منهجْنَاؕ

Akkar WonderLand Report 3/8

Outline
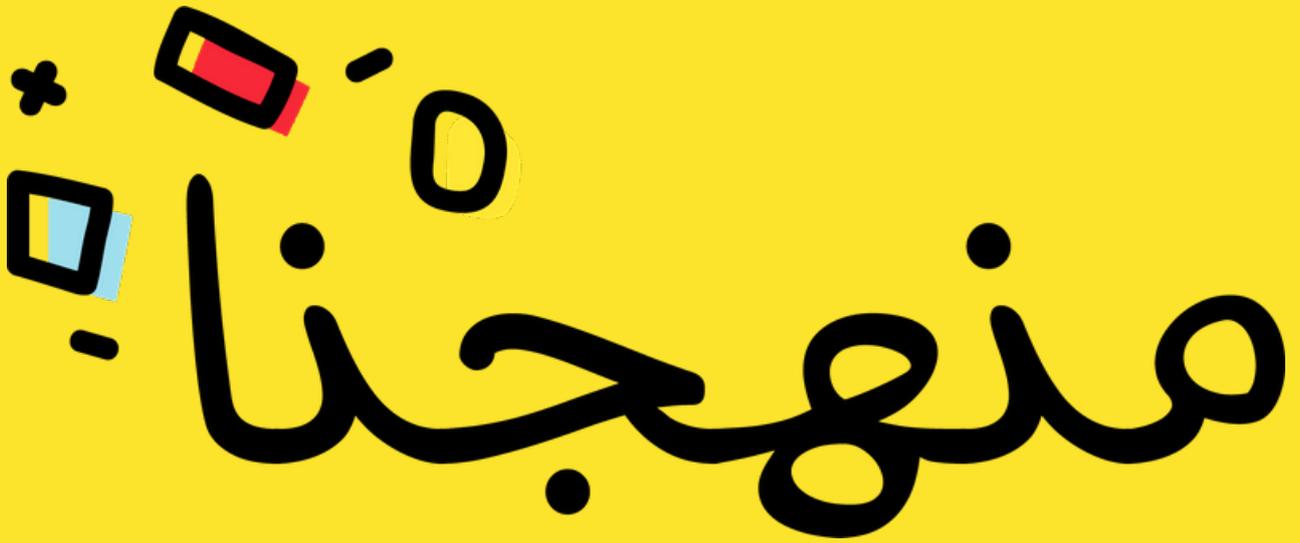
منهجنا

منهجنا

👁 Vision

Manhajna is a holistic, participatory, and visionary project that aims to democratize the processes of curriculum reform. Manhajna advocates for policy change that is envisioned and conceived by the education ecosystem in Lebanon.

Mission

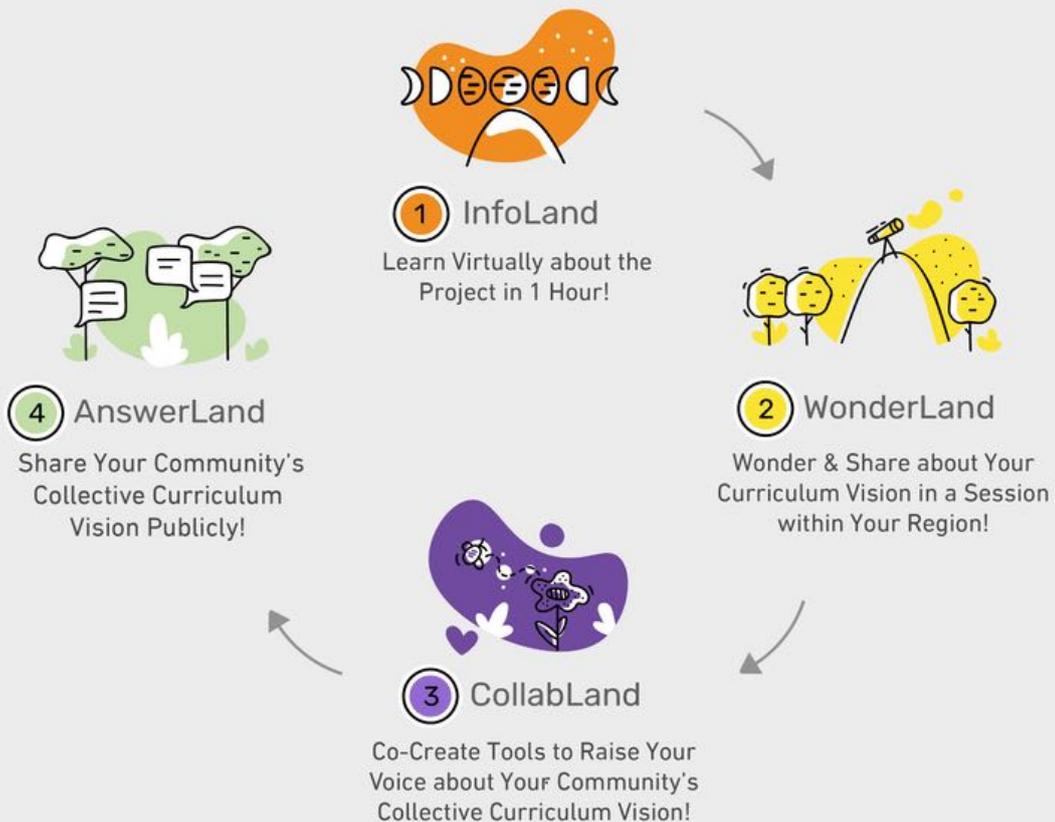The project co-creates inclusive spaces for dialogue to re-imagine the new curriculum.
Eights spaces are being facilitated in eights governorates across Lebanon.

Through Manhajna's activities, we engage diverse groups from across the country to join us to envision a curriculum embedded in the values of participation, inclusion, justice and equity.
We aim to create a national network that will campaign to influence policy and curriculum creation processes to make them more inclusive and relevant to all.

منهجنا

Project Journey

1 InfoLand
Learn Virtually about the Project in 1 Hour!

2 WonderLand
Wonder & Share about Your Curriculum Vision in a Session within Your Region!

3 CollabLand
Co-Create Tools to Raise Your Voice about Your Community's Collective Curriculum Vision!

4 AnswerLand
Share Your Community's Collective Curriculum Vision Publicly!

منهجنا

Theory of Change
FOR THE PEOPLE BY THE PEOPLE

People
People
Education Policy Change
Advocacy Campaign
Participatory Research
People
People
People
People
People
People

Theory of Change
FOR THE PEOPLE BY THE PEOPLE

① People

By adopting a human-centered design, we consider people to be at the heart of this project in all its processes.

② Participatory Research

Our project relies on the people's perceptions which are seen as central to all stages of the research process.

③ Advocacy Campaign

We will create advocacy campaigns in an attempt to initiate policy change at the national system level.

④ Education Policy Change

We aim to bring about a change at the policy level that leads to the birth of a new Lebanese curriculum.

OUR
PARTNERS

About the Partners

منهجنا

CLS
Centre for Lebanese Studies
مركـز الدراسـات اللبنـانيـة

Why CLS?

Center for Lebanese Studies (CLS) aims to contribute to Lebanon's education development through research and advocacy to impact education public policies.

Learning Land
Community of Educators

Why Learning Land?

At Learning Land, the educators' community mission is to contribute to Lebanon's education systemic transformation through the reform of the current national curriculum and the partnership with key national institutions to influence education public policies.

منهجنا

رؤية منهجنا

إدراك المفهوم الحقيقيّ للمنهج الدراسيّ والعمل
على تغيير السياسات التربويّة المتّبعة حيث يصبح هذا
المفهوم للمنهج خفيفة واضحة.

مهمّة منهجنا

المشاركة في إنشاء مساحات دامجة للحوار دون
إعادة تصوّر المنهج الجديد.

نظريّة التّغيير ـ النّاس ومن النّاس

ABOUT WONDERLAND & THE REPORT

About WonderLand & this Report:

WonderLand aims to collect genuine and authentic needs, wonders, interests, and reflections about people's vision regarding the Lebanese national curriculum.

This happens through a focused group discussion format of 6 participants per group (see figure 1) with the help of dialogue facilitators.

Figure 1

All wonders are structured and documented through two main tools: 1) The Dialogue Mat and 2) visuals. The Dialogue Mat (see figure 2) is a tool used to collect the wonders of the educators while maintaining an interactive dialogue. It fosters a position-free instructional and reflective dialogue that is based on reflective professional inquiry. Educators freely share their knowledge based on their intuition, practical wisdom, habitual behaviors, and trial-and-error experiences that happened back in their classroom. The visuals (refer to figure 3 as an example) are data collection tools that help educators to visualize their thoughts, reflections, and experiences.
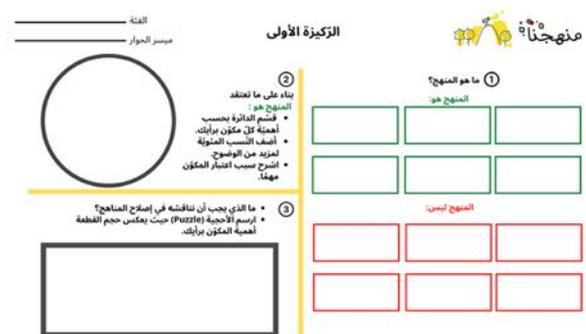

Figure 2

Figure 3

About WonderLand & this Report:

The report summarizes the data generated through qualitative open-ended questions during focus group discussions documented on the Dialogue Mat and visuals.

The researchers opted to analyze the data thematically in order to highlight the key ideas shared by the participants. The researchers also presented quantitative data, such as the the number of participants who presented a common answer, when they believed such an approach would add value and insight to their findings to highlight the significance of such common answers and the level of agreement.

The importance of this report lies at the heart of Learning Land's methodology. Learning Land aims not only to create a community of educators, but also co-create solutions, provide accessible research, and impact practices and policies on a school level and national level. Through accessible research, school-level policymakers, national policymakers, social innovators, researchers, and various practitioners can use this report to drive decisions based on evidence. Learning Land impact pillars are listed below.

Learning Land Impact Pillars

We connect diverse educators coming from public, semi-private and private schools with experts, researchers, academics and social innovators through our transformational learning journeys to exchange knowledge, enhance learning and consolidate their know-how.

We foster a setting for all to codesign sustainable solutions based on diverse school-based needs while building educators' non-positional leadership.

1 ENGAGED COMMUNITY

2 CO-DESIGN SOLUTIONS

EDUCATOR

3 ACCESSIBLE RESEARCH

4 ENHANCED POLICIES
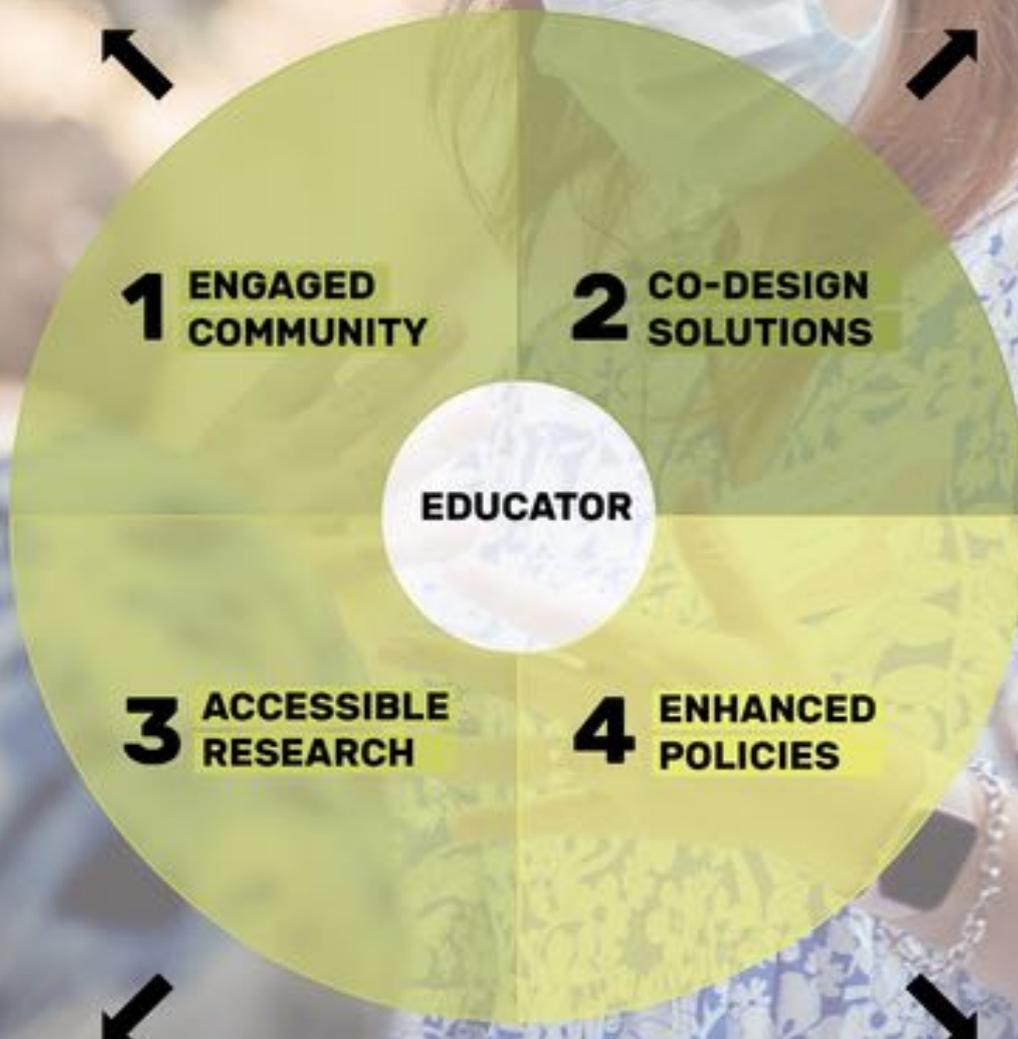
We provide easy-accessible research, centered on teaching and learning, for the education ecosystem players to drive evidence-based decision making.

We promote an inclusive school-policy dialogue with our community members in an attempt to build a grassroots movement that impacts the policy process on a national level.
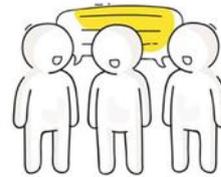
WHOM ARE WE DESIGNING FOR?
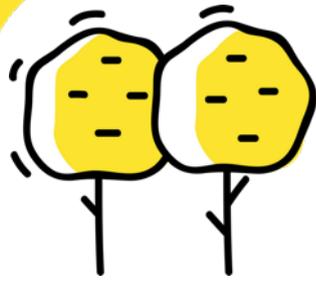
WONDERLAND PARTICIPANTS

48
Attendees

9
Dialogue
Facilitators

4
Team
Members

48 ATTENDEES:

BACKGROUND

Bar chart showing the background distribution of attendees. The y-axis ranges from 0 to 15.

- Teachers: 9
- Supervisors: 8
- Researchers: 3
- Principals: 11
- Employers: 1
- Specialists: 4
- NGOs: 1
- Not stated: 6
- Youth: 3
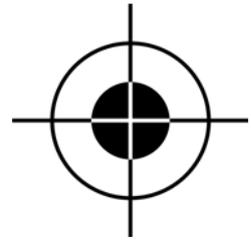- SDG Advocates: 2
- MEHE: 0
- Parents: 0
- Unions: 0
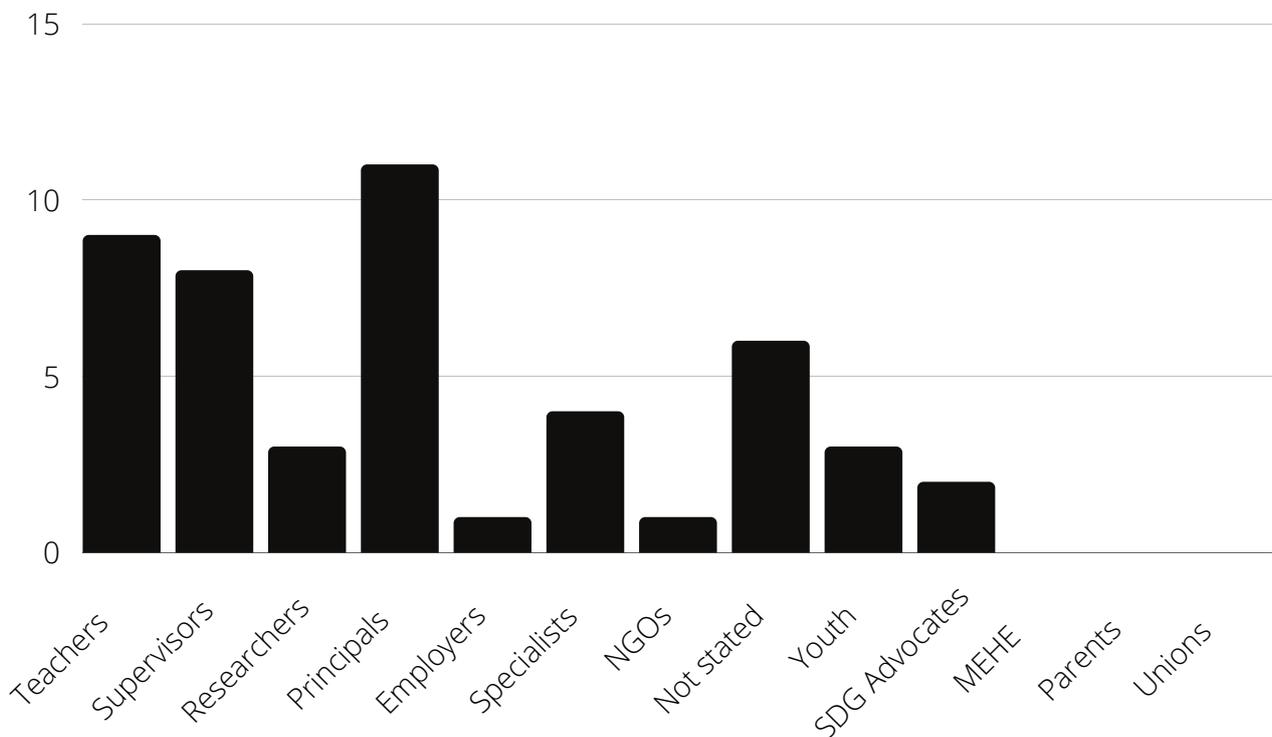
1/4
WHY & WHERE
OF EDUCATION

Why and Where of Education

This pillar describes what the participants believe should be the main aims of the new curriculum. The pillar also describes the successful student profile and the values the participants think students should acquire through the curriculum, and why those values and characteristics are perceived to be important.

The participants shared the following as what they considered the aims of the curriculum should be. The results are stated in order starting with the one with the highest consensus.

Aims of the curriculum

Societal development

Participants considered the development of society and promoting citizenship to be at the heart of the curriculum. The collected data showed that the curriculum should prepare students to play a positive social role through interacting effectively with their social surroundings. They added that they believed that the curriculum has a pivotal role in preparing students to help the country recover.
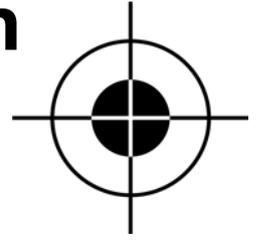
Personal development

In addition to societal development, participants considered the promotion of personal development to be a central aim of the curriculum. They believed that this could be manifested through the promoting critical thinking and installing qualities such as leadership, decision making, and problem solving, in addition to developing analytical skills and awareness. Many participants added that learning should be promoted for learning's sake and not just as a means to another end.
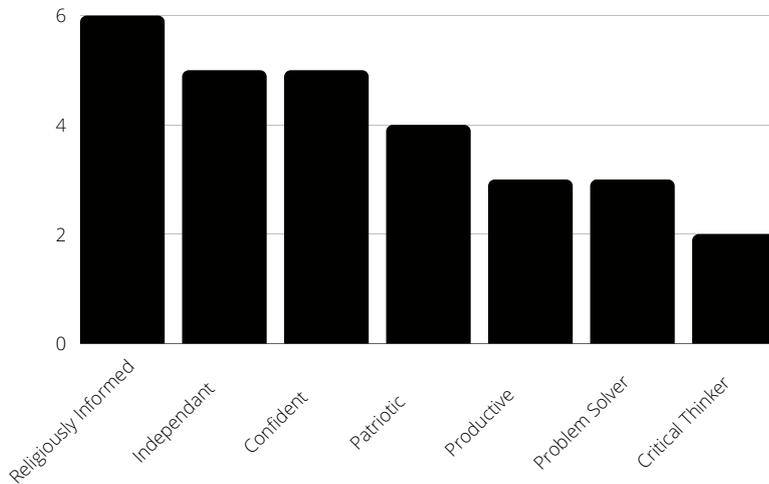
Career development

Finally, some participants mentioned that the curriculum should help students be economically productive and facilitate their quest towards attaining a better and more sustainable future.

Why and Where of Education

Successful student profile

Bar chart categories (left to right): Religiously Informed (6), Independant (5), Confident (5), Patriotic (4), Productive (3), Problem Solver (3), Critical Thinker (2)

Top 6 Values the curriculum should promote:

- Respect
- Honesty
- Humility
- Love
- Acceptance
- Humanity

Participants were asked about their thoughts regarding learning venues, in addition to schools, which can be used to further promote the aforementioned values which will aid in the construction of the student profile they seek. The following venues were the most mentioned and are placed from most to least. Unfortunately, participants did not make explicit the link between the venues and the values they believed would be promoted.

Additional learning venues

- Nature
  - Gardens
  - Public gardens
- Work places
  - Hospitals
  - Factories
  - Agricultural fields
- Religious Sites
  - Churches
  - Mosques
- Art facilities and theaters

Researchers' Insights:

A larger number of participants considered societal development to be the main aim of the curriculum. This could be attributed to the prominence of social values especially in rural areas.

WHAT IS A CURRICULUM?

What is a Curriculum?

We aimed to explore how participants perceived and understood curricula   by asking them "what is a curriculum?"

After going over their answers within the focus group discussions, the participants' answers were grouped under two main themes:

2.1 Curriculum as a Developmental Process

The first theme is the curriculum development process which encompasses the overarching curriculum aims, goals, vision, and philosophy that guide the curriculum developers in what to consider during the development process.

2.2 Curriculum as a Design

The second theme is   curriculum design which encompasses the components of a curriculum. These components aid the curriculum developers to break-down the design of the curriculum. They are themed under four titles:

- Objectives
- Learning Experiences
- Content
- Evaluation

What is a Curriculum?

2.1 Curriculum as a Developmental Process

The curriculum development process was themed under two sub-categories: student goals and community and citizenship.

2.1.1 Student Goals. When answering "what is a curriculum?", participants associated the question with students. Some of the participants' ideas were:

- A mean of getting the student to his or her destination
- The formation of a civilized personality
- Student support and talent development
- How to learn and manage
- Developing students' intelligence
- Life skills development
- Way of thinking
- Preparing the student for real life
- Building students' character
- A set of goals and competencies that help build the learner's personality
- A group of behavioral goals
- Objectives (personal development)
- Creativity and invention
- Love of learning
- Development of thinking strategy
- Self development
- A link between the academy and the labor market

What is a Curriculum?

2.1 Curriculum as a Developmental Process

The curriculum development process was themed under two sub-categories: student goals and community and citizenship.

2.1.1 Student Goals. When answering "what is a curriculum?", participants associated the question with students. Some of the participants' ideas were:

Curriculum as a Student Roadmap:

- A mean of getting the student to his destination
- Preparing the student for real life
- Student support and talent development
- Personal development objectives
- Building students' character

Curriculum as Student Skills & Values:

- Life skills development
- Way of thinking
- How to learn and manage their learning experience
- Developing students' intelligence
- Creativity and invention
- Love of learning

Curriculum as Student Preparation:

- A link between the academy and the labor market
- A reflection of the educational needs of society
- Up to date with century needs (Coping with modernization)
- Taking into consideration the ways of development that occur in the world

Curriculum as Student Goals & Strategy:

- A set of goals and competencies that help build the learner's personality
- A group of behavioral goals
- A goal to build a person
- Development of thinking strategy
- Self development
- A well-rounded scientific plan that serves humanitarian goals
- Rules, assets, and principles that take into account the individual's role in sustainable development
- Setting goals for the age group
- A set of educational goals
- Aims to achieve educational outcomes
- An educational goal and a living vision

What is a Curriculum?

2.1.2 Community and Citizenship. When answering "what is a curriculum?", participants associated the question to answers related to community and citizenship. Some of the participants' ideas were:

Citizenship:
- Active citizenship
- Citizenship
- Helps define the characteristics of a good citizen
- A set of goals that we need to see in a citizen
- The formation of a civilized personality

Community:
- A reflection of society
- Reflects customs and traditions
- A carefully set plan that reflects the government's strategy in preparing a new generation
- Community development plan
- National and humanitarian goals

What is Curriculum?

2.2 Curriculum Design Components

Curriculum design components are considered the essential components that make up the curriculum. These components were divided into four categories: objectives, learning experience, content, and evaluation.

2.2.1 Goals and Objectives: The participants expressed that the curriculum should be designed based on goals, competencies, and objectives

2.2.2 Curriculum Learning Experience:

Curriculum Learning Experience is defined as how the curriculum is being delivered. Answering "what is a curriculum?", below are the people's perceptions that were divided under the learning experience category.

Pedagogy/Teaching Strategy:

- Learning by discovery
- Various active and purposeful methods
- Teaching methods in harmony with the mentality of the generation
- Educational active teaching methods
- Deduction and exploration
- Avoiding simply memorizing a lesson
- Summarized lessons
- Thinking and Searching
- Scientific method
- Handling and solving questions
- Research
- Applications
- Peaceful ways of thinking
- Rational theory practice group
- Dialogues
- Document Analysis

What is Curriculum?

Activities:
- Weekly, monthly, and quarterly activities
- A group of activities that help in acquiring competencies
- Classroom and extracurricular activities
- A set of educational or practical activities that express a future vision
- activities and behaviors
- Competencies that the student obtains at the end of each activity

Tools:
- Computers or other technologies
- Books with valuable materials
- Demonstration tools that are adapted to modernization and students' desires
- Books
- E-books
- Technical books and publications
- Necessary tool-kits
- Demonstration tools
- Motivation tools
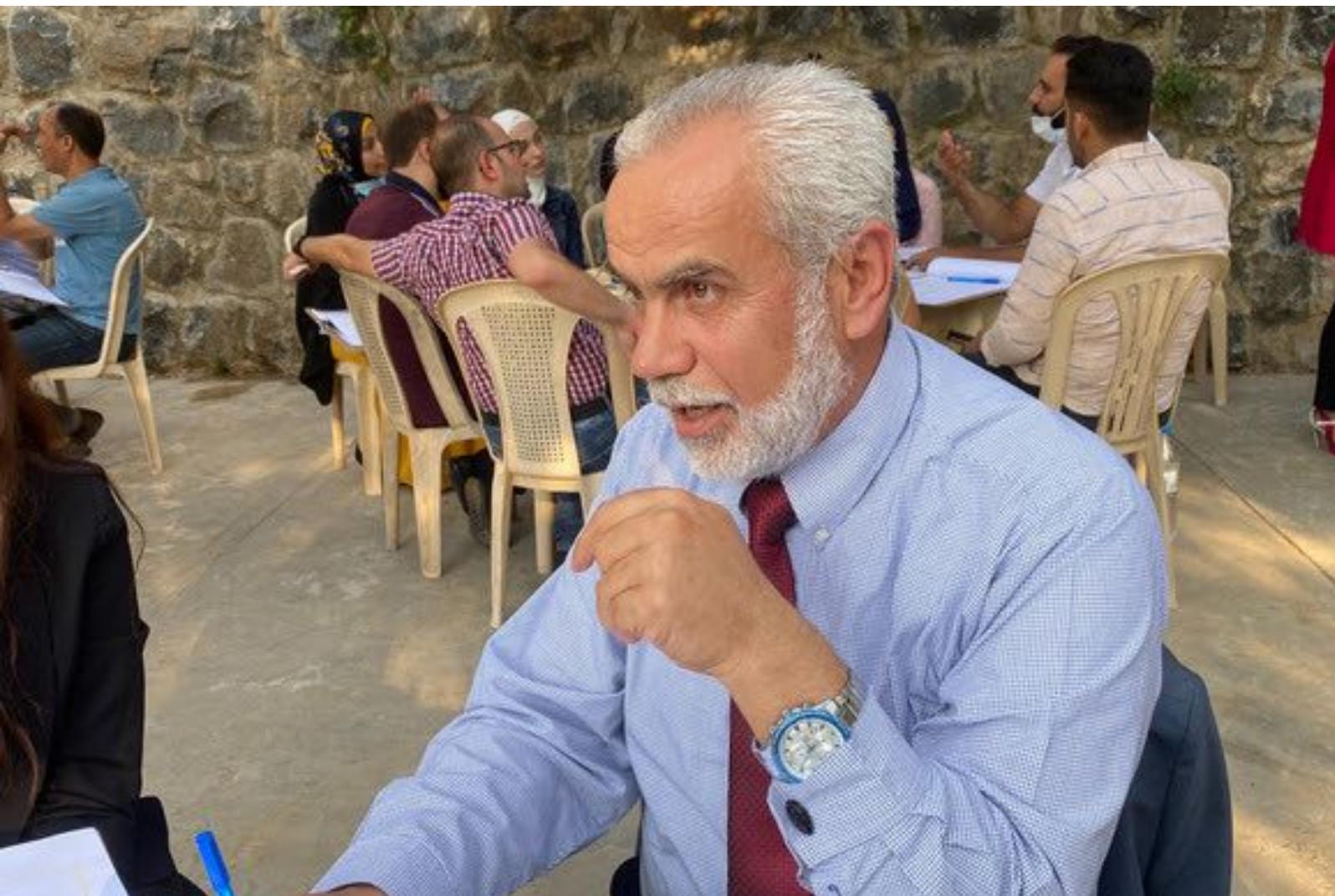
What is a Curriculum?

2.2.3 Curriculum Content:

Participants were asked to share their thoughts regarding the content that should be delivered through the new curriculum. The purpose of this question was to discover whether the participants possessed a different take than what is currently being applied as what is considered essential in terms of knowledge and learning outcomes. The participants contributed by discussing subjects and skills, in addition to touching on the venues that best suit delivering the content. The participants' insights were as follows:

Contact hours

Participants stated that students should be able to have their say regarding their own education by being able to choose some of the courses they want to study based on their preferences. Subjects including art, drama, music, dancing, and workshops were highlighted as options to be chosen from. Participants considered middle and high school to be more suitable for electives, whereas primary levels should provide the basics needed for all students. Those electives were considered a much-needed addition to the traditional subjects that are currently at the center of the Lebanese curriculum.

Traditional subjects

The majority of the participants reiterated the significance of what was considered as traditional or core subjects throughout the learning journey. Those subjects were considered to be: languages, mathematics, and sciences. Participants highlighted the importance of a horizontal alignment between those subjects, in addition to restudying the time slots those subjects are given. Many participants believed that less time should be granted to those topics, especially in middle school and high school, to allow space to teach life skills and introduce new subjects.

What is a Curriculum?

Electives

Participants also mentioned the importance of teaching social skills that enable students to be more effective in their community. Participants also focused on the importance of providing students with a space to learn hands-on skills such as carpentry and agriculture which can help them choose a career path that differs from the traditional one that is promoted by the current curriculum.

Researchers' Insights:

It appeared that the main innovation regarding subject matter that participants suggested was to add elective courses where students are given the agency to choose what topics to pursue. Participants, however, believed that lower grade levels were not in need of an elective system.

What is a Curriculum?

2.2.4 Curriculum Evaluation:
Curriculum evaluation is concerned with the strategies, tools, and tasks used to assess its aims. The following are the people's perceptions that were categorized under evaluation based on two major questions in the event. The first question was "what is a curriculum?" and the second question was "how could the new curriculum assess student capabilities?"

Assessing What?

- Knowledge
- Competencies
- Learning Objectives
- Confidence
- Personal Growth
- Theories
- Listening skills
- Reading skills

General Issues in Assessment

- Assessment should not create student anxiety
- Assessment should not be used as a power tool over students but a tool for learning
- Students should be given more time between one assessment and the other
- Assessment should reflect the curriculum
- Assessment currently is focused on memorization

Assessment Strategies

- Project-Based Learning
- Collaborative Assignments
- Play-Based Assessment
- Exams
- Research-Based
- Summative Assessment
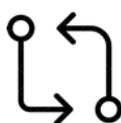
Assessment Tools & Tasks

- Questions
- Open-book
- Interview
- Oral examination
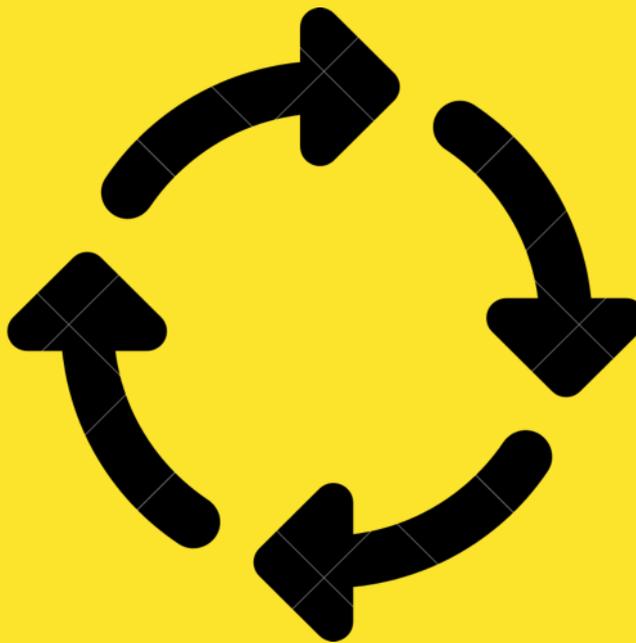- Laboratory
- Written Response

Issues in Official Exams

- Only have one official exam in the secondary period
- Exams should not give students anxiety

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Curriculum Development Process

This pillar focuses on the process of curriculum development by reflecting on the participants' knowledge and past experiences of how the Lebanese curriculum was developed, the 1997 curriculum in particular, and sharing insights regarding how the process should transpire in the current reform process.

3.1 - Curriculum Reality in Lebanon

The participants' thoughts and perceptions regarding the state of the Lebanese curriculum that is currently being used where the focus is on content, culture, and evaluation.

3.2 - 1997 Curriculum Development Process

The participants' take on the curriculum development process that took place in 1997 and led to the birth of the Lebanese Curriculum that is still used today.

3.3 - 2021 Curriculum Development Process

The participants' vision regarding how a successful curriculum development process should be undertaken for it to yield what they consider to be a success.

Curriculum Development Process

3.1 - Curriculum Reality in Lebanon

Curriculum reality in Lebanon encompasses all realities that the participants described as the status-quo of the Lebanese curriculum.

- One size fits all
- Limited
- Prescriptions of how teachers should teach
- Non-updated books
- Punishment
- Memorization/ recitation
- Official exams
- A tool to pressure students
- One way of teaching
- Unchangeable/ Outdated
- General to all learners
- Focused on theory and not practice

- Focused on the syllabus
- Set of instructions
- Set of subjects
- Set of books
- General to all learners
- Should not be centralized
- Should encompass everything that should be taught
- Should include professional development sessions
- Should not be a public policy
- Should not be a calendar

Curriculum Development Process

3.2 - 1997 Curriculum Development Process

The participants were asked about their insights regarding how the curriculum development process was carried out in 1997. The participants shared their thoughts regarding who they thought was not included in the process and in what capacity, as well as their feedback of the curriculum development process that was carried out back then.

Who was not represented historically?
- Parents
- Students
- The work sector
- School management
- Education experts
  - Philosophers
  - Researchers
  - Teachers

Who is not represented in WonderLand?
- CERD
- MEHE

Describe the 1997 curriculum development process

Limited/no knowledge: 9 out of the 48 participants stated that they have minimal to no information regarding how the Lebanese curriculum was developed in 1997. Those with prior knowledge stated the following regarding the process.

Curriculum Development Process

Participants who possessed knowledge pertaining to the 1997 Curriculum development process described it as follows:

Western influence

Participants stated that they believe the curriculum was adopted from the West. Many participants highlighted France as the main source of the curriculum. It was also stated that some participants believed that the translation from foreign language to Arabic was not done properly which negatively affected the quality of the curriculum content.
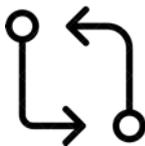
Needed follow up

Participants stated that the curriculum was not revisited or improved after it was commissioned which led to it becoming outdated. This, considering the mistakes the original curriculum contained compromised its value.

Limited teacher preparation

Participants stated that teachers were not properly prepared for implementing the curriculum. They stated that even though professional development was conducted, it was not enough. They added that the main focus of professional development was on assessment and evaluation not on pedagogy.

Highly demanding

Participants added that the process focused on quantity of subject matter which was significantly increased through the addition of material within already existing subjects, and adding new subjects like civics and economics. This resulted in more pressure on students and academic professionals.

Curriculum Development Process

3.3 - The 2021 Curriculum Process

Many participants believed that everything stated before in this section should be part of the curricular reform discussions. However, below are some questions that were captured as different from how the participants expressed their perceptions compared to the earlier section.

- Who is responsible for reforming the curriculum and what are the individuals' roles in this reform process?
- What should the reform process look like?
- What is the aim of teaching and learning?
- What is the general philosophy that will guide the development of students' cognitive, psychological, and social capacities?
- What objectives, skills, and broad topics do we need to include?
- How can we ensure the development of a locally rooted citizen while being globally informed?
- What are the values that the curriculum should address?
- What is the learner profile?
- How can we tolerate oppression in education?
- To what extent should we keep "stuffing" the students?
- How can we change the official exams?
- How can we keep developing with technological advancement?
- How can we maintain good mental health for our students?

Curriculum Development Process

The 2021 Curriculum Reform

The participants were asked about their insights regarding how the curriculum reform process should take place. The participants shared their thoughts regarding who they thought should be included in the process and in what capacity, and what, in their opinion, the curriculum development process guidelines should be.

Who should be represented?
- Parents
- Students
- Policymakers
- Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE)
- Center for Education Research and Development (CERD)
- Government representatives
- The work sector
- Education experts
  - Researchers
  - Teachers
  - Professors
  - Curriculum experts
- Mental health professionals
  - Psychologists

Curriculum Development Process

Who should have the main role in developing the curriculum?
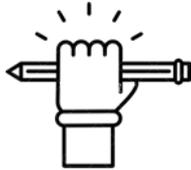
Education professionals

Policymakers

Community members

Researchers' Insights:

Participants considered that education professionals should play a main role in curriculum development. However, they believed that the status of MEHE and CERD should not be disregarded, as they are the main authority for educational matters in Lebanon.

What the curriculum development process should look like:

Focused on student needs

Participants stated that the curriculum development process should be based on students' needs. Those needs are related to providing them with the knowledge they require to be active members of the society and become capable citizens that can help Lebanon progress and move forward.

Focused on societal needs

Participants stated that the curriculum development process should consider the needs of the society to which the student belongs, which happens through acknowledging that different areas across Lebanon tend to have different needs. They added that the curriculum should play a central role in building a better community for the future.

Collaborative

Participants stated that the curriculum development process should be collaborative where all stakeholders have a role to play. Participants stated that teachers, curriculum experts, CERD, and researchers should form focus groups where the curriculum would be developed through deliberation and dialogue.

Curriculum Development Process

Research based

Participants stated that they believe the curriculum development process should be based on research conducted by curriculum and educational experts on international curricula. The research will also focus on past experiences that arose from the 1997 curriculum. The data will be analyzed and evaluated.

Researchers' Insights:

Even though the participants were asked about the curriculum development process, many opted to focus on content rather than the process as a whole. This misconception could spring from the reality that those participants have rarely been involved in a dialogue that focuses on the curriculum development process.

EDUCATOR PROFILE

Educator Profile

To achieve the curriculum aims, values, objectives, and plans, we asked about the ultimate teacher profile that can participate and carry out the curriculum reform. This pillar is divided into three main sections.

First, we asked about teacher characteristics that can increase the chances of success in the curriculum. Second, we asked about the role and characteristics of the educational leaders and instructional supervisors. Finally, we asked about the general opportunities that the new curriculum could bring forward to help teachers achieve the envisioned reform.

Educators' Characteristics

We asked the audience what characteristics the future teachers needed to uphold so that they could increase the chances of success in the curriculum. The answers are as follows:

Knowledge

- Good command of language of subject matter delivery
- Familiar with methods of analysis
- Expertise in their subject
- Awareness of learning difficulties
- Knowledge of modern methods of education
- Knowledge of various types of assessment and diagnosis
- Familiar with methods of analysis
- Possession of strategies and methods of learning
- Knowledge of psycho-social support
- Informed in their subject
- Informed of technological advancement

Educator Profile

Educators' Characteristics

Skills

- Constructive dialogue
- Classroom management
- Good leadership skills
- Emotional intelligence
- Dynamism and openness
- Openness to criticism
- Effective dialogue, communication and listening skills
- The ability to bring content to life by effectively linking it to real life situations
- A good role model to children
- Awareness of the power of audio-visual communication
- Ability to adapt to all circumstances
- Good negotiation skills

Values

- Holds values
- National educational ethics
- Respect for students' opinions
- Passionate
- Equality and honesty in education
- Loving towards his or her family
- Encouragement of innovative creativity
- Patience, love
- Openness to students' ideas
- Balanced personality

Educator Profile

Educational Leaders' Characteristics

We asked the audience what characteristics the future school leaders could uphold including principals, instructional supervisors, and general supervisors. The answers are as follows:

- **Values**
  - Positive behavior with students and teachers
  - Confidence in the success of the individual and the team
  - Teamwork spirit
  - A positive and supportive role
  - Development seeker
  - Openness to others' opinions
  - Good listener especially to problems of students, teachers, and parents
  - Values distributive leadership

- **Skills**
  - Technological training
  - Planning
  - Coordination skills
  - Problem-solving
  - The ability to continuously develop the organization
  - Direction, leadership, and follow-up
  - Organization
  - Leading the organization to success
  - The ability to distribute tasks in a manner compatible with the capabilities of people
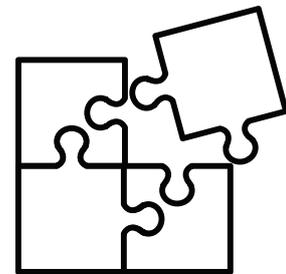
Educator Profile

Educational Leaders' Role

- **Leadership and management tasks**
  - Following up on grades with students
  - Evaluating the results
  - Designing educational policies
  - Creating a personal connection with parents and teachers
  - Guiding towards correct the educational process
  - Hiring experts in all fields
  - Focusing on student safety
  - Linking between parents and teachers

- **Instructional support**
  - Organizing training courses
  - Supervising the preparation of lessons
  - Attending classes
  - Setting periodic meetings with subject coordinators
  - Building the character of teachers
  - Rehabilitatng and training
  - Following-up, monitoring, and evaluating
  - Supervising and supporting
  - Placing all their experience and information into the hands of teachers
  - Monitoring the curriculum implementation process

- **Beyond the school's internal context**
  - Submitting proposals to the concerned ministry to take appropriate measures
  - Creating a link between the ministry and the teachers

Educator Profile

Curriculum Opportunities

We asked about the general opportunities that the new curriculum could bring to help teachers achieve the envisioned reform. Below were the answers:

Mental Health

- Fairness
- Serenity
- Time to relax
- General support system
- Safe environment for teachers

Rewards

- Social stability
- Appreciation
- Salary increase

Professional Development

- Continuous training
- Providing teachers with knowledge and techniques
- Training courses
- Technology
- Educational workshops
- Technological workshops

Teaching Hours

- Reducing contact hours
- Increasing the number of non-class hours

Teacher rights

- Old age security
- Early retirement
- Pressure on the unions to preserve the rights of teachers
- Social security and health insurance
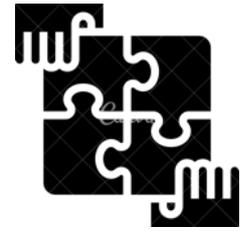- Health insurance

School-Based Autonomy

- Sense of ownership in the teaching content

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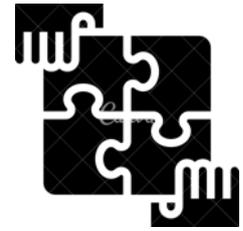Merehbi International School

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