UGSC Report

American University of Beirut:

The University is a private not for profit Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) institute with liberal arts that currently offers more than 120 programs leading to the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees on one main campus. Its research orientation ranges from basic to applied research. It is not affiliated with any religion or sect within the country. The university reports that it has a shared governance model with policies and regulations in place to ensure full accountability. It is an exemplary institution that strikes a balance between the different governance dimensions; it'sgood practices deserve to be shared.

AXIS 1 – CONTEXT, MISSION, AND GOALS

A key element in defining university governance is the overall framework of the system and the interaction between the institution and the state (Jaramillo et al., 2012). The clarity of the mission and goals of the university is the first element in assessing university governance. In the case of this university, the general mission and its specific goals are formally and clearly stated, particularly in a decree issued by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the university's internal regulations. In addition, it was reported that both the mission and the goals are stated within the institutional self-assessment. The university mission is not formally defined at the national level due to the absence of a national law that stipulates the objectives and general organization of the national higher education system. This implies that the university engages in the process of defining its own mission distinct from all other universities in the country.

The actors involved in the process of defining the university's mission and goals included civil society representatives, industry and business representatives, and representatives from the university itself. The state was not involved in the process of elaboration of the university's mission and goals. When the university set its goals, they are aligned with its mission. For example, the university's mission addresses, in addition to teaching, its contribution to "…the advancement of knowledge through research…" This is clearly supported by a number of the institutional goals, such as "by promoting pure and applied research, AUB will become an acknowledged leader in graduate education and a respected member of the global network of research institutions." It was reported that the university's goals may change with the change of its strategic plan. The university has maintained the same legal status since it was established in the late 1866 as an institute of higher education. However, it has modified its mission once since its establishment when it went through the international accreditation process, which is a classic governance function.

AXIS 2 – MANAGEMENT ORIENTATION

Strong leadership and strategic planning are key elements of a well-performing university (Jaramillo et al., 2012). Several elements of the day-to-day management of the university that are critical decisions of operating the institution are addressed within this axis in an attempt to identify the extent to which a university followed results-based management aligned with the New Public Management (NPM) practices. The results of the self-perception of Management orientation were almost identical to the results from the questionnaire. The university has established a strategic plan through internal reports and road maps and uses wide consultations. The strategic plan is available at the office of Strategy Management at the university. The process for preparing the strategy is consultative and the definition of the strategy is comprehensive including the following topics: Setting the goals and the process for their achievement, detailed action plans, the values promoted by the institution, the vision of education and research, and the internal regulations and procedures (which are not a target by themselves, but rather a facilitation to reach a specific goal-and they are continuously updated). Furthermore, a number of strategies are outlined for each goal, and for each strategy, a number of key performance indicators are developed by different institutional committees. For example, the institution will conduct a performance review for each goal, which will have a list of objectives with a list of associated indicators for the achievement of the goal. In addition, the university reports that a new institutional vision has been under discussion by members of the Board of Trustees for over a year, a vision which focuses on the institution's role within the MENA region.

The university uses Quantitative surveys producing performance data, examples of which are assessment reports conducted by the governing board, by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (in the case of licensing of a new program), and an independent agency in order to measure the attainment of these key indicators of the strategic plan. As a result of the latest institutional self-assessment, the university introduced internal periodic review of academic programs, whereby each department is submitted to a review every 6 years. The results of the surveys are all published online by the university's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA). Furthermore, the university regularly [every three years] uses surveys to review each program. These investigations provide information for the university to measure attainment of the key elements outlined by the institutional strategic plan. Therefore, the university's management orientation tends to be results-based. The fact that reports are used to evaluate institutional goals is in itself a measure of modern management. The governing board discusses the following issues during the meetings they hold: budget and academic issues, long-term strategy for the institution, human resources directives, and institutional relationships and partnerships.

Selection of Decision Makers

The president of the university and the deans are selected through competitive recruitment by a Selection Committee in which the institutional leadership and senior academic staff are implicated. This selection process is typical to the selection process of similar actors within private universities in the region. In the case of the president, the Board of Trustees makes the final decision. The president's profile reveals that the university adheres to an academic-governance model, where the president of the university is expected to have an academic profile with a managerial background. S/he can be external to the university, s/he needs to meet the full job specification and to propose a strategic vision for the university, but it is not necessary for her/him to be a member of a political party. Her/His mandate is more than four years renewable for a limited number of times.

The qualifications and the conditions of the mandate of the selected deans are similar to those of the university president to be selected. Members of the governing board are usually appointed by a selection committee from within the Board of Trustees through competitive recruitment. However, unlike the university president and deans, members of the governing board do not necessarily have to be academics. Furthermore, members of the governing board serve for more than four years renewable but for a limited number of mandates.

Performance and Evaluation of the Staff

It is evident that the university has introduced management tools in line with those used in the private sector. The state does not have any direct monitoring of the performance of the university staff. Staff members of the human resources, financial and academic departments report to a number of entities across the university, among which are the head of the university, institutional councils, deans and the quality assurance center at the university. The performance and evaluation of staff stand out with its recourse to reporting measures, scorecards, compensations and salaries attached to performance, providing justifications for expenditures, and standardized sanctions in case of professional misconduct.

Composition of the Staff

Less than half of the staff within the university are composed of administrative staff (22%), of which 11% at the senior level. Similarly, a limited number (2%) of academic staff are at the senior level. Neither academic nor administrative staff are civil servants. All administrative staff are on full-time permanent contracts, while all academic staff are appointed on fixed-term contracts. However, there are a variety of both full-time and part-time academic staff, with more so employed on a full-time basis. More than half (81%) of the academic staff are PhD holders with 50% having more than 10 years of service at the university, and 12% having more than 10 years of service in a managerial position.

AXIS 3 – AUTONOMY

The autonomy demonstrated through the questionnaire is almost identical to that reported through the self-perception and is in line with international trends of increased institutional autonomy in an attempt to achieve independence and self-governance. The university's academic autonomy is relatively high, which is a critical element for innovating, producing knowledge, and excelling on academic and research grounds. The university reported to have full autonomy in deciding on the curricula, the type of courses offered at the institution, the number of hours per program, assessment of students and the format of exams, and academic partnerships with other institutions. The university is partially autonomous in deciding on other academic issues particularly pertaining to the introduction of new programs. Within these aspects of academic autonomy, the university is required to get the approval of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education through a formally issued decree. Furthermore, the university's academic autonomy was demonstrated in its freedom in determining the admission procedures and the overall number of students admitted at the university and within different programs. The university has complete freedom to decide on all aspects of the human resources management, as long as they abide by the national law governing employment for administrative staff.

The university has full autonomy in managing its financial resources. Its revenue is not heavily dependent on student fees (only 45%) which is a unique situation compared to most institutions in the region. An important additional source of revenue comes from the university's medical center which accounts for over half (53%) of all revenue. The university does not receive any funding from the government. The only additional sources of funding within the university are limited to loans and grants obtained from international organizations (3%) and minimal funds from contracts (1%) and financial applications (1%). The revenue sources reported are an indicator that the university is engaged in providing services within its local environment.

AXIS 4 – ACCOUNTABILITY

The university's self-perception of its accountability is similar to that demonstrated on the questionnaire, which is relatively high. One of the strengths of the university is that its autonomy is positively correlated to the accountability level. The university has a quality assurance (QA) mechanism that acts both within the university and outside the university under the responsibility of an independent agency. The government does not have a direct role in overseeing it. The QA system in place addresses issues of institutional licensing, the accreditation of programs, the assessment of learning outcomes, the evaluation of teaching methodologies and research production, and the appraisal of university facilities. In order to follow up on the results of these evaluation procedures, the university establishes action plans that are followed by the internal QA unit, the president of the university and the deans.

These action plans are regularly reviewed resulting in variable budget allocations. Usually, departments submit requests and institutional committees decide where to allocate budgets, but the variability is not too wide. The university reallocates the budget based on results when there is a serious weakness or change, such as when the university established the Center for Teaching and Learning.

The university has applied standardized sanctions against examination fraud, unethical behavior of faculty, non-compliance with admission standards, and the unethical management of faculty careers.

The university fares very well on the social responsibility aspect on this axis because outcomes are measured and information is well disseminated. It has developed public or external accountability on service delivery towards society at large by establishing, for example, tracking surveys to measure a number of indicators related to new graduates employment, such as employment rate, average unemployment period after graduation, and average salaries of new graduates. The university has also established tracking surveys for measuring the average number of years required to complete a degree at the institution. These indicators are communicated through a number of dissemination channels among which are the institutional website, reports that are publically disseminated, newsletters and communication brochures. The university also currently publishes its mission and goals, strategy and results of the accreditation process, institutional evaluations and the average number of years required to complete a degree through a number of vectors such the institutional website and communication brochures.

The university's budget documents are regularly reviewed by the concerned administrative and academic staff, students, and public audience. In addition, the university submits to an annual financial audit conducted by an external body that results in a report that is made available to internal and external stakeholders. The university has applied standardized sanctions against embezzlement, inappropriate spending, and mis-procurement. These measures of ensuring financial accountability reaffirms what the university had reported as part of the self-perception.

AXIS 5 – PARTICIPATION

Stakeholder participation in the decision-making process was the area in which the university presented relatively lower scores than on the other dimensions. Moreover, it was one of the dimensions on which the university's self-perception score was different from the score obtained through the questionnaire. In the Participation dimension the extent to which different stakeholders are taken into account in the decision making process is considered for analysis. Students, academic and administrative staff, alumni and the private sector all have formal and active modes of representation within the university.

STUDENTS:

Due to the particularities of the Lebanese context, there are no formal student bodies, such as student associations, as in the past these bodies had a tendency to be politicized. Thus, Lebanese universities have opted for other alternatives and mechanisms when it comes to consulting with students and creating institutional processes that guarantee that their voices are heard. Students have an active mode of representation within the university. Although students do not have a say when it comes to the definition of the goals of the university and the type and number of courses offered, they have a voice in the elaboration of the strategy and budget allocation, through their representation on the financial aid committee. Students also have elected representatives with voting roles on the academic council, or its equivalent, such as the disciplinary committee and the research council (or its equivalent). Students are not represented on the Board of Trustees nor the administrative council (or its equivalent).

ACADEMIC STAFF:

The academic staff have a formal and active mode of representation within the university. They have a voice in the definition of the goals of the university, the elaboration of its strategy, budget allocation, and the types and numbers of courses offered within the university. Their representatives have a consultative role on the Board of Trustees as opposed to the voting role they have on the academic council, the research council, and the administrative council (or its equivalents). Regardless of the type of role on each of the councils, the faculty representatives are elected throughout the university.

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF:

Administrative staff have a formal and active mode of representation within the university. They have a voice when it comes to the definition of the goals of the university, the elaboration of the strategy, and budget allocation. However, they do not have a voice when it comes to the specification of the types and number of courses offered on campus. They have a consultative role on the Board of trustees and a voting role on the administrative council (or its equivalent) but they do not have a role on the academic and research councils (or their equivalents). Their representatives are appointed rather than elected on both the Board of Trustees and the administrative council (or its equivalent).

ALUMNI:

Alumni have a formal and active mode of representation within the university, although they do not have a voice when it comes to the definition of the goals of the university, the elaboration of the strategy, budget allocation and the selection of the types and number of courses offered. They have representatives with a voting role on the Board of Trustees, but they are not represented on the academic, research, or administrative councils (nor their equivalents). The alumni representatives on the Board of Trustees are usually appointed.

PRIVATE SECTOR REPRESENTATIVES:

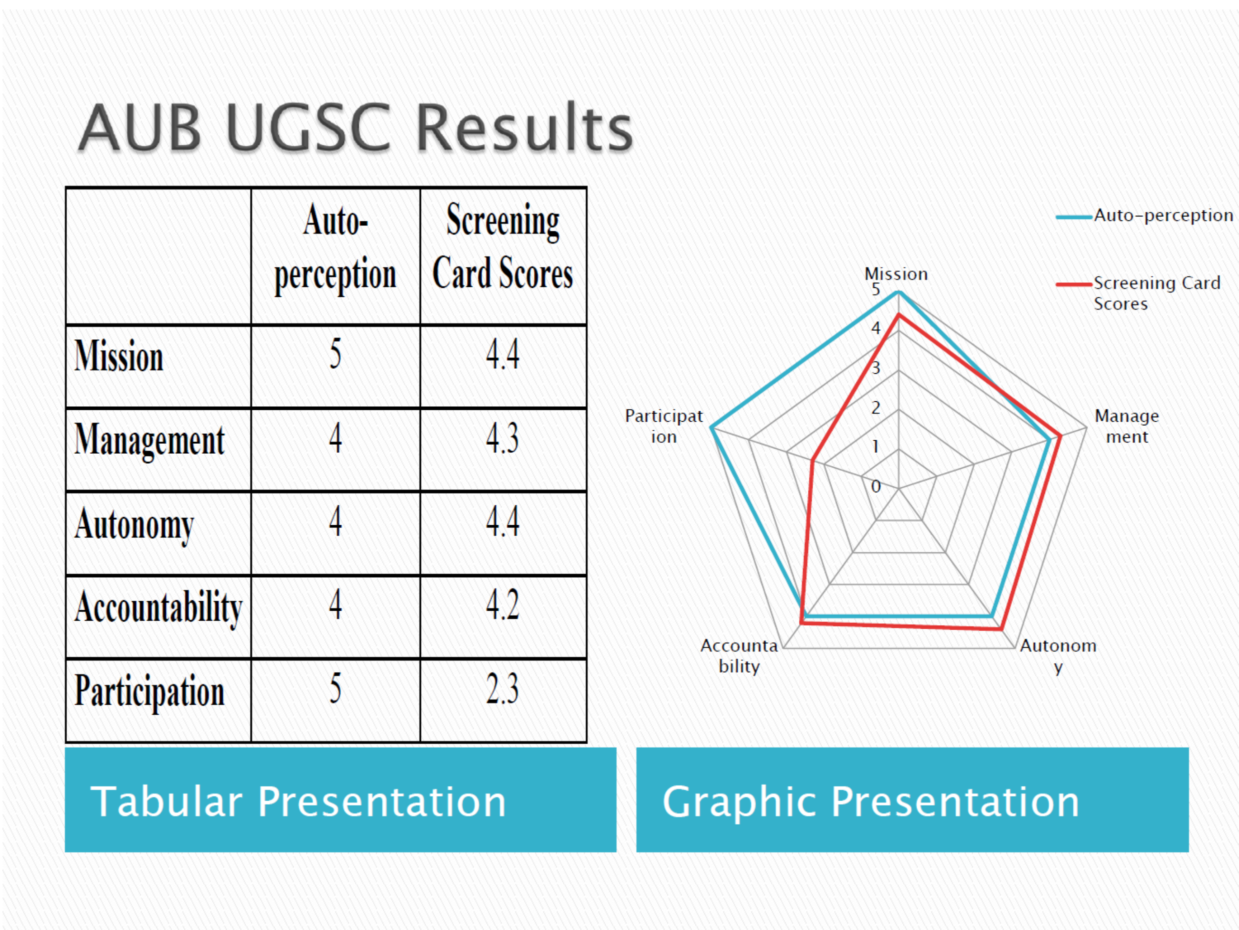
The private sector representatives have a formal and active mode of representation within the university through the advisory boards. They have a voice in the definition of the goals of the university and the elaboration of the strategy, but not in the budget allocation or the selection of the types and numbers of courses offered. They are not represented directly on the Board of Trustees, the academic, research nor administrative councils (nor their equivalents).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

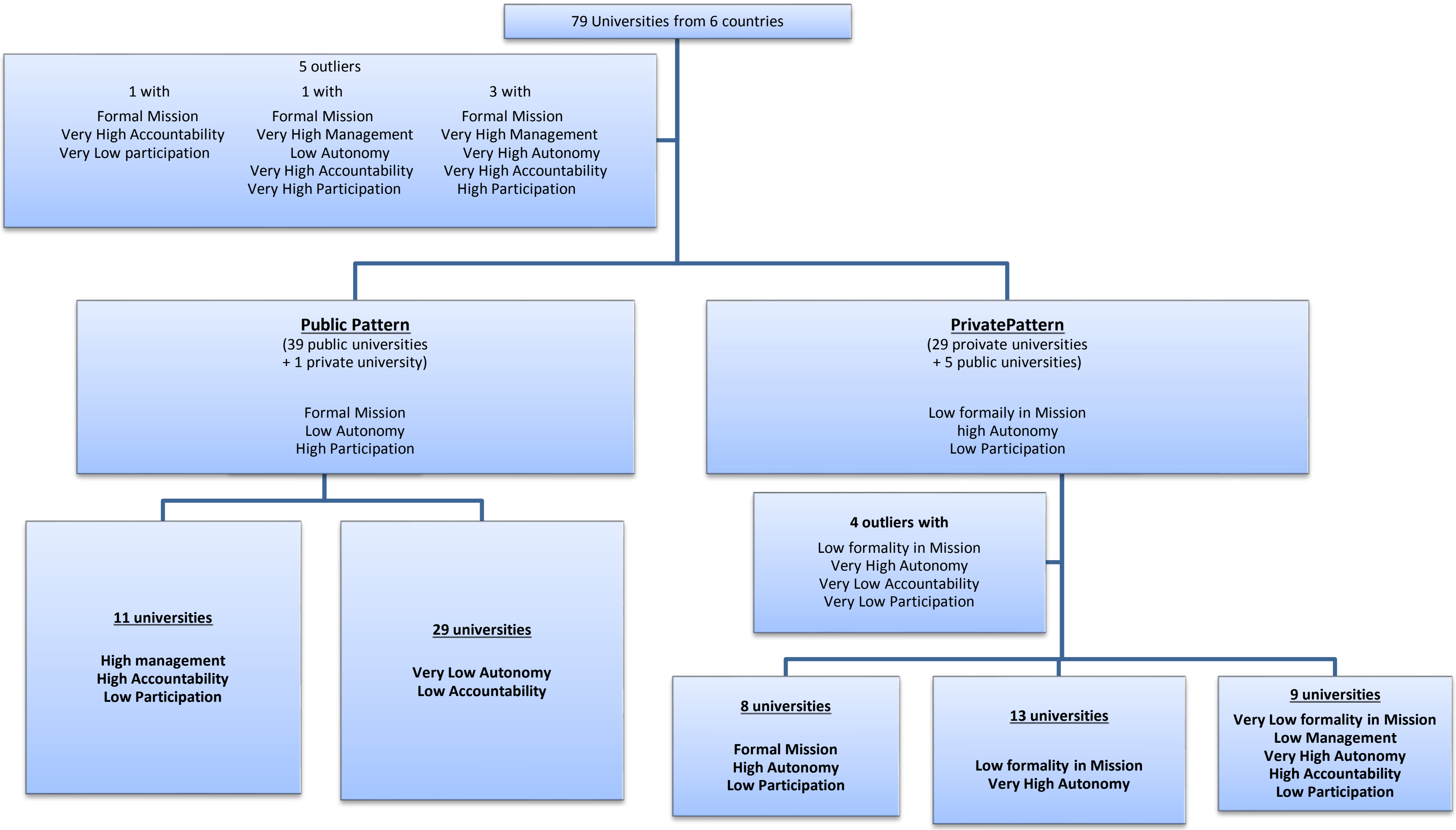
Looking at the scores of the 79 Universities that have been surveyed in 6 countries of the region so far, it has been possible to identify certain patterns. A hierarchical clustering approach was used, i.e., a statistical method for the identification of groups within a sample, according to their similitude (and differences) on a set of variables. This method consists of aggregating individual observations into groups ("clusters") so that the variance within each group is minimized and the variance between the groups is maximized. The first differential pattern that emerges has to do with the variable Public versus Private universities. The pattern refers to the dimensions of Mission, Autonomy and Participation: One large group of 40 universities emerges (all are Public, with the exception of one private), with high level of formality in the definition of their mission, high participation and low autonomy. And there is a second group of 29 private universities and 5 public ones, with high autonomy and low participation. This difference between public and private universities is thus the main *dividing line* that appears in the assessment results. Beside these two main groups there is a third group of “high performers”. This university was classified within the “high performers” group characterized by a formal mission, very high management, very high autonomy, very high accountability, and relatively high participation (although the participation measure was low in this case) (Please see figure in Annex 1).

The university seems to strike a balance between the different dimensions of governance measured, with one dimension identified as improvable. The university’s results on the self perception and the questionnaire are very similar -- with the exception of participation. The relatively low score on this can be attributed to the fact that impact on decision making is concentrated mainly within academic and administrative staff groups, although other stakeholder groups have a formal and active mode of representation: students, for instance, are reported to have a voice in the elaboration of strategy and in budget allocation; they also have elected representatives with voting roles on a number of committees across the university such as the disciplinary committee. Alumni also have a formal and active mode of representation with representatives who have a voting role on the Board of Trustees, but they are not represented on the academic, research, or administrative councils (or their equivalents). The self-perception of high participation may be due to the fact that academics participate actively in the university. This university's self-awareness of its governance model and the balanced scores in all of the dimensions suggests that there are important good practices to be shared.

American University of Beirut		
Dimension	**Self-Assessment Scores**	**Screening Card Scores**
Context, mission, goals	5	4.35
Management Orientation	4	4.26
Autonomy	4	4.41
Accountability	4	4.22
Participation	5	2.34



Annex 1: University Governance Pattern Tree (Jaramillo et al., 2012)



Below are the visual representations of the university's scores on the five dimension of governance on each of the self-assessment and the screening card