

# **K-19 Task Force**

## **Minutes of Meeting, May 22, 2022**

### **Parliament, Education Committee**

#### **Agenda:**

**Workshop with Education Committee of Parliament to review in detail the Draft Law on Education in the KRI**

#### **Attending:**

Abdulqader Kakasur (UNICEF)

Dr. Mohammad Ahmed (MHE)

Dr. Naznaz Muhamad (Former Education Committee, Parliament)

Dr. Randall Rhodes (AUK)

AbdulSalam Medeni (Rwanga)

Dr. Honar Issa (AUK)

Dr. Galawezh Obaid Othman (MP)

Burhan Argoshy (MoE)

#### **Workshop**

Called to Order: 09:15

The session was exclusively dedicated to the review of the Draft Law. Following are various points raised. NOTE: This is not an exhaustive list of all Articles/topics discussed.

- Title of Draft Law: The law does not encompass all education within the KRI; it predominantly focuses on schools under the supervision of the MoE. For example: schools for disabled children and schools inside juvenile reformatory centers are run by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affair (MoLSA); these are not mentioned in the law.
- Education is a guaranteed and free right in the schools: There is a reference to “monthly wages that government kindergartens receive from the child’s guardian”; this contradicts the essence of the “free right” to education.
- Right to Education: This also extends to refugee and IDP children; this should be stipulated under the principles governing access and stated in a separate Article or Chapter.
- Institutions authorized to offer classes in other languages: These language differences amongst schools may result in inefficiencies and inequities across the system. How will we ensure consistency in teaching and learning and the availability of teaching resources?

- Philosophical Foundations: How will the system ensure the satisfaction of these critical thinking, problem solving, and other skills dedicated to forming an educated, conscious, innovative, and contemporary Kurdistan individual? Will the guidelines for implementation address such issues?
- Teacher-Student Relationship: There will need to be a paradigm shift and continuous professional development for teachers to accomplish this vision.
- Objectives of the Educational Process: Objectives must be properly worded so ensure that they are measurable.
- Kindergarten: As early education is foundational to the development of the individual, kindergarten must be an important component of this new vision for education. While resources are insufficient, it is important to strategize to make kindergarten mandatory, not optional.
- Religious Education: There is a reference to the study subjects of “religious education, art and sports”. Public education should not include “religious education”; it could include an historical or social-science perspective on regional and world religions.
- There needs to be more clarity on Non-Formal Education (NFE) – definition and purpose. Who are the service providers? Relationship and pathways?
- “Decentralization” is mentioned as a fundamental principle governing the vision outlined throughout the law. However, the Articles outline very centralized structures and procedures.
- Greater focus should be placed on community participation in the education sector, especially when the government has been going through financial crises.
- Vocational Education: Since TVET is a current priority for the KRG, it should have greater emphasis within the draft law.
- Preparatory Project: Vocational students in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, instead of the preparatory project, have the option of a research project in lieu of participation in a training course. Offering internships may be another option. For secondary school students, it would be appropriate to consider the international best practice of requiring volunteering for a minimum number of hours in the community, e.g. with NGOs.
- Academic Calendar: The holidays do not need to be specifically listed in the draft law. By a determined date (e.g. August 15), each Directorate of Education should submit to the Ministry the academic calendar of the upcoming year with all religious and governmental holidays, test dates, mandatory Saturday sessions, teacher development days, etc.
- Schools of a Special Nature: There should be further discussion of the role public-private partnerships can play in this initiative.

- **Electronic Study:** This area needs further elaboration. Is online education only to be implemented in times of declared emergency; can it be used for hybrid modalities of instruction? Online technologies are simply tools. What are the structures for ensuring quality online education? Is it subject to different measures than face-to-face teaching-learning, or the same? This is an area needing regulatory frameworks.
- **Governmental Educational Institutions of an International Character:** Is this legal? At a minimum, it is an oxymoron. A governmental institutional should be local/public in its philosophical, curricular, and administrative structures, not “foreign”.
- **Workers of Governmental Institutions:** There should be mention of health professionals working an in-school clinic.
- **Teacher Workloads:** There are workload reductions for teachers of 50 years and older. When a system has a deficit in the number of excellent and effective teachers, the option of permitting some of the best and brightest to continue full-time should be retained.
- **Exams and Textbooks:** The only type of assessments herein allowed is exams. The textbooks are approved as the only source for the exams. Therefore, only memorization of the textbooks is measured by these exams. Student learning outcomes can only be measured through a variety of assessment mechanisms; this diversity needs to be recognized. If education seeks to ensure citizenry with life skills for their own and Kurdistan’s success, then the teaching and learning of critical thinking, social responsibility and ethics, problem solving, etc. goes beyond textbooks and multiple choice exams.
- **National and Ministerial Exams:** Articles 92 and 93 outline year-end exams for various grade levels. Some are identified as national exams, others as ministerial exams. The exams need to be properly identified. The design of the exams needs to be evaluated to ensure that they measure the student learning outcomes. Also, the number of exams needs to be assessed to minimize testing anxiety.
- **Exam Dates:** Rather than the Ministerial Exams concluding by the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> month, they must be completed by the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> month to ensure the MoHESR’s university admissions procedures prior to the start date of the fall semester.
- **Kurdistan Accrediting Association for Education:** Since this body was approved by the Council of Ministers as a legal entity, its role within Quality Assurance should be mentioned.
- **Applying for a License:** The Article lists items required within the proposal for a license. It also needs to include a market study to evidence that the institution’s establishment compliments other educational institutions in Kurdistan, adds value to the local and regional educational ecosystems, and does not duplicate or unnecessarily compete with existing institutions.

- Equalization: Within the draft law, the MoE determines the controls for calculating the grades and scores of students of international and foreign non-governmental institutions for the purposes of admission to universities and higher institutes in Kurdistan (equalization). All aspects of setting standards for university admissions fall under the purview of the MoHESR. The MoE provides certification of the student's completion of all requirements for the high school diploma; the MoHESR addresses admission eligibility and application procedures.
- Duties of the Ministry: Ensuring access, efficiencies in operations and administration, and quality assurance should be listed under Article 168. The whole document never mentions gender equity; it should be infused throughout the law.
- Structure of the Ministry: The content in the final Articles should be moved to the beginning of the document as the structure needs to be commensurate with, and discussed alongside of, the mission in order to ensure effectively execution of all that is written.

Several of the points above reflect discussions of the Task Force on TVET and the introduction of a University Entrance Exam. After this detailed review of the law and discussion of the philosophy and mechanics of education, there was a common understanding as to the need for reform within the current system and the role of all stakeholders in these important conversations.

Session adjourned at 15:45.