



Career Path of Higher Education Teaching Personnel in the Arab States and the Quality Challenges

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Abstract

This study presents a set of concepts related to the quality of teaching personnel in higher education, and a number of standards and best practices adopted at the world level to guarantee this quality. It also presents indications about the quality of higher education teaching personnel in the Arab States drawn from the practices of these States related to the initial training and qualifications of this personnel, as well as to their selection schemes and working conditions. It also deals with what could be regarded as fundamental issues to be addressed in order to raise the teaching personnel to the levels expected according to international standards. The study is primarily based on the analysis of official documents available from international organizations, some of the world countries, and Arab universities, as regards faculty members' selection, conditions of employment, promotion, and working conditions. It also relies on relevant available statistical data.

The study shows that the efforts made by the Arab States regarding the career path of higher education teaching personnel are deficient, at the quantitative and qualitative levels, and that there is an urgent need for a radical change in the current situation, if teaching personnel are to play an active role in meeting the challenges of higher education quality in the Arab States.

I. General introduction

1. The quality of higher education and the quality of the teaching personnel

The study of higher education quality in the Arab States faces a variety of problems, the most important of which is the lack of comprehensive data on higher education inputs, on the processes taking place within the framework of this level of education and on its educational, research and service outputs. In fact, there are only few documents published on these issues, and no national, regional or international body has data which are accurate and comprehensive enough to draw a clear picture of the quality of higher education in these States.

A recent study (Salamé, 2007) tried to tackle these issues from aspects on which some statistical and qualitative data were available, such as the characteristics of teaching personnel, teaching curricula and graduates' competencies. The study concluded that higher education in the Arab States generally suffers from deficiencies in the various mentioned aspects.

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Available data concur to the fact that no Arab university is capable of occupying a frontline position among the world universities, taking into account the standards² adopted at the international level, and apart from of all reservations on the methodologies adopted in the related classifications.

Achievement of the quality of higher education institutions and programs requires a combination of various elements. However, the higher education community agrees on the critical role played by teaching personnel in ensuring this quality since they constitute the main resources around which revolve most of higher education processes and outputs. Teaching personnel determines teaching curricula, as well as the students' performance standards and quality. They also significantly contribute to the establishment of programs offered by higher education institutions to keep pace with scientific progress, as well as with the development and labor market needs. Furthermore, teaching personnel conduct to a large extent research and development activities that contribute to the technical, economic, social and cultural progress of societies. Thus, they directly contribute to the development of their societies.

Agencies of Quality Assurance in Higher Education have adopted the quality of higher education teaching personnel as one of the main standards to assess the quality of higher education institutions and programs³.

One of these agencies formulated this standard as follows: "The institution develops a faculty that is suited to the fulfillment of the institution's mission. Faculty qualifications, numbers, and performance are sufficient to accomplish the institution's mission and purposes. Faculty competently offer the institution's academic programs and fulfill those tasks appropriately assigned them" (NEASC, 2005).

Moreover, the American Board for Engineering and Technology, one of the most prominent higher education specialized accreditation institutions in the United States of America and in the world, considers the teaching personnel, in terms of quality and number, as one of the seven criteria adopted in the accreditation of engineering and technology programs (ABET, 2008)⁴.

The British Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education attaches particular importance to the role of teaching personnel in achieving the quality of graduate studies in higher education

² Review for instance the online ranking of the first 100 Arab universities among world universities for 2009, based on their activities and quality of available production, knowing that 70% of the first 100 universities are from the United States of America and that only 10 Arab universities rank among the top 2000 world universities, i.e. 0.5%. Moreover, only 42 Arab universities rank among the top 5000 world universities, i.e. 0.08%. This shows that Arab universities are lagging behind in terms of scientific interaction and use of modern technology. Accessed April 9, 2009. http://www.webometrics.info/top100_continent.asp?cont=aw

However, no Arab university enters the Shanghai University ranking which only publishes a classification of the top 500 world universities based on elitist selectivity (according to Nobel prizes won, to recognitions certifying scientific production, or to publications in prestigious journals such as «Nature» or «Science», etc). Accessed April 9, 2009 [http://www.arwu.org/rank2008/Top500_EN\(by%20rank\).pdf](http://www.arwu.org/rank2008/Top500_EN(by%20rank).pdf)

³ Hereinafter are the eleven domains of standards adopted by the Association of schools and colleges in New England in the United States of America for the accreditation of higher education institutions: (1) Mission and Purposes, (2) Planning and Evaluation, (3) Organization and Governance, (4) The Academic Program, (5) Faculty, (6) Students, (7) Library and Other Information Resources, (8) Physical and Technological Resources, (9) Financial Resources, (10) Public Disclosure, (11) Integrity. Accessed April 9, 2009. http://cihe.neasc.org/standards_policies/standards/standards_html_version

⁴ Hereinafter are the seven general domains of criteria adopted by this board in the accreditation of Engineering and Technology programs: (1) Students, (2) Program Educational Objectives, (3) Program Outcomes, (4) Continuous Improvement, (5) Curriculum, (6) Faculty, (6) Facilities, (7) Support (including Financial Resources). ABET. Criteria for Accrediting Engineering Programs, Effective for Evaluations during 20092010- Accreditation Cycle. November 1, 2008.



through the supervision of the students' works, in addition to including elements closely related to teaching personnel in all other standards adopted to ensure the quality of these programs (QAA, 2004)⁵.

2. Specificities of teaching in higher education

During the last quarter of the twentieth century, a number of questions on the specificities of teaching in higher education and on the possibility of allowing all holders of university degrees to exercise this profession emerged within the higher education community. Moreover, the number of questions about the level of the required academic qualification and pedagogical training for teaching personnel in higher education increased. These questions cannot be answered without knowing whether teaching in higher education entails a series of highly specialized competencies which are accurately determined and different from those required for the exercise of other professions. One could ask if any jurist, psychologist, historian, medical expert, or any other person who is usually holder of a doctorate degree, is qualified to exercise teaching in higher education without any further qualification. These questions have driven many countries and higher education institutions to differentiate between the different academic paths designed for university students enrolled in graduate studies. Thus, special training programs were designed for those who wish to exercise teaching in higher education and were added to the general requirements for acquiring a Ph.D., based on the specificity of teaching in higher education and on the fact that the general competencies acquired by Ph.D. students are not sufficient to exercise teaching in higher education.

3. Approaches for the establishment of a reference framework to ensure the quality of higher education teaching personnel

The establishment of a reference framework to ensure the quality of human resources in any professional sector requires a series of measures, starting with the definition of the roles expected to be played by the professionals in the concerned field and the tasks relevant to these roles, taking into account the advancement of knowledge and the expectations of the concerned community, institutions and professional bodies. This should be followed by the identification of the competencies that should be mastered and of the ways to acquire them, as well as the definition of the conditions that would ensure proper selection of human resources, their efficiency and further development. Teaching in higher education requires competencies that meet the different work situations faced by members of teaching personnel. In fact, teaching tasks in higher education range from teaching large numbers of students in halls capable of accommodating hundreds of students, which requires special skills and attitudes, to supervising individual, theoretical or practical works undertaken by the students, which requires skills and attitudes different from the above. Between these two extremes, we find multi-shaped educational situations requiring different types of skills and attitudes, although, in all scenarios, higher education practitioners use the same academic knowledge.

⁵ Hereinafter are the domains of standards adopted by this agency to determine quality characteristics related to post-graduate research programs: (1) Institutional Arrangements, (2) The Research Environment (including many standards and indicators closely linked to faculty), (3) Selection, Admission, and Induction of Students, (4) Supervision (included directed standards linked to faculty), (5) Progress and Review Arrangements, (6) Feedback Mechanisms, (7) Assessment, (8) Student Representations, Complaints and Appeals. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education. Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes - September 2004.



II. Roles and functions of higher education teaching personnel

1. Roles

It is commonly agreed upon that higher education teaching personnel perform basically three functions that are: teaching, research, and service to the university and the community. However, apart from this stereotype and in order to shed some light on roles and functions which do not usually get enough attention, the roles expected from higher education teaching personnel were divided into five categories and the order of these roles was modified as follows to be in line with the French orientation which emphasizes scientific research as a prior condition for teaching and distinguishes between scientific research and research management. This new classification also follows the American orientation which distinguishes between service to the university and service to the community. Thus, the functions of higher education teaching personnel could be labeled as follows:

- Research;
- Teaching;
- Research management;
- Academic participation and collegiality;
- Contribution to community development.

In fact, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in France identifies two interrelated main roles for teaching personnel: “ensuring the development of basic and applied scientific research and the transfer of the resulting knowledge to students” (Ministère de l’enseignement supérieur et de la recherche, 2009). Thus, the Ministry gives priority to scientific research over teaching and links teaching to the results of scientific research.

The French system also differentiates between research carried out by teaching personnel on their own, or within the framework of teams, laboratories or research centers, and research management. The former is expected to be carried out, in one form or the other, by all members of higher education teaching personnel. As for the latter, it is only reserved for those who have proven their ability and have been recognized as such by the institution through a mechanism called “habilitation” This also applies to the German system. (Enders, 2001).

The distinction between academic participation and collegiality, and the contribution to the development of society, sheds light on two distinct types of activities undertaken by higher education teaching personnel which appear particularly in American documents. In fact, in the USA, collegiality in higher education goes back to more than a century, while the contribution to the development of society, as a role for the teaching personnel, appeared only during the last decades of the twentieth century as a result of the expansion in higher education institutions which sought to be closer to local communities and decided to leave their “ivory towers” where they had isolated themselves when they were few in number and when they were reserved for the children of political and economic elites.

2. Role-specific functions

a. Scientific research

The International Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel (UNESCO, 1997) stipulates that teaching in higher education requires a high level of knowledge to be acquired and sustained by teaching personnel through lifelong studying and research. This is reflected in the Recommendation by the use of the term “Scholarship” which emanates from the American tradition. Scientific research include activities undertaken personally by the



member of the teaching personnel, which lead to the expansion, deepening, dissemination and innovative use of knowledge, through continuous scholarship, a synthesis of available knowledge, a systematic search for new knowledge, and the production and publication of new documentation. The tasks also include the production and publication of new creative literary, artistic or technical products. It also includes registration of patents, scientific, literary and artistic criticism and the development of knowledge applications in the various fields of human activities. If teaching personnel leave aside these activities, higher education becomes similar to other levels of education, where knowledge transfer occurs without any critical thinking, analysis and scrutiny, which are supposed to be present in higher education.

b. Teaching

The raison d'être of higher education institutions is to train high-level scientists and professionals that would meet the society's need for human resources possessing advanced qualifications in various fields so as to ensure its proper functioning and to contribute to comprehensive and integrated development. Teaching tasks include assuming the responsibility of courses which encompasses the following: planning courses, preparing lessons, choosing and applying learning and teaching methods, supervising students' work and supporting students in order to achieve learning and to acquire the prescribed competencies or the intended learning outcomes, assessing students' learning and performance, developing new educational methodologies in order to promote learning and to evaluate learning and progress, supervising practical exercises and field experiences of students and assessing their progress, evaluating the work accomplished by the students, participating in the examination committees, and supervising teaching assistants.

c. Research management

Research management tasks include activities aimed at the systematic organization of scientific research leading to the desired results. They include the supervision of students' research, reports, theses and dissertations, the implementation of activities aimed at initiating or supporting research activities, the management of research projects and research teams, the participation in committees concerned with the assessment of research projects and applications for research grants, the participation in the editorial committees of scientific periodicals and in peer review committees, etc.

d. Academic participation and collegiality

Academic participation and collegiality tasks include activities related to the organization of academic work and to the participation in decisions regarding academic and professional life. These activities include the management of study and training programs, the participation in the management of research centers and in the organization of seminars and conferences, etc. as well as in scientific research ethics committees, along with other relevant committees and councils, and responsibilities related to the management of academic and student affairs.

e. Contribution to community development

The contribution to community development includes activities that reflect the commitment of the teaching personnel to societal issues and that contribute to the promotion of their social status and that of the higher education institution to which they belong, provided that these activities are done within the framework of the specialization of the teaching personnel or within a multidisciplinary domain, in an atmosphere of academic freedom similar to that applied to teaching, scientific research, scientific management and collegiality. This includes consultations provided by the teaching personnel to the community's institutions, and services offered to civil society institutions and to governmental and non-governmental organizations. It also includes the participation in the activities of scientific, professional, governmental, cultural, and social bodies.



3. University ranks and their requirements

Teaching personnel in higher education are characterized worldwide by a hierarchy of university ranks often made up of four main ranks with possible ramified ranks horizontally, upwards or downwards. At the bottom of the pyramid, there are members without a Ph.D., then the holders of a PhD or of an equivalent qualification, followed by holders of a Ph.D. who have some years of experience in higher education. The members of this group would also have proved their competence in teaching and research, as well as their ability to carry out research management responsibilities along with individual responsibilities in terms of academic participation and collegiality. Finally, at the top of this pyramid, are those who are generally Ph.D. holders and who have provided outstanding contribution to their field of specialization, profession, or the society, through their work as members of teaching personnel. These contributions must usually be recognized by the professional or academic community outside the institution where these members work.

The U.S. appellations in this regard may be the most adequate ones. These are classified from bottom up as follows: Lecturer⁶, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Full Professor⁷. As for other ranks, such as, teaching assistant, research assistant, technician and others, they ought to be classified in a different category and should not be considered part of the faculty.

Usually, the promotion from one rank to another does not occur only on the basis of the accumulation of years of experience, but also requires that the member of the teaching personnel member demonstrates, according to due assessment, his eligibility to be promoted based on his performance. There is usually no automatic promotion other than between the ranks of lecturer and assistant professor, which occurs generally after obtaining a Ph.D., although many higher education systems require more than a PhD to grant this promotion, and impose other prerequisites related to productivity in research and the adequate performance of teaching tasks.

⁶ The term «Lecturer» has sometimes been translated into Arabic as «Muhader» which has the connotation of «Speaker». We think that the terms meaning «Instructor» or «Teacher» are more adequate appellations for at least two reasons. The first concerns the fact that lecturers and instructors are generally limited in higher education to the transfer of available knowledge without deep personal contribution. This is the type of role expected from a beginner having no PhD and no scholarship opportunities. Thus, the majority of systems adopted by higher education institutions considers the rank of lecturer as a temporary one and designed for a short period of time. The relevant member can either become eligible to reach the next rank or its employment be terminated. Language teachers in higher education (not teachers of literature and language specializations) may be the exception to this rule, because teaching basic language skills, even at universities, doesn't rise up to the level of higher education. As for the second reason, the appellation «Speaker» isn't particular to the occupier of this rank, and may apply to any university rank or even individuals who aren't faculty members. Thus, «Speaker» is a description not a rank. However, in some systems and institutions of higher education in the Arab countries, this appellation has been used as a university rank instead of «lecturer» or independently. Moreover, we disapprove the use of the term «instructor», which is common in some faculty regulations in Egypt and other countries that follow the same system, to refer to the rank of «Assistant Professor» according to the American hierarchy of university ranks. In fact, it is common worldwide and in the Arab countries to have a PhD as a prerequisite to access this rank. Hence, the use of «instructor» to refer to «Assistant Professor» downplays the importance of this rank. Discarding this appellation would allow to free this category of teaching personnel from any «complex of inferiority».

⁷ It is noteworthy that the Association of Arab Universities tried years ago to unify university ranks without much success because each system in the Arab countries is deeply rooted in its own history which is often inspired from a western country. Nevertheless, the global rapprochement to the American system of rank classification may be an incentive to review the current fragmentation of the classification systems in the Arab world. Furthermore, it seems necessary to examine, at the level of each Arab country separately and of the Arab world as a whole, the classifications adopted by the newly established institutions of higher education and to try to unify the standards necessary to access to each rank, or at least, harmonize them in order to preserve their credibility and promote the mobility of faculty members.





III. Academic and international standards ensuring the quality of teaching personnel

1. To qualify for teaching in higher education

The guiding principles contained in the UNESCO International Recommendation (1997) stipulate that the training of graduates of higher education who are qualified, educated and able to serve the society as responsible citizens, and who are capable of carrying out tasks related to scientific research, requires a highly qualified and talented teaching personnel, capable of preserving, disseminating and criticizing the knowledge and culture accumulated through the ages. Teaching personnel should also search for new knowledge, without any restrictions imposed by prescribed doctrines. Moreover, according to the guiding principles, the progress in higher education depends on the qualifications and advanced knowledge of the teaching personnel, as well as their humanistic, educational and technical attributes supported by academic freedom, professional responsibility, collegiality, and institutional autonomy.

These guiding principles conclude that teaching in higher education is a full-fledged profession which requires teaching personnel to have advanced knowledge and specialized skills, acquired and preserved through rigorous and lifelong studies and research. This profession also requires a commitment to high professional standards in scholarship and research. The benchmark documents issued by accreditation bodies of higher education institutions and programs as well as by the associations and unions of teaching personnel are concordant with those of the International Recommendation⁸.

a. Academic and research training

The UNESCO International Recommendation, as well as other standard documents, seem almost to recommend that all higher education teaching personnel should be at least Ph.D. holders and to have had an appropriate pedagogical training. In fact, one would ask what exactly are the necessary high qualifications for teaching personnel advocated by the International Recommendation if these are not at the level of Ph.D.? At what level of education, if not at the level of Ph.D., can one actually acquire the advanced knowledge and intellectual independence to be able to undertake scholarship and knowledge criticism and renewal based on strong scientific grounds, adopt reflective thinking approach to contribute to the continuous development of the discipline and the improvement of educational practices, and undertake responsibilities for research and educational programs management?

Furthermore, it is common sense to say that training in scientific research, with a high degree of professionalism and independence, could not be achieved but through the preparation of a doctoral dissertation under close supervision and through extensive discussions of the various stages of progress with the participation of at least the supervising professor and a few specialized professors. These various stages include choosing the topic, reviewing relevant literature, choosing methodological approaches and research methods, means and tools, undertaking the research with precision and care, analyzing results, and writing the dissertation according to the relevant standards, taking into account the necessary quality control during all the stages of planning and implementation⁹.

⁸ See for example the documents of the American Association of University Professors and those of the Canadian Association of University Teachers.

⁹ For instance, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in the UK has proposed in 2004, in cooperation with the councils of scientific research, seven domains of research qualifications that should be acquired by PhD. students, while these are not expected to be mastered at the first levels of higher education. These domains





The most advanced countries, in terms of higher education quality, have almost generalized the possession of Ph.D. as a prerequisite for teaching in higher education. For example, available statistics about the qualifications of teaching personnel in the United States of America (Cataldi et al., 2005) indicate that about 86% of those working in the public and not-for-profit private universities hold a Ph.D. degree or an equivalent qualification. The same applies for example to the universities in the Province of Quebec, Canada (CREPUQ, 2009)¹⁰.

b. Pedagogical qualification

It is common sense to wonder if obtaining a Ph.D. is sufficient for teaching in higher education with a high degree of professionalism, and whether this professionalism could be automatically acquired by merely studying at this level.

In fact, teaching in higher education is not different from teaching in other levels of education, in terms of the need for professionalism, which requires having a set of competencies unanimously agreed upon by teaching reference frameworks and that could only be acquired through learning and training (Salamé, 2009). As for teaching tasks in higher education, the basic competencies can be summarized in terms of: (1) competencies relevant to the learning mechanisms, (2) competencies relevant to the organization of the learning/teaching environment and the choice of means and methods of teaching and learning, (3) competencies relevant to the assessment of students' learning and performance.

c. Qualifying for other tasks

It is common sense as well to wonder if a member of the teaching personnel is able to perform all other tasks with an acceptable degree of professionalism without having a systematic training in each of them. For instance, supervising the practical training and research has its own rules and methods, and the relevant supervisory competencies are acquired at universities through learning and practice under supervision. The same applies to students' counseling, participation in committees and councils, and other tasks. Members of the teaching personnel may acquire some of these required competencies through practice. However, having access to specialized training in the relevant areas could improve their performance of these tasks and reduce the time necessary to master the relevant skills with minimum errors. Therefore, there is a need to allow Ph.D. students and new teaching personnel to participate in various actions and activities that permit them to get acquainted with the activities they are expected to perform in order to acquire an early training to perform the functions expected from them.

d. Training frameworks

Many countries and universities around the world became aware of the need to train higher education teaching personnel, beyond their academic qualifications. Therefore, they have adopted various regulations and mechanisms and a variety of methods to train them or train

are: (1) Research Skills and Techniques, (2) Research Environment, (3) Research Management (4) Personal Efficiency, (5) Communication Skills, (6) Networking and Team Work, (7) Management of the Career Path. These titles may fail to reveal all the content of each domain, but it is clear that acquiring these competencies can only be done through in-depth training which is ensured through the preparation of a doctoral dissertation or by long years of practice in scientific research under supervision.

¹⁰ According to the rule of thumb, the difference in education between the teacher and the learner must be made up of at least two educational levels. If we simplify the educational ladder into the levels of basic education, secondary education and the three university levels, it may be said that all teachers in basic education must hold a corresponding bachelor's degree. Similarly, all teachers in secondary education must hold a corresponding master's degree and all teachers in the first university level must hold a corresponding Ph.D. As for teachers in the two advanced university levels, they must be holders of a Ph.D. and have supplementary competencies acquired through studies, research, and practice undertaken after the Ph.D.



the candidates wishing to enter into the higher education teaching profession on carrying out the tasks entrusted to them in the best possible way. Some countries have considered that it is necessary for them to learn the basic principles for teaching and to undertake training under specialized supervision as a precondition to access to the higher education profession or to get tenured, and have made this training compulsory as is the case of Norway, Finland and the United Kingdom (Trowler and Bamber, 2005).

Some countries and institutions of higher education have designed special training programs for those who intend to join the higher education profession and for the new entrants in it, as well as for more experienced personnel, in order to encourage them to improve their educational practices. This is, for example, the case in the Netherlands, Australia and New Zealand (Trowler and Bamber, 2005), and in Sweden (Stigmar, 2008).

There is great diversity among countries and universities in terms of the scope, duration and comprehensiveness of the training on the various competencies expected of the teaching personnel. This diversity also appears in terms of compulsory training, especially for junior faculty members, and its focus on faculty members or on those aspiring to enter into the higher education profession as is the case in France and the United States of America¹¹, or on both, as is the case in the United Kingdom. Nowadays, the issue of compulsory training and its timing in view of the period of access to the teaching profession is raised in many countries of Europe (Trowler and Bamber, 2005). Perhaps, the oldest initiative in this field is the one adopted in the United States that allows graduate students the chance of undertaking a systematic practice of a set of consistent tasks that are usually performed by a faculty member, accompanied by meticulous educational supervision and performance assessment. This requires that students delve into the subject, participate in the preparation of the general plan of the course and in each of its lessons, contribute to lectures, discussions and laboratory work, practice the establishment of constructive relationships with students, guide them, encourage them to actively participate in the teaching and learning activities, and help them develop their higher mental abilities. Finally, they would practice different types of methods to assess student learning and performance¹². All of this happening with respect to the code of ethics of teaching in tertiary education.

The institutions of higher education in the USA encourage all higher education students to engage in programs of graduate teaching assistant. However, the programs usually remain limited to those who wish to join the teaching profession because of their future professional orientations. In fact, there are students who receive a Ph.D. without acquiring any educational experience during their studies, because they do not aim to become university teachers. As for institutions of higher education, they prefer to recruit graduates who have such experience.

In the UK, this issue led to the establishment of a special degree for teaching in higher education. Among its entry conditions, there is the obligation to hold first a graduate degree or to be a new member of the higher education teaching profession¹³. This degree can also be obtained as a master in higher education in some universities, including the approved Master of the French

¹¹ See, for example, the Graduate Teaching Assistant Handbook, prepared by the University of California at San Diego, (Streichler, 2005).

¹² A study conducted in Turkey demonstrated the need of graduate research and teaching assistants in faculties of Education for that kind of training to prepare for teaching in higher education. What then about graduate students in other majors? See in this regard (KABAKÇI and ODABAŞI, 2008).

¹³ See for example the Post Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education offered by the University College of London (UCL Center for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching, no date), or the training offered at the London School of Economics for graduate students (LSE, no date).



Speaking University Agency, provided by a university in Belgium, through distance learning¹⁴ among other means.

The United Kingdom is characterized by the dynamism and mobility of its organizations concerned with the professional development of teaching personnel and with the training of higher education students on teaching in higher education. Thus, since the end of the last century, official authorities have established institutes, networks and bodies for this purpose. Shortly afterwards, they all united under the name of The Higher Education Academy¹⁵. In collaboration with various stakeholders in higher education in the United Kingdom, this Academy has developed the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education. These standards are used to adopt the programs offered by institutions of higher education in this area (The higher education academy, no date).

Worldwide, the most common system remains the establishment of training units for teaching personnel or equivalent bodies within the higher education institutions. These units are aimed at the teaching personnel during the performance of their teaching tasks. Participation in the activities and consultations of these units is usually voluntary. However, there is a growing tendency to make this participation compulsory, as is the case in the United Kingdom and some other countries¹⁶.

Some authors defend the need to diversify the ways and means through which teaching assistants and teaching personnel are trained on the tasks of higher education. They maintain this stand by noting the accumulated impact that is achieved by having multiple ways of bringing about change in educational practices (Knight et al., 2006). However, the international experience points out the need to institutionalize the pedagogical training of higher education teaching personnel¹⁷ (Salamé, 1994), to the benefits of establishing national standards to this effect, and to the benefits of networking at the national and the global levels, as is the case in French-speaking countries¹⁸.

2. Appointment

Proper selection of human resources plays a central role in ensuring the good performance of

¹⁴ See the program available at the Université de Liège entitled: Master complémentaire en pédagogie universitaire et de l'enseignement supérieur, <http://www.fomcom.auwe.be/portal/formationsearch.htm?id=128> (Accessed April 6, 2009), and a similar program is available at the Université Catholique de Louvain, <http://www.uclouvain.be/232266.html>; (Accessed April 6, 2009).

¹⁵ The three most important bodies are: the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, the Learning and Teaching Support Network, and the Higher Education Staff Development Agency.

¹⁶ For more information: <http://www.cefes.umontreal.ca>, where one can access the center of studies and training for higher education (Centre d'études et de formation en enseignement supérieur) which was established by the University of Montreal in Canada as an advanced model of the existing model in French-speaking countries in addition to what has been referred to concerning English-speaking countries.

¹⁷ See in that regard the list prepared by the University of Dalhousie, Canada, including specialized university centers in Australia, Canada, USA...and some bodies interested in developing teaching in higher education in English-speaking countries. <http://learningandteaching.dal.ca/ids.html#US> (Accessed April 6, 2009).

¹⁸ The International Association of University Pedagogy (Association Internationale de Pédagogie universitaire) was established in 1980 and regroups members from Europe, North America and Arab countries (Lebanon, Morocco, and Algeria). It publishes a specialized journal called *Revue Internationale de Pédagogie de l'Enseignement Supérieur* (RIPES), previously known as «Res Academica». For more information, visit the current website of the association: www.ulg.ac.be/aipu (accessed April 6, 2009). Another journal is published in French about university teaching techniques: *Revue Internationale des techniques en pédagogie universitaire*. For more information, <http://www.ritpu.org>



any institution and the good quality of its services and products. Proper selection helps choosing the right person for the right position. Thus, the selected individual performs his tasks with the expected efficiency, effectiveness and autonomy, without the need for lengthy training and continuous supervision.

According to article 43 of the UNESCO International Recommendation (1997), teaching personnel should enjoy «a just and open system of career development including fair procedures for appointment, ...».

The most important procedure for ensuring this fairness is the announcement of vacancies in the widest way possible and for a sufficient period. The announcement should consist of a clear description of the required tasks, qualifications and selection standards and procedures. Moreover, the selection process should be based on equity and transparency, without distinction of any kind other than what is relevant to the needed qualifications. Finally, peers at the faculty should take part in this process.

3. Probationary period

In order to become a regular staff member in any profession, it is necessary to pass a probationary period during which the newcomer has the opportunity to practice the basic tasks required by the profession, and demonstrates his/her ability to accomplish these tasks with the required level of quality. Teaching personnel in higher education are no exception to that. In fact, recruitment systems in higher education institutions include probationary periods, and the guidelines of teaching personnel organizations¹⁹ as well as the International Recommendation of UNESCO (1997) recognize the legitimacy of the existence of such probationary period.

The probationary period constitutes an opportunity to help newcomers in the higher education profession get acquainted with the various aspects of work and standards of professional practice. This is also an opportunity for the newcomers to apply these standards in practice and develop their educational and research capabilities and benefit from the supervision and advice of the experienced members.

According to the International Recommendation (UNESCO, 1997), some of the entrants may not be able to successfully conclude the probationary period within the designated time period. Therefore, they may not be provided tenure. However, it is their right to receive previous assessment of their performance and to be informed of the results in order to give them the opportunity to improve their performance. However, if they fail to prove their capabilities anyway, there is no objection to terminate their contracts for the sake of the quality of teaching and research.

4. Tenure

According to the International Recommendation of UNESCO (1997), job security is one of the basic regulatory safeguards of academic freedom and a shield against arbitrary decisions. Job security promotes personal responsibility and the retention of highly talented faculty members. Therefore, it serves the interest of higher education and of its professionals, and should be ensured for the teaching personnel who prove to be competent through the periodic evaluation of their performance. Thus, they are protected from termination for non academic reasons.

¹⁹ It has been since a long time that the guidelines adopted by the American Association of University Professors limit the probationary period to a maximum of seven years. However, according to regulations and practices currently applied in North America, this period is limited to five or six years in normal conditions and to four years in exceptional conditions. As for Germany, the probationary period could be much longer according to available vacancies of permanent posts (See: Enders, 2001).



5. Evaluation for contract renewal, tenure or promotion

In advanced industrial countries, higher education teaching personnel may be the most subjected to evaluation. Often, students are asked at each semester to evaluate their performance. In addition, scientific articles written by them are submitted for peer review before publication. Also, all research projects they present to donor parties pass through peer evaluation before getting the funding. Their writings are scrutinized by their colleagues who may quote them in their own writings, or criticize them positively or negatively. Their performance in the context of academic participation and collegiality is subjected to peer criticism at any time and taken into account for re-election or reappointment. Finally, they are asked to take part in consultations and societal development based on their reputation.

In fact, there are at least four main stages in the career path of the higher education teaching personnel where evaluation is crucial. In addition to the evaluation for selection and appointment, teaching personnel face evaluation when renewing their contracts, getting tenure, and getting promoted. Hence, given the importance of evaluation in the career path of teaching personnel, it should be based on the best principles, methodologies and level of transparency. Therefore, the International Recommendation of UNESCO (1997) laid the groundwork for this evaluation, so that its primary mission would be to guarantee the quality of higher education and the development of individual skills according to personal interests and capacities. Moreover, this evaluation should be exclusively built on the academic standards of efficiency in research, teaching, and other academic and professional tasks. In addition, it should be based on the highest degree of objectivity according to reliable standards and mechanisms, without bias, spite or equivocation. Evaluation mechanisms should take into account the difficulties of judging the qualifications of a person through a single experience or situation²⁰. The concerned faculty member must be informed of the various stages of evaluation, its criteria, mechanisms, results and relevant decisions. Finally, faculty members must be granted the right of appeal to a neutral party concerning the evaluation process and results, if they believe that the evaluation process wasn't duly respected or that its results and decisions aren't based on solid grounds.

6. Professional renewal

As science make progresses every day, teaching personnel in higher education have the duty to be up-to-date to promote their scholarship and thus, benefit their students. Higher education institutions throughout different countries became aware of the importance of the periodic renewal of the competencies of teaching personnel in higher education. Hence, they have adopted a unique well-established tradition at universities, the tradition of the "sabbatical leave", which is provided by these institutions to tenured higher education personnel. The International Recommendation has anchored this tradition in articles 65 and 66.

The objective of this "Scholarship period"²¹ is to renew the competencies of teaching personnel

²⁰ Specialists in human resources assessment distinguish between accomplishing the tasks competently, assuming the responsibilities with conscientiousness and abiding by the code of ethics. This is opposed to incompetence, negligence and moral turpitude. Specialists consider repeated negligence despite of warnings and flagrant moral misconduct as an accepted reason to deny contract renewal or to terminate services. However, the relevant institution is held responsible for proving incompetence with undeniable arguments.

²¹ We chose to use the term «scholarship period» instead of the term «sabbatical leave» to avoid any misunderstanding of its nature among faculty members, public officers or the public in general. In fact, these parties frequently accuse higher education institutions of granting teaching personnel «leaves» every seven years in addition to annual leaves, without understanding the true objectives of this period.



and enrich them with recent scientific and educational developments relevant to their discipline. This is done through scholarship, development of educational methods, scientific research, or scientific, literary or artistic productions in the context of the assigned tasks. Furthermore, teaching in higher education requires continuous renewal of competencies. The need for this renewal was stipulated in the International Recommendation which recommended granting teaching personnel in higher education the opportunities to participate in professional activities, events of scientific and cultural exchange and technical support programs outside the country in which they work. Also, their institutions are required to participate in any possible additional expenses related to these activities.

IV. Some facts about the career path of the teaching personnel of higher education in arab countries

1. A gloomy picture

Observers of the career path of the teaching personnel in Arab universities find themselves confronted with many shades in a gloomy picture. As a matter of fact, Arab countries often send their elite high school graduates or university undergraduates abroad to acquire graduate degrees, especially Ph.D.s, and they then return and teach at local universities. Also, Arab universities have applied a ranking system for the teaching personnel according to the best practices in industrialized countries. Moreover, more than a third of a century ago, Egypt adopted, in a pioneering move, both in the Arab world and internationally, a legal text imposing training on “teaching methodologies” as a precondition for getting appointed at the first rank in a faculty²². Furthermore, many Arab universities have called for nearly twenty years now, for the establishment of “the Arab network for the professional development of teaching personnel in Arab universities”, laid the foundations for it and have been participating in its activities over the years²³. In addition, many college deans in Arab universities have been discussing the issues of faculty quality, performance evaluation and promotion in periodic meetings²⁴. They have also called for the establishment of a regional academic center to improve the performance of teaching personnel in the relevant colleges²⁵.

²² According to article 59 of Decree 809 of 1975 related to the executive rules and regulations of law 49 of 1972 relevant to the organization of Egyptian universities, «assistant lecturers and lecturers shall receive training on the general and specialized teaching methodologies through courses, seminars or practical lessons according to the conditions of each college and the rules adopted by the university council. Attending training in a satisfactory way is a prerequisite for getting appointed as assistant professor» (Abou Hatab, 1994).

²³ The first meeting of the network's founding committee was held in October 1991 at the faculty of Architecture, University of Alexandria. This faculty administrated the network's secretariat affairs (the Arab network for the professional development of teaching personnel in Arab universities and UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States, 1993).

²⁴ See for example, the minutes of the sixth meeting of the deans committee of the faculties of literature and human and social sciences in the GCC, held on Tuesday and Wednesday 6 - 7 January 2004. This meeting tackled the issues of teaching courses to a big number of students, the necessity to use modern techniques and the deficiencies of university programs. During this meeting other issues were brought up such as the importance of having skilled human resources and modern scientific material, as well as the evaluation of faculty and academic courses, and ways of promoting faculty performance. <http://www.kau.edu.sa/fah/amda/admin/M6.htm>, accessed April 6, 2009.

²⁵ See the minutes of the second meeting of the deans committee of the faculties of literature and human and social sciences in the GCC, held on the 17th and 18th of November 1998 at the King Abdul-Aziz University. <http://www.kau.edu.sa/fah/amda/admin/M2.htm>.



At the same time, many indicators show that higher education in Arab States is falling behind the international progress, be it in the quality of education and the quality of its outputs (Salamé, 2007) or in terms of its contribution to the advancement of knowledge (Salamé, 2007; Hamzé, 2009). Perhaps the most important indicator of faculty shortcoming in Arab States compared to all the other regions of the world is the ratio of students per faculty member. In 2005, this ratio amounted to 25 to 1, the highest rate in the world, while the rate in the industrialized countries was no more than 16 to 1. According to a study of current trends, the Arab States won't be seeing the end of this dark tunnel soon. Enrollment rates in graduate studies in these countries remain quite low compared to international rates, and would not ensure a number of highly qualified teaching personnel to meet the current needs of higher education. This also applies to ensuring appropriate educational services for the growing numbers of students flocking to higher education institutions²⁶. The current needs of the Arab States are estimated at more than a hundred and fifty thousand Ph.D. holders in order to meet the needs of students' training in higher education institutions. This is without considering the need for more Ph.D. holders to substitute for foreign teaching personnel²⁷ and to meet future needs (Salamé, 2007).

2. Scholarship

Many higher education institutions in the Arab States have adopted programs for internal and external scholarships aimed at facilitating the pursuit of bright students of graduate studies, with the intention of paving the way for their integration in the higher education teaching profession²⁸, even though some officials in these institutions complain about the obstacles that impede the proper implementation of such programs²⁹.

However, in contradiction with the principles of sound human resources management and with the principles of the International Recommendation that stipulate an open competition for the recruitment of teaching personnel, higher education institutions in Arab countries (with the support of the States themselves) resort to their local resources to increase the number of teaching personnel. To this end, they send out their graduates to specialize abroad then return to the faculty, or they assign graduates to lower positions (lecturer and such) and then gradually promote them³⁰. It is needless to emphasize the disadvantages of such a closed local system,

²⁶ See for example the 2004 declaration of the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Algeria concerning the need of this country for 24400 new teaching personnel members to cater for the deficit in the number of personnel expected for 2008 and to the need for 43300 new teaching personnel members to become near the international students/teacher ratio, in addition to the fact that only 15% of the teaching personnel members hold the upper two university ranks and the difficulty of the higher education system to ensure the necessary numbers to raise this rate. http://www.algeria-watch.org/fr/article/div/recrutement_enseignants.htm ((Accessed April 6, 2009).

²⁷ Available statistical data, for example, show that at least some of the Saudi Arabia universities essentially count on teaching personnel from foreign countries. This seems also to be the case of many recently established universities in other States of the Gulf.

²⁸ Take for example the case of Saudi Arabia: the rules and regulations of missions and training for registered students. The decision of the higher education council number (61997/4/); Yemen: law number (19) of 2003 related to missions and scholarships; Libya: decision number (43) of 2005 of the General People's Committee of Libya; Kuwait: the rules and regulations of missions: <http://www.mohe.edu.kw/moheweb/sch2.pdf>. (Accessed April 6, 2009).

²⁹ See the interview with the minister of higher education in Yemen. "Bassirra: Ending the problems related to scholarship missions and the Higher Education law is my main priority". <http://www.almotamar.net/news/28667.htm>. (Accessed April 6, 2009)

³⁰ A website mentioned that the Administrative Judiciary Court in Egypt has ruled in 2008 that it is contrary to the





compared to an open system which avoids isolationism and inbreeding, and encourages mobility among higher education institutions.

The decision (43) adopted by the General People's Committee of Libya in 2005 concerning the rules and regulations of scholarships for studying abroad or locally is undoubtedly the clearest manifestation of this philosophy. In fact, this decision stipulates that scholarship "candidates from universities, higher institutes and affiliated institutions must be members of the teaching personnel at the same institution". This means that each university selects its own lecturers, who are usually graduates that have completed the first academic cycle at the university. Then, after having taught as lecturers for a year or two, their university nominates them for scholarships so that they attain higher academic levels. Afterwards, they return to their universities as faculty members, and are most likely to remain in it and get promoted in it to the various academic ranks until their retirement.

If it could be considered normal for some small Arab countries, like Kuwait among others, where there is only one university, to select the graduates who have obtained study scholarships to specialize abroad and then return to work as teachers in the same university, it seems awkward that countries such as Libya, Saudi Arabia and Egypt continue to adopt this approach. The difference being in the latter group that these countries have an increasing number of universities, and an increasing number of graduates in the various disciplines who constitute a large reservoir to choose from for scholarships and recruitment in higher education at the entire national level.

3. Terms of employment

Arab countries have generally adopted the international standards of employment at the various university ranks, especially requiring a doctorate degree or its equivalent as a precondition for assigning a candidate to the position of an assistant professor (or any other equivalent title), and in the two following ranks as defined above³¹.

constitution for an Egyptian university to restrict the applications for faculty recruitment to the graduates from only one institution, because such a practice breaches the principle of equal opportunities. However, members whose appointment was cancelled resorted to the Supreme Administrative Court, claiming the revocation of the decision that cancels their appointment. <http://www.f-law.net/law/showthread.php?s=&threadid=22323>. (Accessed April 6, 2009). If the latter court upholds the ruling of the former, these rulings could entail the revision of faculty recruitment that is restricted to graduates from the same university. But it seems that the organizations of teaching personnel in Egypt do not approve of open competition because they do not trust the impartiality of governmental parties who supervise universities, and they fear that this process would be politicized. <http://www.cusclub.net/fileman/aaa//pdf/L2-Project.pdf>. (Accessed April 6, 2009).

³¹ For this purpose, the national and institutional bylaws related to teaching personnel as well as statistical data were reviewed in each of the following countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, U.A.E, and Yemen. It's worth noting that the rules and regulations concerning faculty recruitments in Arab countries no more contain, at least in the texts, any ethical conditions that may be considered breaches to human rights, as is still the case for example in China, where the law concerning faculty recruitment stipulates the necessity for the candidate to have the right ideological beliefs and that the assessment of teaching personnel for any purpose, including recruitment and promotion, should include the evaluation of their ideology and political performance, in addition to other professional and ethical elements (See the higher education law in the Popular Republic of China, particularly articles 46 and 51 on the following website http://www.moe.gov.cn/edoas/website18/en/laws_h.htm) (Accessed April 6, 2009). Whereas we find in Arab countries for example that the duties of higher education teaching personnel include integrity and good ethics as well as the need to respect regulations, instructions and applicable ethical rules, in addition to avoiding any breach to the professional honor. (Saudi Arabia). The stated conditions of recruitment and promotions at the U.A.E University are void of such considerations and are similar to those adopted in industrialized countries.



Public universities in some countries like Lebanon and Jordan restrict their selection to teaching personnel who are Ph.D. holders. In contrast, public universities in other countries massively recruit teaching personnel who do not hold a Ph.D. and sometimes not even a Masters degree, which constitutes an essential weak point in such universities. Hiring regulations of academic staff do not consider that as an exception to the rule or a transitional phase. Moreover, no maximum limits have been defined for recruitment in terms of the percentage of such teaching personnel from the total number of higher education staff. In addition, the situation becomes even more blurred, given that some rules and regulations fail to underline the difference between secondary language teachers who, once they obtain their Masters degree along with an pedagogical qualification, may be suitable to teach at post-secondary level, from those who are responsible for teaching core specialized courses.

Some of the available statistical data show that the percentages of Ph.D. holders among teaching personnel (at least in certain Arab universities, not to say most of them) do not reach the internationally sought after minimum percentage of 70%. This is with the exclusion of higher averages as in the case of the United States, Canada, or Germany. For instance, in 2003, the number of Ph.D. holders in Iraq reached 28.2% (UNESCO, 2004)³²; teaching personnel in Saudi universities occupying the ranks of professor, associate professor and assistant professor, who are supposedly Ph.D. holders, accounted for 59% of the total number of teaching personnel (Masi & Abu Ammo, 1225 H). In Algeria, teaching personnel occupying the three highest academic ranks and who are supposed to be Ph.D. holders, account for around 54%³³. Whereas in Syria, such teaching personnel account for 71%³⁴, and in one Egyptian university the number of Ph.D. holders does not exceed 60%³⁵.

Furthermore, according to the available data, many Arab universities consider, within their statistics, all holders of academic ranks as teaching personnel, including lecturers and teaching assistants, and student/teacher ratio is calculated on this basis. This applies at least to Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, and other Arab States. However, in general, the concerned countries and universities do not provide sufficient information regarding the qualifications of their overall teaching personnel, especially the qualifications of low rank lecturers who often hold only a first university degree³⁶.

Thus, in view of the absence of a sufficient number of teaching personnel who are Ph.D. holders, the educational quality is being jeopardized by resorting to lecturers and the like to assume the

³² Masters holders accounted for 38.7% and Bachelor's degree holders accounted for 33.1%. The actual circumstances undergone by Iraq in recent times may have influenced these rates, but it is doubtful that they have turned the tables that much.

³³ See the data published on webpage: http://www.algeria-watch.org/fr/article/div/recrutement_enseignants.htm (Accessed April 6, 2009).

³⁴ If we exclude the technical and laboratory personnel as well as the instructors and adjunct personnel that are being mistakenly included when calculating students/teacher ratios. See Syrian Arab Republic, Government Office, Central Statistical Office, 2003.

³⁵ Out of the total number of regular faculty members, whereas the university indicates in its statistics that it has around twice the number of teaching personnel covered by data. This information is taken from available data relevant to teaching personnel in Arab Universities on the website of the Association of Arab Universities (See webpage: http://www.aaru.edu.jo/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=81&Itemid=47 for statistics about teaching personnel and the following webpage : http://www.aaru.edu.jo/index.php?option=com_reports&task=teachersGuide that contains an index of teaching personnel in some member universities. (Accessed April 6, 2009)

³⁶ One of the universities announces that all its teaching personnel in all fields are « British Board » members with no further details!

full responsibility of teaching academic courses and giving lectures, etc. without any supervision. In addition, the Ph.D. holders are often entrusted with the responsibility of teaching courses that fall out of their specialization, whether within their teaching load or as additional courses in exchange for an additional fee, thus reducing the time allocated for scholarship and the advancement of knowledge.

The danger for the quality of higher education also lies in the lack of national regulations related to the required qualifications for faculty recruitment in private universities that have been licensed in several Arab States since the 1980's. Despite the lack of relevant statistical data, one can assume that in view of the lack of such legal constraints, newly established private universities do not require from teaching personnel to be Ph.D. holders in order to enroll in the teaching profession. This could also be because of the additional financial cost entailed by such a requirement. Similarly, the statistical data related to the number of Ph.D. holders in Arab countries reveal a huge deficit in this area and a lack of sufficient numbers that could respond to the need resulting from the increase in the social demand for higher education (Salamé, 2007).

4. Pedagogical qualification

The Ain Chams University is considered to be one of the first universities that began implementing the pioneering decision, adopted in Egypt in 1975, which stipulated compulsory pedagogical training as a pre-recruitment requirement in the first of the three highest regular academic ranks (Abu Hatab, 1994). It was preceded by the faculty of education in Alexandria University in organizing training courses for its teaching personnel starting in 1973 (Al Nemr, 1994). Other universities in Egypt have followed the example of these two universities, and the Teaching Personnel Development Center at the Cairo University gained reputation in this field given the huge efforts undertaken to cover various faculties.

This concern was not restricted to the above universities. It also encompassed other universities, such as the public universities in Jordan, the UAE University, as well as Damascus and Khartoum universities³⁷. It appears from the available data that the entry point to this field lied in the efforts made by these universities to upgrade health education and to create centers for educational technologies in order to help teaching personnel to enhance their educational practices.

However, this concern did not manifest itself in other higher education institutions in the Arab countries, or rose up to the expected qualitative level; it rather remained marginal in the professional life of teaching personnel, mainly reflected in the attendance to workshops and sessions instead of really benefitting from activities and focusing on the impact of such attendance in the educational practices of the teaching personnel (Abu Hatab, 1994). Moreover, the latter did not show, in most cases, any real interest in this matter and are not yet convinced about its efficiency. However, with the exception of Egypt, the concerns about the upgrading of teaching personnel's pedagogical know-how were limited to few official and higher education personnel in several Arab countries³⁸.

³⁷ See: The Arab Network for the Professional Development of Teaching Personnel in Arab Universities (1994). Workshop on the experience of Arab universities in the field of faculty professional development, the University of Jordan, Faculty of education.

³⁸ It should be noted that UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States-Beirut provided support for many years to the Arab Network for the Professional Development of Teaching Personnel in Arab Universities and tried to disseminate this model through the promotion of national networks or pedagogical clubs in several Arab countries. Bu these attempts have failed, sometimes because of the lack of awareness among university officials of the importance of this issue (like in Libya) or because of the refusal of teaching personnel of the notion that they could benefit from these programs and activities (like in Algeria), or from both (like in Lebanon).

5. Promotion

Public universities in Arab States in general have adopted the international standards related to the academic promotion of teaching personnel, in terms of the need for the candidate to produce research and to ensure quality education.

However, some countries and institutions have established a difference between scientific promotion based on performance standards and what can be called statutory promotion based on the accumulation of years of service along with a relatively low research production or even without such a production. This includes the promotion to Assistant Professor without holding a Ph.D., or on the basis of equivalence granted by the university itself according to research produced that may not match the usual level of a Ph.D. dissertation. These two elements abolish the efficiency of internationally based promotion systems and reduce the profession of higher education to a mere administrative job in which the employee is promoted on the basis of the accumulation of years of service and the direct recommendation of his/her supervisor.

In contrast, in some countries which have adopted the French approach in academic ranking, such as Morocco, there are quasi-separate tracks for tenured teaching personnel with a strict hierarchy between these tracks, with different categories and ranks in each of them. One can remain in the same position throughout one's entire career, and may be promoted based exclusively on seniority. As for moving from one track to another, it appears to be constrained by strict requirements and limited numbers through qualifying, applying for vacancies, competition, selection and elimination of candidates as well as granting few promotions. Such selection and elimination might lead to frustration among teaching personnel members, who tend to be submissive and desperate, and thus unable to generate scientific production. However, the financial, physical and moral privileges enjoyed by the teaching personnel of the highest tracks prompt teaching personnel to ask for the elimination of all hurdles and impediments to access such tracks. It seems that this occurred in the academic year 1997 - 1998 and the following years, following the adoption of new laws and rules that regulate the matters related to the promotion from one track to another. Transitional provisions for promotion were also included that combined seniority and scientific production. The effects of such provisions led to the transfer of a large number of teaching personnel between tracks in a very short time period (between 1997 - 1998 and 2003 - 2004), which cannot be explained by promotion on the basis of scientific production and performance assessment.

However, what lies beyond the text is the prevailing culture, as some available texts related to the promotion terms and conditions in academic ranks reveal the cultural shortcomings regarding the nature of such ranks. In general, laxness prevails in Arab countries when it comes to promotion terms and conditions. This unveils the perception of higher education as any other civil service rather than as an occupation that requires years of perseverance and scientific production as well as excellence in professional and educational performance.

In one of the reputable universities of science and technology, promotion from assistant professor to associate professor can take place by achieving excellence in scientific research (five research papers at least) during the first three years after obtaining a Ph.D. (and this could be considered a short period of time, according to international standards) or by teaching, undertaking research, and gaining professional experience at least five years after obtaining a Ph.D., or by achieving service excellence during ten years at least after obtaining a Ph.D. without any original scientific production. Promotion can also take place from associate professor to professor following four years of experience, including excellent scientific production. Thus, brilliant researchers can be awarded the title of professor at less than thirty three years of age! Then they remain in the same rank for another thirty three years until retirement!

On the other hand, an opinion poll undertaken in Saudi Arabia (Al Kari, 1425 H) showed that teaching personnel do not accept the current promotion terms and conditions, which are in general more similar to the minimum standards than to the German or other standards. One of the suggestions made by the surveyed sample in this regard, was “to have only three years of service before being promoted to a higher rank”, and “to reduce the number of research units required for promotion to associate professor and professor”, as well as “to take into consideration the research serving the university and society when grading scientific production”, and “to apply both scientific and statutory promotion systems”. This indicates that teaching personnel are not familiar with internationally agreed upon academic standards and customs. Furthermore, their perception of academic work is similar to other government jobs where promotion from one rank to another occurs in a very limited time and with a minimum scientific productivity. This trend is reinforced through the direct linkage between higher education institutions and public authorities as well as through the definition of teaching personnel members’ obligations by the number of office and teaching hours that are largely similar to the working hours of civil servants rather than by teaching, research and service assignments³⁹. In addition, instead of holding teaching personnel accountable for fulfilling these tasks it rather makes them respect the working hours (a condition that is often useless and counterproductive). It is further reinforced through doubling teaching hours of teaching personnel in comparison with their peers in developed industrialized countries. This is in addition to reducing the time allocated by teaching personnel to scientific research, scholarship and writing (Hamzé, 2009). In fact, scholarly activity does not necessarily require a presence at the higher education institution, but an independent invisible effort, especially in the humanities, social disciplines and education, to name just a few fields. The situation is further worsened by the widespread establishment of private higher education institutions and the lack of national standards for the promotion of teaching personnel in the absence of awareness of academic traditions among the founders and officials of these institutions. The divergence between the noble academic traditions and the practices of many academic leaders may be due to the pressure exerted by the owners of these institutions and by the teaching personnel as well.

V. Teaching personnel and qualitative challenges - the main issues

The quality of higher education is not only bound to the quality of teaching personnel. However, these constitute the cornerstone when building the quality of higher education processes and outputs, as well as the quality of its intellectual inputs, in terms of programs, methodologies and the like. The efficiency of higher education institutions is also based on the competencies of teaching personnel who are entrusted with the governance of these institutions as well as the management of their activities and affairs.

³⁹ It should be noted that the university traditions and practices in North America require the determination of annual assignments to each member of the teaching personnel in the form of courses as well as the supervision of a number of graduate students, in addition to the supervision of research financed or non-financed by internal or external parties, research production, participation in conferences, councils and committees, etc. without mentioning the number of working hours devoted to each of these components of duties and responsibilities. In addition, each faculty member should submit by the end of each academic year an annual report about his activities, works and achievements. Future assignments are determined in the light of previous achievements and future commitments. It is worth noting that research indicates that every faculty member spends at least 50 hours per week as a general average of hours dedicated to university assignments. It might reach 70 hours per week for novice teachers and more productive researchers. (See for example Cataldi and al., 2005).

Nonetheless, this quality is first and foremost the result of the efforts of the teaching personnel and the direct supervisors of the teaching and learning processes. These people create the suitable conditions for learning and they can develop and enhance learning incentives among students, because they were granted the authority to assess the competencies acquired by learners and to evaluate the attainment of educational objectives. Thus, there are many important issues that make a difference between a successful member of the teaching personnel and a less successful one. These are: their academic training prior to their appointment; their pedagogical competencies; their constant renewal; their openness to international knowledge and its various approaches; the academic freedom; the job security; the working conditions and the mechanisms adopted to evaluate their performance and their productivity.

1. Qualification to teach in higher education

The qualification to teach in higher education constitutes the first issue that needs to be thoroughly addressed in order to upgrade this profession in the Arab States, in addition to guaranteeing the minimum human resources required to efficiently undertake the necessary tasks at this level of education. This process rests upon three interdependent factors:

The first factor is the recruitment of non-Ph.D. holders and the insufficient human investment in graduate students. As a matter of fact, primary estimations point at the urgent need in universities in all Arab States of at least 150.000 Ph.D. holders to work as members of teaching personnel, in order to match up to international standards in higher education (Salamé, 2007). In addition, there is a need stemming from the increase in demand on higher education, and the necessity of replacing teaching personnel who are not Ph.D. holders with those who are.

The second factor is the pedagogical qualification of teaching personnel, whether for teaching, supervision or participation. Arab States and their higher education institutions must review pioneering experiences in this regard such as the experiences undertaken in the United Kingdom, the United States or other countries, in order to follow their example and make this qualification compulsory. Unfortunately, the pioneering decision adopted in Egypt more than 30 years ago did not lead to the desired results. Similarly, the project aimed at enhancing the capacities of teaching personnel and leaders adopted in Egypt within the framework of the Development of Higher Education projects⁴⁰ failed to rise up to the level required for an effective qualitative leap in this domain. Undoubtedly, Arab States are in need for a radical progressive vision to make such a leap, starting with the adoption of best practices at the international level as a first step towards progress in this domain and with the development of an Arab pioneering pattern that promotes the cooperation between countries. As for the third factor, it concerns the regular and continuous academic and professional renewal of teaching personnel. Sabbatical leave may be widespread in some Arab universities. Nonetheless, it is not a universal practice, and teaching personnel rarely dedicate their time during this leave to scientific scholarship, research and production. Instead, they undertake teaching tasks in other institutions, seeking additional financial gains rather than academic or professional renewal. There is also an urgent need for the promotion of continuous academic renewal opportunities, through the participation in local, regional and international conferences and seminars. It is equally necessary to enhance the opportunities of professional renewal through mechanisms such as the establishment of academic pedagogical clubs and specialized associations that study methods for developing educational practices in the field of specialization, as well as national and regional networks for the same purposes.

⁴⁰ The Arab Republic of Egypt - Ministry of Higher Education (2005)



2. Isolationism

Isolationism is the second issue that needs to be treated radically. This lies in the lack of a diversified scientific enrichment and in the exclusivity of scholarships to each institution aside from others.

The available data regarding the scientific production of teaching personnel in the United States reveal that during 5 years, members of academic institutions produce an average of 6.5 articles published in refereed periodicals; 1.25 published books, studies or reports; 2.25 published reviews of papers written by others; 3.25 non-refereed articles; and 14.75 presentations in conferences, seminars or exhibitions (Cataldi and al., 2005).

These numbers underline the vitality of knowledge production among teaching personnel as well as the vitality of knowledge dissemination. They also show that the scientific production of each faculty member is exposed to criticism almost permanently, away from the trap of isolationism. The faculty member might easily fall into isolation if ever he limits himself to teaching in classrooms in order to transfer his knowledge, to translating a book, writing and publishing a book without arbitration or even publishing articles in a journal issued by the college or the university where he works.

The Arab academic community has often limited itself to the publication of a number of periodicals specific to each institution of higher education or even to each separate college (Al Amine, 2005; UNESCO, 2004) and has rarely published national or Arabic periodicals, and these latter periodicals are rarely published by academics; they are rather sponsored by regional or international organizations. In all cases, they are not widely promoted, and are only accessible to a small number of direct stakeholders. Moreover, Masters' theses and Ph.D. dissertations are often kept within a narrow circle without being fully published or even sometimes, without publishing their results. This prevailing pattern leads to the isolationism of the scientific knowledge itself and limits it to narrow circles.

Thus, it appears imperative to reconsider this status of things at the Arab States' level as a whole and at the level of each State individually, in order to promote Arab scientific advancement and dissemination. Therefore, the establishment of the Arab Information Network on Education "Shamaa"⁴¹ is a good start for preventing this intellectual isolationism.

The second factor leading to isolationism lies in the mechanisms of graduate scholarships. The partial data available about the career development of a large number of teaching personnel in Arab universities highlight some grim experiences. For instance, we find that the member of the teaching personnel was born and raised in the same city where he graduated from primary and secondary education and works at the same university from which he obtained the three university degrees. The term "intellectual cloning" applies in this situation where the member of the teaching personnel has not been exposed to any enrichment outside this narrow context. This situation becomes more alarming when many teaching personnel actually defend these unsound situations and oppose the selection of lecturers and candidates for scholarships based on a non-restricted competition that is open to all those interested and qualified, regardless of the institution from which they graduated. Furthermore, the idea of the necessary intellectual enrichment outside the mother institution, at least at the graduate levels (Master and Ph.D.) doesn't appear to be widespread amongst higher education officials, whether at ministries, institutions or among teaching personnel, let alone the advantages of external enrichment through the practicing of higher education in more than one institution.

⁴¹ For more information about the network and services: <http://www.shamaanet.org>





3. Research professors and academic freedom

As mentioned above, the mission of higher education institutions, in general, and universities, in particular, could be defined as to “ensure the development of basic and applied scientific research, and the transfer of the pertaining knowledge to students” in order to ensure the training of highly qualified persons. It is therefore crucial to stress, first of all, the interdependence between the roles of teaching and scientific research that are played by the members of the teaching personnel. This is possible, for example, by describing the backbone of teaching personnel as “research professors” (enseignants-chercheurs in French) and by ensuring a balance between their teaching and research tasks. The need for this assertion becomes greater since teaching personnel in higher education institutions constitute the critical nucleus of scientific research in Arab States (Hamzé, 2009). This is explained by the scarcity of governmental and non-governmental research centers that are independent from higher educational institutions, and operate through full-time researchers⁴². This leads to the “recognition of knowledge and scientific research as a basic raw material and a permanent resource” (Ministry of Higher Education, Algeria, 2007, p. 26). Hence, teaching personnel should enjoy academic freedom in education and research, as well as in intellectual, literary, artistic and technical production. They should also be allowed to freely express their critical intellectual opinions without any institutional or societal pressure and without any discrimination. In this way, they would be able to freely delve into knowledge, expand it and promote it. In addition, if China and a few other countries around the world continue to impose on teaching personnel particular ideologies that can not be altered through free scientific research, Arab countries should put this issue on the table and find the appropriate solutions.

The analysis of official documents regulating the work of institutions of higher education reflects in general, respect to international standards in academic freedom. However, an in-depth study of practices shows that most Arab States lack the basic conditions for achieving these standards on the ground (Salamé, 2006). In fact, most higher education institutions are still directly subjected to governmental authorities and do not really enjoy academic autonomy. These institutions consider teaching personnel as employees, no different from other civil servants who are constrained by a number of limitations which restrict their ability to travel abroad, organize meetings, seminars and conferences, or participate in such events, publish the results of their research without prior censorship, participate in public policy debates and institutional discussions and so on. In addition, only governmental authorities have the right to appoint heads of higher education institutions and expect them to remain loyal to the prevailing ideology.

At the same time, groups of both teaching personnel and students use higher education institutions as forums for political action and ideological mobilization. In some cases, actions are undertaken to suppress any nonconformist views, disregarding one of the conditions of practicing academic freedom, which is the responsible use of this freedom, the respect of opposing opinions and the approach of all issues from a scientific angle, provided that the freedom of practicing political action and of defending ideologies be kept outside the boundaries of educational institutions. In both cases, the conflicting parties prove their ignorance of the true nature of higher education institutions and their lack of respect for academic freedom.

On the other hand, the other elements that influence the scientific productivity of teaching personnel and the quality of education are the loss of scholarship opportunities, the absence

⁴² This even applies for Egypt which is the most active Arab country in the domain of scientific research outside higher education. See (Radi, 2005).



of real support provided to research, the lack of production of new knowledge, the lack of opportunities to disseminate research results through various means, and drowning the teaching personnel in heavy workloads.

This situation is exacerbated by the absence of a supportive social environment for academic freedom, and the presence of issues that cannot be subject to research and to deepening of the knowledge related to them through rigorous scientific research and societal debate. These taboos are related to what is considered in most Arab States as sensitive issues that should not be subject to public discussion such as discussing religious beliefs, issues related to national security and armed forces, and issues affecting the political system, the head of state, the heads of other states and the judiciary system. Sensitive issues may even be related to history and geography, given the possible interstate or internal political sensitivities.

The violations of academic freedom are not limited to the practices of the authorities responsible for higher education which refuse the renewal of the contract of any individual considered as having violated his obligations or going off-course, but also engulf the practices of state authorities. These authorities exercise various forms of pressure on individuals who may be arrested or ordered to internal or external exile. To that we can add all forms of pressure, threats, and intimidation exercised by ideological groups that are independent from state and academic authorities against all those who dare to cross the red lines imposed on the freedom of belief and expression which are safeguarded by the Charter of Human Rights and are also necessary for proper exercise of the higher education profession. A teaching personnel association at an Arab university expressed its attachment to “the importance of academic freedom which is the basis for the advancement of education and development, (and its conviction) that the disregard of academic freedom is not only limited to the current administration at the university, but is a widespread phenomenon in some regional and Arab universities” (Al Ray Newspaper, 2009).

In conclusion, the institutional and societal atmosphere in the majority of Arab States doesn't seem to be conducive to academic freedom. As a result of various pressures faced by teaching personnel, it is noted that most of them adopt a policy of self-censorship and refrain from engaging in the discussion of any issue that may be considered sensitive or controversial by those who hold the power. This has led to the reduction of the role of teaching personnel in leading scientific research, in producing knowledge and debating issues that can contribute to the advancement of society and its institutions. Furthermore, it hinders the education of intellectual elites who would possess the critical thinking needed to lead societal progress.

4. Job security and accountability

If the enjoyment of academic freedom requires a high degree of job security so that the teaching personnel would exercise this freedom without being subjected to the risk of being sanctioned or fired for having expressed their opinion, absolute job security would reflect negatively on their productivity. This absolute job security is mainly represented by the fact that teaching personnel in governmental higher education institutions in the Arab States are considered as regular civil servants. Furthermore, they often insist on staying in this situation because of the job security they enjoy and other social benefits generally reserved for public sector employees.

However, job security must be coupled with clearly defined accountability mechanisms and with a regular assessment of performance and productivity as well as with measures designed to improve this performance. There should also be strict measures applied in the event of proven incompetence, repeated neglect or misconduct. It is to be noted that all of these measures, both preventive and disciplinary, are absent from the culture of public management in the Arab States

or are applied in a selective way that is far from respecting equity and non-discrimination. This situation that could lead to the absence of the sense of responsibility is coupled with short-term contracts which require the “good conduct” of the teaching personnel in order to be renewed. Thus, the member of the teaching personnel remains at the mercy of the administration of the institution of higher education which employs him, and keeps him/her on a short leash. Therefore, the member of the teaching personnel adapts all his/her activities to the expectations, letting him/herself go and neglecting his role in searching for the truth, criticizing knowledge and leading the thought paving the way for social development at various levels. It is perhaps in North America that the best practices in this area are found resulting in the autonomy of the universities, even governmental ones, and where the contractual relationship between the institution and the member of the teaching personnel is based on a clear and collective explicit contract. This model includes job security which is conditioned by the proper accomplishment of the tasks entrusted to the member of the teaching personnel, and the provision of various social benefits similar to those enjoyed by public sector employees. Thus, the institutions have working conditions specifically tailored for higher education and a financial status commensurate to the high-level functions performed by the members of the teaching personnel.

5. Working conditions

The performance of teaching personnel cannot be reduced to their scientific qualifications and educational skills. In fact, their morale, dynamism and motivation to ensure efficient performance are affected by the working conditions.

The objective conditions that have a significant effect on teaching personnel include the availability of appropriate facilities and equipment, the number of students per classroom, the presence of teaching and research assistants, the availability of funding for research, the opportunity to participate in decision-making, especially those of an academic nature, and the means for disseminating intellectual outputs and the opportunities for meeting peers from the professional and academic community.

Another important factor is that of the physical, financial and social benefits which are granted to teaching personnel. It seems that benefits provided by institutions of higher education in the Arab countries to teaching personnel could be described as good (as in the case of Kuwait), acceptable in some cases and less than acceptable in most of the cases. This is because many countries still lag behind in this area by depriving teaching personnel of a decent salary, even in some Arab countries that enjoy high incomes⁴³. This state of things would prevent teaching personnel from fully engaging in their profession and devoting themselves entirely to their tasks, as recommended by the International Recommendation of UNESCO (1997). In fact, they seem to pile up additional teaching hours, therefore drowning themselves in heavy teaching loads and consequently, leaving aside scholarships and scientific research⁴⁴. Thus, in a matter of a few years they lose their scientific vitality, quit and move to the private sector for other possibilities or emigrate. As for those who are not Ph.D. holders, they face the same threats in a much shorter period.

VI. Conclusion

This study shows that Arab States did not give enough attention to the issues of career path of higher education teaching personnel, in spite of many efforts aimed at sending nationals to

⁴³ Many interventions of teaching personnel or those on scholarships deploring low wages in some Arab countries including the KSA and the UAE can be found online.

⁴⁴ See for example, regarding Egypt (Radi, 2005).

specialize abroad and then return home to undertake teaching functions in higher education institutions.

For instance, in the majority of Arab States there is no integrated strategy designed to supply the institutions of higher education with highly qualified teaching personnel who have the necessary competencies to efficiently carry out the various roles and functions expected from them.

In addition, there is no strategy to promote scientific research aimed at developing and deepening existing knowledge, producing new knowledge and expanding its applications. This is badly needed in order to develop Arab societies in all areas, to benefit higher education students from these advances, and achieve a more educated society with graduates who master analytical skills and new technology better than past generations, are aware of and committed to human, societal and universal issues and better equipped to face the challenges of globalization.

These issues are related to the policies that should govern teaching personnel matters more than to career path rules and regulations. In fact, regulations applied to scholarships may be good from a management point of view, but the underlying philosophy ought to be entirely reversed. In addition, specific regulations for recruitment and promotion may be good in appearance. However, the highest standards in this context are not established in the minds of the teaching personnel and of the higher education officials. Thus, it becomes difficult to properly apply these standards and preserve the glitter and academic connotation of university ranks.

In respect to the issue of qualifying to teach in higher education, and despite some orientations that at first seemed innovative, it seems that the actual levels remain far from the expected. In fact, academic qualifications are below the expected in most Arab States, while pedagogical qualifications seem to be almost or totally absent in these countries, regardless of the standards that could be considered.

In conclusion, it seems that achieving the quality of higher education in the Arab States is only possible if a high priority is given to the issue of supplying its institutions (including private institutions) with teaching personnel capable of assuming their responsibilities with a high degree of professionalism. Thus, each country should develop an urgent and integrated strategy to significantly upgrade the qualifications and competencies of higher education teaching personnel in order to get close to international standards, if not to match them.

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