

# **K-19 Task Force**

## **Minutes of Meeting, November 11, 2021**

### **Sulaimani Polytechnic University**

#### **Agenda:**

#### **Morning Session: 10:30-12:30**

Work Group 1: University Admissions

Room E1

Work Group 2: TVET

Room E2

Lunch: 1:00-2:00, Titanic Hotel

#### **Afternoon Session: 2:30- 5:30**

K-19 Task Force Meeting

Room SPU Council Hall

2:30 – SPU Welcoming Remarks by SPU President

2:40 – Work Group 1: University Admissions

- Challenges and Issues to be addressed
- Presentation of Research, Benchmarking
- Proposed Next Steps
- Discussion

3:20 – Work Group 2 Presentation on TVET, Discussion

- Challenges and Issues to be addressed
- Presentation of Research, Benchmarking
- Proposed Next Steps
- Discussion

4:00 - Coffee Break

4:15 - Review of Methodologies and Ensuring Success of Efforts

4:30 – Identification of Issue for Work Group 3

5:15 - Conclusion

#### **Attending the full session of the Task Force:**

Bashdar Sarbaz (ME)

Shelan Khalil (ME)

Salih Akyol (Zakho BIS)

Abdulqader Kakasur (UNICEF)

Jayne Laurina B McAdam (Duhok BIS)

Vida Hanna (CUE)

Behar Ali (EMMA)

Dr. Amanj Saeid (MHE)

Dr. Mohammad Ahmed (MHE)

Dr. Naznaz Muhamad (Education Committee, Parliament)

Dr. Soran Saeed (SPU)

Dr. Zana Ibrahim (UKH)

Kirstin Crawford (UKH)

Sherwan Mohammed Mahdi (GIZ)  
Dr. Mildred Libot, AUK  
Nashwan Mohammed (British Council)  
Dr. Randall Rhodes (AUK)

Guests:

Dr. Alan F. Ali (SPU)  
Salman, Turki (British Council)  
Abdi Hassan (British Council)  
Tim Mizen (UNESCO)  
Ahmad Gall (ME)  
Rana Sher (CUE)  
Bryar Rauf (Leadersdream)

Absent:

AbdulSalam Medeni (Rwanga)  
Dr. Galawej Osman (KRG Parliament)  
Dr. Honar Issa (AUK)

### **Morning Session**

At 11:00, there was a short press conference/welcoming session hosted by the President of SPU, Dr. Alan F. Ali.

### **Morning Work Group: University Admissions**

Members gathered to recap previous discussions, set out issues to be addressed, and spoke with experts on admissions and testing systems in Iran and the UK. Representatives of the British Council joined the discussion.

Key issues include:

- The need to introduce better metrics to limit the number of high school graduates heading to university;
- Admissions decisions are made based on HS scores/exit exams; no university entrance exam;
- HS grades are excessively high and may not be the best indicators;
- University autonomy in admissions process; and
- If selectivity is valued, then what other factors are to be taken into consideration and their respective weighting.

Dr. Sharareh Kaleghizadeh, Iran, presented on Konkours and the university admissions system overall. In that country, only 10% of high school graduates are accommodated at publics, therefore there is an attempt to introduce a rigorous selection process. Additional criteria in the admissions process include: socio-political background, family income, veteran status, rural residence. The Konkour University Entrance Exam is designed and administered by the National Organization of Educational Testing of Iran; it is a 4-hour multiple choice exam. Students register for the exam via an online platform. It is administered in June/July; it takes 4 weeks for the results to be available, giving sufficient time for fall matriculation. The stated weakness is that Konkours is a multiple choice exam without opportunity to assess students' higher level thinking skills. The positive in the

Iranian system, is that the exam is just one path to prove eligibility for university; students can submit three data points – Konkours score, HS 3-year GPA, and discipline-specific entrance exam. The three can be weighted or one can be prioritized. There are interviews for arts or talent-based fields. If a student decides to re-sit for the Konkours, their university matriculation will be delayed as the exam is only offered once per year. Otherwise, the student can resubmit their application only using their HS GPA.

Des Cutchey and Teona Droc representing UCAS – the Universities and Colleges Admission Service – joined from the UK. This is a centralized admissions service, an admissions data hub that processes applications for 357 institutions. Students upload a personal statement, references, past and predictive grades, portfolio, exams, etc. Students identify up to 5 institutions/programs to receive the application materials from UCAS. The application deadline is the January before matriculation. UCAS is only a data management service; all admissions decisions (and selection criteria) are set by the institution/program.

### **Morning Work Group: TVET**

Tim Mizen, Senior Project Officer for the UNESCO TVET Project, informed of the TVET-Project Phase I, 2015-2020; Phase II, a three-year project has been ongoing for the past year. Aspects of the project are underway in universities in Erbil, Duhok, and Sulaimaniyah.

The MoE is looking forward for the TVET project to be activated in schools and that it has been neglected for many years. Dr. Ahmad Gall (MoE) linked high unemployment with the lack of TVET trainings. The MoE cited various barriers. They are aware that UNESCO started to work on the implementation of the TVET-I through the European Commission. They said that the 5 ministries planned to move forward on the project; the policy was agreed by the government, but the law and policies were not approved by the parliament in Baghdad. Regarding TVET-II, the MoE is planning to work on the technical issues by initiating market needs surveys and assessments, especially in the field of agriculture. TVET 2 is currently carrying out 5 LMSs in Agriculture for Duhok and Erbil Governorates following on from the 8 national surveys carried out in 2017. The data reveals that there are 4000 students graduating in Junior high school that applied for TVET, but there are only 52 TVET centers for these secondary school students. There must be a guarantee, and funding for centers/instruction, before the initiative can be fully implemented.

Bryar Rauf, CEO of Leadersdream, introduced Leadersdream to the group are their interest in the school to work concept.

Mildred Libot expressed her concerns with regards to the low enrollments of students in TVET (less than 1%), and the assessment and certification of TVET competencies based on TVET standards for graduates.

### **Full Task Force Meeting Called to order at 14:40**

Both work groups presented issues relative to their charge, current research, and steps for moving forward. Since the Task Force is charged with writing recommendations and action plans, there is no need to confer with the respective ministries prior to moving forward.

There was a summary presentation of the points from the conversations within the work group on university admissions. In addition to the points stated above, the following was discussed:

- The use of the HS score as the sole indicator of past and future student academic success;
- ME would hand over responsibility for designing and implementing the admission process to the MHE (university admissions is a MHE issue, not ME issue);
- Foreign models will be reviewed simply to inform conversations; there is no intention to adopt any single international model;
- If there will no longer be a grade 12 exit exam, then a university entrance exam could be scheduled earlier and the academic year could begin on time in the fall;
- The university entrance exam would need to assess both knowledge and skills (such exams are already implemented for specific disciplines);
- The need to identify a unit/individuals with professional experience in writing, administering, and scoring a university entrance exam; and
- Legal frameworks will need to be revised.

It was agreed that it is pivotal to collect data and input from stakeholders – parents, HS students, K-19 administrators, etc. This can be accomplished via focus groups and surveys. A set of questions will need to be developed and the instrument be professionally designed and implemented. At the next meeting of the work group, the research questions will be developed and issues relative to the instrument be identified. The instrument will be presented at the next full meeting of the Task Force.

In respect to TVET, it was acknowledged that the KRI is far behind in balancing technical with academic pathways for students. There is an insufficiency of center-based and non-formal trainings, community-based programs, and enterprise-based programs. Comparisons with other countries were presented.

The work group's vision included additional job and training centers (TVET Centers) and the development of occupational curricula to ensure an alignment between the various curricula and workplace needs. This would be a demand-driven curriculum that facilitates students' transitions to work. However, this curriculum should be much more than teaching mechanical tasks; it should be holistic and reflect Bloom's Taxonomy.

Tim Mizen presented a summary of that organization's efforts on this same issue. UNESCO's objective is to create a governance model for TVET across ministries in Iraq; The Qualifications Framework developed in Phase I has been approved by the Council of Ministers in Baghdad. The package includes a quality assurance model, labor market surveys, and a competency-based training model. However, full ratification was stalled due to the elections. Phase II intends to focus on increasing employment, enhancing labor market links, revising curricula, introducing professional trainings for trainers, using the Bologna process to update and enhance the degree offerings at the Polytechnic Universities, establishing centers of academic excellence and career development centers, and establishing sectorial councils.

Additional points:

- The imperative to get full benefit from the TVET Phase I output: Translating The Iraqi new governance arrangements through legislation (the TVET Law) into the Kurdish language and submit to the Kurdistan Parliament for approval. UNESCO with its partners have been working on it for 4 years. The UNESCO drafted TVET Law will facilitate the Task Force's work;

- The imperative to get benefit from the UNESCO TVET Phase II: Improving socio-economic status for vulnerable youth in Iraq;
- Need to review the Iraqi-approved TVET Qualifications Framework (the 10 levels); and
- As discussed by the MoE, reform the textbook/curriculum for the technical vocational schools in Kurdistan with research on models from other countries.

The Task Force conversation highlighted the following:

- Students going through accredited TVET programs be given priority in work placements;
- There is high demand for trained human resources in the industrial sector;
- If TVET students are guaranteed jobs upon program completion, then tech training will be more eagerly sought (as was in the cited case in the oil industry); the public should view institutes as a pathway to the market, not an intermediary step on the way to university; and
- Implement the standardized test for grade 9 to sort out student who would benefit more from tech training than university.

It was also agreed that the work group and UNESCO work together to benefit from each other's knowledge and experience.

During the TVET conversation, it became evident that curriculum development within K-12 would create a greater understanding of the value of work, more specifically technical training. It was noted that the curriculum should be designed to prepare students for the jobs of the future. Therefore, it was agreed by consensus that the Task Force create a third work group dedicated to the development of a curriculum for K-12 that would have a disruptive impact on the current educational system, a positive disruption. However, the curriculum should not solely focus on technical/scientific training, but be holistically designed to ensure values important for the social dimension, e.g. social responsibility, gender equity, inclusion, human rights, communication, and team work. Behar Ali and Shelan Khalil volunteered to chair this third work group. Salih Akyol will join to provide perspective on the curricula currently offered at international K-12 schools in the KRI.

#### **Next steps:**

There will be online meetings among the three work groups.

A full meeting of the Task Force was tentatively set for December 9 at UKH; a morning start time was suggested.

By consensus, the members of the Task Force thanked the President and staff of SPU for their generous hospitality.

**The meeting adjourned at 17:20.**