Quality Issues in Education Programs in Arab Universities
(A Synthesis of Case Studies)  

Anies Al-Hroub

Abstract

This chapter reviews seven reports related to a range of educational programs in Arab universities in Lebanon, Egypt, Oman and Morocco. The chapter reviews these programs in terms of seven key metrics: objectives, program management, academic resources, curricula, teaching and evaluation, learning opportunities, and the competency level of graduates. These key metrics address the current trends in higher education and emphasize several strengths and weaknesses of the education programs. In our analysis, we examined the organizational structure of the universities and programs using standard guidelines proposed by the Lebanese Association for Educational Sciences. The study revealed disparities: (a) between the education programs of the different universities in terms of the clarity and internal-external consistency of the stated objectives; (b) in balancing the theoretical and practical aspects; and (c) in conducting internal or external evaluations of these programs for the purpose of quality assurance and accreditation. The management of these programs is mostly centralized and bureaucratic. Most of these programs have an academic staff that consists mostly of full-time faculty members, the majority of whom hold PhD degrees. However, research productivity remains modest in most of these programs, and the universities in which they take place are still lacking modern resources and technical equipment. Also, significant disparities appear in the faculty workload in the seven programs. The results also indicated the predominance of theoretical over practical aspects in teaching and assessment methods. However, there are employment opportunities for graduates in all of these programs in the education field.

Introduction

This study includes a review of seven educational programs, which were founded in the last four decades: three BA/BS degree programs in Egypt and Lebanon, one General Diploma program in

1 This is a translation of Chapter Three of the book entitled “Quality Issues in Higher Education in the Arab Countries” (El Amine, 2014). The Chapter synthesizes seven case studies (published in the same book) covering seven universities in four Arab countries. The project was funded by the Ford Foundation.


2 Dr. Anies Al-Hroub is an Associate Professor at the American University of Beirut, PhD holder from the University of Cambridge, UK in 2005/2006. Email address: aa111@aub.edu.lb
Egypt and three Master’s programs: two Research Master’s in Oman and one Professional Master’s in Morocco.

The Bachelor of Arts/Sciences degree (BA/BS) in Mathematics program at the Ain Shams University is one of the oldest, dating back to 1970. The Lebanese University program for Bachelor of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education goes back to 1988, while the Bachelor of Arts degree in Education at Notre Dame University (NDU) goes back to 1997. The General Diploma program at Cairo University on the other hand was established in 1987. Regarding the three Master’s programs, two were launched during the second half of the 1990s, the Master’s program for Curriculum and Teaching Methods of Social Studies at Sultan Qaboos University (1997) and the Master’s program for the Rehabilitation of Juvenile Delinquents and Vocational Integration at the University Mohammed V (1998). The Master’s program for the Curriculum and Methods of Teaching Social Studies at the Sohar University is relatively new, dating back no more than five years. It is worth noting that Sohar University in Oman and NDU in Lebanon are the only private universities among those participating.

The present researchers have adopted in their reports a scientific methodology that is based on a referential framework proposed by the Lebanese Association for Educational Sciences. This framework includes several metrics, each based on specific indicators, evidence and standard guidelines. Case studies provided by researchers have relied on: (1) college and university data and publications pertaining to the program objectives, (2) admission requirements and enrollment, (3) student, faculty and staff-related reports and statistics, (3) student support services and orientation documents, (4) internal and external curricula reports, (5) curriculum content and course syllabi: (6) and field surveys based on observations, interviews with faculty members and with a student sample. In addition, they reviewed results of previous studies on the efficiency of such programs and clarity, consistency and achievement of the program objectives.

In general, a survey of the literature reveals that the above-mentioned framework lacks comprehensive studies on the quality of education programs in the Arab countries, with the exception of a 2006 study by UNDP/RBAS. This regional study tackled the issue of quality assessment of education programs in 23 public and private universities in 13 Arab countries, viz. Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, KSA, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. The main conclusions of the analytical review can be summarized as follows:

- The participating Arab Universities are making a strong contribution to the education and training of graduates and postgraduates in education. Students are being successfully trained to become public and private school-teachers or to meet specific requirements in school-based education, in the various Arab countries. Some graduates of these programs successfully proceed to further studies.
- Overall academic standards were judged to be good in 5 participating universities, satisfactory in 16 and unsatisfactory in 2. There was a clear controversy regarding the use of intended learning outcomes in the participating universities. Curricula used were deemed good in 6 universities and satisfactory in 17. The wide spectrum of specialization and relevant curricula were generally strengths at both the undergraduate and
postgraduate levels. However, assessment continues to be a weakness in several respects. First, too much emphasis is placed on the knowledge-based thinking skills. Second, not enough is being done to test higher-order thinking skills. Third, there is virtually no moderation either internal or external to ensure the fairness and transparency of the grading system.

- The quality of learning opportunities varies among participating universities. Teaching and learning were generally strong as they were deemed of good quality in 16 universities and satisfactory in 7. A wide range of occasionally innovative teaching methods was observed, though there was often an over-reliance on set lectures. There were also disparities between programs in terms of the quality of learning resources; resources were considered good in 11 universities, satisfactory in 5 and unsatisfactory in 7, especially ICT resources and the number of personal computers (PCs) available for students’ use.

- Quality assurance and enhancement continue to be the weakest aspect of this provision. Quality assurance and quality improvement were considered good in 4 universities, satisfactory in 13 and unsatisfactory in 6. A quality culture in which annual feedback, evaluation and monitored action plans are the norm has not yet developed.

The study revealed common regional issues pertaining to the education programs of participating universities, including:

- A need for education program stakeholders in Arab universities in general to develop the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and program specifications, to be the basis for curriculum development and to ensure that provision is coherently designed so that content (including theory and practice), delivery, and assessment are aligned with aims and ILOs.

- Curricula in general need to be more challenging for education programs and Master’s degree programs in particular, thus focusing on higher-order thinking skills of the students, such as analysis, critical thinking and inquiry.

- The need to improve English language proficiency in Arab universities to enable students to refer to current and recent books, resources, periodicals and articles in the English language.

- An over-reliance on assessment methods dominated by lower-order thinking skills, such as memorization and recollection, rather than focusing on higher-order thinking skills, such as critical thinking, analysis, synthesis and inquiry.

- A lack of efficient mechanisms to ensure the clarity and consistency of the methods, and criteria that are used to assess students’ performance.

- Effective mechanisms are rarely in place to ensure that teaching methods are clear and consistent across different departments and programs. In addition, there is a lack of use of ICT in supporting teaching and learning.

- The collection of statistical data to track student progress and follow-up of students after their graduation is a serious overall weakness.

- A culture of awareness and commitment to quality assurance and enhancement, planning, follow-up and corrective action is not yet embedded in all participating universities.

Table 1 below summarizes data related to the level of higher education in Arab countries participating in the current study. The table reveals the big picture without detailing program
quality, although the previewed data could apply to education programs in the current study. In general, the data reveal that the level of higher education is the lowest in Egypt and the highest in Lebanon in terms of enrolment rates, quality of education programs and access to research and training services at the local level.

**Table 1** Level of Higher Education and Training in Four Arab Countries and their Global Ranking According to the Global Competitiveness Report 2013-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Lebanon</th>
<th>Egypt</th>
<th>Oman</th>
<th>Morocco</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global Ranking</td>
<td>Rate/ Value*</td>
<td>Global Ranking</td>
<td>Rate/ Value*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education Enrolment Rate</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the Educational System</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of Research and Training Services</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: the global ranking in the report is out of 148 participating countries for 2013-2014.
* The value is from 1 to 7, with 7 being the highest.
Source: Schwab, 2013

Below is a review of the education programs under study, based on seven main metrics: objectives, program management, academic resources, curriculum, teaching and evaluation, learning opportunities and the level of graduates. It is worth noting that the researchers who worked on the case studies followed standards and guidelines and a number of indicators and evidence that were proposed by the Lebanese Association for Educational Sciences.

**First Metric: Objectives**

The objectives and mission of each institution are available both in print and electronic forms, in the regulations and brochures of the institution or College. With general and specific objectives set for most of these programs, there was clear confusion in some of the case studies between the objectives of the institution or college in general, and the objectives of the programs under study as will be explained below. Accordingly, the conclusions of the case studies on the program objectives can be classified as follows:

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3 Standard guideline: “The program has clear and applicable objectives, as well as means of verification”. This is of central importance so I would not have it as a footnote but put it into the main text.
(1) General objectives that are internally and externally clear and consistent but with no verification means identified.

There are many reasons for reaching this conclusion, including the lack of students’ knowledge of the programs’ content and mission as is the case with the education programs of NDU, Cairo University and Ain Shams. In addition, there are no specific objectives for the Early Childhood Education Program studied at the Lebanese University. Having general and common objectives for all BA and BA/BS programs could be a common denominator between these objectives. They are thus used as a general reference contributing to the internal and external consistency of the objectives, as we can see with the general objective of the BA in Early Childhood Education: “train specialized teachers who assist students in their physical, psychological, social and cognitive development”. However, when such objectives become general their measurement and verification become difficult. For example: “developing students’ critical thinking”, “focusing on the ethical and national aspects” or “abiding by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”.

(2) General Objectives that are clear with an acceptable level of internal and external consistency, with few exceptions.

The objectives of the Master’s program in Oman –as an example –reveal a balance between those that aim at teaching students about scientific research requirements and those that aim at developing students’ intellectual capacities to understand the modern educational trends in their field of specialization. However, loose objectives such as “contributing to the enrichment of human knowledge in all its aspects through specialized studies and serious research” and “linking the university to the community by addressing the most important social and economic problems (such as population, the environment and pollution) and problems related to values, trends and behaviors…”, make it hard to measure or examine their implementation. When we consider the objectives of the General Diploma at Cairo University, they were clear enough to allow for an easy verification while noticing that most of these objectives are teacher-centered rather than learner-centered, due to the use of terms such as “rehabilitating university graduates”, “providing them with knowledge” and “teaching them the basics of curricula design”.

(3) General objectives dominated by the cognitive aspect which affects their internal and external consistency.

The cognitive aspect dominates the objectives of some programs, particularly the Master’s programs – e.g. those at Sultan Qaboos University and University Mohammed V – and this indicates a need to balance the theoretical and practical aspects. The contradiction stands out in the juvenile delinquent rehabilitation and professional integration program as it is essentially a vocational program, and in the prevalence of the cognitive aspect in the program goals, thus working against the nature of the program. This raises many questions about the synergy between the internal and external objectives and their alignment with the program objectives and mission. The program objectives need to be redrafted so as to avoid the excessive use of the term “knowledge” or its synonyms such as “acquaintance”, “acquiring knowledge”, and “mastering
the knowledge” in order for the program objectives to be compatible with its aims and to be measurable through appropriate evaluation methods. It is noted that the descriptive document of the program pedagogical standards rectifies the situation and focuses on the practical vocational aspect of the program. Nonetheless, some texts remain general and ambiguous such as “the capacity to analyze and dissect complex professional situations and propose adequate responses”. They also mention more than one objective: “the capacity to mobilize the theoretical examples emerging from the psychological, educational, psycho-social and sociological fields and also the capacity to identify patterns that are related to institutional intervention, through medicine and law, in order to analyze the delinquency and criminal phenomena”.

(4) General objectives with questionable internal and external consistency.

The objectives of some programs in Egypt and Lebanon were so general that they can be used for several educational programs and at different academic levels (undergraduate, diploma, Master’s). At NDU, all of the objectives of the BA in Education – electronically available in university and faculty publications – are quite vague. Some of the NDU objectives could be considered as strongly linked to the graduate programs such as the Graduate, Master’s or PhD programs, especially when they stress the importance of “participating in academic workshops and conferences to improve their professional and knowledge levels and for extensive networking in the education sector” and of “students conducting research in their fields of specialization”. Regarding the objectives of the mathematics program at Ain Shams University, they are divided into relevant general and specific objectives. NDU and Ain Shams objectives are similarly general. When reviewing Ain Shams University, it is difficult to determine the means to measure some general objectives such as “develop and improve the character of the student”; “develop students’ awareness as to the importance of participating in the development and improvement of the local community”; and “developing the student’s capacity to forge a future vision for the development of the education system in Egypt”. These objectives are not strongly related to the mathematics program and therefore cannot be easily measured, so they must be amended. These objectives cannot be verified through exams and classroom discussions or assessment reports by educational advisors from the Ministry of Education. As for the special objectives, they are closer to a strategic educational vision rather than a set of objectives as they basically confirm the need to “provide students with the academic knowledge and skills in mathematics, to prepare them for the teaching… and complete their higher education…”

Generally speaking, several factors had an overall effect on the alignment between internal and external objectives, as follows: (1) the lack of action/behavioral verbs in some objectives rendering their measurement and validation according to international learning measures and models difficult; (2) the use of mainly cognitive behavioral verbs, especially in the research-type academic or vocational programs; (3) drafting very broad objectives to the extent that they are no longer tightly linked to programs under study; (4) the use of more than one objective in some texts; and (5) some objectives are teacher-based rather than learner-based.
Second Metric: Program Management

1. Structure, responsibilities and decisions

Most of the Arab Universities’ internal regulations have identified a clear administrative structure with organizational and administrative responsibility for colleges, departments and program coordinators. A general review of the management of the studied programs shows that colleges, higher education boards, deanship of the Institute of Educational Studies and Research (IESR) – each according to their own programs – have the main responsibility of general policymaking. However, the distinction was in the responsibilities of the different departments and program coordinators because of the centralized and bureaucratic authority in most universities. At University Mohammed V, for instance, there is an administrative hierarchy and a program coordinator as well as pedagogical and administrative committees, though all meaningful and important decisions are made by the dean and the faculty board as well as the higher education coordination committee, which creates a sense of complacency among some of the faculty members. Both University Mohammed V and Cairo University do not enjoy an administrative autonomy when it comes to their programs. Nonetheless, the General Diploma program at Cairo University is described as having a participatory central management because the IESR’s council and the heads of departments are engaged in the decision making process. Most of the IESR’s departments take part in the teaching process of the General Education Diploma, and the program is not affiliated to a specific department, which negatively affects the program coherence and coordination mechanisms. That is why many of the important decisions are left to the Dean of the Institute of Educational Studies and Research. This actually slows down the process of resolving administrative, organizational and academic problems; it increases red-tape in decision-making; and adds to the confusion among the students of the program.

Ain Shams University, NDU and the Lebanese university have some similarities when it comes to having a clear structure and clear department responsibilities, although the system, mechanisms and implementation of the said responsibilities and decision-making processes at the Lebanese University are far from clear. Program development and the review process are thus negatively affected. On the other hand, the decision to integrate the field of Education into the English and Translation Department impacted the mainstreaming of the program because there was no coordinator with specified responsibilities. Sohar University is a unique case as it is subject to Mutah University in Jordan administratively. This partnership, though important, has further confused the decision-making process and exacerbated the administrative and organizational problems related to the appointing of thesis advisors; it has also led to the adoption of unsuitable measures for student admissions.

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4 Standard guideline: “The program has an efficient administration that is based on consultation and participation, fostering the spirit of cooperation among staff members and constantly aiming at promoting the program level. The same program is subject to an external assessment and endeavors to acquire external quality assurance or accreditation”.

2. An atmosphere of cooperation and participation in decision-making

Many positive comments were made about the atmosphere of friendliness and cooperation among faculty members and the program management in most universities, while comments related to the Lebanese University and Sohar University indicate a lack of cooperation and consultation. Student interviews in Sohar University have proven the absence of cooperation in the university programs, due to an unstable study plan and an insufficient number of supervisors managing the program. Furthermore, the program subordination to the Mutah University program has confused its managerial and organizational aspects, despite the several administrative committees that supervise it. As for the atmosphere of poor consultation at the Lebanese University, it is due to the system’s failure to define the appropriate mechanisms to exercise authority and participate in decision-making relative to the program.

3. Program evaluation and quality assurance

A clear disparity was shown among the educational programs in Arab universities regarding their undergoing of an identified internal and external evaluation according to a scientific and comprehensive method. We can categorize this disparity according to the standards of program evaluation and quality assurance as follows:

A. Programs that have never undergone an internal or external evaluation, as is the case at the Lebanese University, Sultan Qaboos University and Sohar University. In fact, in Oman, Sultan Qaboos University is striving to obtain accreditation from the NCATE: The Standard of Excellence in Teacher Preparation, in 2016. Regarding Sohar University, its program is quite new, and the university’s website does not provide any information as to the existence of an internal or external evaluation for its program, despite the existence of a quality assurance department in the university – which shows a capability to evaluate and improve the program. However, student interviews showed no progress in this field.

B. Programs that have undergone a nominal internal evaluation in the absence of an external quality assurance system, as is the case in Mohammed V University and in Notre Dame University (NDU). In fact, at Mohammed V University, an internal evaluation is made every four years. It is a nominal evaluation performed in conditions of urgency, and it is considered as a mere formality rather than accreditation. Regarding the external system, it is a monitoring shortcut that the Ministry and the Presidency of the University apply to affiliated faculties. Besides, the accreditation was granted by the National Coordination Committee for Higher Education based on the descriptive internal report for the program’s criteria. Therefore, it is difficult to include the aforementioned monitoring mechanisms within the control and external quality assurance mechanisms. This categorization also applies to the NDU, for despite the fact that it carries out an internal evaluation every two years, this does not go further than a mere study of the amendments applied to the courses by the Curriculum Committee, which will in due
course be presented to the Dean and to the President of the University. Thus, we could not consider this as a quality assurance evaluation in the traditional sense of the term.

C. **Programs that have undergone only a partial internal evaluation in the absence of an external quality assurance system.** This mainly applies to the program of Ain Shams University, which lacks an external quality assurance system in the traditional sense. This shows the ambiguity that lies between the quality assurance performed by the faculty, and the term “external” that implies the existence of an external body that has or is running the evaluation. As for the participatory method of the internal evaluation mentioned herein, it actually does not go beyond a limited number of interviews with students and faculty members in which they speak of a shortage of equipment and classrooms, as well as the feasibility of some of the goals. Furthermore, there is insufficient information on the quality assurance unit in the faculty in the context of external quality assurance.

D. **Programs that have undergone an internal evaluation and a partial evaluation by an external quality assurance system.** This particularly applies to the General Diploma program in Cairo University. In fact, internal evaluation in Cairo University is conducted on an annual basis by the quality assurance unit in the Institute of Educational Studies and Research (IESR). Some amendments were ratified, such as adopting the credit system as of academic year 2013-2014. However, the evaluation remains limited, especially in the absence of any mention of measurement tools or procedures. The procedures for the comprehensive evaluation of the programs, their goals and learning outcomes are most probably carried out once every four to six years. These evaluations study the number of students and the effectiveness of the programs over many years. Regarding the role of the external quality assurance system, it evaluated another program (namely, the General Diploma in Education, Division for teaching Computer skills) within the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2006). The need remains to establish an external quality assurance system for the division of General and Vocational Education. This is what the institute is striving for, by obtaining accreditation for the General Diploma from the National Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee in Egypt.

4. **Strategic planning**

Some indicators to future visions and plans have appeared, in an effort to develop educational programs in most universities concerned by the current study. In Cairo University, a serious discussion is underway about the importance of using distance education in General Diploma Programs, due to the ever increasing number of students, and of the adoption of an electronic diploma qualification for applicants, as well as establishing a special unit for Foreign Student Affairs. Considering the strategic plan in Ain Shams University, it sets six main goals that embody the vision of the department to develop the mathematics program (2012-2017). The plan focuses on internal quality assurance to obtain accreditation, the development of educational programs, the development of computer education programs, improving the quality of graduates, the training of researchers, faculty members and their assistants. This plan can be considered
strategic and constructive, with the need to clarify the mechanism through which this strategy is intended to be implemented. In Oman, the strategic plan of Sohar University consists of further cooperating with its sister university, Sultan Qaboos University, and becoming independent of Mutah University in Jordan. Sultan Qaboos University is endeavoring to launch a doctoral program – which has yet to be defined. The University is also endeavoring to obtain accreditation from the NCATE in 2016. At Mohammed V University, its plan shifts focus to the practical side of the program by reducing the educational units devoted to the cognitive theoretical aspect, and putting emphasis on training teachers through training workshops. It is worth noting that there is an absence of a project for a strategic plan to develop the educational programs in Lebanese universities. In fact, the plan in NDU consists of building modern facilities, providing funding, establishing research and planning centers at the university level without mentioning special plans specifically related to the BA program in Education. At the Lebanese University, the current academic year 2013-2014 has started with the establishment of a plan to develop all educational programs, since the past three years were occupied by a pilot program.

5. Partnerships

It has been noted that partnerships in Arab universities are weak or absent, despite the positive expressions that are used. In fact, all these partnerships do not go beyond the local, national or regional levels, and most of them are agreements with other universities – which is not usually categorized as a partnership, since the latter is supposed to be conducted with beneficiaries in the communities surrounding the university partner. A good example would be the partnership between Cairo University (The Institute of Educational Studies And Research) and some other Arab universities, such as in Sudan, Kuwait and Yemen; or the partnership between the Cairo institute and the Faculty of Education in North Carolina University in the United States of America. Regarding the partnership between Sohar University and Mutah University, it is a regional Arab partnership and was terminated recently. Furthermore, the relationship of NDU and some American institutions only concerns some other scientific qualifications, such as the doctoral degree.

Third Metric: Academic Resources

1. Teacher specializations and teaching workload

Most programs reviewed herein have an academic staff that consists mostly of full-time faculty members, the majority of whom hold PhD degrees in areas of specialization related to these programs. This reflects the importance placed by these universities on highly skilled and qualified professors. However, some exceptions were noted in some universities. For example, in the juvenile delinquent rehabilitation program at Mohammed V University, the educational

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5 Standard guideline: "The program provides an educational body, sufficient in number, field of specialization and competencies, and with high scientific productivity. It is subject to professional assessment and development"
committee has 16 members (9 professors, 5 assistant professors and 2 associate professors). However, the academic qualifications of these professors do not accurately match the educational programs for juvenile delinquent rehabilitation. At Sohar University, there is a lack of, and instability in, the number of instructors, therefore there are no data on the number of the faculty members, or the number of students over the past few years. The department was shut down and then reopened, which negatively affected the turnout. But the most negative effect is manifested in the absence of qualified professors to supervise the university theses. At Ain Shams University, the total number of faculty members is 90, mostly instructors and teaching assistants.

The teaching load of faculty members is uneven in the seven programs that are under study. This is clear when we compare the teaching load in Egyptian and Lebanese universities. In Cairo University, the number of credit hours per faculty member varies between 10 and 12 per week, with consideration to the qualification degree. Full professors only have a load of 8 credit hours, while teaching assistants have a load of 14 credit hours, per week. At Ain Shams University, hours are divided as such: 4 hours for professors, 6 hours for assistant professors and 12 for teaching assistants, given that the number of hours may increase in some semesters. This disparity is due to a large increase in the number of students enrolled in the General Education Diploma at Cairo University, while the number of students enrolled in the Mathematics Department in Ain Shams has sharply decreased.

In Lebanon, the disparity is visible between NDU (private) and the Lebanese University (public), in favor of the latter. The teaching load at LU is acceptable: the program includes 53 faculty members (86.8% of them hold PhD degrees). They teach 75 courses to 271 students in the faculty’s two branches. At NDU, hours are distributed as follows: 15 hours for full professors, 18 for associate professors, 21 for assistant professors and 21 for lecturers. This disparity can be attributed to the nature of the private universities that tend to increase the hours of their faculty members for financial reasons – despite the fact that the number of students enrolled in the BA in Education course in NDU is no more than 19 students.

In Oman, two main problems arise. The first is related to the low number of professors and instructors in the Master’s programs at Sultan Qaboos and Sohar Universities. The second is the increase of supervision hours for Master’s theses at the expense of teaching hours. The Master’s program in Sultan Qaboos University only has 3 professors (all PhDs), for a total of teaching hours that does not exceed 12 credit hours, including the supervision of Master’s theses, where an hour is accounted for every primary supervision, and half an hour for every secondary supervision, allocated so as not to exceed 4 hours.

For Sohar University, there is a difficulty in data collection regarding the number of students and faculty members, and therefore it is difficult to determine the teaching load of faculty members. However, the workload pertaining to thesis supervision tasks varies: a maximum of 6 theses for professors or associate professors, and 3 for assistant professors, on the
basis of one hour per Master’s thesis for supervisors (3 hours maximum). In the presence of an assistant supervisor, each receives 0.5 credit hours per semester.

At Mohammed V University, the program does not suffer from a heavy teaching load, but there is a problem of voluntary leave among professors, endorsed in 2005, which certainly affects the number of specialized faculty members as mentioned above.

2. Faculty productivity, academic promotion policy and professional development

Scientific productivity and academic contributions remain weak in the majority of Arab universities. With the exception of Ain Shams and Sultan Qaboos Universities, there is no mention of the number of research articles published in Arab or international peer-reviewed journals. In fact, the number of papers published by faculty members of the program in Ain Shams significantly decreased in 2011 to 8 publications only, given that 94 scientific papers were published between 2007 and 2011. The Institute for Educational Studies at the Cairo University has a scientific peer-reviewed journal in which faculty members can publish their papers. Nonetheless, there are few academic promotions in universities in Egypt. Most universities suffer from poor academic research activity, and this was shown convincingly in the reports of Mohammed V University, Sohar University and the Lebanese University.

Internal policies in most Arab universities have set three clear criteria for academic promotion: teaching, scientific research and community service. Regarding teaching, the performance of faculty members in each course is appraised every semester by the students. In terms of research, each faculty member must publish a certain number of scholarly articles in peer-reviewed journals. However, Arab universities have different criteria regarding the amount of publications. Faculty members are also expected to provide evidence of professional contribution to the educational community. Academic evaluation for promotional purposes remains an internal procedure within the universities themselves. Thus, the conditions for promotion are affected by the absence of a transparent mechanism for research evaluation, as is the case in the Lebanese University. More specifically, all faculty members in Egypt are subject to the academic promotion system of the Supreme Council of Universities. If we go back to the reports in our possession regarding the percentage of professors who were promoted, we find that the numbers are low. In the Lebanese University for example, 90% of specialized faculty members are still in the same rank at which they entered the faculty, i.e. assistant professor. In Mohammed V University, the performance of professors is not evaluated according to the principles of academic merit or research, but according to seniority.

Some universities offer services to their faculty members, such as financial support to attend scientific and educational conferences and seminars, and to organize roundtables and workshops, as well as to host visiting scholars. And some universities, such as NDU, offer training sessions for their faculty members on the use of audio-visual support. One of the most important forms of academic support – seen in the Lebanese University and in Cairo University – is the right to a sabbatical year for research. The Lebanese University grants it at the end of the sixth year of teaching, and Cairo University grants it after every promotion to a higher rank, in
order to alleviate the professors’ teaching and service loads, and encourage them to conduct educational research that helps them advance professionally.

3. The availability of teaching assistants and administrators

General comments reveal that teaching assistants and administrators are available in some educational programs, without identifying the numbers and field of expertise of these administrators and employees. It is worth noting that there are no teaching assistants in Master’s programs in Oman, which increases the burden on faculty members, but the number of teaching assistants in Ain Shams and the Lebanese University, it is well defined and sufficient. In the Lebanese University, there are trainers who are considered as teaching assistants in practical education; they are Master’s degree holders, experienced and most of them are qualified. While the increase in the number of General Diploma students in Cairo University represents a problem in providing them with the appropriate number of administrators and teaching assistants, there are no data regarding the number of assistants and administrators in Mohammed V University.

Fourth Metric: Curriculum

1. Curriculum goals and learning outcomes

All educational programs provide syllabi for required and elective courses. Students are provided with a copy of the syllabus at the start of their course. The curricula of these programs are aligned with the general goals of the faculties or educational departments. Many of these goals can be measured, especially the ones pertinent to cognitive abilities. This being said, there was a lack of alignment between the programs’ goals and cognitive, practical and effective outcomes and content, in the Master’s and General Diploma programs in particular. Some of the reasons for this lack of alignment lay in the difficulty of measuring some performance and effectiveness outcomes, as well as in the fact that theory prevailed over practice in the vocational programs, like the program on integrating juvenile delinquents into society and its institutions. This also applies to the BA/BS in Mathematics. Regarding the programs leading to the License in Education ‘in the Lebanese University, many flaws became apparent in the vertical alignment among some of the courses, due to the intertwining of some subjects which greatly affects the curriculum learning outcomes.

2. Number of credit hours, teaching system, distribution and volume

The education programs are theory- and practice-based, and the study period varies according to the university degree of the program: three to four years for the undergraduate degree, one year for a Graduate Diploma, and two years for a Master’s degree.

6 Standard guideline: "The program provides a curriculum that has internal consistency and external compatibility with the program objectives and the mission of the university. It is in line with the requirements of the diversity of students and work and the pursuit of higher studies, and is characterized by modernity and comparability, or the potential of international equivalence".
Most university programs adopt the Credit system, like the Master’s programs in Oman, NDU and Ain Shams Universities. The Lebanese University and Mohammed V University adopt the European Credit Transfer system, known as LMD: License, Master’s, and Doctorate.

Comparison of the credit hours in the Bachelor/License programs showed up a clear disparity as follows: Ain Shams (232 credit hours), the Lebanese University (180 credit hours), and NDU (105 credit hours). Thus, the study period is 4 years in Ain Shams University, and 3 years in NDU and the Lebanese University. The Lebanese University’s curriculum contains the following courses:

1. Core courses: 68 credits, 37% of the total credits.
2. Specialty courses: 90 credits, 50%
3. Practical education: 14 credits, 8%
4. Elective courses: 8 credits, 5%

We notice an imbalance in the percentages of Practical education and Electives. Despite this, the total number of education hours is 560 hours, and this is considered a sufficient period of training.

At NDU, the courses are divided into four sections: (1) General Education Requirements (31%), (2) Core Requirements (23%), (3) Major Requirements in Early Childhood, Learning Disabilities or Education of the Gifted (40%), and (4) Free Electives (6%). In Ain Shams University, the total of credit hours reached 232, divided thus: Specialization: 75%, Education: 20%, Culture: 5%.

In a quick comparison, we notice that the License program of the Lebanese University takes applied aspects into consideration more than the programs in Ain Shams or NDU.

Master’s programs in Oman are different in more than one aspect:

1. The absence of electives in Sultan Qaboos University, which leads to a low student motivation, due to the program’s lack of diversity.
2. The condition requiring taking 6 additional credit hours for English in Sohar University.

The existence of two tracks at the Sohar University: Non-thesis (Comprehensive Examination) and Thesis (while only Sultan Qaboos University offers only the thesis track).

Also in Oman, we find the number of 33 credit hours in Sohar University, plus 6 hours for English. And the program offers two tracks: (1) Non-Thesis (Comprehensive Examination) – includes 7 required courses (21 hours) and 4 elective courses (12 hours); and (2) Thesis – includes 7 required courses (21 hours), 2 electives (6 hours) and the thesis itself (6 hours). Credit hours in Sultan Qaboos University are set at 30, divided as follows: 24 credit hours for required courses, plus 6 hours for the thesis.

The curriculum in Mohammed V University is divided into sections: theoretical and practical. It is spread over four semesters over the course of two academic years. The practical part of the program does not exceed 21% of it, and should be increased. Actual teaching hours
could reach 1440, divided as follows: main units that define the nature of the specialization (45%), curricular units (12%), complementary (or elective) units (11%), training (21%) and final project (11%). The distribution does not leave sufficient time for research and presentations in the context of continuous monitoring.

The study period for the General Diploma program in Cairo University is one academic year (9 months), where the student receives 28 class hours a week (20 hours of lectures, 8 hours of practice). The curriculum has 12 courses, all mandatory, which negatively affects the student motivation and the program’s overall diversity. The program administrators are endeavoring to develop it in the light of the credit hours system.

3. Compensatory, credit recovery/reinforcement and elective courses

Not all programs include compensatory or credit recovery courses. With the exception of Sultan Qaboos University and Cairo University, the programs offer a package of elective courses. The Lebanese University’s program represents a special case, as its creators have considered that the courses of the specialization track that the student chooses represent a list of elective courses that the student is therefore committed to complete, and so they became “required elective courses”.

Fifth Metric: Teaching and Evaluation

1. Language of instruction

Arabic is the only language of instruction used in the four programs in Egypt and Oman. In Lebanon, however, Arabic, French, and English are used in the early childhood programs, while in Morocco, the teaching modules in the juvenile delinquent rehabilitation program use both Arabic and French with full modules taught solely in French. The way these two programs are affected by French educational systems and policies is clearly apparent and is shown through the use of French educational terminology, mainly in Morocco. In the same context, the BA program in Education in Notre Dame University (NDU) is the only program using English as the formal language of instruction.

2. Teaching methods

Teaching methods used in the majority of educational programs vary to include lectures and discussions, presentations, research and inquiry, brainstorming, field visits, and practical activities. Even so, the traditional method prevails through many lectures. Additionally, the level of use of communication technology is still unsatisfactory in many programs, a number of which focus on theoretical knowledge rather than fieldwork practical aspects. Some Master’s and diploma programs need to use applied activities and reduce the reliance of the program on memorization in exams. Added to this must be the need to reduce the high numbers of students

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7 Standard guideline: The program offers active learning comprising various educational methods, mainly Information and Communication Technology. The program’s evaluation includes upgrading evaluation and evaluation for the improvement of teaching and learning methods.
enrolled in some courses. In some Master’s programs, the reliance on non-specialized professors to teach a number of courses is noted.

3. Assessment methods

A range of assessment methods is used in the majority of programs to include written tests, classroom activities, classroom discussions, verbal presentations, practical work, and preparation of projects and research. However, some programs in Egypt focus on traditional written tests in theoretical courses by up to 80%. In fact, the final written test in the practical courses of the Ain Shams University program makes up 70% of the final grade. Moreover, the Master’s program in Oman and Morocco needs to use assessment methods of scientific research more broadly.

Sixth Metric: Learning Opportunities

1. Admission requirements

When it comes to the BA or BA/BS program, all universities impose the same admission requirement: students need a high grade average in their secondary school certificate — or its equivalent. Ain Shams University does not mention the requirement to pass a foreign language test, in contrast to the Lebanese University where students are required to pass an English or French language test, in addition to the Arabic language test. For its part, NDU requires the students to pass the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), knowing that the language of instruction is English. In the Lebanese and Ain Shams Universities, passing the “Aptitude Test for the Ability to Practice the Teaching Profession” is set as a requirement. This test, however, is considered vague and is done through conducting routine and formal interviews. The faculty internal regulations in Ain Shams University specify other conditions, some of which are vague and can be unfair to some categories of students, for instance those with special needs, who may have to meet the condition of “passing the medical examination to prove the physical eligibility to practice the profession.”

In order to join the Master’s and graduate diploma programs, students must be holders of a BA, BS or Licence and pass written and verbal tests (interviews). Requirements differ: while Sohar University requires students to pass an English language test and Mohammed V University Arabic and French language tests, Sultan Qaboos and Cairo Universities do not require students to pass linguistic tests. The general diploma of Cairo University is distinctive as students are required to be holders of an undergraduate degree in non-educational fields because the program targets mainly these students. Among others is a requirement is for students “to undertake personally to dedicate time to pursue studies at the institute.” Also, Cairo University states that “the medical commission shall acknowledge their physical eligibility to practice teaching.” This requirement is similar to that imposed by Ain Shams University. The undertaking of students to

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8 Standard guideline: The program provides equal opportunities for follow-up, success, and compensation and offers the needed guiding services to enhance their opportunities.
dedicate time for studies, however, is an unpractical condition given that it is not easy to verify especially when such a large number of students is admitted to the institute.

2. Admission rates and numbers of admitted students

The reports of universities, except for those issued by Ain Shams and the Lebanese University, mentioned the numbers of admitted students without the rates. In Ain Shams, the percentage of students admitted to read Mathematics in 2012 stands at 14%. The percentage was calculated by comparing the number of mathematics students with the number of students in the faculty in general. For the 2010-2011 academic year, the admission rate in the Lebanese University was 21% of the number of applicants.

In general, the number of students joining the programs differs, ranging from very low to very high. Sohar University has had only 12 students enter its program since 2009. At NDU, and given the fact that it is an undergraduate program, the number stands at 20 students. In Ain Shams University, the numbers are higher, reaching 415 students. It is worth noting the clear decrease in the number of students in past years as well as in the LU. At the level of post-graduate programs, there are only 14 students in Sultan Qaboos University, as it is running a Master’s degree course. In Cairo University, however, the number is really high with 1415 students joining the program, a number so high that it constitutes a burden on the faculty.

3. Student diversity

A number of programs are characterized by student diversity in terms of gender, social and cultural background, as is the case in the universities in Oman, but reports note that the relevant programs lack diversity on the level of nationality. The overwhelming majority of students are natives. In Lebanon, there is no diversity in terms of gender, nationality, and religion. At the Lebanese University, 97% of students are females. In each of the two university branches, the majority of students belong to a single religion, depending on the geographic location of the branch and transport facilities. This also applies to NDU. The report of Mohammed V University, however, points in detail to the number of foreign students, which reaches 11.7% of the total number admitted (34), 53% of whom are females.

4. Attendance and follow-up

Any system for monitoring attendance and level of application to study was not mentioned in the reports of Sultan Qaboos, Mohammed V, and Cairo Universities. It seems that the large number of students at Cairo University renders this process difficult and impracticable. In Sultan Qaboos University, attendance is mandatory with emphasis on the number of hours (study load) allowed for full-time and part-time students. A similarity in the attendance policy is noted in the Lebanese universities, as well as in Ain Shams and Sohar, where attendance is mandatory and is required to be at least 70 to 75% for every course. If students’ attendance falls below this percentage, the relevant faculty or department council deems that they have dropped out of the course.
5. **Retention, attrition and graduation**

Except for the Lebanese University and Ain Shams University, no detailed reports were submitted about retention, failure, and graduation in the programs of Arab Universities. At the Lebanese University, the ratio of graduates to admitted students decreased between 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 from 80% to 64.4% for reasons related to changes made on the grading of evaluation methods. The number of graduates differed markedly, from 124 students in 2008-2009 to 80 students in 2011-2012. The retention rate of students during the years of study, however, is very high, reaching 96%, 87%, and 93% respectively. The overwhelming majority of graduates have majored in Early Childhood Education in French (50 students). Childhood Education in Arabic came in with 18 students, and the same number graduated in the English section. The retention percentage of admitted students - from the first to the last year of study - in Ain Shams University is 60%. The other 40% dropped out of the program throughout the four years, notably during the first year, which witnessed a success rate of 70%. This fact requires the consideration of those in charge of the program.

NDU and Sohar University did not provide information on their retention and attrition rates compared with the number of graduates. At Mohammed V University, 34 students were admitted in 2011-2012, a fixed number of students the university plans to admit in the next two academic years. The admission rates in Sultan Qaboos University have also been stable at 26% to 29% in recent years, with the number of students ranging from 12 to 14, among whom the number of males is double that of females. This program did not witness any case of dropping out or failure in any year of study. At Cairo University, the Diploma program is unique as the number of students escalated from 194 to 1,415 between 2007 and 2011. This increase is attributed to the fact that the Ministry of Education required those wishing to work in schools who did not graduate from the faculty of education to acquire a university educational qualification. This has affected the program’s quality of education.

6. **Student support and guidance services**

In general, the majority of programs, except for those at NDU, lack services in terms of books, recent references, computers, electronic communication, visual aids, and documentary movies, especially in the case of specialized programs such as early childhood and juvenile delinquent rehabilitation programs. This was confirmed by the reports of students in some programs such as those at Sohar and Sultan Qaboos Universities. Additionally, academic guidance services are unsatisfactory in the majority of programs. In fact, some of these programs did not mention these services during their analytical presentation. At Sultan Qaboos University, the program offers scholarships for graduate students and on-campus dorms for Omani female students at their own expense. It also offers academic guidance services for students to choose the courses and organize their academic workload.
7. Student-faculty members ratio

The ratio of faculty members to students varies from 1:4 in both Sultan Qaboos and the Lebanese University and 1:3.4 in Ain Shams, a ratio considered acceptable, to a high ratio in Cairo University (1:47), due to the acute shortage of instructors. This comes as a result of too many professors working with other universities and of the steady increase in the number of students during past years. There are other ratios that are hard to determine due to the lack of available information, as is the case with the program at Sohar University, or due to the involvement of faculty members in many educational programs as is the case at NDU, noting that the number of students in the education undergraduate program at NDU is limited. Therefore, the ratio of students (19) to full-time faculty members (15 tenured members, 1 lecturer, 10 assistant professors, 3 associate professors, and 1 professor) at NDU is very good. In fact, this ratio is a point of strength of the program. In Oman, however, Master’s programs struggle because of the low number of thesis advisors.

Seventh Metric: Competency Level of Graduates

The present study clearly shows the availability of work opportunities and the great need of the education market for the graduates of the programs that are the subject of this study. This confirms the important role these programs play in supplying the education sector with teachers and specialists. In general, graduates do not have to overcome any lack of work opportunities. Moreover, these programs open the doors for graduates to pursue graduate studies in their own major or in the educational field. The number of students opting for graduate studies after graduation, however, is low and this option is unavailable in the majority of these programs.

Work opportunities are still available for the overwhelming majority of graduates, even though some of these programs have negative characteristics, such as the predominance of theoretical knowledge over practical aspects, in addition to the graduates’ poor command of foreign languages as is the case in the Lebanese University and Mohammed V. Available information from the report of Mohammed V University, for example, affirmed the need of the education and social work sectors for the graduates of these two universities, despite the large numbers of graduates and the weakness characterizing their practical training. In Morocco, reports showed the ability of graduates to find jobs in centers for education preparation and youth integration in the ministries of defense, social development, sports and youth as well as the national security directorate, institutions for prison inmate re-integration, and organizations for the integration of youth dealing with behavioral problems. Graduates can find a job in these institutions without a long wait, given the needs of the market. A positive impact of the program on the performance of the workers was noted, especially in dealing with inmates and the re-integration of juvenile delinquents, in addition to the enhancement noticed in social work. Yet, the evidence used to come up with these results and conclusions was not mentioned. This also

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9 Standard guideline: “The program shows that its graduates enjoy a good level of competency in their major.”
applies to the Lebanese University graduates whose numbers exceed 80 annually. Despite the high number, the labor market needs them, given the increase in the number of nurseries and kindergartens in Lebanon.

The general diploma offered by Cairo University is considered to have the largest number of graduates, amounting to hundreds. Despite this fact, the needs of the market and the industry are very high. The large numbers of students joining the program have affected the academic quality, and we should also note the disparity shown in the competency of students depending on their major. The high reputation of the Cairo University and Ain Shams University and their educational programs has created work opportunities for their graduates. In Oman, the two graduate programs comprise students, the majority of whom are employees, teachers, or educational supervisors. Therefore, the two programs allow the students theoretically to pursue a doctoral degree regardless of the weak points and instability characterizing the Sohar program in particular.

The problem of graduates in some graduate programs remains the inadequate training in research skills. The graduate program of Mohammed V University offers a professional Master’s degree. For their part, the programs in Oman struggle with small numbers of faculty members and the focus of some of these programs on comprehensive exams due to the lack of qualified thesis advisors. These reasons prompt questions about the research skills of graduates and their ability to pursue a doctoral degree in western universities.

**Conclusion**

Drawing on the seven metrics analyzing the programs of education in Arab universities, we can conclude the following:

**Objectives.** Objectives can be divided into four categories: (1) general objectives characterized with clarity as well as internal and external consistency, although the means to verify them were not specified; (2) general objectives characterized with clarity as well as acceptable levels of internal and external consistency, with some exceptions; (3) general objectives dominated by the theoretical knowledge aspect, affecting their internal and external consistency; and (4) objectives that are too general, prompting questions about their internal and external consistency.

**Program management.** Administrative hierarchy is present in all Arab universities. The managing authority is central and bureaucratic in the majority of the universities. Furthermore, an environment of cooperation and participation prevails over the majority of programs. When it comes to quality assurance: (1) some programs have never been subject to internal or external assessment as is the case with the Lebanese University, Sultan Qaboos, and Sohar Universities; (2) some programs were subject to formal internal assessment coupled with the absence of an external quality assurance system, as is the case with Mohammed V University and NDU; (3) some programs were subject to only a partial internal assessment without any external quality assurance system, which applied mainly to the BS in Mathematics at Ain Shams University; and (4) some programs were subject to a partial internal assessment and an external quality assurance
system, as is the case with the General Diploma at Cairo University. The majority of universities talked of prospective visions and plans to develop the educational programs. However, partnerships among Arab universities are either weak or non-existent despite the positive expressions that were used.

**Academic Resources.** The academic staff in the majority of programs subject to this study consisted of faculty members, the majority of whom are full-time members and holders of a PhD in majors related to educational programs. A disparity in the workload of professors in the seven programs stands out. Also, scientific productivity and academic contributions are still weak in the majority of Arab Universities. The universities are dealing with this weakness in their academic research activity. In regard to academic promotion policy, the majority of internal regulations specified three clear criteria for promotion: teaching, scientific research, and community service. However, the percentage of professors who were promoted is low in some universities. Moreover, some universities offer services to faculty members, such as financial support to attend educational and scientific conferences and seminars and to hold seminars, panel discussions and workshops, in addition to hosting visiting academics, recognizing that the small number of graduate/teaching assistants in all educational programs add to the academic workload of professors.

**Curricula.** The majority of educational programs offer a description of core and elective courses. Students receive a copy of the syllabus at the start of their first classroom meeting of every course. Inconsistency between the goals of the program on one hand, and the content and cognitive, practical, and affective outcome on the other, was starkly apparent in the diploma and MA programs in particular. The majority of the programs espouse the system of credits. The European course and credit system is adopted in French-system universities. When comparing the credit hours in the BA programs, a clear disparity was found. Moreover, the curricula in all programs have a theoretical and practical aspect, but the former is predominant in the majority of them. Also, the curricula do not contain any compensative or credit recovery/reinforcement courses; and some programs do not offer a list of elective courses.

**Teaching and evaluation.** Arabic is the language of instruction in the majority of programs. Arabic, French and English are used in Lebanon, while, in Morocco, programs are taught in Arabic and French. The teaching methods vary in the programs to include lectures and discussions, presentations, research and inquiry, brainstorming, field visits and practical work. However, the traditional delivery of lectures prevails within many programs. In some Master’s programs, a dependence on non-specialized professors to teach a number of courses is noted. Furthermore, the methods of assessment in the programs variously include written tests, classroom activities, classroom discussions, verbal presentations, practical work, and preparation of projects and researches. However, some programs rely heavily on traditional written exams.

**Learning opportunities.** In regard to undergraduate programs, all universities impose the same admission requirement: students need a high secondary school certificate — or its equivalent — grade average. Yet, a requirement to pass a foreign language test is not uniformly applied
throughout these universities. Some requirements imposed in a number of universities are vague, such as passing the “Aptitude Test” or the “Ability to Practice the Teaching Profession”. All graduate programs require students to be holders of a BA or BA/BS degree and to pass written and verbal tests (interview). What differs, however, is the foreign language requirements. In general, the numbers of students joining the programs are not optimal. Unsurprisingly, there are disparities and similarities between universities in terms of student diversity in terms of gender, nationality, and social and cultural background. In the majority of programs, attendance and follow-up systems are adopted. Attendance is mandatory by 70 to 75%. When it comes to retention, attrition, and graduation, there were no detailed reports on the numbers in the majority of the Arab Universities’ programs, although they offer logistic resources such as classrooms, lecture halls and stationery. Even so, these programs have to cope with a shortage of services in general, especially in terms of books, up-to-date references, computers, electronic communications, visual aids, and documentaries. Student to faculty member ratios vary, from acceptable to too high. Also, some graduate programs have small numbers of thesis advisors.

**Competency level of graduates.** Data revealed many similarities with those of the UNDP report of 2006 in terms of the labor market’s great need for graduates of educational programs. The need of the education field for teachers, specialists, and professionals to fill the gap in educational centers, schools, and educational institutes was starkly apparent. Consequently, the negative aspects of the programs studied — such as the ambiguity of some objectives, the weakness of resources and lack of equipment, the unavailability of specialized professors, the shortage of academic supervisors, and the neglect of professional practical aspects, etc. — were overlooked. Graduates were offered job opportunities because they hold educational degrees from reputable Arab universities. Also, the reputation of the majority of universities subject to this study is well known by many educational institutions which are potential employers of their graduates, thus encouraging students to join their programs. Nonetheless, the competency of students regarding scientific research ability is unsatisfactory, which explains the low numbers of students pursuing graduate programs. The programs do not prepare students to work as educational researchers due to the shortage of specialized professors qualified to teach research methods.

In general, we can conclude the following:

- The graduate research programs lack specialized professors to teach and prepare students to use applied research methods. This shortage reflects the need of Arab universities in general to focus on research aspects and send off students on scholarships to major in the field of research method-teaching in order to improve the competency of students and pave the way for a competent generation of Arab researchers.

- The theoretical knowledge aspect prevails over the majority of educational programs, even at the level of a professional MA, such as the juvenile delinquent rehabilitation program in the Mohammed V University. The imbalance between the theoretical and practical aspect is clearly shown in the curriculum, teaching and evaluation metrics. The results are similar to
those of the study conducted by the UNDP on the quality of educational programs in 23 public and private universities in 13 Arab countries. (UNDP, 2006).

- Ever since the decision was made to expand the educational system and open the General Diploma program in Cairo University to hundreds of students, the program has attracted a large number of enrolments, which has greatly affected both the infrastructure and quality of education. This also applies to many educational programs in many Egyptian universities, which was brought out in the study conducted by Mona El-Baradei on the status of higher education in Egypt (2009). The low quality affects the internal and external efficiency of the educational institution. Among the indicators of internal efficiency is an increase in the student-faculty member ratio, as shown in the study of El-Baradei. External efficiency, which is represented by the need of the labor market for graduates, is still acceptable since the majority of the General Diploma graduates find jobs in the education sector shortly after graduation, whether in Egypt or other Arab countries.

- There is an increased demand on specific branches of humanities at the expense of science and mathematics. This is evident through the continuous decrease in the number of students pursuing a BS in mathematics. The study conducted by El-Baradei attributed this decrease to economic reasons, since the related fees in terms of books, material, and private teaching are higher. Also, mathematics and science take more years of study in comparison to humanities.

- Private universities in Lebanon and Oman, namely NDU and Sohar University, struggle because only small numbers of students join their educational programs. However, the factors leading to the decrease in the number of students are different. The program of Sohar University is unstable and lacks specialized professors, equipment, and educational resources. Also, its systems remained affiliated to the Jordanian Mutah University. The BA of Education at NDU – a private university - was ambitiously expanded to offer scarce majors, such as the education of the gifted and talented, without studying the labor market or hiring specialized professors.

- There are no commonalities between NDU and Sohar University in terms of the availability of facilities, equipment, and libraries, despite the fact that the Ministry of Higher Education in both countries offers incentives to private universities. In contrast to NDU, Sohar University lacks educational resources, modern books, and technological equipment. In general, the private Sohar University is not different than the rest of the Arab public universities which have been the subjects of this study.

- Despite the graduates’ poor command of foreign languages and poor technological communication skills, public universities are still the main institution supplying the labor market with graduates in the field of education. This can be attributed to the free education or the low university fees, in addition to the flexibility of some French-system universities in awarding a BA or MA in Education in Arabic, French, or English depending on the need of the market, as is the case with the Lebanese University and the University Mohammed V.
• Public universities accommodate medium to large numbers of students. The reason may be the free education and low university fees, which help a broad spectrum of low-income families to encourage their children into joining these universities, and this was also a conclusion of the study conducted by El-Baradei.

• No difference in quality between Anglophone and Francophone programs was shown in the seven metrics of this report.

References

