Iraqi Higher Education and Ways Forward in Difficult Times

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Delegation from Iraq

Dr. Zuhair Humadi, General Director
Higher Committee for Education Development (HCED)

Dr. Salah Hadi Al Fatlawi, Director General of Scholarships & Cultural Relations, Government of Iraq - Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research (Baghdad)

Dr. Jwan Sharif, Director General of Scholarships and Cultural Affairs Kurdistan Regional Government - Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research (Erbil)

Mr. David Skaggs, Board Member
American University of Iraq Sulaimani (AUIS)
Meet the Delegation from Iraq
Thursday June 2

8:00 – 9:00 am
Open Meeting: The Future of Iraqi Scholarship Programs: A Conversation with Program Directors from Baghdad & Erbil
KCISSS Networking Center, Room 207, Convention Center

11:00 am – 1:30 pm
Networking Opportunity and Individual Meetings with Delegation from Iraq & Washington Representatives
IEM KC Networking Center, Room 203, Convention Center
Goals Today

• Update on higher education systems in Iraq
• Update on scholarship programs
• Recruitment and partnership opportunities
• Best practices to support Iraqi students on your campus
Iraq Update

• Security Situation
  – ISIS presence in Iraq
  – Effect on higher education in Iraq
    • 5 universities still in ISIL controlled areas
    • Faculty and students displaced; instruction stopped
    • Anbar, Mosul, and Ninewa universities at Kirkuk University campus
    • Rebuilding needed at liberated campuses (Tikrit, Anbar)

• Humanitarian Crisis – 3.3 million displaced

• Economic Effect

• Financial Transfer Problems

• Visa Services (Baghdad and Erbil)
Overview of Iraqi Scholarships

• Goal: Rebuilding higher education systems and re-establishing Iraq in the global academic and scientific community
• 2 ministries of higher education (Baghdad and Erbil)
• 3 Competitive Scholarship Programs for master’s and doctorate degrees, with emphasis on STEM fields; funding for ESL; other opportunities for collaboration
• Most students request Conditional Admission
• 2015 Open Doors Report – 1,727 Iraqis
• Strategic Framework Agreement
Scholarship Programs

• **National Programs** (funded by Government of Iraq; open to students in all provinces)
  – GOI Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research (MoHESR)
  – Higher Committee for Education Development (HCED) through Prime Minister’s Office

• **Regional Program** (funded by Kurdistan Regional Government; open to all students in Iraqi Kurdistan Region)
  – Human Capacity Development Program (HCDP)
Government of Iraq
Ministry of Higher Education

Dr. Tahani Alsandook BDS,Ph.D
Cultural Attaché
Iraqi Cultural Office
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Washington DC
Mission

- Build model of success.
- Think about degree for young people as a tool to make positive changes.
- Address problem in their society.
- Develop peer to peer ability to collaborate and learn from each other.
# Iraqi Higher Education Overview

#### MoHESR Universities
- **Number of Institutions:**
  - Public Universities (34)
  - Technical Institutes (44)
  - Private Universities (50)
- **Other MoHESR Services**
  - Scientific Consulting Offices (163)
  - Scientific Associations (66)
  - Teaching Hospitals (21)
  - Research Centers (48)
  - Research Units (55)

#### Faculty Demographics
- **Number of Faculty (40,141)**
- **Degree Holders:**
  - PhDs (42%)
  - MSc (58%)
- **Gender:**
  - Male (65%)
  - Female (35%)
## Overview - Students

### At Universities in Iraq

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students (489,399)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate (95%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate (5%)</td>
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**Gender:**
- Male (55%)
- Female (45%) 

### Abroad

<table>
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<th>Students abroad (~25,000)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Undergraduate (22%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate (78%)</td>
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**Students in the USA (9%)**
- PhD – 325
- Masters - 87

**Students in all other countries (91%)**
Challenges Facing MoHESR

- Impact of Da’esh on higher education:
  - Universities (7);
  - Students (113,000)
  - Faculty (10,000)
  - Staff (9,000)
- In spite of this, MoHESR quickly relocated students, faculty, and staff and reseated them at other universities.
- MoHESR systems were outstanding. Financial support to students around the world was sustained.
- MoHESR programs focused on reaching international standards in areas like university staff training, new teaching methods, developing new curriculum, and rebuilding libraries continued.
MoHESR Action Plans Underway

- Improve curriculum and teaching methods.
- Faculty training.
- Scholarship programs.
- Implementing electronic library.
- Rebuilding universities liberated from Da’esh.
Update on Degree Programs

• **Iraqi Scholarships Scheme/Future Capacity Building Program**: Benefits were reduced in March 2015 that affect: Monthly Stipends; Extension (Year 5); ESL approved time now 6-9 months.

• **Study Leave**: Employees of MoHESR (not students) and other government ministries. Same benefits as Scholarship Program, but scholarship holder pays U.S. university directly and submits payment for reimbursement. Actively sending students abroad.

• **Foundation of Political Prisoners/Foundation of Martyrs Scholarship**: Beneficiaries receive funding to study abroad. Students apply themselves for admission to U.S. university. They are considered Sponsored Students by their institution. Most require ESL and Conditional Admission to academic program. POC: Dr. Fatima at ICO.
Update on Short-term Programs

Currently restricted to a small number of participants doing research in rare fields of study or areas of national priority.

Short-term Student Research Scholarships Program:
Graduate students at Iraqi Universities to do research abroad that cannot be done in Iraq. PhD students: 6-12 months; Masters students: 3-6 months. Iraqi academic advisor funded for 1-month visit. Limited number of participants in 2016. Currently self-funded only.

Post-Doctoral Research program for the Iraqi Faculty and Sabbatical leave:
Up to 12 months of funding for university faculty to do research in high priority fields of study; participants required to publish research project for academic review in Iraq. Currently self-funded only.

Faculty Training Program:
One month of funding for technical training abroad in specific fields of study.
Common Problems & Challenges

• Transfer of funds and payment delays
• Changes in Benefits, including extension period
• Restricted budget
• Admission letter
• Health insurance coverage is very limited, dependents were not included
• Bench fees
• Periodic information about the student’s academic progress.
• GRE and ESL program and its cost
Iraqi Cultural Office (ICO) and Authentication of Documents


- The Iraqi Cultural Office can authenticate documents awarded to:
  - Iraqi scholarship students including those who studied in the United States under Iraqi-Sponsored Scholarship programs and fellowships;
  - Iraqis who graduated from U.S. educational institutions, including private students; and
  - Non-Iraqis who graduated from U.S. educational institutions and require authentication in order to work in Iraq.

- ICO can also assist in verifying documents with Iraqi universities and issued a letter of accredited university to MoHESR and provide context about the documents.

http://iraqiculture-usa.com/degree_authentication
Partnerships

• U.S. universities have signed several MoUs with Iraqi Universities. The main objective of the U.S. university is to admit a larger number of graduate students in the long term. From Iraqi side, the objective is to facilitate admission and to guarantee a lower price for tuition.

• Iraqi universities have the authority to negotiate and sign agreements with foreign universities.

• Some U.S. universities are negotiating with the Ministry to have a partnership that includes multiple Iraqi universities.
Conclusion of Our Mission
Education as a Vehicle for Peace

- Education is infused in what we do. Education and learning can play an important role in preparing the next generation to bring about and contribute to peace.

- Technology and sciences work to address peace.

- Economic disparity between wealthy and poor contributes to conflict and violence.

- Climate changes, land changing damage to health, and medical issues have an impact on ability to learn.

- Challenge to transform community service; requires skills, training, capacity building.

- Create degrees (i.e. Peace and Conflict Resolution) and develop courses that include peace studies (i.e. education, public policy, public health, etc.)
The Higher Committee for Education Development (HCED)

- Funded by the Government of Iraq through the Office of the Prime Minister
- Started 2009; more than 3000 admitted abroad
- STEM + public admin, business, law, economics, education, English, health admin, nursing & TESOL
- 1 year ESL plus academic program for masters or PhD
- Places students; Conditional Admission; J visas
- Follows GOI MoHESR regulations
Program Updates

• Funds Transfer Delay
  – Release of 2 monthly stipends to family members in Iraq
• Monthly Stipends – continue at reduced levels
• Health Insurance – continue for student, spouse, and 2 children
• Tuition and Fees – fully funded
• Extensions:
  – PhD – Years 1-4 funded; Year 5 Unfunded; HCED approval required
  – Masters – Years 1-2 funded; no extensions
By the Numbers

- Admitted – US universities: 1,252
- Admitted to UK universities: 989
- Admitted to Australia: 273
- Graduated: 557
- 2016/17 Scholarships Planned: 300
Higher Education in Kurdistan Region

Remziya Suleyman
Director of Congressional and Academic Affairs
Kurdistan Regional Government
Representation in the US
Higher Education in Kurdistan

- Organized through Ministry of Higher Education
- Serves 130,000 students from all 4 provinces: Dohuk, Erbil, Sulaimanyia, and Halabja.
- Fifteen (15) Public universities
  - Erbil - 6
  - Sulaimanyia - 5
  - Dohuk - 3
  - Halabja - 1
- Twenty-four (24) private universities, including three American-style, not-for-profit universities teaching in English:
  - American University of Iraq Sulaimani (AUIS)
  - American University of Kurdistan (AUK)
  - Catholic University of Erbil (CUE)
Ministry of Higher Education

• KRG provides public post-secondary at **no cost** to students.

• **Curriculums:** technical certificates, bachelor's, master's, doctorate programs.

• **Higher-Ed Directorates (7):** Finance & Admin; Research, Scholarship & Cultural Relations; Projects & Engineering; Studies, Planning & Follow-up; Inspection & Quality Assurance.

“Quality is Our Top Priority”

**Internationalization values**

1. Human Capacity Development Program (HCDP)
2. Study Leave
3. Split-Site PhD
4. Joint Research
5. Post Doctorate
6. Sabbatical Leave
7. Student Exchange
Human Capacity Development Program

- Established in 2010.
- Students pursue master's and/or doctoral degrees.
- The selection process is competitive. Award based on the quality of application and transcript grades:
  - IELTS score > 5.0 (roughly 59-60 on the TOEFL iBT)
  - Most grad students apply on conditional admission and take GRE while in ESL.
- The program is administered by the Ministry of Higher Education; the Ministry of Planning also awards scholarships.
- Students can study at accredited universities in 28 countries.
- Currently more than 3,400 students from IKR study abroad.
- 1,855 HCDP students have graduated and returned to IKR.
Humanitarian and Economic Crises

- Hosting **1.8 million refugees and IDPs**.
  - Estimated 300,000 Syrian refugees
  - 98% of Syrian refugees in Iraq are in Kurdistan.
- Economic woes compounded by **60-percent drop in oil prices**.
- Dohuk hosting more than **100,000 refugees/IDPs**
- **1,700 students** from Mosul (under ISIL control) study at Dohuk – double shifts.
HCDP Students in the US

- HCDP awardees still in Kurdistan have seen scholarships put on hold.
- KRG is committed to supporting students abroad.
- Around 220 students are enrolled in US universities.
  - 24 have graduated.
- Despite austerity measures, KRG is still operating at a monthly deficit.
  - Significant delays in stipend payments
- Some graduates have completed degrees, but are unable to collect their diplomas because their universities are still owed tuition funds.
Authentication of degrees

- The Kurdistan Regional Government authenticates degrees for residents of Kurdistan, who studied abroad.

- Graduates have two options for degree authenticated:
  1. Authentication by KRG
  2. Authentication by the Government of Iraq (for students anticipating working outside of the IKR)

- Both processes can be performed by the student after graduation, but prior to their departure from the U.S.

- Steps are outlined online on the us.gov.krd website.
Retention Strategies to Meet Current Challenges

- Be familiar with updated policies of each program
- Communicate regularly with affected faculty and departments
- Communicate regularly with students
- Connect students to community support
- Raise awareness of the issues with internal and external stakeholders

- Fill the Funding Gap
  - Employment Authorization Document (EAD) due to financial distress
  - Work Options on-campus & off-campus for student & spouse
  - On-campus resources
  - Short-term loans
  - Grants & Scholarships
  - Community resources
  - Personal Resources from Iraq

- Send family back to Iraq
- Leave of Absence for students in financial crisis
Recruiting Iraqi Students

- EducationUSA Advising Centers in Baghdad, Basrah, and Erbil
- Small market for self-funded students; offer partial scholarships
- HCED – pending for 2016/2017
- Iraqi Scholarships Scheme/Future Capacity Building Program (GOI MoHESR) – not active
- Study Leave (GOI) – Contact ICO

- Foundation of Political Prisoners/Foundation of Martyrs Scholarship – Contact ICO, Dr. Fatima
- HCDP – not active
- Engage with Lorna, ICO, and KRG Office in DC
- Complete NEW Online Survey: www.surveymonkey.com/EducationUSAIraq
- Facebook: Friends of Iraqi Higher Education
U.S. Government Support for Iraqi Higher Education

• ~500 Iraqis participate in USG exchange programs each year
• IREX implements numerous HE activities:
  – Career centers at public universities in Iraq
  – Industry Advisory Boards
  – Labor Market Surveys
  – Small Grants Program
  – Register with IREX: Lori Mason at LMason@irex.org and Lorna; Facebook Page
• English language teacher training & Access Programs
• IIE Scholar Rescue Fund for Iraq
• Sponsorship of Iraqi Delegation to attend NAFSA 2016
Building Partnerships

University of Missouri – Columbia (Professional Masters Degree)

Ball State U and Tikrit University

Iraq University Partnerships through IREX (Lmason@irex.org) and Lorna

Requests for Proposals from USG on Grants.gov, Embassy Baghdad website, and Friends of Iraqi Higher Education FB page

Register with IIE Scholar Rescue

Leverage current students & graduates

Virtual Engagement

MoUs for student recruitment

Interns/student volunteers ($60K raised on Kickstarter to rebuild Library at College of Fine Arts, U of Baghdad)

State Department Speakers Bureau: Send CV to: IIP-Expertmanagement@state.gov
Contact Us

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