منهجنا

Baalbek WonderLand Report 4/8

Outline

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👁 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

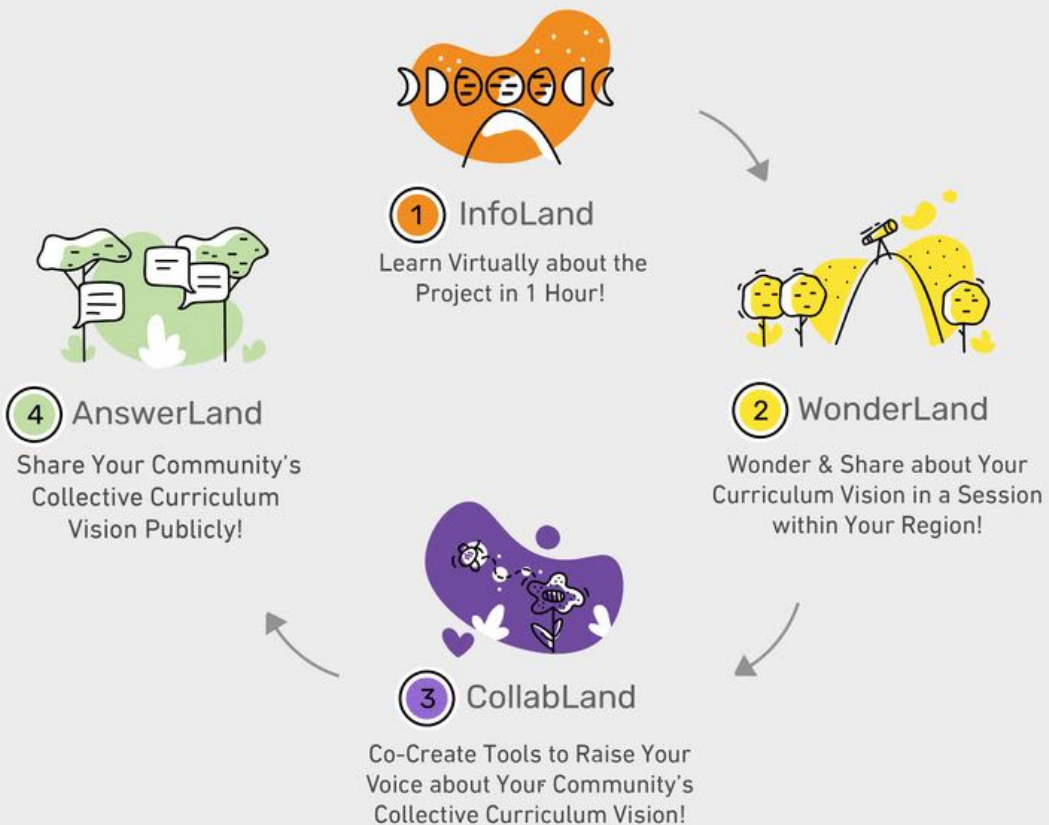The project co-creates inclusive spaces for dialogue to re-imagine the new curriculum.
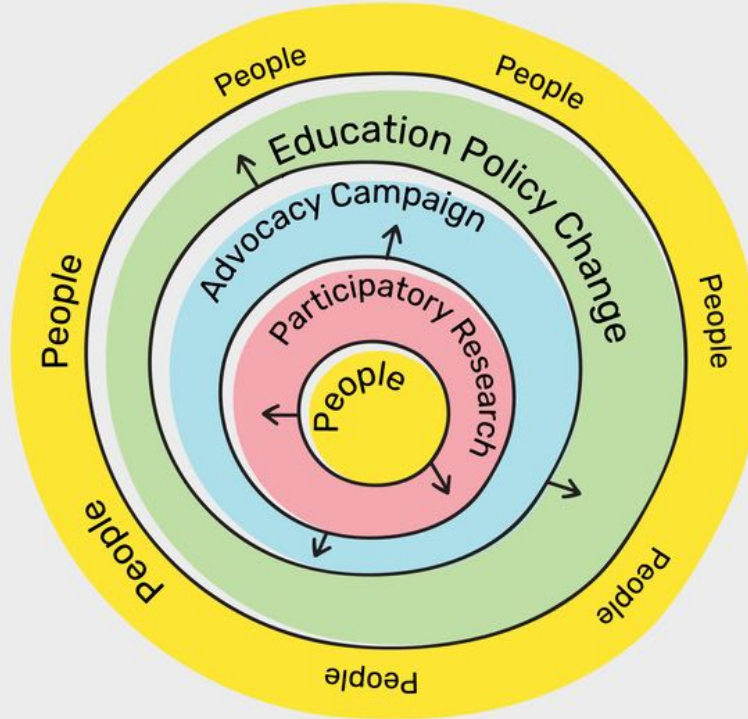Eights spaces are being facilitated in eights governorates across Lebanon.

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.

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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!

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 اللبنانيـة

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.

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.
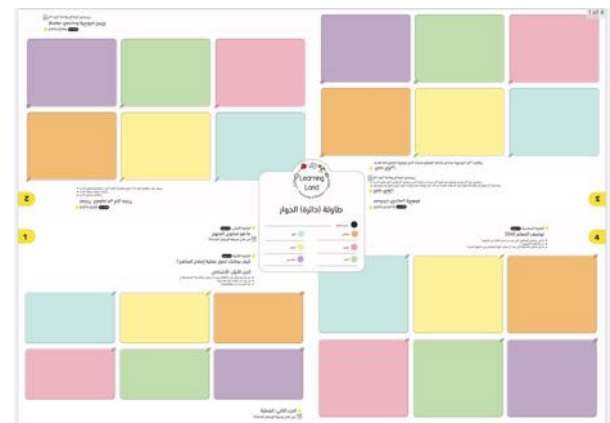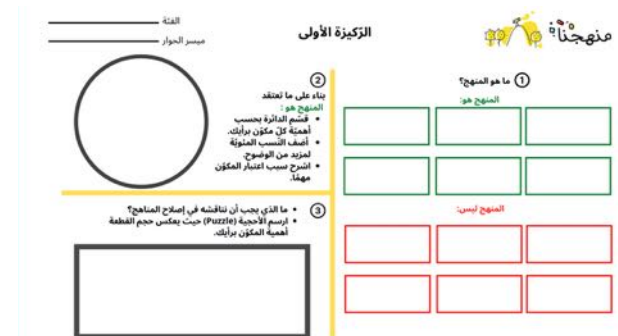

Figure 2

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.

EDUCATOR

1 ENGAGED COMMUNITY

2 CO-DESIGN SOLUTIONS

3 ACCESSIBLE RESEARCH

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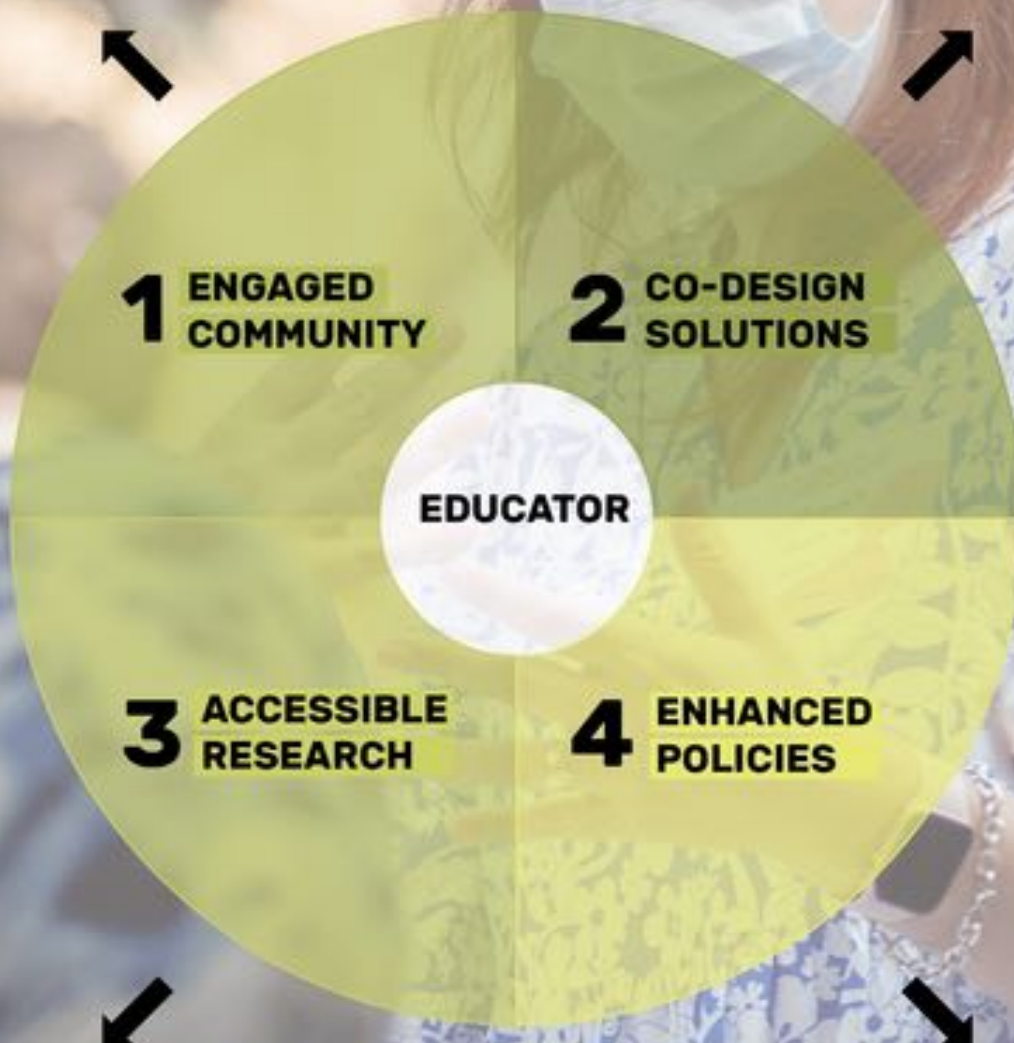
We provide easy-accessible research, centered on teaching and learning, for the education ecosystem players to drive evidence-based decision making.

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?
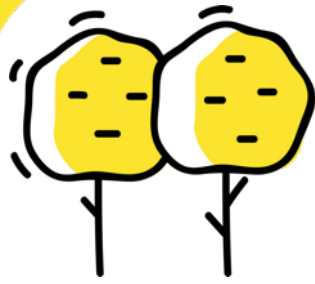
WONDERLAND PARTICIPANTS

39
Attendees

9
Dialogue Facilitators

2
Team Members

39 ATTENDEES:

BACKGROUND

Chart (vertical bar chart), y-axis from 0 to 20:

Background	Count
Teachers	16
Supervisors	6
Researchers	0
Principals	5
Employers	0
Specialists	1
NGOs	0
Not stated	8
Youth	2
Unions	0
MEHE	1
Parents	0
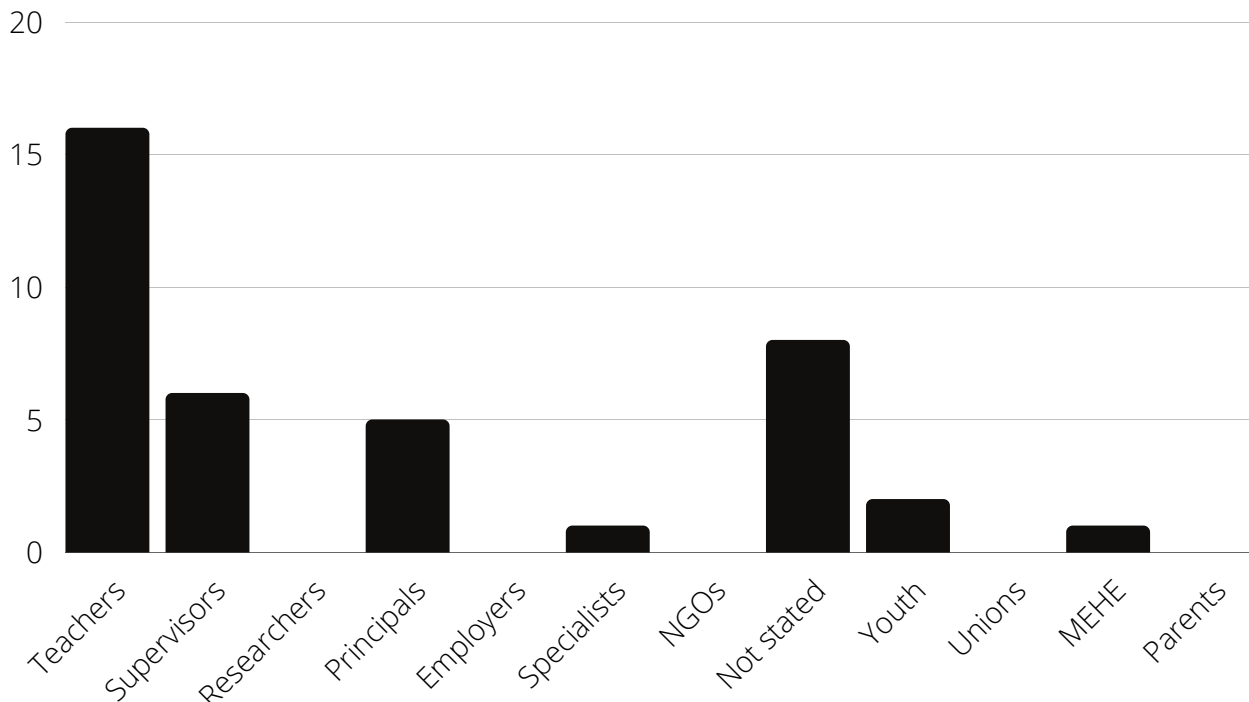
1/4
WHY & WHERE OF EDUCATION
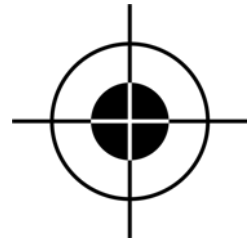
Why and Where of Education

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

Personal development

Participants displayed an awareness that building towards a successful career is but a single aim of a successful curriculum. The participants claimed that the curriculum should promote students' personal skills and allow them the chance to develop through focusing on and differentiating between their needs. Such a curriculum, according to the participants will enable students to progress in life and achieve their potential.

Societal development

Participants stated that the promotion of citizenship and the development and betterment of society should be among the primary aims of the curriculum. The use of the word "citizen" was ever present in participants' views of the aims of the curriculum. They shared that the curriculum should enable students to improve their local society in particular and the whole county in general by promoting democracy and the ability to change towards a better future.
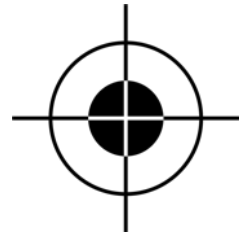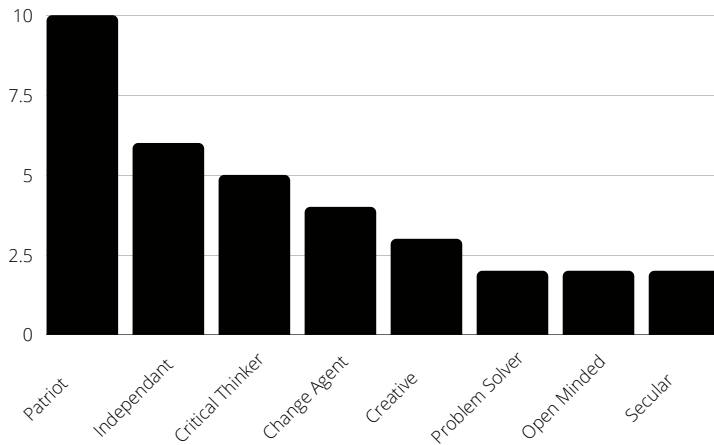
Career development

Finally, some participants mentioned that the curriculum should help students lead decent lives financially by helping them keep up with economical advancements.

Why and Where of Education

Successful student profile

Bar chart with y-axis from 0 to 10:
- Patriot: 10
- Independant: 6
- Critical Thinker: 5
- Change Agent: 4
- Creative: 3
- Problem Solver: 2
- Open Minded: 2
- Secular: 2

Top 6 Values the curriculum should promote:

- Acceptance
- Respect
- Confidence
- Honesty
- Family values
- Anti-bullying

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

- Home
- Sports venues
- Theater
- Community
- Social media
- Scout trips

Researchers' Insights:

According to the participants, the main focus of the curriculum should be personal and societal development. This could be seen in their description of the student profile, where patriotism was the most mentioned attribute, in addition to independence and critical thinking.

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 Development 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. These components are themed under four titles:

- Objectives
- Learning Experiences
- Content
- Evaluation

What is a Curriculum?

2.1 Curriculum as a Development Process

The curriculum development process was themed under three sub-categories that the curriculum developers could look into while designing the curriculum. These categories are: student, curriculum and planning goals.

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

- Student needs for the future career
- Everything that builds an independent learner/critic
- Empowerment of the student with the tools he or she needs to determine his or her personality and scientific direction
- Discover capabilities and hobbies
- The learner as an active member of society
- An educational policy aimed at building an effective and productive personality
- A phased path to reach citizenship building for the student

2.1.2 Curriculum Goals. When answering to "what is a curriculum?", participants associated the question to curriculum goals. Some of the participants' ideas were:

- Serious training for teachers to direct them to invest in courses in their classes
- Access to deeper levels of education
- Preparation of appropriate resources
- Coherence of ideas and sequences with what fits the age of the student
- Consolidation of information for all students
- Guidance for the teacher in order to achieve certain competencies

2.1.3 Planning Goals. When answering to "what is a curriculum?", participants associated the question to planning goals. Some of the participants' ideas were:

- Thoughtful plans to get "there"
- Regulation of the education process
- Rehabilitation
- Steps and procedures
- A clear vision - a clear mission

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 Objectives: The participants expressed that the curriculum should be designed based on specific objectives, goals, outcomes and competencies. Some believed that the curriculum should create an outline or a roadmap that is purposeful and goal oriented.

2.2.2 Learning Experience: Curriculum Learning Experience is defined as how the curriculum is being delivered. Answering what is a curriculum, participants said that the learning experience could be delivered through different teaching methods and teaching styles including tools such as textbooks and technological equipment. Participants also highlighted the importance of extra-curricular activities that focus on mental, emotional, physical, and psychological student needs.

2.2.3 Curriculum Content: Participants elaborated that the curriculum content could include general knowledge, skills, and values. They specified that a curriculum could be delivered based on a subject-matter division through different materials and textbooks.

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 on 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:

What is a Curriculum?

Include electives

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, technology, and additional languages were highlighted as options to be chosen from. Participants considered middle school 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. Many participants believed that those subjects should be the focus of the curriculum in initial stages, and that less time should be granted to those topics in middle school and high school to allow space to teach life skills and introduce new subjects that help students to identify their career path better. Some participants opted to advocate for the removal of some subjects that are currently considered to be main subjects such as geography and civics as they considered them of limited educational value.

Researchers' Insights:

What participants advocated for is actually present in the 1997 Lebanese curriculum policy. However, the implementation of that policy varied between areas in Lebanon where some schools, which usually cater for students of higher socioeconomic level, do offer elective courses while others do not.

What is a Curriculum?

2.2.4 Curriculum Evaluation:

Curriculum evaluation is concerned with the content and strategies used to assess them in Baalbak. 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
- Concepts
- Competencies
- Theories
- Objectives
- Creativity

Assessment Strategies

- Project-based
- Experimental-based
- Research-based
- Task-based
- Exams
- Participation-based
- Formative assessment

Issues

- Should not be based on assessing filled information
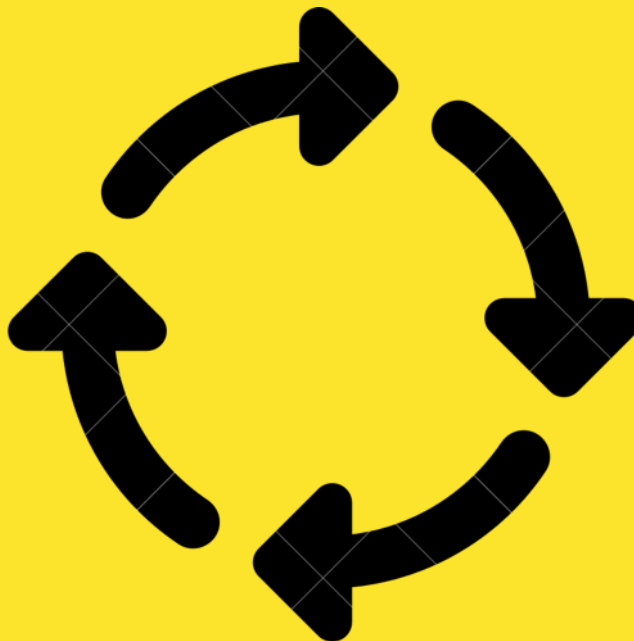- Written responses as a strategy should be removed

Issue in Official Exams

- Official Exams should be removed

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Curriculum Development Process

This pillar focuses on the process of curriculum development through 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 the 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 in the past.

Who was not represented?
- Parents
- Students
- The work sector
  - Business owners
- Professionals
  - Researchers
  - Lebanese University Researchers
  - Sociologists
  - Psychologists

Describe the 1997 curriculum development process

Limited/no knowledge: a significant number of 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 the1997 Curriculum development process described it as follows:

Late

Participants stated that the curriculum renovation was much needed. However, it was implemented late and took a lot of time. This, in their opinion limited its impact and success.

Improperly planned

Participants stated that the curriculum founded in 1997 was not properly planned which resulted in accumulated pressure on teachers and students, and ended up missing the set goals of promoting good citizens.
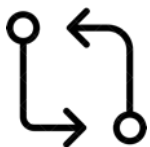
Needed follow up

Participants stated that the curriculum was intended to be evaluated after a particular time of implementation. Some stated that the original set time was three years. The curriculum however was never revisited.

De-contextualized

Participants stated that the curriculum included material that did not fit with the Lebanese social fabric. They added that the curriculum did not take into consideration the difference in contexts across Lebanon.

Researchers' Insights:

Feedback seemed to vary regarding the shortcomings of the 1997 curriculum development process. While some considered the problem to have originated from the process itself, others considered the process to be up to the required standard and considered the problem to lie within the implementation and evaluation phases.

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
- Education experts
  - Researchers
  - Teachers
  - Professors
  - Lebanese University professors
  - Curriculum experts
- Policy Makers
  - Center for Education Research and Development (CERD)
  - Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) representatives
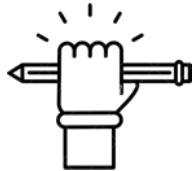 - Politicians
- Work sector

Curriculum Development Process

Who should have the main role in developing the curriculum?

Education professionals

Different Stakeholders

Healthcare Workers

Researchers' Insights:

Participants stated that education professionals should play a main role in curriculum development. However, they believed that they should rely on feedback from different stakeholders to build an inclusive curriculum.

What the curriculum development process should look like:

Focused on student needs

Participants stated that they believe that the curriculum development process should be based on students' needs. Those needs are related to preparing students for the work market, 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.

Collaborative

Participants stated that they believe 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 work together in order to construct the new curriculum.

Time Relevant

Participants stated that the new curriculum should focus on the needs of the current times we live in. It should promote 21st century skills and knowledge of technology.

Curriculum Development Process

Participants stated that teachers should be included in the different phases of the new curriculum development process. They added that the curriculum development process should take into consideration the needs of teachers and how to keep them motivated.

Include Teachers

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 could uphold so that they could increase the chances of success in the curriculum. The answers are as follows:

Knowledge

- Keeping pace with development and digital learning
- Up-to-date on the development taking place
- Expert in his or her subject

Educator Profile

Educators' Characteristics

Skills

- Leads
- Motivates students
- Efficient and reliable
- Takes care of the students
- Takes into account individual differences
- Accepts criticism
- Exhibits self confidence
- Shows professional
- Deals with challenges
- Shows creativity

- Life-long learner
- Exhibits technical abilities
- Good communication skills
- Knows effective classroom management
- Separates the personal from the professional

Values

- Empathetic
- Acceptance of others' opinions
- Objectivity
- Hard work ethic
- Respect for the emotions of others
- Fairness in dealing with students
- Acceptance of all students

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:

- **Skills**
  - Awareness of mistakes, seeking development
  - Sense of management
  - Development of learning skills
  - Responsibility
  - Social Integration

- **Values**
  - Be positive
  - Be sympathetic
  - Create of an incubating environment
  - Believe in "From the people to the people"
  - Resemble the societal outlook and values
  - Consider others' insights when making decisions
  - Open to forgiveness with others
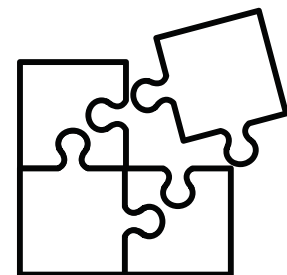
Educational Leaders' Role

- **Leadership and management tasks**
  - Creates an appropriate atmosphere within the educational institution
  - Transfers the generation from ignorance to the light of knowledge
  - Comes from an educational community and be in direct contact with students, teachers and parents
  - Motivates the teacher through appreciation and giving a sense of freedom
  - Provides suitable places for students
  - Develops proper educational plans

- **Instructional support**
  - Trains and work on the development of knowledge and skills
  - Puts plans to monitor the progress of the learning process
  - Trains on modern methods and curricula
  - Provides guidance
  - Appreciates the learner and give continuous workshops as well as giving space for expression and development

- **Beyond the school's internal context**
  - Involves teachers in decision-making
  - Gives the teacher the freedom to choose the evaluation mechanism
  - Provides entrepreneurship education
  - Promotes the development of leaders in the society
  - Involves teachers in the educational process

Educator Profile

Curriculum Opportunities

We asked about the general opportunities that the new curriculum could bring to help teachers achieve the envisioned reform. The answers are as follows:

Mental Health

- Psychological support
- Emotional motivation

Rewards

- Financial support
- Appreciation
- Extrinsic motivation

Professional Development

- Counseling
- Monitoring
- Training on using modern and advanced methods
- Continuous training
- Providing various means of demonstration, including laboratories and documents
- Working on the development of knowledge and skills
- Providing seminars

Role Outside the Classroom

- Participation in community building
- Participation in the development of the Lebanese curriculum
- Provide opportunity to participate in the development of programs
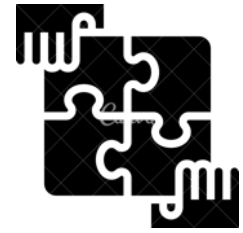
School-Based Autonomy

- Sense of freedom
- Right of expression

COLLABORATORS & CO-CREATORS

Baalbek Region Champion & Dialogue Facilitators

Lina Al Masri
Baalbek Community Champion
English Language Trainer
CERD

Aya Shemali
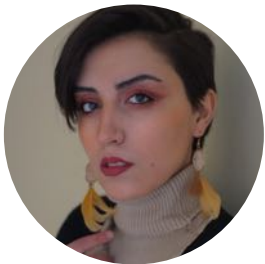Administrative Assistant
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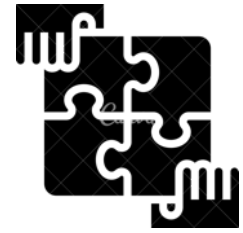**Raghad Chall**
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Disclaimer:

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To cite this work, please use the below: