

Work Group on University Admissions
December 2

Need to finalize earlier discussion points and move forward. Obviously, we are not going to adopt another country's model in its entirety; all have acknowledged weaknesses/challenges. We will propose a model customized to address local needs.

Discussion focused on two strategies: the introduction of a new university entrance exam and the introduction of a more liberal formula for the balancing of multiple metrics for the admission decision-making process.

While there is value in giving more authority to universities to make decisions and admit students matching identified profiles, there is also the concern that the lack of oversight for the administration of the application process will be more subjective and lead to perceptions of *wasta*, e.g. interview, essays (not the applicant's work), local-level exams. There was a limited pilot of a direct admissions system for select universities; it apparently was not successful.

In regard to a university entrance exam, there are issues with the scale of the undertaking and ensuring that the exam is acceptable by stakeholders. There must be a survey sent to stakeholders or focus groups arranged (e.g. MHE, student unions, etc.) to gauge their concerns with the implementation of an exam.

No matter what proposal is promoted by the Task Force, the MHE and TF members will need to work to "sell" it to the public. It is unclear as to whether there will need to be a larger forum with international exam proponents to promote the initiative. While adding this new gateway to the university application process is the key issue, there was also discussion on the design of the exam – general or field specific. Feasibility and design are both of concern.

So, why are we having this conversation? The current high school exit exam is a very weak indicator of student achievement and potential. The results are biased as the standard deviation is narrow with an increasing number of students achieving over 90%. Are we trying to introduce a new metric to ensure more integrity in the system? Or, do we simply need more metrics that will be collectively computed and result in a more holistic indicator of students' knowledge and/or skills? Selectivity must be enhanced as there are insufficient seats to accommodate all those intending to attend university. How will a new process improve selectivity?

The MHE has a platform for a common application. The MHE also has data analysts and researchers capable of contributing to the data collection.

There will be another meeting at MHE at 10:00 on Tuesday, December 8, to achieve a consensus on the "vision" and develop concrete plans to move forward. Staff at the Student Admission Department and those who worked on the common application will attend to present their work. Members of a focus/research group need to be identified.