



16. The Private Education Sector

Summary

This section aims to cover the most important aspects of the private education sector, its components, and types according to scientific and vocational classifications. It also aims to identify the sector's problems and address what the Kurdistan regional government can do to develop it. Investments in private education play a special role in the region because they benefit not only the investors, but all of society. These benefits are permanent, making education one of the most important pillars of sustainable human development.

Private higher education in the region lacks teachers who hold higher education degrees because such teachers tend to avoid private universities for fear of the loss of the benefits and securities of public university employment. Most private universities and colleges in federal Iraq as a whole, and in Kurdistan in particular, suffer from insufficient facilities ownership problems, a cause of embarrassment and hardships for these universities, especially when it comes to the application of educational standards issued by the Ministry, as well as the lack of educational materials and resources to meet their needs. In addition, teachers and professors who are contracted by private universities tend to leave their jobs when they receive offers from competitive sectors, such as the public sector or the private commercial sector.

The institutions in this sector desire a system that allows them to admit students without having to go through a centralized admissions system and to tie in admission with entrance exams. The sector also aspires to establish new scientific laboratories, acquire sophisticated scientific equipment, and develop the spirit of scientific research in line with developed countries.

Introduction

Private investment in the education sector brings assured benefits and profits not only to the investors, as is the case with commercial activities, but also brings permanent benefits to society as a whole as the classes of graduates complete their studies each year. The accumulation of cognitive skills will have a huge impact on the capabilities and capacities of human capital, which is one of the cornerstones of human development. In other words, one cannot treat education—whether primary or higher education—as one deals with other commercial activities in the private sector, regardless of the relative importance of such commerce. It is important to treat education with the proper attention the critical sector deserves.

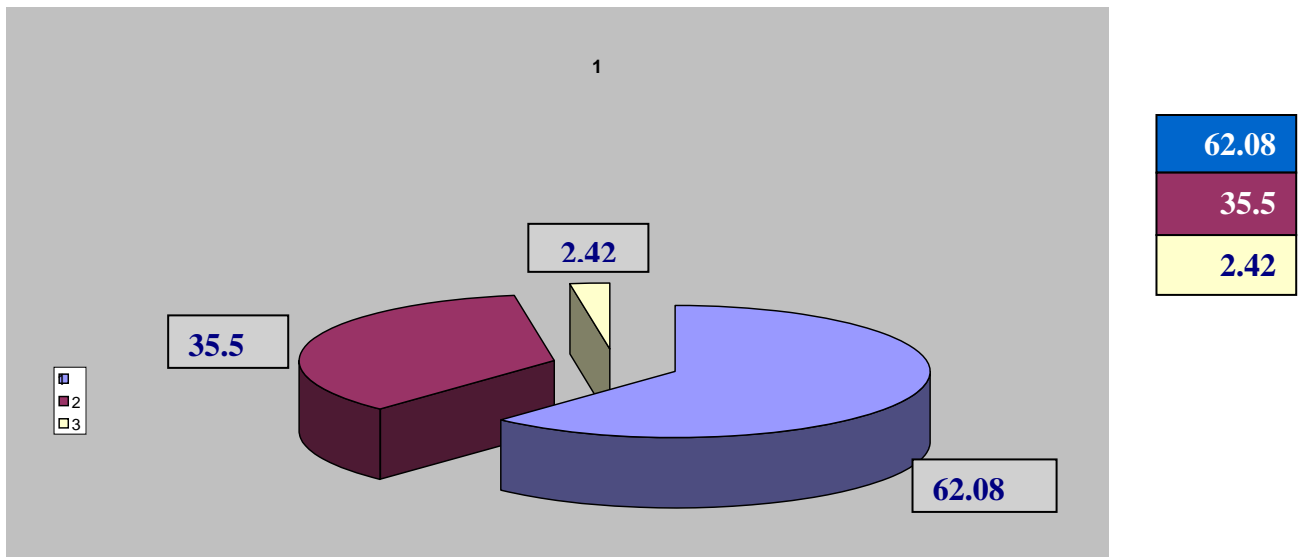
Private education in the Kurdistan region is a recent development, especially when compared to advanced countries around the world. The education sector as a whole is run by the state, with a few exceptions that are at a very nascent stage. This is because the private education sector has not been regulated by law, resulting in a lack of strategic vision. The sector also fell under the influence of private education practices in federal Iraq, until the Law of Higher Education and Scientific Research No. 33 was enacted in 2004. While Law No. 33/2004 addressed private higher education and scientific research through solid legislative provisions, private primary education was unfortunately left unregulated.

Characteristics of the Private Education Sector

Private Higher Education and Scientific Research

This type of education is growing in the region, and many universities have been given formal accreditation (such as Dohouk University College and Kurdistan University).

Others do not have any formal accreditation (including St. Clements Open University). The total number of students in accredited private universities is about 1,500, with another 1,500 students in informal universities, which is a small number in comparison with the number of graduates from preparatory education (about 45,000 in 2006). For 2006, the capacity of the universities in the Kurdistan region was 16,000, and this accounts for 35.5 percent of the total number of graduates. Additionally, 1,090 students (2.42 percent of total number of graduates for 2006) were admitted to private colleges and universities. However, the majority of preparatory school graduates (62.08 percent) did not go on to higher education (see the chart below).



- Percentage of preparatory school graduates who did not go on to higher education
- Percentage of preparatory school graduates accepted to public universities and colleges in 2006
- Percentage of preparatory school graduates accepted to private universities and colleges

The importance of private universities becomes apparent because of the flexibility and speed they exhibit in closing the gap between the number of preparatory school graduates and the capacity of public universities.

Private Primary Education

Private primary education also has a short history in the region. This sector absorbs small numbers of students, but there are numerous schools in all provinces of the Kurdistan region.

Private education offers special features that public education cannot provide with the same efficiency and comprehensiveness. This is due to the ability of private primary education institutions to adapt to changes and use modern technologies faster and more efficiently, unobstructed by methods that resist change. Thus, private schools gain a positive edge.

The Ministry of Education does not have statistics on the percentages of students enrolled in private schools compared to those enrolled in public schools. Estimates indicate

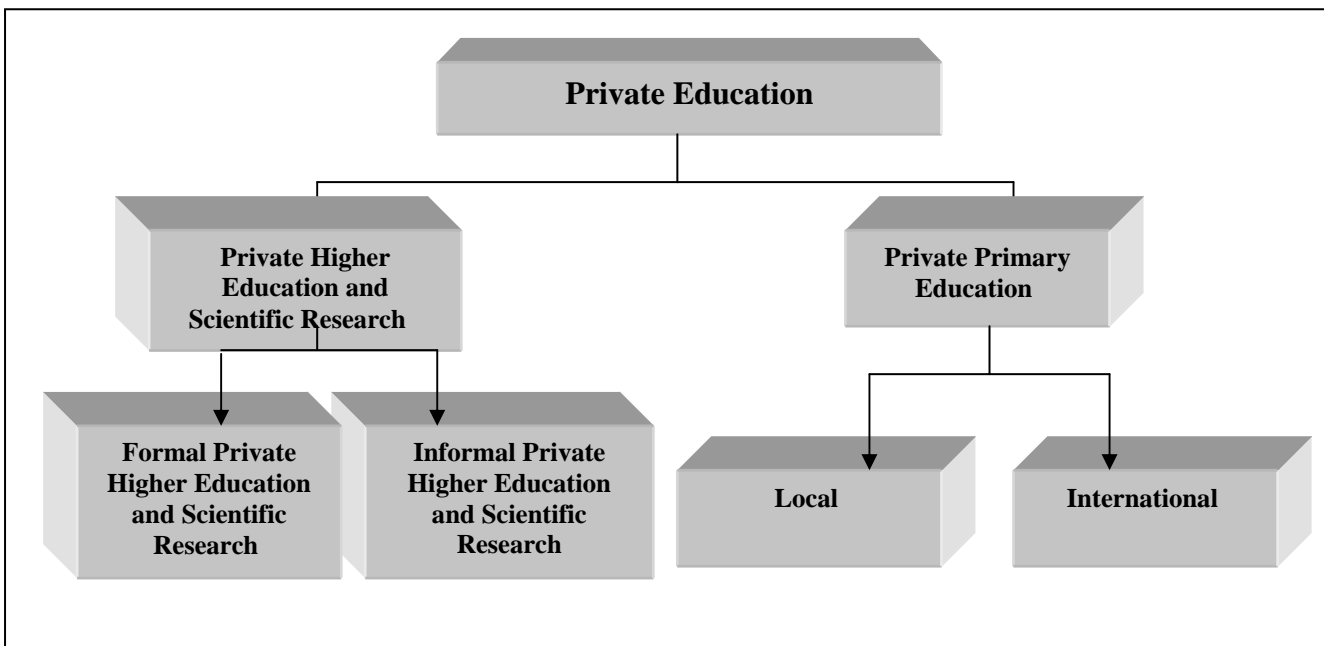
no more than 0.5 percent of the total number of students in the Kurdistan region is enrolled in private schools. It is obviously easier to deal with this small number than with the 99.5 percent who receive their education under the Ministry of Education, which bears all the educational, scientific, financial, and administrative burdens.

Methodology

Major Partners

1. ASK Organization
2. The Businessmen's Association
3. Economists Union of Suleimaniya
4. A group of professors from private universities and colleges
5. A group of primary school teachers
6. Media Private Schools

Classification of the Private Education Sector



Private Primary Education

This sector consists of the region's private primary schools that follow Ministry of Education curricula, as well as some foreign languages without international participation.

International Private Primary Education

This sector consists of the region's private primary schools that operate with international participation.

Formal Private Higher Education and Scientific Research

This sector includes universities and colleges established in accordance with the Private Education Law No. 33 of 2004.

Informal Private Higher Education and Scientific Research

This sector consists of universities and colleges established informally, without compliance with Law No. 33 of 2004.

Problems and Proposed Solutions

Formal Private Higher Education and Scientific Research

Problems	Proposed Solutions
1. Shortage of teaching staff in higher education and scientific research who hold higher education degrees. These are not attracted to private universities due to loss of benefits and privileges, such as a government pension.	1. Extend such benefits to the private sector teachers, as teaching in public and private universities is subject to the same conditions set by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. <u>Stakeholders:</u> Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
2. Shortage of buildings and problems associated with <i>musataha</i> land contracts.	2. Grant lands for the building of private universities and colleges; provide suitable resources to fund the buildings and premises; support them during the establishment period. <u>Stakeholders:</u> Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research The Province

Informal Private Higher Education and Scientific Research

Problems	Proposed Solutions
1. Recent introduction of distance learning, and the differences with conventional rules followed by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in the region. This has led to questioning the legality and legitimacy of distance learning in the region.	1. Understand new methods of teaching and training, including distance learning, that differ from the conventional education. New methods should be subject to appropriate regulations in the educational process. <u>Stakeholders:</u> Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
2. Difficulty of obtaining permits to establish distance learning institutions due to absence of legislation regulating the method.	2. Endorse the idea of a special administration in the Ministry of Higher Education to regulate modern teaching programs and distance learning; evaluate the results and coordinate with government institutions. <u>Stakeholders:</u> Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

Local Private Primary Education

Problems	Proposed Solutions
1. Experienced teachers abstain from working in private local schools because of lesser benefits than those afforded teachers in government schools, where Ministry of Education service regulations are applied.	1. Put in place a new system that supports the teaching staff in private schools (applying the same teacher selection system); include private school teachers in the Ministry of Education regulations. <u>Stakeholders:</u> Ministry of Education
2. A number of difficulties in the Ministry's final examinations due to differences in teaching language, differences in some of the courses taught, and differences in teaching levels between private and public schools.	2. Standardize final examinations for students in local private schools and public schools, taking into account the basic language of teaching in private schools. <u>Stakeholders:</u> Ministry of Education
3. High costs of land and buildings occupied by local private schools.	3. Proposed solutions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitate access of local private schools to land, with soft loans from government banks. Investment Law, Article 2, par. 10, could be invoked to support the right of land ownership, and to include education as a strategic project. ▪ Invoke Article 34, par. 4, of the Constitution of Iraq to treat Iraqi private schools on par with international schools, as the word "guaranteed" in the Constitution provides the key to all needed solutions. <u>Stakeholders:</u> Ministry of Education Investment Commission

International Private Primary Education

Problems	Proposed Solutions
1. Foreign teachers under contract with international schools tend to quit when they get job opportunities in competitive sectors, such as the public sector or the private commercial sector.	1. Amend the residency law to meet the needs of international schools. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Approve long-term contracts. ▪ Oblige the person under contract to the guarantee principle, without allowing him/her to quit without approval, in the form of a certificate from the school. ▪ Enforce deportation from the region

	<p>and fines against violators.</p> <p><u>Stakeholders:</u> Ministry of the Interior</p>
<p>2. Lack of coordination between international schools and the Ministry of Education. Private international schools follow international curricula and their exams are subject to the standards of international institutions. Their main plan is to obtain international accreditation. At present, the acceptance of international diplomas is based on an unwritten norm, not regulatory legislation.</p>	<p>2. Set up a joint committee between the Ministry of Education and private international schools to put in place guidelines for final exam procedures, so the Ministry can endorse students results after ratification by relevant international institutions. This will regulate the equivalency procedures for diplomas and graduates instead of leaving matters to unwritten norms.</p> <p><u>Stakeholders:</u> Ministry of Education</p>

Challenges and Aspirations

Primary Education–Challenges

Private primary education controls its choice of teaching subjects in accordance with set standards shared to a certain extent with public primary education. This constitutes the first challenge that the private sector has to face, as it has to offer advanced alternatives, modern teaching methods and technically advanced teaching aids. This is a feasible task as long as the private sector acts quickly with flexibility and adaptation. A challenge of no less importance is for private primary education institutes to excel, meet international quality standards, and graduate students who are talented and innovative. This requires a greater flexibility on the part of the government to allow this sector to develop, advance, and serve society.

Primary Education–Aspirations

The private primary education sector aspires to achieve a quantitative leap in its capacity for students and distinguish itself in the quality of the education it provides. This sector can become an important branch of society, provided the state gives it an acceptable level of logistical and technical support, albeit for a limited period of time, during its foundational stages.

Higher Education–Challenges

The private higher education and scientific research community should stand steadfastly in the face of the major challenges expected in the future. Important among these are its ability to compete with the public higher education and scientific research sector, and prove its ability to balance making a profit with providing a quality education for its students.

This is not an easy task in light of the prevailing attitude that looks upon the private sector with suspicion and is distrustful of its methods and goals. To achieve the balance between profit and quality, the sector will face an additional challenge: to keep pace with the major scientific and technological leaps that have placed all such institutions at the cutting edge of research. The ability to compete in this area is a matter of life and death for these institutions. This requires understanding and support from the highest levels of government and a shift from traditional, hindering approaches when dealing with this sector.

Higher Education–Challenges

The private higher education and scientific research community looks forward to the day when its institutions are operated by the proper educational, administrative, and quality control principles. This sector also looks forward to a complementary partnership with public academic institutions, through which the educational goals of all society will be met. This will also enable the sector to forge ties with the labor market and become more involved in educational and scientific activities and social development.