QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN IRAQ & KURDISTAN REGION
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“Empowering Higher Education Institutions Through Information Sharing and Improved Governance”

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This presentation reports on two different strategies that have been implemented in Iraq to improve Quality Assurance in the Higher Education sector in Iraq.
1-One strategy has been developed by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Baghdad including establishing a quality development process that focused on training senior academic staff and quality reviewers who represented all the universities.
2-The Second Strategy was implemented in the Kurdistan Regional Government, where a team of reviewers from Exeter University in (United Kingdom) conducted an initial evaluation of quality practice in Kurdistan Region Universities, following this review, selected staff members, representing the different Ministries specialization including Higher Education, were then sent to the United Kingdom to be trained as quality reviewers and they will ultimately lead the program.
The Higher Education system in Iraq, including Kurdistan Universities, is hailed as the best of its kind in the Middle East and Gulf Region. Most of the Gulf Countries Universities and also some other arab professors have studied and attained their degrees in Iraq. However, higher education in Iraq and also Kurdistan Region has suffered from a prolonged period of relative isolation due to two sets of sanctions: one by the United Nations and the other by the regime of Saddam Hussein on Kurdistan Region.
The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research is responsible for more than 23 public Universities with 2 Universities and 37 Colleges all are private while the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Kurdistan Region is responsible for 13 public University including three polytechnics and also 14 private Universities.
EARLY WAYS

One of the early ways, the University of Babylon in 2007 has evaluated the progress of the 150 implementation has been to carry out a study to determine the effectiveness of training sessions in ISO program application. The academic staff of the University attended training course and compared with other who had not attended the course there were significant positive results in many areas: staff motivation; knowledge of quality assurance and many other interesting.
External factors affect the success of using the quality management system to improve student learning, the rate of development in education and the needs set by the national development plan.
The higher education system in Iraqi Kurdistan is composed of 13 public Universities including 3 polytechnic Universities and 14 private Universities. Most of the public Universities have a full range of subjects on offer, except Hawler Medical University, it was established in 2006 to include the four medical colleges of Salahaddin University (the oldest in the region established in 1968), these colleges are Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy and Nursing (recently the College of Medical Sciences has also established. The total number of students are more than 100000 students with about more the 6000 academic staff and more than 10000 administrators and support staff.
Kurdistan Higher Education is overseen by its own Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, which was established in 2006.

Attempts have been made to develop a quality management, evaluation and assurance system for the region, by senior staff, academic and external visitors from UK and Sweden which carried out an initial needs assessment included a review of quality documents and interviews with staff and students. A report on this study in 2006 was produced and included a number of observations:
1- There was a substantial demand for high-quality English-language teaching and assessment in Kurdistan.
2- Research laboratories were generally in a very poor state.
3- Library and information technology services were seen to require significant investment and hardware upgrades to remain competitive.
4- Pedagogic issues like curricula, teaching methods. Staff training and development were also seen to need modification.
5- The University Presidents must be empowered to take their institutions forward.
The strategy for higher education consists of short-term (two years), medium-term (three years), and long-term (10 years) plans.
THE PLANS BUILD ON THE EXETER REPORT AND WILL FOCUS ON:

1- Developing on administrative structure and institutional planning strategy which includes:
   a- Quality Assurance.
   b- Reform higher education programs.
   c- Review of the higher education’s structures and developing
2- Updating teaching support such as:

a- Laboratory equipment’s.

b- Advancing teaching and learning methods and organizing extra curricula activities of students.
3- Creating an information database to link educational institutions to all related areas:
   a- Establishing complementary research centers.
   b- Establishing a modern admission system.
   c- Establishing welfare services.
   d- Reviewing academic and administrative employment and recruitment procedures.
   e- Improving the general working environment for staff including remuneration and assessment of performance.
The major stimulus for developing quality assurance in Iraqi Kurdish was a series of international conference on higher education:

1- Two conferences were organized by the University of Westminster in London in 2004 and 2005.
2- In October 2006, The Ministry of Higher Education in Kurdistan Region organized another Conference entitled “for a Contemporary Education System” aimed at reforming and establishing the articular and language of teaching in Kurdistan Universities.
3- International Conference on Higher Education in Iraq was held in Erbil in December 2007 and was Organized by both Ministries in Baghdad and Erbil with the Cooperation and participation of London-based Iraq Higher Education Organizing Committee.
PAPERS DEALT WITH THE FOLLOWING EIGHT KEY ISSUES:

- Papers dealt with the following eight key issues:
  - 1- Models for interactive higher education.
  - 2- Capacity Building.
  - 3- Developing Curricula.
  - 4- Quality Assurance.
  - 5- Higher Studies and Scientific Research.
  - 6- The role of University in Society.
  - 7- Different types of Higher Education.
  - 8- Decentralization of Higher Education.
The outcomes of the conference were similar to the University of Exeter’s report. They concluded that:

1- Universities are a leading part of Society and teaching faculties are the care of the Universities.
2- A Quality Assurance board should be set up.
3- Specializations in higher studies are needed.
4- Quality Research should be developed to meet the needs of employers.

Steps should be taken to decentralize the higher education sector in Iraqi Kurdistan.
As a part of long term strategy for higher education reforms in Kurdistan Region, a robust QA system has implemented by all Kurdistan Universities. The main pillars of this system:

- Student Feedback.
- Continuous Academic Development (CAD).
- Teacher Portfolio.
- Peer Review and Questions Bank as far as the academic’s performance is concerned.
All academic departments are now annually assessed by external professional academics.
The academics are involved in assessing their heads of departments and deans to get their feedbacks on their academic leaders.
The academic promotion of all members of teaching staff is now linked with their QA scores.
The National Strategy for Higher Education in Iraq is also includes the establishment of an independent QA body in the future.

The higher education sector will endeavor to obtain international accreditations as another well-defined objective of this strategy, which encompass in its broader spectrum:
OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGY

A- Establishing an institutional frame to manage the QA system for higher education.

B- Improving the standard of academic infrastructure and creating an appropriate academic atmosphere.

C- A continuous upgrading of teaching resources, including contemporary syllabi, teaching methodologies and libraries.

D- Enhancement and capacity building of teaching staff. Moving from teaching to learning approach/concept.

E- Globalization of higher education in Iraq aiming at moving the Iraqi universities into the high ranking category.
Thank You