SAGESSE

Improving Governance of Tunisia's Higher Education System:

Towards University Autonomy and New Quality Assurance Mechanisms

Autonomy, Governance and Quality Assurance in Tunisian Universities.

Review and Appraisal

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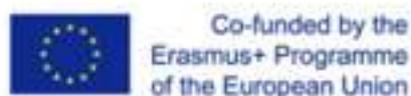Silvia Marchione (UNIMED)

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Partnership

This report, coordinated by the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne and the University of manouba, with the support of UNIMED, has involved all the project partners.

Website:

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4 C: Career and Competence Certification Center

AMUE: Mutualization of Universities and Institutions Agency

ATOS: Administrative and Technical Staff, Workers and Services

BEPP: MESRST Bureau of Studies, Planning and Foresight

MTEF: Medium-Term Expenditure Framework

ISCED: The International Standard Classification of Education

DGET: General Directorate for Technological Studies

HEI: Higher Education Institution

HERI: Higher Education and Research Institution

PSTI: Public Science and Technology Institutions

EUA: European University Association

BBO: Budgeting by Objectives

HCERES: High Council for Evaluation, Research and Education

IEAQA: National Authority for Evaluation, Quality Assurance and Accreditation

ISET: High Institute of Technological Studies

MESRST: Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

OECD: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

QIP: Quality Improvement Program

PROMESSE: Modernization Project of Higher Education in Support of Employability

UVT.SG: Secretary-General of Tunis Virtual University

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Introduction: Work Methodology

This report is the first deliverable of the first work package of the Sagesse project. It is the result of an appraisal and debates on the state of play of governance and governance practices in Tunisian and European universities.

The work developed in this report comes as an answer to a plain question: Where are we in terms of autonomy and governance of universities in Tunisia? Trying to answer such a question is not an easy matter, due to the complexity of the object of study and the specificity of the field of analysis, which led us to adopt a methodological scheme harnessing different methods of data collection. A triangulation approach is therefore used, combining individual interviews, group interviews, direct observation, as well as documentary research and data collection. This methodology allows for going beyond the simple formalist approach, to better fathom the reality of university governance from various complementary perspectives.

Between December 2017 and April 2018, we first conducted a work of collection, analysis, interpretation and synthesis in terms of legal texts governing higher education and scientific research, reports on governance and autonomy of universities, plans and reports produced by Tunisian universities, evaluation and self-evaluation benchmarks, scientific studies on higher education and research in Tunisia, documents from national and international bodies, and articles (see bibliography).

Starting from March 2018, we then embarked on fieldwork through interviews and discussion meetings with the various stakeholders. In particular, a series of interviews were carried out in April 2018 at MESRST (International Relations Department, Governance Unit, GBO Unit) and at IEAQA. The first individual interviews made it possible to develop two surveys sent to all the partners in May 2018. The first general questionnaire was general (see Appendix 1) and was intended for Tunisian universities. It aimed to help us draw a conspicuous and updated picture of the Tunisian university system. It was followed by a second more targeted questionnaire (see Appendix 2), addressed to the Secretaries-General of Tunisian higher education institutions and universities in which they perform their duties. It centered upon governance, autonomy, exercise of power, quality assurance, evaluation, decision-making, etc., and was completed between June and September 2018. Several partners, the IEAQA in particular, provided numerous suggestions with a view to improving this questionnaire.

On July 12, 2018, a preliminary version of this report was presented and discussed during the first intermediate meeting of the Sagesse project, held at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. During this meeting, three focus groups were formed, bringing together Secretaries-General and administrative managers on the one hand, and presidents and vice-presidents on the other (see Appendix 3). These working groups, established according to a both factual and perceptual approach, aimed to garner the expectations and opinions of the participants, to assess their experiences and their representations of the current university system, to understand the way with which they perceive reality, as regards governance, autonomy, etc. Some observations have enriched this report. The data concerning the foresight work concerning governance of Tunisian universities will be used in a second deliverable, separate from this one. Data on the state of play of the information systems in use in Tunisian universities, collected and presented by Mr. Béchir Allouch on July 12, have also been included in this report.

In January-February 2019, the final version of the report was corrected and supplemented by various institutions: IEAQA (factual corrections and the commendable contribution to the preparation of the questionnaire intended for Secretaries-General); MESRT - BEPP (factual corrections, statistics); MESRST - GBO Unit (comments and additional information on budgeting by objectives and the information system); MESRST - DGRU (supplement on recent actions of the Ministry in basic and continuing training); University of Gabes (Supplements on statistics concerning the university); UVT (thorough proofreading, corrections and comments on the whole report).

This report is divided into three parts, consisting of 8 sections in total, and ending with a general conclusion. It rests upon numerous illustrations (charts, graphics, etc.), appendices, statistics, case studies, extracts from legal texts. Each section is independently developed for easy readability. While this report does not cover all areas in depth, it has the merit of presenting an overview of the fundamental questions arising about the governance of Tunisian universities. It offers both keys to understanding for the international partners of Tunisian universities, and a realistic portrait, without miserabilism, of the strengths and weaknesses of university governance, to the actors of this system.

The first part suggests a first theoretical approach. It questions the notions of "governance" and "autonomy", as polysemous and complex notions that are steeped in history, and encompassing all the processes put in place to ensure the various missions of the university. It brings a comparative overview of recent developments in the governance and autonomy of European universities. The second part is devoted to the description of Tunisian higher education through charts and using a map of its governance bodies.

The third part adopts a more "practical" approach to the autonomy and governance of Tunisian universities and their developments over the past ten years (2008-2018). It revolves around notions closely linked to university management, namely the quality approach, evaluation, performance, relational governance, status, responsibility, information system, etc., introduced in particular by the 2008 Law. It

seeks to understand the reasons for its mixed implementation, and thus identifies a certain number of good practices and pilot experiences, as well as elements of dysfunctioning in the good governance of the Tunisian university.

The concluding chapter draws up a picture of the different facets of the autonomy of Tunisian universities in 2018.

1.

Autonomy and Governance of Universities: Definitions and Benchmarks

1   Definition of University Autonomy

The term "university autonomy" has been particularly used to refer to the new university model that was promoted in Europe by the Bologna Process. By using this term, the architects of this process knew they were echoing a term with a long history, and associated with strong values in academia, including the freedom to think and to teach. However, the Bologna Process has actually bestowed a new significance to this notion of "autonomy", understood in the sense of a transformation of the university into a managerial entity, built on the model of a company.

 It is therefore worthwhile to start thinking about the meanings of the word "autonomy" in the long term.

Let us introduce a first distinction. University autonomy has always had two dimensions, or two facets. The external autonomy (the fact that the university is protected, through stable funding, from the pressures of political and religious powers or from economic constraints) implies that there is an internal autonomy, that is to say a capacity for self-organization for the members of the university, which allows them to define the values and the principles which constitute the pillars of the university's missions.

The first organization of the university in Europe (early university age, between the 12th and 18th centuries) was based on the model of one or more corporations of teachers and/or students (internal autonomy), capable of enacting their own operating rules, independently of political power, while remaining under the tutelage of the Church, which grants the licentia docendi, a degree granting the authorization to teach (external autonomy). It is the birth academic freedoms,

understood here as a set of legal privileges (Charle and Verger, 2012). At the same time, the Muslim world does not know of "universities" in the specific sense of the term, but of reputable educational centers, supported by public charity (Waqf system) and regulated not by a system of corporations and privileges, but a model of free competition tempered by the social consensus of scholars (principle of ijmâ) (Vallet, 2013).

With the development of nations-States since the 18th and especially the 19th century, a second age of universities begins, where the university is seen as one of the spearheads of the nation. The university is State-owned: its funding becomes mainly or exclusively a public funding; the members of the university are assimilated to civil servants. Academic freedoms are redefined (Humboldt), such as the freedom of research, which means that the scholar does not define his subjects of interest by abiding by an outside power, but by referring to universal reason. The university is not only defined as a place for the transmission of knowledge but also as a place of discovery and progress for the nation, and more generally for common humanity. University autonomy here becomes essentially educational and scientific (Charle and Verger, 2012). It was this conception of a national State-owned university, as a source of progress, that was instilled at the time of independence in Tunisia (Siino, 2004).

The economic crisis, the globalization of higher education, but also the rise of the new knowledge economy that coincided with the digital revolution, disrupted the landscape of higher education in Europe starting from the 1990s. The Bologna Process, presented as a momentum of European convergence, is also an instrument to integrate European universities into a globalized university "market" (Musselin, 2017). The autonomy addressed here is fundamentally the ability for universities to manage themselves on a managerial model, to develop their own resources while States partially withdraw. It is both managerial autonomy and the ability to develop specific strategies in the organizational, academic and scientific spheres. It is also inseparable from the development of evaluation, internal and external, and accreditation mechanisms. Besides, it does not follow a single organizational model, but rests on the distinction between board of directors (interface with the outside) and academic board (emanating from the teaching staff of the university).

As regards **the managerial redefinition of the university**, we will therefore retain here the definition introduced by the EUA in the Lisbon Declaration, distinguishing four forms of autonomy, which are crucial for the development of this new form of university:

- **Academic autonomy**: ability to decide on the orientation and content of training and pedagogy, as well as research carried out within the university,

- **Organizational autonomy**: ability to designate its governing bodies and the internal organization of the university (statutes, regulations),

- **Financial autonomy**: including, in particular, the capacity to generate its own resources (calculation of duties),

- **Autonomy in terms of human resources**: capacity to determine the type of recruitment, remuneration and career for the members of the university.

2 Governance and Autonomy of Universities in Europe

The long history of university organization in Europe, which has gone through the developments that we have just described, mean that there is no single model of university organization. There are stark differences among the European countries in this regard, and within the same country, among universities themselves. Depending on the country, the Bologna Process therefore took place under different conditions, with more or less strong political impetus, which brought about mixed results.

2.1 General Information

The European University Association (EUA) has regularly published for the last ten years a scoreboard of "autonomy" in European universities (http://www.university-autonomy.eu), by taking into account the four dimensions of autonomy (academic, organizational, financial and human resource), which is measured according to around thirty indicators:

– The level of academic autonomy of a university is gauged in terms of its ability to decide on the overall number of places and its capacity to select students, in addition to its freedom to define academic disciplines and the content of its trainings, to choose the language of learning, and to manage of the quality assurance system.

– The organizational autonomy is assessed according to criteria such as the ability to decide on the internal organization of the university, the ability to appoint or dismiss managers, the freedom to define the inherent criteria in this appointment, the length of terms of office. It is also based on the involvement of personalities from outside the university in the governing bodies and the ability to decide on the creation of academic structures or even legal entities such as foundations.

– The financial autonomy is assessed according to the following criteria: period and type of public funding; ability to borrow money and own buildings, to create budgetary reserves or to set the amount of tuition fees.

– Regarding the management of human resources, universities are compared according to their freedom to decide on recruitment and dismissal procedures, career development, and salaries.

The study and analysis conducted by the EUA provide an interesting analytical framework and allow for the comparison of very different higher education systems. It is important to note, however, that a number of countries underscore the considerable divergences between the law and the practice of autonomy. A change in the nature and the way in which State funding is allocated to universities is redefining the State–university relationship, and in some cases is contributing to deepening regional disparities.

2.2   The British Case

One of the top performers in the EUA ranking is Great Britain. The high level of autonomy of its higher education system is also recognized by The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The country, recognized worldwide for the performance of its research, has 166 higher education institutions, three of which regularly appear in the top 10 of international rankings. Its model of autonomy, marked by strong deregulation, has a very specific profile in Europe.

The universities enjoy legal independence in Great Britain, since they are not part of the UK public sector. The recruitment of staff and students is carried out in complete autonomy vis-à-vis the State and the teacher-researchers do not have a civil servant status. Universities are free to select the students they wish to enroll. They can also recruit their academic staff and freely decide on salaries. In the event of dismissal, no specific regulations exist, other than national labor laws. The total number of students, both national and European, is capped, but the institutions are flexible in terms of the allocation of places in a number of courses.

The management and organization of British universities is heavily influenced by the entrepreneurial model. A governing board holds ultimate responsibility for all aspects of the university's functioning. Its reduced composition (from 12 to 25 members), the majority of whom are from outside the university, aims to favor pragmatism and efficiency. This council notably appoints the president (vice-chancellor), supervises the proper functioning of the university, and defines its strategic orientations. Besides, an academic committee is tasked with academic matters. It only exercises an advisory role and performs its duties under the supervision of the institution's managing board.

The government sets the broad guidelines for higher education and specifies its priorities and expectations for the entire sector, in exchange for funding allocated to regional agencies which, in turn, impose a number of conditions on universities[1]. The distribution of funds allocated by the agencies depends in particular on the number of students they agree to fund annually at each university. The amount may be readjusted from year to year if the university does not meet or exceed its admission quotas. British universities therefore have no restrictions on the internal allocations of their financial package, that is to say a type of funding in the form of blocks. They can also keep any surplus of this funding.

In addition, universities are endowed with a strong fundraising capacity. They are free to borrow money as long as the annual cost of the financial commitment is less than 4% of the institutions' overall income. They can decide on the amount of tuition fees, while respecting the ceiling defined by the public authorities. It is worthy to note that this cap has tripled in recent years to reach £ 9,000. The higher education institutions also own their buildings and can manage their real estate without restriction. In order to develop new sources of funding, universities are increasingly developing activities that are complementary to their main research and teaching activities, such as fundraising, bequests and donations, endowed chairs financed by companies, teaching contracts for professionals, continuing education, etc. Today,

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[1] From 2010 to 2016, public funding for higher education fell by 68% for the region of Wales and 50% for England (https://eua.eu/101-projects/586-public-fundingobservatory.html)

the average university budget is 29% public funds, 38% student fees, and 33% other sources of funding.

2.3   The Spanish, Italian and French Cases

The last decade has been marked by significant legislative developments in most European countries, often associated with the theme of university autonomy. Depending on the country, the reforms have focused more particularly on financial and managerial autonomy, strengthening the powers of the board of directors, the freedom to determine the terms and conditions of access to higher education, to create foundations, or to determine the modalities for electing rectors.

Spain, France and Italy, however, remain among the countries which grant the least "autonomy", according to the EUA (out of 29 compared countries (or regions), Italy is thus ranked 16th, France 20th, and Spain 24th). The State still largely supervises higher education in these countries, and institutional independence is greatly reduced.

- Universities keep little room for decision, particularly regarding the conditions to appoint staff, the term of office, or even the conditions for dismissing their managers. In France, for example, it is the law that sets these conditions: the university president is elected by an absolute majority of the members of the board of directors for a four-year term, renewable once. He must belong to the teaching corps of the university and cannot remain in office after the age of 68. However, the legislative changes underway in 2018 provide for the introduction of a right to statutory and institutional experimentation as part of the cluster strategies. In Italy, universities have a certain autonomy conferred by their statutes, which they are free to define within the limits of complying with the law and the constitution.

- The reference method of recruiting staff remains civil servant status. In France, even if recruitment is carried out by selection committees at the level of each university, based on job profiles including the institution's expectations in terms of education, research and collective investment, the recruitment of tenured teacher-researchers thus remains subject to obtaining a national qualification, granted by the National Council of Universities. The salary scale is regulated by the State.

- The share of public funding remains largely predominant (> 80%), even if the nature of the regional (Spanish case) or national (French case) allocation framework implies different room for maneuver for institutions. Since 2010, Italy has introduced a performance-based competition system among public universities, for the allocation of public funding. This reform confirms the transformation towards a new mode of public management.

While empowerment remains curtailed from an institutional and financial point of view, the main impact of the Bologna Process, over the last fifteen years, has been

to accelerate the managerial transformation of universities, with the dissemination of new practices, falling under the quality assurance.

The comparison between the cases of the University of Barcelona, the University of Siena and the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, partners of the Sagesse project, is enlightening in this regard. In all three cases, the strategic orientations of the university are set in the medium term (a four-year master plan in Barcelona, a three-year one for Siena, and four-year contract in Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne). The strategic decisions seem to be concentrated in the hands of an executive body (government council in Barcelona; board of directors in Siena and Paris 1-Panthéon Sorbonne), with reduced power of control for the bodies representing staff and students (Academic senates of the universities in Barcelona and Siena; Academic council in Paris 1-Panthéon Sorbonne). The master plans and the four-year contract are based on a dual internal and external evaluation process (for external evaluation: Regional Evaluation Agency in Barcelona; National Agency for University System Evaluation and Research (ANVUR) for Siena, and the High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (HCERES) that carries out an evaluation every four years, in the case of Paris 1-Panthéon Sorbonne).

The main difference lies in the degree to which internal structures for developing quality assurance are put in place. In Barcelona, an internal quality agency has been created for the evaluation of diplomas, research, teachers and general services. Information on accreditation is being disseminated to the public. Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne does not have an internal evaluation agency, the evaluation of training and research programs being carried out by members of the academic council. The indicators are collected by fragmented bodies: on the one hand, an observatory of student life, which conducts regular surveys on the diplomas and professional integration of students; on the other, there are two units under the general directorate of services, one responsible for steering assistance (coordination of information systems; production of indicators; data collection; preparation of the contract), the other dedicated to management control (implementation of dashboards in the basic or continuing training; studies on the operating cost of training and full costs; collaboration in the development of the project and the performance report). In Siena, a department devoted to quality assurance (PQA) was created in 2013. It is in charge of promoting and coordinating the establishment and conduct of quality assurance procedures within the university.

Besides, the French case allows for the reflection on the implications, from the point of view of university / ministry relations, of the transition from universities managed as State administrations to a more managerial management model. Apart from the legislative and regulatory changes, it is indeed a question of rethinking the role of the supervisory authority, called upon to play an incentive and regulatory role, rather than that of an authorizing officer. The capacity for collective self-organization of universities in countries dominated by the "spearhead of the nation" model of universities is essential to reconcile the development of management capacities and the maintenance of national coherence of the offer in higher education. The model of the Mutualization Agency of French Universities (AMUE) provides interesting avenues in this respect.

2.

Higher Education and Research in Tunisia: General Information

2.1 The Tunisian University: "a Creation of the State, for the State"

2.1.1 Birth of the Modern Tunisian University

The idea of Tunisian "higher education" (the expression is from the 19th century) can be traced back to the two major restructuring phases of the Zaytouna University (founded in 734 in Tunis), which took place under the reigns of Ahmad Bey, in 1843, and Muhammad Sadok Bey, in 1875 and in 1876. Between the two phases, a commission was appointed in 1862, with a view to making Zaytouna a real university of modern type, comprising faculties where religious disciplines were taught alongside scientific courses, like the European universities of the time (N. Sraïeb, 1994). This institution grew to the point that after the Second World War, it created extensions in several regions of Tunisia (K. Bendana, 2004) and outside Tunisia. The Zaytouna was established as a public institution, with a civil personality, from 1948.

The modern national university, which materialized with the decree dated March 31, 1960, was not established in an institutional vacuum, but on a nucleus of constellations of institutions spread over two poles. The first pole includes the Zaytouna and its various extensions. The second one is made up of the Pasteur Institute (created by a Beylical decree in 1893); the Higher School of Arabic Language and Literature (1911); the Center for Law Studies of Tunis (1922), the Institute of Higher Studies of Tunis (IHET), described by the colonial authorities as "the first cell of a modern university in the east of French Africa" (K. Bendana, 1994) and established by the Beylical decree of October 1, 1945); the École Normale Supérieure, created in 1956; the Colonial School of Agriculture, created in 1898 and later became in 1959 the National Institute of Agriculture of Tunis; etc.

Apart from these two poles, the Khaldounia is an institution which has been distinguished, since its creation in 1896, by open and modern education, ensuring training courses similar to those authorized by the Protectorate administration. By opting for the modernization of its courses and by creating several institutions after the Second World War (the Institute of Islamic Studies in 1945, the Arab Institute of Law in 1946 and the Arab Institute of Philosophy in 1946), the Khaldounia, known

as the "Popular Tunisian University", has sought to have its courses recognized by older universities in Egypt, Iraq and Syria.

The proclamation of a Tunisian University by the independent State, in 1960, was a watershed moment for a country that obtained its independence after 75 years of French protectorate. At the time, however, it did not arouse the interest it deserved around its mission, its objectives, the choices of its administrative structure, its relations with public authorities and the modalities of its governance. Indeed, on reading the newspapers of the time, one notices the absence of debate around the establishment of the first higher academic institution. "The university issue is only addressed in the journalistic news by reverential, almost mundane, people; the solemn tone of the press silenced the many questions raised by the new university" (M. Ben Slimane, 1993). "The modern university in Tunisia, as in many other new decolonized states, is above all a creation of the State for the State" (Sino, 2010).

2.1.2 Reform Process in the Tunisian University and Modes of Governance

2.1.2.1 Reform of 1958-1986: Decree N° 68-33, dated February 3, 1968, amending Decree N° 60-98, dated March 31 1960

Before the creation of the University of Tunis in 1960, works of research and reflection were undertaken from 1954 to 1958, whether in public conferences or in Tunisian journals and newspapers. The need for a change in terms of content and a reform in terms of structures seemed to be the concern of everyone. The first president of the Tunisian Republic, Habib Bourguiba, announces in a speech on June 25, 1958, at the College Sadiki, the guidelines of this reform. The aim was to restore to Tunisian education its national character, to unify and democratize it. This teaching had to be open to the outside world and sensitive to socio-economic transformations and scientific and technical developments. The challenge was then to build a national State capable of integrating individuals into the mold of "republican" citizenship by reforming the archaism of tradition, accused of having led to "decadence", protectorate and underdevelopment (K. Ben Kahla, 2004).

As regards the organization of the University, Decree N° 68-33, dated February 3, 1968, amending Decree N° 60-98, dated March 31, 1960, stipulates that the president of the university is assisted in his tasks by a University Board chaired by the president, and composed of a pro-rector, heads of institutions, as well as elected representatives of teachers and two representatives of students, etc. Nevertheless, in practice, this rector will never be appointed: it is a pro-rector with a secondary role who will be responsible for this function. In addition, the deans and directors of institutions do not have any autonomy of their own, since all higher educational institutions have a common civil personality, called "University of Tunis" and directly attached to the central administration.

2.1.2.2 Reform of 1969: Law N°69-3, dated January 24, 1969, on the Organization of Higher Education

This law abolished the university as a global entity, and eliminated the post of rector. It granted civil personality and financial autonomy to higher education institutions, and attached them directly to the ministry. The University Board is henceforth chaired by the Secretary of State for National Education; the directors and deans are to become elected. The scientific councils have representatives of elected teachers and students, as well as representatives of the students' parents.

This law introduces autonomy and an air of representative democracy into the functioning of higher education institutions. "The faculties had almost total autonomy in educational, administrative and financial matters. Only the faculty budget was set by the ministry in coordination with the Ministry of Finance and the government of the day" (N. Dejoui, 2017).

However, based on several articles, we notice the advent of a new doctrine advocating that the university must adapt more closely to the needs of the national economy (planning system). According to the terms of the motion passed at the end of a meeting of the University Board, in which members of the ruling party, the PSD, sat in July 1968, the time has come to "bind the evolution of the University to that of economics in such a way that our teaching is based on the real needs of the country". The arsenal of measures envisaged includes, inter alia, the introduction of orientation tests, the intensification of short cycles in higher education, and even summer internships for students and teachers in cooperative units or public enterprises.

2.1.2.3 Reform 1986: Law N° 86-80, dated August 9, 1986, Regarding Universities

This law re-established the university as a legal entity after its abolition in January 1969, attached faculties, schools and institutes to the university and revoked the principle of elections for deans and directors. The Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research chaired the University Board, while the position of vice-president was granted to the rector, who is a member of the council.

This law marked a crucial step in the choice of decentralizing/regionalizing the Tunisian university. In fact, higher education is, at the time, organized in three universities, the University of Tunis for the north of the country, the University of Monastir for the center and the University of Sfax for the south. These universities exercise control over their respective university institutions, research institutions and academic work offices located in the three regions.

However, while this law re-instituted the university, it stripped it of all power and prerogatives by assigning it to a role of "letterbox". It also marked the starting point of a deliberate process to restrict the autonomy formerly granted to university institutions by means of a specific status for its heads of institutions, elected by their colleagues and independent from the political authorities.

There followed a large-scale reaction from teachers and their unions, as teachers decided to boycott the appointed deans. The authorities have yielded on the question of the election of deans. A compromise was then concluded, consisting in

organizing internal elections in the faculties and the ministry agrees to appoint the deans chosen by their peers, pending the promulgation of a new law re-instituting the election of deans.

2.1.2.4 Reform of 1989: Law N° 89-70, dated July 28, 1989

This law, amended and supplemented by Law N°67, dated July 17, 2000, established the autonomy of universities, broadened the powers of university presidents and introduced the multidisciplinary structure of universities to promote bridges between courses. The university was for the first time established and identified as an organization with its own organization chart, bodies and internal structures; it acquired the status of a public institution enjoying civil personality and financial autonomy, in addition to ensuring scientific, educational and financial supervision over the relevant institutions.

The University, headed by a designated president, also had two governance bodies. The first is a University Board whose decisions are deliberative and have a very high degree of representativeness: for the first time we find elected members of the ATOS staff. The second body is the scientific and educational committee, composed of the president of the university, his vice-presidents and heads of institutions under the university, and whose opinions and proposals are of an advisory nature.

From 1986 until the 2000s, the 13 public universities were thus created, bringing together different institutions, faculties and schools, and ensuring better access to higher education across the country, in particular through the creation of universities in the inland and southern regions of the country. The 2000s coincided with a moment of significant massification: a record level was reached in 2010 with more than 86,000 graduates (compared to less than 16,000 in 1997). Finally, the reforms of 2006 and 2008 brought in-depth changes to the structuring of Tunisian universities, in particular with the adoption of the LMD system, the principles of contracting and autonomy, and the establishment of a new governance of Tunisian universities (infra). The organization of higher education in the 2010s is thus the direct consequence of the transformations and reforms introduced in the 2000s.

2.2 Key Figures for Higher Education In Tunisia

The functioning of the higher education and scientific research system in Tunisia required the budgeting of 1.481 billion dinars[2] in 2018. The 2019 Finance Law provided for an increase of 11% (compared to that of 2018), which will represent 4.06% of the general budget of the Tunisian State in 2019.

Analyses of recent statistics on the number of HEIs (departments (specialties), the number of research units, the number of students and teachers, the level of graduation activity, etc.) will shed light on the activities of MESRST.

2.2.1 Place of Universities and HEIs in Public Higher Education in Tunisia

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[2] 440 million euros (exchange rate on January 9, 2019)

Higher education in Tunisia consists of 276 higher education institutions, of which 73.91% belong to the public sector (Table 1); 26% are private HEIs. Among the 204 public HEIs, 12.25% are ISETs (under the direction of the DGET); the others are attached to the 13 universities across the country. Research in Tunisia is exclusively conducted in the public sector, thanks to the 668 research structures (institutes, research centers, laboratories and units).

Public Higher Education	
Universities	**13**
HERI	**204**
Including ISETs (General Directorate of Technological Studies)	**25**
Including HEIs in joint doctoral programs	**31**
Including HEIs only under the MESRS	**148**
Private Higher Education	
Private Institutions	**72**
Research Structures	
Institutes and Research Centers	**38**
Research Laboratories	**329**
Research Units	**301**

Table 1: Number of Tunisian HEIs and research structures in 2017–2018

The number of HEIs in higher education stabilized since the 2014/2015 academic year (Table 2). The latest to have been created are eight university institutions, namely in 2012/2013: the ISSAT of Kairouan, FST Sidi Bouzid, ISET Kelibia, and in 2014/2015: IPEI of Kairouan, ENSTA Borj Cédria, ENI of Gafsa , ESTIT Borj Cédria and ISPIR of Kairouan.

	University	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
1	University of Jendouba	13	13	13	13	13
2	University of Kairouan	9	9	11	11	12
3	University Ezitouna	2	2	2	2	3
4	University of Monastir	16	16	16	16	16
5	University of Sousse	16	17	17	17	17
6	University Tunis El Manar	15	15	15	15	15
7	University of Gafsa	9	9	9	9	10
8	**Virtual University of Tunis**	1	1	1	1	1
9	University of Sfax	19	19	19	19	19
10	University of Gabès	15	15	15	15	15
11	University of Manouba	13	13	13	13	13
12	University of Carthage	31	31	31	31	33
13	University of Tunis	14	15	15	15	15
	HEIs under Universities	169	171	174	174	179
	HEIs under the General Directorate of Technological Studies (DGET)	24	24	25	25	25
	Total	193	195	199	199	204

Table 2: Evolution of the number of institutions (faculties, schools, institutes) per university in Tunisia.

Source: BEPP– MESRST, 2015.

On balance, we notice a maturity of the public higher education system. Thus, universities like Sfax (19 HEIs), Monastir (16 HEIs), Gabes (15 HEIs), Jendouba (13 HEIs), Manouba (13 HEIs), El Manar (15 HEIs) have seen the number of their institutions stabilize, since 2010. With the exception of the University of Kairouan (3 new HEIs) and Carthage (2 new HEIs), the other universities have incorporated one single HEI since 2010. Overall, the evolution of the structures of the 13 universities under the MESRST, in terms of teaching units, stopped after the creation of 8 HEIs between 2013 and 2015.

The different institutions (faculties, institutes, schools) may include several departments. According to the responses from the survey of university Secretaries–General (10 responses out of 13), universities manage 3 to 65 departments of different specialties, spread over all the relevant HEIs. According to the graph below (Graph 1) designed on the basis of the responses received, the University of Sfax manages the largest number of departments (which concern 18 different specialties, BEPP report, 2016), followed by the universities of Monastir (13 specialties), Sousse

(15 specialties), El Manar (15 specialties) and Manouba (12 specialties). In order to complete the data not provided by the universities regarding the number of departments they manage, the BEPP 2016 report indicates that some universities are developing a wider diversity in the training they offer, such as the universities of Gabès with 16 different specialties, of Carthage with 17 different specialties and of Tunis with 12 different specialties. Besides, two universities are more specialized, the University of Ezzitouna (mainly letters) and the UVT (business affairs and computer science).

According to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), the 21 fields of study that attracted students in 2016 (source BEPP, 2016) are in order of priority: engineering and related techniques (45,831 students, i.e. 15.56% of the total), commercial and administrative affairs (44,752 students or 15.1% of the total), computer and multimedia sciences (38,606 students or 13% of the total), literature (34,716 students or 11 , 7% of the total) and health (28,358 students, or 6.62% of the total).
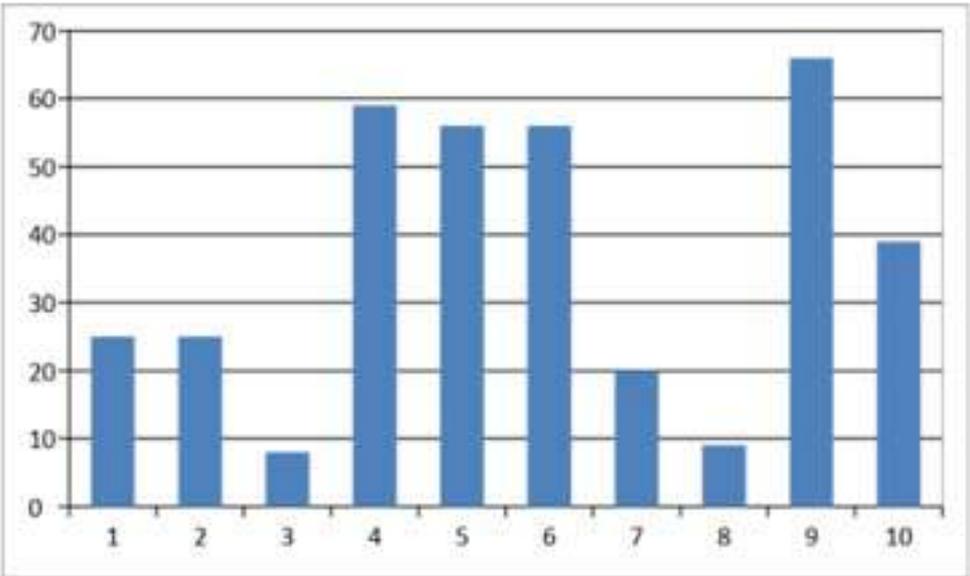
Graph 1: Number of departments per university in Tunisia in 2017

Legend: 1:univ. Jendouba; 2: univ. Kairouan; 3: univ. Ezzitouna; 4: univ. Monastir; 5: univ. Sousse; 6:univ. El Manar; 7: univ. Gafsa; 8: univ. UVT; 9: univ. Sfax; 10: univ. Manouba; 11: univ. Gabes; 12: univ. Carthage; 13: univ. Tunis.

2.2.2 The Place of Students and Teachers in the Higher Education System

Since the beginning of the 2010s, the variety of the university education supply is concomitant with two factors regarding the demand: the decrease in student demography (in 2017, – 23.82% compared to 2011) and the increase of the share of students enrolled in the private sector (+ 75.42%) (See Table 3).

	2011–2012	2016–2017	2017–2018	Evolution
Tunisian Population	11 304,00	11 304,00	11 582,00	+2.45%
Number of Students	375 392	282 204	272 261	–23.82%
Public Institutions	339 619	250 900	241 084	–29.01%
Private Institutions	17 773	31 304	31 177	+75.42%
African Students	4 932	5 962	5 647	25.67%
Number of Graduates (Public and Private)	72 139	64 801	59 200 (approximation)	–17.9%
Percentage of Women	61%	65%	68%	
Enrollment Rate	28.1%	31.3%	34%	
Teaching Personnel	22 410	22 846	22 343	–0.30%
Number of Teacher-Researchers	10 816	12 650	12 485	+15.43%
Number of Technologists		1998	1934	–3.20%

Table 3: Evolution of the number of university teachers, students and graduates in Tunisia.

These data are interesting for more than one reason. They show both the decrease in the number of graduates (–17.9% compared to 2011) and the decrease in the number of students (–23.82%). It should also be noted that the number of teachers has also plummeted, but not proportionally with the number of students (– 0.30%). This led to endeavors to stabilize the distribution of the number of teachers among universities as it was done in the 2000s (Graph 2).
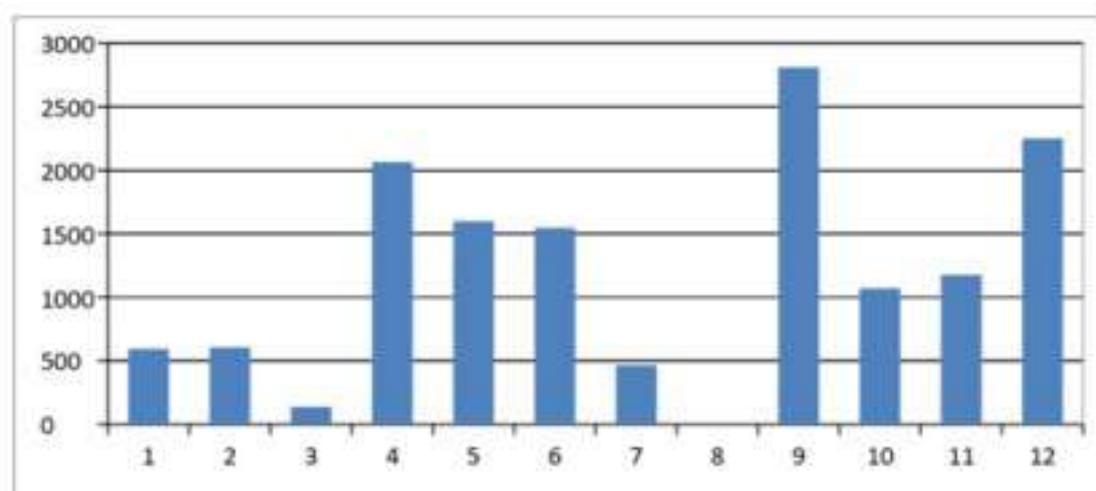

Graph2: Number of teachers per university.

According to the responses to the first survey (see Appendix 1), the universities with more teaching staff are the University of Sfax and the University of Carthage. The comparison with the BEPP figures (2016) shows that the University of El Manar (3349 teachers), Sfax (3128 teachers) and Carthage (3126 teachers) are the main employers of the teaching staff. These three universities thus employ 42.40% of teachers in the public sector (BEPP, 2016). It should be noted that the DGET for its part manages 2,479 teachers (BEPP, 2016) working in ISETs.

The study of student figures confirms this trend, since the universities with the highest number of students are the University of Sfax (34,213, BEPP figures, 2016), Carthage (34,590 students, BEPP, 2016) and El Manar (33,331, BEPP, 2016). The three of them account for 38.71% of the number of students in the public sector (Graph 3).
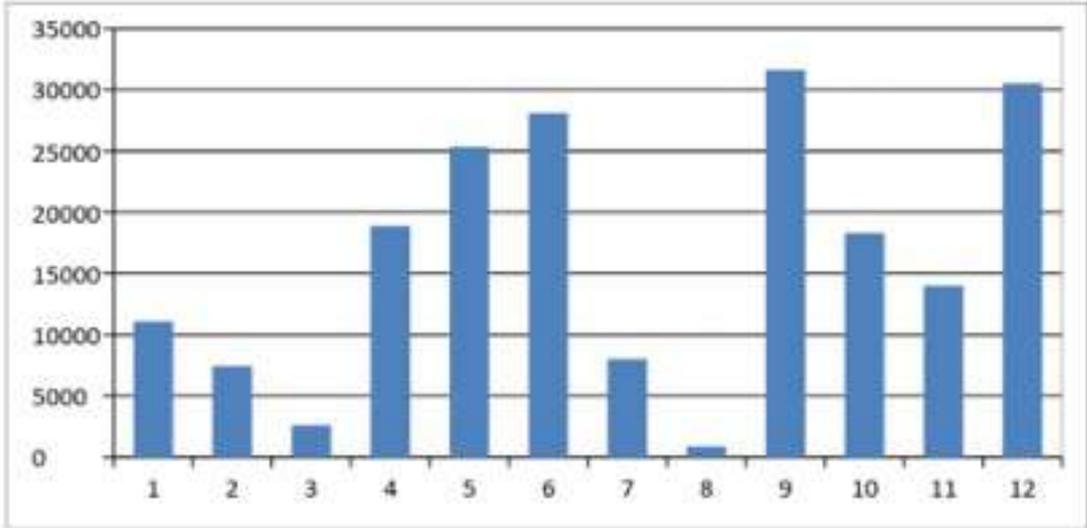
Graph3: Number of Students per university

Legend: 1:univ. Jendouba; 2: univ. Kairouan; 3: univ, Ezzitouna; 4: univ, Monastir; 5: univ, Sousse; 6: univ, El Manar; 7: univ, Gafsa; 8: univ, UVT; 9: univ, Sfax; 10: univ, Manouba; 11: univ, Gabes; 12: univ, Carthage; 13: univ, Tunis.

In addition to the variety of offer in terms of specialties (see Graph 2), the students in the Tunisian university education system face a diversity of educational pathways. Out of 702 B. A. degrees (Bachelor's Degrees) in 2017/2018, the applied "Bachelor's Degrees" represent 63%. The diversity in master's programs is greater, since the Tunisian system offers 692 master's degrees, 55% of which are vocational (see Table 4).

Courses of Studies	
Public Sector	**Number**
Bachelor's Degrees	702
Fundamental Bachelor's Degrees	261
Masters	692

Professional Masters	384
Research Masters	308
Private Sector	
Fundamental Bachelor's Degrees	
Applied Bachelor's Degrees	

Table 4: Distribution of higher education pathways in Tunisia (2017-2018)

2.2.3 Place of Research in the Higher Education System

Number of Scientific Publications (SCOPUS Database)	7 746
Number of Teacher-Researchers (affiliated in laboratories and research units)	11 628
Number of Student-Researchers (Masters/PhD)	13 742

Table 5: Publications, Teacher and Student-Researchers in Tunisia (2017).

Referring to Tables 3 and 5, the teacher-researchers, affiliated to the 618 research structures (see Table 1), represent 52% of the teaching staff. As for student-researchers (master's and doctoral students), they represent 5% of all students enrolled in 2017.

2.3 Governance Bodies in Tunisian Higher Education

2.3.1 Structure of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research in Tunisia

The Ministry includes several departments and units dealing with priority themes. Legal provisions govern the organizational units and functions at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, according to Decree N° 2008-2876, dated August 11, 2008, on the Organization of the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and technology, (Official Gazette N° 67 – p 2580), and Decree N° 2010-615A dated April 5, 2010, amending Decree N° 2008-2876, dated August 11, 2008, on the organization of the Ministry of Higher Education , scientific research and technology (Official Gazette N° 29 – p 940).

The organization chart of the ministry (see Chart 1):

Two types of bodies work together to improve governance at MESRST. The main activity of the first is evaluation, while the second plays a decision-making role, which may be binding or advisory.
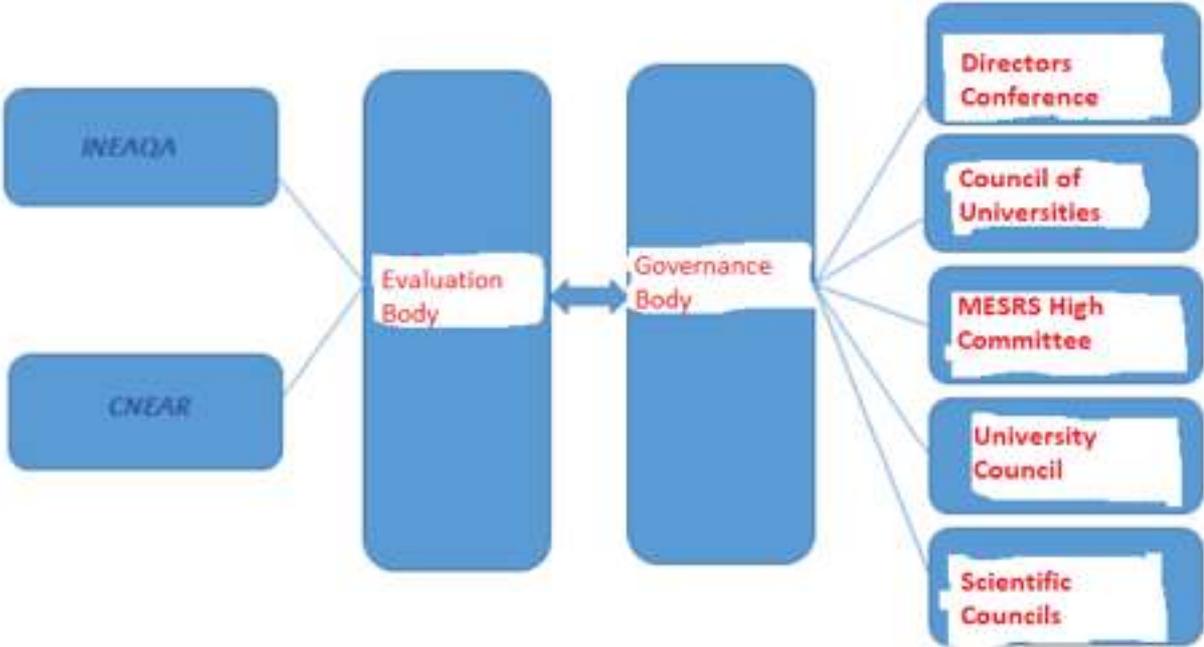
Chart 2: Organization of Evaluation and Governance Bodies

Source: Communication, Launch Day of SAGESSE Project, by Olfa Kacem (2018), MESRST

The decision-making governance bodies are as follows:

The Council of Universities, created in 2010, is chaired by the Minister for Higher Education. It is composed of the presidents of universities and the general managers of the Ministry's central administration. The president of the Council of Universities may invite any person whose presence seems useful to him.

The MESRS High Committee is an advisory body which assists the Minister in the development of the Ministry's project planning, general coordination, organization and training. The committee is composed of the general directors of the different structures of the Ministry (general management).

The Directors Conference brings together, in addition to the general directors, directors and other senior Ministry officials, and anyone whose participation is deemed useful for the items on the agenda. This conference meets when convened by the Minister. It periodically reviews the progress of the work of the ministry and the main files submitted to it.

The Central Governance Unit, created in 2017, is in charge of training and monitoring governance issues within the Tunisian university.

Ad hoc structures have also been created:

▪ **The Management by Objectives Unit** whose task is to effectively put in place budgeting by objectives and the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF). This approach to budgeting was initiated in 2008, and was made compulsory by Decree N° 2010-615, dated April 5, 2010. This unit, although partially provided with human resources (a director and two assistants only) plays a very active role in the conceptualization and the implementation of budgeting by objectives.

▪ **The management by Objectives Department** is tasked with the execution of the higher education reform project, with a view to supporting the employability of higher education graduates (Government Decree N° 2016-1100, dated August 25, 2016). This department is particularly responsible for coordinating the implementation of a quality approach in institutions and universities according to a competitive system, in this case the Education Quality Improvement Program (QIP).

▪ The Management by Objectives Department also oversees the execution of the program to support the implementation of the "Horizon 2020" program (Government Decree No. 2016-955, dated July 22, 2016).

2.3.2 Governance Structure of Tunisian Universities

The first person in charge of the university is the President, who has become elected since 2011, for a three-year term. He chairs the University Board, composed of two elected vice-presidents, heads of institutions, ten representatives of teachers, three representatives of students, two representatives of ATOS (Administrative and Technical Staff, Workers and Services) and three representatives of the socio-economic and cultural sphere.

The University Board takes decisions regarding:

– The issues of pedagogical and scientific nature,

– The establishment of the university's programs in scientific and pedagogical fields and in the areas of training, research and interuniversity cooperation,

– The organization of university life and the establishment of appropriate methods to improve the scientific and pedagogical performance of institutions under the jurisdiction of the university,

– Approval of the budget

– All other issues submitted to it by its President or by the Minister of Higher Education.

The decisions of the University Board are enforceable (since 2008-19) after the approval of the Ministry, or after the expiration of a period of one month from their arrival at the registry office of the Ministry without being subject to opposition.

As for the Secretary-General of the university, his prerogatives are not explained in the texts. He acts under the supervision of the authorizing officer (the president of the university). He has two organizational units under his direction:

1 The Common Services Directorate, consisting of five sub-directorates:

The sub-directorate of Financial Affairs, which includes:

> – The University Budget Service,
>
> – The Department of Accounting and Oversight of the Institutions' Budgets.

The Human Resources sub-directorate, which includes:

> – The Department of Teaching, Administrative and Technical Personnel and workers,
>
> – The Department of computerized management systems for civil servants.

The sub-directorate of Studies, Prospecting and IT, which includes:

> – The Studies and Prospecting Department,
>
> – The IT Department.

The Construction and Equipment sub-directorate, which includes:

> – The Technical Studies and Construction Monitoring Department,
>
> – Materials, Equipment and Maintenance Department,
>
> – The permanent Secretariat of the Procurement Commission.

The Legal Affairs, Archives and Publication sub-directorate, which includes:

> – The Legal Affairs and Litigation Department,
>
> – The Publication, Documentation and Archives Department.

2 The Directorate of Academic Affairs and Scientific Partnership.

It is supervising the work of six general directorates (DG) at MESRST such as: the DG of Higher Education, the DG of Scientific Research, the DG of Research Promotion, the DG of University Renovation, the DG of Student Affairs, the DG of International Cooperation. It includes two sub-directorates:

The Pedagogical Affairs and University Life Sub-Directorate, comprising three departments:

- The Department of Programs, Examinations and University Competitions,

- The Student Affairs Department,

- The Department of Relations with the Environment and Professional Integration.

The Scientific Research, International Cooperation and University Evaluation Sub-Directorate, comprising two departments:

- The Scientific Research and University Evaluation Department,

- The International Cooperation Department.

The MESRT decree, dated March 4, 2008, provides for the creation of observatories within each university (see 3.1.3). Likewise, Decree N° 2008-2716, dated August 4, 2008 provides for the establishment of a university quality committee (see 3.1.1). Under the government decree N° 2016-1158, a governance unit must also be created and attached to the board of directors for public institutions.

It should be noted that the current organization chart of the university, which is supposed to be, on the one hand, a schematic representation of the functional and hierarchical links of its components, and on the other hand, an organizational device allowing the university to discharge suitably its duties, is susceptible to a three-fold bias:

- First of all, this organizational chart does not allow the university to perform, as it should, its strategic functions. This conclusion is corroborated by two facts: first, the internal imbalance is noticed between the Directorate of Common Services and that of Academic Affairs and Scientific Partnership. The former includes five sub-directions and eleven departments, while the latter has only two sub-directions and five departments. This de facto situation implies that the legislator attributes to the university only a mission of logistical and financial support (towards its institutions) and not a strategic one. The second fact is that the strategic functions of the university depend on steering and governance bodies, which are either non-existent or have difficulty operating (observatories, professional integration and spin-off center, space for company, quality committee, integration and monitoring committee, internal evaluation structure, etc.).

- Secondly, this organizational chart does not make it possible to put into effect or maintain the relationship, provided for by the laws governing their functioning and defining their missions, between the university and its institutions. Indeed, university institutions do not have organizational charts and have been obliged, for decades, to perform their functions in addition to other traditional ones (services: education, human resources and financial resources) in the absence of structures dedicated to international relations or quality and evaluation.

– Thirdly, by comparing the organization chart of the Ministry with that of the university, we see that the structures and bodies of foresight work, steering and governance, which are predominant in the Ministry, are lacking at the university.

2.3.3 Organization of HEIs: Faculties, Schools and Institutes

Each institution has a legal personality. It can be a public administration or a public institution of a scientific and technological nature) (see 3.1.5).

There is no legal or administrative provision to organize the functioning of HEIs. Law N° 2008–19 simply recognizes the authority and role of the:

– Dean or the director, elected by their scientific councils (since 2011): the director or the dean is the authorizing officer of the budget. Each institution has a Secretary-General whose role remains vague in the regulatory texts.

– Scientific council of the institution: under Law N° 2008–19, its role is primarily advisory. It is composed of heads of departments, representatives of teachers, representatives of students and representatives of the socio-economic environment (law N° 2008–19). it is mainly involved to validate the budget of the institution and to examine the issues related to the development and monitoring of the projects and the proper functioning of the institution, as well as the organization and conduct of studies, training programs, internships and research programs.

It should be noted that academic institutions do not have regulatory organization charts. Nevertheless, it remains possible for the first person in charge of the institution, for a better performance of the functions, to distribute the tasks and to assign the responsibilities of the executives and the agents working in these HEIs.

3.

Governance and Autonomy of Tunisian Universities: Implementation of Reforms

and Good Practices
(2008–2018)

The current situation of universities in terms of governance and quality assurance cannot be understood without going back to the reforms introduced in the 2000s. It can be summed up as the result of an ambitious reform, when the principle of autonomy and the establishment of new governance of Tunisian universities were explicitly introduced by the 2008 Law, which brought about in-depth changes to the structuring of Tunisian universities. However, few of the provisions foreseen in 2008 have actually been fully implemented, for multiple reasons that will need to be analyzed. The lack of support and the unpreparedness of those responsible for implementing the reform in institutions and universities are often put forward to explain this failure. We will propose here other avenues of interpretation, highlighting in particular the absence of a shared vision of the future of the Tunisian university, with different, even antagonistic, conceptions of the role of the university vis-à-vis the society, and of what its organization should be. These tensions, which emerged in the context of the Tunisian revolution of 2011 and the political transition that followed, are difficult to resolve due to the lack of opportunities to

build consensus, in terms of organization and management, tailored to the needs of universities.

3.1 Implementation of the 2008 Law: A Sluggish and Difficult Process

The road map provided for by the 2008 Law set as a starting point the forging of new relations between government/Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and universities, through the establishment of contracting, associated with the development of strategies at all levels (ministry, universities, institutions). Promoting institutional autonomy had to go through the systematic implementation of a quality assurance approach, new management tools and new budgetary practices (GBO). Commitment to this process gave universities and institutions the opportunity to change their status from public administrative institutions (EPA) to Public Science and Technology Institutions (PSTI). The main purpose of this structural change was to provide universities with a certain financial autonomy by eliminating prior budgetary control and adopting commercial accounting. The analysis proposed here takes up the different stages outlined by the law to assess their actual implementation.

3.1.1 Adopting a Quality Approach in the Higher Education Structures

3.1.1.1 Legal Framework

The spirit of the 2008 Law grants a fundamental role to quality assurance in the functioning of the Tunisian higher education system (Articles 5, 22, 50, 51, 52, 54 and 55). It proposes a definition of quality of higher education that is focused on innovation and professional integration (Article 50). Improving quality is explicitly presented as a major new objective of the university (Article 22). Article 55 of the aforementioned law even establishes a payment in the form of additional credits to the accredited institution "allowing it to meet the requirements implied by its commitment to respect quality standards, the conditions of which will be set by decree. These credits are charged against those intended for the promotion of quality".

It is worthy to reiterate, however, that the notion of quality was not new in the Tunisian university landscape. Indeed, the creation of quality committees within universities and HEIs was imposed by Circular N° 32, dated June 03, 2006. Law N° 2008–19 of February 25, 2008, endorsed by Decree N° 2008– 2716 of August 4, 2008, nevertheless made it compulsory in each HEI to establish a quality committee, formed on the proposal of the scientific councils of the institutions, and appointed by the president of the university. The presidents of each HEI committee form the quality committee of the university to which they are attached (Article 18 of the Decree). The establishment of quality committees is considered as the cornerstone for the implementation of the quality assurance process, as enacted by the 2008

Law. The legislator considers it as the condition for the accreditation of training (Articles 52–55).

Law N°2008-19, dated February 25, 2008, on Higher Education

Article 5 – The quality of the higher education in the areas of research, training and educational, administrative and financial management constitutes a fundamental element of the higher research and educational system.

Article 22 – The university should ensure the continuous improvement of the quality of the training, scientific research, pedagogical, administrative and financial management, as well as the quality assurance within the institutions to which it is attached. It should work, in accordance with Article 54 of this Law, to obtain the accreditation by these institutions. It shall be established, within each university, a Quality Committee whose composition and operating procedures are laid down by a decree.

Article 50 – The quality of the higher education and scientific research consists in the compliance with the standards determined by the Authority mentioned in Article 42 of this law, particularly in terms of:
- The quality of transfer of knowledge and know-how,
- Vocational competences of graduates,
- Efficiency of scientific research and technological innovation,
- Degree of adaptation of the training to the needs for the job market.

Article 51 – For the institution, quality assurance consists in meeting the necessary conditions allowing it to achieve and maintain quality in a sustainable fashion. Quality assurance refers to indicators based on data related to the standards provided for in Article 50 of this Law, set by the Authority referred to in Article 42 of this Law, and objectively quantifiable.

Article 52 – The accreditation is the certification granted by the Authority mentioned in article 42 of this Law, at the request of the institution of higher education and research. It should meet the standards of quality assurance, defined by the aforementioned Authority, in accordance with Article 50 of this law.

The accreditation is granted for a maximum period of four years, either to the institution, or to the programs or the courses.

The accreditation can be withdrawn, during the said period, by the Authority mentioned in Article 42 of this Law, in the case of failure to meet the standards of quality, in accordance with the regulations defined by the Authority.

Article 53 – The accreditation of the institution consists of the certification, by the body in charge of the quality assurance, that the structures of the institutions and its human resources have the capacity to ensure the academic and administrative services in accordance with the quality standards provided for in Article 50 of this Law. The accreditation of the institution includes the educational and scientific programs and methods applied therein and their adequacy with the level of the diplomas awarded and the skills and abilities expected of graduates.

The accreditation of the programs consists of the certification, by the body in charge of the quality assurance, of the conformity of the programs and of the educational and research methods of the institutions, with the quality standards provided for in Article 50 of this Law and their adequacy to the skills and abilities expected of graduates.

Article 54 – The institutions of Higher Education and Research that distinguish themselves and meet quality assurance standards in accordance with Article 50 of this Law, may, at their request, obtain accreditation by the National Authority for Evaluation, Quality Assurance and Accreditation. In this case, the said institutions should comply with the aforementioned quality standards in the fields of teaching, scientific research and educational, administrative and financial management.

**Article 55** – Obtaining the accreditation allows the concerned institution to benefit

3.1.1.2 The Effort to Implement the Quality Approach

The high education system, provided for by the 2008 Law, has been implemented very unevenly. It is possible to speak of a favorable period for the development of quality committees, associated with the wave of launching projects to support quality, financed by competitive funds (QIP-E, QIP-CG) between 2006 and 2009.

However, not all institutions have formally established quality committees. Although some have officially set up internal teams responsible for implementing the quality approach in their institutions, few have been operational. This disparity in the establishment of these committees is observed only at the national level, among the different universities, but also within the same university. The introduction of a quality committee is closely linked to the will of the administration of the institution. Overall, the latter remained timid and little committed, given the vagueness surrounding the tasks allocated to the quality committees.

This situation has persisted since 2008, because neither the roles, nor the representation, nor the scope of the authority, and even less the resources granted to these committees, have been defined by the law. It should be noted, however, that the benchmarks for the assessment of institutions and universities drawn up by the IEAQA (below) recommend that it be assigned the following missions: ensure or manage the assessments of the institution; ensure or manage traceability; manage the annual activity reports of the various training and research structures.

Overall, the implementation of the quality approach has therefore deviated from the mechanism provided for by the 2008 Law (through the implementation of a QIP, European projects or through institutional will).
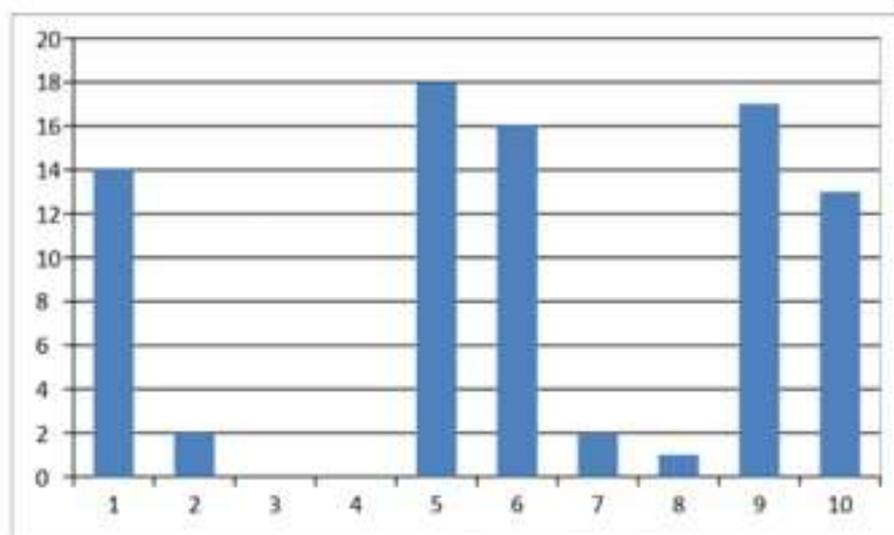

Graph 4: Number of active quality committees in HEIs (Survey 1, June–July 2018)

Légend: 1:univ. Jendouba; 2: univ. Kairouan; 3: univ, Ezzitouna; 4: univ, Monastir; 5: univ, Sousse; 6: univ, El Manar; 7: univ, Gafsa; 8: univ, UVT; 9: univ, Sfax; 10: univ, Manouba; 11: univ, Gabes; 12: univ, Carthage; 13: univ, Tunis.

This observation is corroborated by the responses to the second questionnaire (see Appendix 2). In fact, the number of active committees remains limited. The majority of Secretaries-General declare that they cannot discharge their duties in the absence of not only will and/or clear prerogatives, but also of the means to ensure their functioning.

The quality committees are actively involved only in 34.6% of institutions/ universities in terms of strategic decision-making of, and in 23.1% of them in terms of operational decision-making, as shown in the graph below. According to the statements of the Secretaries-General, who are the main observers of the functioning of universities and HEIs, the experience of institutions in terms of quality comes down mainly to their participation in QIP projects (i.e. 73.1% of institutions that responded to the investigation). For 50% of those surveyed, it is difficult to talk about quality within the institutions in the absence of the means and actions undertaken. Only 3.8% of institutions used a quality assurance body for training programs. In addition, 42.3% state that they have internal mechanisms aimed at evaluating the quality of training programs without however ensuring the quality of the courses.

Are Quality Committees involved in operational or day-to-day decision-making?
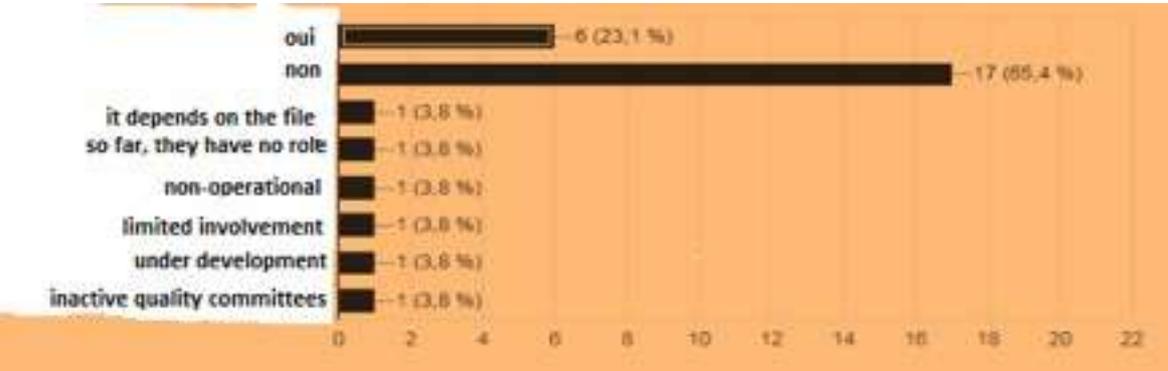
Graph 5: Involvement of Quality Committees in Decision-Making

3.1.2 Evaluation of Universities and Institutions

3.1.2.1 First Evaluation Experiences

Promoted in 1998 by Dali Jazi, then Minister of Higher Education, evaluation practices are an essential element of the new architecture of Tunisian higher education that is focused on quality. Self-assessment practices began at that time, with the production of internal assessment guides for HEIs by the National

Evaluation Committee, the first being in 1998 (Circular N° 13/98), the second in June 2004 (Circular N° 26, dated June 4, 2004), then a third in 2005, which was more elaborate and better equipped (Circular N° 52, dated July 13, 2005).

The first attempts to implement internal self-assessments took place during the period of 2004-2006. Thus, in 2004, 76 institutions participated, to varying degrees of achievement, in internal evaluation operations. Thirty-six of them produced detailed reports. Only four institutions were then subjected to an external evaluation, during a pilot experiment carried out by the National Evaluation Committee.

The 2008 Law provides for the existence of an evaluation process for universities, institutions and training courses, both internal and external (Articles 44-48).

Law N° 2008-19, dated February 25, 2008, on Higher Education

Article 44 – The evaluation of universities, institutions, as well as training courses and their relevant programs involves overseeing their academic and institutional performance based on pre-established quality criteria, with a view to adopting appropriate measures to improve the performance of the institution and promote it in terms of efficiency and competence.

Article 45 – The evaluation is conducted on the basis of objective criteria, methods and procedures guaranteeing transparency and equity, and which are made public by the Authority for the purpose of informing the universities, the institutions of higher education and research, the teaching staff, the students and the administrative staff. The evaluation work includes in particular the examination of all documents related to the operations carried out, as well as the hearing of the President of the University, the dean or director, the president of the Quality Committee referred to in Article 29 of this law, the teaching staff, students, managers and employers.

Article 47 – The evaluation is either internal (carried out by higher education and research institutions) or external (carried out by teams of experts under the supervision of the Authority referred to in Article 42 of this law).

Article 48 – The bodies created for this purpose, within the university or the institution concerned, carry out the internal evaluation and prepare annual reports comprising the analysis of the situation of the institution and the conditions of its functioning. They elaborate action plans and propose the necessary measures to improve and enhance its performance

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Although the 2008 Law provided for the completion of an annual internal evaluation (Article 48), it is above all with a view to contracting that the majority of Tunisian universities and their institutions carried out self-evaluations in 2009, while invoking the experiences of the first wave of reforms during 2004-2006. However, this experience was not capitalized on, due to the postponement of the contracting policy (see below).

3.1.2.2 Establishment of the National Authority for Evaluation (IEAQA)

The 2008 law also provided for the establishment of a National Authority for Evaluation.

Law No. 2008-19, dated February 25, 2008, on Higher Education

Article 41 – Assessment, quality assurance and accreditation are fundamental mechanisms for achieving the objectives of the higher education and scientific research sector.

Article 42 – A public institution, with legal personality and financial autonomy, called "National Authority for Evaluation, Quality Assurance and Accreditation" is created. Its budget is attached by decree to the budget of the Ministry of Higher Education.

Article 43 – The National Authority for Evaluation, Quality Assurance and Accreditation is tasked with evaluation, quality assurance and accreditation in higher education. Assessment missions are carried out by pools of experts, composed in accordance with the regulations set by the Authority.

With much delay, the establishment of this body took place in 2012 (Decree N° 1719). Since its announcement by the 2008 Law, the creation of this body had aroused mistrust and criticism from the university community as to its independence. Being considered as judge and party (placed under the direct supervision of MESRS), it is initially rather assimilated to an academic inspection unit, likely to be exploited by the political power to interfere in academic affairs and become an apparatus of pressure.

Decree N° 2012-1719, dated September 14, 2012, determining the composition of the National Authority for Evaluation, Quality Assurance and Accreditation and the terms of its functioning.

Article 1 – This decree establishes the composition of The National Authority for Evaluation, Quality Assurance and Accreditation and the modalities of its functioning.

Article 2 – The National Authority for Evaluation, Quality Assurance and Accreditation is composed as follows:
– The Authority council,
– Two technical departments,
– A permanent secretariat.

Article 7 – The Authority council is responsible for:
– The establishment of a quality system and a specific procedure guide,
– The improvement, in all stages of the its work, of the quality of its services, its reliability, in addition to making its activities and methods available for external evaluation by its counterparts within the context of reciprocity,
– The establishment of an evaluation and accreditation program in line with the priorities set by the Minister of Higher Education and with the accreditation requests from higher education and research institutions,
– The approval of evaluation reports and accreditation requests.

Under the authority of a president and a council composed of 13 members, including eight Full Professors, four members of the economic and social environment and a governance specialist, the IEAQA is currently organized into two technical departments: a department of the institutions and a training department, supported by a permanent secretariat, for a total of 15 permanent staff. It has set up a network of 160 expert evaluators, who have volunteered in the evaluations organized by the IEAQA.

Since the law does not explicitly provide for a regular assessment of institutions, the IEAQA mainly intervened at the request of the Ministry for the assessment of universities and institutions wishing to upgrade to PSTI (Public Science and Technology Institutions) status:

– 7 universities in view of transition to the PSTI status: Virtual University of Tunis (2015), Universities of Sfax (July 2016), Sousse (August 2016), Monastir (September 2016), Kairouan (September 2016), Tunis El Manar (January 2017), Gabes (July 2017);

– 15 institutions in view of transition to PSTI: ISET'COM (July 2016); Higher Institute of Education and Continuing Training (July 2016); National Engineering School of Sousse (August 2016); Higher Institute of Applied Sciences and Technologies of Sousse (August 2016); Faculty of Medicine of Sousse (September 2016); Higher School of Science and Technology of Hammam Sousse (October 2016); National School of Veterinary Medicine of Sidi Thabet (October 2016); National Engineering

School of Monastir (November 2016); ISET Kelibia (March 2017); Faculty of Medicine of Sfax (January 2018).

In the case of assessments at the transition to PSTI, the evaluation benchmark consists of the regulatory conditions set by law for the transition to PSTI.

The IEAQA has also evaluated nine Bachelor's Degrees (2016) and engineering school courses (2016) for accreditation.

Summary Table of Evaluation Missions Conducted by the IEAQA (2015-2018):

Evaluation Type/Year		2015	2016	2017	2018
Evaluation of Higher Education and Research Institutions (External Evaluation)	Public Sector			2 (*)	2
	Private Sector			1 (*)	1 (*)
Evaluation for the Transition to a PSTI Status	Universities	1	4	2	
	Higher Education and Research Institutions		8	6	1
Assessment of Programs and Training Courses	Bachelor's Degrees (Public Sector		9	8	4
	Bachelor's Degrees (Private Sector		4	4	
			60		

(*) Participation of a number of IEAQA experts as observers in the accreditation missions of four engineering schools led by the CTI (Engineer Title Commission): ESPRIT: April 11 and 12, 2017 / Sup'Com: May 16, 2017 / ENIT: May 17, 18 and 19, 2017 / Private International Polytechnic School of Tunis (Polytech INTL): June 04 and 05, 2018.

3.1.2.3 Difficulties in the Implementation of Evaluation in Tunisian Universities and Institutions

The expert committees were generally well received by institutions and universities, which were largely cooperative. However, a number of hardships still hamper the smooth running of the evaluation process. Chief among these difficulties are:

- The IEAQA has been operating since its establishment in difficult material conditions, with specialized staff, but insufficient in number in comparison to the requests of the institutions wishing to move to the PSTI status, and more broadly in

relation to the needs required by the implementation of a recurrent evaluation of Tunisian universities and institutions. Training needs remain important to bring the pool of experts up to international standards.

– The evaluation procedures put in place by the IEAQA are based on an international standard (references accessible online; pool of experts), but the absence of articulation between the periodic definition (or redefinition) of a university or institution and its evaluation empties the process of much of its meaning. The first objective of evaluation is to assess the capacity of a university or an institution to specify its objectives and to meet them.

– The IEAQA is not currently an independent agency, for it remains an administrative body. The results of the evaluations are unpublished and are not disseminated, which is contrary to international practice in the matter; they are for the moment reserved for the sole use of the Ministry. The Authority's more general role in the dissemination of the culture of quality assurance remains limited, due to a lack of resources, even though the awareness-raising and training work for the benefit of universities and institutions constitutes is of more significance than a recurrent evaluation of universities and institutions. The transition to autonomy for the IEAQA seems essential to make the Authority more credible. What credibility will a body that itself cannot have an independent strategy have, when it assesses the strategies of universities? The announced transformation of the Authority into a National Assessment and Accreditation Agency in higher education and scientific research must consider these requirements.

– The survey conducted among the Secretaries-General also shows the limits of communication concerning the IEAQA activities. In fact, 26.9% of Secretaries-General answered that they did not even know this body.

Overall, the survey conducted in June–July 2018 shows a disparate experience in internal and external evaluation among universities. In general, a first round of internal evaluations were carried out in 2008–2009 (internal evaluations of institutions). A project carried out by the University Agency of Francophonie (AUF) in 2015 (Self-evaluation of universities of the Maghreb Office) led some universities to carry out an in-depth self-evaluation. The transition to PSTI status also involves performing these self-assessments. Moreover, in terms of external evaluation, the IEAQA has not intervened in all universities and institutions.

Table 6: Number and dates of internal self-assessments carried out in Tunisian universities

University	Number of Evaluations	Dates
1	1	2012
2	1	2015 (AUF)
3	0	

4	2	The 16 institutions in 2009 and the university in 2013
5	5	Unspecified dates
6	1	2014
7	1	
8	1	2014
9	NM	
10	1	The 10 institutions in 2008
11	NM	
12	NM	
13	NM	

Legend: 1: univ. Jendouba; 2: univ. Kairouan; 3: univ. Ezzitouna; 4: univ. Monastir; 5: univ. Sousse; 6: univ. El Manar; 7: univ. Gafsa; 8: univ. UVT; 9: univ. Sfax; 10: univ. Manouba; 11: univ. Gabes; 12: univ. Carthage; 13: univ. Tunis.

NM: Not Mentioned.

Having been the first to experiment with self-assessment, the universities of Sfax (since 2008) and Monastir (since 2009) are considered forerunners. The University of Monastir has even undertaken two evaluations four years apart, which included all its HEIs. As for the University of Sfax, it has intensively extended its self-assessments to ten HEIs (out of 19). The University of Manouba and all its 13 institutions started their first self-assessment in 2009 (five of its institutions had already undertaken a self-assessment between 2005 and 2006). The University of Sousse reported five self-assessments, without specifying the relevant HEIs. From 2012, the universities of Jendouba, Kairouan, El Manar, Gafsa and the UVT initiated their first self-assessment.

Table 7: Number and dates of external evaluations carried out in Tunisian universities

University	Number of Evaluations	Dates
1	0	2012
2	0	2015 (AUF)
3	0	
4	4	University: 2014 and 2016 (IEAQA) Institutions (Engineering School): 2009 and 2016

5	6	2011 (CIDMEF) /2016 (IEAQA)
6	2	2014 / 2017
7	2	
8	1	2015 (AUF)
9	NM	
10	5	5 institutions have undertaken an external evaluation (2005-2006)
11	NM	
12	NM	
13	NM	

Legend: 1: univ. Jendouba; 2: univ. Kairouan; 3: univ. Ezzitouna; 4: univ. Monastir; 5: univ. Sousse; 6: univ. El Manar; 7: univ. Gafsa; 8: univ. UVT; 9: univ. Sfax; 10: univ. Manouba; 11: univ. Gabes; 12: univ. Carthage; 13: univ. Tunis.

NM: Not Mentioned.

The University of Sfax initiated the experience of external evaluation in 2008, but the pace of evaluations accelerated from 2014. Several universities such as Monastir, Sousse, El Manar and UVT have been subject to assessments starting from that date.

Questionnaire 2 confirms this still reduced role for external evaluation. In fact, only 30.8% of Secretaries-General say that their institutions have carried out an external evaluation of training programs and courses. In the same context and for the purposes of transition to PSTI status, 38.5% of Secretaries-General declare that their institutions have carried out or are in the process of carrying out an external evaluation. Only 19.2% of institutions have taken steps to obtain international accreditation for one or more training programs and pathways.

3.1.3 Establishment of Indicators: Case of Observatories

The implementation of a quality assurance approach entails the design and use of follow-up indicators. The 2008 Law provided for the creation of observatories to centralize, analyze and disseminate statistics on students, graduates (career opportunities and development) and teachers (specialties, ranks, etc.). However, the implementation of these new tools posed significant challenges.
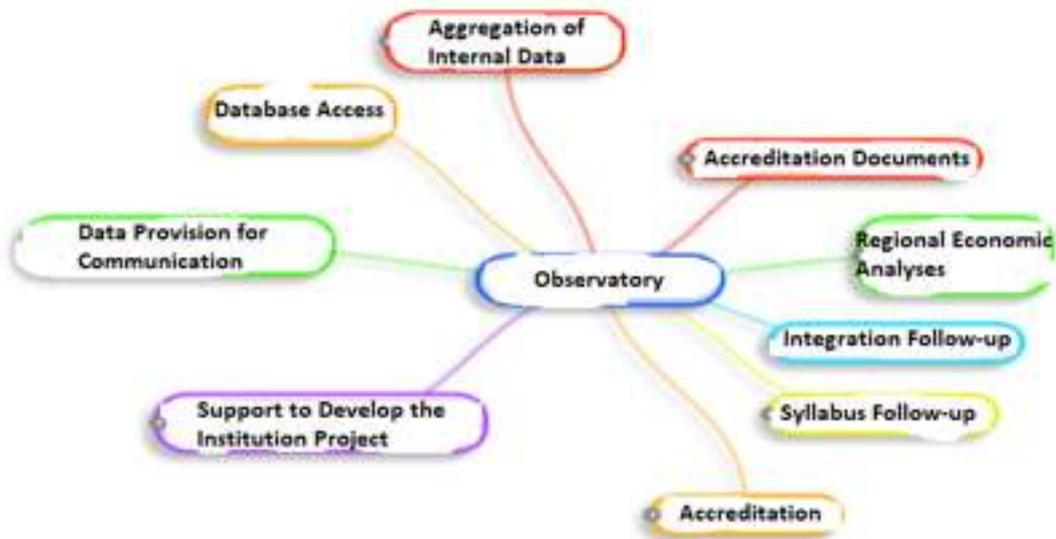
Graph 4: Tasks of Observatories

3.1.3.1 The Observatories regulatory System

They were created by the Decree of April 3, 2008, in order to strengthen the adequacy of the training offer to the employment situation in Tunisia.

Decree of the Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Technology, dated April 3, 2008, establishing the observatories within universities and setting their composition and powers as well as the modes of their operation.

Article 2 – An observatory is created within each university and is subject to the authority of the President of the university. Its headquarters is located in the buildings of the university concerned or in one of the higher education institutions and research attached to it.

Article 3 – The observatory is a body that helps the university and the supervisory authority take decisions and ensure their follow-up. The observatory is responsible, in particular, for the following tasks:

– To centralize, analyze and disseminate statistics concerning students continuing their studies, graduates, teachers as well as training fields and institutions,

– To express its opinion about the university's strategy and its results,

– To provide relevant information to enhance the university's strategy and action plans aimed at a better match between training and employment,

– To carry out studies on the vocational integration of university graduates,

– To ensure the follow-up of university courses and to analyze the causes of failure and dropout in the institutions of higher education and research, under the university concerned.

Article 4 – The Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Technology appoints the head of the observatory from among the university teachers having, at least, the rank of assistant professor of higher education or an equivalent rank, after consulting the President of the university concerned, for a period of three (3) years renewable once.

The observatory includes an orientation and follow-up committee and a technical unit.

Article 5 – The head of the observatory is responsible, under the authority of the President of the university concerned, and within the framework of the applicable legislation and regulations, for the proper functioning of the observatory.

Article 6 – The President of the university concerned sends a report on the activities of the observatory every six months, to the Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Technology.

3.1.3.2 Functioning of Observatories: Uneven Implementation

In most universities, there has been no clear structure responsible for the observatory tasks. The means and resources available in the universities have not been foreseen to fulfill the functions assigned to the observatories. The establishment of such a structure required clear regulatory mechanisms, resources in terms of space, skills, compensation mechanisms that were not met. This finding is consistent with the diagnosis already made in the report of SORECO office on observatories, and published in 2014 (Chart 5).
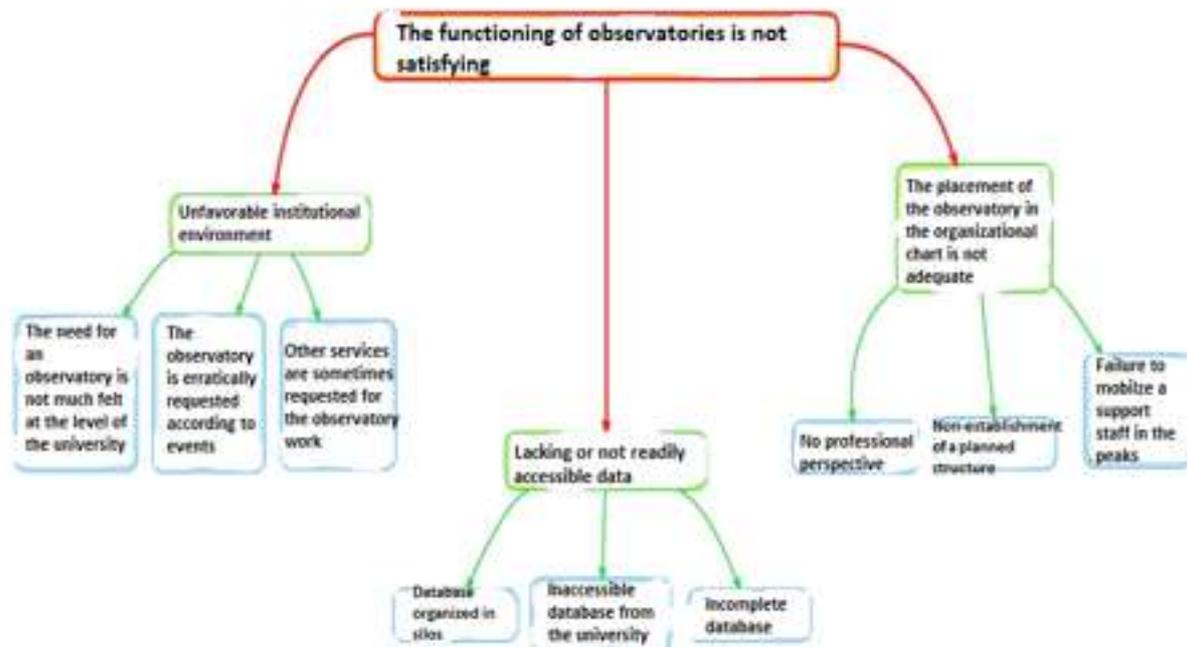
Graph 5: Causal analysis of the roots of observatories dysfunction

Source: Phase 2 report on the observatories, edited by SORECO, November 2014

One of the main impediments is the lack of an integrated information system capable of generating the information and data required to carry out this kind of project. In fact, it appears from the second survey that only 38.5% of institutions have an information and prospective structure, and 42.3% of them have a structure that allows collection, processing, use and dissemination of information. It is by no means an integrated information system adapted to the exploitation of its results on a national scale.

The universities that have set up such projects have not always been able to make them sustainable due to a lack of dedicated space and specialized human resources. At the launch of the initiative to create the observatory, statistician engineers were recruited, but the universities were not able to retain them, due to the differential in the remuneration of these personnel in the private sector compared to public service. Moreover, the solution of entrusting university teachers with an administrative function to take care of the observatory does not seem to have been attractive.

Moreover, when they were set up, the impact of these observatories appears to be very limited. In fact, the observatory is involved in strategic decision-making only for 23.1% of the institutions.

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Despite this embryonic stage, the fact remains that the need for prospective studies is keenly felt among the main university officials. Indeed, it is essential to identify the socio-economic needs and capacities of the university in order to establish relevant strategic choices.

3.1.4 Towards a Redefinition of Relations between Ministry and Universities: the Case of Contracting

3.1.4.1 The Experience of Contracting, from Commitment to Abandonment

The 2008 Law provided for a significant redefinition of the relationship among the universities, between the institutions and government, and between the ministries of Higher Education and Finance. However, the experience of contracting, after giving rise to important preparatory work within universities, was quickly forsaken.

Article 13 – The activities of universities and university institutions in terms of training, research and technological development are governed by training and research contracts. The said contracts are concluded for a period of four (4) years between the State, represented by the Minister of Higher Education or the minister concerned where appropriate, and the universities and or the institutions of higher education

The models of said contracts are determined by a decree of the Minister for Higher Education.

Article 22 – The universities and the institutions under their authority work within the framework of the guidelines of the supervisory authority, with the aim of realizing the quantitative and qualitative sectorial objectives mentioned in the plans of the economic and social development. To this end, training and research contracts respecting national priorities are concluded with the Ministry of Higher Education.

The models of the said contracts are determined by a decree of the Minister for Higher Education.

Article 23 – The training and research contracts last for a period of four (4) years. They are subject to periodic evaluation. These contracts provide for the obligations of universities and institutions of higher education, as well as the proper resources they committed to provide.

Article 24 – Te Ministry of Higher Education allocates to the university and to institutions of higher education and research credits which consist of a fixed part, which takes into account, in particular, the fixed expenses, the number of students and the training programs, and a variable part for the fulfillment of contractual obligations, as well as for the progress in the realization of the programs mentioned in the training and research contracts. The allocation of resources and credits, which are mentioned annually in the budgets of the university and of the institutions under it, is conducted according to the achievement of the objectives set out in the training and research contracts.

Originally, the contracting system aimed to put in place a new mechanism governing the relationship between the institution, the University and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. The Ministry, based on the signed four-year contracts, should grant the universities the necessary funds for the implementation of programs and projects by referring to the MTEF (Medium-Term Expenditure Framework) forecasts and to the validated projects of institutions and universities.

3.1.4.1.1 The Importance of University and HEIs Involvement

Since 2008, an extensive work in terms of contracting has been carried out, at the legislative and operational level, with the creation of reference documents, the organization of training in support techniques (logical framework, SWOT analysis, self-assessment, etc.), the design of the various indicators, the design of school plans, etc.

To achieve this, a training plan intended for the majority of universities and institutions has been developed, covering the development of institution plans, the logical framework, the MTEF, the building of indicators, etc. MESRST officials and foreign experts have worked on organizing these training sessions.

The four-year institution projects were carried out according to a methodological medium, including an initial assessment (diagnosis in the form of a self-assessment) and a logical framework facilitating the breakdown of objectives into activities. Universities had to carry out a comprehensive assessment of institutional capacities (teaching and research) to determine the baseline level of performance and plan improvements on that basis. This resulted in the development of a project for each institution, defining the strategic development priorities within four years, the general and specific objectives to be achieved, the activities to be undertaken to achieve the objectives, the performance measurement indicators and financial costing of activities and actions over the project period. The universities, on their part, have established a financial framework through MTEFs, making it possible to ensure the financial feasibility of the planned activities.

A participatory process has sometimes preceded the drawing-up of contracts to prepare the institution projects. This made it possible to mobilize several stakeholders and blazed the trail for a dialogue focused essentially on the relevance of the objective-resources relationship. However, in some cases, the implementation of the contract has been reduced to filling, without prior consent, in a preconceived grid from the Ministry.

Although not completed, the 2009 performance contracts had a "positive" impact at two levels:

– Institutional awareness of the accountability of institutions;

– Development in the skills for the resource persons involved in the implementation activities.

This phase also made it possible to familiarize with the strategic approach adapted to universities and HEIs.

3.1.4.1.2 Barriers to Contracting

This new approach to contractual relationship made autonomy conditioned by responsibility and accountability. It was the basis of a new funding mechanism distinguishing between the recurrent grant (basic funding) and the variable allowance granted by the State according to the projects proposed by the university. However, this method of financing did not see the light of day: after the promulgation of the Decree N° 2008-2016, dated August 4, 2008, on the Organization of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education and Research and the Rules of their Operation, the variable part of the performance-based funding has never been allocated.

Only a few contracts have been concluded between a number of universities and the relevant institutions. In 2009, performance contracts signed with 13 universities and 9 research centers did not result in a performance-related funding. The momentum linked to contracting has been abandoned since 2010. As a result, and well before 2011, there was a definitive abandonment of four-year contracts.

According to the statements of administrative officials gathered during the focus groups, this reliquishment of contracting is the result of a number of obstacles and shortcomings, which still persist today:

– The performance contracts did not provide for a commitment from the central administration for the gradual simplification of the procedures to have access to resources in a manner that is concomitant with the achievement of performance objectives.

– No structure had been clearly planned within the university administrations for the development of the institution plan and the contract follow-up. There has been a shortage in qualified human resources for this kind of large-scale project, in addition to the lack of an integrated information system, capable of generating the information and the data required to carry out the related actions.

– The contract model, which was eventually adopted by the ministry, did not, by any means, reflect a performance contract that would underpin an institution development project. The indicators built to feed the logical framework were mostly uncontrollable by universities and institutions (number of students, university guideline/number of teachers, national competitions/number of ATOS, competitions, 1/3 fundamental and 2/3 applied by obligation, etc.). Overall, many stakeholders underlined the non-adaptation of performance indicators to most institutions.

– The negotiation suggested during the establishment of the performance contracts was hastily conducted, and quickly turned into an obligation; the negotiation or dialogue system was neither formalized nor visible to all central and regional actors.

– The difference in periodicity among the institution plan (4 years), the MTEFs (3 years) and the mandate of university directors, deans and presidents (3 years) is an obstacle to an effective management of strategies.

3.1.4.2 Budgeting by Objectives (BBO) Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF)

Contracting, provided for by the 2008 Law, was part of the public financing reform. Initiated in 2004, the incorporation of the concept of "Budgeting by Objectives" (BBO) in the Organic Budget Law had added the possibility of credits allocation according to programs and missions, without entirely replacing the old method of budget allocation. Since 2004, two budgetary approaches have coexisted, one focused on resources with an ex-ante oversight, and the other on results, with an ex-post control.

Organic Law N° 2004-42, dated May 13, 2004, amending and completing the Organic Budget Law N° 67-53, dated December 8, 1967 (1)

Article 11 (new): The finance Law opens appropriations by part and by chapter for management expenditure, development expenditure and expenditure of special treasury funds.

The budget chapter groups together all the credits made available to each head of administration.
The finance law may authorize the allocation of credits according to programs and missions. The programs include the credits allocated to an action or a set of homogeneous actions charged to each head of administration, in order to achieve specific objectives and results that can be evaluated.

The missions include a set of programs helping to achieve a strategy of national interest. The programs and missions are determined by decree.

3.1.4.2.1 Budgeting by Objectives (BBO)

Goals of the BBO

This reform mainly targets the performance follow-up (performance indicators) and the development of management control tools, in order to strengthen the procedures of budget implementation. It notably includes the preparation of the medium-term expenditure framework (MTEF), the creation of management dialogue and the development of performance documents, such as the annual performance project (APP) and the annual performance report (APR). The reform mainly rests on the modification of the budget nomenclature, as well as on the modernization of public expenditure oversight.

Contributions and Limitations of BBO Implementation

The introduction of the programs logic constitutes a fundamental organizational change from the prevailing classical logic in the administrative organization. However, its implementation has been limited in practice for the following reasons:

– Since 2004, the implementation of the BBO has adhered to a gradual approach according to a predefined master plan, and has gone through an experimentation phase from 2013 until today: an experimental budgetary IS has been operational,

and a new system of performance follow-up is in the testing phase. The lack of prior establishment of appropriate information systems, however, resulted in operational technical deficiencies in the control, the collection and the (manual) entry of information, the systematic monitoring and control, cumbersome procedures, and uncertainties about the validity of the information (uniqueness of information not guaranteed). The process of developing and following up the performance documents drawn up annually within the context of the BBO directly addresses these IS problems, and offers continuous improvements, in a spirit of optimization of performance management tools. The so-called "technical shortcomings" concerning the information systems already existing in all the ministries are an unpleasant fact, regardless of this reform. The establishment of an internal control and QMS (Quality Management System) system is a necessary condition for the success of the BBO approach. Such projects were launched within the same context.

- The inadequacy of the MESRST HR management method did not allow for a rapid adoption of a reform of this magnitude. The career system does not provide for flexible and responsive forms of staff mobility, which would have contributed to the achievement of the project objectives. Thus, any change of employees or heads of programs, logically responsible and accountable to ministers, results in the termination of missions. However, this problem goes well beyond the context of MESRST. In fact, this aspect is currently being dealt with at the Head of Government office in a more extensive logic, affecting all State employees and having as objective the revision of the statute of the public service by integrating managerial functions (program manager and sub-programs and operational units) and performance-based remuneration.

Following the approval of the new budget-oriented law (January 31, 2019), a range of implementation texts relating to financial, administrative and HR management is being prepared for the enforcement of this new mode of management.

3.1.4.2.2 Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF)

MTEF Objectives: Multiannual Programming of Resources

The transition to BBO was also to be accompanied by an additional budget management tool. The MTEF is a rolling three-year budget programming instrument, prepared annually, allowing budget management to be placed in a multiannual perspective. It helps improve budget control, and ensure the sustainability of public policies and their compatibility with the State's financial capacities.

Contributions and limitations of MTEF implementation

The introduction of the MTEF has given concrete expression to the government's desire to introduce bottom-up budgeting techniques. The control approach is rather based on obtaining results and not justifying the use of resources. The MTEF was to be initially a tool to ensure the alignment between the university's strategy and its

budgetary capacities, since it was one of the main components in the four-year contracts. It was supposed to be the device that allows universities to negotiate their needs in terms of resources. However, the practice of the MTEF has developed primarily as a parallel exercise. Its results are not discussed during annual budget negotiation meetings, neither with the supervisory ministry, nor with the Ministry of Finance.

Added to this is the discontinuity in the staff training effort. As a result, the MTEF technical aspects are no longer mastered by the majority of managers, due to lack of upgrading or training. In principle, the programming of the MTEF training envisaged two phases. The first, training of trainers, concerned only university officials; the second consisted of peer training for managers in each institution.

In fact, the generalization of this practice has encountered many logistical but also political problems, due to the end of the budgeting policy initiated by the contracting policy. Perceived as a purely financial programming tool, the MTEF, with its different components (prospective analysis, budgetary impact of the policies of each university, etc.), was not favorably perceived by university presidents at the end of 2000s, being seen as a simple component of a contested contracting.

From the results of the second survey, it emerges from this interrupted experience that only 61.5% of institutions have experimented with the establishment of a Budgeting by Objectives (BBO) and have taken the opportunity to set up performance indicators that they periodically followed.

3.1.5 Transition to PSTI (Public Science and Technology Institution) Status

3.1.5.1 Legal Framework

The provisions of the 2008 Law (Article 10) contained little details on transitioning to PSTI. They were specified in the implementing decree N° 2008-3581, dated November 21, 2008. The adoption of the PSTI status allows for the transition to commercial accounting characterized, in particular, by the elimination of an ex-ante oversight of expenditure.

2008 Law

Article 10: Universities can be made public institutions of a scientific and technological nature if they meet conditions laid down by decree. Their transition to this status is enforced by decree. Universities with scientific and technological status are governed by commercial legislation, except for the provisions of this law.

Decree N° 2008-3581, dated November 21, 2008

Article 1 – The character of universities, higher education and research institutions and public research institutions may be transformed into a public science and technology institution if they meet all the criteria mentioned herein.
The said transformation is carried out by decree
Article 2 – Universities, higher education and research institutions and public scientific research institutions, which have been transformed into public science and technology institutions in accordance with the conditions provided for by this decree, are subject to commercial legislation.

Article 4 – The character of universities, whose relevant institutions provide in-person teaching, can be transformed into public institutions of a scientific and technological character, if they meet all the criteria cited by this decree and related to the following areas:
– Quality of educational management,
– Quality of scientific management,
– Quality of administrative and financial management,
– Quality of internal performance,
– Openness to the economic and social environment,
– Conclusion of a training and research contract, in accordance with the provisions of Article 13 of Law No. 2008-19, dated February 25, 2008, referred to above.

The conditions laid down for the transition to PSTI status initially limited its application. This is why only research centers switched to this status in 2009-2010. For various reasons, in particular those related to the smooth mobility from one status to another, the circular of February 2016 recommends a certain flexibility in dealing with the requirements.

In 2014, the Virtual University of Tunis (UVT) initiated a voluntary process to obtain this status. To achieve this, several steps have been taken: development of a strategic plan for the institution, internal and external assessment, implementation of the quality approach, procedures manuals.

According to the survey carried out in June-July 2018, at least seven universities are in the process of transitioning to PSTI status, at various stages of the procedure. Three universities (Sousse, Monastir and Sfax), as well as four institutions (ENISO, FMS, ISEFC, ISSAT Sousse), are awaiting decrees formalizing their status as a PSTI. One university (UVT) has already acquired the new status since January 1, 2016 (validation of the Council of Universities), but the promulgation of the decree modifying the status did not take place until the beginning of 2019.

3.1.5.2 The Status Contributions and Limitations

The tardiness in obtaining the status and the reluctance on the part of the universities to initiate the procedure can be explained at various levels:

– The legal vacuum that currently surrounds the PSTIs operating rules, the 2008 Decree only addressing the conditions of the change of status;

– The lack of information on the feedback from the first mutations. The experience of the first university that passed to PSTI was not the subject to any evaluation, which could have been useful to other universities engaged in this process;

– The lack of anticipation of needs by the public authorities, in terms of the personnel resulting from the transition to commercial accounting;

– The absence of change in the regulatory organization of universities and HEIs, to introduce new structures necessary for the proper functioning of the PSTIs, such as the creation of an institution board for the audit and management control service;

– The lack of coordination between the transition of universities to PSTI status and that of their relevant institutions. New situations have arisen: some HEIs have become PSTIs without this being the case for their university, and vice versa. This has brought about many problems, since two very different financial management systems and administrative mechanisms must then coexist together, without legal framework. Such incompatibility is difficult solve, according to some contact persons, which would probably jeopardize the experiment.

3.2 Impediments

Since 2011, when the contours of the main changes were drawn, Tunisian universities have found themselves in a radically different context from that of 2008. This context presents both new opportunities, notably to reaffirm academic freedom and the opening up of universities to society and the world, but also significant constraints of a social, political and economic nature.

Chief among these drivers of change is the steady decline in the demographic curve of students in the public sector since 2009. Indeed, after the peak of 2008/2009 with 360,175 students, their number was 346,876 for the year 2009–2010. It has since continued to decline to reach 272,261 students in 2017–2018 (a decrease of 24.41%).

This change could have been considered as an advantage for the implementation of a strategy to improve the quality of Tunisian higher education, but the existence of other factors has hindered this process. They include:

– The budget cuts limiting the financing of universities budgets and recruitment of university, administrative and technical staff;

– The arbitrary and unscheduled departure of part of the university staff outside the country (see Table 3 and Graph 6);

– The persistent regional disparities, especially in terms of supervision rate. Among the most affected universities, in number, by the departure of teachers are those of Monastir, Sousse and Sfax;

– The political and institutional uncertainties, which lead to a lack of visibility in the medium and long term, and to the absence of a common and shared strategic decision.
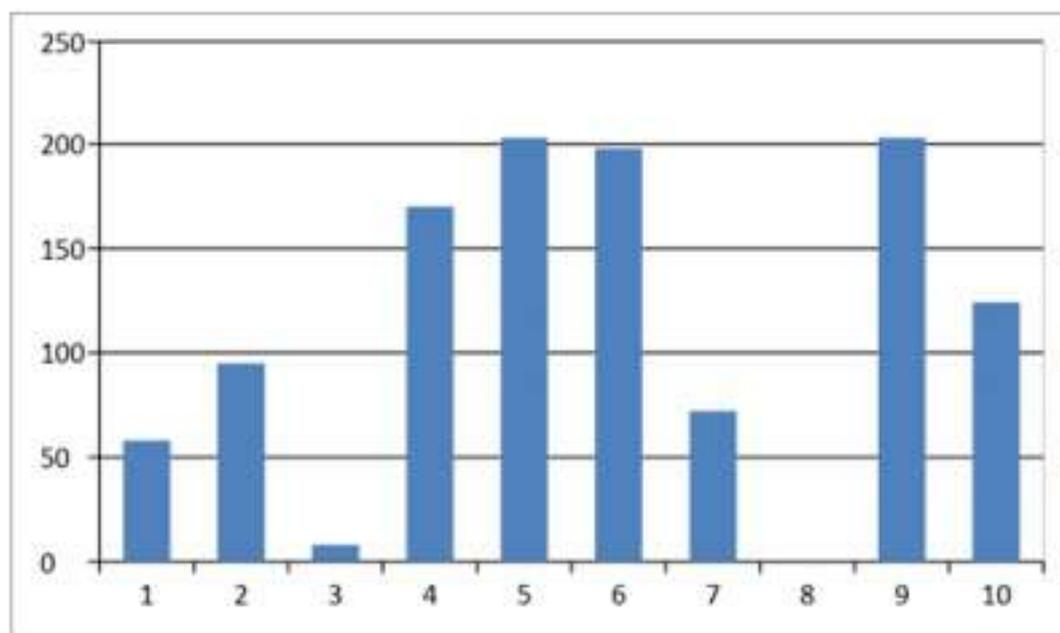
Graph 6. Number of teachers on secondment until 2018 (teachers who went abroad)

Legend: 1: univ. Jendouba; 2: univ. Kairouan; 3: univ. Ezzitouna; 4: univ. Monastir; 5: univ. Sousse; 6: univ. El Manar; 7: univ. Gafsa; 8: univ. UVT; 9: univ. Sfax; 10: univ. Manouba; 11: univ. Gabes; 12: univ. Carthage; 13: univ. Tunis.

NB : 8, 11, 12, 13 : without answers

The period 2011–2018 has particularly highlighted and aggravated two aspects distinguishing the environment of the Tunisian university system. First, it revealed the existence of deeply divergent visions of the Tunisian university and its place in society; on the other hand, it has disclosed the dysfunctional nature of governance, due to the modes of assignment of responsibilities among ministries, universities and institutions, as well as within the same institutions among president, dean, directors and Secretaries-General.

3.2.1 Divergent Opinions on the Autonomy of Universities

La loi de 2008 introduit la notion d'autonomie, mais sans la définir précisément. Elle promeut en réalité une conception de l'autonomie comme avènement d'une université managériale, capable de développer et de mettre en œuvre des stratégies. À partir de 2011, l'autonomie entendue comme renforcement des libertés universitaires a toutefois été particulièrement poussée par la volonté de se développer indépendamment des pressions externes, politiques et religieuses.

3.2.1.1Implementation of autonomy to strengthen academic freedoms

This conception initially manifested itself in the revision of the methods of appointing officials (Decree-law 2011-31 of April 26, 2011) by the election of university presidents and the election of directors of HEIs (and no longer just deans). The broadening of the electorate strengthens the role of the University Board and the enforceability of its decisions.

Decree-Law n° 2011-31, dated April 26, 2011, amending Law N° 2008-19, dated February 25, 2008, on Higher Education.

Article 15 (new) – Each university is headed by a university president elected from among Full Professors of higher education or equivalent ranks.
The president of the university is appointed by decree for a period of three years renewable only once.
Article 19, Paragraph 1 (new) – The president of the university is assisted, if necessary, by one vice-president and, if necessary, by two vice-presidents.
The vice-president is elected for a period of three years renewable only once.
Article 25 (new) – The faculties are headed by deans. Schools and higher institutes are run by directors.
Deans and directors are elected by permanent teachers.
The dean or director is appointed by decree for a period of three years renewable only once.

The university Board
Article 12 – The University Board meets, at least, once every two (2) months, at the invitation of its president to deliberate on the items included in an agenda communicated at least one week in advance to all members of the Board and the Minister of Higher Education. The board can only validly deliberate in the presence of at least half of its members.
Article 13 – The University Board deliberates on the issues provided for in Article 21 of the Law on Higher Education. It makes its decisions on matters of educational and scientific nature, within the limits of the regulations governing the higher education sector. The University Board makes its decisions by a majority of the present members. In the event of a tie, the president's vote is decisive. The decisions of the University Board become enforceable after their approval by the Minister of Higher Education, or after the expiration of a period of one month from their submission at the registry office of the Ministry, without being subject to opposition.
Article 14 – In the event that exceptional events occur at the university and hamper the functioning of its bodies, the Minister of Higher Education shall take all urgent measures that the situation requires, on the basis of a report submitted to him by the president of the university.

However, the effect of these new institutional mechanisms has not been properly evaluated so far, especially in relation to performance. According to the second survey, only 23.07% of Secretaries-General believe that the organization of the elections had a positive effect on the distribution of power within the governing bodies.

   3.2.1.2Debated Autonomy Strategy

Beyond these measures, the question of autonomy has remained a central element in the debates around higher education. The 2015–2025 higher education strategic plan for reform is in line with its three main objectives (OG3), based on promoting good governance and optimizing resource management. This overall goal is broken down into three objectives:

– Objective 1: Promote good governance at all levels;

– Objective 2: Establish the autonomy of universities and HERIs (Higher Education and Research Institution);

– Objective 3: Adopt a management system that promotes performance at three levels (ministry, universities, HERIs).

This strategic plan does not, however, specify the limits of the autonomy of universities and HEIs. In practice, therefore, it is the framework of the 2008 Law and the STPI status that, for the moment, darw the path of "autonomy" promised to universities and institutions.

3.2.2 Limited and Blurred Responsibilities

The vertical order of the reform process, imposed from above without taking into account the human, financial and logistical resources available, seems to explain the blockages surrounding the implementation of the quality approach. This would have required collective and participatory processes, which are struggling to surface.

The university/institution duality, which is specific to Tunisian higher education, is also sometimes another source of confusion in responsibilities. In this respect, the example of the creation of quality committees is emblematic. Because these committees are appointed by the president of the university but report to the institutions and their scientific councils, their functioning requires fluid collaboration between institutions and universities, based on the awareness of a shared responsibility. But rare are the spaces that allow, in the current architecture of Tunisian university governance, for the existence and sustainability of such awareness.

This issue of the clear distribution of responsibilities also arises internally, as the first questionnaire shows. The partners were asked about the existence of detailed job descriptions for administrative staff, as well as the presence of procedure manuals. In order to facilitate administrative functions, the majority of officials refer to clearly established procedures (see Graph 7)
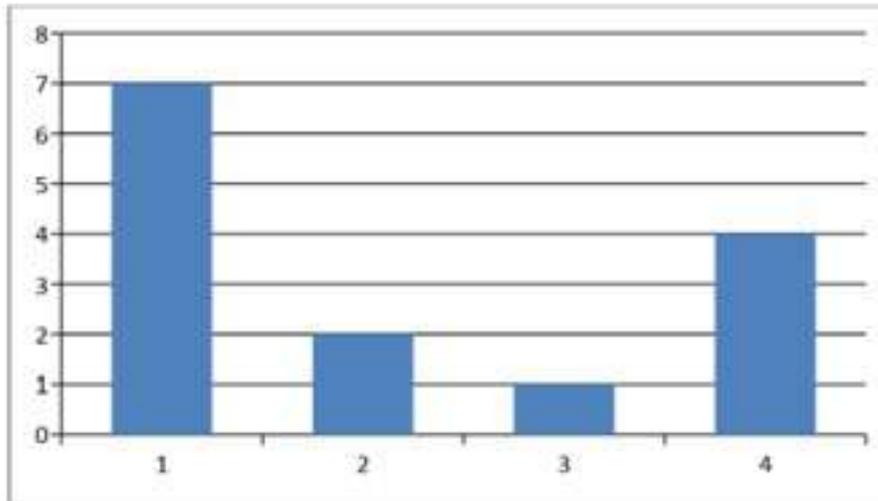
Graph 7: Existence of Procedure Manuals

Legend: 1: yes; 2: in progress; 3: to be reviewed; 4: without answer.

During the meeting of the focus group in July 2018 with the Secretaries-General, the question of the clear distribution of responsibilities among Secretaries-General and Deans/Directors/Presidents was raised several times. The Secretaries-General as well as the administrative executives emphasized the absence of a text that precisely defines the missions of the Secretaries-General and their responsibilities (see Graph 8). Their statements evoke several cases where the extremely hierarchical conception of university authority leads to their exclusion from strategic decision-making processes.
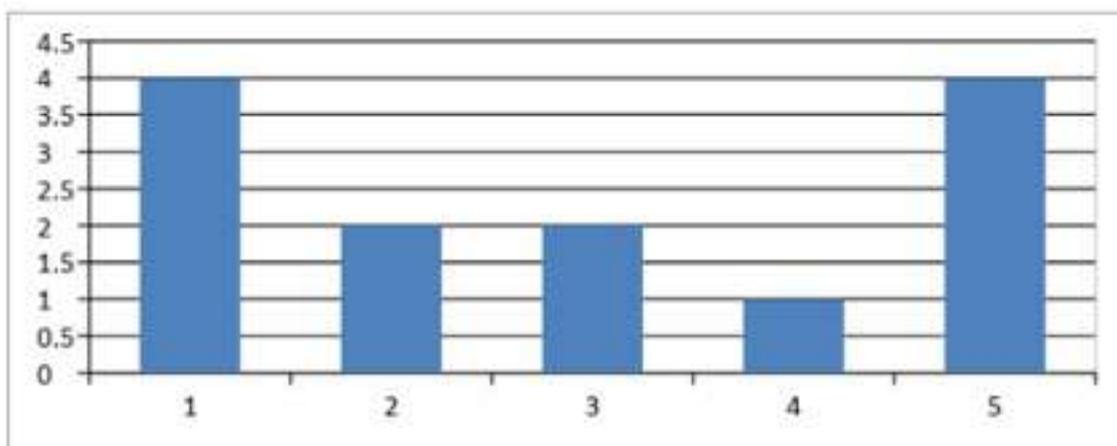
Graph 8: Existence of detailed job sheets for the administrative staff

Legend: 1: no; 2: yes; 3: in progress; 4: some sheets; 5: without answer

3.2.3 Inadequate Information System

The inadequacy of information systems (IS) deployed in universities and institutions, in terms of architecture, functionality and governance, is also an essential factor of dysfunction. This system, characterized by a summation of disparate applications without any communication between them, was built brick by brick, in the absence of a strategic master plan developed according to an anticipatory and normative approach that defines, formalizes, implements or updates an information system capable of meeting the objectives set and providing the services expected by any university.

Within this same university, there coexist various information systems dedicated to the specific needs of services and specific communities of stakeholders. These multiple disparate information systems host and convey information which is generally not commonly used. Indeed, our university information system is made up of heterogeneous application bricks in terms of technologies, which are not integrated in terms of communication.

Based on elements of a diagnosis made within the context of two European projects PFESE 2015 and ITG4TU 2017, and on the Preliminary Note on the Information System in Tunisian Public Universities, prepared by Bechir Allouch in the context of the SAGESSE project, as well as on three projects proposed by four Tunisian universities for the establishment of an information system within the framework of QIP (Education Quality Improvement Program) in 2008, we can deduce the following observations:

3.2.3.1A system used primarily for the information policy of the State

For years, we have heard about the establishment of a National University Information System (SINUS). However, until today, there has been no development of an information system specific to Tunisian higher education. The functional coverage of the information system is provided by applications that support the areas of higher education management, independently of each other: INSAF; RACHED; ADEB; MANKOULET; MAKHZOUN; SYGEC; INESS; BIRUNI; REGISTRATION.TN; ORIENTATION.TN; SALIMA.TN; BEST.TN.

These applications emanate from three sources (Chart 4). First of all, Tunisian universities have benefited from the same applications as those developed by specialized national public bodies, like the National Center of Informatics (CNI) (http://www.cni.nat.tn), in line with the computerization policy of the Tunisian administration, which serves, among other things, the purpose of modernizing the management of the public sector. Other applications have been developed at the level of structures under the MESRST, such as the general directorates of the Ministry or the El-Khawarizmi Computing Center. Some applications have also been implemented as part of one-off projects.
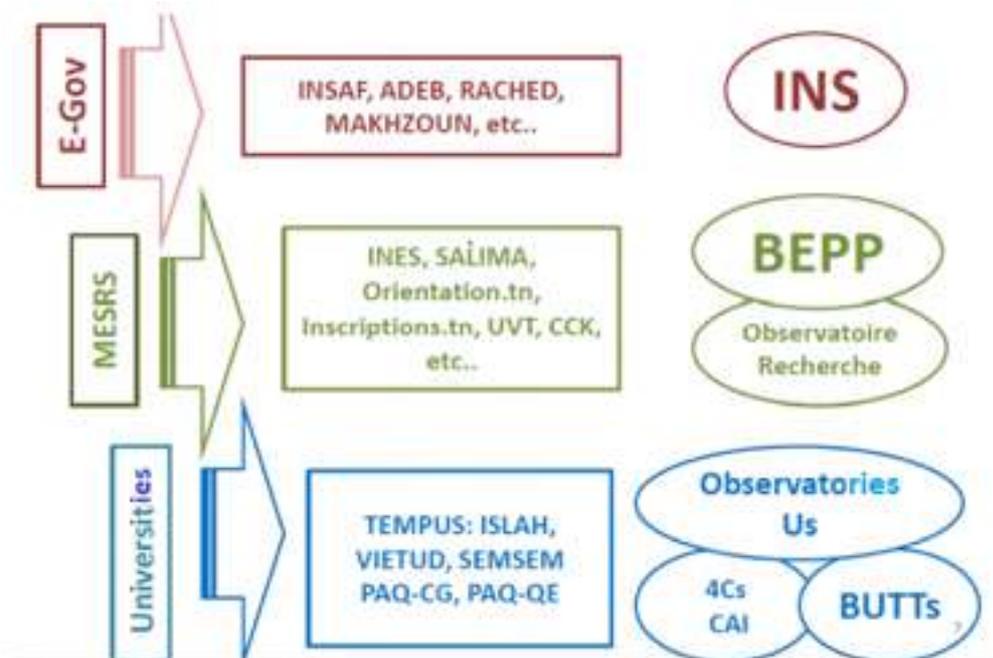
Chart 4: University Information System in Tunisia

Source: N. Romdhane, Gestion de l'information: Etat des lieux & défis pour la réforme de l'enseignement supérieur en Tunisie, Beyrouth, 13 & 14 mai 2015. (Information Management: Situational Analysis and Challenges Higher Education Reform in Tunisia. Beirut. May 13–14, 2015.

The operation of the information system is controlled centrally. Planning and maintenance of the information system are carried out by specialized services at the national level or at the level of the MESRST. The statistical analysis is also centralized. Several national structures exist and independently carry out surveys, data analysis and studies on activities related to higher education. These include the National Institute of Statistics (INS) and the Bureau of Studies, Planning and Foresight (BEPP) at MESRS. The observatories within each university are hardly functioning (see above).

Overall, external communication has been given priority over the development of an internal communication network linking the various institutions at the level of each university and coordinating the exchange of information and documents. The BEPP application, which collects and centralizes statistical data in the ministry, is a good example of this limitation. Institutions are supposed to enter statistical data directly by their staff and validate them by their own managers, without any intervention from the university. For the oversight of its own institutions and in its decision-making, the university depends on the statistics processed and generated by the Ministry.

Centralization does not reduce the time needed for the information to circulate, and does not eliminate redundancies (especially in terms of follow-up and reporting). The autonomy of institutions from the university creates a multiplicity of information sources, particularly in financial matters, and a persistent separation between data pertaining to institutions and to the university. Analysis of information requests currently exchanged, either manually or semi-automatically, shows that

the current system is not only weakly integrated, but also unreliable (different data sources do not give the same information on a same issue).

3.2.3.2 A system that does not support decisions

In addition, the choice of centralizing administrative applications, whether at the level of specialized national bodies, or at the level of the MESRST, has resulted in an information system which largely covers the standardized areas of management, but which does not take into account some specificities of universities in comparison with other administrations.

As the IS is focuses on the computerization of the day-to-day management operations of the university and its institutions, it does not promote sufficient integration between operational management information and decision-making support information. These business applications, responding to some traditional functions of a university organization (financial management, human resources management, payroll, education management, etc.), do not allow for the construction of indicators or the development of dashboards. Budgeting modules adapted to budget simulation, during the development and the follow-up of university financial operations that are compatible with the central financial management system, are not yet operational at universities and institutions. This is largely due to insufficient formulation of decision support needs.

Some functional areas are not yet covered by the current information system: maintenance management, monitoring of research projects, consolidated educational dashboards, etc. More generally, we note the absence of tools for collecting dashboards according to the needs of each decision-making level, as well as the absence of an application dedicated to the collection and use of information on the environment, on the course of teaching, on the evaluation of the services of the university and its institutions: satisfaction of stakeholders, requests, etc.

To overcome these shortcomings and to take into account the specific needs of universities and institutions, such institutions have developed systems and applications that are specific to some of their needs (management of additional hours, management of jobs, management of grants, etc.). However, these are disparate experiences, linked to one-off needs, in the absence of a strategic vision on information systems. They are limited by the complexity of ISs and the significant costs that IT projects can generate.

3.2.3.3 Very Limited Human and Material Resources

The structures devised to deal with the information system in the universities and their institutions, as envisaged by the Ministry and embodied in the law, have not made it possible to master all the potentials of the established system. The survey of Secretaries-General confirms this finding. Indeed, only 42.3% of institutions have a structure responsible for collecting, processing, using and disseminating information. Likewise, only 38.5% of institutions have an information and forecasting structure.

The centralized approach to the development of the information system has not fostered the development of human potential at the level of university and institutions structures that use computer applications. The services supposed to develop the information system in universities are only weakly operational. Where they exist, such services are affected by the current lack of universities material and logistical resources that are adapted to their needs. The structures dedicated to the development of the information system in universities are either not provided with resource persons or not sufficiently involved in the design of specific tools for university management. This did not allow for enhancing the information system with an endogenous approach favoring the needs of universities in terms of coordination and decision-making support.

If we add to this situation the dispersion of limited human resources among the universities and the relevant institutions, it becomes difficult to undertake the changes required to modernize management, even by providing universities with a better information system. In many situations, the coordination and planning carried out by the university are sometimes reduced to a simple role of assistance and support and not of guidance and management. This state of play is a fundamental problem that will affect the effectiveness of any university information system.

3.3 Real-Life Experiences and Good Practices in Quality Assurance

Even if the institutional integration of the quality approach in Tunisian universities, as provided for in the 2008 Law, has been faced with clear limitations (see above 3.1.1), the dissemination of the quality culture has mainly taken place during of the last ten years, thanks to the Quality Improvement Programs (QIP) and various European projects.

The dissemination of the quality culture, which was initiated in 2005, went hand in hand with the integration of Tunisia into the Bologna Process, with the objective of improving student mobility and the readability of Tunisian diplomas. It was then a question of overcoming the problems linked to the globalization of higher education, as was done in the 1990s, in the face of massification. This is why the launch of the first calls for subscription to Quality Improvement Programs (QIP) was concomitant with the first authorizations for LMD Bachelor's degrees in 2006-2007.

3.3.1 Quality Improvement Programs (QIP)

Launched in 2007, the Quality Improvement Program (QIP), financed by the World Bank, is based on a logic of projects voluntarily proposed by universities and institutions with the aim of improving the quality of teaching and education, as well as the management capacity of universities and related institutions. Several themes were addressed such as: the establishment of innovative courses, courses with high

employability, multidisciplinary partnerships, the implementation of quality assurance.

3.3.1.1 Contributions of QIP

Since 2007, 130 million dinars have been used to finance 100 projects, after nine calls for proposals, one of which was dedicated to young institutions. The number of projects varies depending on the institution (Graph 9).
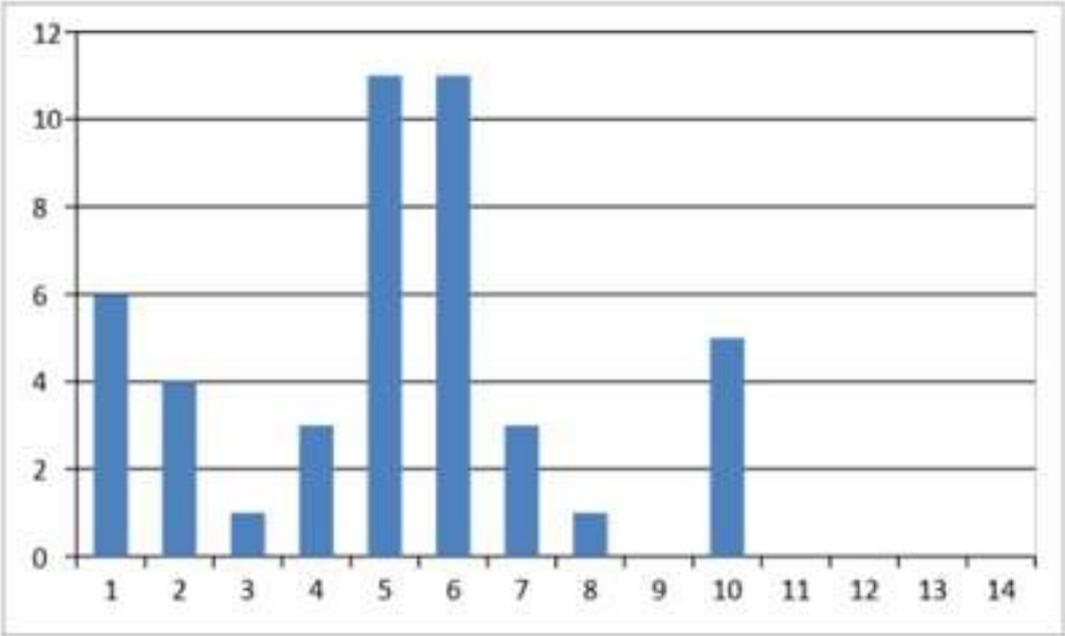
Graph 9: Number of QIP projects implemented in universities and institutions (2008-2018)

Legend: 1: univ. Jendouba; 2: univ. Kairouan; 3: univ. Ezzitouna; 4: univ. Monastir; 5: univ. Sousse; 6: univ, El Manar; 7: univ. Gafsa; 8: univ. UVT; 9: univ. Sfax; 10: univ. Manouba; 11: univ. Gabes; 12: univ. Carthage; 13: univ. Tunis.

NB: Without answers 9, 11, 12, 13, 14; Answer 4 only for the period of 2018-2019.

From a program management perspective, the QIP has encouraged a number of good practices:

- Equal opportunities with regard to funding, since all institutions and universities are eligible;

- Transparency of principles, rules and procedures, thanks to the operations manual, MPO, and procedure manuals on procurement according to World Bank procedures; and the transparent organization of QIP management (Steering Committee, QIP Unit, Technical Evaluation Committee, external evaluators, "Quality" Committees);

– Training of expenditure controllers and accountants in order to master IBRD procedures and adapt some of them to Tunisian administrative law;

– The possibility of involving actors from all sides (teachers, departments, institutions and universities, sometimes even students and doctoral students) in the initiation of projects and in their management.

– The acquisition of experience in the administration of block budget allocation (management by objective); which may result in improved accountability for the use of public resources and improved data collection on institutional performance.

3.3.1.2 Difficulties and Limitations

Among the most significant difficulties encountered:

– The rigidity in budgeting, even that coming from external services (in self-financing), because of the predominance of the expenditure controller' authority;

– The poor practice of internal and external evaluation, due to a lack of habit of being accountable, of setting manageable objectives, of self-evaluation or of reporting;

– The hardships of interacting with the socio-economic environment oscillating between excessive demands and indifference;

– The shortage of skills for managing quality assurance in universities and higher education institutions.

3.3.1.3 Diversification of QIP as part of the Higher Education Modernization Project in support of Employability PromESsE / TN

A second wave of agreements was concluded between MESRST and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (BIRD), as part of the preparation of the higher education development project to improve the employability of graduates and the modernization of higher education (2016-2021). To achieve this, several programs have been launched:

– QIP-QE Improving the quality of programs and teaching.

– QIP-CG Improving management capacity.

– QIP-Support for the employability of young graduates

– QIP -Support for SNRI – QIP-Services for students

– QIP-Governance and Management Capacity – QIP-Quality Assurance

1 The Quality of Programs and Teaching (QE Allowances): this part of the program aims to bring out and finance innovative formulas emanating from HEIs, using a bottom-up approach to improve the quality of teaching and learning, while strengthening management capacity for a gradual decentralization of institutions. The project funding is awarded on a competitive basis, following a transparent selection and management procedure. Institutions are expected to identify specific weaknesses in the quality of education in their institutions, and propose a coherent and realistic

plan with a clear execution strategy that must demonstrate a direct link between all the investments requested and the expected improvements from the quality of teaching.

2   Management Capacity (CG Allowances): these are institutional support grants for the financing of projects intended to (1) to strengthen the educational, administrative and financial management capacity of educational and research institutions, with the aim gradually supporting them towards autonomy or its strengthening, and (2) optimize the use of resources allocated to higher education. Institutions are expected to develop a coherent and achievable proposal that identifies weaknesses in management capacity and proposes a package of investments and activities to address them, as well as an implementation program.

The Competitive Innovation Fund to support actions to promote end-of-study work and to promote mobility towards the company (QIP-Post PFE/MFE) is aimed at young graduates (classes 2016, 2017 and 2018) of engineering training, professional masters, research masters and applied bachelor's degrees. Young graduates, their supervisors, research departments and/or structures, as well as partner organizations are invited to form teams holding a partnership project to promote the results of PFE or MFE work and to propose a coherent plan and realistic execution showing a direct link between the requested funding and the achievement of the expected results of the project as well as the objectives targeted by the QIP-Post PFE/MFE (End-of-study project/senior thesis). This call for the QIP-Post PFE/MFE program is the second in a series of calls for proposals within the context of the PromESsE project.

The QIP-Collabora (PAR & I-Tech) program is a competitive core program under the QIP mechanism and within the framework of PromESsE. This pilot program will finance collaborative projects around high-technology clusters for the promotion and use of innovative results achieved and validated in a research structure (production of industrial prototypes or development or improvement of the production system, a process, device or product). This program is aimed at all components: research structures, higher education and research institutions (HERIs), technical centers, business incubators, start-ups or SMEs, companies (public or private, Tunisian or foreign), agencies, associations operating within and around technopoles and united in a consortium holding a partnership project to promote and use their research and innovation results. The term consortium means the constitution of a group of partners carrying the QIP-Collabora project and containing at least one component belonging to a technopole or competitiveness cluster.

The QIP – Labeling of research structures is aimed at the 277 research laboratories listed in universities, research centers and public health institutions. The objective is to remedy the low visibility of laboratory performance, to establish inter-laboratory competition for the emergence of a culture of excellence, and to have a pool of labeled laboratories capable of participating in major projects of international research and innovation, in particular those of the H2020 within the context of Tunisia's new privileged partnership with the European Union. The QIP funds would be allocated at the end of the implementation of the program in three

stages: the development of a methodological guide of reference, standards and criteria for the labeling of laboratories according to international practices; the design of a detailed action plan for the execution and management of the labeling operation; and following a call for competition from the QIP, the financing of the implementation of the various actions planned by the laboratories to gain access to the Label.

The QIP-PAS "Scientific Pre-Start and Spin-off" is aimed at young graduates (engineering or masters degrees), young researchers enrolled in doctoral theses and post-docs. Applicants, their supervisors, and the structures of their affiliation are invited to propose a coherent and realistic execution plan demonstrating a direct link between the requested funding and the achievement of the expected results leading to the creation and development of a spin-off. This call for proposals aims (i) to promote the transfer of knowledge and technology from academia to the professional world and (ii) to support the creation and operation of spin-offs. This involves making funds available to the promoters of innovative projects (on a competitive basis and as part of the promotion of the results of their research) for the pre-start of their own innovative businesses and the creation of qualified jobs. This mechanism should also boost the ecosystem for the promotion of research results within higher education and research institutions.

3.3.1.4 QIP 4C: Career and Competence Certification Center

Among the mechanisms supported by the QIP, we can note the Career and Competence Certification Centers (4C). Their creation was provided for by the Decree of the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, dated October 7, 2016, establishing the composition and powers of the 4Cs. With the mission of improving the employability of students by strengthening the university-company relationship, the QIP 4C aims to bring the company and the university closer together through a better response to the needs of companies in terms of skilled labor and competent human resources.

Since 2016, 30 4C centers have been created at university and institutional level, allowing the certification of more than 4,000 students, the creation of ten matching platforms. Four QIP Price projects are underway and two calls have been made for QIP projects benefiting 4Cs.

More concretely, the 4Cs aim to promote employability through the development and certification of skills with the aim of promoting:

– The development of a culture of initiative among students and graduates of higher education;

– The development of teachers' competencies through the training of trainers;

– The development of networks of partners.

The second survey shows that 4C centers are involved in strategic and operational decision-making in only 23.1% of institutions. This observation shows that the first experiences suffer from some difficulties of different kinds such as:

– The persistence of several procedural constraints linked to cooperation with the socio-economic world and to public management in terms of human resources, procurement, etc.;

– The reduction of the efforts of the different institutions to carry out different projects simultaneously due to the coexistence, within the institutions, of several structures with similar missions;

– The absence of structures clearly responsible for developing the project and agreements with the socio-economic world, and for overseeing these contracts;

– The centralized management by the Ministry with a weak involvement of universities and HEIs in the construction of activities and choices resulting from duplications of similar projects, but which do not benefit from the synergy effect;

– The lack of developed networks with the socio-economic world;

– The lack of financial resources budgeted by universities and HEIs to carry out the actions of the centers;

– The lack of qualified human resources to manage time-consuming logistics activities;

– The lack of an integrated information system capable of generating information on training and certification needs to carry out the center's missions;

– Limited funding, which is provided through competitive projects;

– The problem of the governance of the 4C network.

3.3.2 European Projects

Several projects have been funded by the European Union (TEMPUS, then Eramus + Capacity Building) concerning quality, evaluation and accreditation, such as the Osmose, AQI-UMED, ITG4TU, TUNED, RESUME, MEDACCR programs. The main objectives of these projects were to improve the visibility of Tunisian universities and HEIs, to improve the capacities of institutions in areas relating to quality, evaluation, accreditation, information system, and to help structure the relationship of the university with the socio-economic world.

Their main results were an increase in the skills of the Tunisian teams, the introduction of new methods and work tools, an awareness of quality assurance, the evaluation and the development of deliverables: diagnosis, good practice guides (self-assessment, structured openness to the socio-economic world, etc.), collaborative platforms, and the establishment of new structures (BUTT, 4C, etc.).

However, these projects were faced with the same structural constraints as mentioned above: the absence of structures clearly responsible for the development of projects and their implementation, their monitoring and their sustainability, the lack of qualified human resources for this type of large-scale project, and the lack of an integrated information system capable of generating the information and data required to carry out this type of project. These projects, which were imagined, constructed and developed by European partners, did not always meet the needs of

Tunisian universities and institutions. Despite several achievements, it appears that universities and institutions are unable to perpetuate these experiences and integrate them into their strategies.

Summary and Conclusions: Limited Autonomy, Capacities Unevenly Exploited

It is worthy to underscore that in the context of this report resulting from the managerial redefinition of the university, the definition of autonomy adopted is that introduced by the European University Association (EUA) in the Lisbon Declaration. Four forms of autonomy are distinguished (academic, organizational, financial and in terms of human resources), and are necessary for the development of this new form of university. We will therefore conclude this report with a summary of each of these components.

1. Academic Autonomy of Tunisian Universities

Academic autonomy is the ability to decide on the direction and content of training and pedagogy, and research carried out within the university.

As far as training is concerned, the LMD reform of 2006 introduced partial pedagogical autonomy of Tunisian universities (request for training upgrading, which passes before a sectorial commission made up of academics). This autonomy was reaffirmed by the 2008 Law.

> **The 2008 Law: Article 11** – Universities are autonomous in carrying out their scientific and educational missions.

Autonomy remains little practiced because the registration of foreign students falls under a national system, even if a new possibility introduced in October 2018 allows for registering foreign students through the payment of specific registration fees.

With regard to research, two main difficulties persist and hamper the efficiency of the functioning of laboratories and research units. The first is related to the allocation of financial resources to laboratories and research centers, which is not

part of the responsibility of institutions and universities, but directly of the ministry. The implementation of these budgets is also constrained by the procedures and rules of public accounting (public procurement, mission orders, etc.). Tunisian universities have almost no lever of their own to develop a university research strategy.

2. Organizational Autonomy of Tunisian Universities

Organizational autonomy is defined as the capacity to designate the university's governing bodies and its internal organization (statutes, regulations). The democratization brought about by the decree of 2011 has undoubtedly given additional legitimacy to university presidents and directors of institutions, now elected. Indeed, Circular 36, dated September 12, 2017, enshrined the principles of democracy in the university through competition and transparency: obligation to formulate a program, to make the candidate's CV publicly available, the expansion of the electoral body to all permanent staff of higher education and research (HER), accountability and control, with the possibility to withdraw confidence in specific cases.

Nevertheless, certain shortcomings persist, such as the question of student representativeness and their participation in the decision-making process, which is not specified. In addition, the programs of the presidents of universities and HEIs are not developed in consultation. They are faced during their executions with divergent visions and an inadequacy of means, which can lead to blockage.

There can coexist, within the same university, three profiles of institutions in terms of governance: institutions that have committed to the implementation of a quality assurance process (practice of QIP); institutions with a decision-making process in which the stakeholders are strongly committed without having a quality approach; institutions with a concentrated decision-making process with a low or no level of consultation.

3. Financial Autonomy of Tunisian Universities

This aspect of autonomy concerns the capacity, in particular, to generate the university's own resources (setting of duties). The 2008 Law provides for financial autonomy for universities.

2008 Law, Article 10: "Universities are public x institutions with an administrative nature. These institutions have legal personality and financial autonomy. "

It allows universities to have their own resources (Title 2), managed by the universities themselves and resulting from the funding of European projects (Erasmus +), donations and grants, income from continuing education, through a service contract, student registration fees as well as refreshment bar contracts, rents.

However, if, within the framework of the HER law, the intervention of the expenditure controller means maintaining a prior authorization for the budget commitment, the recent reform allows for committing 50% of the appropriations without justification.

In addition, the coexistence of two management systems (Adab and Insaf) contributes to dysfunctions, and makes the university endure a very significant cost without efficiency.

Finally, the negotiation of the budget should be done with the Ministry, and the university should ensure its allocation among the institutions. However, this approach is not necessarily respected, and the administrative decision as regards the budget allocation among the institutions ultimately rests with the ministry.

Regarding the management of buildings and real estate, one of the stages of decentralization for the benefit of the universities has been taken concerning the development of buildings, a competence transferred to the universities. Only two main administrative constraints persist: (1) the devolution of the new development mission was not accompanied by additional resources, and (2) the construction of the buildings remains in the hands of the Ministry.

4. Autonomy in terms of Human Resources

This aspect of autonomy concerns the ability of universities to determine the recruitment, remuneration and career of the university staff.

The recruitment of teachers in Tunisia falls under a national system and escapes the free choice of universities.

As regards the recruitment and management of administrative and technical staff, functional progress has been observed in the management of universities, in terms of the organization of the recruitment competition for ATOS (Administrative and Technical Staff, Workers and Services) agents, which has been decentralized since 2017, in addition to the initiation of the definition of job descriptions and the development of procedure manuals.

However, this work was interrupted and several constraints and difficulties were noted. We observe first of all that the recruitment of ATOS remains a national procedure. ATOS employees are attributed to universities through job opening negotiations with the Ministry of Finance and the Head of Government. The organization of functions within universities is also rigidly fixed by law, which is a blocking factor for career development. The typical university organization chart was established in 2002 and modified in 2008. It has not changed since.

Conclusion

Since its creation, the Tunisian higher education system has gone through several phases with well-defined objectives that have been assigned to it, and with contextual particularities. In 1960, higher education aimed to contribute to the building of a sovereign nation-State by training the elites. The reforms of 1986, 1989, 2000 and 2008 emphasized this objective of higher education. Thus, Article 1 of Law N° 2008-19 stipulates: "Higher education aims to provide university training, develop skills, help build the knowledge society, enrich knowledge, develop technology and place it at the service of the national community".

However, these reforms have taken into account, either by reaction or by anticipation, the exogenous changes of the Tunisian higher education system. Thus, after having favored diversity in training to meet the needs of building an independent nation, higher education has developed in the direction of expansion (territory and supply) to face the massification initiated in 2002. The commitment to the globalization process has imposed other objectives on the higher education system in Tunisia, in particular a better legibility of diplomas and better mobility of graduates. Since the promulgation of this law, several laws have seen the light of day, either to improve representativeness in governance bodies or to create evaluation bodies, or to encourage the transfer from one status to another, etc. However, their implementation encountered many difficulties that have been presented in this report.

In general, this report shows that the autonomy of Tunisian universities in 2018 is further reduced. It also shows that there is considerable leeway for autonomy to develop, but it is unequally exploited. Indeed, the experiences accumulated have certainly contributed to the establishment of new cultures and managerial approaches, but the sporadic adoption of practices and techniques, without human resources, suitable technical and information resources, nor above all, political will and a common and shared vision of governance of higher education, can only be an obstacle to its development.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Survey 1: Tunisian Universities Data Sheets

Rappel

This data sheet aims to collect factual data on the various partner universities and their institutions. It was informed by the coordinator/focal point of the project in each Tunisian university (13). It includes 62 questions.

For statistical data, for information concerning students, teachers, staff, the year to be taken into account will be 2017/2018. For graduates, the year will be 2016/2017.

Legend (list of universities)

1: University of Jendouba;

2: University of Kairouan;

3: University Ezzitouna;

4: University of Monastir;

5: University of Sousse;

6 University Tunis El Manar;

7: University of Gafsa;

8: Virtual University of Tunis;

9: University of Sfax;

10: University of Manouba;

11: University of Gabes;

12: University of Carthage;

13: University of Tunis.
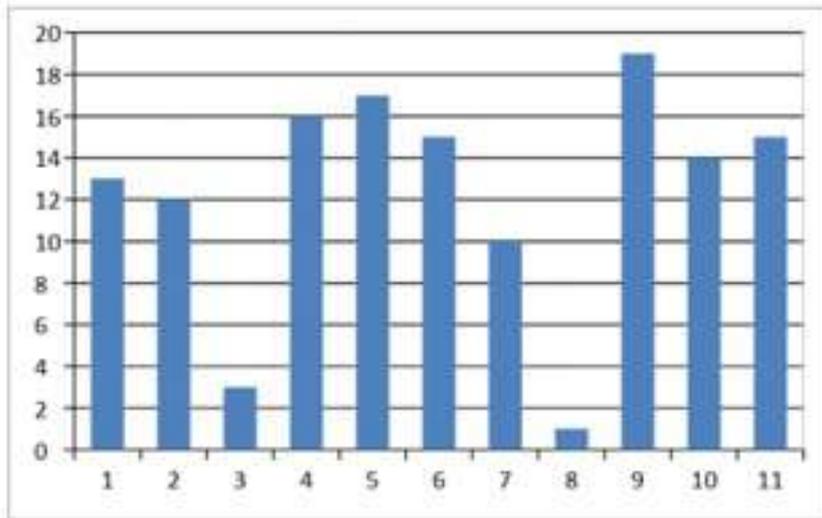
Number of Institutions (faculties, schools, institutes) by University
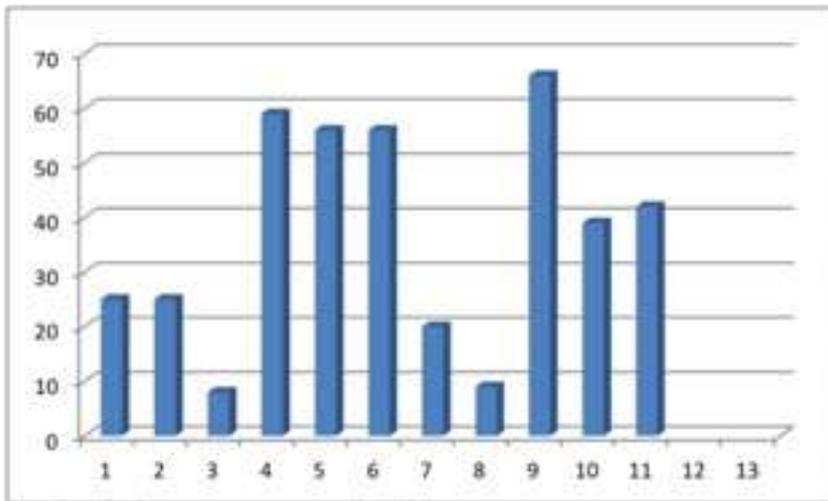
Number of Departments by University
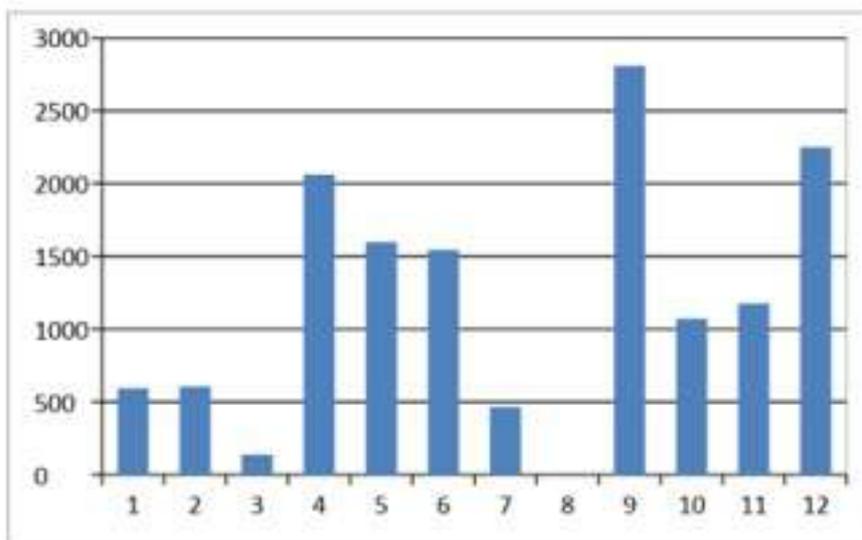
Number of Teachers by University
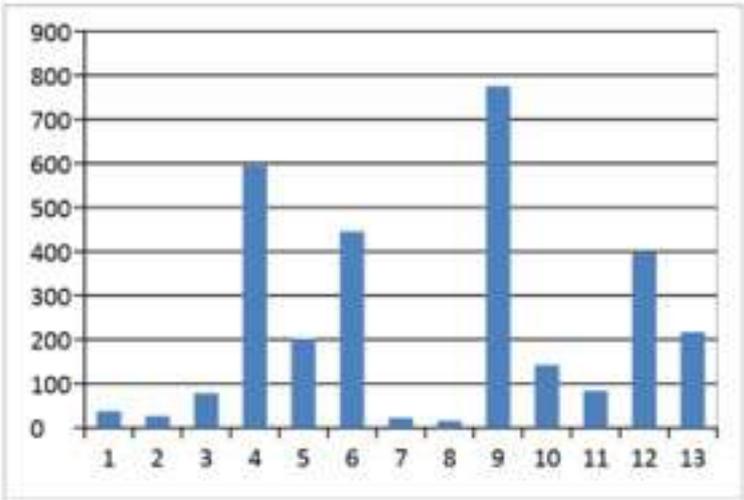
Number of Teachers by University – Corps A
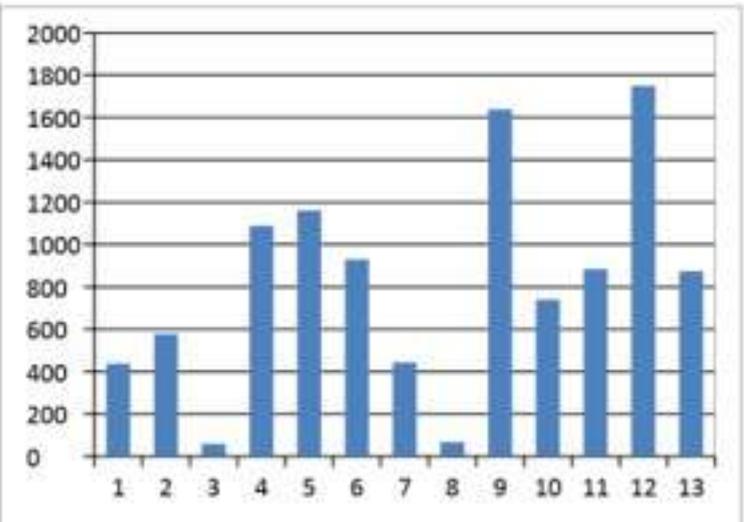
Number of Teachers by University – Corps B
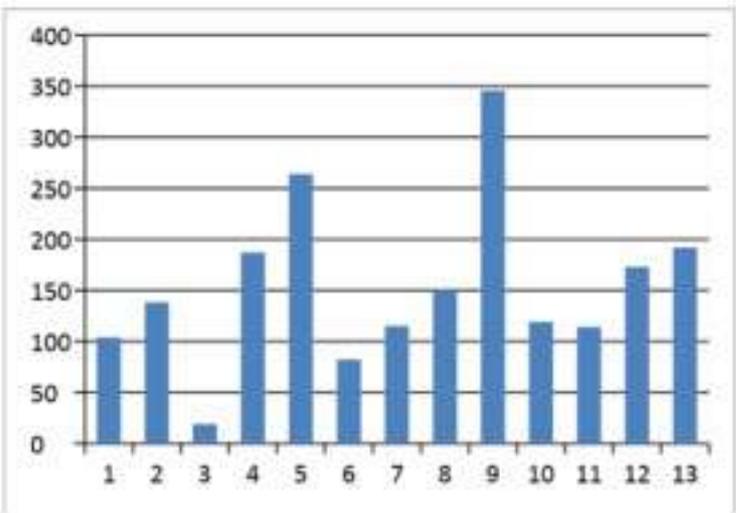
Number of Teachers by University – Contract Teachers
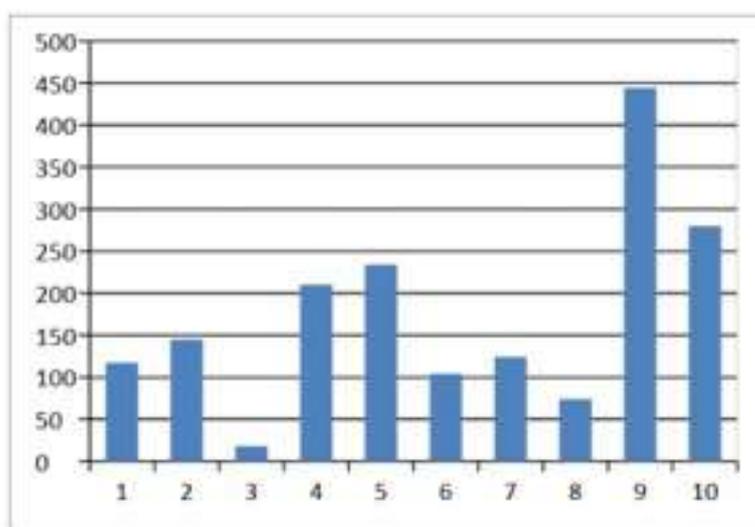
Others (Seconded teachers, Agrégé, biologists…)
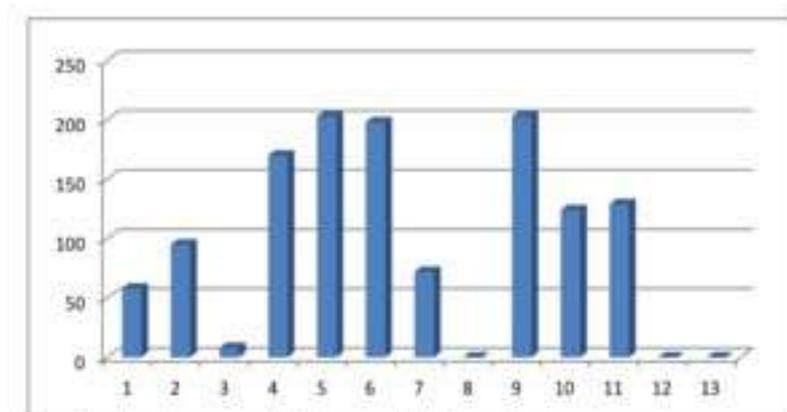
Number of Seconded Teachers Abroad

1 73,07% **2** 15% **3** 57,69% **4** 100% (Academic Positions) **5** 73%
6 13,04% **7** 17%

8 65.4% (University) 57% (Specialized Institute) **9** 100% **10** 40%
11 No Information

12 No Information **13** No Information

Percentage of positions filled compared to the total number of functional positions
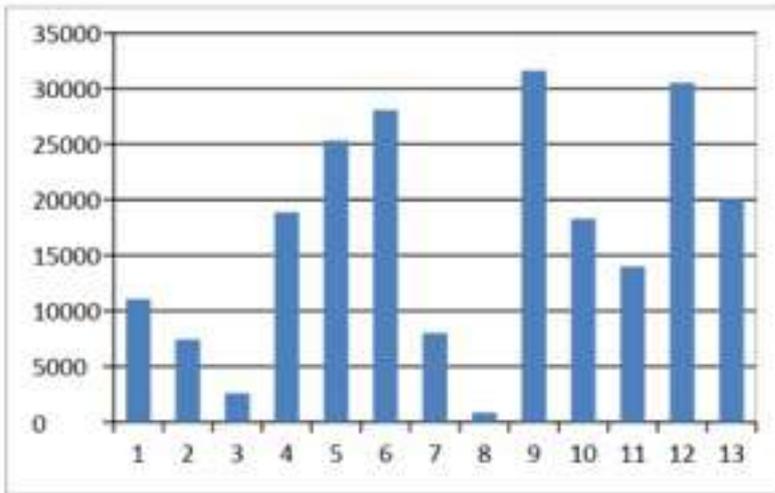
Number of Students by University

Number of Graduates

87
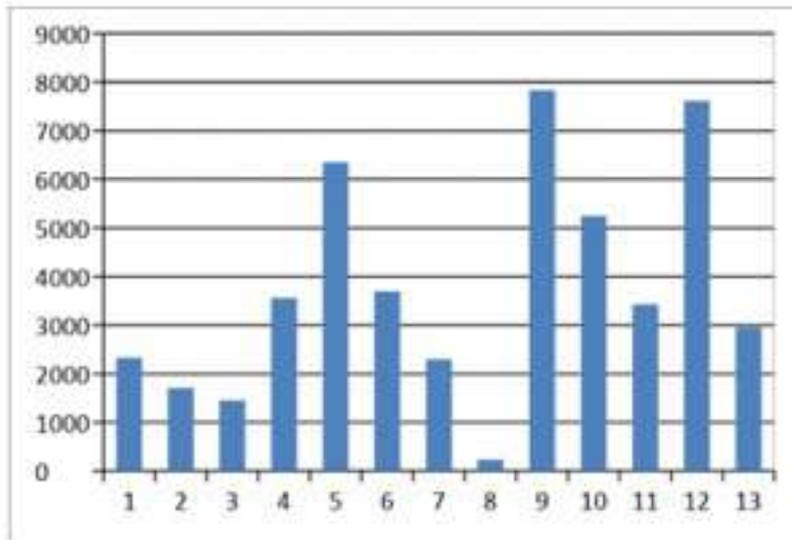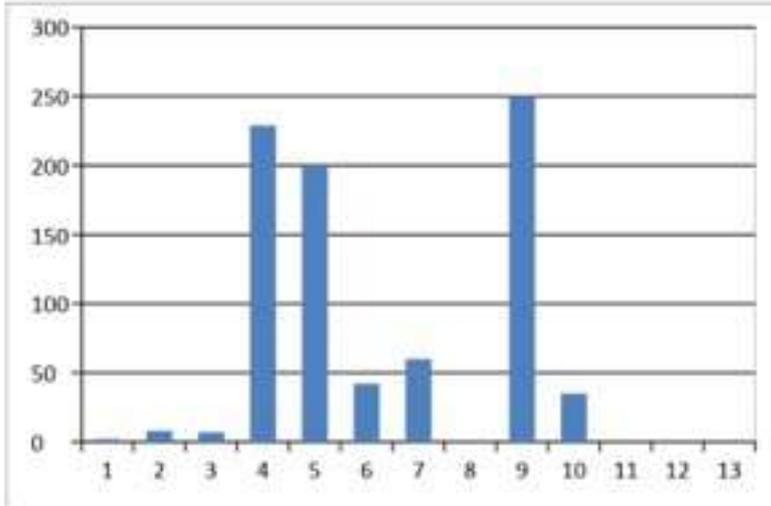
Number of Students who Obtained Mobility Grants
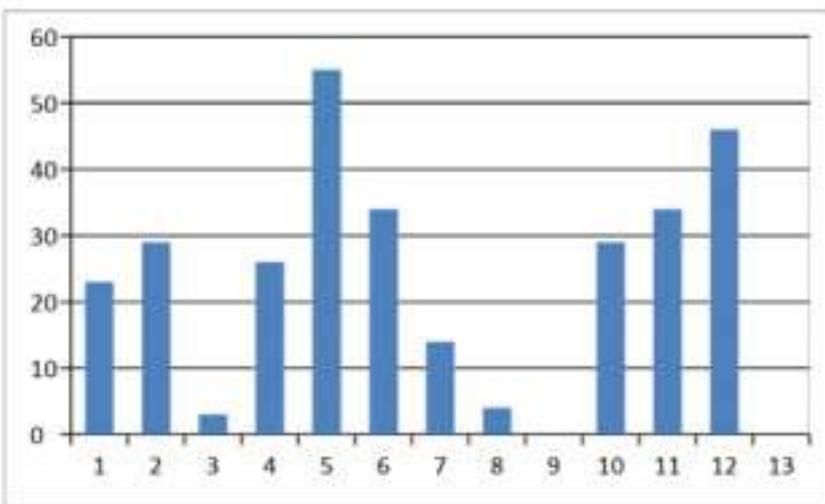
Number of Graduates (Applied Bachelor's Degree (Licence))

University 9 and 13: Non-useable data

Details: University 9: 2018

                       University 13: 1170
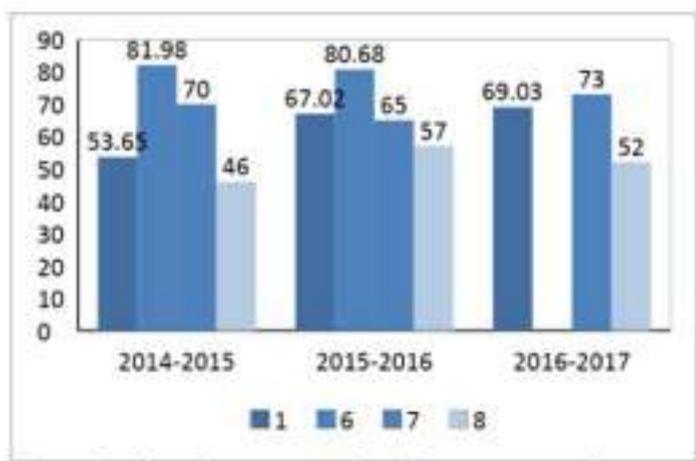
Average Success Rate of licenses (Bachelor's Degrees) for the academic years 2014–2015, 2015– 2016, 2016–2017

Universities 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13: No information or non–useable data.

Details:

1   2014–2015: 53,65% , 2015–2016: 67,02% 2016–2017: 69,03   **2**   74,70%
3   79,08%   **4**   No information   **5**   86,29%   **6**   2014–2015 : 81.98%; 2015–2016: 80.68%   **7**   70–65–73   **8**   14/15=46% – 15/16 =57% – 16/17=52%   **9**   66%   **10**   60 %   **11** No information   **12**   No information   **13**   No information
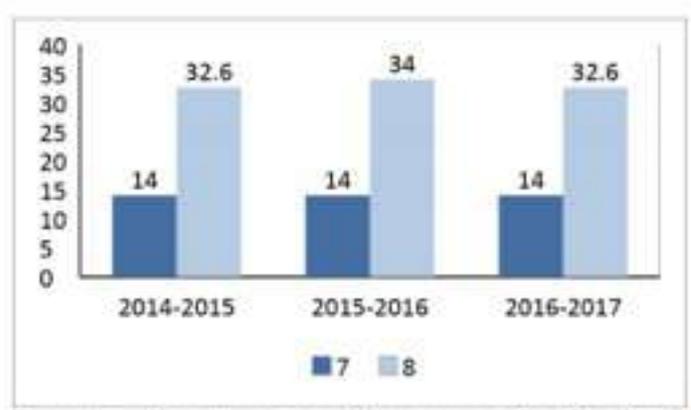
Average of the averages obtained by the students registered in license (Bachelor's Degree) for the years 2014_2015 / 2015_2016 / 2016_2017

Universities 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13: No information or non–useable data.

1 NR   **2** 11,5   **3** 10,61%   **4** NR   **5** NR   **6** NR   **7**   14–14–14   **8**   14/15=32.6% –15/16=34%–16/17=32.6%

9 12,75   **10** No information   **11** No information   **12**
No information   **13** No information
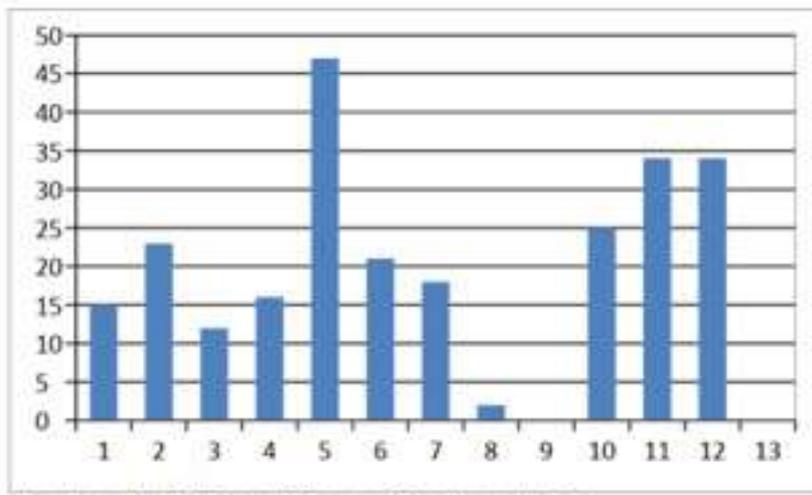
Number of Graduates (Fundamental Bachelor's Degree (Licence))

University 9 and 13: Non-useable data

Details: University 9: 2441

                       University 13: 1009
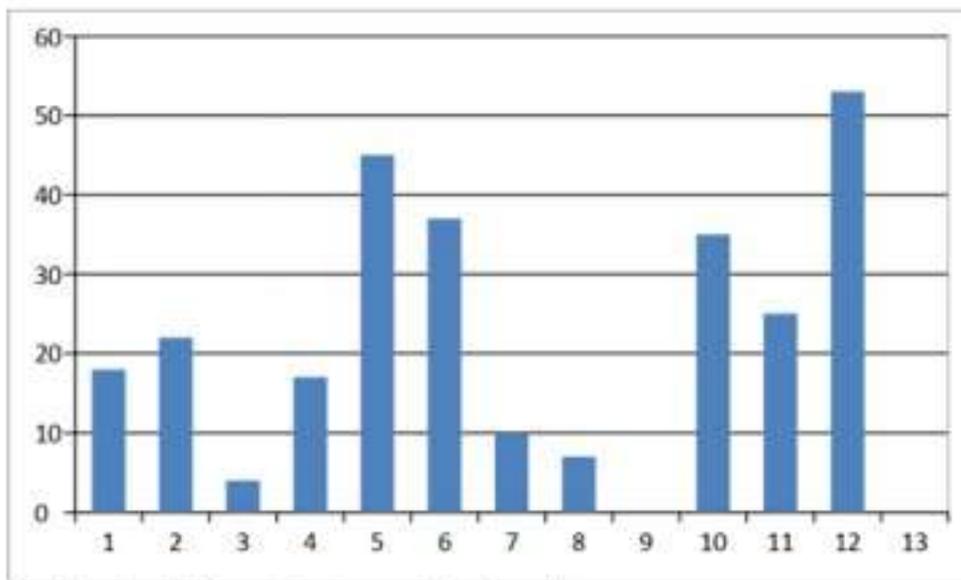
Number of Graduates (Professional Masters)

University 9 and 13: Non-useable data

Details: University 9: 886

                University 13: 271
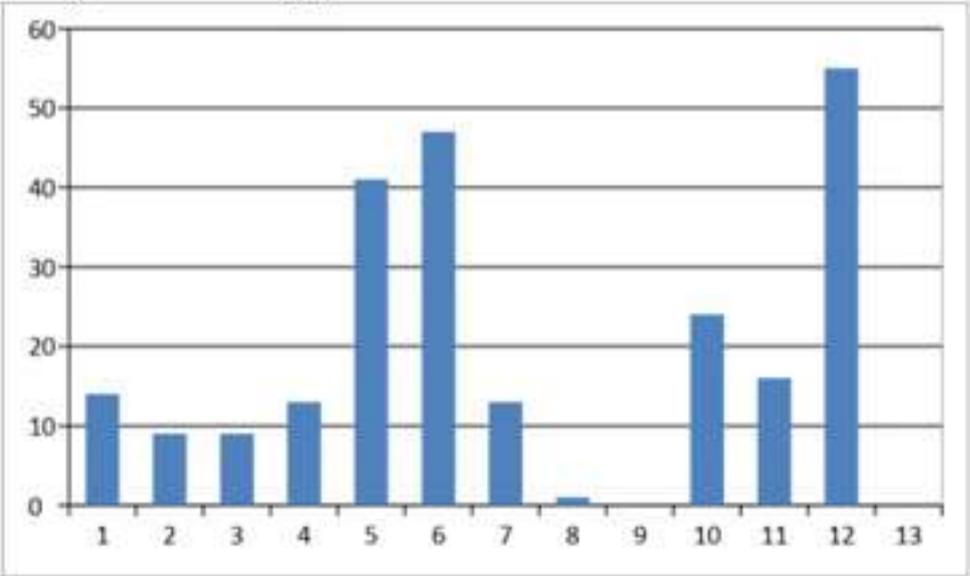
Number of Graduates (Research Masters)

University 9 and 13: Non-useable data

Details: University 9: 649

                University 13: 435
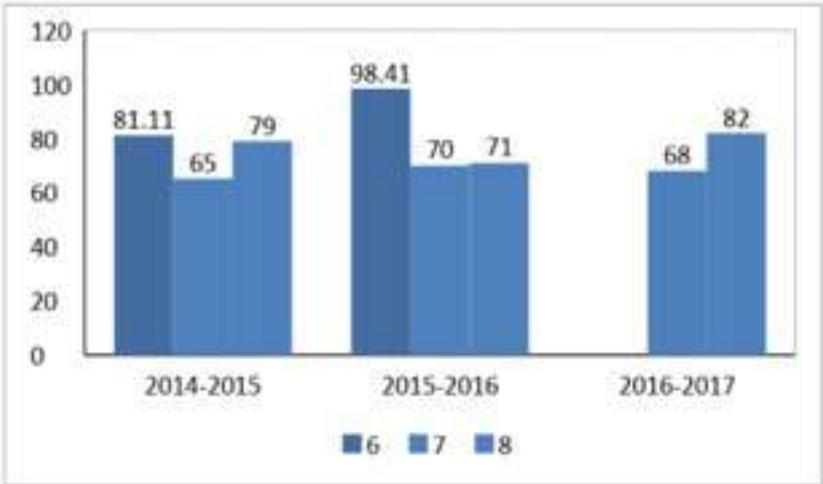
Average master's success rate for the 2014-2015, 2015- 2016, 2016-2017 university years

Universities 1–2–3–4–5–9–10–11–12–13: no information or non–useable data

Details:

1 NR   **2** 54,90%   **3** 77,88%   **4** No information
5 78,59%   **6** 2014–2015: 81.11%; 2015–2016: 98.41%   **7** 65–70–68
8 14/15=79%– 15/16=71%– 16/17=82%   **9** 73%   **10** 75 %
11 No information   **12** No information   **13** No information
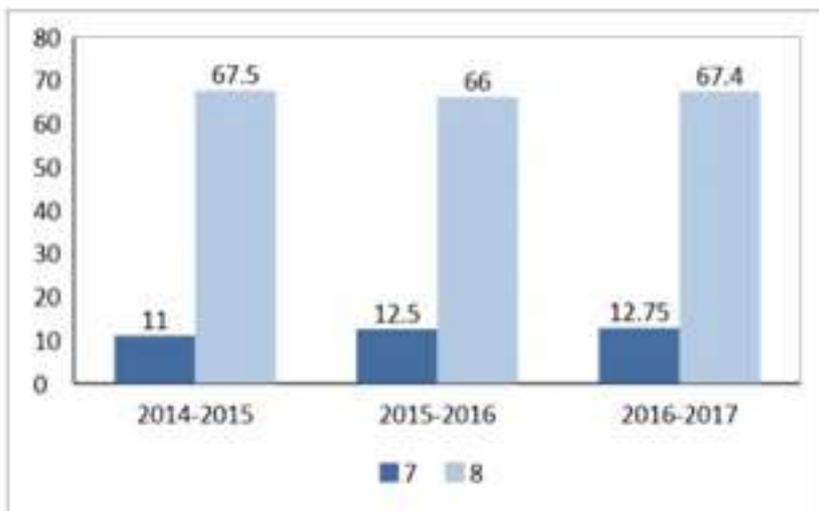
Average of the averages obtained by students enrolled in a master's program for the years 2014_2015 / 2015_2016 / 2016_2017

Universities 1–2–3–4–5–6–9–10–11–12–13: no information or non–useable data

Details:

1 no information   **2** 10,8   **3** 11,93%   **4** no information
5 no information   **6** no information   **7** 11–12,5–12,75   **8**
14/15=67.5%–15/16=66%–16/17=67.4%   **9** 13,25   **10** no information
11 no information   **12** no information   **13** no information
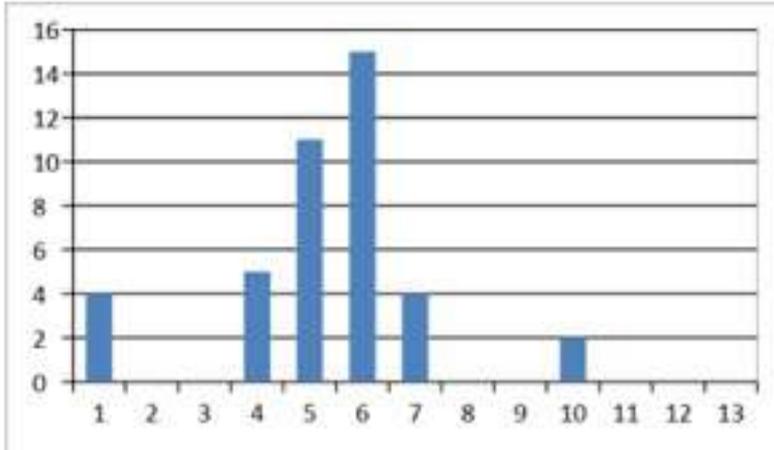
Number of Engineering Degrees

University 9: non-useable data

Details:

9 738
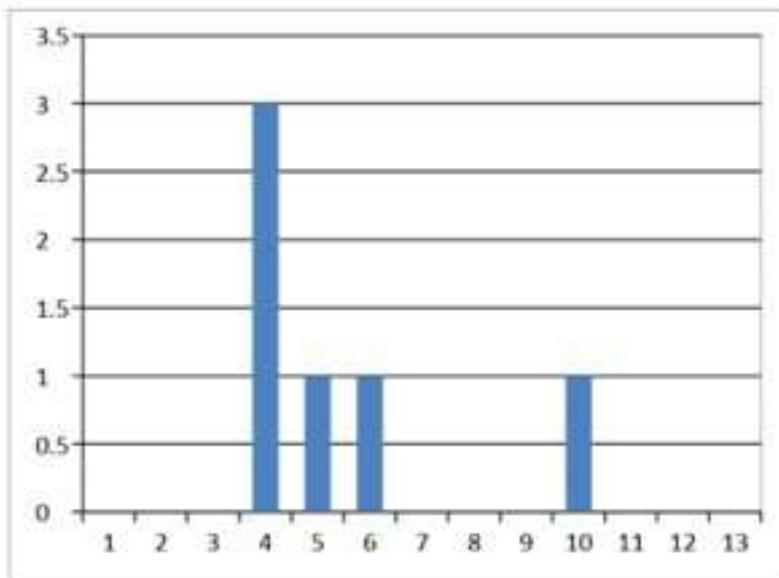
Number of Doctorate Degrees in Medecine

University 9: non-useable data

Details:

9 199
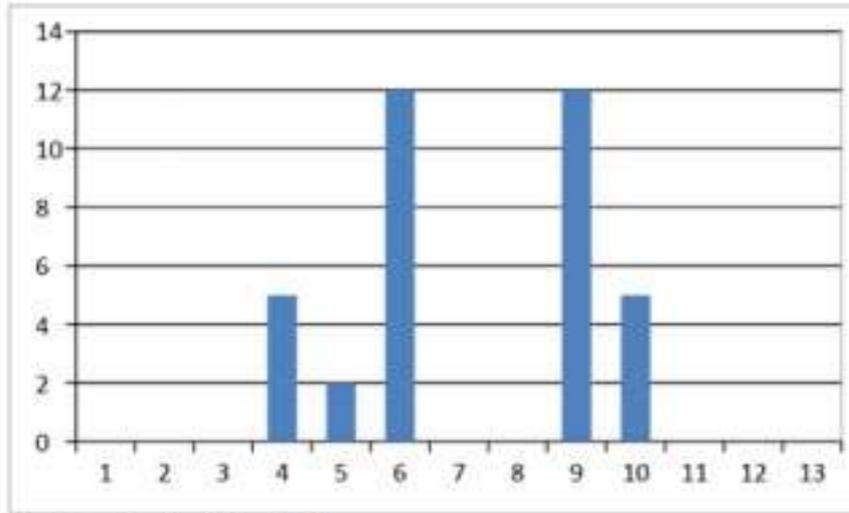
Number of Dual Degrees
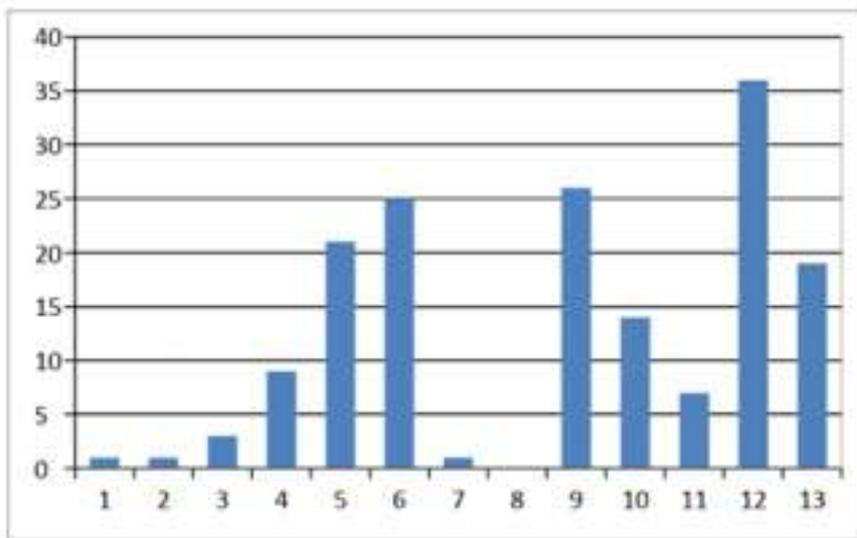
Number of Doctoral Pathways

Number of Doctors

94

Universities 4-8-10-12-13 : no information

Details:

1 0   **2** 98   **3** 930
4 to be completed   **5** 995 doctoral students for the year 2016-2017: Economic Sciences and Management (187), Agricultural Sciences (64), Legal Sciences (152), Humanities (267), Fundamental and Technical Sciences (306), Medical Sciences (19)   **6** Number of students for the year 2017-2018 **:** 3986   **7** 0   **8** No information   **9** 2909 Economic Sciences, Management and Computer Sciences (799), Letters, Arts and Humanities (289), Sciences and Technologies (691), Legal Sciences (381), Fundamental Sciences (749) **10** No information   **11** 214 (since 2010)   **12** No information **13** No information

Number of Doctoral Schools

Number of Pathways for HDR (Accreditation to Supervise Research)

University 12: data to be specified: Academics 8 / Degrees 224

Number of Research Units

Number of Attached Research Centers

Universities 11–12–13: No information
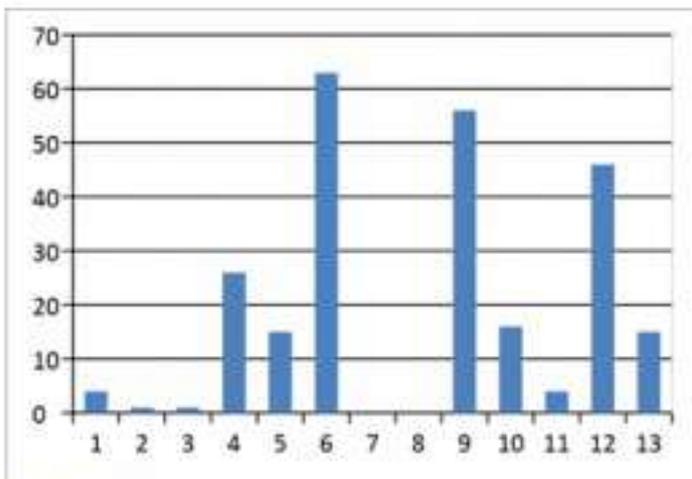
Number of Laboratories

University 8: No information
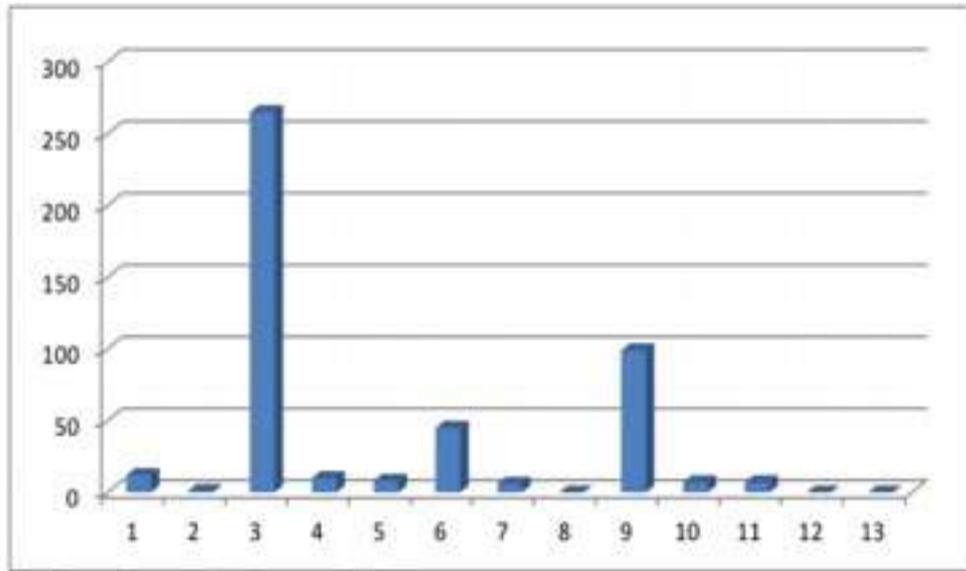
Number of Research Projects in Progress

Universities 8–12–13: No information
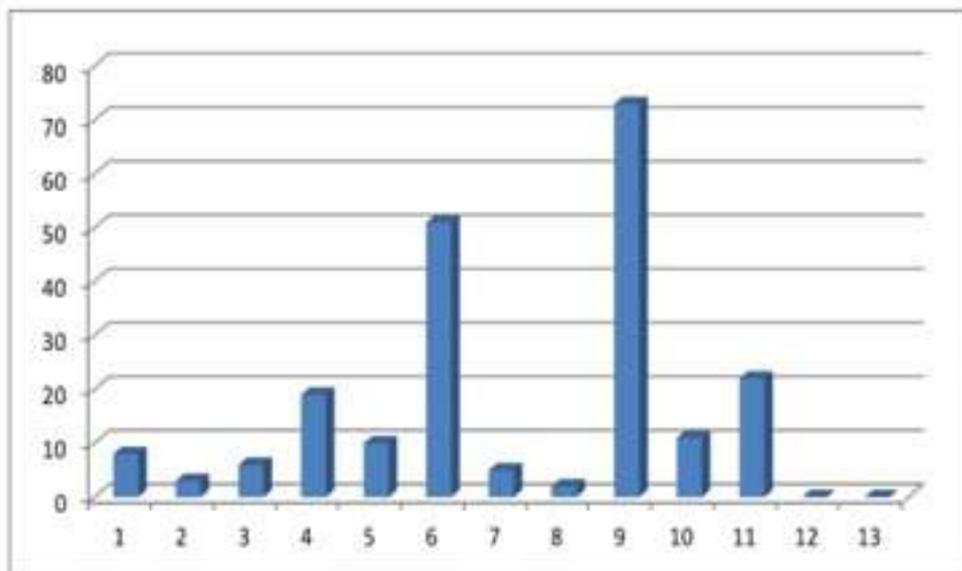
Number of International Cooperation Projects in Progress

Universities 12–13: No information
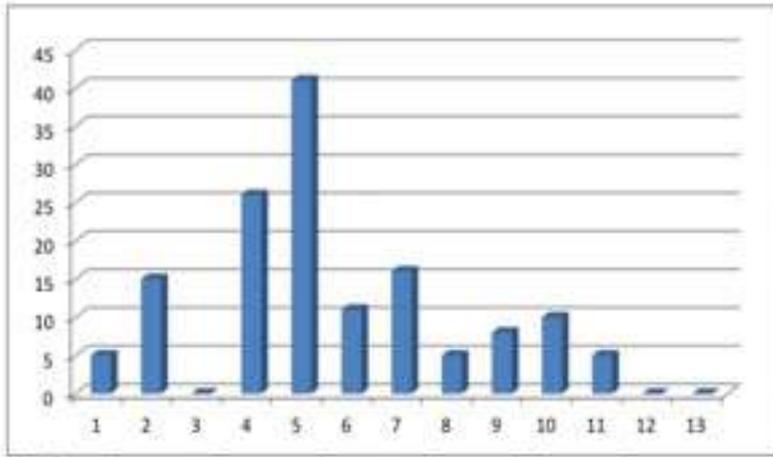
Number of Agreements with Socio-economic Partners

Universities 12-13: No information
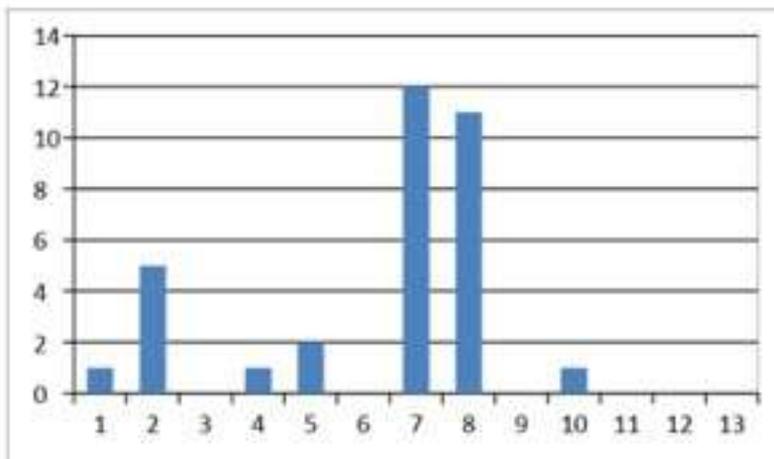
Number of Agreements with Local Universities

Universities 9-11-12-13: No information
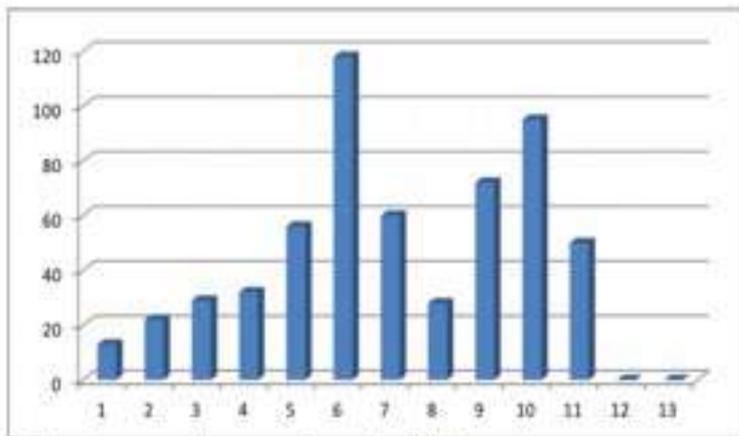
Number of Agreements with Foreign Universities

Universités 12–13: No information
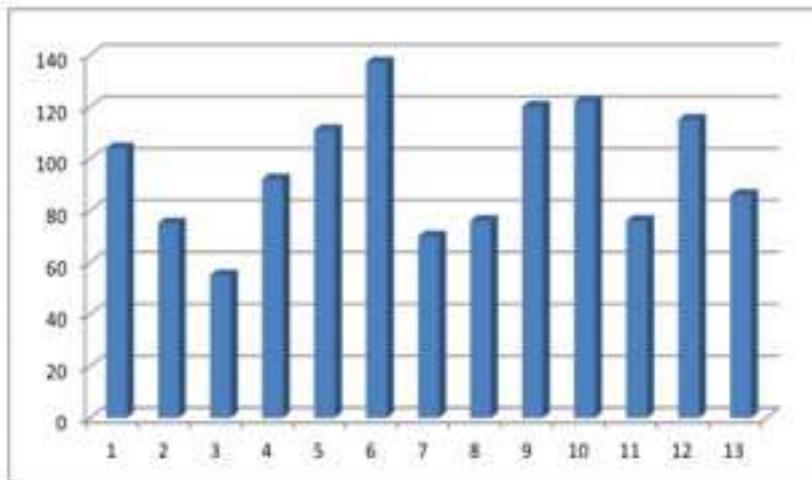
Number of University Staff
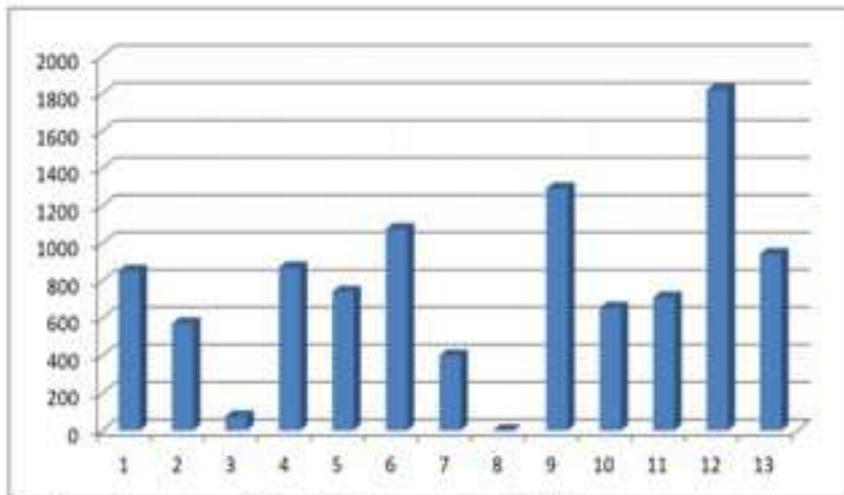
Number of Staff in Attached Institutions
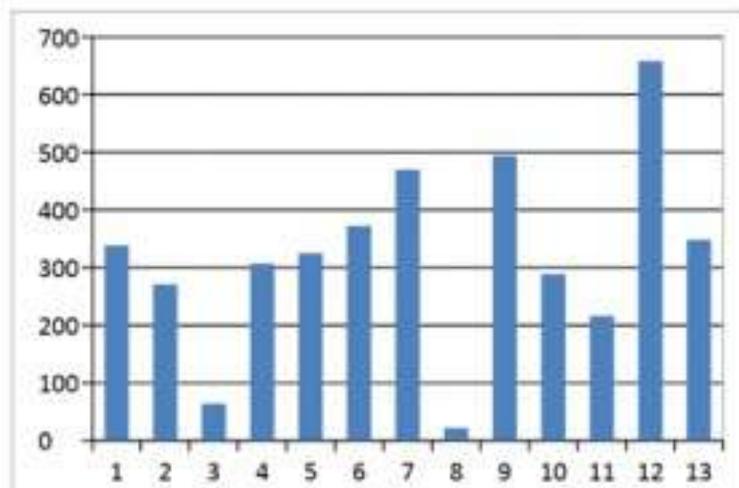
Number of Administrative Staff (University and Attached Institutions)
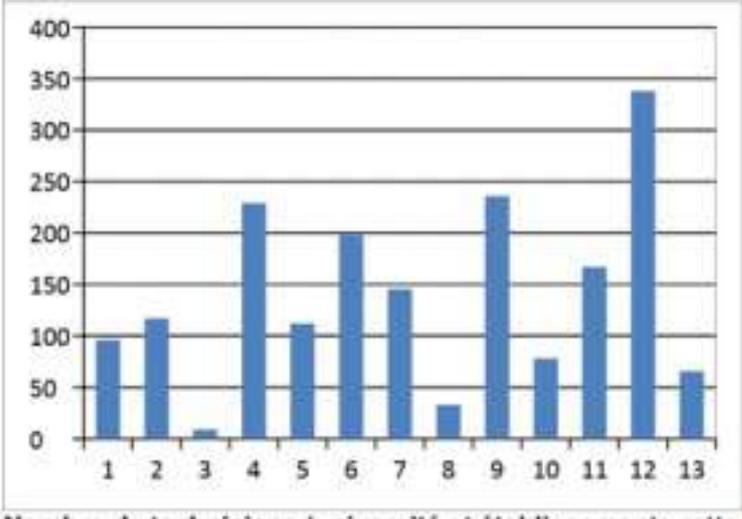
Number of Technicians (University and Attached Institutions)
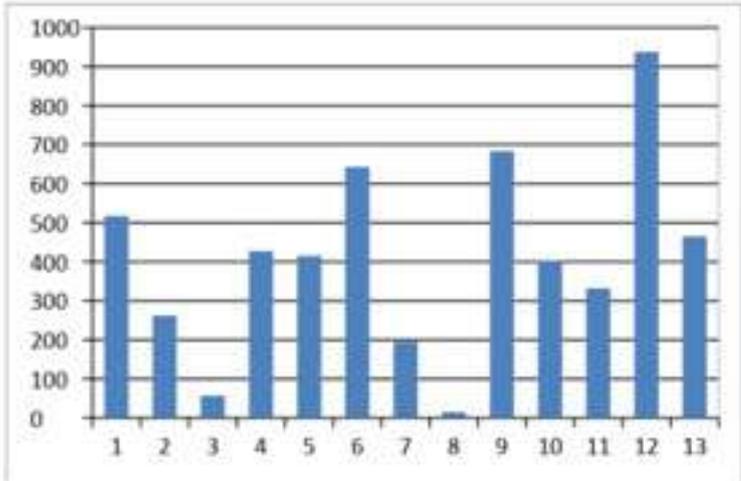
Number of Workers (University and Attached Institutions)
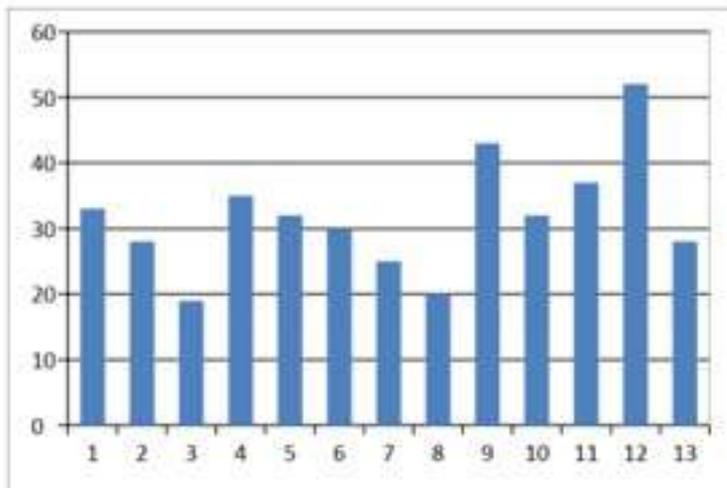
Number of Members in the University Board
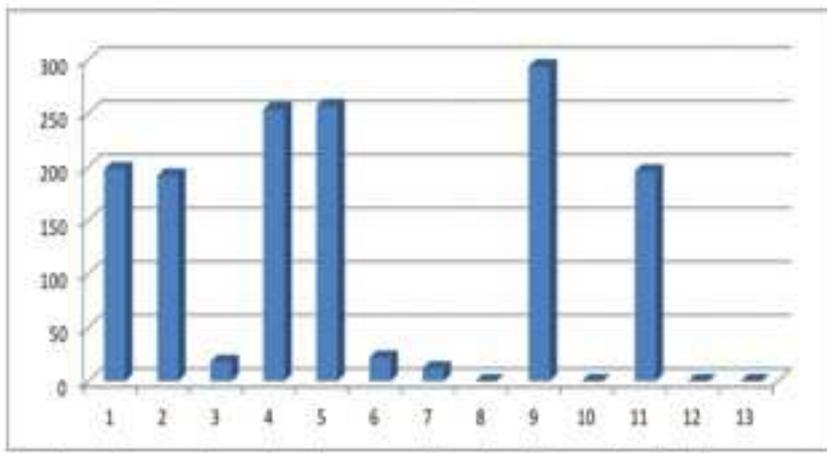
Number of Members in the Scientific Councils of Attached institutions (total of the average)

Universities 9−12−13: No information
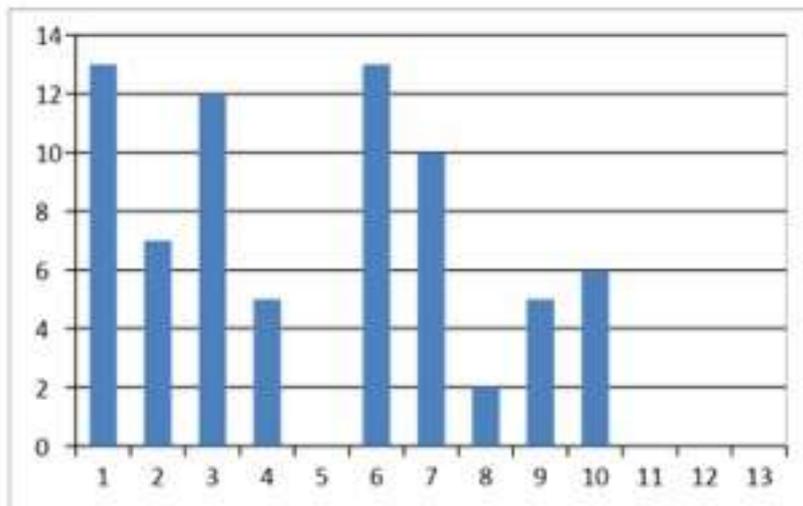
101

Active Committees and commissions (Scientific, Educational and Administrative) in Universities Universities 11-12-13: No information or non-useable data

List of Active Committees and commissions (Scientific, Educational and Administrative) in Universities

1 13   **2** 7 including QIP, recruiting contract staff, administrative joint commissions, medical commission, career center commission, governance commission, procurement commission   **3** 12   **4** 5 including Quality Committee, Pedagogical Committee, Butt Committee, H20-20 Committee, ERASMUS Committee   **5** 118 including 21 doctoral commissions and 97 masters commissions   **6** 13   **7** 10
8 2 including the university board and a CODEV   **9** 5
10 6 including an institution board, a scientific orientation and innovation council, a pedagogical orientation and education council, committee of Wise Men, committee for digital affairs, Partnership committee   **11** no information
12 no information   **13** no information
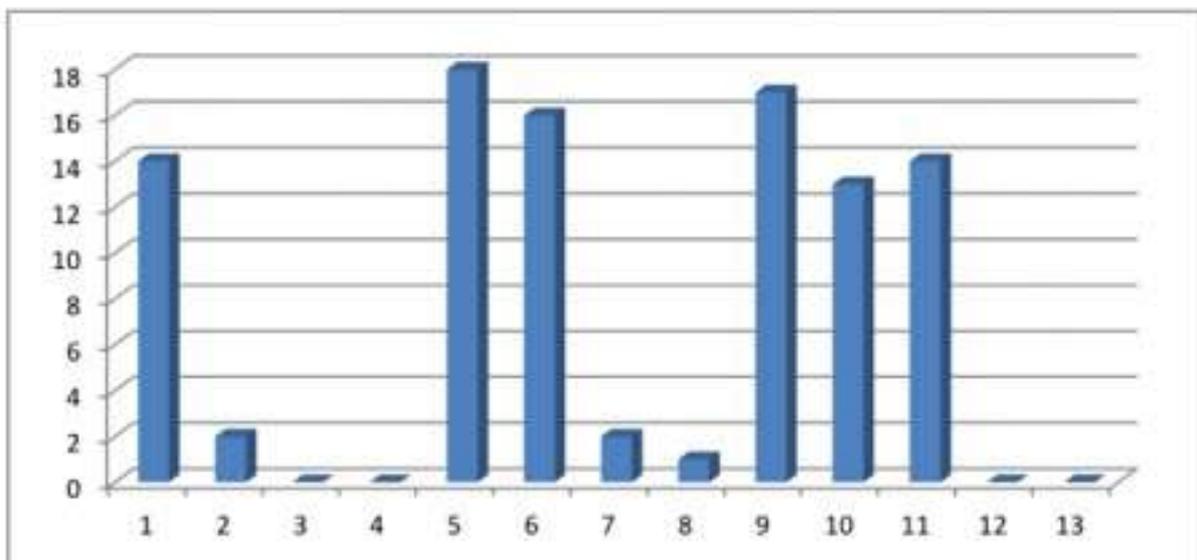
Number of active quality committees per Tunisian university (questionnaire June-July 2018) Universities 4-12-13: no information

University 1	1	2012
University 2	1	2015 (AUF)
University 3	0	
University 4	2	The 16 institutions in 2009; the university in 2013
University 5	5	Non-specified data
University 6	1	2014
University 7	1	
University 8	1	2014
University 9	No information	
University 10	1	The 10 institutions in 2008
University 11	No information	
University 12	No information	
University 13	No information	

Number and Dates of Internal Self-Assessments in Tunisian Universities (2008-2018)

University 1	0	
University 2	0	
University 3	0	
University 4	4	University: 2014 and 2016 (IEAQA) Institution (Engineering School) 2009 and 2016
University 5	6	2011 (CIDMEF) 2016 (IEAQA)
University 6	2	2014 2017
University 7	2	
University 8	1	2015 (AUF)
University 9	No information	
University 10	1	2008
University 11	No information	
University 12	No information	
University 13	No information	

Number and Dates of External Assessments in Tunisian Universities (2008-2018)
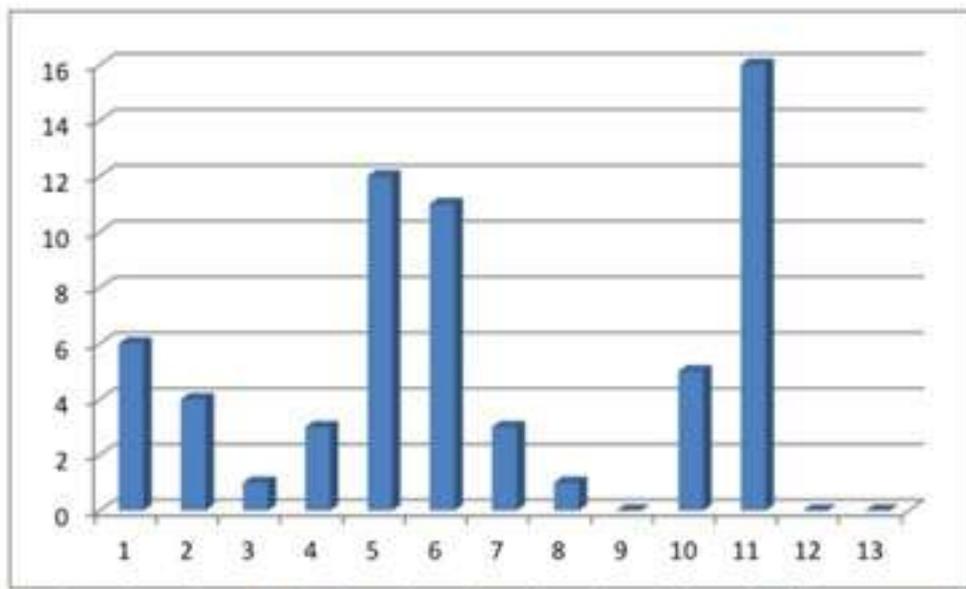
Number of QIP projects, Implemented in Universities and Institutions 2008-2018

Commentary:

1 6   **2** 4 including 1 for the university and 3 for schools and institutes
3 1   **4** 3 including 1 for the university and 2 for schools and institutes
5 12 achieved and 17 under preparation   **6** 11   **7** 3   **8** 1
9 no information   **10** 5 including 1 for the university and 4 for schools and
institutes   **11** 16   **12** no information   **13** no
information
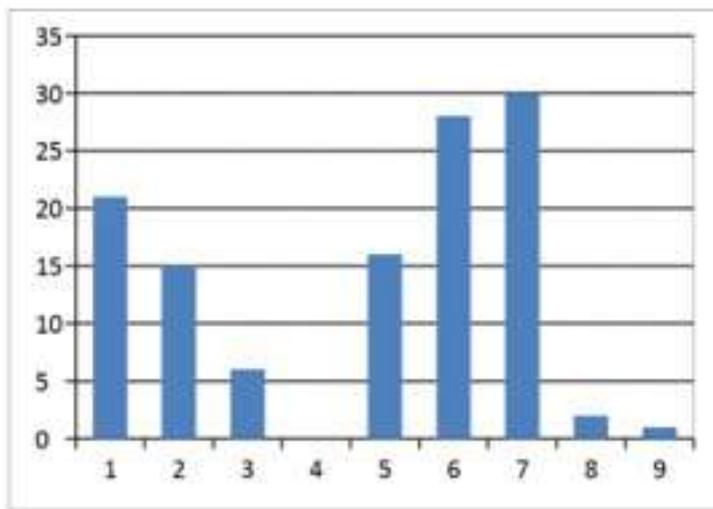
Number of new training courses opened in institutions affiliated with the university over the past 3 years

Universités 4 –10–11–12–13 : no information

Commentary:

1 21   **2** 15   **3** 6   **4** no information
5 16 including 4 bachelor's degrees, 9 master's degrees and 3 doctoral degrees
6 28: 7 in 2015, 10 in 2016 and 11 in 2017   **7** 30   **8** 2   **9** 1:
professional master's in education and teaching   **10** no information
11 no information   **12** no information   **13** no information
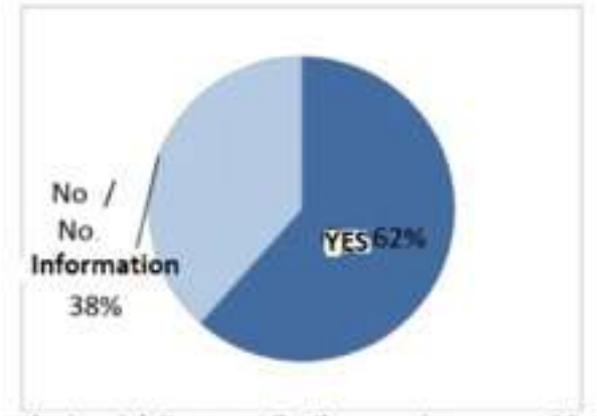
Does the university have a public organization chart [attach document]?
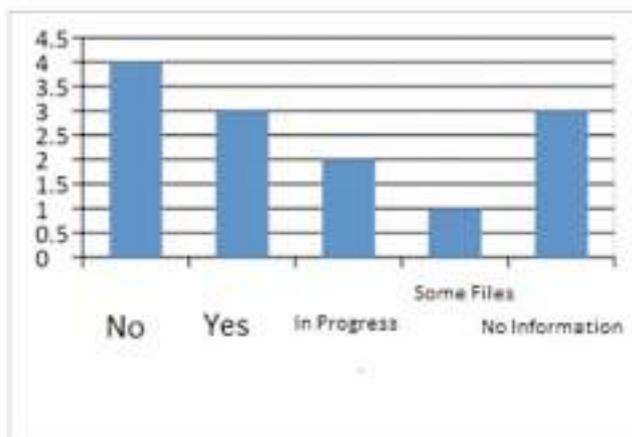
Existence of detailed job descriptions for the administrative staff
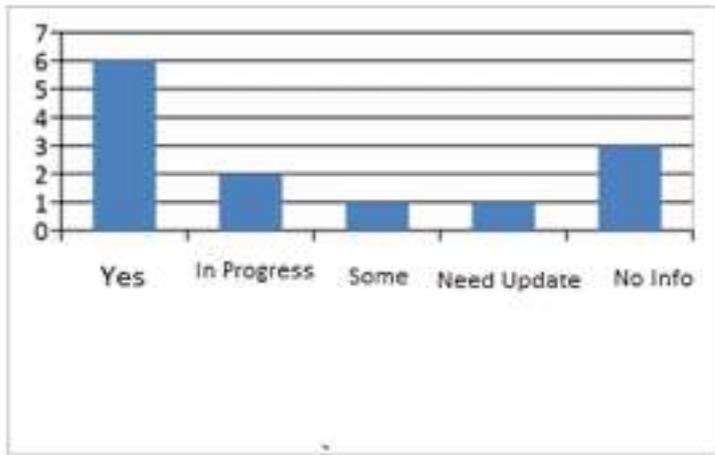
Existence of Procedural Guides

Appendix 2

Questionnaire 2: Governance and Quality Improvement, Intended for Secretaries-General of Universities and Institutions

This questionnaire is anonymous. It will enable detailed information to be collected from the Secretaries-General of universities and related higher education institutions. This information will supplement the work of focus groups and the data sheets, in order to draw up the most precise map of the state of governance and the quality approach in Tunisian higher education.

1. **You are a Secretary-General in:**

A university

An institution

Decision-making body: power and clarity in ownership of the mission and goals (vision, mission, value)

2. **How do you define your mission?** *

Missions

3. **Is the defining of the mission of your institution/university carried out at the level of the executive board (President, Vice-president, Dean, Vice-dean, Director, Vice-director)?** *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

4. **Is the definition of the mission of your institution/university achieved at the level of the decision-making body (University Board, Scientific Council)? ***

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

5. **Did you participate in setting the mission outlines of your institution/ university?**

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

6. **If so, do you think that the parties working with you have the same perception of this mission?**

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

<u>Objectives</u>

7. **Are the objectives of your institution/university set at the level of the executive board (President, Vice-president, Dean, Vice-dean, Director, Vice-director)? ***

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

8. **Are the objectives of your institution/university set at the level of the decision-making body (University Board, Scientific Council)? ***

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

9. **Did you participate in setting the objectives of your institution / university?**

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

10. **Do you think that these objectives are understood and accepted by your partners and collaborators? ***

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

11.If so, explain.

12.If not, explain.

Values and Commitment

13.Are the values and commitments of your university/institution displayed and known? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

14.These values and commitments?

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

15.Do you think that these values and commitments are recognized by your partners?

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

The exercise of power: participation and weight of the persons in charge

16.Does representativeness, as exercised in the institution/university, respond to the fundamental principle of democratization of decision-making? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

17.Are the supervisory authorities involved in making strategic decisions of the institution/university? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

18.Institution/university?

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

19.Does the observatory within the university take part in the strategic decision-making of the institution/university? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

20.Does the decision-making body intervene in the strategic decision-making of the institution / university? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

21.Are the administrative and financial services involved in the strategic decision-making of the institution/university? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

22.Do the quality committees intervene in the strategic decision-making of the institution/university? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

23.in the strategic decision-making of the institution/university? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

24.How do you assess the participation of the different stakeholders in strategic decision-making? *

25.Are the supervisory authorities involved in making operational or day-to-day decisions of the institution/university? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

26.Does the management board intervene in operational or day-to-day decisions? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

27.Is the decision-making body involved in making operational or day-to-day decisions? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

28.operational or day-to-day decisions? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

29.Are the quality committees involved in making operational or day-to-day decisions? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

30.Are the career and skills certification centers involved in operational or day-to-day decision-making? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

31.How do you assess the participation of the different stakeholders in making operational or day-to-day decisions? *

32.Do you think that Decree 2017-827 relating to the elections of university managers (on the organization of elections for management structures in higher education institutions) will have an effect on the distribution of power within the governance bodies of your university/institution)?

33.How would you rate your degree of financial, academic and administrative autonomy? *

<u>Financial Autonomy</u>

34. Can your institution/university freely own its buildings, facilities and equipment? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

35. Is your institution / university free to decide the amount of tuition fees? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

36. Can your institution/university freely manage its assets (purchase/sale/rent)? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

37.Can your institution / university freely borrow or invest funds? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

38.Is your institution/university free to use its budget to achieve its objectives? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

39.Are some sources of income available but not used? If so, what are they? *

Academic Autonomy

40.Can your institution/university freely define its disciplinary fields, degree structure and training content? (If yes, explain / If no, explain). *

41.Students to register?

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

Administrative Autonomy

42.Is your institution/university free to recruit, contract, dismiss and manage staff careers? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

43.Is your institution/university free to set salaries? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

44.Can your institution/university freely conclude agreements with foreign partners? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

45.Is your institution/university free to conclude agreements with socio-economic partners? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

46.Can your institution/university freely assess its academic staff? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

The interdependence of the actors involved in collective action: the degree of participation and the ability to obtain and administer resources: managerial orientation

47.Who is involved in making strategic decisions in your institution/ university? *

48.Do you have action plans to achieve your strategic goals and objectives? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

49.Have you carried out a self-assessment of the governance of your institution / university? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

<u>Quality Improvement</u>

50.How do you implement Article 5 of law 2008-19: "the quality of higher education in the fields of [...] constitutes a fundamental element of the higher education system"? *

51.Do you have a quality committee (Articles 18 and 41 of Decree 2008-2016)? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

52.Do you have a QIP (Quality Improvement Program) in place at your institution/university? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

53.Did you take part in setting up a budget by objectives? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

54.Did you put in place performance indicators that you monitor periodically? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

55.Have you participated in an institution project under the medium-term expenditure framework (MTEF)? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes　　No

Other

56.Have you participated in the establishment or operation of the observatory within your supervisory authority (Articles 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the 2008 Decree)? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes　　No

Other

57. Do you have a structure that collects, processes, uses and disseminates information? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

58. Do you have an information and foresight structure? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

59. Do you ensure the archiving and dissemination of administrative, educational and scientific information? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

60.Staff ?

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

61.Do you organize, manage and promote communication with internal and external stakeholders? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

62.Do you know the national body in charge of overseeing assessment, quality assurance and accreditation (IEAQA) (Law 2008-19, Articles 41, 42 and 43) (Decree 2012-1719)? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

63.Have you carried out an external evaluation of the training programs and pathways in your institution/university? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

64.Have you carried out an external evaluation with a view to applying for a transition of your institution/university to PSTI (Public Science and Technology Institutions) status? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

65.Evaluation, Quality Assurance and Accreditation?

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

66.Do you have a center/annex to the career and skills certification center (Decree dated October 7, 2016)?

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

67.Have you obtained/taken steps to obtain certification of one or more processes in your quality system? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

68.Have you obtained/taken steps to obtain international accreditation for one or more training programs and courses at your institution? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

69.Is the administration involved in improving quality through validated procedures? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

70.Validated procedures?

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes No

Other

71.Are students involved in improving quality through validated procedures? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes No

Other

72.Are socio-economic partners involved in improving quality? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes No

Other

73.Did you use a quality assurance organization for quality improvement? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes No

Other

74.Are there internal mechanisms (surveys, benchmarking, informal discussions, commissions, etc.) to regularly assess the quality of training programs? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

75.Are there means to collect on a regular basis the opinions of the various people concerned (students, graduates, collaborators, etc.) with regard to all aspects of training programs (description and general conditions, positioning and relevance, design, operation, results and effects, resources, organization and quality management)? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

76.Have you taken part in actions to evaluate universities, institutions and training courses (Law 2008–19, Articles 44, 45, 47 and 48)? *

Please answer yes or no. You can comment or explain your answer in the "other" field.

Yes   No

Other

77.To what extent are the results of these evaluations and surveys discussed and used in order to improve the quality of training programs? : *

78.To what extent are the results of these evaluations and surveys used to improve the governance of your institution/university?

Appendix 3

Focus Group Report – July 12, 2018 in Paris

First Focus Group – Presidents and Vice-Presidents Green Room – Décanal Apartment Moderator: Annie Soriot Rapporteur: Jouhaina Gherib			
N° Partner	**University**	**Name**	**Position**
7	University of Tunis	Khaled KCHIR	Vice-President
7	University of Tunis	Saoussen KRICHEN	Vice-President
10	University of Sousse	Ali MTIRAOUI	President
13	University of Manouba	Mohamed Hicham RIFI	Vice-President
13	University of Manouba	Jouhaina GHERIB	President
14	University of Monastir	Mskeni HATEM	Secretary-General
17	University of Gafsa	Rached BEN YOUNES	President
18	University of Jendouba	Abbes CHAABANE	Vice-President
20	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research	Kamel KDISS	Director of Multilateral Cooperation
21	IEAQA	Mounir BEN ACHOUR	Assistant-Director

Decision-Making

The current context is one of a changing distribution of roles. The structures allowing for strategic decision-making and the exercise of democratic power have been created and must now be used.

The university is thus in the learning phase in terms of managing its decision-making capacity and defining its strategy. The importance of the role of the university board is reiterated.

There is consensus on:

– The place of the university as the center of gravity of the system,

– The place of institutions as repositories of training and research, in connection with the university,

– The essential role of the ministry in terms of support, facilitation and coordination of government policies (especially for accreditation at national level, for example).

Exercise of Power

Currently, the involvement of universities within institutions is limited to crisis and conflict management and arbitration, in terms of coordinating trainings, catalyszing resources and a harmonizing procedures between the different institutions.

Capacity to Leverage Resources

The resources (human, financial, information, etc.) of universities and institutions are currently too limited. The transition to the status of PSTI (Public Science and Technology Institutions) status appears as a first positive solution towards the autonomy of resource management, but remains an intermediate step towards a new status still to be defined. The universities and institutions should move towards a more managerial management, with a better consideration of ethics, through awareness-raising actions and through a commitment in the form of signing a charter.

Quality Improvement

The foundations of the quality approach have been laid: criteria exist, indicators have been identified. However, it is noted that there is a lack of formalization and systematization. Evaluation experiments have been sporadically carried out, but they remain unrepresentative because they are too fragmented.

Evaluation

It should be noted that the new system (election of presidents every three years, electoral program setting objectives) raises the question of performance. Nevertheless, universities suffer from a lack of data and procedures for collecting these data. A lack of awareness of the importance of the quantitative is still in evidence.

The need to raise awareness, and to mobilize all components of the university to the strategic dimension of evaluation, is identified, in addition to the importance of developing internal self-evaluation and of being part of an approach that takes into account accreditations at the international level.

The idea of putting in place an observatory to collect these data, supported by all the components, is put forward. Its implementation should involve both coercive and incentive measures, the aim being not to impose it from above but to ensure the involvement of all stakeholders.

N° Partner	University	Name	Position
Second Focus Group – Presidents and Vice-Presidents Room 216 Moderator: Silvia Marchionne Rapporteur: Abdelwahid Mokni			
P8	University of Tunis El Manar	Fethi SELLAOUTI	President
P9	University of Carthage	Imed ZAIRE	Dean
P11	University of Sfax	Abdelwahid MOKNI	President
P12	University of Gabes	Mehrez ROMDHANE	Vice-President
P15	Tunis Virtual University	Ezzeddine ZAGROUBA	Vice-President
P16	University of Kairouan	Kamel SAID	Vice-President
P17	University of Gafsa	Ali MANSOURI	Associate Professor
P18	University of Jendouba	Jacqueline BACHA	Vice-President
P19	University Ezzitouna	Wiem ZAHI	Secretary-General/ General Administrator
P20	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research	Olfa KACEM	Director of the MESRS Governance Unit

Decision-Making

The crisis has played an important role in disrupting the functions of the various bodies in charge of making strategic decisions, but we are witnessing a continuous evolution today.

Strategic decision-making is still the responsibility of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. The latter decides the priorities by communicating to the universities the privileged guidelines that will be engaged.

However, more and more universities are assuming increasing powers, by overriding national law and implementing MESRS decisions at different speeds. For example, the University Board has assumed a very important decision-making role, whereas in the text of the 2008 Law only states consultative power.

Even today, important decisions are taken at meetings of the Scientific Councils Finally, the Management Board has become a parallel power in all matters relating to day-to-day decision-making.

The University has a very significant role as the institution's contact party with the Ministry. The exercise of decision-making power is therefore a rapidly developing process that requires a harmonization of vertical and horizontal powers.

Exercise of power

Currently, universities mainly deal with financial aspects such as budget allocation, day-to-day affairs and the purchase of equipment, in addition to the management of conflicts and dysfunctionalities. It therefore plays a role of supervision and guidance.

There is also a concern about the relationship with institutions, which are sometimes older than universities and which create a very strong sense of belonging for professors. On the other hand, universities also claim the possibility of organizing competitions for the admission of students and the recruitment of teacher-researchers and administrative, technical and working staff.

It is therefore recommended to rethink the organization of the exercise of power by giving universities the power of evaluation, while the Ministry should play a harmonizing role.

Capacity to Leverage Resources

Universities are faced with a shortage of financial and human resources, which can sometimes compromise good administrative management. It is therefore necessary to have more wide access to international funding and to find mechanisms for the development of resources and the recognition of the efforts made. It is therefore recommended to motivate academic and administrative staff and, while respecting social constraints, to establish the principle of meritocracy at all levels: either at the statutory level guaranteeing job promotion, or at the financial level with an increase of salary for more deserving staff.

Quality Improvement

In order to guarantee the quality of university services, instruments have been adopted, but they remain insufficient. Evaluation and self-evaluation bodies have been created, and the quality of training is now measured by ranking. On the other hand, computerization should be boosted, many query platforms should be set up providing for a response within 48 hours, and accreditation should be guaranteed.

It is recommended to create observatories so that the standards guaranteeing monitoring, which already exist, are actually applied, thus ensuring staff reactivity. The role of students and their involvement should also be further supported.

Evaluation

A system of evaluation and self-assessment does not exist, and there is a lack of strategic thinking that sets clear goals.

It is recommended to introduce specific methods such as, for example, the drafting of dashboards in relation to the objective. In fact, the activity reports, which are written in an ordinary way, do not give due importance to evaluation.

Third Focus Group – Secretaries–General and Administrative Staff Room 1 Moderator: Eric Vallet Rapporteur: Wahida Boutabba			
N° Partner	**University**	**Name**	**Position**
8	University of Tunis	Adnen BEN FADHEL	Assistant–Director in charge of Scientific Research, International Cooperation and University Evaluation
9	University of Carthage	Wahida BOUTABBA	Secretary–General
10	University of Sousse	LATIFA KECHICHE	General Administrator in charge of International Relations
11	University of Sfax	Nejib BOUTHELJA	Director of Academic Affairs and Scientific Partnership
11	University of Sfax	Mounir GHALI	Director of Common Services
12	University of Gabes	Mohamed HOUTA	Assistant–Director
13	University of Manouba	Nadia AMRI	Director of Academic Affairs and Scientific Partnership
15	Tunis Virtual University	Bechir ALLOUCH	Professor Technologist
16	University of Kairouan	Mabrouk HANZOULI	Chief Administrator
19	University Ezzitouna	Mouna MOUGOU	Chief Financial Officer / Advisor Administrator
20	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research	Makram DRISS	Director of Common Services at MESRS
20	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research	Hayet SOUIAI	Assistant–Director in charge of Regional and International cooperation
21	IEAQA	Zouheir ZIEDI	Assistant–Director in charge of Regional and International cooperation

Decision–Making

The context is that of a system which remains – even if the presidents are at the same time elected on a program – very centralized and where the MESRS sets the strategy. Decision–making theoretically belongs to the university board, but its role appears more consultative than deliberative. The university has executive autonomy. The change of status does not count as much as the mechanisms and tools that will be deployed in the new framework.

The lack of representativeness of the administrative staff at the university board (no voting right for the administrative staff in the election of the president, and for the secretary general of the university in the election of the board), and the absence of tools (for example, absence of an information system) to help decision-making, were widely mentioned.

There is consensus on the need to:

– Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Secretary-General and the administrative staff, which will enhance accountability according to the tasks assigned (there is work to be made, in particular, on the organization chart)

– Find balance in decision-making, through increased participation of the administrative staff in decision-making

– Encourage the pooling of resources

Exercise of power

Since 2011, the president of the university is elected by the directors of the institutions. The only advantage of the transition to PSTI status is the removal of ex ante control of expenditure, which makes the university more financially autonomous, but this does not solve governance problems. The university should be provided with audit capabilities and not wait until it is initiated by the MESRS to be able to put in place the necessary corrective measures. In an autonomous university, the role of university boards should be strengthened.

Capacity to Leverage Resources

Today, the president of the university has his own program, as does the director of the institution, and there is not always consensus between them. Besides, the university does not choose its teachers or its students. They suffer from the lack of an observatory of university life. The regulatory framework is good; it is the implementing texts that are binding and sometimes disconnected. This constraint is related to the lack of delegation of signature authority.

– Need to provide universities with an institution plan containing indicators to measure performance

– Adapt the organization chart and resources according to the size of the university and the institutions

Evaluation

– Need for regular and structural evaluation to highlight positive results and to take support and corrective measures

– Lack of sustainability of good practices that had been identified during previous evaluations due to the lack of a data collection system

– Issue of transparency in the evaluation of the staff

Quality Assurance

– Lack of an evaluation system for teachers and teaching, currently not provided for in the reform

– IEAQA: created in 2008, operational in 2015, but with what resources and with what level of expertise, given the time required to train experts?

Questions Raised during the Focus Groups

Questions for the Presidents and Vice-Presidents

Topics	Questions (Evidence-Based Approach)	Questions (Perceptual Approach)
Decision-Making	– How does strategic decision-making in your university work in practice?	– What should be the respective role of universities, HEIs and MESRS in strategic decision-making? – What can be the role of the Ministry if universities or HEIs are autonomous?
Exercise of Power	– What are the situations / circumstances /reasons for which universities should intervene in relation to the functioning of HEIs?	– How do you see the role of MESRS in supporting the decision-making power of the university vis-à-vis HEIs?

Capacity to Leverage Resources	– What resources do you currently have to achieve your strategic objectives? – How do current resources allow you to achieve your strategic goals?	– What regulatory and practical changes would be necessary to help you improve the performance of your university? – How can MESRS help you improve the performance of your university?
Quality Improvement	– What are the quality criteria of your services? – What are the future satisfaction requirements of your partners?	– What, according to you, are the quality criteria of your services according to: the students, the socio-economic partners, the public authorities? – What regulatory and practical changes would be necessary to help you improve the quality of your services?
Evaluation	– What are the methods used to evaluate your performance?	– How do you see the involvement of the different components of the university (teachers, administrators, students) in your evaluation? – How do you plan to use your university's performance evaluation reports?
	– If your university has carried out an internal and/or external evaluation, which strategic dimensions have been privileged?	–Do you find the indicators used for the assessment appropriate?
	What are the strategic dimensions that your university is most interested in / about which you think your university can learn more from the experiences of other countries?	

Questions for the Secretaries-General and Other University Representatives

Topics	Questions (Evidence-Based Approach)	Questions (Perceptual Approach)

Decision-Making	How does the strategic decision-making process take place within the university?	In an autonomous university, what should be the role of the administration in making strategic decisions?
Exercise of Power	– What are the difficulties and obstacles you encounter in executing operational and day-to-day decisions? – How is the monitoring role of the university carried out vis-à-vis HEIs? – Who are the parties involved in making operational or day-to-day decisions?	What should be the respective roles of universities, HEIs, and MESRS in the implementation of strategic decisions and day-to-day management?
Capacity to Leverage Resources	– Do you have action plans to achieve your strategic goals? – What does a good performance of your university represent for you? – Are there performance indicators that you monitor periodically?	As a representative of the administration at the university, what would be the regulatory and practical changes necessary to be able to improve your performance?
Quality Improvement	– What are the quality criteria of your services? –What are the difficulties you encounter in improving the quality of your services? –Do you have a quality committee (Articles 18 and 41of Decree 2008–2716): how does it work?	What regulatory and practical changes would be necessary to help you improve the quality of your services?

Evaluation	– How do you assess (methods, tools) your performance? – Have you participated in the evaluation of universities, institutions or training courses (Law 2008–19, Articles 44, 45, 47 and 48)? – Have you taken steps to obtain certifications from accreditation institutions or international programs?	– How to enhance transparency for the sake of improving evaluation?
	What strategic dimensions has the evaluation focused on?	–What are the performance indicators to use, in order to evaluate administrative services in a university?
	What are the strategic dimensions that your university is most interested in / about which you think your university can learn more from the experiences of other countries?	

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