



School Improvement Program and Community Engagement Gap Analysis

D-RASATI

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Introduction

As part of the assessment component of D-RASATI, a School Improvement/Community Engagement gap analysis was proposed to be conducted in order to support planning and strategy development in these areas. A gap analysis is a tool that is used to determine what steps need to be taken to move things from their current state to the desired future state. It usually consists of looking at the characteristics of the present situation, the factors needed to achieve future objectives and highlighting of the gaps that exist and need to be filled.

The main aspiration of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) that is relevant to D-RASATI's SIP/CE work is to move schools to a state in which the schools themselves, led by the school principal, are held responsible for their own development and improvement. This is to be done through involving the community and local stakeholders who together with the principal can improve the public schools to reach the Ministry's National Standards. The local community, as defined in this context, includes a broad range of actors including municipalities, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, private sector businesses, banks and financial institutions and finally individuals.

Since there is no current model for school improvement planning and community engagement in Lebanese public schools, the D-RASATI gap analysis will include a review of the literature on international best practices in these areas in order to identify main factors that influence whether the desired aims can be achieved. Analysis of the current state of the public schools will be based on a review of current structures, laws and decrees in the public school educational system, as well as on the 2011 D-RASATI field survey of all public schools and on focus groups carried out by D-RASATI with school principals. Synthesis of data from these sources will provide insights into challenges and opportunities for interventions in the target areas.

Review of Literature

In conducting the gap analysis, D-RASATI felt that it was extremely important to look into international best practices in school improvement planning and community engagement in order to frame its work. Therefore, the project prepared a comprehensive review of the international literature on school-community engagement.

The review of the literature notes that the cultural and social construction of the communities in which schools are located has a significant impact on the quality of engagement. Thus it is extremely important to understand the different “communities” in the school so as not to hinder effective school-community engagement.

The literature review identified 6 successful models in school-community engagement: the Comer model, Epstein Partnership Model, Children’s Aid Society, BRAC, Escuela Nueva, and UNICEF’s Child Friendly Schools model. The first 3 models all started in the United States and were extended and adapted internationally, while the latter 3 originated in other areas of the world and also extended beyond their initial local context. Below is a summary of recommendations that emerge from the literature review (To read the complete literature review please see Appendix 1)

The 6 models present different variations of community engagement in schools. However, while they may differ in terms of organizational structure, administration and management, and in modalities of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, they all share a common goal: to mobilize community input to create a safe, nurturing, and dynamic schooling climate for quality teaching and learning.

All six models, regardless of their differences, show that community engagement works. Research shows that when the involvement of parents and community organizations become entwined through school-community partnerships, families are empowered to hold schools more accountable and some studies indicate that principals and school districts can be swayed by parent committees or associations to make changes to policies and practices that help improve educational outcomes. Parental involvement enhances student achievement, brings about better attitudes about childrearing, reduces rates of school failure and dropout, increases school attendance, betters student behavior and promotes overall success of schooling.

Furthermore, home-school-community engagement increases the level of social trust among teachers, school administrators and parents, and parental involvement creates opportunities for both teachers and parents to communicate, allowing teachers to better understand the child’s home and cultural environment and to find common ground for shared values and beliefs about educational goals. Moreover, community engagement seems to improve the quality of learning environments and learning outcomes, bringing

about more transparent school management and stronger feelings of self-efficacy and self-esteem among students, leading to increased academic achievement and improved attitudes and behaviors that bring about democratic civic engagement.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE D-RASATI MODEL

The literature suggests several main recommendations for school improvement planning and community engagement. The most prominent implications for implementing SIP/CE in Lebanon have to do with the importance of distributed leadership; with the roles of the principal, parent council, and teachers; and with professional development.

The Importance of Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership is the distribution of authority, decision-making and management to actors besides the absolute authority of a single person, such as the principal or head teacher (Harris, 2004; Harris, Goodall, & Andrew-Power, 2009). All the models share the theory that effective home-school-community engagement is based on shared problem solving and decision making. This increases the capacity of the principal and action committees, allowing them not only to leverage whatever local funding resources may be available, but also to create substantive, meaningful partnerships with parents and other community actors. The school “community” of staff and students thus becomes more integrally connected to the local community of which it is a part.

Distributed leadership thus leads to a change in the perception of the role of the community and transforms it from a cash provider into a partner whose involvement contributes substantively to planning, management, resource mobilization, and monitoring and evaluation of school activities (Harris, 2002; Harris, et al., 2009). Distributed leadership also works against any one individual or group monopolizing power and authority in the person of the principal, or through parents from local elite families, or through organizations.

Distributed leadership in community schools seeks to integrate leadership from both the bottom up and top down so that schools can more effectively mobilize the social capital and other resources in the community. This integration helps partners to prioritize decision-making that meets children’s best interests.

Having said this, the roles of the principal and parent councils in developing effective school improvement plans and engaging community support stand out.

The Role of the Principal

Distributed leadership strengthens the hand of the principal and administration, for by cultivating community engagement that includes sharing in decision making the principal gains access to supplemental resources unavailable through national or district-level educational authorities (Davies, 1991; Nygaard, 2010; Shechtman, et al., 1994). A

community-engaged principal who builds collaborative partnerships also helps to mitigate the potential for mistrust and tensions between local residents and teachers who may come from outside the community. Principals can work to boost school management and decision-making by working through a school's existing Parent Council or PTA to create either permanent or ad hoc management and/or advisory committees. Replacing authoritarian leadership with a more shared, participatory management style based on collaboration and consensus building among all key stakeholders expands a school's capacity to mobilize community resources to support academic and developmental goals for all students. This creates a more robust, comprehensive School Improvement Plan underpinned by consensus and mutual accountability. The principal determines the appropriate level of involvement of teachers, parents, and even students, in gathering input to formulate a school improvement plan.

The Role of the Parent Council

Research on home-community partnerships in the past several decades both in the United States and internationally has led to policy shifts in favor of greater participation of parents and local residents beyond the occasional bake sale or helping with homework (J. A. Anderson & Howland, 2008; J. P. Comer & Haynes, 1991; Harris, et al., 2009). In addition to traditional Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), parents are recruited to serve on special consultative and management committees to contribute to the development and decision-making of SIPs, school management, and community outreach. Increasingly, parents are called on to help formulate goals, objectives and impact indicators for a school's SIP, and this can benefit a school's overall learning environment in two important respects. First, parents can help identify and mobilize other parents and residents, along with key business and civic leaders, to support extracurricular programs as well as co-curricular learning and assessments requiring activities or research outside the classroom. Second, parents and other residents possess knowledge about local history, culture, traditions and economic production, and this information can be integrated into the curriculum to help connect content to the local community.

The Importance of Professional Development for Teachers and Principals

There are two main factors that can be attributed to the success of community schools: the first is research based training and professional development; the second is relying on training and support from larger institutions such as universities, NGOs, and governmental agencies. In addition to research-based training and professional development, successful community school programs take a systemic approach to promote the internalization of the values and benefits of school-community engagement among teachers, school administrators, parents, and community leaders (Berg, Melaville, & Blank, 2006). Unless all school stakeholders believe in the importance of at-school parental involvement and view it as constructive rather than a hindrance, then systemic barriers separating school and home are likely to remain pervasive. Similarly, the development and management of effective school improvement plans are increased when a systemic framework for leadership, team

building, and collaboration are the basis for designing workshops, in-service trainings, and professional development (Manz, Power, Ginsburg-Block, & Dowrick, 2010). In sum, schools credited with effective community engagement find that a systemic approach to training and professional development helps to counter the cultural and institutional forces that often destabilize collaboration among teachers, families, community leaders and community organizations.

Where Does Lebanon Stand?

To better understand where Lebanon stands relative to international best practices, D-RASATI conducted a field survey of all public schools, focus groups with school principals, and a framework analysis in which the processes and existing structures that can increase the autonomous role that the school can play in the development process and engaging the community in the improvements made were assessed. The findings of these exercises are summarized below.

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

According to the ministerial decision (407/M/August 7, 2007) on *The Bylaws of Kindergartens and Basic Education in Public Schools*, the principal is the person who is in charge of the school (to see the public school framework analysis, please see appendix 3). As described in [Article 17](#), the role of the principal is to be responsible for the school and everything related to it, including the building structure, contents, furniture, library, labs and records. The principal takes care of the general cleanliness of the school and health requirements and ensures that the teaching staff is doing their duty. The principal is expected to treat staff equally and justly, especially when distributing working hours. Furthermore, the principal works with the parents. According to [Article 19](#), the principal plays a supervisory role in that s/he has to attend every teacher's class at least once every 2 months and supervises the work of all staff, taking accurate notes for the record.

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education recognizes the importance of the principal when it comes to improving the school. Between the years of 2005-2007, MEHE implemented the Leadership Development Program as part of the World Bank-funded Education Development Program. The main purpose of the Leadership Development Program (LDP1) was to provide a professional development program focusing on leadership and educational management to 30% (450 out of 1500) of the public school principals in Lebanon.

Through this project, 450 principals were provided with the opportunity to complete an intensive three-week training program designed to improve leadership, strategic management, educational supervision and relations with the local society and parents. They

also developed an improved understanding of international trends in competency based contextualized learning. Principals then went through a self-guided study program (10 modules) and a practicum, during 18 weeks, supported by an international education database and network that was accessed through a specially conceived e-portal. As a further goal of the LDP program was to establish the basis for the institutionalization of a national pre-service and in-service training program for principals, the forty best-performing principals were also provided with a 2-week training of trainers experience and a study tour in Canada to prepare them to become trainers for future cohorts of principals.

The D-RASATI team conducted focus groups with a sample of principals who have undergone the LDP program (to read the full focus group report, see Appendix 3). Findings show that the benefits and positive aspects of LDP I (Leadership Development Program) were diverse and can be categorized at the following three levels:

- The intrapersonal level, where principals felt that the training contributed to increasing their self-esteem and created a sense of initiative, transforming them from being administrators into becoming leaders.
- The interpersonal level, where the training enhanced the principals' abilities to communicate positively with teachers, parents and students as well as increased their abilities to resolve conflicts. According to participants, the LDP training instilled in them a sense of responsibility and collegiality, which led to an increase in trust and positively affected the relationships they had among each other, as participants in LDP1, and among them and their staff.
- The organizational level, where participants learned skills and strategies related to the planning and coordination of projects under a comprehensive vision, distribution of tasks, diversification of organizational styles, design of extracurricular activities, evaluation, communication with local community, etc. This led to an increase in participation, collaboration and delegation, performing educational supervision and monitoring teacher performance, gaining self-confidence, etc.

Although the benefits of training cannot be denied, the principals did note some obstacles to implementing improvements in their school once they had been trained. These obstacles include:

- Lack of motivation and accountability mechanisms -- according to principals, MEHE does not compel schools to adopt strategic plans nor does it monitor their work effectively
- Lack of teacher and supervisor training
- A mismatch between existing laws and regulations and the needs of the principal, which hampers his/her work. According to the principals, internal regulations and many organizational texts need updating. These texts limit the principal's jurisdiction

yet still hold him/her accountable for mechanisms in which he/she is not involved (such as nomination and training of teachers, budget management, information management, participation in mandatory projects and activities, etc.).

- Lack of teachers and the inability of principals to hire/fire teachers. According to principals there is a lack of teachers in some areas, a surplus in others, and an increasing number of contractual teachers who usually do not stay long before they move to the private sector

When it comes to principals, it is obvious that MEHE is aware of their importance in the school and therefore has worked on developing their leadership skills. However, principals alone cannot be held accountable for leading the development of schools without competent teams. Teachers and staff play an important role in school improvement, and need to be supported in that role. Not only do they need to be trained on a regular basis, but the principal also needs to be able to hold teachers accountable so as to incentivize them and increase their productivity and ability to connect with their students.

TEACHER TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

There are two main bodies that work with teachers and provide them with training and professional development: the Center for Educational and Research Development (CERD) and the Guidance and Counseling Department (DOPS).

The **Center for Educational and Research Development (CERD)** is an organization that is dedicated to the development of the various educational, developmental and technical sides of the sector.

The main objective for the establishment of CERD in 1971 was to:

- Establish an official central body to handle educational matters by attracting and using highly qualified personnel to enable the government to carry out an educational development process within the framework of Lebanon's comprehensive development plan.
- Be proactive with scientific progress and technological and cultural development in the world.
- Create a formal educational authority to cooperate with similar bodies in other countries.
- Upgrade the quality of education in Lebanon.

CERD's main functions include the preparation of members of the teaching staff for all educational stages and fields, except secondary and university level education, training all workers in all educational stages and fields, except university education and proposing qualifications that are required of applicants for jobs in all educational stages and fields, except university education. Since its inception up until the year 2004, CERD has mainly dealt with training teachers on pedagogical innovations, new teaching methods and the new curricula.

The main responsibilities of members of the **Guidance and Counseling Department (DOPS)** are:

- Guiding the teaching staff at schools with all that is related to the learning and teaching process
- Providing the teaching staff with all new information and strategies that contribute towards enhancing their educational and teaching performances
- Providing students with career, behavioral, emotional, health, environmental, cultural, and artistic guidance in cooperation with the specific public and private entities
- Other roles and responsibilities according to the applicable laws and regulations

Members of the DOPS provide significant school-level support for teachers to enhance the learning and teaching process in the classroom

The literature suggests that teachers need to be trained further on the role of the community in the schools so as to be more effective in supporting the principal in community engagement and school improvement planning. Both CERD and DOPS can play this role in the training. CERD can provide a comprehensive training for teachers while DOPS can provide ongoing guidance and mentoring to the teachers so that they can ensure that the training is internalized and that teachers are able to effectively support the principal.

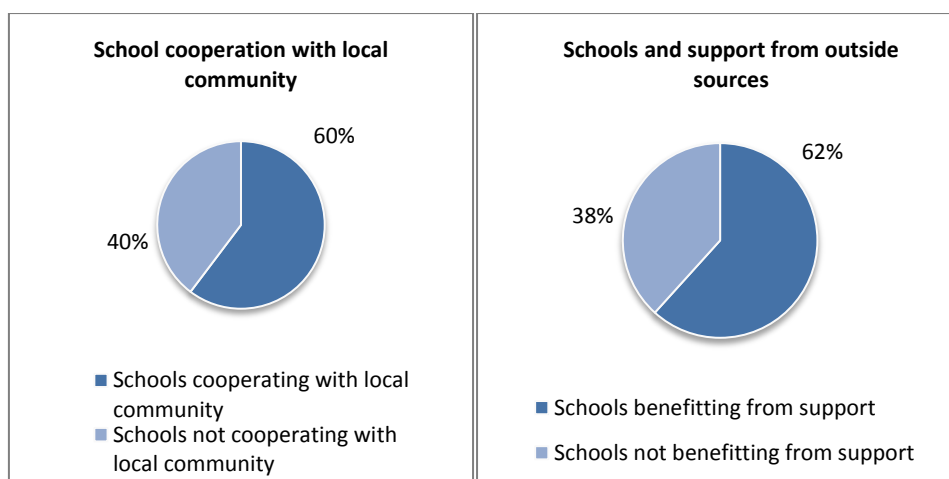
PARENT COUNCILS AND ENGAGEMENT WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

As mentioned in the literature review, parent councils and the local community can play an important role in supporting schools. This section provides a general overview of how parent councils and the local community are currently supporting schools in Lebanon based on the 2011 D-RASATI Field Survey of all Lebanese public schools (to read the full D-RASATI field survey report, please see Appendix 4).

How is the Local Community Supporting Schools in Lebanon?

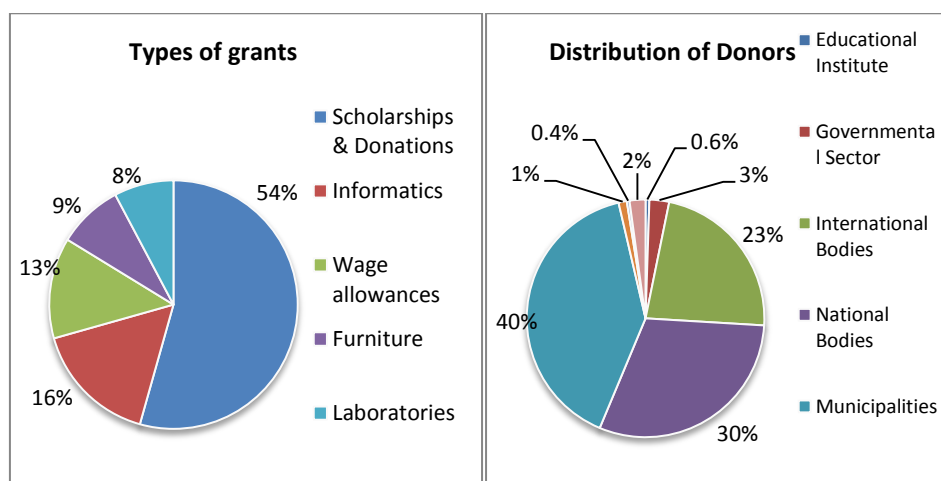
The local community, as defined in this context, includes a broad range of actors including municipalities, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, private sector businesses, banks and financial institutions and finally individuals. All these actors can potentially, directly or indirectly, support schools in organizing extracurricular activities in schools.

It appears that more than half of the public schools in Lebanon have cooperated with their local community; of the 1281 schools that were surveyed, 60.3% of them reported having done so.



Furthermore, about 62% of the schools reported having benefitted from support, such as in-kind, services and financial contributions from outside sources at the local community level and/or at the regional, national and international levels. This suggests that more than half of the public schools have had the experience in receiving financial support from their local community.

The grants offered to schools by members of the local community are used to support various aspects of the school including scholarships, furniture and equipment, and wage allowances. Almost 54% of the grants that were offered to schools were in the form of scholarships and donations; 32% were for furniture, informatics and laboratories, while 13% of the grants were for wage allowances.



It appears that the largest number of grants, about 40%, came from municipalities. This can be explained by the fact that Articles 49 and 50 of the Municipal Council Decree-law no. 118 dated 30/6/1977 dictates that the municipalities have a duty to support the public school. Furthermore, 30% of the grants were offered by national bodies and 23% by international bodies.

How are Parent Councils Supporting Schools in Lebanon?

Article 2 of the ministerial decision (2153/M/2007) on the *Statute of Parent Councils in Public Schools, Kindergarten, Basic Education and Secondary Schools* describes the role of Parent Councils as one that ensures coordination between parents and the school management, provides moral and financial support to the school and contributes to raising the standards of the school and providing recommendations to school management without direct interference in the educational and learning process. As described in Article 25, the parent council is responsible for providing schools with the support needed to ensure educational equality and improve the school. This includes covering the costs of extracurricular activities, and paying for staff overtime, transportation of students and even tutoring costs when necessary. Furthermore, according to Article 30, parent councils can cooperate with municipalities and external entities (association, clubs, civil entities and cultural bodies) to support the educational process at the school including, school and sport equipment, educational materials, extracurricular activities, etc.

Parent Councils' activity levels

Three levels of parent councils have been assessed in the D-RASATI field survey: whether a council exists; whether a council exists and is active (meets regularly); and whether a council exists, is active and organizes activities/events for the school.

Parent Councils are present in almost all schools in Lebanon; out of a total of 1281 schools, 1233 or 96%, reported having a parent council. However a much lower percentage (around 69.3%) has reported parent councils that are active and even fewer (51.6%) reported that parents councils have been active and engaged in organizing school activities. Almost half of the Parent Councils (52%) have organized activities in their schools. Therefore while schools have reported the existence of parent councils, only half reported that the parent councils have fully actualized their roles.

The highest percentage of schools reporting fully active parent councils is in the governorate of Mount Lebanon (65.4%), followed closely by Nabatiyeh (63.2%). On the other end of the spectrum, the lowest percentages are in the governorates of Bekaa (39.6%) and the North (46%). Activity is generally greater at the higher cycles in the system. Preschools are an anomaly in that they reported a high percentage of parent councils that meet on a regular basis without that activity translating into measurable support for schools. Furthermore, the larger the school, the higher the parent council level of activity. As shown below, the percentage of active parent councils organizing school activities decreases from a high of 75.3% for schools counting 501 and above students, followed by 74.1% for schools with 251 to 500 students, then 62.2% for schools with 100 to 250 students and last 43.3% for schools counting 1 to 99 students.

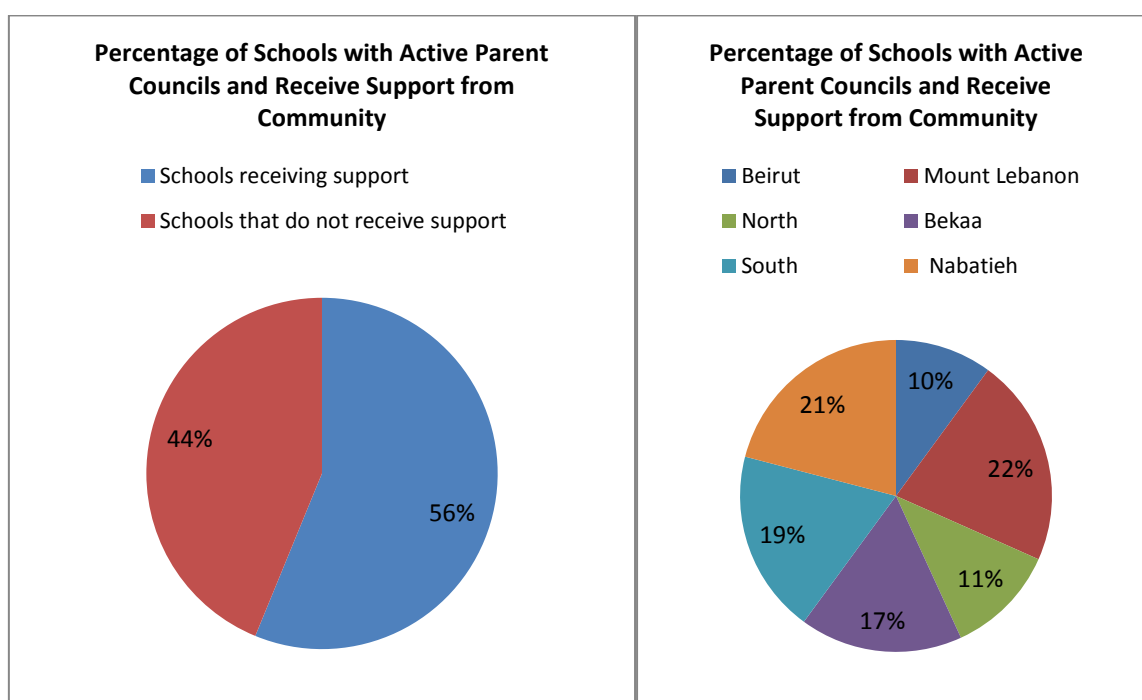
Schools in which the parent council has been trained

Although the majority of schools have parent councils, only 7% (88 schools) report having parent council members who attended or participated in a workshop in the past three

years. The percentage (by rounding) of schools where the parent council attended workshops is 11% in Beirut, 9% in the South, 7% in the North and Mount Lebanon, 5% in Nabatieh and 4% in Bekaa. The percentage of parent councils that have been trained is almost identical whether it is calculated out of the 'active' parent councils or out of the total parent councils existing in the schools. Among the parent councils who have been trained, 82% overall reported that parent councils organized activities/events at their schools. This percentage ranges from 95% in Mount Lebanon to 67% in Nabatiyeh. This low percentage of trained councils may partially explain their marginal activity level in the schools. There is a significant correlation between parent councils that have been trained and parent councils that organize school activities. Training and capacity building appears to have been beneficial, and to have affected the Parent Councils' performance in supporting the school.

Active parent councils and the community

There is a significant relationship between active parent councils and schools that cooperate with the local community and which reported receiving support from outside sources. The chart below shows that 56.2% of the schools with active parent councils do receive help from the local community and outside bodies. The percentage ranges from 71% in Nabatieh to 34% in Beirut. Apparently, schools with high levels of parent council activity have a better chance of cooperating with their host communities and receiving support from outside sources.



Community Support to Public Schools

There is a clear pattern of discrepancy in the levels of cooperation and support by governorate. The North and Beirut are the areas that have the lowest level of community involvement in public schools, while Nabatieh, Mount Lebanon, and the South show the

most significant involvement of communities in public school life. As the North has the highest number of public schools of any governorate, this relative lack of community engagement may disadvantage that region.

There is readiness by local communities to support public schools but it is somewhat inconsistent across governorates with the lowest levels again in the North and Beirut, and the highest in Nabatieh and Mount Lebanon.

Secondary and intermediate levels reported more cooperation with the local community and have actually received more support from outside sources than pre-school and elementary levels. Further analysis of the nature of such support by cycle may shed light on what kinds of investments are more likely to be targeted at upper grades, as well as areas in which lower-grade support could potentially be mobilized.

Conclusions

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education is not unaware of the challenges that the schools face. In March 2010, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) launched its 5 year strategic plan for the improvement of the public educational sector in Lebanon. The plan is based on the fundamental principles found in the Lebanese Constitution and the National Accord Convention as well as on the laws and regulations that emphasize the right to quality education for all. The National Education Strategy identifies 5 main priority areas as follows:

1. Education Available on the Basis of Equal Opportunity
2. Quality Education that Contributes to Building a Knowledge Society
3. Education that Contributes to Social Integration
4. Education that Contributes to Economic Development
5. Governance of Education

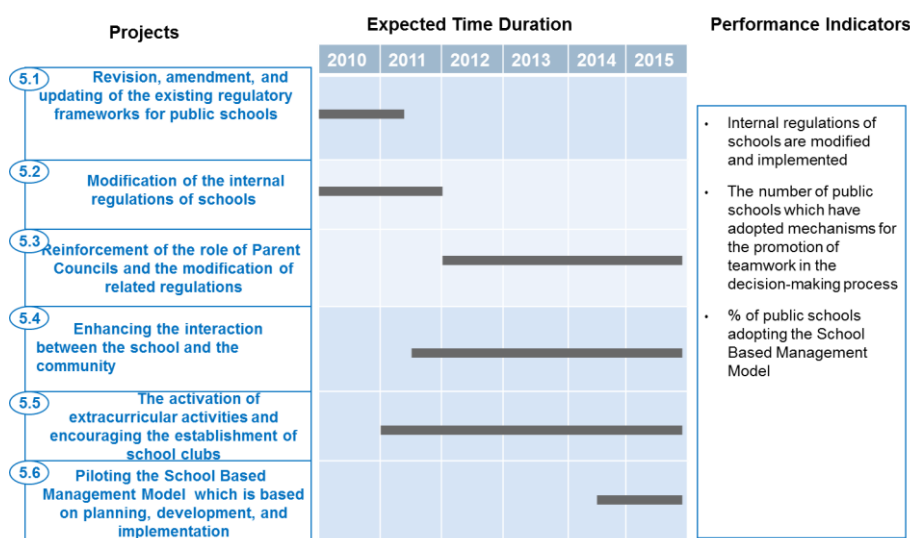
It is the second and third priority areas that are of interest to this analysis especially since it addresses the main structural and framework challenges that schools face when it comes to SIP/CE.

Priority 2: Quality Education that Contributes to Building a Knowledge Society

According to the National Strategy, one of the main programs in priority 2 is the modernization of school Management. The figure below outlines the main projects to be implemented under this program.

V

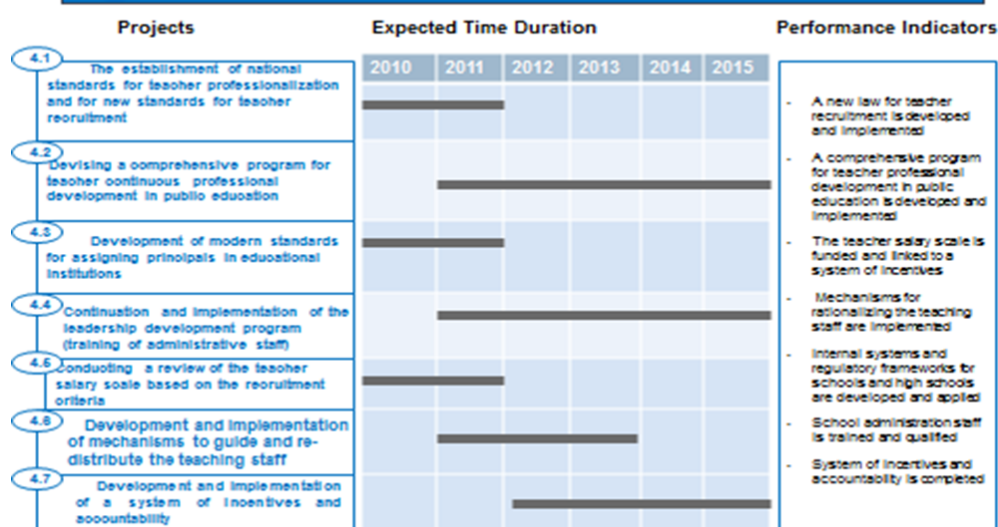
Modernization of School Management



Revision and modification of the existing public school frameworks and internal regulations of schools is vital for the school to be able to lead its own development processes and school improvement plans. The jurisdiction of the principal needs to be reviewed in a way that would allow him or her to assign teachers based on the school needs and holds them accountable for the work that they do. This would improve the overall teaching and learning standard of the school. Furthermore adding a school council responsible for the development of the school is vital. Looking at 5.3 and 5.4, MEHE seems to be aware of the importance of working with the parent councils and reinforcing their work. Furthermore, MEHE's strategy includes working towards enhancing the interaction between the school and community.

Furthermore, within the same priority area, MEHE recognizes the vitality of the principal and professional development. As has been mentioned before the principal is key when it comes to school improvement planning and community engagement. The continuation of the leadership development program and the development of modernized standards for principal assignments are therefore very important. Furthermore, as has been mentioned by principals in the focus groups, one of the main obstacles to school improvement planning is the lack of trained teachers. The literature suggests that both teachers and parents need to be trained on the importance of community engagement programs.

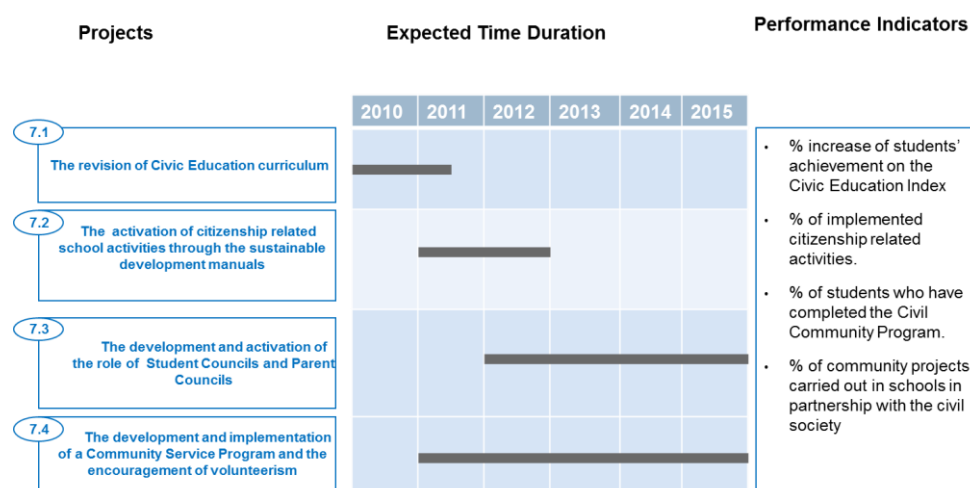
IV Professionalization of the Teaching Workforce



Priority 3: Education that Contributes to Social Cohesion

When it comes to priority 3, education that contributes to social integration, citizenship is the main program on which the national strategy focuses. Within citizenship education, 2 of the main projects outlined fit within the realm of the community engagement as seen in the below figure:

VII Citizenship Education



Developing student and parent councils across all schools in Lebanon is vital if one is to implement a distributed leadership model where all school stakeholders play a role in the

raising of resources for the school as well as the decision making process. One of the main elements of school improvement planning is the ability to conduct a school review that includes evidence-based research on the needs of the school. As main stakeholders in the school, both parents and students play an important role in this element of the planning. Furthermore, both parent and student councils can help in the design, fundraising and implementation of school improvement plans.

In addition to MEHE's strategic plan for the improvement of public schools, considerable time and effort has been exerted by the Education Development Program at MEHE to establish national school standards. This document is still in draft form and has not yet been approved by MEHE, however, the main purpose of the standards are to serve as a reference against which schools will be able to self-assess and towards which they can work to improve. In discussions with contact people at MEHE, it seems like the document will probably include standards and indicators that are dedicated to community engagement, the role of parents and communities as well as the importance of engaging the community and parents in the school.

Overall, the gap analysis reveals that the Ministry of Education and Higher Education is well aware of what needs to be done when it comes to school improvement planning and community engagement, and has begun to take critical steps to support schools and the system improve in this regard. Working on the internal by-laws of schools and adapting them so that principals can have more jurisdiction in determining the school needs and in the hiring, firing and evaluation of teachers is vital, as is providing ongoing training and support on school improvement planning and community engagement to teachers and principals alike. This can be done through institutions like the CERD and the Lebanese University while the DOPS can provide ongoing mentoring and coaching to the schools similar to the role of the coaches in the SIP program.

D-RASATI CONTRIBUTIONS TO ACHIEVING MEHE'S STRATEGY

To support the achievement of the Ministry's goals for school improvement under the national strategy, MEHE has asked D-RASATI to include a second phase of the Leadership Development Program (LDP2) and a School Improvement Program (SIP) within the project's scope of work.

LDP2

LDP2 will be a continuation of the LDPI program. According to the focus groups, the LDPI program appears to have accomplished significant achievements in the areas of principal professionalization and long-term capacity building by improving their administrative and

educational work performance and efficiency. Thus the LDP2 program will take off where the LDPI program stopped and train principals who were not trained in LDPI. The LDP2 program includes 10 modules (such as management and educational planning, educational assessment, educational supervision, and school information management). LDP2 will be implemented with a clear definition of roles and responsibilities between MEHE, the Lebanese University Faculty of Education, and D-RASATI, and will focus on improving the ability of principals to act as instructional leaders in their schools, supporting and catalyzing participatory school-based improvement planning.

The School Improvement Program (SIP)

The SIP program will build on LDPI activities and human resources, and provide the basis for longer-term SIP efforts at MEHE in which principals completing LDP2 under D-RASATI can then participate. It will begin with a school review process which will empower school planning committees (school teams) to then design, implement, and assess their own reform process, based on the national school standards to be adopted by MEHE. The planning committees will focus on promoting learning quality and fostering educational equity and school retention. They will raise the confidence level in public schools among local communities and contribute to building positive attitudes towards these schools and triggering constructive initiatives by the schools with support from local stakeholders. The current design of the program entails the training of the school principal and 2 other school staff to form the school team that will be the main driver for the school improvement plans in their schools. These teams will be supported not only by the school staff but also by a coach who will mentor and visit the school to provide ongoing support to the teams both when planning and implementing their school improvement plans. There will be three main phases for the training: School Review, SIP Design and SIP implementation. A grant will be given to the schools participating in the program to ensure implementation of the activities. The program is to be delivered to in 2 phases: a pilot of 20 schools followed by a roll out phase at broader scale. The aim of the pilot phase is to test the material and design of the training so as to refine it during the roll out.

Based on the literature, parents play an important role when it comes to school improvement planning and community engagement. Furthermore the field survey data shows that there is a positive correlation between the training of parent councils and community engagement. In the pilot phase of SIP, it has been agreed with MEHE that there will not be any training of representatives from the parent councils with the school teams; however, the teams will be invited and encouraged to work together with their respective parent councils throughout their SIP. The evaluation of the pilot will determine whether there is a need to train parents in later roll out phases of the program.