

Short Review

Statistics

Population:	3.0 mln.
Number of state HEIs	26
Including state HEIs belonging to the system of the MoES	16
Number of private HEIs:	67
Number of HEIs established by intergovernmental agreements:	4
Number of students in state HEIs:	59.047
Number of students in private HEIs:	53.197

Note: statistics for HEIs is for **2008-2009** academic year

Introduction

The education sector in Armenia is represented by two types of educational establishments: general (**Preschool establishment and School**) and professional (Preliminary Professional Educational Institution – **Technical School**; Middle Professional Educational Institute – **College**; Higher Education Institution (HEI) – **University, Institute, Academy and Conservatory**). Post-graduate studies are available within HEIs as well as in scientific institutes.

In 2006 Armenia converted to a three level 12 year general education system having the following sequence: elementary school (4 years), middle school (5 years) and high school (3 years).

Unified school examinations, held by Assessment and Testing Center, are introduced to replace centralised admission exams to enter HEIs by ensuring relatively fair and transparent selection conditions.

Legislation

The general principles of legislation in the tertiary sector are determined in the framework of the **Law on Education** adopted in April 1999 and in the **Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education** adopted in 2004. The university or college status as an organisational entity is regulated by the **Law on State Non-Profit Entities** adopted in October 2001.

“**Development Strategy of Education for 2008-2015**” is the main action plan for the implementation of reforms in the field.

Higher Education Programmes and Qualifications

According to the **Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education** and subsequent **Government Decree** the 2-cycle system (Bachelor – 4 year and Master – 2 year) was introduced in Armenia at the system level from 2005-2006 academic year. The **Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education** envisaged “Mandatory implementation of credit system into the higher education system shall start from 2006/07 academic year”, nevertheless, due to actual unreadiness of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), the Ministry of Education and Science shifted the start of introduction of credit system to 2007/08 academic year. Concurrently, admission to the former study programme for the diploma specialists (5 year) was terminated, while the status of respective Specialist’s qualification was equalised to the Master’s qualification.

Postgraduate Professional Education is conducted through two scientific degree systems: aspirantura (candidate of science), which is equalised to PhD, and doctorantura (doctor of science). Duration of doctoral studies (aspirantura) is considered to be 3, 4 and 5 years for full-time, distant and free creative studies consequently.

According to the **Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education**, ECTS has been started of being introduced since 2007/2008 academic year in all Armenian HEIs.

Higher Education Institutions

The following types of HEIs are operational in Armenia - **University; Institute; Academy (educational); and Conservatory**.

In total, there are 26 state HEIs, of which 16 with their 14 branches belong to the system of Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), 4 HEIs founded by interstate agreements and state participation, and funded by MoES, 2 HEIs in the system of the Ministry of Defense of the RA, one HEI in the system of each of the following Ministry/Body: Republic of Armenia Police, Ministry of Emergency Situations of the RA, Civil Service Council of the RA, Mother See of Holy Etchimiadzin. The number of private Universities currently is counted to be 67.

Administration of Higher Education Field

The main external stakeholder that claims significant formal power and influence in Armenian tertiary education sector is the Ministry of Education and Science of Armenia which is the authorised state body for education and responsible for developing and implementation of state policy/strategy and legislation in tertiary education. The Ministry is also a source of funding and exercises oversight and auditing function. Tertiary education in Soviet Armenia was highly centralised and strictly controlled by the Government. Nowadays, it is still a most regulated sphere. However, the general tendency is to confine the state to the general supervisory functions. At present, the right to main decision making within the academic community is mostly reserved to the institutions of higher education. They are autonomous in determining the main spheres of activity, adopting budgets and supervising execution thereof, introducing new majors and upgrading the existing ones, adopting curricula and teaching methods. Rectors and deans are now elected by the academic community of each institution rather than being appointed by the Ministry as was the practice under the soviet regime. So, tertiary institutions themselves and state seem to share governance of the system, but responsibilities seem tangled and sometimes unclear. The Government issues a state seats order for enrolment by specialties and by institutions as well as appropriate funding. The higher educational institutions can establish quotes for tuition free and tuition paying enrolment of students based on the total quotas for academic admissions allocated by the Government, providing unpaid education for at least 10% of admission figure for each major. The Government approves the state educational standards and their formation mechanisms; the fields of study and the list of specialties to be taught; the state order for higher educational institutions. The Ministry defines state educational standards, issues licenses and state credentials; forms the list of the specialties provided; develops the state order for colleges and universities; approves the admission rules for the state and private accredited higher educational institutions and supervises their implementation; conducts state accreditation according to the institutions and their specialties (with no regard to the organisational-juridical and ownership form of the institution).

As a direct impact of joining Bologna Process, there have been certain structural changes in the Ministry. Department of Policy Development and Planning and also a Coordinating Committee of Bologna Promoters were formed.

In 2009, 5 Bologna committees, composed of the representatives of different Universities, were founded by the MoES on the development of the strategy on post-graduate education, qualification frameworks, ECTS, finance administration, and quality assurance.

Among the institutions responsible for the organisation and administration of the HE system are the **State Licensing and Accreditation Service** - the only intermediate body established by the Ministry by operating in the area of the central accreditation system – and **National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA)**, established on December 28, 2008, as an independent foundation for promoting quality education at tertiary level.

There are also two main representative bodies in the tertiary education system: **the Council of Rectors of State Higher Educational Institutions** and **the Council of Rectors of Private Higher Educational Institutions**, which are advisory bodies to the Ministry.

Quality Assurance

The external review of quality assurance of HEIs is done by the **National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA)** - an independent foundation aimed at promoting quality education at tertiary level, being established on December 28, 2008. ANQA is founded and subsidised by the Armenian Government and is projected to be financed through entrepreneurial initiatives. It is governed by the board of stakeholders and is independent of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) and institutions at tertiary level. Among the objectives of the center are to accredit quality of the educational programmes and provide the decision to the MoES for state

accreditation; make academic audit of HEI, evaluate and accredit HEI, provide the decision on accreditation to the MoES for state accreditation of HEIs, as well as evaluate quality assurance systems of HEIs and make recommendations, etc.

The Universities themselves are involved in the development of internal mechanisms for quality assurance. They are becoming increasingly introspective and analytical about their strengths and weaknesses and need to develop a culture of constant improvement through periodic evaluation.

The “2009 Stocktaking Report” submitted to the Ministers in charge for Higher Education in the 46 countries participating in the Bologna Process, who gathered in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Conference (2009), contains individual country scorecards, including one for Armenia. It shows current developments in regard to the implementation of the Bologna Process.

There are five scorecard indicators ranging from green to red. More detailed description of each indicator for separate block of issues (degree system, quality assurance and recognition) is included in the “2009 Stocktaking Report” available at:

http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/Bologna/conference/documents/Stocktaking_report_2009_FINAL.pdf

Indicators for Assessment				
Green (5)	Light Green (4)	Yellow (3)	Orange (2)	Red (1)

ARMENIA

DEGREE SYSTEM	
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	Green (5)
2. Access to the next cycle	Green (5)
3. Implementation of national qualification framework	Yellow (3)
QUALITY ASSURANCE	
4. Stage of implementation of external quality assurance system	Yellow (3)
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	Green (5)
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	Orange (2)
RECOGNITION	
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	Yellow (3)
8. National implementation of Lisbon Recognition Convention	Green (5)
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	Yellow (3)
10. Recognition of prior learning	Yellow (3)

The report, based on national reports, indicates that in Armenia transfer to the two-cycle degree system has been completed and almost 95% students below are enrolled in Bachelor and Master programmes. All higher education programmes are based on ECTS as of 2008, while only two Universities issues Diploma Supplements. The report includes information on the proposal for creation of national quality assurance center. As far as **National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA)** was formed in the end of 2008, probably the indicator for assessment for the implementation of external quality assurance system will be changed in the next report.

In the short-term perspective, the report indicates upon the challenges for the Armenian Higher Education, among which are overcoming inadequacies between learning outcomes and the labour market needs; strengthening financial management of HEIs; improving life-long learning programmes; internationalisation of HEIs and creation of joint degree programmes. In the long-term, the report mentions such future challenges as better coordination of reforms to develop a competitive high-quality HE system and increase of confidence in Armenia’s education system; improvement of organisational structures and support systems, strategic planning, monitoring, budgeting and other related functions.