**K-19 Task Force**

**Minutes of Meeting, September 21, 2023**

**Agenda:**

* **Priority issues of the year**
* **Meeting Structure**
* **Membership**
* **Strategies to enhance lobbying efforts**
* **Goals for the year**

**Attending:**

Dr. Mohammad Ahmed, Ministry of Higher Education

Shelan Khalil, Ministry of Education

Bashdar Sarbaz, Ministry of Education

AbdulSalam Medeni, Rwanga

Behar Ali, Emma

Dr. Zana Ibrahim, English Language Dept at UKH

Kristin Crawford, University of Kurdistan Hewler

Dr. Galawezh Obaid Osman, MP, Education Committee

Dr. Honar Issa, American University of Kurdistan

Dr. Randall Rhodes, American University of Kurdistan

**Called to Order: 09:40**

The session began with members presenting their priorities for the upcoming year. Issues cited are here paraphrased.

1. Universities preparing students for the workforce: A market study/feasibility study needs to be conducted to identify gaps between the university curricula/programs and the expectations of employers. Information attained from the study would inform the redesign, suspension, and addition of new programs at universities. However, the private sector has not sufficiently articulated what it needs (e.g. skills, knowledge). The ILO, GIZ, UNESCO, and others have conducted research, yet there has been limited sharing of data for a systemic realignment of academic and industry.

2. Capacity building for teachers: It was noted that there are excellent, eager, and highly motivated teachers in Kurdistan, yet even they acknowledge the need for continual professional and instructional development. Communities of practice can provide a venue for sharing; perhaps CSR can offer support. Universities must also revise the curricula for their bachelor’s programs in education – the training of teachers – to ensure that the curriculum focuses on higher order thinking skills.

3. Strategies tackling reform need to be holistic: The current strategy is to address issues individually. It is important to have an overall vision for educational progress: Is there a vision for education in the long term? What are the steps leading to that vision? A written policy paper needs to be developed for submission to the next Cabinet; education needs to become a national priority.

4. Vision and a plan: Stakeholders are working randomly with little or no knowledge of what others are doing. Short-term and long-term strategies need to be formulated. The ministries need to conduct a needs assessment in order to prepare for the future – Education 2030, Education 2040. What does the future of education look like, and will we be ready?

5. Stakeholder trust: Society has lost faith in the value and relevance of education. If the objective is to prepare students for the future, then we’re already behind other countries in the region, and very far behind international leaders. For example, we should be preparing students for the world of AI – the issues of the future, not those of the present.

6. Plan, do, check, act: Processes need to be more systematic. While brainstorming has been valuable in sharing knowledge, focus should shift to a clear roadmap for education’s future. This involves developing a TOR for the Task Force and documents to lend the TF clear direction and increased credibility. It is also important to reduce the duplication of efforts by various stakeholders, focus on English, and on the skills of the 21st century.

7. Quality assurance: Mechanisms need to be introduced to raise teaching standards to national/international standards. Obviously, “national standards” needs to be defined and integrated into a variety of educational and training programs. The U.S. government has committed to supporting the development of education in Iraq.

8. Culture of education: The school environment needs to be addressed. While there have been various conferences/workshops/trainings over the past years, what has been accomplished? If the culture surrounding education doesn’t shift, then efforts are in vain.

9. Realistic expectations: Assessment mechanisms, quality assurance, and a new culture of learning need to be introduced. Students need to develop a love of learning and be motivated to become self-directed learners. Education needs to privilege skill-based competencies over the acquisition of knowledge. Most important is that schools/universities have more autonomy in designing curricula while ensuring that the Ministry’s student learning outcomes are being met.

10. Cooperation: Stakeholders needs to be invested in the implementation of reforms. Within the NGO sector, if there is no funding, then they don’t participate. Research and data collection are key to making the case for reform and establishing credibility.

Members acknowledged the national context, where realities overshadow a vision for reform. Teachers and state university faculty are not paid on schedule, and therefore, often lose enthusiasm for their professions. These state employees may have lost the motivation for professional development and interest in investing efforts in advancing education.

During the conversation, two issues were ever present: teacher capacity building (and teacher training) and the marketing of the TF through a “publication”.

Regarding the “publication”, the narrative should include a TOR, historical brief of the TF, accounts of the research/proposals from the past years, and a support letter from the KRG. This booklet would serve as an introduction to the TF, its mission/vision, and perspective on education and be distributed to garner support from national and international governmental and non-governmental entities. Benchmarking should be conducted on other associations’ narratives, for example, the International Institute for Educational Planning.

Membership: It was agreed to keep the membership limited to the current Steering Committee. Others from the U.S. Consulate and NGOs could be invited as per the agenda of the meeting. These people (associate members) could serve as experts and provide input on various initiatives.

**Action plan for the next three months:**

* Develop the “marketing” package including: TOR, Vision for Education for 2030/2040, statements of purpose, examples of past proposals/discussions, letter of support from KRG. This will be published in two languages.
* A shared document platform needs to be set up for everyone to contribute to the narratives.
* Meetings will be held monthly – in Erbil; the next meeting will focus on the development of the draft of the marketing package.

**Session adjourned at 11:40**