

# A comparative view of Kurdistan Region education system



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### An Overview of Kurdistan Education System

The Kurdistan education system was an integral part of the educational system in Iraq until the beginning of the 90's when Kurds became semi-autonomous and began forming their own government agencies and educational institutions somewhat independently of the central government. By that time, the Kurdistan-region's key concern was to restore the education infrastructure following a long war and conflict devastation. Over this time, educational change and reform efforts were slow and limited due to the lack of availability of resources. After 2003, however, as the entire country experienced many significant political changes, there were greater prospects for reform in education and growth. As a result, more substantial attempts have been made to improve the standard of education and keep up with internal and external demands and improvements. The recent reform initiative aimed at modernising the existing curriculum, increasing the ability of schools and enhancing the standard of education. Saeed (2008) describes this reform project as a significant step to a stronger and more stable education system that could have positive implications for the overall education process. In spite of some improvements in the system of education at different levels, there has been widespread concern that the reform proposals would remain rhetorical. Wahab (2014) shows that there are still significant obstacles ahead alongside the current plans, initiatives and on-going attempts to improve the education sector. According to Saeed (2008), the failure of the educational reform in Kurdistan is related to several factors, such as the lack of educational expertise, especially at the decision-making level, the absence of effective reform mechanisms and the on-going and negative intervention by political parties in the field of education.

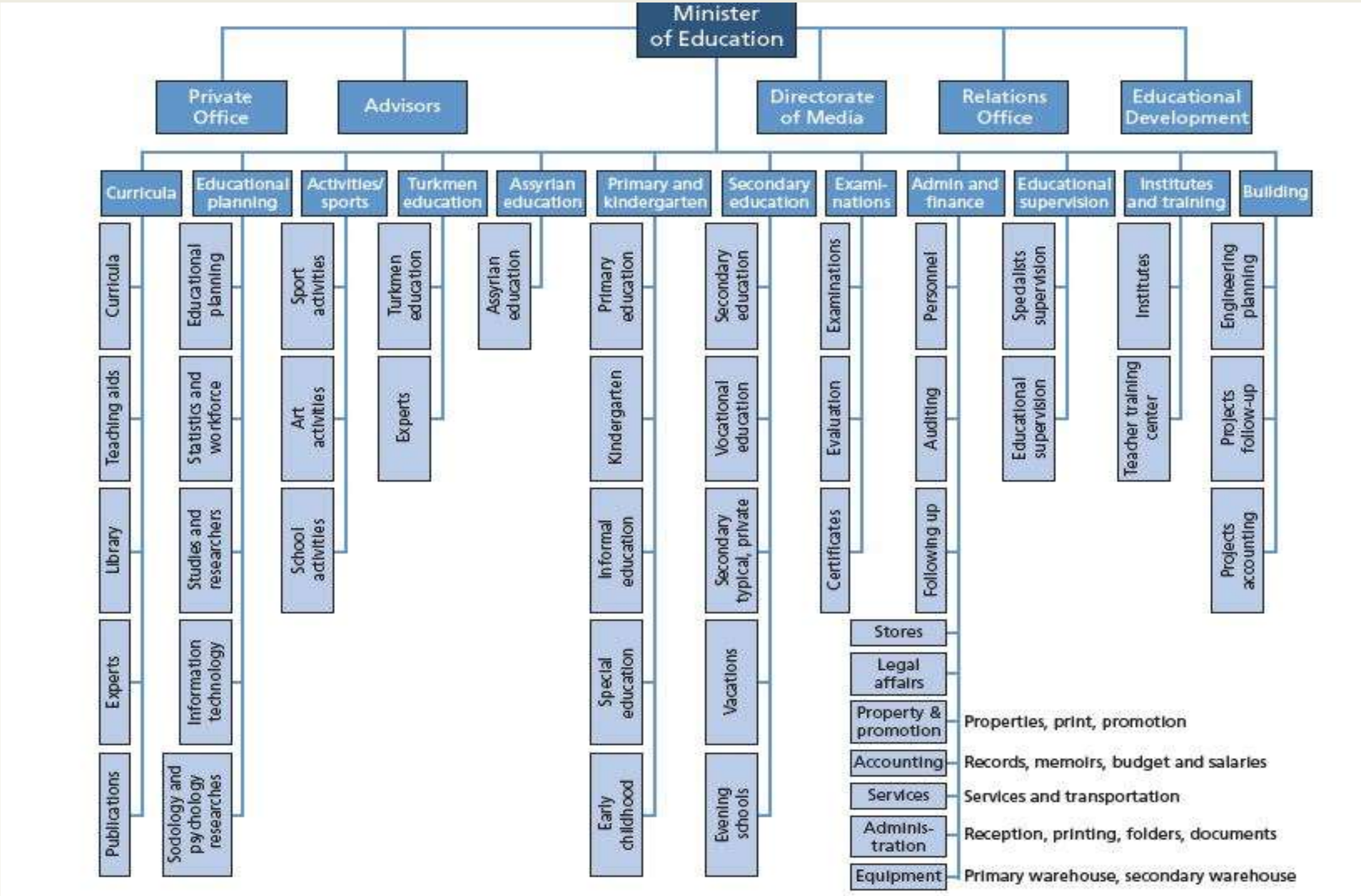


### Structure of Education System in Kurdistan Region

During the school years of 2008–09, the Ministry of Education initiated a series of significant K–12 education reforms. Education was mandatory by grade 6 but now obligatory by grade 9. A new, more rigorous curriculum has been introduced in the schools. Preschools serve children of age 4 to 5 years. The previous three grades, primary (grades 1 to 6), intermediate (grades 7 to 9), and secondary (grades 10 to 12), have been restructured to two grades, primary (grades 1 to 9) and secondary (grades 10 to 12). On the high school level, students can select one of two classes, either vocational or preparatory, with most students choosing the latter. General schools offer a well-rounded education with a Literary/Humanities track and scientific track. Teachers must complete higher education standards than before the 2008 changes, with new teachers now expected to obtain a bachelor degree. Previously, teachers may have graduated from teaching institutes, five-year programs that started after grade 9 (Venez, etal, 2016).

### Current Organizational Structure of the KRG's Ministry of Education

The present organisation of the Education Ministry of the KRG has three management levels. The Education Minister has an exceptionally large span of controls and 16 managers, including 12 organisational units, report to him. The Ministry of Education of the KRI is arranged primarily by functions. While there are two programmatic groups, basic and secondary education, these two classes do not operate as such but are limited to the conducting of human resources functions. Main functions such as curriculum development, examinations, training for teachers and sports are divided into separate reports. High level of centralisation: The Minister takes almost all important decisions, including policy and financial management decisions and even some minor ones including approval of a new private school or appointment of a new teacher. The Minister will also have to accept demands for data from inside the organisation. Likewise, directors cannot take decisions without their Director General's approval.



### Main orientations of the curriculum vision

The curriculum is supposed to provide high-quality human rights education for everyone. It enhances the learners' skills and attitudes towards human rights, gender equality, awareness of intercultural issues and sustainable development. The curriculum should address both the needs of students and the needs of national growth programs, including existing and potential labour market conditions. It is also supposed to forge responsible citizenship based on democracy, equality and social justice values. It also should develop rational and innovative thinking, problem-solving, proactive behaviours and lifelong learning skills. The core educational and learning goals of the curriculum are Life-long learning, confidence to succeed, participation and citizenship in the context of Iraq and the wider world. Young people must improve their thought and analytical skills so that they can think, research, interpret knowledge, overcome challenges and make decisions objectively, creatively and independently. They must be able to communicate with a number of people effectively across a variety of media and must be knowledgeable enough to handle their own learning. These are the skills that allow them to continue learning and adapting as they live. They must be tolerant of others, constructive and ready to engage in society positively and to be flexible and capable of improving. They must be able to work independently and as part of a team both at work and in life. Young people must also cultivate the capacity of citizenship to be active and responsible in society and to take on strong environmental responsibility. They have to not only be deeply embedded in their nation and culture but also have a broader understanding and awareness of the world in order to become global citizens and work successfully in the field of science (UNESCO Iraq Office, 2012).

### Training Programs, Participation, and Alignment with Needs

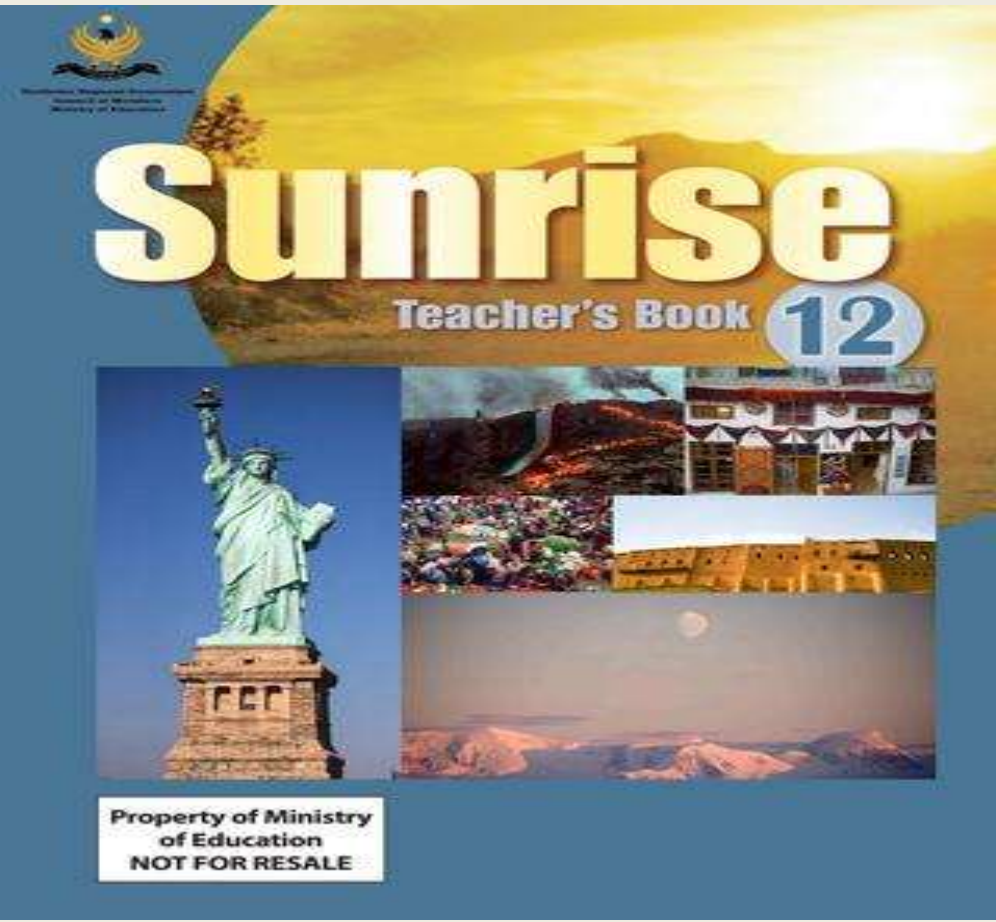
Training Programs  
There are six types of programs:

- subject-specific (curriculum) training, pertaining to a specific subject or substantive area (includes kindergarten, which has expanded significantly)
- capacity-development training, annually provided to teachers on new topics including approaches to student-centered instruction and use of technology; also targets specific teachers to address performance gaps
- school leadership and management training, designed for school leaders, teachers, and supervisor
- training of supervisors and training on administrative matters and use of computers
- contractor-specific training, typically large in scale, initiated and provided directly to teachers by an organization such as the British Council (in 2012 and 2013)
- other training, includes topics not covered above, such as training in disaster relief and emergency management following the large influx of refugees from neighboring Syria.

### Conclusion and recommendations

*The ministry needs to*

- Develop a new structure that supports the MoE's initiatives and ongoing management of education (we have provided a suggested structure).
- Provide training more regularly and consistently.
- Provide training to ministry and school staff to implement school quality assurance.



### References:

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