

K-19 Task Force

Minutes of Meeting, April 24, 2022

Ministry of Education, Parliament

Agenda:

10:30: Visit with Minister of Education, Alan Hama Saeed Salih

12:00: Visit with the Kurdistan Parliament Deputy Speaker Dr. Hemin Hawrami

1:00: Visit with Education Committee of Parliament

Attending:

Bashdar Sarbaz (ME)

Abdulqader Kakasur (UNICEF)

Vida Hanna (CUE)

Behar Ali (EMMA)

Dr. Amanj Saeid (MHE)

Dr. Mohammad Ahmed (MHE)

Dr. Naznaz Muhamad (Education Committee, Parliament)

Kirstin Crawford (UKH)

Dr. Randall Rhodes (AUK)

AbdulSalam Medeni (Rwanga)

Dr. Honar Issa (AUK)

Dr. Soran Saeed (SPU)

Absent:

Shelan Khalil (ME)

Ministry of Education

The session began with Dr. Randall Rhodes introducing the Task Force, its charge and objectives. The TF was established a year ago to act as a collaborator for the ministries and non-governmental organizations with the mission of reforming the KRG's education system.

Many areas of mutual interest exist, including the implementation of international standards in K-12, students' soft skill development, workforce development, etc. Other issues mentioned included TVET, university entrance exam, inclusion (including gender equity), and compulsory kindergarten.

In respect to the draft law, the TF expressed its willingness to consult with the Ministry in the evaluation and revision of the document to ensure that it meets the current and future needs of Kurdistan. The TF has held meetings to review the draft law and wanted to express its concerns. Clearly, the purpose of the law is to reform the educational system in the KRG and make it internationally competitive, which it is currently not. Question was raised as to the support for the implementation of the new regulations, teacher trainings, addressing shifts in the paradigm, and an operational plan with targets/benchmarks and timelines for implementation. The TF acknowledged the focus on student-centered learning, national values, and experiential pedagogies.

Regarding the university admission exam, the Minister agreed to clarify the respective purviews of the two ministries and leave the design and adoption of a university entrance exam to the Ministry of Higher Education. There was discussion on students' exam fatigue and the level of stress students experience as they prepare for multiple, high-pressure exams. The MoE would focus on year-end exams for grades 10, 11, and 12 to ensure students' satisfaction of the student learning objectives for those years and the student's eligibility for the graduation verification. The MoE would determine how to define graduation verification and the relative weighting of year-end exams for a more comprehensive review of the student's achievements. The Minister agreed that the curriculum of K-12 needed a reassessment to ensure the alignment of the knowledge/content taught/gained with appropriate assessment mechanisms. Then only those interested in applying to university would take the additional exam; the MoHESR would oversee the university entrance requirements.

The meeting ended with the Minister supporting the TF in its mission and pledged much cooperation into the future.

Parliament Deputy Speaker Visit

Dr. Hawrami spoke about the procedures for the reading and approval of draft laws. Due to the current political climate, parliament not being in session, and no firm date for elections, he doubted that there will be much progress on pending legislation.

Education Committee of Parliament

The Chair of the TF introduced the group, its mission, etc. It sees itself as a consultative body in support of the ministries and the KRG. Its members represent a broad spectrum of stakeholders in Kurdistan's educational system. The TF sees its role in contributing to the improvement/revision of the current draft law to ensure that it provides a template

appropriate for the progress of education and ensure international standards and best practices.

Other points covered included:

- Mandatory kindergarten
- Promotion of gender equity
- Capacity building for teachers
- High school students' soft skill development
- Workforce preparedness
- University Entrance Exam

If successful, this reform would be a game changer for the entire KRG educational system.

Regarding the introduction of a university entrance exam, this would support change in high school curricula and student outcomes in line with the philosophy of education mentioned in the draft law. It was mentioned that the Minister of Education was open to the creation of this exam and leaving it to the purview of the MoHESR.

Members of the Education Committee discussed current political challenges that would complicate major systemic changes.

It was agreed that the Education Committee would schedule a two-day workshop to review the draft law line by line with members of the TF to hear the input. Once recommendations are received, there would be a reconciliation process to incorporate approved verbiage. This could occur prior to the second reading on the floor of Parliament.