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The Role Of Higher Education Development In Jordanian Social Policy

Abstract

The following article presents the role of higher education and its development in the social policy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan since the beginning of its independence. Development of Jordanian higher education sector became an example of a useful instrument in achieving important goals from the state security point of view. Due to historical reasons, Jordanian government decided to recruit state elites from the Transjordanian part of society, which however was traditionally poorer educated than Palestinians. In order to change this situation, various methods, such as affirmative actions including quota systems aimed at promotion of underprivileged candidates, started to be used. These tools did obviously not serve equally to both Palestinians, to whom only private sector remains open, and Transjordanians.¹ However, preferential treatment reserved for the latter ones may bring a serious threat to internal stability of the Kingdom populated by Palestinian majority.

Key words: higher education, Jordan, Transjordanian, Palestinian, university

¹ For the purposes of further analysis in subsequent parts of this article a division between Transjordanians (Bedouins or East Bankers) and Palestinians (originating west from Jordan river) will be remained. These terms have been already used in the literature concerning this part of the Middle East region..

Currently, more than a half of Jordanian population is of Palestinian origin, which makes the titular population a minority.² Due to the unstable internal situation in the country during the 2nd half of the 20th century caused by the activity of Palestinian militant groups in the beginning of the 1970s, Jordanian authorities decided to take steps in order to promote socially ethnic Transjordanians, who in the subsequent decades were bound to form a base for military and government structures. To achieve this aim, several key decisions were undertaken, *inter alia* in the higher education system, which was rapidly developing and enjoying relatively good reputation in the Middle East region.

Jordan and Palestine in the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century

Jordan as a state dates back only to 1946.³ In the same year its official name was changed from the “Emirate of Transjordan” to the “Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan”.⁴ Its modern history is inextricably interwoven with Palestine. Until September 1918 it formed part of the Ottoman Empire. Later on, it became known as the emirate of Transjordan founded in March 1921 as a protectorate of Great Britain. Both Palestine and Transjordan were British mandate territories. Jordan in its present shape is a relatively young state, whose borders were eventually formed only after the lose of control over the West Bank of Jordan river, which was a result of the Six-Day War with Israel in June 1967. The young kingdom formally renounced its rights to this area only in July 1988.

² The exact percentage of Palestinians is difficult to estimate due to the lack of official data on ethnic composition of Jordanian society. However, different sources tend to show this population as exceeding the half of the entire society. Mudar Zahran, *Jordan Is Palestinian*, [in:] “The Middle East Quarterly”, Winter 2012, p. 3, <http://www.meforum.org/3121/jordan-is-palestinian> (Accessed 11.05.2014).

³ There are two dates recognized as the beginning of Jordanian independence: 22nd March 1946, when Great Britain and Transjordan finally signed the alliance treaty (in which independence of the latter one as a monarchy was proclaimed) and 25th May 1946 – declaration of full independence by king Abd Allah I ibn Husain. Bartosz Wróblewski, *Jordania*, Warszawa 2011, s. 87.

⁴ Jordan. History. The Making of Transjordan. http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/his_transjordan.html (Accessed 18.08.2014).

The loss of the West Bank (currently Palestinian Autonomy) with its fertile soil in 1967 caused the exodus of Palestinians to the territories of historic Transjordan. Until today this group has benefited from schools established as a form of assistance from the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.⁵

The course of events in the neighbouring countries during the last few years contributed to even more complicated ethnic situation in the kingdom. The US-led invasion on Iraq started on 20th March 2003, and the following persecutions on its territory, forced around 400, 000 Iraqi citizens, including many Christians, to abandon their homeland.⁶ Many of these people found its refuge in Jordan.⁷ Similar case applies to Syrians incoming since 2011 to Jordan's northern areas.

Table 1. UNHCR 2014 planning figures for Jordan

UNHCR 2014 planning figures for Jordan							
TYPE OF POPULATION	ORIGIN	Dec 2013		Dec 2014		Dec 2015	
		Total in country	of whom assisted	Total in country	of whom assisted	Total in country	of whom assisted
			by UNHCR		by UNHCR		by UNHCR
Total		1,283,510	1,283,510	1,438,440	1,438,440	1,349,330	1,349,330
Refugees	Iraq	24,73	24,73	23,29	23,29	20,79	20,79
	Syrian Arab Rep.	1,254,950	1,254,950	1,410,520	1,410,520	1,324,210	1,324,210
	Various	1,35	1,35	1,8	1,8	2,26	2,26
Asylum-seekers	Iraq	1,2	1,2	1,6	1,6	900	900
	Syrian Arab Rep.	490	490	490	490	490	490
	Various	790	790	740	740	680	680

Source: 2014 – UNHCR country operations profile – Jordan. <http://www.unhcr.org/>

⁵ According to the UNRWA in 2013 there were 173 schools teaching 116,953 pupils. UNRWA. Where we work? Jordan. <http://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan> (Accessed 18.08.2014).

⁶ As a result of war in Iraq since 2003, at least 400 staff members of its higher education institutions (HEIs) were killed. Munir Bashrur, *Higher Education In the Arab States*, Beirut 2004.

⁷ There were nearly 30,000 Iraqi refugees residing in Jordan in March 2013. 2014 – UNHCR country operations profile – Jordan. <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486566.html> (Accessed 16.08.2014).

Estimated data suggest the number of 6 to 7 million people living at present in the kingdom⁸, part of which does not possess its citizenship. What is more, according to the Human Rights Watch report published in February 2010, government in Amman withdrew citizenship already assigned to ca. 2, 700 Palestinians.⁹

Development of Jordanian higher education over the decades

The lands of today's Jordan and Palestine were different from each other in terms of educational system development in the 1st half of the 20th century. Under the British protectorate on the territory of the emirate of Transjordan local education system appeared, which included a few secondary schools. However, in its prevailing majority it was composed of schools on elementary level. Until the end of the 1st half of the 20th century the situation in Transjordan remained very different from the one in the West Bank. This contrast became especially visible after 1950, when Palestine was annexed by Jordan.¹⁰

Higher education in Jordan may be dated back to 1952, when the first two teachers colleges were established – one in the capital city of Amman and the other located in Ramallah in the West Bank.¹¹ In 1958 Teacher's House was established, in which training for performing profession took two years. The next units of this kind, transformed in subsequent years into Teachers Institutes, and in the 1970s again in colleges, form until today part of Jordanian education system.¹² Since

⁸ According to Jordanian Statistical Office, at the end of 2012 there were 6, 388 thousand people living in the kingdom. Among its 12 regions (muhafazats), the ones with the highest number of inhabitants are located in the north-western part of the country. These are Amman (over 2, 473 thousand) and Irbid (over 1, 137 thousand). http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/Demography/2012/2-6.pdf (Accessed 14.04.2014).

⁹ Jordan. Stateless Again. Palestinian-origin Jordanians Deprived of their Nationality. Human Rights Watch Report. February 2010, p. 26-27 <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/jordan0210webwcover.pdf> (Accessed 17.07.2014).

¹⁰ <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/306128/Jordan/23330/Transjordan-the-Hashimite-Kingdom-and-the-Palestine-war> (Accessed 09.08.2014)

¹¹ Munir Bashrur, *Higher Education In the Arab States*, Beirut 2004

¹² <http://www.mohe.gov.jo/brief/briefMohe1/tabid/558/language/en-US/Default.aspx> (Accessed 06.04.2014).

1980 they are under supervision of a special department in the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, which is devoted to control their teaching programmes. It also checks up their widely understood activity in both public and private sector. In the last decade of the 20th century colleges reported decline in number of their students for the sake of private universities. Between academic years 1990/91 and 1996/97 the percentage of teachers college attendees diminished from 51% to 22%. This situation can be explained by the fact that a degree obtained from a private university may be of higher esteem than the one from a teachers college. At the same time the number of students at public universities remained with no major changes.¹³

In 1962 the University of Jordan was founded in the capital city of Amman, which became the first Higher Education Institution (HEI) in the kingdom. Its mission was teaching future elites of the society, among whom new resources for state positions would be recruited without expensive sending Jordanian citizens abroad as it used to take place before. The second HEI, which was opened in 1976, is Yarmouk University in Irbid. Both of the aforementioned institutions are located in cities with a high percentage of Palestinians (around 80% in Amman and more than 50% in Irbid)¹⁴. In 1970s the two universities gave actually the only possibility to obtain higher education by Jordanians, who could not afford themselves at that time to study abroad due to the economic crisis. Increased social demand for higher education posed in the following years a strong incentive for the authorities to open new universities.

Since 1980s a remarkable shift in the government policy has been observed in opening new educational institutions. From now on, they were about to be created in less urbanized parts of the country populated mainly by Transjordanians. The first HEI of this kind became in 1981 Mu'tah University (formerly known as a military academy) located in al-Karak in the south of Jordan. It was followed five years later by Jordan University of Science and Technology near the city of Irbid in north-western part of the country. In 1993 University Al-Bayt was opened in Mafrq (north-east of Jordan) and in 1991 the Hashemite University was founded in Az-Zarqa, which started teaching four years later. According to the royal decree from 19th June 1991 this institution's

¹³ Munir Bashrur, *Higher Education In the Arab States*, Beirut 2004

¹⁴ Yitzhak Reiter, Higher Education and Sociopolitical Transformation in Jordan, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 2002, 29 (2), p. 142

name was about to be “the University of Az-Zarqa”, which was replaced to the current one only by the next royal decree. The founding place of this HEI was meant to make it a science and technology centre for developing food and chemical industry.¹⁵ Until the end of the 20th century yet two other universities were founded: Balqa’ with its seat in Al-Salt and 11 branches (1998) and King Hussein in Ma’an founded a year later.¹⁶ By this step, the whole territory of Jordan became covered by a net of public higher education.

The last two decades of the 20th century is a period, about which one can speak in terms of educational revolution in Jordan. Currently there are 10 public universities, 17 private and 51 colleges. These institutions teach ca. 236, 000 students, among whom ca. 28,000 are foreigners.¹⁷ Creation of new HEIs was a government response to a growing social demand for higher education. Since this demand was especially visible in the poorer segments of the society living far away from big cities, one of the newest technical universities was founded in the year 2000 in a desert town of Tafila with substantial population of the Bedouin origin. The 1980s and 1990s resulted in social change in ethnic composition of students, namely significant balance between Transjordanian and Palestinian students was ever closer to be achieved. However, this balance does not reflect existing disproportion in ethnic content of the whole society.

Despite its short history higher education in Jordan reached significant position in the region due to both internal and external factors. The first ones include relatively high quality of teaching based on the aforementioned Anglo-Saxon model as well as competitive costs of acquiring higher education. Among external factors there is unstable situation in the region forcing many young people from the neighbouring states to pursue studies outside their countries of origin. This applies especially to Palestinian Autonomy, Iraq and Syria. Nevertheless, the number of Iraqi and Syrian students granted with different types of scholarships to continue their education at Jordanian

¹⁵ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/participating_countries/higher/jordan.pdf (Accessed 06.04.2013).

¹⁶ <http://www.mohe.gov.jo/UniversitiesE/tabid/611/language/en-US/Default.aspx?x=1> (Accessed 13.08.2014).

¹⁷ <http://www.mohe.gov.jo/brief/briefMohe1/tabid/558/language/en-US/Default.aspx> (dostep 06.04.2014) Overview Report: Assessment of Selected Number of Academic Programmes In Higher Education Institutions In Jordan, Al. Hussein Fund for Excellence, Amman 2012, p. 15.

universities will probably not alter the general ratio between Tranjordanians and Palestinians.¹⁸

Between 1980 and 1995 among countries from the Middle East and North Africa Jordan was ranked as the second one, after the Lebanon, regarding total number of persons with a bachelor title per 100, 000 inhabitants. In the 1st half of the 1990s Jordan was also one of the best educated nations in the region taking into account the number of university graduates per 100, 000 inhabitants. Such a situation was possible among others thanks to political stability in the Kingdom at that time.

Table 2. The number of university graduates per 100, 000 inhabitants between 1991 and 1996 in the Middle East.

Country	Jordan	Kuwait	Lebanon	Palestinian Autonomy	Iraq
Number	657	571	486	345	274

Source: Higher Education Systems In the Arab States: development of Science and Technology Indicators 1998, Cairo 1998

In 1996 the state was located on the third place as far as PhD title holders among academic staff members were concerned (81%).

Table 3. Percentage of academic staff members with a doctoral title in 1996 in selected Arab countries.

Country	Kuwait	Syria	Jordan	Saudi Arabia
Percentage	100	85	81	74

Source: Higher Education Systems In the Arab States: development of Science and Technology Indicators 1998, Cairo 1998

Jordan was also one of the countries in the region, in which expenditures for higher education doubled between 1992 and 1996.¹⁹ At the turn of the centuries students of private universities outnumbered their peers from public HEIs, which resulted in high private investment

¹⁸ Only 100 refugees from Syria will commence 4-year studies at Jordanian and Lebanese universities this autumn within the UNHCR's DAFI programme. *Grant clears path to university in Jordan and Lebanon for Syrian refugees*. <http://www.unhcr.org/53c915756.html> (Accessed 16.08.2014).

¹⁹ Higher Education Systems in the Arab States: Development of Science and Technology Indicators 1998, ESCWA, UNESCO, Cairo 1998, p. 6.

in higher education sector.²⁰ Such a situation might have been effect of quota systems aimed at Transjordanians, which made university admission for Palestinians more difficult.

Jordanian higher education system is based on Anglo-Saxon model and receives substantial financial assistance from the US AID (United States Agency for International Development) as well as from the United Nations Development Programme, World Bank and the European Union. A good example of support of the latter one are Tempus²¹ (several editions from the 1990s and early 2000s) and Erasmus Mundus²² programmes, which enable exchange of students and university staff between selected Jordanian and European HEIs. The main aims of these programmes are among others modernization of university equipment and enrichment of local curricula. Within the framework of “Erasmus +” programme initiated in the new budget perspective for the years 2014-2020 Jordan, as a country belonging to Southern Mediterranean countries²³ (close neighbourhood of the EU), will remain among the priority states supported by the European Commission in terms of modernization of its higher education.

At the beginning of the 21st century only two oldest public universities offered education on a master and doctoral level. At the same time, these HEIs provided the most comprehensive offer as far as academic fields were concerned. More than a half of students were female, whereas private universities were dominated by males (around ¾ of their students).²⁴

²⁰ Jordan Fiscal Reform Project II. Education, Public Expenditures. Working Paper. August 2011, p. 35. <http://www.frp2.org/english/Portals/0/PDFs/Education%20PEP%20Working%20Paper.pdf> (Accessed 10.08.2014).

²¹ In 2013 13 projects within the framework of Tempus IV programme were finished in Jordan. http://www.tempus.org.jo/TempusProjects_2013.html (Accessed 06.04.2014).

²² In 2010-2013 Jordanian universities were partners in 11 projects financed from the European Commission within the framework of Erasmus Mundus Action 2 programme. In 2007-2009 they participated in 3 other projects within the framework of Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window. http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/results_compendia/selected_projects_action_2_en.php (Accessed 12.04.2014).

²³ <https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/about/participating-countries> (Accessed 30.07.2014).

²⁴ Munir Bashshur, *Higher Education In the Arab States*, Beirut 2004, p. 50-51.

Social policy in the context of higher education

Due to the fact of young Jordanian statehood, local population has not yet developed its strong identification connected with a new country. Perhaps this is the reason, for which national flags or portraits of the royal family members are present in many public and private offices. These elements may be treated as a base for founding new Jordanian (and at the same time Hashemite) identity. Despite ethnic descent of Queen Rania, Palestinians are usually treated with reserve when it comes to terms of the current Hashemite character of Jordan, because King Abdullah I was assassinated by one of them in 1951.²⁵ What is more, they come from the lands, which are not included in the kingdom's territory since 1967.

The martial law existing in Jordan from June 1967 until the end of 1989 limited freedom of HEIs introduced by many internal university laws. Governmental interventionism manifested itself in the beginning of every academic year by bypassing internal university procedures in accepting at least part of new students. Every tenth candidate was exempted from fulfilling university admission requirements. Even nowadays only 20% of places at public universities are reserved for candidates accepted in competition. The remaining ones are reserved for the army and security forces, government ministries and so called "less fortunate areas".²⁶ Behind this enigmatic expression stand usually poor Bedouin regions, where insufficient teaching on secondary level could in other circumstances pose an obstacle in terms of university admission. These questionable policies are known as *makarim* - a term applied to situations, when candidates with much lower academic

²⁵ Shaul M. Gabbay, The Status of Palestinians in Jordan and the Anomaly of Holding a Jordanian Passport, Political Sciences and Public Affairs, p. 3, <http://esciencecentral.org/journals/the-status-of-palestinians-in-jordan-and-the-anomaly-of-holding-a-jordanian-passport-2332-0761.1000113.pdf> (Accessed 09.08.2014).

²⁶ Lamis El Muhtaseb, Jordan East Banker-Palestinian schism. Export analysis, April 2013, Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, p. 2, http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/746892acedd3e8fcb1ff7370a77fb67.pdf (Accessed 19.07.2014).

records are admitted to public HEIs.²⁷ Apart from that, the government interfered in administrative, financial and academic affairs.

The animosity between Palestinians and the Hashemites was the reason, for which young state decided in recent decades to upgrade the status of general educational level of Transjordanian population, from which future elites are going to be recruited. This task is even easier due to the substantial limitation of illiteracy rates, especially among Bedouin population. In the beginning of the 21st century this phenomenon was characteristic only for 4% of men and 15% of women, mainly among older generations.²⁸ In order to increase the number of persons with higher education among Transjordanians, various methods are used such as quota systems addressed to the villagers. At least 37% of students are accepted by universities in such form of affirmative action. Preferential treatment is also applied to relatives of persons, who are already appointed in the army²⁹, national universities or in high positions at the Ministry of Education.³⁰ This practice however often takes place at the expense of transparency of the university recruitment processes. Its most often form is nepotism known here as *wasta*. The expected outcome of such practices is at least equalization of chances of Transjordanians with traditionally better educated inhabitants of big Jordanian cities like Amman, whose population is predominantly Palestinian.

Every year certain number of students are sent abroad at the state's expense to study at foreign universities. In return they are obliged to work in the civil service for a definite period of time after

²⁷ Violence at Jordanian universities, Roundtable discussion, Irbid, October 10th, 2013, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, p. 4 http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_36227-1522-2-30.pdf?131201143907 (Accessed 20.07.2014).

²⁸ Bartosz Wróblewski, *Jordania*, Warszawa 2011, p. 273. According to the World Bank, an average literacy rate in Jordan in 1995 was about 85%. Education in the Middle East and North Africa: A Strategy Towards Learning for Development. <http://www.worldbank.org/education/strategy/MENA-E.pdf> (Accessed 10.08.2014). For more information on literacy rates in Jordan see <http://www.uis.unesco.org/DataCentre/Pages/country-profile.aspx?code=JOR®ioncode=40525> (Accessed 10.08.2014)/

²⁹ Even among places reserved for families of the army employees, the priority is given to candidates of strictly Transjordanian origin. Yitzhak Reiter, Higher Education and Sociopolitical..., op. cit., p. 151-152.

³⁰ Higher Education in Jordan, op. cit., p. 5-6.

they graduate. According to estimated data up to 95% of students, to whom this offer was addressed, are of Transjordanian origin.³¹

After Black September and domestic war of 1970-71 (including pacification of Palestinian military groups) mass demonstrations on university campuses, dominated by that time by Palestinians associated to political organizations, are perceived as a threat for the state's stability, and especially its Hashemite character. Although political organizations on campuses are prohibited, they sometimes act as religious ones. In the years following the Black September riots, which took place in Amman and especially bloody incidents in Irbid, where police used force against students at Yarmouk University³², the government made a decision concerning new campuses location. From now on, they were going to be placed outside the centres of big cities, like e.g. the Hashemite University in the outskirts of Az-Zarqa. Apart from easier access to land for new universities' foundation, such step was, in minds of political decision-makers, designed to prevent from potential spreading of riots from university centres to densely populated urban areas. The ban on public demonstrations in support of 2000 Intifada (Palestinian uprising on the West Bank) was additional circumstance in favour of new campuses location. As a result of the abovementioned domestic war, academic staff members are now verified by Jordanian security forces, what is reflected in preferential employment of Transjordanians.

Due to limitations imposed on Palestinians in being appointed at high governmental positions or in public higher education, many of them decided to engage in a private sector. This applies also to founding private universities, which aspire to compete with their public counterparts. Specific provisions dealing with private institutions of this kind were regulated by law in 1989, when government allowed of founding private HEIs. The first of them was opened only a year after and through the next two decades 21 other such institutions appeared.³³ Among the most renowned one can mention Philadelphia University

³¹ Yitzhak Reiter, *Higher Education and Sociopolitical...*, op. cit., p. 149.

³² Twenty academic staff members were removed from Yarmouk University for alleged incitement of students to strike in May 1986. These employees were reinstated to their functions only after democratic changes in 1990. *Academic Freedom In Arab Universities*, ATF Seminar, Amman, 27-28.09.1994, ed. Ali Oumlil, 1995, p. 30.

³³ *Academic Freedom In Arab Universities...* op. cit., p. 15.

located in Amman, Academy of Jordan or Jordan Academy of Music.³⁴ The increase in number of these HEIs, most of which are located in surroundings of Amman, is among others an effect of more than 300,000 Jordanians (mostly of Palestinian origin) returning after the 1990/91 Gulf War.³⁵ Public higher education sector was not able to absorb such number of people. Apart from Palestinians from the Persian Gulf, Jordan becomes more and more often educational destination for their countrymen living in the neighbouring Israel. In 2009 their number was estimated to around 5 400, among whom 70% were men.³⁶ Such popularity can be explained by difficulties encountered by many candidates in being accepted by Israeli HEIs as well as by geographical and cultural proximity offering convenient conditions of studying for many Muslims. Although most of Palestinians living in Israel and studying in Jordan are men, their ratio to women is more balanced than the equivalent one existing at Israeli universities. The reason of such a situation is that Palestinian families tend to send their daughters more willingly to Arab universities perceived as preserving Muslim heritage and traditions approved by Islam.

Control bodies in Jordanian higher education

Only in 1980 *Law on Higher Education* was adopted and two years later the Higher Education Council (HEC) was founded. The latter one being perceived as a government tool, became seen as incapable to develop and improve educational standards in the eyes of many scientific staff members. Therefore, idea about recreating Boards of Trustees appeared.³⁷ This type of universities' governing bodies

³⁴ Bartosz Wróblewski, *Jordania*, Warszawa 2011, p. 273.

³⁵ This return was caused by the rage of Kuwaitis against Palestinians, who favoured Saddam Hussein supporting the Palestinian case. Yann Le Troquer, Rozenn Hommery Al-Oudat, From Kuwait to Jordan: The Palestinians' Third Exodus. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Spring 1999), p. 37. See also Peter W. Galbraith, Refugees from War in Iraq. What Happened in 1991 and What May Happen in 2003. MPI Policy Brief, February 2003, No. 2, p. 3, www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/MPIPPolicyBriefIraq.pdf (Accessed 13.08.2014).

³⁶ Every fifth international student in Jordan came from Israel. Khalid Arar, Kussai Haj-Yehia, *Emigration for Higher Education: The Case of Palestinians Living In Israel Studying in Jordan*, Higher Education Policy, 2010, vol. 23, p. 5-7.

³⁷ Ali Mahafza, Academic Freedom In Jordanian Universities,

returned in the “Higher Education and Scientific Research Law” issued in September 2009.³⁸

In 1985 *Law no. 28 on Higher Education* set specific aims of this sector and created the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, which functions until today with a two-year break between 1998 and 2000, when its duties were performed by the HEC.³⁹ Relations between the HEC and universities in Jordan were also regulated in the mid-1980s.

In 1998 the Accreditation Council was founded, which aim was to guarantee minimum standards at private universities. The fact that public universities were excluded from such regulations made a significant difference between the two types of HEIs. Private universities, usually run by Palestinians, became automatically subject to more precise scrutiny and control whereas at public universities yet for a long time the government could continue its policy of granting student status to ethnic Transjordanians through unclear admission rules. However, a real milestone in development of Jordanian educational policy is establishment of the Higher Education Accreditation Commission (HEAC) in 2007 as an independent financially and administratively body.⁴⁰ Two years later the HEAC took the responsibility for developing criteria for accreditation and quality of teaching assurance including specific programmes offered at universities. Another tool used in strengthening the quality of education by implementing instruments of teaching evaluation is *Enhancement of Quality Assurance and Institutional Planning In Arab Universities* – a project under the auspices of the UNDP functioning since 2001. Apart

³⁸ Higher Education in Jordan, p. 3 http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/participating_countries/overview/jordan_tempus_country_fiche_final.pdf (Accessed 26.07.2014).

³⁹ It was made through the Law no. 6 of 1998. The same legal act affiliated all Jordanian community colleges, as complementary element to universities, to Al-Balqa University of Applied Sciences. The aim of the prior ones was to decrease the pressure in university admissions and offering education for middle level employees, which would be more suitable for the market needs. Overview Report: Assessment of Selected Number of Academic Programmes In Higher Education Institutions In Jordan, Al. Hussein Fund for Excellence, Amman 2012, p. 15.

⁴⁰ International Handbook of Leadership for Learning, ed. Tony Townsend, John MacBeath, p. 1120, books.google.pl/books?isbn=9400713509 (Accessed 13.08.2014).

from implementation of the aforementioned tools, this programme offers its assistance in intensive trainings for academic staff members, experts advice and supports creation of professional databases for the needs of HEIs. This project since 2002 involves 36 leading Arab universities, including four Jordanian (University of Jordan, Yarmouk University, Jordan University of Science and Technology and private University of Az-Zarqa).⁴¹

In 1999 King Hussein bin Talal died. In the same year the Fund for Excellence of his name was founded. Since its beginning, it has functioned under the patronage of his son, King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein as a non-profit organization. So far, it has managed to evaluate 83 curricula at 17 universities.⁴² Although the Fund is often presented as the first Jordanian NGO, the fact that its honorary presidency is assumed by the King, poses doubts about its declared status. Similarly ambivalent character can be assigned to the universities as such. The first HEIs in this country were created as allegedly autonomous units. In reality however, the King and his government played major role in determining university policy.⁴³ To confirm this situation one can point at the lack or a very limited role played by university senates or any other internal legal bodies. Large influence of the executive power on local HEIs, including unclear criteria in university admission, was possible especially until the mid-1980s, when the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research was founded. However, it does not mean that afterwards this phenomenon became eradicated.

Conclusion

The experiences of Jordan and other countries from the Middle East and North Africa in higher education suggest limited optimism in interpreting it as a tool of social policy. Although Jordanian authorities managed to achieve their aim, namely educating government elites from the Transjordanian part of the society, the policy of hidden discrimination of the Palestinian majority in the public sector may in the

⁴¹ Arab Network for Quality Assurance for Higher Education http://www.anqahe.org/attachments/070_1207600654_HE_Brief.pdf (Accessed 11.05.2014).

⁴² http://www.husseinfund.jo/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3&Itemid=15 (Accessed 14.03.2014).

⁴³ Yitzhak Reiter, *Higher Education and Sociopolitical Transformation*, op. cit., p. 139.

long run endanger fragile political stability in the kingdom. The nearby Egyptian example shows that creating new HELs and increasing enrolment does not have to lead to greater social inclusiveness into political, social or economic mainstream.⁴⁴ Egyptian experience proved that despite huge efforts, big part of the society still experiences exclusion. The reason for such a situation may lay in discrepancy between the number of new universities and the quality of education offered there. What is more, Middle Eastern job market, including Jordanian, have problems with absorbing the surplus of persons with higher education. Such a situation may lead to frustration of a part of society.

As it was stated in 2012 letter to King Abdullah II written by Jordanian politicians and academics, "[t]he presence of Jordanians of Palestinian origin in some institutions and all universities has become a rare phenomenon."⁴⁵ Further favouritism of Transjordanians may bring too high costs in terms of state's security. The government in Amman will have to decide in the future about its further policy as far as its higher education sector and its long-term functioning are concerned. It will be one of the factors influencing possible status of Jordan as a relatively stable country in the region. This topic is becoming of ever greater importance taking into account the current complex situation in the Middle East region.

⁴⁴ Emily Cupito, Ray Langsten, *Inclusiveness in higher education in Egypt*, High Educ (2011) 62, Published on-line: 4 December 2010, p. 183.

⁴⁵ Khaled Abu Toameh, "Anti-Palestinian Discrimination in Jordan. Now It's Official.", Gatestone Institute. International Policy Council. <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/3249/anti-palestinian-discrimination-jordan> (Accessed 09.08.2014).

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