

Mini-review article

Physiotherapy Education in Libya: between Vocational and Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to provide a comprehensive review of the current situation and challenges in physiotherapy education in Libya, with a specific focus on the disparities between higher education and technical education. The review primarily examines two key areas: the laws and regulations governing physiotherapy education, and the variations in curricula and years of study. In analyzing the laws and regulations, this study uncovers significant violations that have impacted the distinction between higher education and technical education in Libya. It highlights instances where technical education has assumed the role of higher education, leading to the issuance of higher degrees. Consequently, this has adversely affected the quality of the curriculum and the professional standing of the physiotherapy specialty. The conclusion of this review shed light on the implications of the blurred boundaries between higher education and technical education in Libya's physiotherapy sector. It emphasizes the need for stricter adherence to regulations governing these educational pathways to ensure the maintenance of quality standards. Addressing these issues is crucial for safeguarding the integrity of physiotherapy education and improving the professional prospects within the specialty.

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INTRODUCTION

A vital component of Libya's development and progress is higher education as well as vocational and technical education. Universities and higher technical and vocational institutions in Libya offer a variety of programs and degrees in various academic fields [1]. In Libya, vocational and technical education aims to prepare qualified workers and technicians for the labor market and the industrial sector [2]. However, both higher education and vocational and technical education face many challenges and limitations in Libya, such as lack of quality assurance, outdated curricula, insufficient funding, inadequate infrastructure, shortage of qualified staff, low enrollment and retention rates, mismatch between supply and demand of skills, and political instability [3]. These challenges have negatively affected the performance and outcomes of the education system and its contribution to the social and economic development of the country [1,2]. As a result, a comprehensive and critical evaluation of higher education and vocational and technical education provision in Libya is required in order to better understand its current status and role in modern Libyan society. There is also a need to develop policies and strategies that can address existing gaps and problems while improving the education system's quality, relevance, accessibility, and effectiveness. This would necessitate the participation and cooperation of all stakeholders, including the government, educational institutions, private industry, civil society, and the international community [4].

Education and research in physiotherapy and rehabilitation in Libya have been developing over the years. The Libyan Ministry of Education has established a number of faculties and departments that offer programs in physiotherapy and

rehabilitation [5]. These programs aim to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become competent physiotherapists. The programs typically last for four years and lead to a bachelor's degree in physiotherapy. Students who complete these programs are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to provide high-quality care to patients with a wide range of conditions [6]. In addition to traditional classroom instruction, students also receive hands-on training through clinical rotations at hospitals and other healthcare facilities. Research in the field of physical therapy and rehabilitation is also being conducted in Libya, with a focus on improving patient outcomes and advancing the field as a whole [7]. Also, the National Authority for Vocational & Technical Education introduced physiotherapy departments under the name of Health Sciences Institutes. The study period is three years, and the student obtains a diploma [8].

The laws and regulations governing the education system in Libya

Higher education rules and regulations guide all institutions of higher learning in carrying out educational and instructional operations. They give legal guidelines for university lecturers, as well as a foundation for students' work. The legislation, cases, and policies that govern educational institutions are governed by educational law, which balances them with the constitutional rights guaranteed to all citizens. Laws and regulations also regulate vocational education. According to the legislation, the principal of the vocational training school or college shall establish the regulations of the vocational training school or college. Higher vocational colleges are responsible for higher education rules and regulations, which form the foundation of educational administration [9].

Libya has issued several laws regulating education, the latest of which is Law No. 18 of 2010 [10]. It stipulates that education is a right for all, and the state works to facilitate it under the auspices of governmental and private educational institutions. Article 31 of Chapter Three states that the objectives of technical and technical education are to provide the state with specialized professional and technical competencies, contributing to the progress of society and serving its developmental and economic orientations. The levels of study in technical education consist of two stages: the stage of intermediate and higher education. In the fourth chapter, Article 53 indicates that the right to establish universities, colleges, and public and private research centers is within the competence of higher education. Article 56 shows that the higher education system consists of two stages: the university stage and the higher stage, where higher education is granted university and postgraduate degrees exclusively.

The Ministry of Higher Education issued an executive regulation for the organization of higher education by Resolution No. 501 of 2010. Part One of the regulation includes general provisions that apply to all higher education institutions, including universities, technical colleges, higher institutes, and research centers established by the Ministry of Higher Education. These institutions grant bachelor's, licentiate, and higher diploma degrees, as well as master's and doctoral degrees. The study and examination system for the first semester is explained in Chapter Two, Article 7, where students studying in public and private universities obtain a bachelor's degree. The conditions for admission and enrollment in colleges are also specified, requiring a secondary certificate from a Libyan school or an equivalent certificate recognized by competent recognition authorities. Articles 61, 62, and 63 refer to the subordination of technical and technical colleges to technical education, while Article 67 grants permission for technical education to issue a bachelor's degree and a four-year study duration. Based on the foregoing, it becomes clear that the executive regulations, particularly in articles 24, 61, 62, 63, and Article 67, have violated the provisions of Education Law No. 18 issued in 2010, specifically in articles 31 and 56, regarding the role and competence of both technical education and higher education.

Curricula, and years of study in physiotherapy education

Upon examination of the curricula implemented in higher education institutions as well as technical education institutes, it becomes evident that there exists a notable resemblance in the academic curricula and unit distribution across various educational programs between the two domains. Specifically, the initial semesters encompass fundamental subjects encompassing chemistry, physics, mathematics, statistics, and biology. These subjects hold the status of prerequisites within the university framework, thereby establishing their equivalency to the initial two semesters in higher education. Furthermore, empirical investigations have demonstrated that fundamental elements in the field of physiotherapy, such as anatomy, physiology, therapeutic exercises, medical electrophysiology, and kinesiology, are imparted in technical education institutes with an equal or, in some instances, even a greater allocation of units compared to their higher education counterparts. Additionally, the specialized and supplementary subjects offered in technical education exhibit parity and comparability to those pursued by university students, encompassing the culmination project and practical training experiences.

CONCLUSION

We conclude that there have been procedural and legal violations over the past years and also over the course of successive governments in applying the laws (Figure 1) related to higher education and technical education, as technical education took over the jurisdiction of higher education as shown in Figure 2, and this is in violation of the law that gave the right to issue higher degrees for higher education exclusively. Also, technical education does not fulfill the role for which it was created, which is to prepare professional cadres in a short period of time. As a result of these violations, the curriculum within the institutes has become comparable and superior to the curricula within higher education, and therefore, all of these violations will negatively affect the job status and job title for this important specialty.

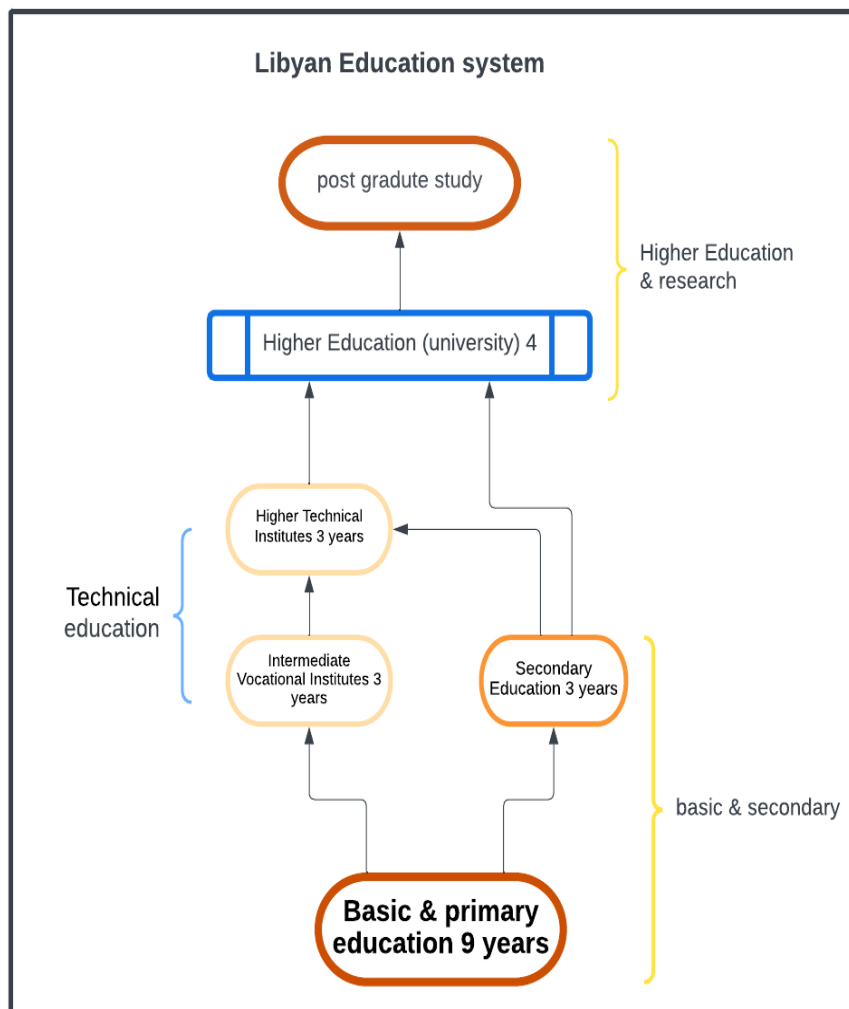


Figure 1. Education system in Libya as set out in Law

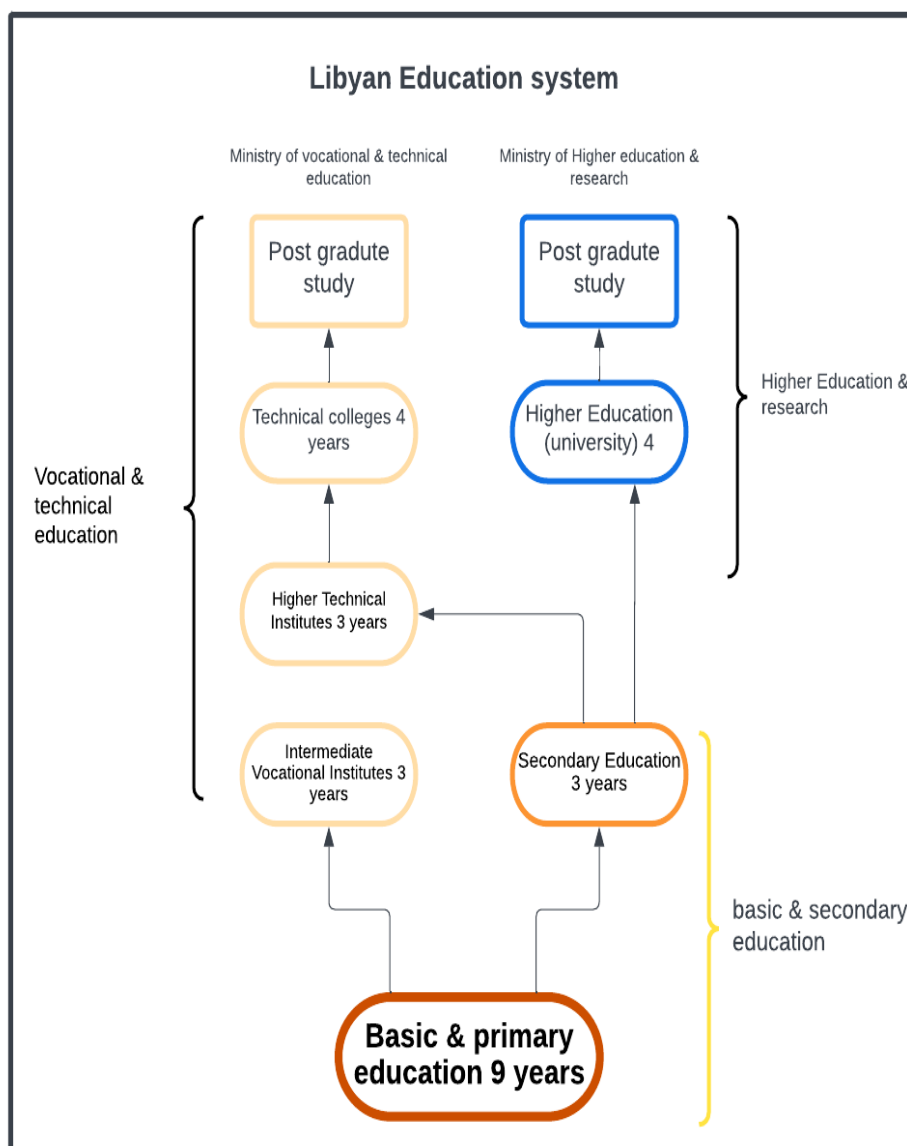


Figure 2. The current situation of education in Libya

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تعليم العلاج الطبيعي في ليبيا: بين التعليم المهني والتعليم العالي

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المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقديم مراجعة شاملة للوضع الحالي والتحديات في تعليم العلاج الطبيعي في ليبيا، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على الفوارق بين التعليم العالي والتعليم الفني. تتناول المراجعة في المقام الأول مجالين رئيسيين: القوانين واللوائح التي تحكم تعليم العلاج الطبيعي، والاختلافات في المناهج وسنوات الدراسة. وفي تحليل القوانين واللوائح، تكشف هذه الدراسة عن انتهاكات كبيرة أثرت في التمييز بين التعليم العالي والتعليم الفني في ليبيا. ويسلط الضوء على الحالات التي تولى فيها التعليم الفني دور التعليم العالي، مما أدى إلى إصدار الشهادات العليا. وبالتالي، فقد أثر ذلك سلباً على جودة المنهج الدراسي والمكانة المهنية لتخصص العلاج الطبيعي. تسلط نتيجة هذه المراجعة الضوء على الآثار المترتبة على الحدود غير الواضحة بين التعليم العالي والتعليم الفني في قطاع العلاج الطبيعي في ليبيا. ويؤكد على ضرورة الالتزام الصارم باللوائح التي تحكم هذه المسارات التعليمية لضمان الحفاظ على معايير الجودة. تعد معالجة هذه المشكلات أمراً بالغ الأهمية للحفاظ على سلامة تعليم العلاج الطبيعي وتحسين الآفاق المهنية داخل التخصص.

الكلمات الدالة: التعليم العالي، العلاج الطبيعي، التعليم الفني والمهني، ليبيا.