

TIMOR-LESTE

Country Summary of Higher Education

Background:

Recent expansion of tertiary education sector: Timor-Leste has experienced a significant growth in the higher education sector in the past few years. Until September 1999, the sector was limited to only six Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with a total of 5,400 students. In November 2000, the higher education system initiated a process of transformation in response to the demand for increased access to higher education and technical degree training. As a result, over 20 HEIs are currently offering a variety of programs, including teachers colleges in teacher education for primary and secondary pre-service and in-service education. Today, the total enrollment in HEIs accounts for over 17,000.

Tertiary education system: The higher education system in Timor-Leste consists of 7 universities, 6 institutes, and 3 academies. A proposed classification system defines that universities confer degrees at the Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral levels with a minimum of 4 faculties; Institutes confer diplomas in applied/technical areas or academic degrees at the Bachelor's or professional graduate degree levels¹ with 1 to 3 faculties or departments. The National Directorate of Technical and Higher Education is responsible for planning and realizing the Technical and Higher Education policies.

Quality assurance mechanisms: HEIs in Timor-Leste are self-declared. The higher education sector has grown without a legal framework for classification system, a process of licensure, or a system of quality assurance and accreditation. In recent years, however, the Government has shown promising effort and commitment to establishing quality assurance mechanisms. The National Commission for Academic Assessment & Accreditation was established in 2006 to take a full responsibility for defining standards and criteria for academic accreditation and assessment and for accrediting HEIs and their programs. A Basic Law on Education is expected to be finalized in the near future. The law is intended to establish authority for the Ministry of Education to determine which HEI can be approved and licensed to confer diplomas or degrees and sets out general parameters for classification and accreditation.

Government Strategy & Policy Reforms: The Government has recognized the need for a stronger education program for the higher education as addressed in key national documents, such as the National Development Plan (NDP) 2002-2007 and the National Education and Culture Policy (NECP) of 2006. Both of the documents emphasize the need to promote and regulate post-basic education. Prior to the NECP, the MoEC began to address the Government's priorities through the gradual development sub-sector strategies. While the sub-sector strategies for primary education have been established, the ones for secondary and tertiary education remain to be developed. The first step in this direction was taken during the 2006 Annual Joint Program Review when the Ministry focused a session on the issues in these two sub-sectors and developed a draft framework for a sector-wide three-year rolling plan. The next step is for the Ministry to begin to articulate and discuss its priorities for secondary and higher education and to move towards sub-sector strategies along the one for primary education. Important components of each sub-sector strategy will include a 3-year rolling plan with costs and financing sources and an articulation of how the strategy will progress towards key performance benchmarks.

¹ A faculty is an umbrella organization for Departments within a particular profession or discipline (such as the Faculty of Engineering.) A Department is a specialized field with the particular profession or discipline (such as electrical engineering, civil engineering, mechanical engineering, computer science, etc.)

Summary Data Table on Higher Education (Data in 2004)

Enrollment	Total Enrollment	17,289 (2006)
	% of Female	52.9%
	% of Private	
Gross Enrollment Rate	Total	10.2%
	Male	8.4%
	Female	12.4%
Student Teachers Ratios		
Teaching Staff	Total Number	123
	% of Female	9%
	% of teachers with Maters	
	% of teachers with Doctorate	
Gross Graduation Rates*	Total	
	Male	
	Female	
Total Public Expenditure on Education	% of GDP	
	% of Govt. Expenditure	
Total Public Expenditure on Higher Education	% of total education budget	
Number of Higher Education Institutions	Total	16
	Universities	7
	Institutes	6
	Academies	3

Source: Global Education Digest 2006, UNESCO

* Number of graduates regardless of age in a given level or program expressed as a percentage of the population at the theoretical graduation age for that level or program

Issues:

Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Without owning property and having enough funding, it is easy for the majority of HEIs to discard students and even close the school.
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to higher education for the poor is challenging. The government has been avoiding the provision for scholarships/financial aid to the poor without an accreditation system to ensure that its resources are used efficiently.
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government has mandated that all HEIs convert to the sole use of the Portuguese languages in five years time. However, there is a paucity of Portuguese speakers in administrative and teaching positions. Most HEIs are operating without laboratories or libraries.
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no curriculum or qualifications framework; furthermore, a process of professional certification or licensure does not exist. Therefore, the students will enter the work force with a diploma of questionable value. In interviews during the World Bank mission in Feb 2007, parents reported that they didn't see post-primary education as relevant nor was it thought adequate to provide access to employment.
Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As of March 2007, budget execution averaged only 33% of the Ministry's allocation, linking to the lack of planning and procurement capacity as well as the absence of strategic policies and financing plans.
Governance/ Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MoEC is experiencing severe management capacity constraints at all levels. Most of the Ministry's staff are inexperienced managers who have not participated in large scale reforms. MoEC does not have a capacity building plan yet. A number of donors remain active, but coordination among them has been difficult.