

Towards a shared vision for education in Iraq

Education in Iraq

Current Situation and New Perspectives

A report on the situation today and our strategies for the immediate future



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Ministry of Education 2004

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Preface

This document provides a brief description on the current status of education in Iraq, including the structural, functional, and pedagogical aspects; it identifies major constraints and outlines the main priorities for reconstruction. It also aims to assess current trends and establish a baseline for rehabilitation efforts. Options, areas of improvement, and strategies for addressing the challenges encountered will be presented and the proposed features of the future education system will be outlined.

The views presented in this document are based on our vision that the role of the new education system extends beyond the traditional mandate of the Ministry of Education in providing high quality education to school children; a good education system is essential for revitalising the Iraqi economy and is the key route to security and the development of a unified, cohesive community.

The strategies outlined in this document focus primarily on short- and medium-term strategies and action plans. They were reviewed in several meetings with Ministry of Education staff, other education experts, and representatives of other sectors as well as political parties. The priorities adopted in this document were also endorsed by the participants of the National Seminar on Educational Strategies in Iraq held, under the patronage of the Chairman of the Iraqi Governing Council, on 3 January 2004.

While the emphasis is on areas for immediate action, the document also provides an opportunity and a tool to raise a set of critical questions on the future shape of the Iraqi education system. What are the elements of reform and how is the new system going to be different? What do we need from the new education system and what policy directions should we adopt? How can we achieve an education of better quality with limited resources? How can we manage issues with conflicting forces like unity and diversity? How do we preserve tradition while seeking progressive approaches? And how can we achieve national harmony while supporting the rights of all ethnic and religious communities?

These and many other questions encompass complex issues for which there are no quick or easy solutions. Although some answers are proposed in this document, for many of these questions the intention for raising them is to stimulate debate and highlight the need for consensus.

I sincerely hope that this document will be particularly useful to decision makers, thought-leaders, media personnel, donors, and all interested in education in Iraq. I am confident the readers will agree with me that supporting the development of a high quality education system in Iraq is the path to a free, democratic, and economically prosperous society.

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Acknowledgments

I wish to express my deepest appreciation to many persons who helped me during the preparation of this document. The discussions I had with senior Ministry of Education staff during the regular meetings organised in October and November 2003 were very informative. The documents published through the collaboration of the Ministry of Education with UNESCO, UNICEF, and USAID have been particularly useful; several figures and tables have been adapted from these sources.

The plans on the reconstruction of the physical infrastructure of the education sector were discussed in close coordination with the United Nations Development Group and the World Bank in the meeting held in Dubai in September 2003 and presented in final form during the Donors Conference held in Madrid in October 2003. I am grateful to our UN and World Bank colleagues for their support. The version of the reconstruction plan which appears as an annex in this document contains further modifications based on updated assessments and costing carried out by the Ministry of Education during the last two months.

I am also grateful to the participants of the seminar organised by the Ministry of Education with United Nations partners, the World Bank, and USAID in November 2003; the consensus reached during the seminar on the baseline characteristics of the education system has been adopted in this document. The contribution of Dr Mahdi AlAllaq and Ms Seham Abdul Hameed, of the Central Statistical Organization in reviewing data on educational indicators is highly appreciated.

I am indebted to many colleagues and experts who assisted me with constructive comments and helpful suggestions. I am grateful to Leslye Arsht and Bill Evers for their input and helpful suggestions. Frank Schorn provided valuable input on management issues. Jaafar Al Zubaidi and Taha Rasheed helped in editing the Arabic version while Leslye Arsht and Pamela Riley provided editing advice on the English version. Moeen Raouf helped in reproducing some figures. I thank them for their friendship and an enjoyable and productive working relationship.

Abbreviations

CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
CSO	Central Statistical Organization
DG	Director General
EMIS	Education Management Information System
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
MOE	Ministry of Education
OFFP	Oil for Food Programme
UN	United Nations
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
RISE	Revitalising Iraqi Schools and Stabilisation of Education
WB	World Bank

Executive Summary

One of the major tasks in the re-building of Iraq is education reform. The impressive achievements in the education sector made in the past have been replaced, during the last two decades, by progressive deterioration in key educational indicators. Major wars, disastrous military adventures, and irrational policies have resulted in a steady decline in all basic human services with education being the most affected.

With lack of resources and the politicization of the education system which influenced everything from curriculum, to teaching, staff, to admission policies, education deteriorated from relatively high levels at the early 1980s to one of the worst in the Middle East region today. Enrolment rates have declined progressively and attendance rates have decreased to alarmingly low levels, including a rate of only 50% of girls attending in rural areas. The curriculum became outdated and distorted as it was used as a tool for political purposes. Family poverty emerged as a major cause of drop-outs, with girls being particularly vulnerable.

Despite the reductions in enrolment, which are troubling by themselves, the school physical infrastructure has so deteriorated that it has an increasingly negative effect on the quality of education and attendance rates. Too many students must now be educated in double or triple shifts. Multiple school shifts in one building shorten the school day and are a barrier to mastery of the required material. It will take about 4,500 new schools to meet the needs of the current student population. Out of more than 15,000 existing school buildings, 80% now require significant reconstruction. More than 1,000 schools need to be demolished and completely rebuilt. Another 4,600 require major repair. Hundreds of schools are built of mud or reeds particularly in the southern governorates and thousands of school buildings nationwide do not meet minimally acceptable health standards.

The average teachers-student ratio appears to be satisfactory, compared to other countries. However, there is an uneven distribution between governorates and there are hard to fill locations around the country. While the country continues to

graduate many teaching candidates, the availability of professional development and pre-service preparation programmes have deteriorated considerably over the last two decades.

The Ministry of Education has traditionally operated with a top-down approach to decision-making. High-level policies and decisions were often arrived at without making use of information and research available and without consultation with the officials who were to implement the decisions. In addition to the bureaucratic hierarchy and centralization, the Ministry and its 21 directorates of education in the governorates were also characterized by the lack of effective coordination across directorate lines. The vital tasks of in-service teacher training, management and data-driven reform were sacrificed to administrative, accounting functions. The personnel system, as it operated within the Ministry, did not encourage innovation or change. Rather, it rewarded those who followed procedures as established, and remained loyal to the ruling Party and to those above them. The complete government control, the lack of meaningful community involvement, and the great political influence of the ruling party resulted in a rigid system and a prescriptive pattern of education in which creativity, innovation and participation had a limited role.

The education budget was reported to be 5.2% of the gross national product in 1970 and 4.1% in 1980. The UN/World Bank Joint Assessment Report, prepared in 2003, indicates that expenditure per student was approximately US\$ 620. With the progressive increase in allocations to the military, expenditures declined to 3.3% of the gross national product in 1990. Much more severe budgetary constraints followed the 1991 Gulf war. Over the period 1993-2002, the annual average expenditure per student is reported by the same source to stand at approximately US\$ 47, funded largely from the Oil For Food Programme. This programme failed to satisfy the basic needs of children particularly in the field of education.

The problems facing the education system range from inefficient management, corruption, and severely deteriorating physical

infrastructure, to those related to inadequate access and inequalities in education, low quality, weak preparation and training of teachers, a highly politicised, outdated and distorted curriculum, and ineffective instructional methods.

Addressing these problems and renewing the education sector is now a top priority for Iraqis. The new education system in Iraq will strategically aim to:

- *achieve universal access to quality education,*
- *eliminate drop-outs and ensure free access to basic education irrespective of ethnic origin or socioeconomic status,*
- *upgrade quality and increase relevance to local needs and the labour market,*
- *separate education from politics, strengthen community involvement,*
- *promote human rights, freedom of expression, tolerance, and national unity,*
And
- *change the management of the system to evidence-based planning, performance-driven evaluation, decentralisation, and institution of anti-corruption measures.*

Based on these policy directions, the short- and medium-term plans will include:

1. Updating and improving the quality of data for evidence-based planning and establishing the education management information system (EMIS)
2. Implementing the new structure of the MOE and upgrading its management capacity
3. Rebuilding the physical infrastructure of the education system particularly school buildings
4. Re-orienting the teaching staff and developing a comprehensive programme for teachers training, focusing on instructional and learning methods as well as citizenship
5. Reaching consensus on the future shape of the Iraqi education system and initiating the process of curriculum reform.

Introduction

Iraq, the land between the two rivers, is the cradle of civilization. It was the land of the Sumerians, Akkadians, Assyrians, and Babylonians. When Arabic Islamic civilization flourished during the Abbasid era, Baghdad became a world centre for knowledge, culture, and creativity, attracting thinkers, writers and scientists from everywhere.

The population of Iraq is currently estimated at around 26 million. The population growth rate is 2.8%. In general, the education system in Iraq was high-performing until the early 1980s. In the preceding years, the country had continued to improve at all levels of education and had achieved nearly universal primary enrolment in 1980. Thereafter, following more than two decades of major wars, disastrous military adventures, and irrational policies the system went into a steady decline, driven by a combination of:

Lack of resources as public funds were siphoned off for military expenditures and other priorities of the ruling regime; and

The politicization of the education system, which influenced everything from curriculum, to teaching, staff, to admission policies¹.

The damage inflicted on the education system, from years of conflicts, oppression, injustice, lack of maintenance, weak technical and management capacity, lack of training, and neglect has resulted in a very serious degradation of the system and has magnified the negative impact on the life and morale of the Iraqi people. Restoring critical infrastructure and re-vitalizing the education sector is now a top priority for Iraqis. Education reform must therefore be at the heart of the reconstruction effort in the new Iraq.

¹ United Nations-World bank Joint Needs Assessment. October 2003, Page 14.

Main Features of the Education System Today

Organizational Structure

During the previous regime, the Ministry of Education (MOE) had 18 ministry-level Directorates. Among the Directorates, for example were Educational Planning; Primary Education and Kindergarten; Secondary Education; Athletic Education; Curricula; Inspection and Supervision; Evaluation and Examination; Cultural Relations; Kurdish Education; Educational Technologies; Teachers Training; and Evening and Private Education. The organizational structure which was operating until December 2003 is included as Annex 1.

The Ministry of Education was structured to follow the orders of a top-down command system. The main characteristics of the processes in the Ministry of Education reflect this institutional setting. Personnel were not only evaluated by their attention to fulfilling their functions but appraisal was even more importantly based on their political affiliation and following orders. There are many more employees than are necessary to perform routine functions. This was coupled with extremely low wages and virtually no incentives to improve management efficiency.

The Directorate for Educational Planning in the Ministry has been a system of fiscal controls. Hence the directorate did not concentrate on long-range planning and had no need to rely on policy analysis or research. During the previous regime, the Ministry was neither a company that had to make a profit nor part of an elected administration that had to satisfy the people. Thus, there was no external pressure to improve the MOE planning process or to align it to educational needs. Past practice depended more on the interest, motivation, skill, and political negotiating power of senior officials than on the quality of the analysis or information provided to decision makers.

Annual planning for staff (teachers), books, and school repairs was handled by separate Directorates in the Ministry, each of which collected, processed and utilised information from the schools, through the governorate offices. As long as the MOE, and

indeed the entire government's planning procedures, depended on political influence rather than evidence-based analysis, improving those procedures and the management of resources would continue to be problematic. Perhaps the most salient organizational feature of the Ministry was its bureaucratic hierarchy, characterized by a top-down approach to decision-making. High-level policies and decisions were often arrived at without making use of information and research available and without consultation with the officials who were to implement the decisions.

In addition to the bureaucratic hierarchy and centralization, the Ministry was also characterized by the lack of effective coordination across directorate lines. Each department tended to function as a separate component of the organization, with minimal linkages to other units. Each major department at headquarters employed a separate system of annual data collection. Although this consumed an enormous amount of time and energy, and duplicated efforts at the school and local levels, it was tolerated because of the surplus of employees and because data did not drive policymaking. The vital tasks of in-service teacher training, management and data-driven reform were sacrificed to administrative, accounting functions.

As mentioned above, the government personnel system, as it operated within the Ministry, did not encourage innovation or change. Rather, it rewarded those who followed procedures as established, and remained loyal to the regime and to those above them. In this setting, the utilization of information to raise questions about policy or management was not a route to promotion. Thus, the normal linkage between good management and the effective use of information was often missing in the Ministry of Education.

The country is divided into 21 provincial Education Directorates; one directorate for each governorate and four in Baghdad. Each is headed by a Director General (DG). They are responsible for the implementation of educational programmes in governorates. These have their own buildings and staff in the capital cities and towns of the governorates. Beneath these there are districts,

housed in municipal buildings at the local level. During the previous regime the governorate-level directorates transmitted orders from above and supervised implementation. Schools were administered by headmasters and assistant headmasters. Loyalty to the ruling Party is a prerequisite for selection to these positions.

A similar structure applied to the three Northern governorates in Kurdistan. However, two Ministries of Education, one in Erbil and the other in Suleimaniya, administer primary and secondary education.

There was an appearance of decentralization but the complete government control, the lack of meaningful community involvement, and the great political influence of the Ba'ath party resulted in a rigid system and a prescriptive pattern of education in which creativity, innovation and participation had a limited role.

Educational Policy and Finance

Education is free in Iraq. In the 1970s, legislation made primary school education (grades one to six) compulsory and initiated a national campaign for the eradication of illiteracy. Private education was abolished in 1974. Subsequent laws issued between 1978 and 1987 made the government responsible for supervising kindergartens and for formulating their educational policies. These laws were made to ensure that the government is responsible for developing and implementing educational programmes at all levels.

Reliable information on the education budget in Iraq is scarce. It has been reported that the budget for education, which includes basic and higher education, amounted to Iraqi Dinars 690 million (US\$ 2.5 billion)². About 50% of the budget was spent on primary education, compared to about 27% for secondary education and 20% for university education. No data is available on the education budget in the 1990s but information from the Oil for Food Programme (OFFP) reveals that just over US\$ 700 million

² UNESCO: Situation Analysis of Education in Iraq.2003

were provided for the education sector in the form of commodities, supplies and projects since the beginning of the programme in 1997. The resources obtained through the OFFP could not even meet the minimum requirements for maintenance of the sector and there was no cash component for southern and central Iraq to meet basic recurring expenditures. According to the UNICEF's Watching Brief document³, financial data from the OFFP indicate that out of the three social sectors of Health, Education and Water and Sanitation, the share of the education sector was considerably less than the other two sectors. Teacher's salaries, which were not covered by the OFFP, fell dramatically during this period from levels corresponding to US\$ 500-1000 per month before 1990 to values as low as US\$ 5 in 2002/2003. This situation caused a large number of teachers to leave the profession or travel abroad and placed severe constraints on teachers training and curriculum development⁴. Also, registration fees were imposed and funds for the purchase of school supplies were collected from parents.

The education budget was reported to be 5.2% of the gross national product in 1970 and 4.1% in 1980. The UN/World Bank Joint Assessment Report, prepared in 2003, suggests that expenditure on education constituted about 6% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1988/1989 and that expenditure per student was approximately US\$ 620⁴. With the progressive increase in allocations to the military, expenditures declined to 3.3% of the gross national product in 1990 (public expenditure on education as a percentage of GNI is reported to range in Arab countries from 1.92 to 9.27)⁵. Much more severe budgetary constraints followed the 1991 Gulf war. Over the period 1993-2002, the annual average expenditure per student is reported by the same source to stand at approximately US\$ 47, funded largely from the OFFP⁴. Although most MOE data have been lost following the looting and destruction that affected the MOE complex, available information are consistent with the above average figure and suggest that expenditure per student was about \$ 25 in 1998 and rose to \$ 53 in 2000. The OFFP clearly

³ UNICEF: Social Sector Watching Brief-Iraq/Education. July 2003

⁴ UN/World Bank Iraq Needs Assessment. October 2003.

⁵ UNESCO web site (www.unesco.org).2003

failed to satisfy the basic needs of children particularly in the field of education.

Because of the major financial crisis, the education sector experienced a rapid deterioration at all levels and along all dimensions. The level of funding for education is now improving but the 2004 Government allocation for education is still considerably lower than what is needed for reconstruction.

Schooling

Kindergarten is a two year programme. Only a small percentage of children of Kindergarten age are enrolled. In 2001/2002, about 54,000 children were attending pre-primary education or kindergartens². Estimates also indicate that less than 7% of children aged 4 and 5 years were enrolled⁶. Pupil attendance is voluntary.

Basic education in Iraq is twelve years. Primary School is compulsory and encompasses six years (years one through six). Most primary schools are single-sex. If they are coeducational, they almost always separate the sexes in classroom assignment or in classroom seating and separate the sexes for recess and sports activities. Students must pass a set of comprehensive standardized national exams to go on to intermediate School.

Intermediate School encompasses three years (referred to as Intermediate One, Intermediate Two, and Intermediate Three). The school week is divided into 34 class periods covering sixteen subjects. With extremely rare exceptions, all schools are girls-only schools or boys-only schools. Students must pass a set of comprehensive national exams to go on to Preparatory School.

Preparatory School encompasses three years (Secondary One, Secondary Two, and Secondary Three). The school week is divided into 34 to 38 class periods covering fifteen subjects.

In the first year of preparatory school all students take a General

⁶ Ministry of Education. National Report on Follow Up of the World Summit for Children, 2001.

Track. In the second and third years they must choose one of the following tracks: Scientific Track, Literary Track, and Vocational Track. During 1980-88, students were assigned, based on their academic strengths, to a track. Since then, they have been allowed to choose, although social pressure or pressure from school authorities may direct students into the track that seems to fit with their academic record.

The vocational education track provides several areas of study like home arts, agriculture, industry, and commerce.

A fourth track, the teacher education track admits students from intermediate schools for a period of five years. Graduates serve as teachers in primary schools. Preparation of primary school teachers also takes place in the teachers' institutes which accept graduates of the preparatory level for a period of two years training. In recent years, the period has been shortened to only six months and in some cases three months.

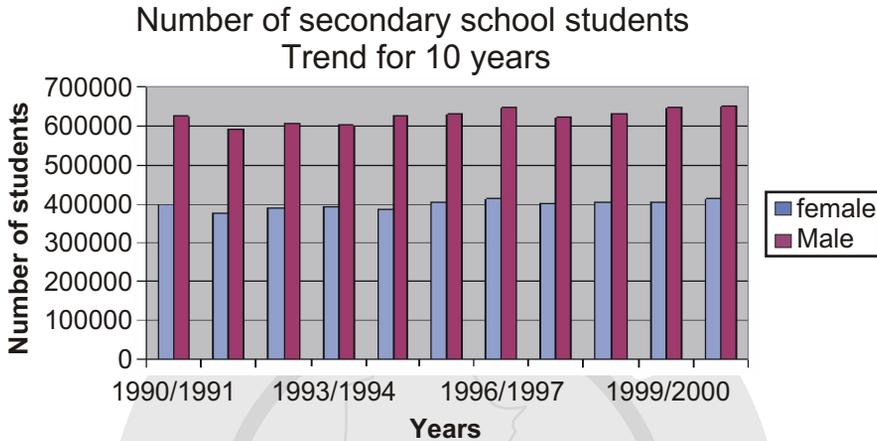
Students are required to sit two major examinations every year: mid-year in January and final in May. Success in all subjects is essential for moving to the next grade. The examination system is generally rigid and evaluation methods are limited to recall. The preparatory school diploma is called Baccalaureate. Students must pass a comprehensive standardized national exam to get a diploma and to go on to university. In the national exams (at each level) students failing a subject (for a total of up to two subjects), may retake the national exam for that subject. If students fail more than two subjects, you have to repeat the year. Because the spring 2003 exams were administered shortly after the March-April war, the rule on the number of subjects was relaxed, allowing students to retake exams during the fall of 2003 in any subject which they failed.

Number of Students and Access to Education

As indicated above, pre-primary education is neglected in Iraq. The net enrolment ratio in pre-primary education is reported to be 5.74% in Iraq, compared with 29% in Jordan, 66% in Kuwait, 59% in Morocco, and 65% in Lebanon⁷.

⁷ UNDP. Arab Human development Report 2003.

More than 4 million students were reported to have enrolled at the primary school level in 2002⁸. Available information on trends shows that despite population growth, the ten year period from 1990/1999 to 1999/2000 did not show a significant increase in the number of students in secondary schools⁹.



Generally, there are several figures on the current number of students at the primary and secondary education levels. Reliable estimates are based on figures derived from surveys conducted by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with UNESCO, UNICEF, and USAID. In a meeting organized by the Ministry of Education in Amman during the first week of November 2003, these figures were carefully reviewed and all agencies involved agreed on the following estimates:

Iraq School Statistics: Number of Students*

Educational level	Number of students	Source
Kindergarten	53,499	MOE & UNICEF
Primary	4,280,602	MOE & UNICEF
Secondary	1,454,775	MOE/UNICEF/UNESCO/USAID
Vocational	62,841	MOE & UNESCO
Teacher Training	66,139	MOE & UNESCO**
TOTAL	5,917,856	

⁸ Ministry of Education.

⁹ National Commission of Iraq: Annual Abstract of Statistics, Baghdad, 2000.

* Based on the consensus reached during the Seminar “Education in Iraq” held by MOE in Amman from 4-6 November 2003.

** MOE 2001 data rolled forward based on 3% average annual growth rate; data from the North provided by UNESCO

Based on the above mentioned data, there are about 6 million students in Iraqi basic education system today. The Ministry of Education has recently conducted, in collaboration with UNICEF, a national survey involving all education levels. This survey is expected to generate more precise numbers by February 2004.

The same estimates provide information on gender. Boys predominate at all levels. However, the most pronounced gender difference is seen in secondary schools and understandably also in vocational schools.

Iraq School Statistics: Number of Students by Level and Gender*

<i>Educational level</i>	<i>Students</i>		<i>Source</i>
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	
Gender			
Kindergarten			
Girls	26,068	48.73%	MOE/UNICEF
Boys	27,431	51.27%	MOE/UNICEF
Primary			
Girls	1,903,618	44.47%	MOE/UNICEF
Boys	2,376,984	55.53%	MOE/UNICEF
Secondary			
Girls	585,937	40.28%	UNICEF/UNESCO/USAID
Boys	868,838	59.72%	UNICEF/UNESCO/USAID
Vocational			
Girls	11,940	19%	MOE/UNESCO
Boys	50,901	81%	MOE/UNESCO

* Based on the consensus reached during the Seminar “Education in Iraq” held by MOE in Amman from 4-6 November 2003.

Enrolment and Attendance Rates

Review of enrolment figures over the last four decades indicates an excellent progress with increasing enrolment ratios until the 1980s. The effect of the deteriorating education system on enrolment became evident in the 1990s. The gross enrolment

ratio (GER) was estimated to be 107.8% in 1990/1991 dropping to 98.4% in 2001/2002. The Central Statistics Organization (CSO) provides the following figures on trends from 1990/1991 to 2001/2002:

Year	Enrolment Rate for Children 6-11 years
1990/1991	90.8% (93.9% for males and 87.7% for females)
2000/2001	87.3% (94.5% for males and 79.8% for females)
2001/2002	88.5% (93.6% for males and 83% for females)

Source: Central Statistical Organization, 2003

Based on the CSO data, only 72.8% of children who had entered first grade reached fifth grade in 2001/2002 compared to 75.6% in 1990/1991.

A KAP study conducted in 2002 revealed an enrolment rate in primary schools of 88% which is identical with the CSO estimates¹⁰. In the North, enrolment improved after 1995. The gross and net enrolment rates were reported to be 97% and 91% respectively in 1999. There are significant gender disparities.

The number of students enrolled in secondary schools increased more than three-fold, from 315,600 in 1971/1972 to 1,023,710 in 1990/1991. As indicated above, although the current figure is higher, given the high rate of population growth, enrolment levels were in decline.

Evidence of the decline in enrolment levels in secondary education is demonstrated by the decreasing net enrolment rate from 41.5% in 1990/1991 to 34.3% in 2001/2002 for intermediate schools (12-14 years). However it was reported to have increased from 10.8% in 1990/1991 to 13.9% in 2001/2002 for secondary schools (15-17 years). As in primary education, there are considerable gender disparities. The declining trend in enrolment is one indication of the rapidly deteriorating education indicators for Iraq compared with other countries of the region. UNESCO

¹⁰ Central Statistics Organization. 2003.

makes a comparison with the Jordanian trends over the last decades. The GER in Jordan was 44.6% in 1990/1991 compared with 47% in Iraq. Ten years later, Jordan doubled its GER to 87.7% while the ratio for Iraq declined. In 1999/2000, the net enrolment rate (children aged 12-17 in secondary school as a proportion of the age group in the population) was only 33% in Iraq compared to 75.9% in Jordan.

Comparison of enrolment ratios in Jordan and Iraq for 1990/1991 and 1999/2000

Country	Gross enrolment Ratio 1990/1991			Gross Enrolment Ratio 1999/2000			Net Enrolment Ratio 1999/2000		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Iraq	47.0	57.1	36.4	38.3	47.1	29.1	33.0	39.6	26.0
Jordan	44.6	43.7	45.6	87.7	86.4	89	75.9	73.4	78.5

Evidence also shows that school attendance rates have declined, reaching seriously low levels. Poverty, combined with deteriorating education standards, lack of textbooks and learning materials, and unmotivated teachers have resulted in a rising number of children out of school. According to a survey conducted in 2000, only 76% of children aged 6-11 were reported to be attending primary school¹¹. More than 31% of girls in this age group were out of schools, compared to about 18% of boys. The situation was worse in rural areas where more than 50% of girls are reported to be out of school along with 28% of boys.

The 2002 KAP study investigated the causes of poor school attendance. About 28% of mothers believed the cause was poor performance in school, 19% attributed it to poverty and inability to meet the cost of education supplies, while another 19% stated it was because of child labour.

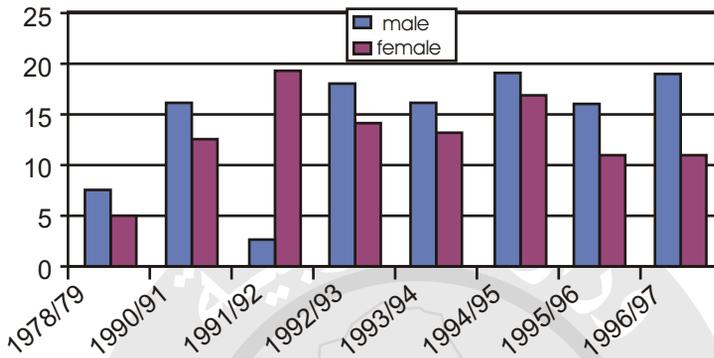
Repetition and Drop-out Rates

Two important indicators of performance are repetition rate (students obliged to repeat an entire school year) and drop-out rate (students dropping out of school altogether). The level of

¹¹ Central Statistical Organization and UNICEF. Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey. 2001

repetition in primary schools is high in Iraq. UNICEF reports that Iraq's repetition rate (14.5%) was among the highest in the Arab region in 1999/2000 where the median was around 7% (9% for boys, 6% for girls)¹¹.

Primary school Repetition Rates



Source: Iraq MIC 82, Multiple indlost or cluster survey 2000. Contract statist load organization and UNICEF Iraq. Baghdad 2001.

* Note: Presumed to be for control south only

In secondary schools, repetition rates rose from 26.5% in 1978/1979 to as high as 36% in 1991/1992. In 1999, the high rates persisted with 34% and 22% reported for intermediate and preparatory schools respectively¹². Repetition rates are generally lower in the North compared to the South/Centre (25% for intermediate and 22% for secondary schools).

Repetition may be attributed to the poor condition of schools, the shortage of textbooks and other educational supplies, and poverty which forces children to work in order to supplement their family income.

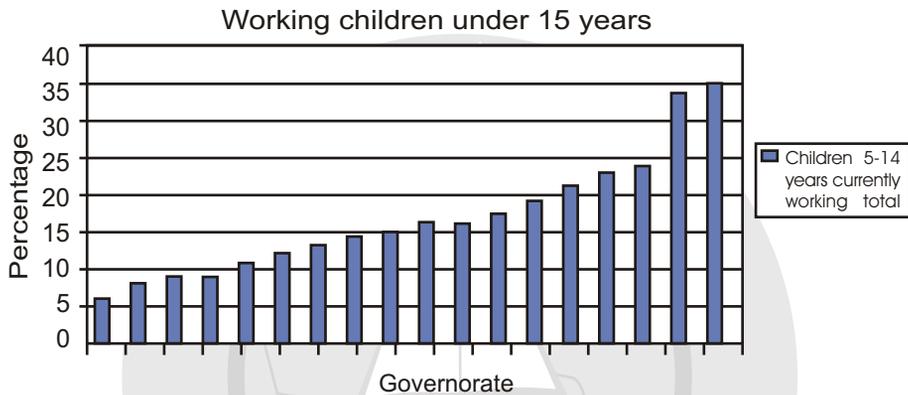
Generally speaking however, high repetition rates point to a general failure of the education system to care for the most vulnerable group of school children¹². It is clear that children have difficulties in meeting the minimum requirements to pass to a higher grade because of the low quality of education offered.

Drop-out rates (between school years) are also reported to be

¹² UNESCO. Situation Analysis of Education in Iraq. 2003

high. In 2000/2001, the number of children in grade 6 was only 45% of the number of children in grade 1. This could suggest that a major proportion of children left school, not only because of the poor quality of education but also due to adverse socioeconomic conditions.

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2¹³ revealed that over 10% of children aged 5-14 years were working in 2000. The highest rates were found in Babylon, Maysan, Salah Aldeen, Kirkuk and Wasit.



source: Iraq MIC 92, Multiple indicator cluster survey 2000.
Central statistical organization & UNICEF Iraq, Baghdad 2001

Vocational Schools

As mentioned before, vocational education is one of the tracks of secondary education. Students are admitted following successful completion of intermediate school. The objective is to train students and prepare them for various trades in agriculture, commerce, industry and home arts. The period of study is three years and students should successfully pass a national examination before graduation. Vocational schools suffer from outdated or complete lack of equipment, deteriorating infrastructure, and lack of appropriately trained staff.

¹³ Central Statistical Organisation and UNICEF, 2001.

The number of schools is 245 and the estimated number of students in vocational schools in 2002/2003 is 62,841. Enrolment has been declining in recent years partly due to change of policy from compulsory enrolment of a fixed proportion completing intermediate schooling to free choice now. The number of students reported for 1991/1992 was 124,479, almost double the number in 2002/2003. The North is an exception where the number of students increased by 24% from 1996/1997 to 2001/2002. Drop-out rates are high. In 2000/2001, more than 1000 students dropped out of vocational schools. Fields of study include agriculture, commerce, industry, and home arts.

There are currently 4,693 vocational teachers in Iraq. Teachers are usually trained in the University of Technology or colleges of agriculture and administration.

Vocational schools currently suffer from either lack of, or outdated, equipment, deteriorating infrastructure and lack of appropriately qualified teaching staff. Falling enrolment is probably the outcome of lack of infrastructure and teaching/training materials, inadequately qualified staff and poor planning. UNESCO conducted a labour market survey in 2000 in Suleimaniya which concluded that there was a wide disparity between the labour market needs and the courses offered in schools. The current vocational education system should be subjected to thorough and critical assessment and rebuilt to respond to the market needs and requirements of the new economic system in Iraq.

Evening (Night) Schools

The evening schools mainly exist as secondary schools or teachers preparation institutes. They provide an opportunity to learn and upgrade qualification for those who work during the day time. Admission is also allowed for those who fail for two consecutive years in ordinary schools. Evening schools also include vocational education classes.

Non-formal Education

The national campaign for the compulsory eradication of illiteracy

was initiated in 1978. People in the age range 15-45 had to enrol at literacy centres to complete the equivalent of grade 4 schooling in reading, writing, and math. Illiteracy decreased in that age group from 48.4% in 1978 to 19.9% in 1987. Thereafter, like other education sub-sectors, the campaign was neglected and the number of schools was gradually reduced. Enrolment in non-formal education dropped sharply to a currently negligible level. The substantial gains made in the 1970s and 1980s were lost. The literacy rates for the age group 15-45 years decreased to 73.6% in 2000.

A KAP survey conducted in 2002 on a nationally representative sample of 3510 households revealed that 62% of women aged 15 years and over could read easily (76% in urban areas and 57% in rural areas)¹⁴.

Data also suggest that female literacy rates dropped from 87% in 1985 to 49% in 1995. However in the above mentioned KAP survey, 62% of females 15 years and over could read easily in 2002. No accurate figures exist for 2003 but it is believed that literacy rates continued to worsen during the last decade. It can be stated that from the practical point of view the non-formal education sector no longer exists today.

Generally, available data clearly indicate that the efficiency of the education system has been declining during the last two decades. The effects of long years of mismanagement, political distortion, and inappropriate leadership.

Teachers Numbers and Quality

While precise data on the number of teachers are not available, the following table provides a reasonable estimate of the workforce, based on partial data gathered at different times.

¹⁴ Central Statistical Organization. 2003

Iraq School Statistics: Number of Teachers by Educational Level*

Educational level	Number of teachers	Source
	2,993	MOE/UNICEF
Kindergarten	206,953	MOE/UNICEF
Primary	74,68	UNESCO/USAID
Secondary	4,693	MOE/UNESCO
Vocational	2,984	MOE/UNESCO
Teacher Training	292,304	
TOTAL		

* Based on the consensus reached during the Seminar "Education in Iraq" held by MOE in Amman from 4-6 November 2003.

From the above figures, the overall student-teacher ratio is good and currently around 20, about 21 for primary education and 19 for secondary education. However, because of uneven distribution, there is a large variation between governorates and considerable differences between rural and urban areas within the same governorate. The following table, based on a survey conducted in summer 2003 on secondary schools by the RISE project, illustrates the student-teacher ratio for secondary schools ranges between 12 and 32. The average teachers per classrooms were 2.1 with a range between 1.7 and 3.1¹⁵. The survey did not include primary schools but such information is expected to be generated by the Ministry of Education survey which is currently being

¹⁵ RISE Secondary School Inventory (report in preparation) 2003.

Student/Teacher Ratio by Governorate

Governorate	Student per School	Teacher per School	Student/Teacher Ratio	Classrooms per School	Student per classroom	Teacher per classroom
Baghdad	587	26.4	22.2	15.3	38.4	1.7
dahuk	447	13.9	32.2	8.4	53.2	1.7
sulaymaniyah	500	16.5	30.3	9.0	55.6	1.8
muthanna	303	17.6	17.2	9.3	32.6	1.9
tameem	378	18.5	20.4	9.5	39.8	1.9
missan	335	19.3	17.4	9.5	35.3	2.0
ninewa	429	18.6	23.1	8.8	48.8	2.1
erbil	422	19.9	21.2	9.6	44.0	2.1
diyala	324	19.2	16.9	8.4	38.6	2.3
basrah	379	22.7	16.7	9.8	38.7	2.3
wassit	348	21.2	16.4	8.8	39.5	2.4
thi-Qar	332	19.7	16.9	8.1	41.0	2.4
najaf	397	25.1	15.8	10.2	38.9	2.5
kerbala	358	25.9	13.8	10.2	35.1	2.5
qadissiya	412	31.7	13.0	10.9	37.8	2.9
babil	413	34.5	12.0	11.1	37.2	3.1
Averages	434	22.3	19.5	10.6	40.9	2.1

conducted in collaboration with UNICEF.

Source: Revitalising Iraqi School Education (RISE): Secondary School Inventory. 2003

An equally important indicator related to the quality of education is the average number of pupils per class. Here again there is a considerable variation. Based on the above mentioned RISE survey of secondary schools, the average number of students per classroom was reported to be 41 with a range of 32-56. In primary schools the variation seems to be much more pronounced with some schools, according to MOE data, having to accommodate more than three times their normal capacity. In some areas in the South

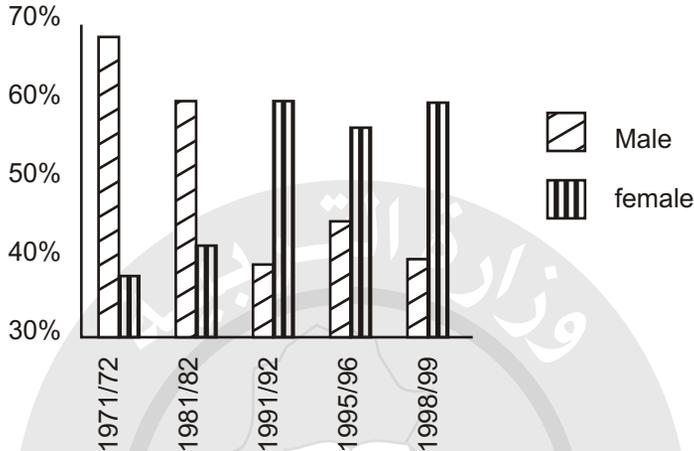
of Iraq, schools are very crowded and reports from some governorates indicate that more than 100 children may be placed in one class.

A continuing concern exists around the incomplete data on the teaching workforce. There is possibility that a certain number of teachers may be on the payroll and not assigned to classrooms. A survey is currently underway to hopefully clarify this situation. If there is a phantom workforce, the student teacher ratio will change.

Most primary school teachers are females. The proportion of

female teachers increased from 33.7% in 1971 to 72.5% in the Centre and South of Iraq in 2000¹⁶. In secondary schools, the rise in the proportion of female teachers was less dramatic (from 33.8% in 1971 to 56.7%).

Gender of Secondary School Teachers 1971-72 - 1998-99



Preparation of teachers takes place in the Teachers Training Institutes which have replaced the earlier Teachers Schools. There are currently 171 teachers training institutes or schools and 2,984 teachers working in them. As indicated before, there are two kinds of teachers' institutes: those that accept intermediate school graduates for a period of 5 years or others accepting secondary school graduates for a course of two years. The quality of basic training is variable but generally inadequate. A proportion of primary school teachers are graduates of secondary schools with only one year of training and some are graduates of secondary schools subjected to only a short period (3-6 months) of pre-service training. The proportion of primary school teachers with university qualification is extremely small and is estimated to be less than 5%. Generally, most primary school teachers are not adequately prepared to teach. In Jordan, in contrast, primary school teachers are required to obtain a university degree and adequate training in education.

¹⁶ UNESCO. Situation Analysis of Education in Iraq.

Inadequate basic training has been compounded by the lack of systems of in-service training. There has been virtually no systems or opportunities for continuing education. Teacher quality has therefore been declining steadily. Teacher's salaries decreased dramatically after the 1991 war to around US\$ 5-10 per month. Many qualified teachers left the system looking for better paid jobs within or outside the country. To compensate for the loss of teachers and to maintain schools, the government continued to recruit less qualified teachers. A proportion of teachers who remained in the system were forced to find an additional job or provide private tutoring to children whose parents can pay. Needless to say, such practices for obtaining a supplemental income have had an additional negative effect on an already deteriorating education system. Teachers are generally demoralised and unmotivated.

The quality of teaching has not been given adequate attention. The teaching methodology used in the school system in Iraq has been another area of neglect. Teaching in Iraq relies heavily on textbooks and is often characterized by memorization without understanding. The absence of libraries makes the writing of essays difficult. The absence of science laboratories means students do not have experience with experiments or practical applications. Effective lesson plans that rely on student discussion or interaction between teacher and student or among students are rare.

Physical Infrastructure of Schools: Assessment of the Current Condition

Numbers

The number of school buildings is estimated to be about 15,000 while the total number of schools is more than 18,500. A proportion of schools work in two or three shifts and many buildings therefore host two or three schools. The figures below were agreed upon as reliable estimates by the MOE and collaborating agencies in a meeting held in Amman in November 2003.

Iraq School Statistics: Number of Schools and School Buildings*

Schools

(Sessions)	Number	Source
Kindergarten	631	MOE/UNICEF
Primary	13,413	MOE/UNICEF
Secondary	4,155	MOE/UNESCO
Vocational	258	MOE/UNESCO
Teacher Training	171	MOE/UNESCO

TOTAL 18,628

Buildings

Kindergarten	631	MOE/UNICEF
Primary	11,066	MOE/UNICEF
Secondary	2,968	MOE/UNESCO/USAID
Vocational	158	MOE/UNESCO
Teacher Training	101	MOE/UNESCO

TOTAL 14,924

*Based on the consensus reached during the Seminar "Education in Iraq" held by MOE in Amman from 4-6 November 2003.

As indicated above, the physical infrastructure of the education system in Iraq has been neglected for more than two decades.

Damage to School Buildings

The situation has been compounded by the great damage inflicted upon the system following the destruction and looting that took place in March 2003 and subsequent months. The damage affected schools as well as other facilities like administration buildings, warehouses, the printing press and factories. The main warehouses were looted and destroyed. Stored paper and stocked textbooks were either stolen or burned. The Examination and Control centre of the MOE was looted and damaged. The main MOE building, one of the most sophisticated government buildings in Baghdad, was repeatedly looted and then burned and severely damaged. The Educational Management Information System (EMIS) was irreversibly damaged with complete loss of all computers, equipment and data.

MOE and UNICEF assessed the magnitude of damage to school buildings. According to the data generated by this exercise, more than one sixth of Iraqi school buildings (2,751 schools) were looted, damaged, or burned. More than 2,400 schools were

reported to be damaged due to looting, 146 were reported to be damaged due to bombing and 197 due to burning. Ammunition existed in 138 schools and weapons in 101. The percentage of schools damaged in Baghdad during the events was 21% (466 out of 2.213). The degree of damage varied. Looting covered ceiling fans, lighting, furniture, school desks, fences, doors, glass, blackboards, cabinets, electric cables, school radio stations, telephones, refrigerators, air coolers and conditioners.



The neglect of the last two decades and the additional damage following the 2003 war has led to severe deterioration in the state of the physical infrastructure of the education system in Iraq.



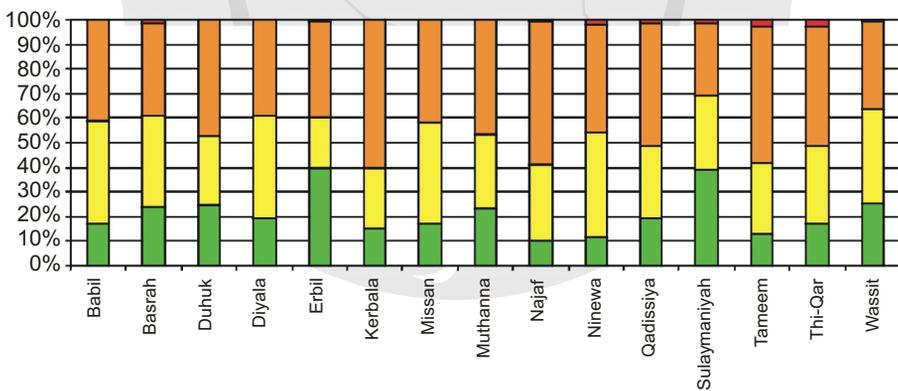
According to statistics available in the MOE, 64% of school buildings required maintenance and rehabilitation in 1999/2000. The situation has been progressively getting worse since then. Based on the surveys conducted in 2003, about 80% of buildings require repair.



The degree of school damage varies between governorates. The RISE survey, conducted between June and August 2003 on 3231 secondary schools, showed that, in the majority of governorates, less than 30% of buildings are in reasonably good condition (green) and the majority are either moderately (yellow) or severely (orange) damaged. A small proportion was found to be in such a bad condition that renders them unsafe.

Degree of Damage in Secondary schools per governorate Rise Survey 2003

(Green: reasonably good condition; yellow: moderately damaged; orange: severely damaged; red: require complete rebuilding)



Health Standards

The majority of our schools have no access to the minimal standards of hygiene and sanitation. UNESCO reports that only 32% of primary schools visited by UN inspectors in 2002 had a satisfactory water supply and 52% of toilets did not meet the basic standards of hygiene.

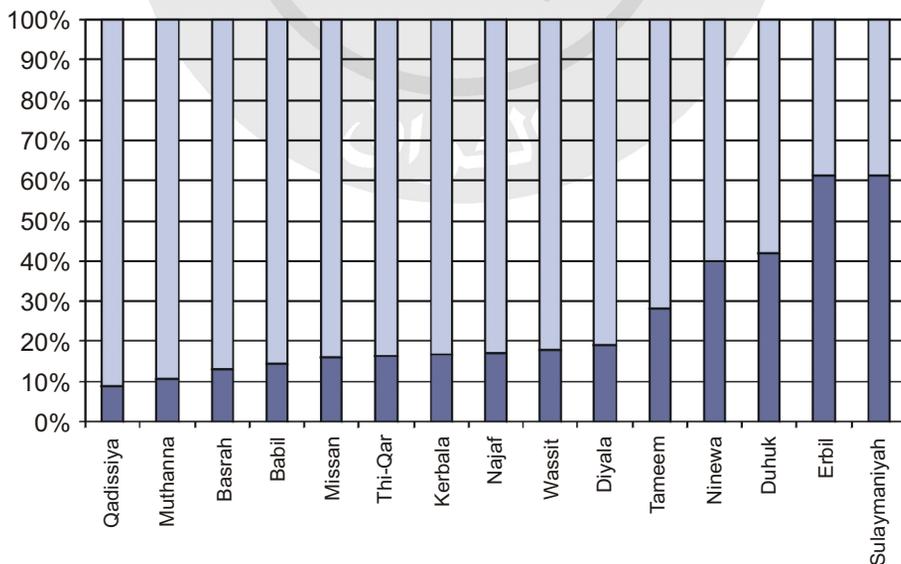


Only one quarter of schools visited had garbage collection bins and in the remaining schools, garbage was observed scattered around the corridors and across the compound.

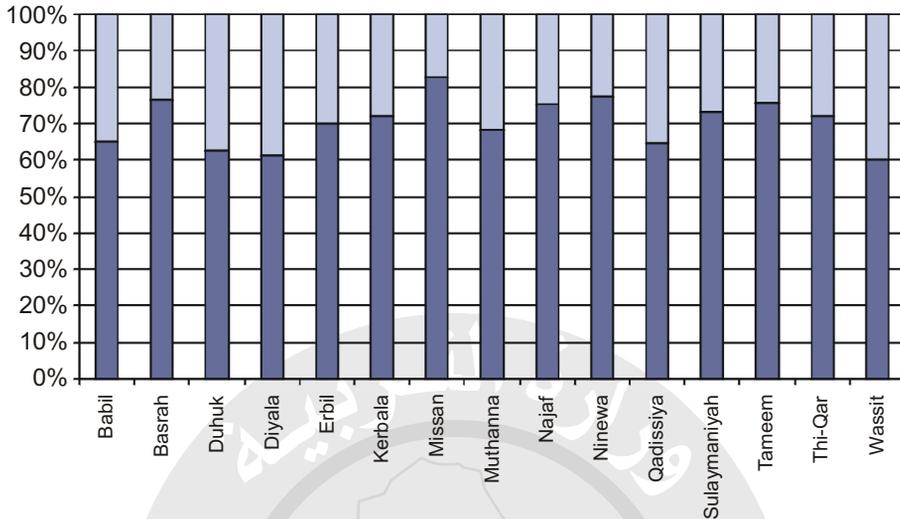
The RISE survey on secondary schools, provided additional information; the survey which included more than 3000 schools in all governorates (except Anbar and Salah Aldeen) revealed that less than 20% of schools in the central and southern governorates had functioning toilets and that between 60% and over 80% of schools had sewage or garbage problems. Another survey, conducted in collaboration with UNESCO, revealed similar results.

Percentage of secondary schools with functioning toilets

RISE Secondary School Inventory (2003)



Percentage of schools with Sewage or Garbage Problems
RISE Secondary School Inventory (2003)



Shortage of School Buildings

Out of the 11,939 schools requiring repair, more than 1,800 schools have been renovated during the second half of 2003. Thus more than 10,000 schools currently require repair, half of which require major reconstruction or demolition and total rebuilding. In addition to the constraints mentioned above, it should be stated that there is a considerable shortage of school buildings. A significant proportion of schools work in two or three shifts and the number of hours students are in school is therefore limited. This restricts access to education, limits the use of effective methods of teaching/learning, deprives school from physical education and art lessons as well as extracurricular activities. There is also no time or space for parents/teachers interaction. In the RISE survey of secondary schools, about 50% of schools were operating on more than one shift a day. In nearly half the cases of multiple shifts, two different schools (with different heads and teachers) were operating in the same building. To overcome this problem and the overcrowding of children in classes, new schools have to be built. The current plan is to build 4,500 schools over the next 4 years.

School Supplies, Libraries, and Physical Education Facilities

There is a severe shortage of school supplies like textbooks, teaching/learning aids and libraries. Even simple requirements like blackboards are missing in many schools. In the RISE survey¹⁷, over half of the schools and 47% of schools in Baghdad had no usable blackboards and 10% have no usable desks. The same surveys confirms sever shortages across the country. Libraries do not exist in about two thirds of schools. Of those who do have libraries, the contents are very poor. There are no science labs in over 50% of secondary schools. Most schools have no lab sinks.

Over 50% of secondary schools in Baghdad have no physical education facilities, such as open playgrounds.

Almost no schools have computers. Only two schools in the RISE survey reported having an internet access.

Building and Reconstruction Needs

The figures concerning the proportion of schools requiring repair were also discussed during the Inter-Agency Meeting held in Amman in November 2003 and the following table shows the consensus reached:

Iraq School Statistics*: Number of schools requiring repair

5,970	Buildings requiring limited repairs (40%)
4,626	Buildings that require major repair and reconstruction (31%)
1,343	Buildings that need to be demolished and rebuilding (9%)
11,939	Total number of schools needing repair

Curriculum What Is It Now?

The term curriculum means coursework. It includes the required courses and the topics covered in each course. It includes

¹⁷ RISE Secondary Schools Inventory 2003 (report in preparation)

textbooks and other instructional materials. At this level, curriculum begins to overlap with teaching practices because curriculum can also be said to include lesson plans, whether created by teachers or those provided to them by an external source.

Textbooks are an essential component of the Iraqi school system. Other curricular materials such as collections of supplementary reading selections, web-based or CD-based information or lessons, or even libraries are, in the words of the UNICEF 2003 Watching Brief for education, “virtually non-existent.”

In the case of Iraq, even before students go into specialized course tracks at the preparatory level (scientific/technical; humanities; teacher-training; vocational), students have a stronger emphasis on mathematics and science courses than one would find in other countries.

This curricular emphasis might seem modern on the surface. But in premodern fashion, it reflects the policies of a despotic government rather than in a modern way, offering free choices to the Iraqi people in economic and political life.

In a totalitarian regime, ideological politics infects everything. Even science and foreign-language instruction were weighed down with ideological propaganda. History and civics materials pushed the agenda of Ba'ath-led secular slogans and criticism of Persians and traditional Arab monarchies. In Islamic studies, the Shia views and beliefs were totally excluded.

All textbooks and teaching aids were centrally and monopolistically designed by the national Ministry and imposed on the schools. The High Committee for Development of Curricula was responsible for the design and revision of curriculum. However, UNICEF reports that, as of 2003, the primary-school curriculum had “not changed for over two decades. Curricula were “centrally decided” and had become a politically “highly sensitive” issue.

Problems Facing the Education Sector in Iraq

Based on the situation analysis, the following represent major constraints that impede reconstruction and reform. The aim is not to provide an exhaustive list of problems but to identify areas where corrective action is needed.

Politicization and Rigid Government Control of the Education System

All aspects of the education system have been rigidly controlled, aggressively politicized and used to support the objectives of the ruling regime.

The government is the sole provider of education and there is no significant role for the community in policy making or choices among education institutions. Limited parental involvement in the education system.

The confidence of Iraqis in the quality of their education system has been progressively eroded over the last three decades.

Inefficient Management of the Education Sector

Lack of a rational process of strategic planning and evidence-based decision making. There is no management information system for education. Available data are frequently contradictory or inaccurate and, thus, cannot (and do not) serve planning. Past practice depended more on the impressions and political negotiating power of the Minister than on the quality of information or analysis provided to decision makers.

The personnel in educational planning are not adequately trained and experience and capacity in information technology is very limited. Thus, the normal linkage between good management and the effective use of information has often been missing in the Ministry of Education.

Limited capacity in management, budgeting and finance.

Management practices are bureaucratic and often outdated. Policies and decisions are made without making use of information and research and without consultation with the officials who are expected to implement the decisions. There is a top-down approach to decision-making and management and ineffective coordination between the education sub-sectors. Consistent monitoring and evaluation is absent.

Limited capacity in budgeting and finance. The Ministry budget is not based on accurate situation analysis and assessment of needs, rather allocation of funds is based primarily on past practice. The finance system is equally obsolete and bureaucratic.

Corruption and financial irregularities are widespread. This has been the outcome of years of corrupt management coupled with severe decline in staff salaries. This problem is a general one involving almost all Iraq institutions; for too many years, the country's wealth was squandered by the ruling clique.

Physical Infrastructure

School buildings are deteriorating, teaching aids are absent, and there are severe shortages of library books and science labs. There is poor school sanitation and little access to potable water. No funds are allocated to regular building and system maintenance.

Schools usually lack even the most basic sports playgrounds and recreational space. Where there is space, it is often not paved or groomed for sports.

Classrooms are overcrowded; a substantial proportion of schools work in double or triple shifts.

Human Resources Development

The personnel system has not encouraged excellence, innovation or change. Rather, it rewarded those who followed

established procedures, and remained loyal to the regime and to those in positions of authority. In this setting, staff members were not encouraged to raise questions about policy or management.

Objective monitoring and evaluation of staff work is very weak. There is no effective performance appraisal system. Incentives for good performance and innovative achievements are minimal or non-existent.

The teaching force is stagnant. Salaries of teachers fell precipitously during the last 13 years. This, together with the deteriorating environment in the education sector, resulted in large numbers of qualified teachers leaving to earn their living elsewhere. Because there is no viable retirement programme, teachers remain in their positions well past the required retirement age of 63. New teachers have difficulty being placed as well.

Access to Education

There is growing concern that enrolment rates are declining and drop-outs are increasing particularly for females and children in rural areas. Based on preliminary data which have not been validated, more than 800,000 children (6-11 years) were not attending primary schools in 2000.

Choices for students not successful in the basic education programme are very limited.

Access to education has been hampered by poverty, which pushes children to search for work, particularly after primary school.

Access to early childhood education (pre-school and kindergarten) is extremely limited and very few children are enrolled.

Literacy rates appear to be worsening and from the practical point of view, non-formal education is currently non-existent.

The low female literacy has a negative impact on empowerment of women and their role in sustainable development.

Quality of Education

The quality of education has deteriorated. Factors responsible for the decline in quality include low level of education financing, deteriorating infrastructure, lack of minimum standards in the form of teaching-learning materials (such as textbooks, libraries, laboratories), outdated curricula, and overcrowding.

Staff member are unmotivated, demoralised, and poorly trained.

Teaching methods continue to be based on lecture and recall with no emphasis on analysis, synthesis or other forms of knowledge application.

Innovation and initiatives to improve quality outside the rigid state-run education system were generally not encouraged. Al Mawhoubeen and Mutamayezeen schools represent a very limited exception.

Teachers Training

Basic training and preparation of teachers is weak. Only 5% of primary school teachers have university degrees.

Skills in communication and information technology are seriously limited.

Professional development programmes are lacking; opportunities for continuing education and clinical supervision are scarce and the teaching workforce is isolated from the outside world.

There is no effective programme for retention and placement of teachers and there are no incentives for rural areas. A large number of qualified and well trained teachers have been lost; they have been replaced by less qualified teachers.

Accreditation or evaluation systems do not exist.

Curriculum

The curriculum can be described as both narrow and shallow and has not been thoroughly updated for two decades. It is often rigid and lacks emphasis on in-depth understanding, reasoning, or analysis and synthesis.

The curriculum is highly politicized. Ideology and propaganda are embedded throughout all texts covering every required subject.

There is no effective adaptation to the labour market

Instructional Methods

Methods are predominantly based on passive learning and memorization without understanding.

The basic requirements of teaching and learning like library books, laboratory equipment, classroom supplies, and technology-based teaching aids are absent.

There is an absence of regional and international interaction with peers.

Textbooks and teaching/learning materials are often inadequate.

Examinations

The national examination system appears to be highly valued by Iraqis but there is currently no way to correlate student success with individual teachers. Gains in students' testing results are not the basis for significant rewards to teachers and administrators. Thus, key employees of the system do not have incentives to be more effective and productive.

The current examination system doesn't encourage initiatives

and innovation. For example, better lesson plans or alternative textbooks are difficult to evaluate or adopt.

New methods of testing and objective evaluation that have a proven value are not being used.

Attendance and other non-academic factors are used to calculate the final test grades and these factors may be arbitrary and obscure the actual measure of learning.

Vocational Education

There is lack of adequate buildings, equipment, and appropriately qualified staff.

Existing programmes do not seem to respond to the market needs and requirements of the new economic system in Iraq.

Major Policy Directions

The new education system in Iraq will be guided by the following major policy Directions:

Access: Reaching universal access to quality education; eliminating drop-outs and ensuring free access to basic education irrespective of ethnic origin or socioeconomic status; promoting access to life-long learning

Equity: Eliminating disparities between girls and boys, regional and rural/urban disparities, ethnic and socio-economic differences

Excellence and relevance: Upgrading quality to compete at the international level and increasing relevance to local needs, labour market, and sustainable development

Citizenship and Governance: Depoliticising education and ensuring the independence of education; promoting human rights, freedom of thought and expression, tolerance, and national unity

Participation: Strengthening community involvement in planning, executing, and evaluating the education system; achieving closer coordination with higher education and other relevant sectors; encouraging the contribution of the private sector to quality education

Institutional management: Changing to evidence-based planning, performance-driven evaluation, and decentralised management; overcoming corruption

Priorities and Strategies for the Renewal of the Education Sector

Implementing the above mentioned policy directions and addressing the problems facing the education system in Iraq is a formidable task and will require both political will and a sustainable commitment at the highest level of the national government and its partners in the global community. Those at the uppermost level of the government structure in the new Iraq should be entirely convinced of the need to place education on the top of its priority list. Restoring Iraq's education system to at least the level of the early 1980s must be at the heart of the reconstruction effort. But reconstruction alone will not be enough. It is also essential to introduce effective strategies and concepts of teaching and learning as well as educational management to renew and engage the system and enable it to compete at the international level. In the rebuilding process, the most immediate task is to separate politics from education, introduce the values honouring human rights, and to intensify work to achieve the targets set by the international community under Education For All and the Millennium Development Goals. By achieving universal access to education and improving its quality, Iraq will be investing in the human capital required to revitalize the economy and break the poverty cycle.

Commitment at the Highest Level Is Crucial

Urgent government action is crucial. During the last few months, Iraq's interim policy and finance officials have argued that education can wait for a few years while the government manages more pressing priorities like security, oil industry, and restructuring the economy. They are wrong. While it is imperative to address without delay these other priorities, our policy makers must recognize that a good education delivery system sets up an effective route to security, reconciliation, tolerance and social cohesion. Investment in education is the most important route to poverty reduction and it contributes to better outcomes in other priority areas like health, women's development, water and sanitation, and nutrition. Furthermore, the transition to a democratic society will be very much dependent upon the achievements of the proposed educational reforms. Therefore, delays in addressing gaps and inequities in education will hamper the achievement of progress in these other areas.

Appropriate Public Funding Is Vital

Other officials argue that the level of public spending devoted to education is not important to education outcomes. Based on the UNDP Human Development Report (HDR) 2003¹⁸, they too are misguided. Although efficient spending is critical, the amount of spending is also important for achieving the desired outcomes.

Experience in countries with high performance in education show that remarkable progress can be made within relatively short periods of time if additional resources are effectively invested. Experience in these countries also shows that political commitment should not only be reflected in raising allocations for public spending to education but also in equitable distribution of those funds. The HDR indicates that spending has focused, in these countries, on basic rather than higher education.

The relationship between the education budget and human development is clear. In countries with the highest level of human development, median spending on public education is 4.8% of

¹⁸ UNDP. Human development Report 2003.

GDP, compared with 4.2% for medium human development countries and only 2.8% in low human development countries¹⁸⁵. In Iraq, public spending on education has been very low during the last 13 years but even with a relatively larger education budget for 2004, the education share of the GDP will still be too small. If the education budget for 2004 remains as it is now, the expenditure per student will be around \$ 100, compared with more than \$ 600 in the 1980s in Iraq and more than \$ 5000 in some high-performing countries.

The current education budget will only cover the cost of salaries and the operating expenditures of the MOE institutions. There is no component for reconstruction. Budget planners in the CPA and Ministry of Finance have assumed that funds required for reconstruction (estimated at one billion dollars per year for 2004-2007) will be provided by donors. Although education has been high on the priority list set by countries pledging to support the rebuilding of Iraq, it is unlikely that donor funds will match the amounts needed and those funds may not be available until late 2004. Thus, additional Iraqi funding for rehabilitation of physical infrastructure and for basic supplies like textbooks is essential.

Strategies for the Next Four Years

It is clear that there are enormous challenges en route to rebuilding and renewing the education system in Iraq. A clear vision develops through good understanding of the current situation, careful analysis of existing problems, and adoption of the five policy directions mentioned above. These policy directions commit the Government to adopt the following strategies:

Strengthening the performance and managerial capacity of the education sector particularly in areas like decentralization, training and capacity building of staff, evidence-based planning, modernizing administration and finance functions, establishing performance appraisal systems, and anti-corruption measures.

Upgrading educational institutions to respond to the full range of teaching/learning activities and to meet the minimum standards

of health and sanitation.

Reforming the education system and expanding it to ensure universal access particularly for the poor and the disadvantaged to ensure that school children and adults acquire the knowledge and skills they need to compete in the global economy and participate in national development.

Establishing better quality and higher educational standards as well as accountability measures.

Improving the basic preparation and in-service training of teachers and upgrading their skills

The Need to Prioritize and to Focus on Cost-effective Approaches

Implementing the above strategies will address most of the constraints from which the current system suffers. Our task is to identify the most effective strategies for improving quality and efficiency for education for all with the limited resources available. Sound prioritization and adopting feasible and cost-effective approaches are therefore essential. It is also crucial to learn from international experience particularly in countries with similar resources.

Where Are We Now and What Have We Achieved So Far?

Our journey began in early September 2003 with an immediate priority to re-open schools and to prepare for the return of children to their classrooms.

At this stage, the MOE was not functioning and the previously large and sophisticated building complex housing the MOE had been completely looted, burned, destroyed and was still inhabited by looters. A small number of staff was working to deal with very urgent issues in a separate MOE facility, the looted and damaged Training Institute building under primitive and very difficult

conditions. These few members of staff were working in a highly chaotic environment, surrounded by huge crowds of people who were suffering from inadequate services, protesting, and often shouting for attention. Words of dissatisfaction and even threats were heard. This was the scene when the newly appointed Minister of Education visited the only operational building in the Ministry on 4 September 2004.

Other buildings were either unusable or occupied by local councils or the military. There were only 3 staff members in the central MOE assigned to key positions on an interim basis, covering areas of administration and finance, school buildings and examinations. Their work was supervised by the CPA advisers and they were able to allow resumption of schools in April and conduct successfully the final year examinations under very difficult conditions. There was no leadership in key Directorates like Basic Education, Educational Supervision, Curricula, and Training. Directors General in governorates had been either appointed by the local governors or military leadership or “elected”. Looting continued to take place in some areas. A very small minority of MOE staff were back to work on any kind of regular basis.

The new MOE leadership had multiple immediate tasks: to find a building for the Minister to work, make a call for key staff to get back to work after months of isolation and to restore the confidence of people in the MOE institutions. Other priorities were to intensify efforts to renovate as many schools as possible, to provide new textbooks without the political slogans and propaganda that infected almost every single textbook, to coordinate for better security for school children and to consider and reconsider leadership assignment to key positions. The agenda was heavy and there was hardly enough time (less than four weeks) for schools to open. The prevailing working environment was difficult, dominated by disorder, lack of reliable sources of information, widespread corruption, rumours, accusations, and general feelings of frustration and mistrust. Needless to say, it will take a long time to permanently remedy this state of affairs.

A temporary headquarters was established for the MOE during the

second week of September and several new Directors General were appointed in key positions on an interim basis.

By the beginning of the school year on October 1, more than 1.500 schools had been renovated. By the end of the calendar year, more than 1.800 buildings have been renovated. In November, a small grant programme was initiated in collaboration with the RISE project to deal with schools which require urgent repairs (broken doors and windows, electricity and water repairs). About 280 schools are included in a new approach to this funding which gives a role for the schools and the local community.

At the same time, USAID had arranged through contracts with UNICEF and the RISE project the delivery of student desks, teachers tables, chalkboards, and other school supplies for primary and secondary students.

Following a relatively uneventful resumption of schools and return of children to their classrooms, the MOE started a process of data collection and analysis. Based on the situation analysis, the strategies of the MOE were outlined. A four year plan for reconstruction has been developed (Annex 2).

In the area of teachers training, a training programme for secondary school teachers was initiated, as part of the RISE project, in September 2003. The plan is to prepare 700 trainers by subjecting selected teachers, supervisors and administrators to an intensive one-week training in instructional methods, classroom practices and citizenship. These trainers are expected to train the rest of the teaching force in secondary education. Training of the trainers will be completed by the end of January 2004.

Task forces were established within the MOE to both engage and guide the intellectual ownership of the Ministry staff in the critical re-thinking of the education system particularly in the areas of the philosophy of the new education system, restructuring MOE institutions, and curriculum reform. The outcome of the work of the internal task forces which were led by the Minister of Education was subjected to further discussion by education specialists and

experts outside the MOE particularly from Higher Education as well as representatives of political parties.

A new more effective structure for the Ministry of Education has been developed (Annex 3).

A working paper containing proposed directions of the new education system has been developed as a tool to initiate a process of national debate and consensus building. The paper also contains a list of questions which need to be addressed (see below). Three workshops were organised in December 2003, outside the MOE, to discuss the paper as part of the debate process. Participants included education experts and representatives of political parties and civil society organisations. A national seminar was held on 3 January 2004 to discuss the process of education reform and the MOE strategy for the next four years. The seminar was attended by the Chairman and some members of the Governing Council (GC), representatives of other Ministries and sectors, political parties, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), education experts as well as MOE key staff from Baghdad and other governorates.

Short- and Medium-Term Plans

Based on the situation analysis and the strategies mentioned above, our agenda has been set on the following short and medium term priorities:

1. Updating and improving the quality of data for evidence-based planning and establishing the education management information system (EMIS)
2. Implementing the new structure of the MOE and upgrading its management capacity
3. Rebuilding the physical infrastructure of the education system particularly school buildings
4. Re-orienting the teaching staff and developing a comprehensive programme for teachers training, focusing on

instructional and learning methods as well as citizenship

5. Reaching consensus on the future shape of the Iraqi education system and initiating the process of curriculum reform.

Addressing these five priority areas includes a wide range of plans which will be implemented within a time-frame of four years. This section of the document will provide an outline of the main plans. Other projects aiming to improve access and quality of education are being planned in parallel with special focus given to education during the early childhood period, adult education, and life-long learning.

Updating and Improving Data Collection and Establishing the EMIS

There are substantial gaps in the reliability and accuracy of data on the education system in Iraq. Qualitative data are essential for a comprehensive education reform process and for planning and evaluation. Data on education indicators, rehabilitation needs, quality and capacity of the teacher training infrastructure, and assessment of the curricula are specially needed.

The available data on the Iraqi education system were carefully reviewed. Data, generated by MOE in collaboration with UN agencies were found to be contradictory and inconsistent in many areas. A consensus on basic characteristics of the Iraqi education system was reached in a meeting organised by MOE in Amman in November 2003. Participants at this meeting were representatives of all international agencies with existing collaboration in Iraq in the area of Education (Annex 4).

- An extensive baseline survey with a standardised methodology has been planned in collaboration with UNICEF, and coordination with UNESCO, and USAID. The survey will be implemented by the MOE in January 2004. Survey teams in Baghdad and all other governorates were trained in December 2003. The survey results will be analysed and published in February 2004 to provide the baseline for periodic data collection in the future. It will also serve as the framework for the MOE's state-of-the-art EMIS.

- A project for the establishment of EMIS has been initiated in collaboration with USAID. The project is currently based in the temporary MOE headquarters building. According to the plan, the first phase of the EMIS, which will be similar to the system already established in the North will be established by the end of March 2004. A more elaborate version will be operational in September 2004. EMIS will ensure the production of relevant, reliable and timely information for planning and policy development and this is the initial step in an academic accountability system. Specifically, EMIS will help monitor access and equity in terms of school enrolment, and improving internal efficiency in terms of attendance, retention or dropout, and completion, including accountability for children in targeted municipalities, not participating in the school system. The system is also indispensable for planning and monitoring of school rehabilitation and construction plans.

- Establishing the EMIS will go hand in hand with similar efforts to join the information and communication technology (ICT) revolution and introducing cost-effective applications into the Iraqi school system. While selected schools will be established during 2004-2005 as model ICT centres, others will be gradually equipped with cost-effective ICT technology over the next 4 years. The plan for the next four years will also include the establishment of community ICT training centres in all governorates.

Restructuring the MOE and Upgrading its Management Capacity

The Ministry of Education is developing the capacity to meet the challenges it faces by streamlining and restructuring the organizational management and recruiting the management talents required for achieving these commitments. Based on the work of the task force on restructuring, a new organizational structure for the MOE has been proposed with the aim of providing a more effective vehicle for meeting the current needs of the new system (Annex 3).

- The new structure will be implemented in February 2004 and appointments of key MOE officials leading the new organizational

set up will be announced then.

The future MOE should adopt an evidence-based planning and evaluation process. Annual plans should contain a description of school goals, priorities, targets, initiative and performance indicators. National benchmarks in key performance areas related to school success should be adopted. Examples include (a) student learning outcomes in mother-tongue, science, and mathematics at several points in schooling (b) parental, teacher and student satisfaction with school (c) student attendance and (d) student completion of schooling.

It is imperative that a coherent performance management system be implemented so that there are clear links between what managers do and what outcomes the Ministry is aiming to achieve.

- An implementation plan for decentralization and change of management will be developed in the first half of 2004 and will be implemented at all levels of the education system in 2005.

Rebuilding the Physical Infrastructure of the Education System

As mentioned in an earlier part of this document, the lack of maintenance and damage affecting the physical infrastructure, particularly school buildings is huge. We estimate that about 12,000 schools require repair; half requiring either major reconstruction or demolition and complete rebuilding.

School buildings must have the minimum quality requirements. Our plan in this area gives priority to repairing the schools damaged by neglect, war, and under-investment. The serious congestion that many schools suffer from and the double or triple shifts that operate in a large proportion of schools will be addressed by building extra classrooms.

- The MOE has adopted, in coordination with the World Bank and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), a comprehensive plan for reconstruction to be implemented over 4 years (2004-2007). The plan, which has been used as the basis

for donor collaboration, is included in Annex 2.

On the basis of this plan, the MOE will need, over the next four years, an estimated amount of \$ 3.2 billion in rehabilitation/ investment costs. The funding needs for 2004 is about \$ 782 million.

During the Donor's conference, held in Madrid in October 2003, a large number of countries have made pledges to support the rebuilding of Iraq and many of them included education in their list of priority sectors they wish to support. Funding from the USA is the first to arrive but it will only cover a small part of the 2004 reconstruction plan.

- A reconstruction plan has been developed with CPA and USAID and will be used to rehabilitate 1000 schools in 2004 using US funding.

- An emergency support grant has also been negotiated with the WB and part of the programme of collaboration with the WB will support reconstruction which is expected to cover 1500-2000 schools.

- Reconstruction project proposals have also been submitted by the MOE to other donors.

Re-orienting the Teaching Staff and Developing a Comprehensive Programme for Teachers Training

Reform of the teacher training system, including pre and in-service training mechanisms is a top priority. Our plans include rehabilitation and capacity building of the Educational Training and Development Institute and the network of training centres in Iraq as an integral part of the training initiative.

A training programme for secondary school teachers was initiated, in collaboration with USAID, in September 2003. The training focuses on instructional methods, classroom practices with emphasis on methods that engage students in their learning, foster interactive questioning between teacher and student and

students themselves, so that students are encouraged to apply their knowledge through analysis, synthesis, and argument, employ various audio-visual devices and promote participation and respect for others. The programme has prepared over 700 master trainers who will be responsible for training the remaining teachers through 5-day training courses conducted in all governorates. These trainers will train 32,000 teachers during the first quarter of 2004.

Another nationwide programme of equal quality is now being developed for primary school teachers in collaboration with USAID and other donors. Our strategy aims to ensure that in-service training of teachers covers the following three areas:

- Instructional and learning methods; classroom practices.
- Citizenship
- Introduction of ICT in schools.

Reaching Consensus on the Future Shape of the Iraqi Education System and Initiating the Process of Curriculum Reform

Iraqis expect a high quality education system which is able to respond effectively to their aspirations in a more prosperous future and a cohesive and democratic society. In determining the shape of the future education system, the following basic principles have been adopted:

1. Education reform should be based on an objective analysis of the situation and clear diagnosis of the limitations and constraints of the current system.
2. Education reform should extend beyond the Ministry of Education boundaries to involve all sectors of the Iraqi society
3. Decisions related to curriculum reform should be purely Iraqi and will be consistent with the values, culture, and heritage of Iraqis.

We have discussed the future shape of the education system.

What will it attempt to achieve and how will it be different from the old system? As an outcome of a series of discussions with education experts and MOE staff held between September and November 2003, the following features have been proposed:

Ensuring enlightened religious education

Developing a solid Iraqi character based on sound behaviour and healthy lifestyles

Strengthening values like constitutional democracy, freedom of thought and expression, human rights, justice, and tolerance

Affirming education as a basic right that is accessible to all in order to eliminate all forms of deprivation, particularly for girls and the poor

Upgrading the quality of education as the key component of education reform; adopting teaching and learning methods with proven efficacy and a quality evaluation and accountability system

Investing in early childhood education as a fundamental aspect of reform

Fostering life-long education as a crucial strategy to combat illiteracy and provide the knowledge and skills required by a highly competitive global employment market

Promoting self learning as an important individual responsibility so that citizens continuously seek knowledge and skills and improve productivity

Investing in modern communication methods and information technology

Although no major disagreement is expected about the

importance of these features, there are many other important issues and questions which require in-depth discussion. What outcomes do we expect from the new education system? What political, social, and cultural challenges face the new system? How can we achieve life-long learning? How can we achieve a balance between unity and diversity, the rights of individuals and public interests, national harmony and the aspirations of ethnic and religious groups? How should we teach religion? How can we promote the accountability of the system?

The quality and outcome of the education system affect all Iraqi individuals and families. It is therefore crucially important that these basic issues be discussed as widely as possible. A process of national debate is essential.

- The process of debate has been initiated and our plan is to continue discussions with other government sectors, a wide range of representatives of Iraqi communities, political parties, and religious groups. At the end of the process, by April 2004, a document, containing the outcome of the debate and the consensus reached, will be prepared and endorsed. Part of this document will include the methodology and time-frame for curriculum reform. Reform will include a major redesign of the curricula at the primary, secondary and non-formal education levels, design and inclusion of new non-formal education programmes, distance learning, and literacy programme, a new vocational and technical education system that takes into account the new needs of the labour market in Iraq, as well as global standards and know-how in vocational training. Education reform will also include changes in management of the system towards greater decentralization, community ownership, more effective performance, and objective monitoring and evaluation.

Annex 2

An outline for the action plan on reconstruction of the physical infrastructure (with estimated cost in US \$ millions)

Component	2004	2005-2007	Total
Repair of school buildings ¹	105	266	371
Demolishing and rebuilding new schools ²	80	240	320
Additional classrooms, toilets & PA facilities ³	33	102	135
New schools ⁴	350	1,225	1,575
Lab equipment/school furniture	55	126	181
Rehabilitating & equipping TVE	49	122	171
Textbooks	79	270	349
School supplies	33	99	132
Total	784	2,450	3,234

1. 80% of school buildings require repair. Forty percent is planned to be rehabilitated in 2004. Average cost is \$35,000

2. 1343 schools will require demolition and rebuilding. Cost of each is estimated at \$240,000

3. Addition of 2-6 classrooms, toilets, and physical education facilities for 3000 schools. Cost of each estimated at \$45,000

4. 4500 New schools to eliminate the over-crowding of classrooms and the two or shifts in school buildings. Cost of each is estimated at \$350,000.

Annex 3

The organizational structure of the Ministry of Education from January 2004

