

A Roadmap to Quality

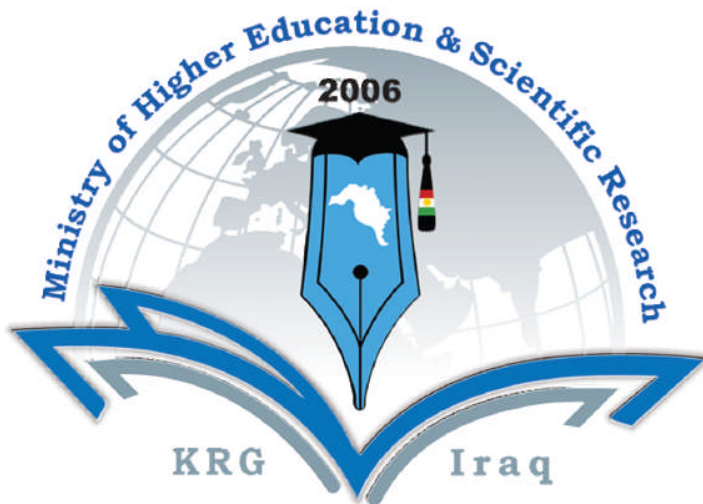
Reforming the system of Higher Education and Scientific Research in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

A Report on the Main Achievements

From 1st November 2009 to 1st September 2010



**Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research
Kurdistan regional government**



وهزارهتی خویندنی بالآ و تووژینهوهی زانستی

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A Roadmap to Quality

Reforming the system of Higher Education and Scientific Research in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Introduction

The Kurdistan Region has developed a great deal since gaining autonomy from despotic regimes of the past. In just eighteen years the Kurdish people were able to lay the foundation of a civilised nation, despite the scarcity of resources and extremely difficult circumstances.

In the past ten years the Region has achieved a remarkable development in the building of infrastructure and consolidating the foundations of governance. The prospect of further and faster development in the long term is now even greater, thanks to the focus of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) on investment and the arrival of democracy in Iraq. The latter has allowed the gates of Kurdistan to open more widely to the international free market and foreign investment.

The Kurdistan Region will need to develop more and achieve higher standards, in the fields of science, technology and management. Investing in people and raising the human capacities of professional cadres is one of the top priorities of the successive governments of Kurdistan. There is no doubt that the Universities and other institutes of higher education and scientific research will play a major role in this task.

It is no secret that the Kurdistan Region has inherited a complicated and outdated higher educational system from the 'old Iraq'. The higher education institutes were originally developed to suit a country with closed-market and little hope of a high standard living

or rapid educational advancement.

In the new Iraq, reformation of higher education is now urgently required in order to harmonise the heretofore antiquated system to the needs of the populace for highly skilled professionals. The KRG has long been conscious of this fact and worked to reform the higher education system accordingly. The Fifth KRG Cabinet made a serious attempt to modernise pre-University education, and established the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Erbil to reorganise the work of the higher education institutes. The Sixth KRG Cabinet has developed these institutes further and continued the modernisation process, taking on a holistic reform program for higher education and scientific research. It is expected that the future KRG Cabinets will follow the same path of modernisation, and further improve the educational system.

The New Strategy

In December, 2009, the KRG adopted a new vision and long-term strategy that led to the design of a new road map for reformation of the higher education system (see Appendix P1). The mission is to achieve quality in higher education and scientific research.

The report in hand is a summary of the long-term strategy and an illustration of how it is being implemented on several fronts since November, 2009, when the Sixth Cabinet took office. Thanks to the enthusiastic support and encouragement of the President of the Region and members of the Sixth Cabinet, in particular the Prime Minister and his deputy, these changes were initiated in earnest. Through the dedication and invaluable cooperation of the academic leaders, particularly members of Council of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, great milestones have been achieved. The Parliament of the Kurdistan Region, especially the members of the Committee of Higher Education, have supported the new strategy and followed up events closely.

No doubt, this strategy is just the beginning of a long process of development that would not be complete without the assistance and efforts of all the teaching staff, students and other employees of the Higher Education institutions. The hope is that future generations will continue on this path and achieve subsequent milestones in due course.

The Purpose of the Report:

The main reason for publishing this report is to make the government's vision and strategy for the reform of the higher education system clear to all stakeholders. It offers clarity of the mission and the mechanisms of implementation. It also outlines what the Ministry, the universities and the technical educational institutes need to do to facilitate the implementation of the new strategy. The approach to reforming the system can be divided into the following aspects:

- Reforming Teaching and establishing a modern Teaching Quality Assurance (TQA) system.
- Reforming the research training and funding system to revitalise scientific research, promote innovation and link our scientists with their counterparts in international research centres of excellence.
- Building capacity by investing in people and infrastructure.
- Establishing an institutional licensing and accreditation system.
- Reforming the management structure of the universities and the technical institutes to minimise waste and promote University independence.
- Reforming the administrative system to minimise bureaucracy and put students and staff first.

Protecting human rights, achieving social justice and improving the learning and working environment.

The past academic year was one of system-review and decision-making. These continued while student and staff work remained unhampered. In the coming academic year, the reform process will be implemented and the changes will hit the ground and become tangible and more visible to everyone. More system re-

forms are planned for this coming year, which will be a decisive year for changing practice and planning for the future. The experience gained will help the law-makers revise the Higher Education Law.

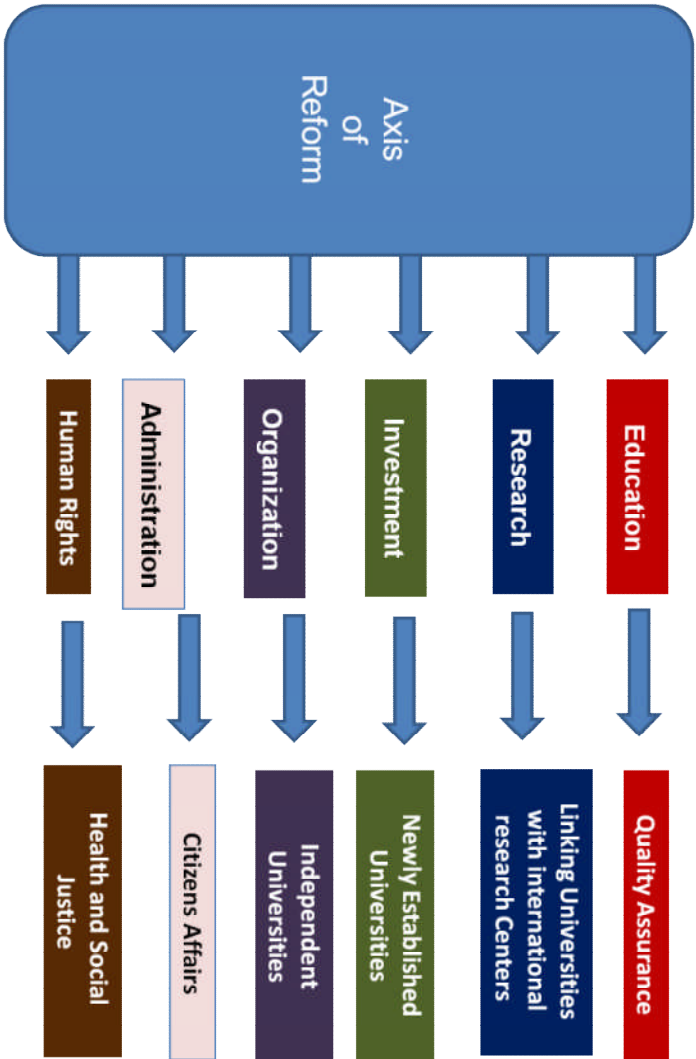
Although key decisions regarding the principles of reform have been made and work has already begun to develop standards within the defined framework, however, it is important that the reform process is considered one that is lively and dynamic. It can be enhanced and enriched with time through constant dialogue. The process is subject to continuous revision for the sake for improvement of the overall education system.

Throughout the process of reform, we would welcome constructive criticism from all those interested in, or affected by, it. Students, academics and other higher education employees are particularly encouraged to engage with the Ministry in a healthy dialogue with the shared objective of serving the nation through raising standards

Professor Dlawer Abdul-Aziz Ala'Aldeen

Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research

The Main Goals



Aspects of Reform and their Objectives

(A) Reforming Teaching to ensure quality

(A1) Establishing a Teaching Quality Assurance system to:

- ensure quality learning and training.
- protect the rights of students and preserve the status of teachers.
- increase the trust in the awarded degrees and certificates.

(A2) Beginning a Continuous Academic Development to:

- raise the academic standard of the lecturers.
- open communication channels between academics and—promote collaborative team work.
- encourage better research.

(A3) Reforming the undergraduate and postgraduate curricula to:

- modernise education curricula and make the training programs suit the needs of the market.
- enhance the capacities of individual students.
- encourage students to think and become more creative self-learners.

(A4) Reforming the postgraduate Masters studies to:

- raise the quality of teaching and research projects.
- promote collaborative teamwork among the academicians and enhance teaching capacity of course organisers.
- prepare more quality teaching staff for the new universities and technical education institutes in Kurdistan.
- prepare well trained professionals for the market needs in the public and the private sectors.
- create income sources for the universities.

(A5) Modifying English language tests to:

- set objective and international standards for evaluation.

- increase the trust in our English language courses and examinations.
- establish social justice.
- keep in line with the outside world.

(A6) modifying the student admission system to:

- link student's ambition with the offered choices
- move towards an electronic system.

(B) Reforming scientific research training and linking Kurdistan's scholars with their international counterparts.

(B1) Establishing a new system for PhD studies to:

- improve training programs in PhD studies in the Region.
- open channels of communication between the scholars of the Region and their counterparts in international centres of excellence.
- establish a link between the scientific departments in Kurdistan Universities with their counterparts in international centres.
- Revitalise scientific research in the Kurdistan Region.

(B2) modifying the old PhD system which remains functional in parallel to the new system for one final year, to

- improve on the old system while it remains functional during this transitional period, before it becomes obsolete in 2011.
- give the academics and potential supervisors the chance to adapt to the new system.

(B3) Sending academicians abroad on sabbatical to:

- update their knowledge and skills, and acquire experience in the state-of-the-art.
- expand their scientific network and open new channels of contact and communication between the scholars and their counterparts abroad.
- help find potential research supervisors and external assessors for graduate students of Kurdistan.
- boost research potential of our local scientists.

(B4) Holding a conference to “revitalise” scientific research in Kurdistan to:

- expand the scientific network of our academics
- find potential scientific supervisors and external assessors for the students of Kurdistan.
- invite inward investment in Higher Education.
- Support the Human Capacity Development Project in the Region.

(C) Investing in higher education and establishing new universities.

(C1) Establishing four new universities to:

- increase the capacity of higher education institutes.
 - increase the opportunities for top students, especially in the deprived areas outside the major cities where the people had sacrificed more for the Kurdish liberation movement.
- revive the suburbs.

(C2) Starting a Human Capacity Development Project that will:

- make the best use of the human abilities in the Region.
- train leading academic and professional cadres for the future.
- establish a competitive system of award based on merit.

(C3) Increasing the stipend for existing scholars who are studying abroad to:

- alleviate the financial difficulties of students and help them focus on their studies.
- support students and strengthen their loyalty to their homeland.

(C4) Sending scholars abroad outside the Human Capacity Development Project, to:

- fulfill the dreams of the ambitious students.
- invest in the human capacities and increase the number of professional cadres.

(C5) Establishing a modern system for licensing and accreditation of universities to:

- find a transparent mechanism for assessing universities.
- increasing the confidence in the private sector in higher education.
- protecting the Region and its people from low quality education.

(D) Changing the management structure of the universities and the institutes of technical education:

(D1) Restructuring the existing two Institutes of technical education and transforming them into three Polytechnic Universities instead, to:

- raise the standard of technical studies.
- make the training compatible with modern technology and with the needs of the market in the Region.
- create a competitive environment for applicants of technical studies.
- encourage academicians to work in the technical studies institutes.
- allow graduates of the technical studies to continue their studies to postgraduate level.

(D2) Reforming the administrative structures of the colleges in Universities to:

- make the best use of the human abilities of academicians and the staff.
- minimize bureaucracy and waste of resources.
- reconnect the teaching and research roles to enhance academic creativity.
- offer the teaching staff the opportunity to take part in research and innovation.
- engage the full time researchers in teaching.

(D3) The future of the new system: helping the universities gain their administrative, financial and academic independence, to:

- grant the universities the freedom to develop and raise the quality of their services.

- grant the universities the freedom to generate income and reduce their dependence on the state-funding.
- create an atmosphere of competitiveness within the local universities and between the local universities and the international ones.
- minimise bureaucracy.
- engage students and staff in the management process.

(E) Administrative reform:

(E1) Changing the way we serve the public at the Ministry to:

- improve our service and reduce red-tape.
- Provide information more readily.
- improve the working environment inside the Ministry, for greater productivity.
- stop external interference and avoid managerial errors.

(E2) Establishing a website for the Ministry to:

- communicate information and instructions more effectively.
- answer queries directly.
- announce ministry news.

(E3) using electronic communication to:

- enhance communication and minimise delays
- reduce the financial burdens of the citizenry and to reduce bureaucracy.

(F) Protecting human rights and establishing social justice:

(F1) Reforming the recruitment system to:

- ensure equal opportunities and increase social justice.
- provide incentives that correspond to the skills and efforts of the employee.
- eliminate bias, exceptions and external interferences.

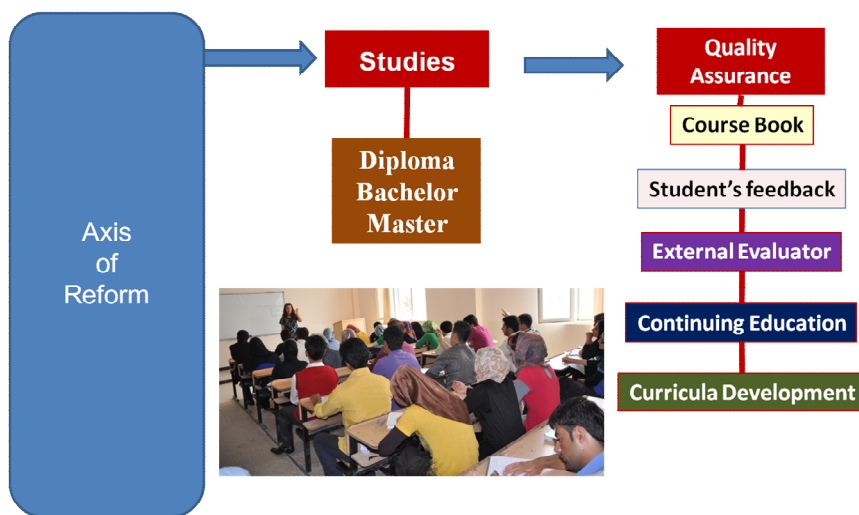
(F2) Establish a health and safety program to:

- improve the working and learning environment.
- protect the health of students, academicians and the staff in higher education institutes.
- Establish a culture of taking responsibility.

Report Appendixes (P1-P4)

(A)

Reforming Teaching to ensure quality



(A)

Reforming Teaching to ensure quality

Implementing a teaching quality assurance (TQA) program is the only guaranteed way to:

- help achieve and maintain a high standard in education and training*
- boosting confidence in our Universities and the degrees they award.*

Hence, the success of the quality assurance program is one of the top priorities of the Region's Government.

It has been the dream of the pioneering professors in Kurdistan to be able to stand on a solid footing that allows them to shift their focus from quantity to quality in education and training. This corresponds to their dream of holding the degrees awarded in high regard, equivalents of those awarded internationally. It is everyone's hope that one day soon Kurdistan will become an exporter of higher academic degrees. We look forward to the day when students from the neighbouring countries desire to obtain quality education in the universities of Kurdistan. Some observers believe that this is just a pipe dream. However, the pace of the current reform process and the strong will of the leading academics have boosted our self-confidence and demonstrated the great potential of our Universities to fulfil such a dream in the not too distant future.

Following the system review of last year, the Council of the Ministry laid the foundation for the achievement of such a dream. The Council made several important decisions, the core of which was to initiate a quality assurance process and establish the tradition of providing quality education and training in all our institutions of higher education. The outcome of these decisions will form the basis of major changes in the system of higher education system in Kurdistan. Further reforms are planned to fill gaps that may arise.

It is well known that the current student admission system in Iraq has many pitfalls, the biggest being that it does not thoroughly

accommodate the student preferences. There are plans to reform this system. However, these changes will require careful thinking and may take some time to achieve. They will require mutual co-operation between the ministries of education and higher education. Many meetings entailing long discussions were held between the Ministries, and there will be many more in the coming years.

(A1)

Establishing a Quality Assurance Program

The classical approach by which to assure the quality of education in the past was to monitor the attendance of the students in the class room, and to conduct discriminatory final examinations. However, time has proved that our universities and institutes have not been able to reach the required standard of excellence in education and training or even maintain a steady level in their respective fields. As a consequence, education standards continuously fluctuate according to political circumstances, financial constraints



of the country and the will of the teaching and the administrative staff.

Maintaining and consolidating a steady level of quality is complex and difficult process. Raising the standard of education and training requires a carefully designed and clear plan of action. There needs to be a continuous assessment of the educational curricula and the performance of students and academicians.

There are different quality assurance schemes worldwide. Each country tends to develop and evolve its quality assurance programme according to the inherited culture, history and local capacities. Last year a modern system of quality assurance was established in the higher education institutes in Kurdistan. This system was successfully piloted by academic leaders in the universities and the technical institutes in the Region.

The main objective of this plan was to protect the students' rights in knowing:

- * What they study and why.
- * How they can benefit from their studies in their professional life in the future.
- * How they are examined and in what topics?
- * What are the limits of students' responsibilities and how they can participate in the process of education, training and management?
- * How they can protect their rights and what are the channels through which they can express their suggestions, complaints and criticism?



The basis of the process implementation

A “Course Coordinator” will be assigned responsibility for each course or curriculum as it used to be in the past. This person will be responsible for preparing the study program. Prior to start of the academic year, a book that contains time-tables, curriculum details and student feedback forms will be prepared and distributed to students. The book will include the complete curriculum



plan, the learning topics, a summary of contents of the lectures, the method of conducting examinations and students' rights or expectations. At the end of the course and examinations, a feedback process will be conducted to collect and analyse data on the opinions of the students. A summary of the results will be presented to the Teaching Quality Assurance (TQA) Committee. This process will form the basis for an evaluation of the curriculum, the performance of the academics and the scientific division in their departments.

An external assessor will be assigned for each course/subject. He/she will play the role of an advisor, examiner and a neutral arbitrator. He/she will give his/her opinion concerning the course plan and implementation, including the method of teaching and the examinations. Furthermore, the external examiner will present his/her suggestions to the TQA Committee and the heads of the departments regarding future adjustments.

Following a series of workshops for academicians, the Ministry began piloting the TQA programme between April and July of this

year. This was applied to the Diploma and BA/BSc degree programs in the different universities and institutes of technical training. Thanks to the enthusiasm of the teaching and the administrative staff in the universities, the pilot program was a very successful experience indeed.

A new directorate in the Ministry was established to support and monitor the process of TQA. A committee and a directorate concerned with TQA issues was established in each of the universities and institutes, where this process will be universally applied as of this academic year. The KRG is monitoring TQA very closely and considers it a top priority.

Details on the quality assurance process may be found in Appendix (P2).

(A2)

The Continuous Academic Development Program

A program of continuous academic development (CAD) has been introduced to support the TQA process, help raise the academic standards of university academicians, and enable students to acquire up-to-date knowledge. The program provides the teaching staff with an opportunity to acquire and exchange their knowledge of the latest scientific and technological innovations in their fields.

According to this program, academicians are expected to spend at least fifty hours per year learning through one of the following methods:



- Attending scientific seminars in various departments and faculties.
- Presenting seminars on the subject of their research.
- Presenting seminars on the latest international innovations in their fields of speciality.
- Participating in intellectual group discussion and drafting scientific policies.
- Publishing peer-reviewed scientific articles in specialised journals.

Starting from the current academic year, series seminars will be organised for all academicians, to be monitored by the Higher Scientific Committee and the TQA Committee in each university. All members of the teaching staff are expected to actively participate

in the CAD program regardless of their scientific degree or managerial positions. Participation in the program will be documented and form a basis for evaluating the performance of the academics. If an academic consistently failed to participate in this program or achieve the required level, he/she will lose all academic privileges or the right to hold posts and eventually will be removed from the staff list.

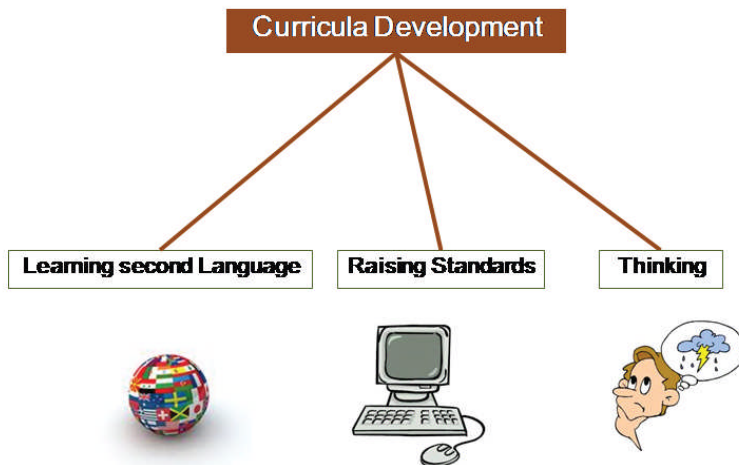
Details on the CAD Program are in Appendix (P3).

(A3)

Reforming the Curriculum

Developing an ever evolving curriculum is a supplementary part of the processes of Teaching Quality Assurance. The current labour market in the Region is in a state of continuous evolution, especially in the fields of science and technology. These developments should be reflected in the contents of the curricula. Moreover, university graduates are expected to be equipped with the latest knowledge of the sciences and professional skills.

University curricula and training programs are normally expected to be step ahead of the needs of the labour market, which is the reverse of what is currently the situation in Kurdistan. This was the reason behind initiating a comprehensive program to reform the curricula in all the scientific and technical departments of the universities and the technical education institutes. These reforms will take different forms. For example, the first academic year in the university will in the future be dedicated to achieving





the following goals:

- Getting to know the basics of the field of specialisation without over-burdening the student.
- Enhancing language skills through learning a second or a third language.
- Improving computer skills and the usage of the Internet and email.
- Students should learn how to search for information, self-educate and become increasingly independent.
- Promoting peer teaching. Students should learn the basics of scientific debate and brain-storming.
- Adopting novel topic-specific approaches to teaching and examinations.

The above teaching methods will continue to be used from the second until the fourth year while the specializations and the practical training courses will increase from one year to another. There is no further need to fill the students' minds with a superfluity of complex and ultra-specialised information. They would be taught concepts of their fields of specialization, and enabled to acquire knowledge and experience after graduation. It should be sufficient for the student to understand the scientific and the technical basics of their specializations, while the rest will be acquired through experience.

For this purpose, the Higher Education Committee in the various

institutes of higher education have been commissioned to revise and reform the curricula and educational system in a strategic manner. The system should be gradually applied beginning with the next academic year.

(A4) Reforming the System of Acquiring Masters Degrees

The rise in the number of students and the growth of universities and institutes has increased the Region's need for specialized teachers and Master's holders. Other private and public sectors are also in need of more specialised professionals with higher degrees. Of course, the Region will continue to require increasing numbers of holders of Master degrees for many decades to come.

Fortunately, the Master studies in the Region have a strong and relatively modern foundation. The first year of each course is divided into two semesters. The first entails an introduction of the specialist topics, whereas the second focuses on the core aspects of these specialized topics. The second year is dedicated to scientific research. This method of study is adequate and does not require major modifications. However, there are key fundamental issues that need to be addressed:

- Currently, course evolutions and student admissions do not reflect the needs of the Region for various specialties.
- Due to the separate and independent evolution of the universities, most courses depend on the internal resources, with minimal collaboration, exchange of knowledge or experience between institutes, and minimal contribution from the outside world. This has affected quality and quantity.
- Lectures are delivered in a classical manner, with no Teaching Quality Assurance programmes, and the contents require updating in all aspects.

From this year, for purpose of planning and reforming Master's courses, all state-funded institutions of higher education in Kurdistan Region will be considered a single entity, and seat numbers, allocations and awards will be decided according to the needs of

the public and private sectors. The current requirement is that for the next four years most new placements must be set aside for the new universities and technical institutes.

The capacity of all Master study programs will be increased where student numbers range from ten to twenty on each course. Specialized academicians in each field from all the universities of the Region will cooperate with other foreign experts in giving lectures and supervising the research carried out by students.

For any Masters degree, an academic board involving the heads of departments in the participating faculties should be established to monitor the entire process. The head of the scientific department of the hosting university will preside over the board. He/she will be responsible for the daily administrative duties facing the University Committee and will also be responsible to the Ministry's Higher Scientific Committee for strategic affairs, including planning, curricula development and teaching quality assurance.

The Teaching Quality Assurance program will be applied to all Masters courses just as it is applied in the BA/BSc studies. As for content and quality, the courses will be updated and enriched from time to time by the academicians and the external assessors.



(A5)

Changing the English Language Tests

In the past, language centres in the universities of the Kurdistan Region used local examinations, which caused many problems for the Region's universities. Students increasingly complained about the examination and the teaching staff could not maintain confidence in it. These were largely due to the lack of an objective and accredited mechanism for assessing the student's language skills. The examination system was old fashion, no appropriate quality assurance system was applied to the courses, and students commonly complained of external interference in the process.

Therefore, the Ministry's Council agreed to apply internationally -recognized English Language Tests for student admissions to both the Master's and PhD courses in the Region, as is already the case in the rest of Iraq. Fortunately, a number of international examination systems have been introduced in the Region, and more will appear in the future at lower costs. After careful consideration, the Council approved six well-established international tests, most of which are conducted through the Internet and are recognized worldwide for various study purposes. Some of these examinations serve as indicators of the level of students' language abilities and others are used as prerequisites for admission to graduate programs.

Minimum English language grades required prior to further studies

Admission to Higher Education	Pass-word	ELTS	ITP	TOEFL COMPUTER	TOEFL iBT	TOEFL Paper
Certificate awarded to life and natural sciences students	5.0	4.5	500	152	50	475
Certificate awarded to humanity students	4.5	4.0	475	133	40	450
Advanced course at the English language center	4.0	3.5	450	113	30	425
Intermediate course at the English language center	3.5	3.0	425	93	20	400
Pre-Intermediate course at the English language center	3.0	2.5	400	75	10	375

(A6)

Modifying the System for Student Admissions

It is clear that the current student admission system in use in Iraq which determines students' ability to join universities and technical educational institutes has many pitfalls. The primary



Meeting with the Minister of Education and General Directors

problem here is that students' desire and the courses they finally obtain are not compatible. Despite such discrepancy, the system has suited the current conditions in Iraq, as it is the only way to achieve social justice and equality. Currently, competition over places in the educational institutes is based on final exam grades. Given that achieving social justice is one of the Ministry's priorities, changing the existing system requires careful consideration and detailed planning.

The Ministry has been in discussions with the Ministry of Education to change the application procedure for higher education institutes in the next two or three years. A student aptitude test will be introduced and initially piloted on a small scale before being officially approved for general use in the coming years.

Meanwhile, a modern electronic central admission system has been introduced for the current academic year. Special software and scan-readers have been developed. This system allows rapid and more accurate admission process. We are grateful for the support of the Ministry of Higher Education in the Federal Government in Baghdad for their cooperation in this particular field.



Meeting with the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research in the Federal Government of Iraq

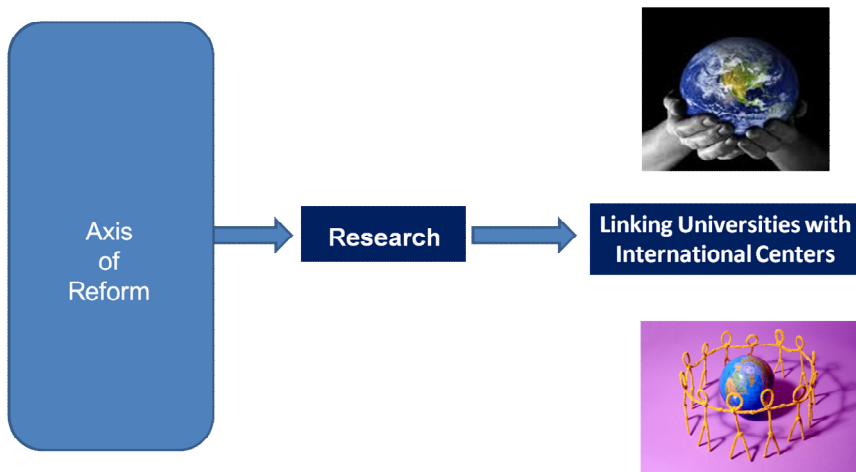
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Meeting with the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research in the Federal Government of Iraq

(B)

**Promoting Scientific Research and Connecting
the Region's Scientists with their counterparts
in international centres of excellence**



Since the independence of Iraq and up to 1992, the successive governments in Baghdad did not exert any real effort to invest in scientific research in Kurdistan. No real investment was made in the research infrastructure, human capacity building or technological innovation. In the rest of Iraq, there were research activities in some Universities and research centers, however, these centers were rather isolated and their performance levels were low.

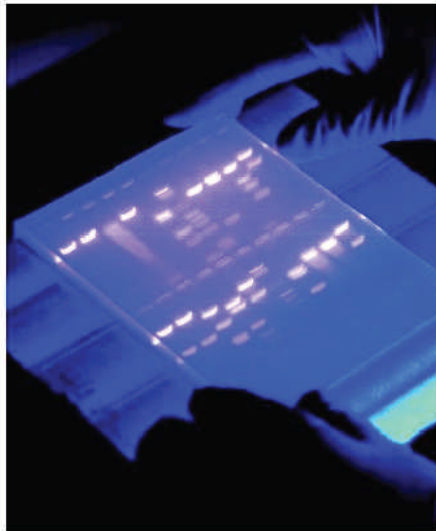
Since the independence of the Kurdistan Region, a number of new universities and technical institutes have been inaugurated in the major cities. The KRG has also invested in research and several research centers have been established. Despite these efforts, scientific research output remained inadequate, with only a limited number of innovations and discoveries achieved. The role played by academicians, scientists and the Region's research centers in solving local issues, formulating strategic visions or producing scientific policies for public or private sector has been minimal.

In these days and age, scientific breakthroughs can only result from multi-disciplinary collaborative research that brings together researchers from centers of excellence. Currently, there are thousands of scientists, professors and research students in the Region who are busy carrying out research individually or in small isolated groups with little collaboration between them or with the outside world. The research funds, capital equipment and institutional infrastructure have similarly remained fragmented. As a consequence, research output in the Region has remained relatively weak with little impact on science, technology or life in Kurdistan.

There are numerous complex factors that have lead to the current situation in Kurdistan. These include, among others, previous blockades and wars; poor management structure of the universities; inappropriate PhD training pathway, a restrictive and wholly inadequate Higher Education Law; and lack of incentives or pressure on academics to collaborate between them in Kurdistan or with their counterparts in international centers of excel-

lence.

To overcome this crisis, radical changes are urgently needed. During the initial phase, research students and their supervisors must strengthen their links with the outside world through scientific projects and bilateral visits. To facilitate this, a new PhD training pathway has been introduced, Sending professors on sabbatical and students for training abroad would allow them to expand their network and update their knowledge and scientific skills.



(B1)

Establishing a New PhD Pathway

The PhD study system in Iraq has been developed in such a way that its link with the cutting edge science and technology would remain eternally weak. Although students and supervisors are expected to be up-to-date, however, no clear mechanism, guidelines or funds were available for this purpose. During the three-year PhD study period, students are not offered sufficient opportunities to acquire in-depth experience in research and learn how to be innovative.

The first year is virtually identical to those they had during their Master's programs. This is followed by two short years of research during which the student is expected to initiate, conduct and complete a research project. For as long as PhD pathways remain the same as in Iraq, the current stagnation and inertia will remain dominating.

The Higher Scientific Committee at the Ministry, reviewed the entire PhD system and proposed a new pathway which was endorsed by the Council. The key objectives were to revitalize research with clear focus on needs of Kurdistan while connected to the World.

The new PhD study program will consist of four years of full time research, with no "Master's" style didactic teaching or comprehensive examinations. Instead, students' progress will be monitored via a modern mechanism. Students will be jointly supervised by a local and an international scientist from a centre of excellence. This will not only ensure the conduct of internationally competitive collaborative research, but also the joint publication of research with international impact.

The first year of the new PhD route is introductory, during which the student will learn the methods and ethics of research, carry out literature reviews, become familiar with the supervisors' and the depart-

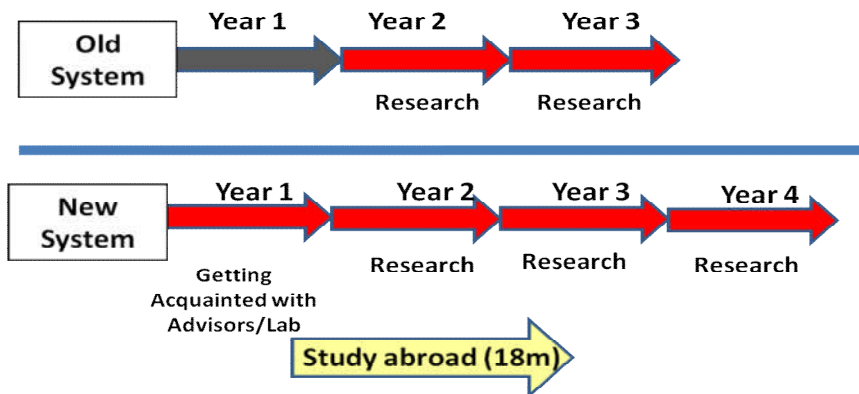
mental research projects, and work on boosting their language and personal skills. During this stage the student prepares an academic report to be evaluated by two assessors, a local and an international one. During the same year, the student will prepare to travel abroad to work in the external supervisor's department.

During the second year, the student travels abroad to the external supervisor's country and will be allowed to attend language courses for up to six months, before joining the supervisor for a minimum of one year research.

After this period, the student returns to his/her home university to complete his/her studies and acts as the bridge between the two departments for further collaboration. This will guarantee team-building, continuity of collaborative research, further investment and joint authorship.

The internal supervisor would be expected to pay an annual visit to the student abroad, and the external supervisor would be expected to reciprocate. As the first student progresses and reaches his/her final years, a second student can be adopted by the two supervisors, and in the fullness of time this should lead to a buildup of a critical mass of scientists working as a team on a common topic. Such collaborative team work would undoubtedly have greater international impact on science, innovation and publication.

Details on the quality assurance process may be found in Appendix (P4).



(B2)

The old PhD pathway is allowed to continue for a final year, but with significant modifications

To be fully prepared for the new PhD system, the Ministry's Council agreed to allow the application of the old PhD study system for the 2010-2011 academic year in parallel to the new system, but with the following amendments:

- Extending the duration of PhD studies from three to four years with the possibility of another extension for an extra six months.
- Publishing at least one research article in an international scientific journal (Impact Factor no less than 1.000) during the four year period.
- This applies mainly to life and natural sciences, whereas for humanities, special regulations will be published in due course.
- There should be no repetition of Master's style didactic teaching and comprehensive examinations.
- The student should travel abroad to a centre of excellence during the period of his PhD studies for a period of at least six months, to gain topic-specific research experience.
- The applicant's age should not exceed 45 years of age.
- The final PhD viva voce will be modified to conform to the quality assurance process. New instructions will be issued concerning this.
- The 2010-2011 academic year will be the last year for the old system to be applied. The new system will be in force thereafter.

(B3)

Sending Academicians abroad on Sabbaticals

There is no doubt about the skill, ability and determination of the academicians in Kurdistan. They managed, during a time of great hardship of 1990s blockades and the 2000's wars, to protect their own, their students' and their institutes' future. Today's professors who lead academia in the past two to three decades have been victims of circumstances, and need unprecedented support to help them revive research in the Region. With exciting recent developments in Kurdistan, with the gates of the Region being wide open to the outside world, it is time to make up for the past.

For investing in the long term, the KRG has always given priority to sending young scholars and PhD students abroad, and will continue to do so. However, for the short-term, we need to invest in the building the capacity of the existing academic leaders who are currently in established senior positions. Otherwise, the gap and the clash between generations will continue.

Current academic faculty would have to be given serious opportunities to update themselves, acquire hands-on research experience, widen their scientific network and engage in collaborative research as soon as possible. Therefore, it is a priority for the Ministry and the Universities to provide these opportunities as well as financial incentives to encourage academics to go on three to twelve months sabbatical and spend quality time, preferably along with their students, in international centers of excellence. The purpose is to help them achieve the following main goals:

1. Acquire international academic experiences.
2. Establish a wide network of scientific links for long term collaborative research.
3. Update their knowledge and acquire new research skills.
4. Identify new scientific projects and new co-supervisors for split-site PhD studies.

5. Identify external assessors in the international universities to participate in the teaching and research quality assurance processes.
6. Publishing research findings in international journals.
7. Promoting the Universities of Kurdistan to the developed countries and link their departments with their counterparts at home.

(B4)

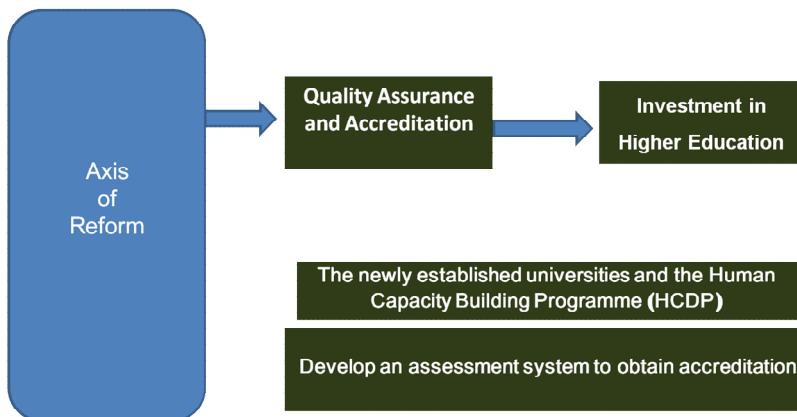
Holding a Conference for Revitalising Scientific Research in Kurdistan

In December of this year, an international conference will be held in Erbil to support the new PhD system, the Human Capacity Development Program and to encourage scientific sabbatical leaves. Scientists and representatives of the international centers will be invited to Kurdistan so that they can be introduced to the academicians of the Region's universities.

The key objectives behind this conference is to revitalize research in Kurdistan, enable the Region's researchers to broaden their international links, identify research supervisors and external assessors for the undergraduate and postgraduate courses; sign memoranda of understanding with international universities and promote inward investment in higher education in Kurdistan Region.



(C)
Investing in Higher Education and
Establishing New Universities



Since the founding of Iraq and until the late 1960s, there were no universities in Kurdistan, including Kirkuk. In 1968 the University of Sulaimaniyah was founded, and later transferred to Erbil and named Salahaddin University. Until the liberation of the Region from the Ba'ath regime, Salahaddin University remained small and isolated. After liberation, the KRG reopened the University of Sulaimaniyah and inaugurated the University of Dohuk. Many other institutes of technical education were later established in major cities and towns. Despite these previous expansions, the institutional capacity has been too limited to accommodate the continually rising number of secondary school graduates in the Region.

The Kurdistan Region's stability, the recent major investment in the private and public sector, and subsequent developments in the labour market have increased the Region's need for more technical cadres. It gives us pride that the Kurdish people have unique enthusiasm for seeking knowledge and further education. The intellectual and professional layers of our society continue to expand rapidly. As a consequence, the numbers of University seeking young men and women have been rising exponentially. Such growth needs suitable solutions in both the short- and long-term. Previously, seven state-funded universities were opened as part of a strategic plan for solving the problem. The private sector was also encouraged to invest in the higher education. Consequently, twelve public universities were licensed in the Region.





Clearly, inaugurating and developing universities are long-term strategic projects, and even after their expansion, their capacity to accommodate students will remain limited. Nevertheless, there is an urgent need to open new institutions of higher education in many overpopulated, yet deprived, towns, including those in former combat zones where there was a large number of martyrs and victims of the Kurdish liberation movement.

The KRG has therefore made strategic decisions to open four new Universities and will continue to expand them and allow them to evolve in line with the need of the Region and the labour market. No doubt, the sudden expansion in the infrastructure will be associated with its own problems, including reciprocal provision of additional education and information tools, such as internet, equipment and human capacity development. These have been taken into account by the KRG.

(C1)

Establishing Four New Universities

Although most of the state-funded universities in the Region are considered 'new', however, there are some that are virtually brand -new. During the term of the Fifth KRG Cabinet, the University of Soran was opened and the foundation of the University of Zakho was laid down.

The Sixth KRG Cabinet continued the trend and inaugurated the University of Raparin in the city of Rania, the University of Halabja in the city of Halabja, and the University of Garmian in the city of Kalar. The foundations for all three universities were laid on three national occasions in remembrance of the three man-made disasters that our nation witnessed in recent history. These acts to establish universities where egregious acts of destruction decimated the respective populations will serve to demonstrate to the whole world that the Kurdish nation has a strong will to turn disaster to triumph.

The government has allocated from this year's budget the funds needed to build the head offices, the faculties and student residence for the three new universities. Construction in the Universities of Zakho and Soran have already been underway. Following the budget approval for this year, further building work was started in the University of Sulaimaniyah campus in Qiliasan. The Prime Minister has paid many site visits to Qiliasan to monitor the progress. The project of establishing the University of Salahaddin campus in Erbil is also being monitored and supported.

Finally, the positions of University presidents for the new Universities have been announced and will soon be filled in competition.

(C2)

Launching the Human Capacity Development Programme

The Human Capacity Development Program (HCDP), the process of sending top scholars abroad, is one of the most important governmental investment projects. Through studying and receiving intensive training in developed countries, students will gain and transfer inward much needed knowledge and experiences that help improve research and education Kurdistan.



By the end of 2009 hundreds of students had already been sent abroad for postgraduate training at Eastern, Western or Developing countries. For this year, the KRG has allocated a protected budget of up to \$100 million per year to send thousands of students more.

After the Kurdish Parliament approved this budget, a Higher Committee for HCDP was formed, chaired by the Prime Minister. The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Planning, Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research served as members. In early May admission requirements were drafted and an application form was made available for applicants. The final version was approved in July and in August scholarship calls were announced, and a modern, transparent and competitive process was followed.

At the first opportunity the Cabinet decided to send all of this year's top university graduates from the various scientific departments in the state universities abroad on scholarships .Thus, more than 200 students immediately benefited from the program and the High Committee for HCDP decided to send more than 1300 additional students by virtue of these new measures. Consequently, more than 1500 competent students have benefited from the program in its first stage. The second and third rounds will follow in the near future.

The HCDP was mainly implemented by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and Ministry of Planning. Beneficiaries included applicants from other governmental institutes as well as the private sector.

(C3)

**Increasing Grants for Current Students
Studying Abroad**

In addition to sending new scholars abroad, the government has given due care to the scholars currently studying outside the country. More than 1200 students were previously sent abroad, but due to budget constrains, they were offered relatively low salaries and allowances. Most suffered from financial hardship, particularly those who were studying in industrialised countries. The KRG therefore made \$23 million USD available to those scholars who are studying abroad.

Students studying in Western countries will receive \$1500 per month in addition to their salaries. As for the students studying in Eastern and developing countries, they will receive \$900 per month in addition to their salaries.



(C4)

Helping students study abroad, outside The HCDP program

The Kurdistan Region's budgetary capacity to send scholars abroad will remain limited, therefore priority has to be given to sending the top young talents abroad. However, this should not mean that the opportunity to study abroad will be restricted to those who fall into these categories. While the KRG will require the talent of a maximum number of qualified cadres, fortunately, an even greater number of knowledge seeking individuals have been dreaming of opportunities to study abroad but missed them during their youth.

At the beginning of this year, the Ministry of Higher Education decided that any knowledge-seeker who has not met the HCDP requirements will be given the opportunity to complete his/her study in a certified university abroad. As a symbol of cooperation and encouragement, the Ministry of Higher Education is prepared



to provide full salary to students who obtain a level of 60% in their undergraduate studies and are under the age of 40 for Master's studies or 45 for PhD studies. When they return home, these students will enjoy the rights granted to other scholars.

Those students who had attained less than 60% and/or are older than 45 years of age will also be granted the opportunity to study abroad but without receiving a salary.

Evidently, the steps taken by the Ministry will provide greater opportunities for greater number of students, irrespective of their social backgrounds.

(C5)

Establishing a Regional System for the Assessment and Accreditation of Universities

The assessment and accreditation system for our universities is the foundation for assuring quality of education and training and for protecting the credibility of state and private universities. It is the only guarantee for every country seeking a flourishing future for its people.

To date, Iraq has not had a credible system for assessing and accrediting higher education institutions. This has led to many problems for the Kurdistan Region, particularly during the phase of rapid growth of state- and private-funded higher education institutions. Numerous private universities were opened in the absence of clear and transparent licensing, accreditation or quality assurance schemes. There was a vacuum under which some universities were opened in the Region without having formal records within the Ministry. Some of these Universities seized the opportunity to grow rapidly and generate profit without offering quality. Unchecked, this chaos would result in a total lack of confidence in the private education and a growing gap between the Government and private investors, which would put the future of the young students at great risk. The following are some specific examples of problems that the Region has faced:

- Numerous colleges and departments were established and began to offer degrees in private universities where there is no need for such specialties in the Region, which would further worsens the unemployment problems. The graduates of such faculties and departments are likely to face unemployment as a result.
- Some universities accepted large numbers of students without providing the necessary human resources, which led to lowering

standards of education. In the 2009-2010 academic year, for example, 13000 students studied at various stages in the private universities, of which 7000 (55%) studied law. This is double the number of students found in the state universities, where the number of teaching academics exceeds those in private universities by several folds. Interestingly, several other new or existing private universities have also requested permission to establish new departments of law in the same manner.

- Tuition fees are not monitored in private universities, and no mechanism of arbitration exists to handle complaints of exploitation.
- The process of appointing professors and staff in private universities is not based on fairness, and in some cases, is against established rules and regulations. This has resulted in many problems.
- Many of the private universities do not have teaching quality assurance schemes or policies, or a continuous academic development for their staff, and their curricula are not subject to monitoring for regular updates. Therefore, most of the private universities are currently facing the same problems that the state universities faced in the 1990s, but worse, for in some of them pass rate is now almost 100%.

To tackle these problems, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research has approved a transparent process to establish a contemporary program for the processes of assessment, licensing and accreditation. A High Committee was formed, and detailed information has been collected from the private universities, collated and analysed. Curriculum vitae of all staff have been assessed for suitability. The university infrastructure, capital equipment and furniture have been assessed. From this point forward, this process will be routinely followed for assessment, licensing and accreditation of all universities. This process entails the following steps:

First: License to Establish a University

The Cabinet grants a license to establish a university upon receiving a proposal submitted by the Council of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. During the first stages, the investor submits a file which includes the key information about the proposed project to the Ministry. A Higher Committee



Meeting of Presidents of Private Universities

for evaluation reviews the file and provides feedback. If the new university's plan suits that of the KRG and the needs of the Region, and if the plan can guarantee its academic credibility and financial security, the Ministry raises the licensing proposal to the Cabinet. When the Cabinet approves of the plan, it grants the investor a conditional license to establish a university.

Second: Permission to Commence Studies

After the investor provides the project with the infrastructure and the teaching staff, the Higher Committee of Evaluation visits the site, gathers information and provide the Ministry with a thorough assessment. Upon careful consideration, and when all conditions are met, the Ministry awards the new university permission to commence its educational programs. The university must initially accept fewer students compared to its claimed capacity, pending accreditation.

Third: Accreditation

A year after the commencement of the educational program at the university, and yearly thereafter, the Higher Committee for Evaluation will reassess the educational standards of the university and its adherence to its proclaimed mission. The outcome of the assessment process is one of the following:

- unconditional accreditation.
- conditional accreditation.
- No accreditation, and withdrawal of the license.

In case of conditional accreditation, the university must remedy any shortfalls noted and meet the prerequisites before re-evaluation of its status and before an unconditional accreditation can be granted. If the university is not granted accreditation, it is not allowed to receive students, and consequently will be closed.

Fourth: Licence to invest

Currently, several new private universities have received various investment incentives, including land and tax reduction. In the future, the Ministry's recommendations concerning investment licensing will be as follows:

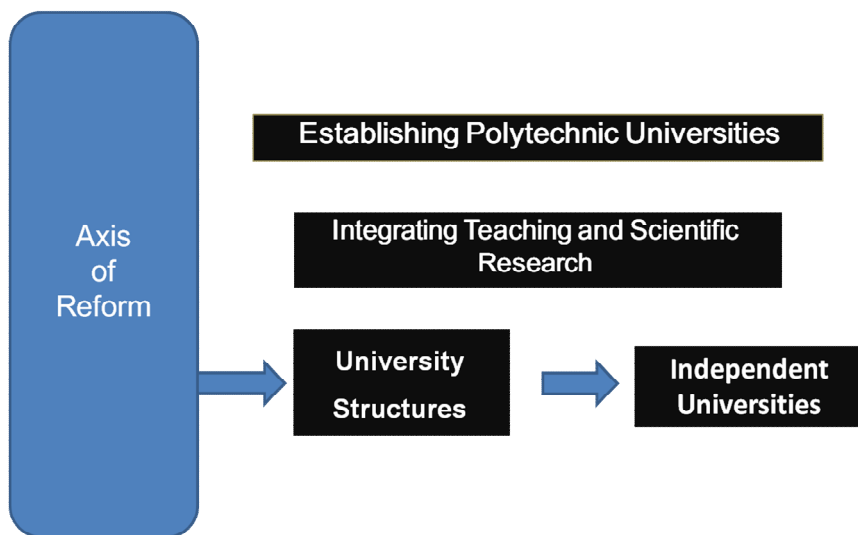
- Every investor in higher education must submit a full proposal and follow the set procedures before applying to the Investment Board.
- After being granted a license to establish a university, the investor must provide the location, infrastructure and required staff to commence the educational program.
- Being granted a license to commence programs, the investor must begin accepting students. After graduating the first cohort of students (after four continuous years of operations) the investor receives a support letter from the Ministry addressed to the In-

vestment Board for further facilitation.

- Establishing new universities and faculties depends on the fields of specialization, the KRG strategies, the need of the Region and the geographical location of the university.
- The universities applying for evaluation, licensing and accreditation are to pay all administrative fees.

The accreditation process does not end at the point of granting licenses or accreditation. It continues for the lifetime of the university. The universities will be asked to provide annual academic and administrative data to ensure that standards are maintained. It is important to remember that after the state-funded universities achieve their administrative independence from the Ministry in the very near future, the same process will be applied to all universities of the Region.

(D)
**Changing the Management Structure of the
Higher Education Institutes**



Before the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research was established, the Council of Higher Education (Chaired by the Prime Minister and whose membership was made up of university presidents) would manage the higher education institutes. There was no central governmental body that would define strategies, set plans, issue guidance or audit administrative and financial affairs. Nor was there a body responsible for implementing a quality assurance system and for accreditation processes.

The Ministry of Higher Education was first established in Sulaimany and after the union of the KRG administrations in 2006, a new Ministry of Higher Education was established in Erbil, which was modelled after its counterpart in Baghdad. From its inception, the Ministry has worked on filling in gaps in the higher education system and has played a significant role in managing and developing its institutes.

Previous higher education ministries in Iraq followed a Middle Eastern hierarchical structure. Managerial, academic and financial decisions were concentrated at the top of the pyramid. Higher education institutes depended on the government for full funding, with little incentives for income-generation or competition. Consequently, the universities, as all the other governmental institutes, suffered from bureaucratic overload with a complex, and at time inhibiting decision-making process. Moreover, all decisions were made centrally, with hardly any engagement of middle or lower ranking administrative or academic staff. Decisions were rarely based on quality, innovation, excellence or even clearly laid down strategy and central planning.

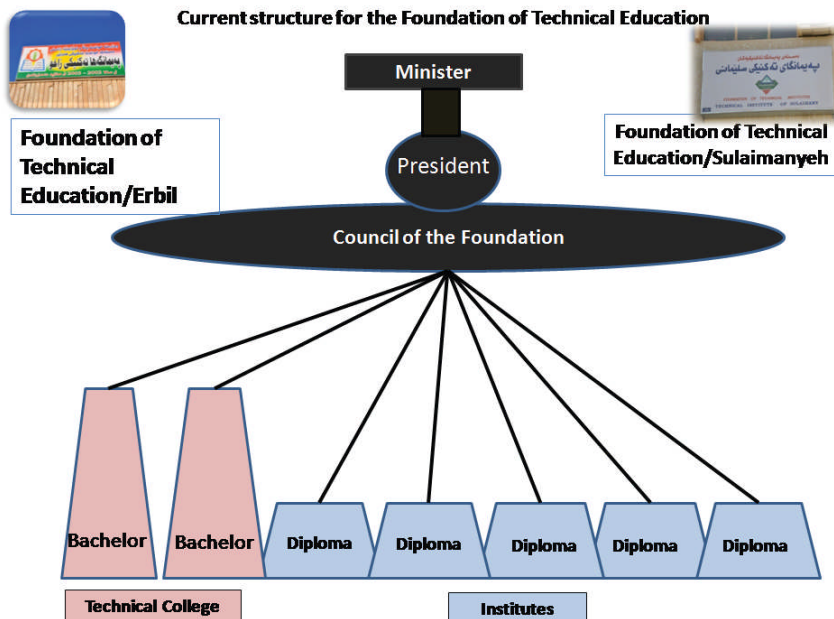
From this year on, the Kurdistan Region is breaking the shackles inherited from the 'old Iraq' and its closed market system of operations. It is heading towards the open, modern world where foreign investment and job markets are developing increasingly. However, transitioning from the 'old Iraq' will not be easy or smooth. The administrative system, the culture, the law, the regulations and funding system require careful consideration before radical reform is implemented.

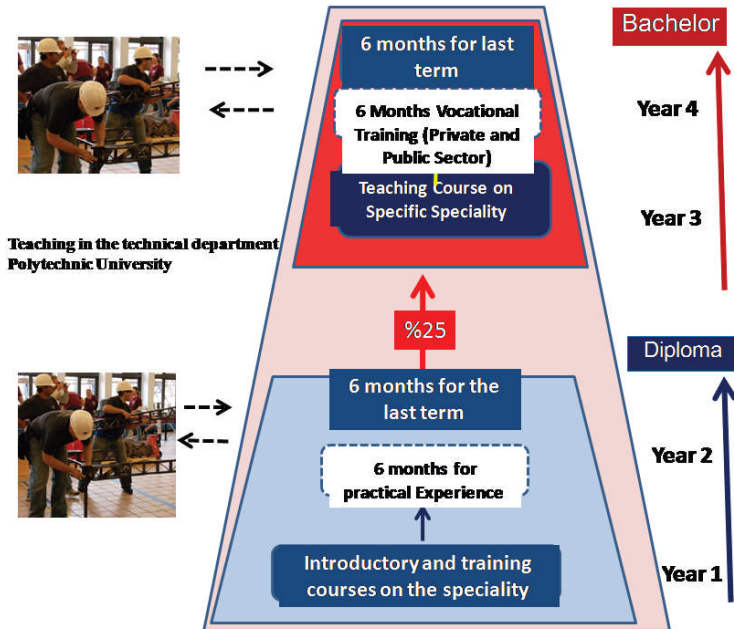
(D1)

Restructuring Technical Education System From Institutes to Polytechnic Universities

Technical education within the Kurdistan Region is progressing and developing at a rapid pace. In record time, institutes of this type have become widespread in many cities and towns of the Region. Technical education and training has been providing the local job market with professionals. However, these institutes have chronically suffered from administrative and academic shortcomings. Their branches are too wide spread and are managed via highly centralized administrative headquarters in Erbil and Sulaimany.

Despite the importance of technical education, students and staff who traditionally prefer studying or working in Universities, show little enthusi-





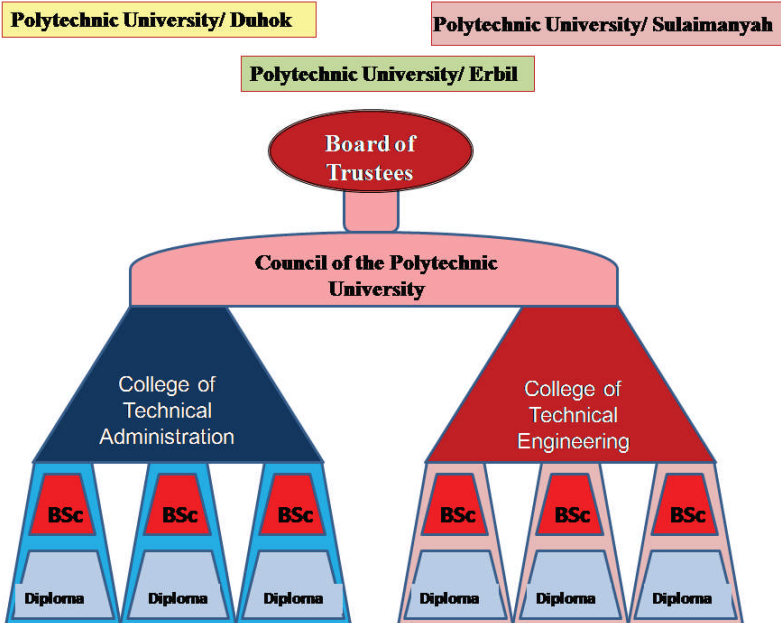
asm for the technical institutes. As a consequence, only least competitive students and reluctant staff end up in the institutes of technical education. This is now reflected in the ever deteriorating standards of education at the technical institutes.

To address this chronic problem, the Council of the Ministry of Higher Education reviewed the system, studied numerous options and sought staff and expert opinions. The final conclusion was to convert the currently existing two Institutes of Technical Education to three governorate-based Polytechnic Universities. The specialized departments and the courses they offer will be radically restructured.

Currently, there are two types of Departments in the ITEs. The majority offer Diplomas after two years of study, and a minority are within Technical Colleges where BSc/BA degrees are offered after four years of study. Training is entirely based at the ITEs with modes infrastructure, teaching staff and available facilities.

Decisions have been made to invest in the human and infrastructure capacities in the ITEs and raise their standards to those of other Univer-

sities. In each technical department, both Diploma and Bachelor's degrees will be awarded. All incoming students will initially study for two years to earn the Diplomas, and the top quarter of distinguished students will continue their study for two additional years and earn their Bachelor's degrees. In the second and fourth year of study, all students will be trained in the public and private sectors for six months in order to gain hands-on experience in the real world and on the latest available technology. This external technical experience will reduce the students' dependence on the Universities' internal capabilities, increase their awareness of the market and its technologies, and enhance their chances of employment through engaging potential employers as shared owners of the process. Such reform in technical education and establishment of technical universities would attract the most competitive students who would find the Polytechnic Universities offer them numerous advantages



over the classical Universities, including better prospects of employment, equal opportunities for postgraduate education (up to PhD) and further progression to become future academics.

In terms of the management structure, the Polytechnic Universities will

become independent entities with self-governing bodies, including a senate and board of trustees. Their dependence on the Ministry for day to day management would become minimal, if at all. The KRG Cabinet has approved this reform and the Prime Minister has endorsed it and by the end of this calendar year will issue a special decree for it.

(D2)

Reforming the Administrative Structures of the Universities

To Eliminate Duplication and Internal Competition; and Promote Collaborative Research

Current University Structure

The basic academic unit in the university is comprised of the specialized scientific department. Coalition of departments forms Colleges, although certain Colleges are not divided. In theory, the establishment of the specialized departments is supposed to be based on an overall University plan, with complementarities between them. In practice, however, departments are unique within single Colleges but not across the University. Colleges have evolved and diverged independently with minimal collaboration between them. These have led to numerous chronic problems, two key obvious ones are:

1. Duplication of departments, leading to waste of resources.

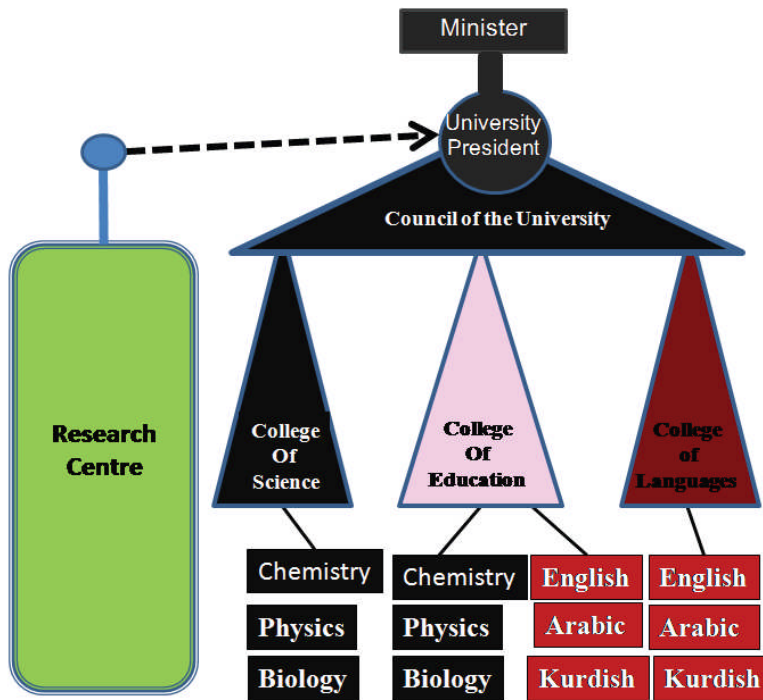
For example, under the previous Iraqi regime, the College of Education was established to train high school teachers. Several new departments were opened, which were in effect duplicates of those present in the Colleges of Arts or Science. Although the curricula in these duplicate departments differed slightly, but it was not sufficiently diverse to warrant separate colleges and, interestingly, graduates of all these different colleges would all end up becoming teachers anyway.

After 18 years of liberation, various universities were inaugurated in the Kurdistan Region. They followed the old Iraqi style, and they all now have at least one College of Education over and

above the Colleges of Science and Art. The University of Sulaimaniyah and the University of Salahaddin, for instance, each have four departments Kurdish language, four departments for the English language and five for the Arabic language. Departments like physics, chemistry, mathematics and biology are also found in duplicates in the Colleges of Education and Sciences at each university.

There is no doubt that the existence of diverse modules of education are useful and serve graduates with different career lines, however, these modules can be offered by the same department where human and financial resources can be pooled. Saving could then be made on many fronts, such as these:

- In every duplicate College, there is a Dean, an Assistant Dean, a secretary and other employees, all of whom are offered expenses, allowances and privileges, over and



above their salaries. They also occupy offices, have private cars, and require furniture and equipment that incur maintenance and renovation costs.

- The same applies to the duplicated departments, each of which will have a Head, Registrar and other departmental staff. Besides salaries and grants, they all require offices, equipment and furniture.
- The distribution of teaching staff and employees is not carried out amicably. Some divisions suffer from staff shortages and others suffer from redundancy. The way these employees cooperate depends on subjective factors, such as the good will of the management and staff themselves.

2. Separation of teaching from research.

The evolution of the management and physical structures of the Universities and their affiliated research centers have with time led to a virtually total segregation of teaching and research, which are clearly reflected in the low quality output from both.

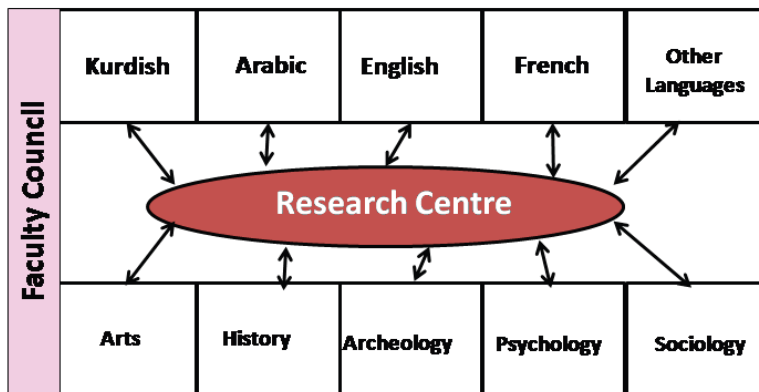
Success in academia can only be achieved when academics can work in a dynamic environment with equal access to teaching and research. In Iraqi Universities, most academics are kept extremely busy with their teaching role, with minimal access to, or encouragement to carry out, research. The few research active scientists who work in research centres contribute very little to teaching. This has deprived Universities of their essential role of leading scientific investigations, contributing to policies and supporting the private and public sector with innovation and intellectual in put.

Creating a vibrant teaching and research environment is not an easy task due to the way the Colleges and Departments are currently configured. It requires restructuring of the current management pyramid before merging the two functions in the life of every academic.

Structural Reform

In December 2009, the Kurdistan Regional Government adopted a new long-term strategy for higher education, which led to the design of a roadmap for reformation of the system. The Council of the Ministry of Higher Education reviewed the existing system and proposed a novel administrative structure for universities, where teaching and research are integrated. The new strategy may be summarized as follows:

The Structure of the merged colleges



First: Merging duplicate academic divisions

Under the new system, the structure of the degree-awarding academic departments will be preserved. However, similar or identical departments within individual universities will be merged and fully integrated in terms of their human, financial and other resources. This should not be at the expense of student numbers or diversity of modules offered. On the contrary, the capability of departments to offer more modules to more students would be

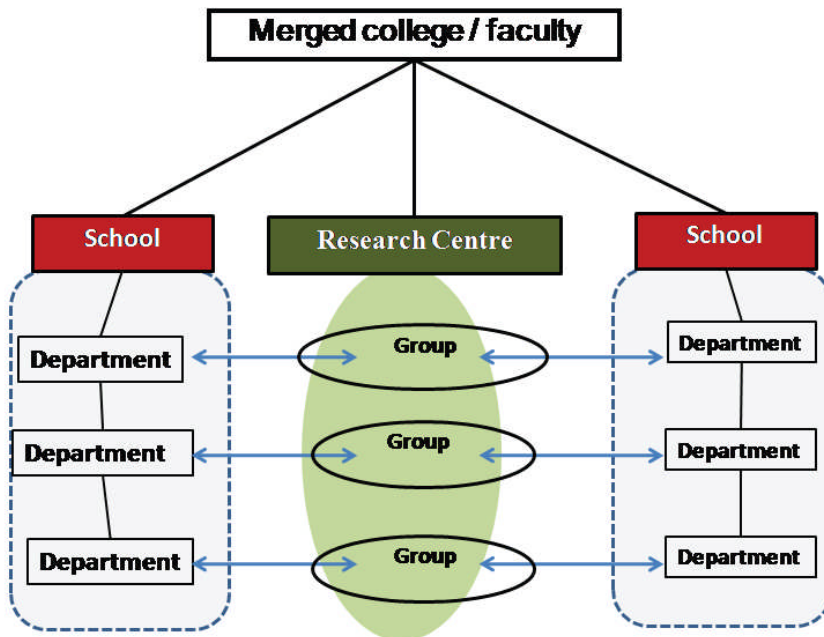
greater.

Second: intercalating departments with complementary interests

After merging overlapping departments, it is possible to join up others with similar or complementary interests. For example, the departments of Kurdish, Arabic, Farsi, Turkish, French and English languages could be brought together under one umbrella, one school, like "School of Languages".

Third: integrating academic divisions with research centres

In this day and age, only multi-disciplinary collaborative research is likely to be internationally competitive and lead to ground-breaking innovations. This requires the critical mass of scientists working together and in collaboration with counterparts



in centres of excellence. Moreover, internationally renowned universities are those which have excelled in integrating teaching into research.

It is the role of every academic to be actively engaged in research, and effectively communicate his/her science through teaching. Clearly, not every teaching academic is likely to be engaged in full time research, however, every one of these should have access to a vibrant research environment within their University setting where they can keep in touch with, contribute to and benefit from on-going research. Conversely, every scientist should have access to students for mutual communication and participation.

Fourth: Reorganizing the Structure of the Colleges

To underpin the concept of integrating teaching and research within the academic institutions, the management structure of the current colleges will be radically changed. The abovementioned merged departments and schools will be integrated with research centres and managed jointly within larger and more dynamic "Faculties". Each University will be broadly divided into 5-7 discipline-orientated, semi-independent and financially devolved Faculties. The table below shows examples of such Faculties. University leaders have the flexibility of merging various departments in more creative ways, to achieve the same outcome.

Timeline for Implementing the New System

Taking the diversity of the universities of the Region into consideration, it was decided to begin implementing the new Faculty system in the new or smaller Universities from this forthcoming academic year (2010/2011). These include the Universities of Dohuk, Koya, Soran, Garmian, Halabja, Raparin, and Zakho. The larger and more complex universities of Sulaimani and Salahaddin need this year to prepare for implementation in the next academic year (2011-2012).

Examples of newly created Faculties:

Academic Departments	Faculty
Language, history, geography, archaeology, sociology, psychology, fine arts and other departments.	Faculty of Human Sciences
Law, economics, management, business, finance, media, tourism and other departments.	Faculty of Law and Management
Religious studies and oration, and other departments.	Faculty of Religious Sciences
Physics, chemistry, mathematics, geology, agriculture and other departments.	Faculty of Natural and Life Sciences
Medicine, nursing, pharmacy, dentistry, veterinary medicine and other departments.	Faculty of Medical Sciences
Civil engineering, architecture, mechanical engineering, electronic engineering, computer science, petroleum engineering and	Faculty of Engineering Sciences

(D3)

**The Future of Universities in Kurdistan:
For a complete Administrative, Financial and
Academic Independence**

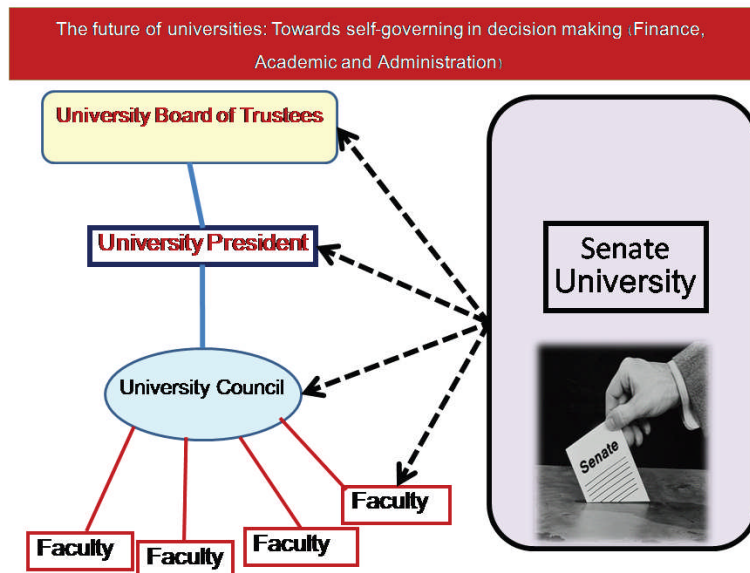
Currently, all state Universities in Iraq are fully funded and administered by the KRG. As a result, the Universities have become an integral part of the bureaucratically micromanaged Government institutions, with little chance of managing their financial, administrative and academic affairs independently. For as long as the state Universities remain micromanaged by the Government, via the Ministry of Higher Education, they would not come under any pressure to generate their own income, focus on quality or aspire to achieve excellence. Therefore, the ultimate objective of the current reformation of the University management structure is to help them gain their total administrative, financial and academic independence from the Ministry, in line with the worlds top Universities in the developed world.

The key changes in the structure include:

- 1. Establishing Boards of Trustees** to oversee the Universities' the administrative aspects that are currently carried out by the Ministry, including appointing staff, setting education plans, approving research projects and building the educational infrastructures.
- 2. Financial Independence:** In the future the government will allocate a limited budget for the universities. The universities will then work to increase their incomes through marketing their education and training course, and attracting industrial and other research funds.

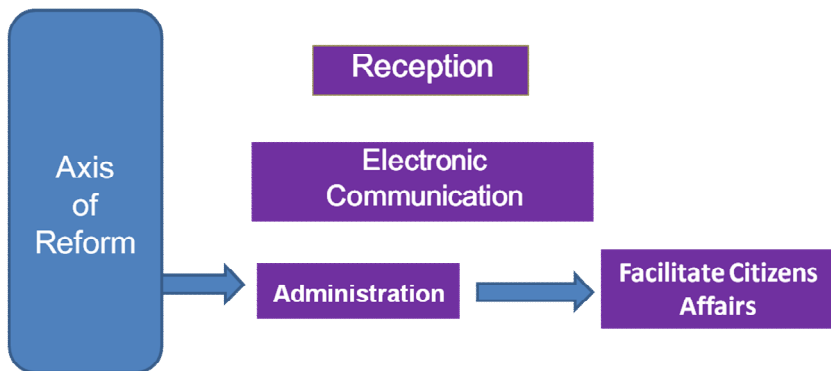
3. Forming Senates, to support the academic process in the Universities:

Senates will comprise of representatives of the various layers of the teaching staff, administrative staff and students, and will act as a University parliament. This will ensure that academic and other members of the University would contribute to the day-to-day academic affairs as well as observing the performance of key post holders.



(E)

Administrative Reform



Institutes of higher education are widespread across the Kurdistan Region. Due the highly centralized management system and the absence of an electronic communication system, the staff in these institutions found it necessary to call the Ministry in person for all official correspondence. They would travel to the Capital Erbil for issues ranging from meeting officials to obtaining information or application forms.

This costly management interaction has further complicated the existing bureaucracy, and causes endless disruption to peoples work and social life. A series of measures have been taken in the Ministry to make use of electronic means of communication and minimize the need for staff and students to call the Ministry in person. Furthermore, a series of additional changes in the Ministry's directorates have taken place to introduce new functions aimed at protecting the rights of staff and students, including Health and Safety.

(E1)

Changing the System of Reception at the Ministry

The reception desk of the Ministry of Higher Education was previously designed to assist the security team and offer direction to visitors. Now, visitors are welcomed by a group of well trained staff (experts), representing various directorates. They would offer information, advice and assistance to visitors.

A confidential feedback mechanism is now in place, to help improve the service provided. Criticisms, suggestions and complaints are regularly examined and acted upon by an authorised committee.



The Previous Reception



A new system for Reception

(E2)

The Ministry's Website

The Ministry's website was launched in January 2010. It is available in three languages; Kurdish, Arabic and English. Through the website, visitors can obtain information, announcements, news, instructions and application forms.

The website is still in its early phases, but its visitors have exceeded tens of thousands per month, particularly following the launch of the human capacity development and student applications. This has helped reduce the number of personal visits by students and staff from thousands in November 2009 to hundreds in May 2010.



(E3)

Electronic Communications

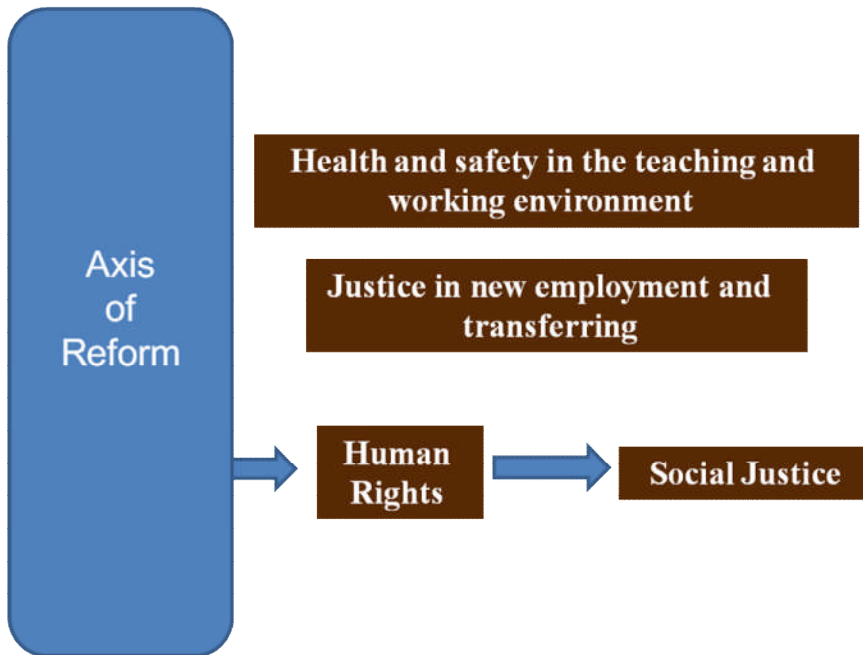
In November 2009, the Minister's Office received 38 e-mail messages from various contacts. In March 2010, the number reached 2,463 and in October, 2010 it reached over 12,000 emails. Elsewhere in the Ministry, electronic communication was not employed for official correspondence.

As of January, 2010, every member of the Ministry's staff was offered an official email address and several opportunities for training. Email use is now the main channel of correspondence and exchange of information between the Ministry and the various institutes, and has led to immeasurable cost-savings all round.



(F)

**Protecting Human Rights and Establishing
Social Justice**



(F1)

Reforming the Recruitment and Transfer System

As of January 2010, all appointments within the Ministry were carried out via a modern and transparent competition-based mechanism. Special guidelines were issued to encourage all the institutes of higher education to advertise the posts, publish the associated job descriptions, form appointment panels and conduct interviews as fairly as possible. All interviews would be minuted and records saved for possible audit and scrutiny.



(F2)

Establishing a Health and Safety Committee

Improving the working environment for students and staff

Ensuring health and safety in the institutions of higher education is a top priority for the Ministry. In December, 2009, a Directorate for Health and Safety was established in the Ministry for the first time, and a wide network of Health and Safety Committees formed in each University, College and Department. The ultimate objective is to make the working environment healthier and safer for staff and students. Numerous guidelines have been issued and implemented which have changed life and behaviour in offices and laboratories.





Environmental Safety is one of the rights of Teachers, Students and Staff



A Roadmap to Quality

**Reforming the system of Higher
Education and Scientific Research in
the Kurdistan Region of Iraq**

Appendices

(p1)

A Vision to the Future of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Quality is our top priority

8/11/2009

The role of higher education institutions (HEI) in the process of nation-building is indispensable. Raising standards in these institutions has long been a top priority for the people and Government of Kurdistan Region.

It is not a secret that the current system of higher education, which Kurdistan has inherited from Iraq, is out dated and largely dysfunctional. Its pyramid-style management structure concentrates decision-making authority at its summit. There is little transparency, democracy and accountability in the system, and the role of staff and students in management is negligible. Internal audit, performance monitoring and quality assurances are virtually non-existing. In short, the existing system is a major barrier for progress, incapable of healthy evolution or modernization.

Whereas student numbers are increasing exponentially, standards within HEIs remain below those of the rest of Iraq or neighbouring countries. The key question is whether this stagnant system can be reformed, and the future of generations of students rescued. The answer is yes. Can this be easily achieved? Certainly not, for the challenges are enormous. However, where there is a will, there is a way.

Fortunately, there is now a unique and historic opportunity to bring this vision closer to reality. The process of reform begins with a vision, followed by a well-designed strategy and a clear

road-map. With the right level of dedication, determination and concerted efforts, the dream is achievable. It will require close collaboration of all parties involved, including the Cabinet, Parliament, political leaders, professional organizations, media, universities, students and the people of the Region.

Priorities

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR) will embark on reviewing the entire system of HE, in a way that no legal or administrative barrier would be considered too sacred to change. On the contrary, they will all have to be removed to accommodate reform and serve the ultimate purpose, namely, improving quality and raising standards. Even the role of the Ministry and the Government in HE would have to be re-defined.

First: A new HE strategy

A key priority for the MoHESR would be to harmonize the Region's demand-and-supply of University graduates. Currently, there is a major gap between the two, in terms of quantity and quality. For example, the Region's economy is booming and demand for professionals in the tourism, oil and other industrial sectors are increasing exponentially, whereas our Universities are busy teaching conventional topics without keeping pace with the reality.

We shall study these issues in close collaboration with the Ministry of Planning and other ministries, and assess the Region's need of professionals in various disciplines. New colleges, training courses and institutions may need to open, while others reduced in size or even closed.

Second: the role of the Ministry

Prior to inauguration of the fifth cabinet, the Region's higher education institutions were managed via the Higher Education

Council, chaired by the Prime Minister.

Key members were the presidents of the state-funded HEIs. There was no central administrative body to support this structure.

Following Iraq's liberation, the fifth Cabinet (formed in 2006) established MoHESR to mirror that of the Federal Government in Baghdad. The Ministry was created in a record time, for which we congratulate the fifth Cabinet, its members and the Ministry staff. Today the Ministry has a vital role in running the Region's HE system. However, past experience has demonstrated that the Iraqi model of HE is bureaucratic and its ability to improve quality is inherently limited.

Therefore, we shall review the Ministry's roles, structure and interaction with HEIs. In this regard, the Ministry's priorities will include:

- 1- Reforming the management structure of Universities, and introduce a modern democratic system where the staff's ownership of their institution and students rights of quality education are protected.
- 2- Reviewing the financial system of universities and institutes, based on formulas as per student numbers, subject areas, quality teaching and research output.
- 3- Introducing teaching and research quality assessment systems to monitor performance and link key performance indicators to promotion and pay.
- 4- Implementing audit mechanisms to ensure the rule of law, control of corruption, safe environment, gender equality and protecting the rights of minorities such as non-Kurds, disabled individuals etc.
- 5- Reforming the funding schemes for student scholarship and research grants, to ensure compatibility with the Region's future

plans and aspirations.

Third: Independence of Universities

It is the ambition of the people, government and academic institutions of Kurdistan to improve standards in the HEIs, to have them counted among the best in Iraq, Middle East and the World, in the near, intermediate and long term future, respectively. However, the main barrier for realizing this dream is the fact that the Region's HEIs are not sufficiently independent.

Independence of HEIs is the main reason behind the success of Universities in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia, in stark contrast to their counterparts in other industrialized countries such as Italy and France.

To insure independence of HEIs, the Ministry must shed power and hand academic, administrative and financial control over to these institutions. Its own role should become largely restricted to strategic planning, funding, auditing and ensuring quality and equality. Mutual interactions between the Ministry and the HEIs should be regulated via a dynamic, modern and transparent mechanism.

Transfer of power, on the other hand, requires the Universities to become more democratic, transparent and accountable. They are not at the moment, therefore, are not in a position to accommodate self-governing powers. Transferring power from the Minister to Presidents of Universities at this moment is more like replacing a micro-managing dictator with several junior ones.

Therefore, one of the priorities is to radically reform the management structure of Universities, to render them answerable to staff and students, and help them gain independence. Power will then be transferred from the Ministry to the institutions in a programmed fashion.

The road map to independence will begin with the establishment of an elected body (senate) which will become central to all

University functions. Via the senate, university owners (academic staff) and customers (students) will take part in decision-making process, auditing and monitoring quality.

Fourth: Redrafting the HE Law

The higher education law in Kurdistan Region was based on the old fashion law of Iraq's HE. No doubt, there are certain components that are amenable to modernization, but on the whole it is a barrier for progress. In collaboration with Parliamentary colleagues (Higher Education Committee), we intend to review the law to bring it in line with the new vision. A direct communication channel between the Ministry, the Parliament and the Cabinet will be created for this purpose and to remove legal barriers.

In conclusion

Reform of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Kurdistan is a big challenge that requires a clear vision and a well thought out road map. Here, the top level strategies mentioned are to provide a frame work for the Ministry's future activities, and to generate lively debates in the academic community. The issues are complex and the challenge is enormous, however, these are not overwhelmingly so. We shall brain-storm every milestone, and with the determination and hard work of the academic leaders, we shall move from a milestone to another.



(P2)

Developing Academic Standards of Higher Education in Kurdistan Region: Teaching Quality Assurance

15/3/2010

Introduction

Kurdistan region universities and institutes are comprised of diverse groups of students, academics, scientists and staff who, taken together, are responsible for offering a high standard of education in every field of higher education.

Teaching quality assurance plays a major role in achieving the high standard of education that the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in the Kurdistan region endeavours to achieve through its universities and institutes. The specific activities that the Ministry's Teaching Quality Assurance Program focuses on are designed to reach several goals that include the following:

1. Instil confidence in the value of the certificates awarded to students by the universities and institutes of the Kurdistan Region.
2. Assure the public that the quality of education and lectures offered by our universities and institutes are up to par and on a level of those offered by international universities.
3. Support students during taking their courses of study;

4. Writing reports, reviewing, following up, observing, filing, decision-making, and sometimes examining the lecture contents and methodology.

The Teaching Quality Assurance (TQA) program involves highlighting both the weaknesses and strengths of all aspects of the work of the university: administration, teaching and learning. Based on input, training, and outcomes, a high standard of education can be achieved and maintained through this viable and proven TQA program.

The Quality Assurance Message

The message of our quality assurance program is to assure students of the academic standards offered within the universities and institutes of the Kurdistan Region. The purpose of the TQA program is to create an environment in which members of society believe in the education, learning, and research processes of the higher education system in the Kurdistan Region. Helping the Higher Education system in Kurdistan to attain a high standard and developing them in away so that they reach the standards of excellence for which international universities are renowned will bring renewed hope and confidence in the universities and institutes of the Kurdistan Region. Graduates will be proud to graduate with degrees from regional universities and institutes because they know that they have achieved the same quality as competitive universities elsewhere in the world.

Despite the efforts and the dedication of the administration, academics and students, the Ministry of Higher Education requires everyone to pursue their academic goals and fulfil their requirements without allowing personal interests to interfere.

The Plan and Mechanism for Teaching Quality Assurance

A committee for Teaching Quality Assurance will be set up in all universities and institutes to oversee the development and implementation of the plan to achieve the highest standards in each area of academic instruction, learning and administration. Sub-committees should then be set up within faculties and colleges to oversee the project in all its aspects.

Likewise within each department, a committee should be set up to implement quality assurance within the confines of that department. The members of that committee will be called 'course coordinators'. The number of these coordinators will depend on the department's capacity and needs. One of the members will serve as the chairman of the committee on the condition that he/she holds no other administrative post.

The chairmen of these departmental committees will become members of the college's Quality Assurance Committee. One member will serve as the chairman of this college committee and another will serve as the deputy chairman on condition that they hold no other administrative posts.

The chairmen of the colleges' committees will serve as members of the Quality Assurance Committee of the university or institute, and they will work under the university's or institute's vice-president for scientific affairs and higher education. One of the committee members will be appointed as the deputy.

These committees will be supported by the university's quality assurance administration staff. They will be responsible for implementing the guidelines (mentioned above) and collecting data which will be used for assembling the course books. The committees will gather and analyse the data, collect student feedback and follow-up on the QA process.

Quality Assurance for Laboratories and Practical Work

In laboratories and work on a daily basis, the purpose of the Quality Assurance program is to identify, reduce and correct the

deficiencies found in the various systems. Quality assurance in the laboratories involves paying attention to details and taking accurate measurements during experiments in order to achieve the same results each time. Quality assurance cannot be neglected after using the appliances, chemical substances, or when discovering inconsistent results. Quality assurance mechanisms here will increase the accuracy of the research and findings.

The laboratory staff will be responsible for the maintenance of all instruments and appliances in the laboratory. Their duty will be to ensure that quality assurance guidelines are in place and adhered to. This can be achieved in routine and non-routine analyses of experiments in which the results experiments are filed systematically. When abnormal results occur, the coordinator will be notified by a written report.

The Coordinator should:

- Be selected by the members of the scientific committee at the department;
- Have experience and knowledge in different fields, especially in the departments he or she works in;
- Has no less than a Master's degree;
- Be proficient in the use of the computer with knowledge of - Word, spreadsheets and databases;
- Be proficient in the English language;
- Have the desire to carry out this job.

The Duty of the Coordinator is:

- To act as a bridge for communication between students and the administration;

- To organise course books for the students;
- To create a channel for communication with students and constantly check e-mails and posts from students;
- To plan and organise work and contact the head of the pertinent department and the lecturer so lectures are not delayed or cancelled;
- To guarantee student feedback for the lectures and courses.

It is the committee chairman's task to present a detailed report to the college committee in September of each year. This report should describe how the previous year's courses were conducted. After review and necessary revisions, the reports will be presented to a higher committee along with a summary of negative and positive points.

The Responsibility of the Lecturer

It is the lecturer's job to carry out certain defined tasks to insure that the classroom experience is productive and that overall learning takes place in a stimulating environment conducive to cognitive and emotional growth. Following are some of the tasks that are assigned to the Lecturer:

- To write out the lecture notes for the assigned topics and to provide a copy of such notes to the course coordinator to be included in the student's course book;
- To prepare detailed, educational lectures on the pertinent topic that are enriched with up-to-date knowledge and illustrations;
- To present a summary of the lecture in a power-point presentation format. Handouts of the presentation should be given to students at a suitable time (before or after the lecture);

- To insert samples of questions and answers into the students' course books and analyse them during the course of the semester or year. These samples should include two essays and five different multiple choice questions. Guidelines or expectations should be provided to students so they can plan their answers and think productively. Students are expected to think ahead and consider how the lecturer will assess their answers and which points he/she will be looking for. The questions level should be in three different tiers (higher, intermediate, lower);
- For each course three batches of questions should be included so that at the end of the course the exam committee can choose one of the batches;
- To advise students on the skill of exam preparation and answering of questions. For example, "Read the question twice; think about what you wish to say; plan the answer on a separate sheet of paper; the answer should have an introduction, a body of substance, and a conclusion;
- Organise special courses in the summer like Word, spread sheet, power-point and data show.

External Assessor

At the end of each year the colleges will select several courses for external assessment. The external assessor is brought in from outside the university or institute to assess the work of the lecturer including the grading, and the students' performance.

Duties of the External Assessor

The external assessor should carry out the following duties:

- Be an assistant Professor or higher and, if possible, should be from an international university. If the university is unable to secure someone of this rank, then a person of a lower rank may be appointed;

- Be an active academic and have experience in his/ her field or in fields closely related to theirs;
- Not have participated in lecturing or planning or laying out the course topics.

The Role of the External Assessor

The external assessor has specific tasks to perform in the Quality Assurance program which helps to ensure that the expected quality of courses remains at a high level. Tasks assigned to the external assessor include the following:

- To assess the entire layout of the course including the course topics;
- To assess the exams. The external assessor should have access to student exam papers after they have been marked. They should see three examples each of papers considered to be of higher, intermediate and lower mark in order to decide whether the papers were marked accordingly;
- To assess student feedback;



- To offer recommendations to the teachers responsible for the teaching and grading and to question them. Teachers are expected to answer these questions and point out the reasons for their answers.

The Rights of the Student

Students have certain rights in the educational process that must be protected for maximal learning to take place. Such rights include the following:

- The right to get the course books prior to the start of the course;
- The right to provide feedback at the end of the course. This feedback will be in a format that accords with the objective standards of each subject. Feedback should be submitted during the lecture period;
- The right to provide feedback on the examination process according to objective standards. This feedback will be used to change and improve the way exams are conducted. It will be used as a measurement device to assess the style and management of the courses, the departments and the entire faculty;
- The right to receive a photocopy of his/her examination paper, if requested.

The Duties of the Student

The university or institution has certain rights and responsibilities; but it also has certain expectations of students and vice versa. At the beginning of each academic year, when the student is admitted to the university or institute, a number of terms and conditions are included in certain forms and given to the student which he or she is expected to sign. These agreements include the following conditions:

1. The student should behave according to university guidelines;
2. The student will be obligated to behave according to the guidelines and instructions he or she has signed when accepted by the university.

Student assessment of academics, courses and lectures is important and is expected to be carried out by the student. However, student attendance is also important, not only for learning and training, but also for the success of the learning experience provided by the universities and colleges. The staff and administrators who manage faculty are expected to take student attendance seriously, register student attendance regularly, and follow-up where needed.

It is a patriotic and academic duty that students behave within the realms of responsibility and raise the standard of knowledge and certificates. Unauthorized absences are those that exceed 10 per cent or 15 per cent of authorised absences. The consequences for exceeding these limits are as follows:

- The student will no longer have the right to assess the lecturer or the manner in which the course was managed;
- The student will no longer have the right to take the preliminary exams for the course and will automatically be listed for a retake.

A student will automatically lose the right to sit for end-of-year exams and will fail the course if their total percentage of absences from lectures exceeds 15 percent for authorised absences and 10 percent for unauthorised absences for the year.

In the case of retakes, change of courses, lessening of workload or expulsion from the university or institution, the following guidelines will pertain:

- Each student has the right to change his or her course topics according to the previous standards. If a student fails in fewer

than half of the subjects throughout the year (or half of the subjects of the entire course of study) then he or she will be allowed to retake the papers. Those who fail in more than half of the subjects will automatically be classified as having failed the entire year and they will not be able to retake the papers.

Expulsion for 2010-2011 will remain as it was previously. If a student fails for two consecutive years then his or her name will be erased from all state universities and institutes and he or she will lose the right to study at these institutions. This student will, however, be free to study at private universities and institutions. During the 2010-2011 academic year all guidelines will be reviewed.

The Quality Assurance Manager

The president of the university or institute will appoint the Quality Assurance manager for the university or institute. The manager should have no less than a PhD and he/she will be responsible for the entire project of teaching quality assurance. The manager should speak English and have a good working knowledge of computers, especially Word, spreadsheets and databases.

Managers' Responsibilities

Managers' responsibilities include the following:

- Preserving and protecting student files at the university or institute;
- Manage, review and research as necessary to discover the achievements of the departments and faculties;
- Liaise with the external assessor for mutual purposes;
Write a university/institution value statement for students to sign before starting the new academic year;
- Serve on the university's Quality Assurance Committee



(P3)

Continuous Academic Development

*To update the knowledge of the academics
To insure the high academic level of the universities*

Seeking knowledge from the cradle to the grave has always been one of the most sacred duties for every professional. The success of individuals and the progress of the country's system lies in raising the standard of knowledge and continuously developing the technical level of work.

It is everyone's legitimate right to get a product or service of high quality for the time, money and effort spent. One can only obtain such a product or service from organisations and professionals who focus on the quality and care about it in their programmes. It is not just students who want to update and seek knowledge, but professionals are also striving in this path.

Although it is a student's right to demand high educational standards from teaching staff at institutes of higher education, these teachers should also consider it their duty, right and personal desire to attain these high standards. Lecturers at universities and colleges in the Kurdistan Region are in desperate need to join the rank of modern knowledge and technology than ever before.

On the one hand Iraq's thirty-year isolation from the outside world resulted in the seclusion of university academics from modern knowledge and science. On the other hand the sudden growth of educational institutions and rise in student numbers increased the burden on teachers. During this time the institutions lacked a mechanism for economic and administrative guidance to provide opportunities for continued education. Even when opportunities were available, for example when scholars and specialists visited

universities and faculties for a seminar, teaching staffs were not expected to attend.

Luckily nowadays the gates of modern knowledge are beginning to open for the institutions in the Kurdistan Region. Golden opportunities are available for the universities in the big cities to benefit from the visits of scholars and academics who come from abroad. However, apart from a small number of staff members, no one else has benefitted from the visits of academic guests.

Academics in the universities and the colleges of the smaller cities feel that they are isolated from knowledge. They have a strong desire to connect and participate academically and to continually update their scientific standards. Not only is the distance from their main centres a problem but their economic and administrative rights have not been preserved. As a result, they have little rights in the competitions within higher education, Scholarship, participation in conferences and scientific activities. They hope that a legislation can be passed so that they obtain these rights to achieve the sacred aims they have.

Thus from here the responsibilities of the institutions of higher education begin to establish a suitable mechanism to encourage and support the academics and staff at these institutes in the continuous academic development project. It is the duty of the academics to put in the time and effort in order to deserve the efforts and costs carried by the higher education institutions to preserve their rights.

In the previous month, the topic of establishing a suitable mechanism for the Continuous Academic Development was presented to the Higher Education Committee. Later it was presented to the Council of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in its last meeting in May, where the project was agreed upon.

Below are the details of the project which can be enriched after it has been tried out and tested.

Continuous Academic Development

In order to establish and implement the Continuous Academic Development project in the universities and colleges, the Scientific Committees of these institutes will lay down a robust programme this September for the academic year 2010-2011. The faculties will implement this programme and it will be monitored and observed by the Scientific Committee.

Each university faculty and teaching staff should lay down a programme periodically for the academic seminars. And at the start of the first term, they must publish a list of seminars with the titles at the university and the faculties and on their websites. In order to encourage exchange visits, seminar presentations and networking among academics of different institutes in the Kurdistan Region, the schedule of the seminars must be published among the corresponding faculties.

The hours in academic development

Under this programme each and every academic, regardless of his degree, is required to allocate at least 50 hours to seek knowledge and participate in various academic activities. These 50 hours will be used as a measurement; each hour will be counted as a unit. Some activities may require hours of preparation and execution, however, they will be calculated as a single unit or one hour.

Collecting 50 hours for academic development throughout the year is not a difficult task. When comparing the larger universities and colleges in the big cities with those that fall outside these cities, the opportunities to attend seminars are greater for the former than the latter. So academics from the big cities should expect to collect more than 100 hours of activities for academic knowledge. However, it may be difficult for academics in the smaller cities to collect the 50 hours without help from the university and college administration. Therefore the deans and principals of these universities along with the different bodies and faculties will be re-

quired to create opportunities for academics who should strive to make up these hours by travelling and visiting various universities to seek knowledge.

Participation through attendance

Each seminar, conference and academic workshop is of great value in education. Participation through attending academic development seminars is an easy task. All academics must be present at the education seminars of their colleges. Each attendance is calculated as one hour of academic development.

The names of the attendees in the seminar will be recorded in a list which will be handed to the Scientific Committee of the college. This list will be given to the Scientific Committee of the university and used as proof of attendance.

A seminar must be no shorter than 45 minutes in order for it to be calculated as one hour of academic development. As for the conferences and workshops, the Education Committee should agree on a standard and hours calculated. However, each full day of conference should not be credited as more than three hours.

Active participation

The best and the most effective method of updating education are via active participation. This can only be achieved through research, analysis and presenting research results at seminars organised by colleges and faculties. Seminars of this type will be calculated as two hours for the researcher. Academics and scholars should achieve 20 hours of academic development each year through active participation.

Seminar presentation

All academics must present the following seminars periodically:

- A) Present a seminar every six months to his colleagues at his department and faculty on the subject of his research or the core of his specialty.
- B) Select a scientific article in his area of specialisation from an international newspaper at least once every three months and prepare a Powerpoint presentation for his colleagues at his department in a simplified and logical manner. The seminar must be open to all and be announced at the university. Attendance of academics of the department will be compulsory and optional for those in other departments.
- C) A presentation of a scientific article should be carried out for the teaching staff of the faculty at least once every six months in the same method mentioned above in (B) but on a different topic. The seminar must be open to all and announced at the university, attendance of the academics of the faculty is expected.
- D) Without a doubt the important role of academics lies in participating in think-tanks, developing strategic plans and providing scientific and valuable advice to various institutions. These activities can be calculated as one hour for each participant if presented with proof.

Educational publications

- A- Writing and publishing educational articles in educational journals updates knowledge. Publications are considered highly in the Continuous Academic Development project. For example, publishing an opinion piece, or a literature review or a speech in a specialist journal can be considered as one hour. Publishing an educational book of the author's field of speciality, after it is submitted to the Education Committee for evaluation should get the credit of five to fifteen hours. It cannot exceed 15 hours since it is prohibited to spend all hours on one subject and activity.
- B- The evaluation of projects, publications and the scientific

research dissertation are considered as good opportunities for seeking knowledge. Those who evaluate the scientific projects and publications of another researcher (before publication) gets one hour. Two hours will be credited for the evaluation of Master's thesis and four hours for Ph.D thesis.

The budget of academic development project

All departments must allocate a budget for inviting scholars and researchers whether from the region's universities, expatriate Kurds or academic visitors. These visitors should be active in their field of research and should be invited to present the results of their research or their latest creations in their specialist areas. A certain amount of money will be allocated for travel costs within the Kurdistan Region and for prizes; however, nothing will be allocated for travel costs outside the region.

Quality and compliance assurance

In order to ensure the implementation of the project, the quality of seminars and other activities, the Higher Scientific Committee (HSC) must follow the process of academic development in cooperation with the Quality Assurance Committee at the universities and faculties. They must also develop an appropriate mechanism for the workflow. The following are some points of clarification, which will become integral to the academic development project and monitored by the Scientific Committee.

- A- The Scientific Committee of each college will collect the scholar's and academic's proof of attendance at every activity. This information will be submitted to the HSC of the university in order to grant each academic a certificate of development. The HSC of the university will be responsible for ensuring attendance and quality assurance. It must also collect proof of achievement of the development process in the faculties and colleges. At the same time the director general of control and quality assurance at the Min-

istry will be responsible for following up the project.

- B- To ensure quality assurance, assessment forms should be distributed among attendees at seminars. Each form should include questions regarding the scientific standard, style of presentation and the academic's effort in preparing the seminar. The HSC of the university will collect these forms and analyse the data in a manner similar to the quality assurance project carried out for students. This feedback will be treated anonymously and given back to the academic.

Compliance and Results

Commitment to the continuous academic development project will be an integral part of a teacher's life and their academic activities and achievements will be taken into consideration. For example, an academic who has completed 50 hours of development activities can request a promotion of their grade or apply for an administrative position or participate in the committees or become part of a delegation outside the country to represent the university. But those who have fewer than 50 hours will not have the right to apply for a promotion or get a higher position or participate in other activities for two years.

Conclusion

Every teacher is an ambassador for his university and he reflects the standards of his university. Every university should want its representatives, ambassadors and academic and administrative staff to attract admirable attention in their performances and achieve the trust and respect of those abroad. Therefore, the teaching staff should be a vivid example of continuous academic development and it is the responsibility of the university's management and staff to create a robust programme and proper environment for the development.

(P4)

A New PhD Pathway in Kurdistan

Promoting Research and Raising Standards

A major review of the system of obtaining PhDs in Kurdistan and the rest of Iraq has long been over due. The current system is out of date and suffers from numerous obstacles, which have aided the decline in the quality of scientific research. On December 7th of last year, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) adopted a new Higher Education strategy and undertook to review the entire system. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research thereafter adopted a road map to improve the quality and raise standards in both higher education and scientific research. A key objective of the new system is to link all research-active academics in Kurdistan with their counterparts in identified centres of excellence around the globe.

Summary of the New System

The following is a summary of changes made to the system of pursuing and awarding the PhD degree in the Kurdistan Region. This New System is implemented with immediate effect.

1. The period of study for the PhD will be four years, extendable for six months with the approval of the college council. Full salary and allowances will be paid throughout the duration of the study. Students may complete their courses of study in less than four years, provided that the actual period of scientific research is not less than two-and-a-half years.
2. The first six months of the first year is an introductory period which will familiarise the student with the research topic, the supervisor's research and develop their language and computer skills. The second six-month period will be allocated to travel preparation to the supervisor's country and finishing the

language training.

3. The second year will be spent abroad in a centre of excellence under the supervision of a collaborating scientist. This period is extendable by mutual agreement.
4. The third and fourth academic years will be dedicated to scientific research in the home institution, writing up the thesis and preparing for the final exam. The home university will grant the PhD degree after all requirements are completed.

The Current PhD System and its problems

Currently, the admission plan to doctoral programs is not linked to the nation's market needs or a long term national strategy. Programs depend on the availability of professors in particular specializations to supervise students, and their topics are decided on the same basis.

A key requirement for acceptance in the PhD program is to have successfully completed a Master's programme. Yet, new PhD students undergo another year of extensive didactic teaching, followed by comprehensive examinations, which are very similar to those carried out during the Master's courses. Exhausted students are then given two short years to find supervisors and adopt scientific projects. Students invariably fail to complete their research during this period and have minimal facilities at their disposal to learn about or keep up with the latest advances in their fields. There are problem of access to resources, books, scientific research equipment, the unavailability of suitable laboratories, and the lack of appropriate supervisors and external collaborators. There other endemic problems, such as the deadly routine, and low standards of examinations.

Fortunately, the Kurdistan Region is now in a position to tackle the bases of these problems, hence the newly adopted system.

The New PhD Pathway

The admission of students to the PhD program will take place in accordance with the strategic plan of the Kurdistan Region. Each scholastic seat will have a special dossier to clarify the title of the proposed research, the requirements to execute the plan, scientific references and the required financing during all stages of research. Contingencies involving extensions of time required at various stages will also be included, as well as funding needs for the external advisor to visit the home university to monitor progress.

Preparing a Research Proposal

The first step in preparing the research project dossier is to nominate a supervisor among the department's senior academics who has experience and knowledge of the subject area. This process will be carried out in collaboration with an external supervisor from an approved international centre of excellence. This dossier will contain a summary of the research project, the academic biography of the supervisors, the conditions of admission to the program and all other research requirements. The dossier will first be presented to the respective department council before submission to the university's scientific committee where the final decision is made.

The research proposal will consist of clearly stated aims, objectives, plan of investigation and the expected outcome. Potential risks, obstacles and their possible solutions will be outlined. The research programme will focus on resolving practical and scientific problems of the Region or other scientific priorities.

The general and specific conditions and application requirements will be clearly outlined including:

- The scientific ability of the student;
- The student's grades at the Bachelor's and Master's levels of education;

- Work experience;
- English language or the language proficiency required during the research stage;
- The availability of internal and external supervisors;
- The project requirements in terms of laboratories in the host and collaborating departments;
- Securing the required budget to complete the research so as to cover salaries, allowances and fees necessary to carry out the scientific research abroad for one year; fees for language courses, travel for the student and supervisors and other costs including materials, laboratory fees, books, computers as well as the fees and expenses inside the Region;
- The researcher should dedicate himself to the Ph.D. study on a full time basis.

The supervisors of doctoral students will nominate external supervisors from international research centres or known universities abroad who are recognized by the Ministry (as per the list provided by the Ministry). There will be mutual visits between the external and internal supervisors as needed.

Internal supervisors are encouraged to take a 6-12 month sabbatical leave to visit and work in the external supervisors' departments/laboratories on the desired topics. This visit will also serve to update the skills and knowledge of the supervisor, extend his/her academic network and transfer foreign experience which will improve the quality of the scientific research, the results of which will be published in visible international journals which can be used by the supervisors for promotional purposes.

The university's scientific committee should seek advice from external referees before endorsing the project. The department undertakes to advertise the available PhD place inside and outside the university and appoint the most talented student in a process involving open competition. Selected candidates will sign a contract to complete their course of study and work five years after graduation in one of the Region's institutions. The sponsoring institution will be responsible for all financial costs.

Upon completion of the research project the internal and external expert examiners will examine the thesis and submit their reports pre and post the live interview with the PhD candidate.

Applicants

All those who apply under the New System shall have solid academic backgrounds. English language skills may not be less than average according to examinations such as TOEFL, IELTS and PASSWORD. Other examinations, such as the Institutional ITP TOEFL, are not acceptable.

