



## Supporting the Educational System in Iraq

### Project on “*Developing new Iraqi Curricula*”

#### Workshop for Iraqi education specialists:

#### Developing the Iraqi Curriculum Framework and Establishing the Iraqi National Curriculum Centre

Doha, 12-16 March 2011

## Concept Note and Agenda



## Concept Note

### Workshop context and rationale

The present workshop corresponds to the third meeting<sup>1</sup> of Iraqi specialists in the context of the project “*Developing New Iraqi Curricula*” elaborated by UNESCO Iraq Office with the cooperation of UNESCO Office in Doha and in consultation with Iraqi education authorities and stakeholders, as well as UNESCO entities, such as IBE. Following a post-conflict Conference for Iraq in Paris, in November 2008, Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser Al Missned, First Lady of Qatar, decided to launch an initiative based on the partnership of Her Highness’s Office and other Educational Institutions in Qatar on one hand and UNESCO on the other hand to implement four education programmes among which is the “*Curriculum Development in Iraq*” project to be implemented over a three-year period (2010-2013)<sup>2</sup>.

The Project was officially launched through a workshop held in Doha, Qatar (9-10 October 2010), where agreements were reached with regard to the project scope and expected outcomes, and a detailed implementation plan for the next three years was in-depth discussed and finalized. The main expected outcomes of the project are as follows:

1. A new Iraqi Curriculum Framework for primary and secondary education stating the principles and means of enhancing the quality of the Iraqi curricula, as well as of learning processes and outcomes through aligning curricula, teaching and learning strategies, and assessment;
2. Blueprints of new syllabuses and textbooks for Math and Sciences to be pilot tested in selected schools that will reflect and promote a learner-centred approach along with up-to-date processes of teaching and learning, as a model of good practice for other learning areas and subjects;
3. A fully functional Iraqi National Curriculum Centre that will coordinate the curriculum processes in Iraq, including the capacity development of curriculum, textbook, teacher training and assessment specialists.

It is expected that, through its particular focus on aligning curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment, the project will contribute to the enhancement of the overall education quality and equity within the Iraq education system especially by addressing “the enduring relevance of Education for All”. (UNESCO, 2007, p. 11)<sup>3</sup>

From 11 to 16 December 2010, a first training workshop took place in Doha, Qatar with a view to elaborate a draft Outline of the new Iraqi Curriculum Framework focusing on the main education and learning goals and aims, the principles of developing the new

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<sup>1</sup> The present workshop is the second implementation workshop after the launching workshop of the project in Doha, in October 2010.

<sup>2</sup> See the annexed Implementation Plan (2010-2013)

<sup>3</sup> See UNESCO, 2007 (*EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008: Education for All by 2015. Will we make it?*).

curriculum and its expected learning outcomes. More particularly, the participants aimed to reach a shared understanding with regard to the directions and priorities for improving the Iraqi curriculum. They also tackled the role of the Iraqi Curriculum Framework in setting the grounds for comprehensive curriculum revision and for orientating education stakeholders with regard to the content, processes and expected outcomes of implementing revised primary and secondary curricula in Iraq.

Capitalizing on the work of the Iraqi teams from Baghdad and Kurdistan region during and after the December 2010 workshop, the present workshop is particularly important for the collective development of a first comprehensive version of the new Iraqi Curriculum Framework (CF), as well as for agreeing on Terms of Reference for the upcoming Feasibility Study on the establishment of the Iraqi National Curriculum Centre (INCC).

## Participant<sup>[D1]</sup>

The workshop will be attended by relevant education partners and stakeholders, as follows:

1. Iraqi MOE representatives (Baghdad and Kurdistan MOEs: 15-20 policy makers, curriculum, textbook and TT specialists, members of a Technical Team assigned to develop the Iraqi Curriculum Framework and establish the Iraqi National Curriculum Centre) – see attached Participant list
2. Her Highness Office (HHO)
3. UNESCO Doha Office
4. Qatar Experts (Supreme Education Council)
5. Embassy of Iraq
6. UNESCO IBE
  - a. Ms Dakmara Georgescu, programme specialist
  - b. Dr Brian D. Male, consultant
  - c. Mr Philip Stabback, consultant
7. UNESCO/ Iraq Office
  - a. Dr Mounir Abou Assali, Education Programme coordinator
  - b. Dr Hanan Innabi, Consultant
  - c. Ms Nidhal Al- Kadhim, Education Programme Officer
  - d. Ms Rhada El Nagar, Liaison Officer

## Organizers

- UNESCO Iraq Office

- UNESCO Doha Office
- HHO
- Iraqi MOEs
- UNESCO IBE

## Objectives

This second implementation workshop of the project aims to contribute to the development of a comprehensive Iraqi Curriculum Framework that should orientate education agents and stakeholders with regard to comprehensively revising the Iraqi curricula after several decades during which no substantive improvements to teaching and learning were possible. At the same time, the workshop will contribute to the preparation of a Feasibility Study on the Iraqi National Curriculum Centre. The first three days will be devoted to the work on the Curriculum Framework, while the next two days will concern the establishment of the Iraqi National Curriculum Centre.

The workshop's main objectives are to:

1. Analyze the results of a Desk Review of the current Iraqi curriculum carried out by the UNESCO Iraq Office with a view to capitalize on strengths and identify the main obstacles and challenges to implementing a quality curriculum in Iraq;
2. Discuss and improve a first comprehensive version of the Iraqi Curriculum Framework by tacking into account the Iraqi achievements, needs and development prospects, as well as international efficient practices of promoting quality education for all;
3. Provide a preliminary concept of the upcoming public discussions on the new Iraqi Curriculum Framework;
4. Share a preliminary concept of the Iraqi National Curriculum Centre, as well as international experiences with regard to the functioning of such curriculum agencies as a basis for an upcoming Feasibility Study to be carried out during the period April-June 2011.

## Expected outcomes

At the end of the workshop, it is expected that the participants will have:

1. Made recommendations for the finalization of the Desk Review of the current Iraqi curriculum, as well as on how it should inform the revision of the draft Curriculum Framework;
2. Reached an agreement on the main issues to be tackled during a next revision of the draft Iraqi Curriculum Framework especially on how curricula can contribute to quality education and learning based on common quality criteria for whole Iraq;

3. Explored strategies for organizing effective public consultations on the new Iraqi Curriculum Framework;
4. Reached an agreement on finalizing the Terms of Reference for the upcoming Feasibility Study on the establishment of the Iraqi National Curriculum Centre.

### Working methodology

The workshop will be highly interactive allowing for the active participation of all participants based on an accommodating and flexible Agenda including:

1. Plenary sessions (overviews and inputs provided by Iraqi and other experts; presentations of group work; summarizing and concluding sessions);
2. Group activities (hands-on group work guided by specific questions and tasks);
3. Access to reference materials translated into Arabic (i.e. ppt presentations; the draft Iraqi Curriculum Framework; the draft Terms of Reference for the establishment of the Iraqi National Curriculum Centre; other reference materials);
4. Permanent, including informal dialogue among the participants;
5. Flexible adjustments of the Agenda based on the participants' feedback;
6. Evaluation by the participants of the workshop's effectiveness;
7. Simultaneous translation (Arabic-English).

### Issues to be tackled

1. *Outcomes of the Desk Review of the current state of curriculum development in Iraq*

Dr. Hanan Innabi, UNESCO Iraq Office Consultant, will share the results of the desk review that was carried out to document the present state of curriculum development in Iraq with a view to identifying strengths to build upon, as well as obstacles and challenges to quality curriculum development and implementation that should be considered by the Iraqi curriculum project. As a baseline study, the desk review was based on analyzing curriculum documents and learning resources in use, as well as investigating the opinions of the Iraqi education specialists. Curriculum development and implementation was analyzed in the context of the overall developments within the Iraqi educational system after 2003, as well as against different programmatic educational policy documents, such as the *Iraqi National Education Strategy* and the *Iraqi Educational Philosophy* (2008).

## *2. The Iraqi Curriculum Framework (CF)*

During the last December workshop in Doha, the Iraqi teams of the MOEs of Baghdad and Kurdistan Regions discussed the role of a Curriculum Framework in orientating education agents and stakeholders with regard to why, what, how and how well students should learn. Based on examples of curriculum frameworks from different countries, the possible content and structure of such a unifying document were analyzed and suggestions were made with regard to issues to be addressed in the Iraqi Curriculum Framework.

During the December 2010 Doha workshop, the participants elaborated a first part of the Iraqi Curriculum Framework focusing on the education goals and aims; expected outcomes; and principles of developing/revising the Iraqi curriculum in order to foster quality education for all.

After the December 2010 Doha workshop, the Curriculum Departments of the MOEs of Baghdad and Kurdistan Regions elaborated each draft curriculum frameworks that were used by UNESCO IBE for pulling together a first comprehensive version of the Iraqi Curriculum Framework. Based on discussions with the Iraqi education authorities, it was agreed that the Curriculum Framework will be developed as one unified document for both Baghdad and Kurdistan Regions that will highlight the commonalities with regard to the education vision and the quality curriculum and learning concepts. At the same time, the common Curriculum Framework will also refer to the specific means used in each Region to implement a sound curriculum in order to enhance the quality of learning processes and outcomes.

During the present workshop, based on inputs from UNESCO IBE consultants with regard to issues to be addressed in a Curriculum Framework and options to be explored in order to improve the present curriculum, the participants will critically analyze the first comprehensive draft of the Iraqi Curriculum Framework and make suggestions with regard to its further improvement (i.e. curriculum policy issues, such as curriculum decentralization and the balance between the core and the local/differentiated curriculum in compliance with the learner context and needs; curriculum content and structure, such as learning areas and cross-cutting issues; time allocation; aligning curriculum, teaching and learning strategies, and assessment). They will also explore different strategies of conducting public consultations in Iraq on the new Curriculum Framework.

## *3. The Iraqi National Curriculum Centre (INCC)*

A preliminary feasibility study on the establishment of a Iraqi National Curriculum Centre was prepared in 2005 when, following a Iraqi curriculum conference organized by UNESCO in Paris, a Saudi donor promised to allocate 2 million USD for this purpose. This study focuses mainly on the Centre's mission and vision; its structure; and the accountability mechanisms. The proposal to establish a Curriculum Centre was well received by the Iraqi education authorities, including the Coordinating/Consultative Committee at the Prime Minister's Office. Although KRG was not part of those initial discussions, today it is clear that the Centre will function with a branch in Erbil. Actually, in the context of the project "*Developing new Iraqi Curricula*" the

establishment of a National Curriculum Centre for the whole of Iraq is a main objective that is supported by all partners.

In order to eliminate political interferences and ensure the sustainability of curriculum processes in Iraq, the Centre's autonomy is eyed as crucial by the Iraqi representatives. The Centre should be related to the MOE, however be the decision making agency for curriculum in Iraq.

Appropriate systems of accountability have to be explored. For instance, in KRG the curriculum is approved by the Minister based on the preliminary approval of an Advisory Committee of six members (four general directors and two advisors). Models from other countries, such as Egypt and Lebanon should be also considered and the advantages and disadvantages of different solutions carefully analyzed.

The Minister recently issued a MEMO to create a small Committee of four specialists in charge with the creation of this Centre, whose members/representatives should be part of the next Doha workshop. The Committee should be more in charge with implementation issues, including monitoring, while the Centre's concept and status should emerge from the curriculum project.

The new feasibility study will have to give a clear justification of the Centre. Among main reasons to establish such as Centre are:

1. The Centre will concentrate professional curriculum staff that is trained in compliance with up-to-date curriculum experiences and trends;
2. It will allow for coordination among different learning areas and subjects, that was missing before. The KRG model of such a coordinating committee (composed of six specialists and decision makers) will be also suggested to the Baghdad MOE. Before '85, Iraq had National Committees for each subject area headed by a university professor – Iraq needs now to get back to a high degree of professionalizing curriculum development and implementation;
3. Curriculum planning, development and implementation will be professionalized and thus less exposed to political interferences. New people have to be recruited and their capacities upgraded for the existing staff of the Curriculum Department does not comply with the high requirements of the curriculum work needed in Iraq (i.e. out of 290 staff, only 4 have PhD degrees and 18 MAs);
4. The Centre will facilitate and stimulate an enhanced cooperation between MOE and MOHE;
5. The Centre will also play a major role in the alignment of curriculum, teacher training and assessment;
6. The Centre will manage democratic and participatory processes of curriculum development and implementation by involving education stakeholders and partners and institutionalizing consultations with them;

7. The Centre will be similar to those of other Arab countries thus contributing to the institutional dialogue on education and curriculum in the Region;

8. The Centre will cater for the sustainability of curriculum processes in Iraq based on sound planning, resource allocation, and monitoring and evaluation.

Different alternatives with regard to the Centre's accountability will be also discussed (i.e. the Centre being linked to MOE, but reporting to the Parliament, who is more representative for the country's constituencies; the Centre to Report to the Coordinating/Consultative Council/Committee at the prime-minister's office, etc. ).

The Centre will have different departments, including the financial, administrative and HR departments. Among the Centre's departments should be the following: Higher Coordinating/Administrative Committee; Curriculum and Examinations for Baghdad; Curriculum and Examinations for KRG; Training of curriculum developers department. The Dean of the Teacher Training Institute should be a member of the Coordinating Committee. Various subjects committees will work under the Curriculum and Evaluation departments. Psychologists should also join the Centre to work with education and curriculum specialists. A curriculum research department will be also needed, along with a media and ICT department. Curriculum development will concern the general curriculum; VET curriculum, and the curriculum of teacher institutions. The Centre will also take care of textbook development based on seconding textbook authors to the Centre. The Curriculum Directorate should take care more of printing and distributing the textbooks, as well as monitoring and reporting on implementation.

Based on discussing the initial feasibility study of 2005, as well as the sharing of some international experiences on the functioning of such national curriculum agencies, the participants will analyze and improve the draft Terms of Reference for the new feasibility study on establishing the Iraqi National Curriculum Centre as a main outcome of the current curriculum project.

## AGENDA

### *Days 1-3: the Iraqi Curriculum Framework*

#### Day 1, SAT, 12 March 2011

Time	Activities
<b>08:30-10:30</b>	<p><b>1. Opening session (08:30-09:15)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Welcome speeches (UNESCO Doha Office; UNESCO Iraq Office; HHO, Iraq MOE)</li> <li>- Overview of the December 2010 workshop outcomes and follow up (Ms. Dakmara Georgescu, UNESCO IBE)</li> <li>- Workshop objectives and expected outcomes and Agenda overview (Ms. Dakmara Georgescu, UNESCO IBE)</li> <li>- Project overview and the place of the present workshop (Ms. Dakmara Georgescu, UNESCO IBE)</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Desk Review (09:15-10:30)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Summary of outcomes (Dr. Hanan Innabi, UNESCO Iraq Office consultant)</li> </ul>
<b>10:30-11:00</b>	<b>Coffee and Tea Break</b>
<b>11:00-12:30</b>	<p><b>The Iraqi Curriculum Framework</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presentation and discussion of a more advanced draft (Ms. Dakmara Georgescu, UNESCO IBE)</li> </ul>
<b>12:30-13:00</b>	<b>Coffee and Tea Break</b>
<b>13:00-14:30</b>	<p><b>Curriculum issues to be addressed in the CF (1)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Options to be explored (Dr. Brian Male, UNESCO IBE consultant)</li> <li>- Discussions</li> </ul>
<b>14:30</b>	<b>Lunch and time off</b>

## Day 2, SUN, 13 March 2011

Time	Activities
08:30-10:30	<b>Curriculum issues to be addressed in the CF (1)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Options to be explored (Mr. Philip Stabback, UNESCO IBE consultant)</li><li>– Discussions</li></ul>
10:30-11:00	<b>Coffee and Tea Break</b>
11:00-12:30	<b>Concluding discussions and clarification</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Options to be explored in completing the Iraqi Curriculum Framework</li></ul>
12:30-13:00	<b>Coffee and Tea Break</b>
13:00-14:30	<b>Group work</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Improving the draft Iraqi Curriculum Framework</li></ul>
14:30	<b>Lunch and time off</b>

## Day 3, MON, 14 March 2011

Time	Activities
08:30-10:30	<b>Group work continues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Improving the draft Iraqi Curriculum Framework</li></ul>
10:30-11:00	<b>Coffee and Tea Break</b>
11:00-12:30	<b>Groups report back</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Suggestions for improving the comprehensive draft of the Iraqi Curriculum Framework</li><li>- Discussions</li></ul>
12:30-13:00	<b>Coffee and Tea Break</b>
13:00-14:30	<b>Concluding discussions of the Iraqi Curriculum Framework</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Summary of discussions and recommendations</li><li>- Follow up, including the preparation of public discussions on the Iraqi Curriculum Framework</li></ul>
14:30	<b>Lunch and time off</b>

## Days 4-5: The Iraqi National Curriculum Centre

### Day 4, TUE, 15 March 2011

Time	Activities
<b>08:30-10:30</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Presentation of the Iraqi vision on the INCC (Dr. Muhsin and Mr. Zyad)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discussions</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. International experiences (1): national curriculum agencies and sustainability issues (Dr. Brian Male, UNESCO IBE consultant)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discussions</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>10:30-11:00</b>	<b>Coffee and Tea Break</b>
<b>11:00-12:30</b>	<p><b>International experiences (2): national curriculum agencies and sustainability issues (Mr. Philip Stabback, UNESCO IBE consultant)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discussions</li> </ul>
<b>12:30-13:00</b>	<b>Coffee and Tea Break</b>
<b>13:00-14:30</b>	<p><b>Presentation of the Terms of Reference for the Feasibility Study on the INCC (Ms. Dakmara Georgescu, UNESCO IBE)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discussions</li> </ul>
<b>14:30</b>	<b>Lunch and time off</b>

### Day 5, WED, 16 March 2011

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activities</b>
<b>08:30-10:30</b>	<b>Group work</b>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. INCC status, mandate and functions</li><li>2. Terms of Reference for the Feasibility Study</li></ol>
<b>10:30-11:00</b>	<b>Coffee and Tea Break</b>
<b>11:00-12:30</b>	<b>Groups report back</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Discussions</li></ul>
<b>12:30-13:00</b>	<b>Coffee and Tea Break</b>
<b>13:00-14:30</b>	<b>Concluding session</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Summary of the workshop outcomes</li><li>- Follow up</li><li>- Concluding remarks (Iraq MOE, HHO, UNESCO)</li><li>- Workshop evaluation</li></ul>
<b>14:30</b>	<b>Lunch</b>

Closing of the workshop