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Beqaa WonderLand Report 6/8

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

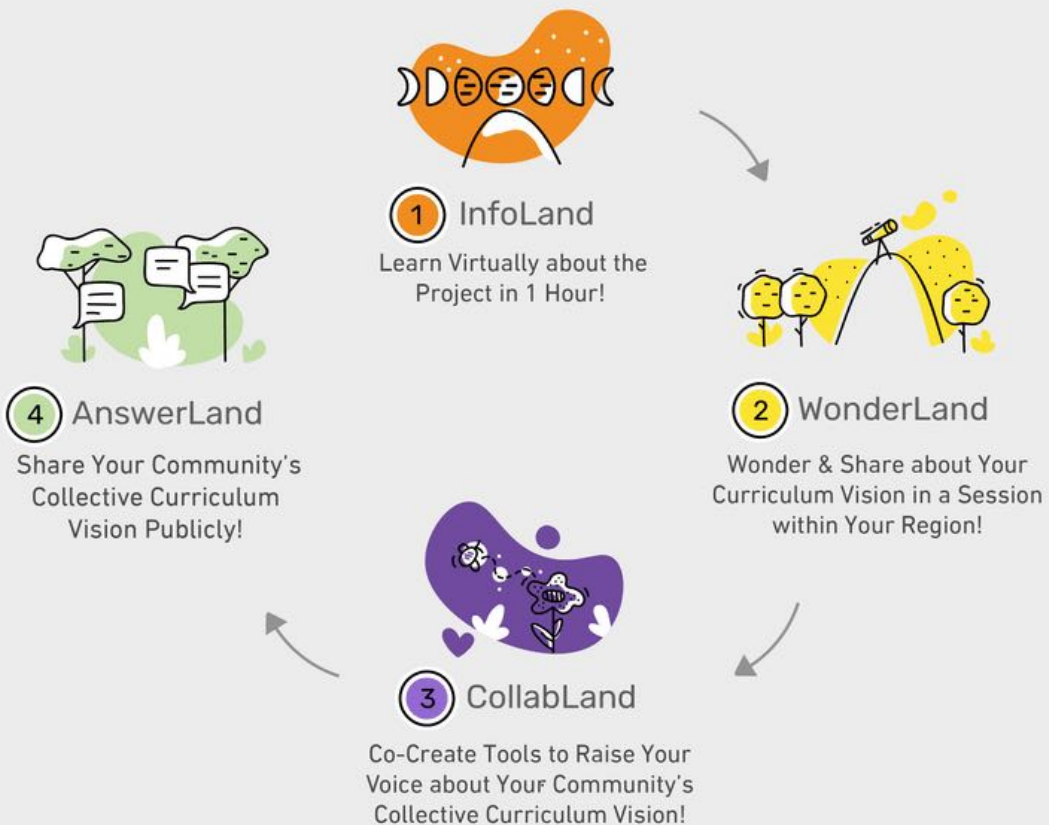The project co-creates inclusive spaces for dialogue to re-imagine the new curriculum.
Eights spaces are being facilitated in eights governorates across Lebanon.
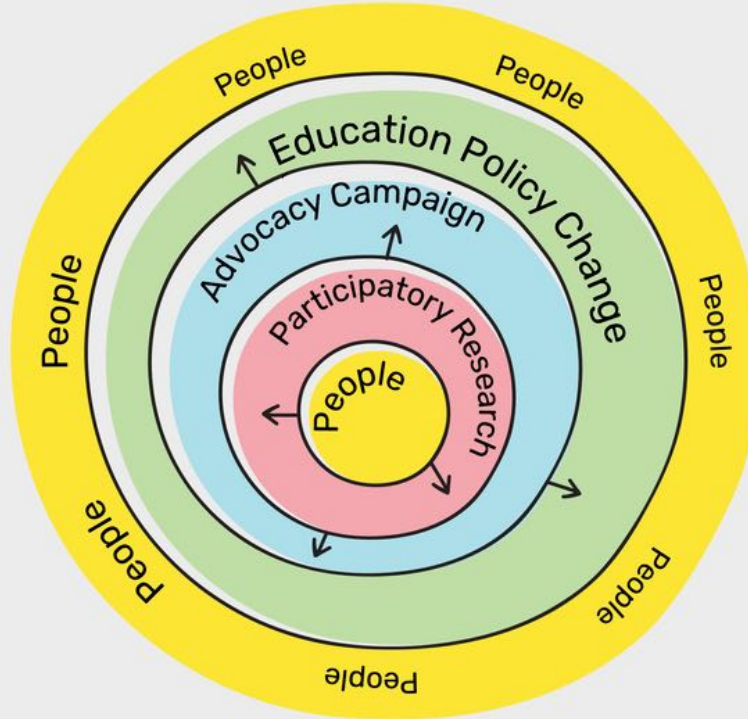
Through Manhajna's activities, we engage diverse groups from across the country to join us to envision a curriculum embedded in the values of participation, inclusion, justice and equity.
We aim to create a national network that will campaign to influence policy and curriculum creation processes to make 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!

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Theory of Change

FOR THE PEOPLE BY THE 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

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Why CLS?

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

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.

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.
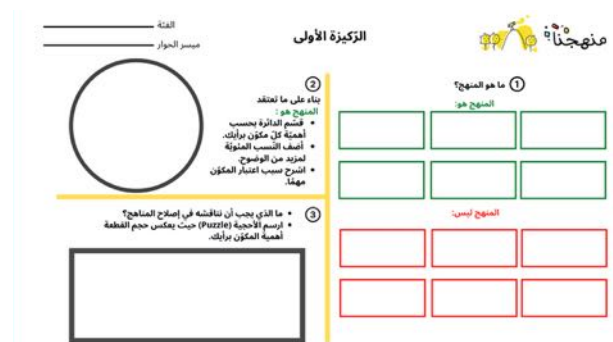

Figure 1

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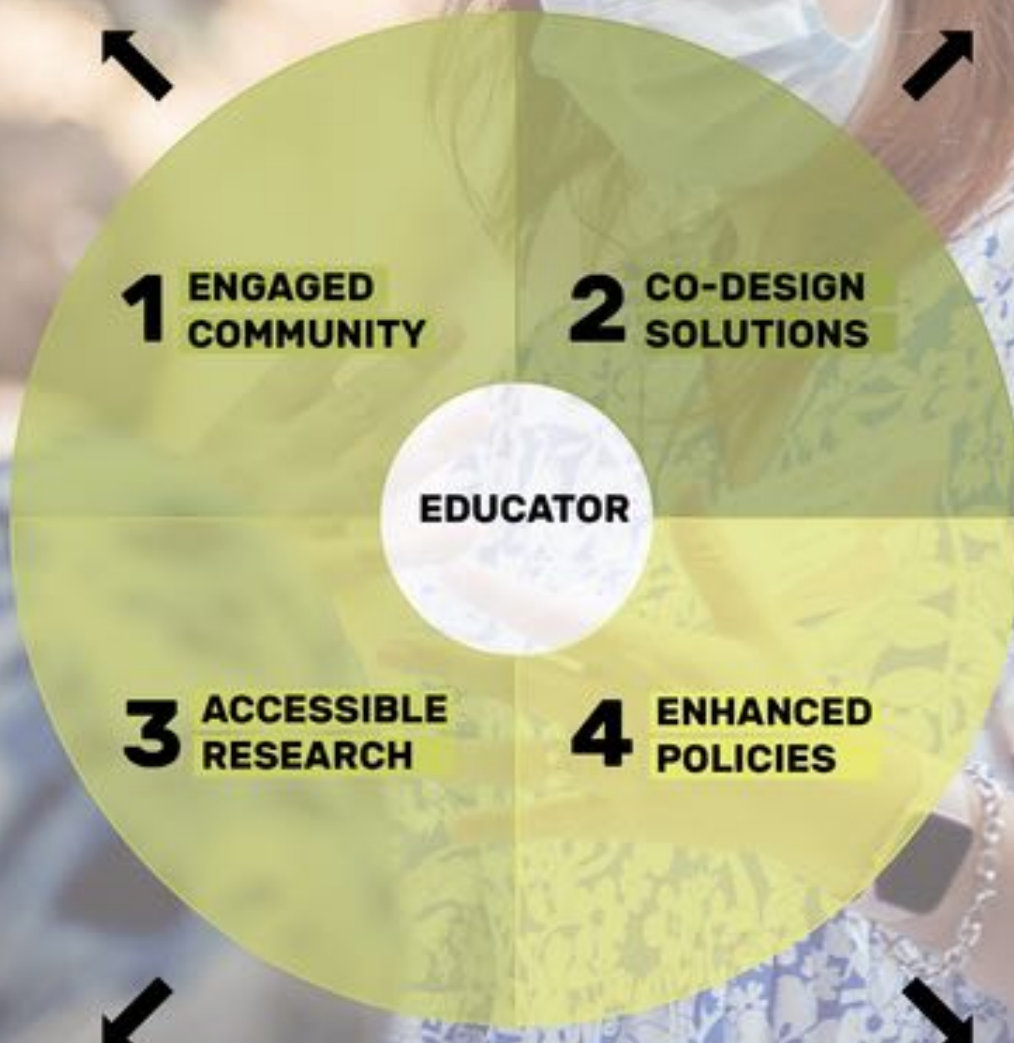
We provide easy-accessible research, centered on teaching and learning, for the education ecosystem players to drive evidence-based decision making.

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?
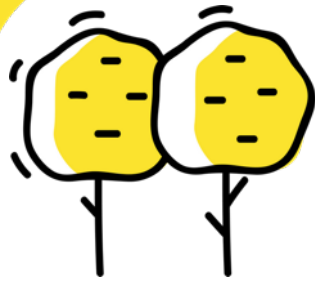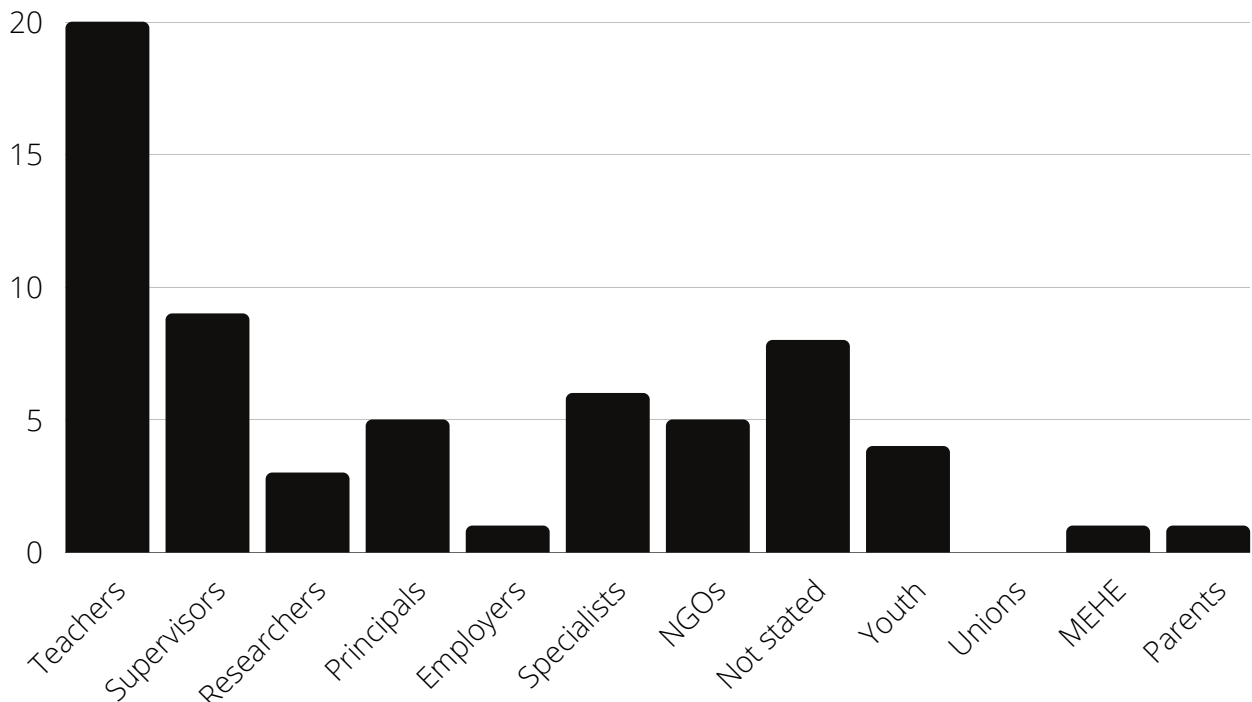
WONDERLAND PARTICIPANTS

63
Attendees

8
Dialogue
Facilitators

3
Team
Members

63 ATTENDEES:

BACKGROUND

(Bar chart — BACKGROUND)

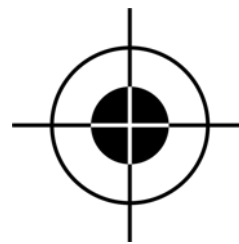| Category	Value
Teachers	20
Supervisors	9
Researchers	3
Principals	5
Employers	1
Specialists	6
NGOs	5
Not stated	8
Youth	4
Unions	0
MEHE	1
Parents	1

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

Career development

Participants stated that the curriculum should consider the market needs in order to guarantee students the best chance to build a successful career that could result in true social mobility.
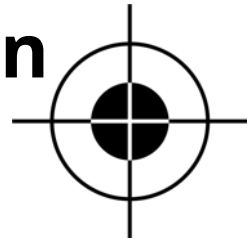
Personal development

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 well-being, and work towards enhancing their technological skills and 21st century skills to his or her personal betterment as well as the advancement of society as a whole.
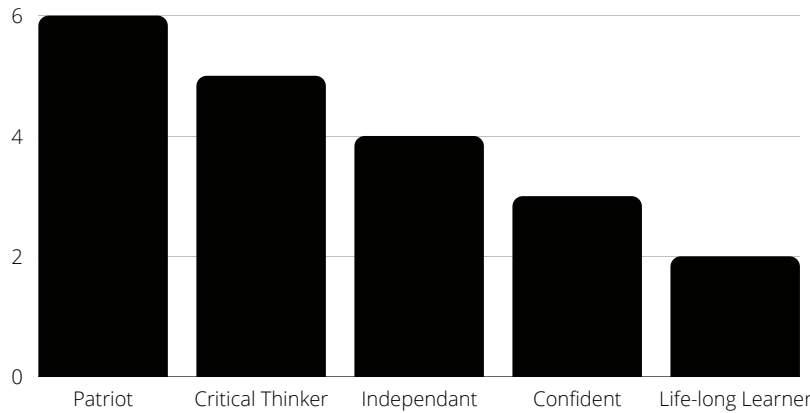
Societal development

Finally, participants believed that the curriculum should open the gate to building a strong nation and a capable society. According to the participants, this could be done through helping students understand social values and building awareness of the rights and duties that students have toward their society. Participants highlighted the needed balance between conserving societal values and promoting change and development.

Why and Where of Education

Successful student profile

Bar chart values:
- Patriot: 6
- Critical Thinker: 5
- Independant: 4
- Confident: 3
- Life-long Learner: 2

Top 6 Values the curriculum should promote

- Respect
- Acceptance
- Honesty

- Cooperation
- Compassion
- 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
- Home
- Museums and Archeological sites

- Businesses and work places
- Scouts and local organizarions
- Factories

Researchers' Insights:

While the larger number of participants considered the main aim of the curriculum to be career development, The prominence of societal and personal development was also clear from their description f the student profile, in addition to the values the curriculum should promote.

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-goal 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:

- Helping students set goals and work towards achieving them
- Teaching students to identify their passion(s)
- Encouraging students to think and analyze
- Supporting all students (inclusion)
- Achieving the large end-goal
- Teaching communication, morals, and manners

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

- Curriculum development
- Support for special needs
- Development of each educational subject according to the age, era, and the learner
- The way in which the institution wants to communicate its goals (educational - religious)
- Development of new ways to promote innovation
- Training of educators
- Constant training and updating of books that are in line with the vision of Ministry of Education
- Building, correcting, and benefiting from educational goals
- System of several necessities for school

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

- An educational plan to advance science and an important teaching strategy
- Teaching plan/ Annual plan
- Concrete, secure, and long-term goals
- A place for the learning and educational process and a well-thought-out plan

What is a 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 perceived that the learning experience could be delivered through different teaching strategies, teaching environments, and teaching tools.

Teaching Strategies:
- Practical rather than theoretical
- Applied Sciences
- External research
- Experience
- Steps to follow to guide students to learn

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 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, and workshops 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. Participants highlighted the importance of 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.

Contact hours

Participants saw a need to reconsider the number of contact hours according to the cycle. There seemed to be a consensus that students spend a long time in classes and that time needs to be reduced. Participants believed that the typical school day should include no more than 4 contact hours for lower cycles.

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?

- Critical Thinking
- Comprehension
- Problem Solving
- Higher Order Thinking
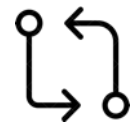
Assessment Strategies

- Project Based
- Team-Based
- Practice-Based
- Play-Based
- Inquiry-Based
- Formative
- Summative

Issue in Official Exams

- Assessment should not be graded.
- It should be based on qualitative assessment and not quantitative.
- Exams are not constructive but destructive.
- It should become more transparent.
- It should be collaborative, not competitive.
- It should consider quality over quantity.
- It should be based on International Standardized Testing (Ex. IELTS & TOEFL)

Assessment Tools & Tasks

- Self Assessment
- Feedback
- Role Play
- Panel Discussions
- Models
- Site Visits
- Case Studies
- Multiple Choice
- Labs
- Online tools
- Music
- Social media/ Blogs
- Competitions
- Drawings
- Fairs
- Portfolios
- Oral examinations
- Brainstorming
- Reports

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 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?
- Parents
- Students
- People with special needs
- The work sector
  - Business owners
  - Businessmen
  - Employers
  - Economists
- Education experts
  - Researchers
  - Teachers
- Other
  - Municipalities
  - NGOs
  - Visionaries

Describe the 1997 curriculum development process:

Limited/no knowledge: Almost half the participants either did not share any input regarding the 1997 curriculum development process, or stated that they did not know how the process occurred.

Curriculum Development Process

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

Western influence

Participants stated that the curriculum was adopted from the West. Participants highlighted France as the main source of the curriculum, and that the adopted curriculum did not take the Lebanese context into consideration. One participant stated that the curriculum was cloned rather than adapted.

Bureaucratic

Participants stated that the curriculum development process was centralized and carried behind closed doors in a top-down manner. Some added that the curriculum was forced on teachers without properly preparing them to implement it.
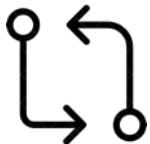
Needed follow up

Participants stated that the curriculum was not evaluated and updated. Some added that while the curriculum was decent at the beginning, the lack of updates and follow up and the fact that updates were "folkloric" when administered rendered the curriculum out of date.
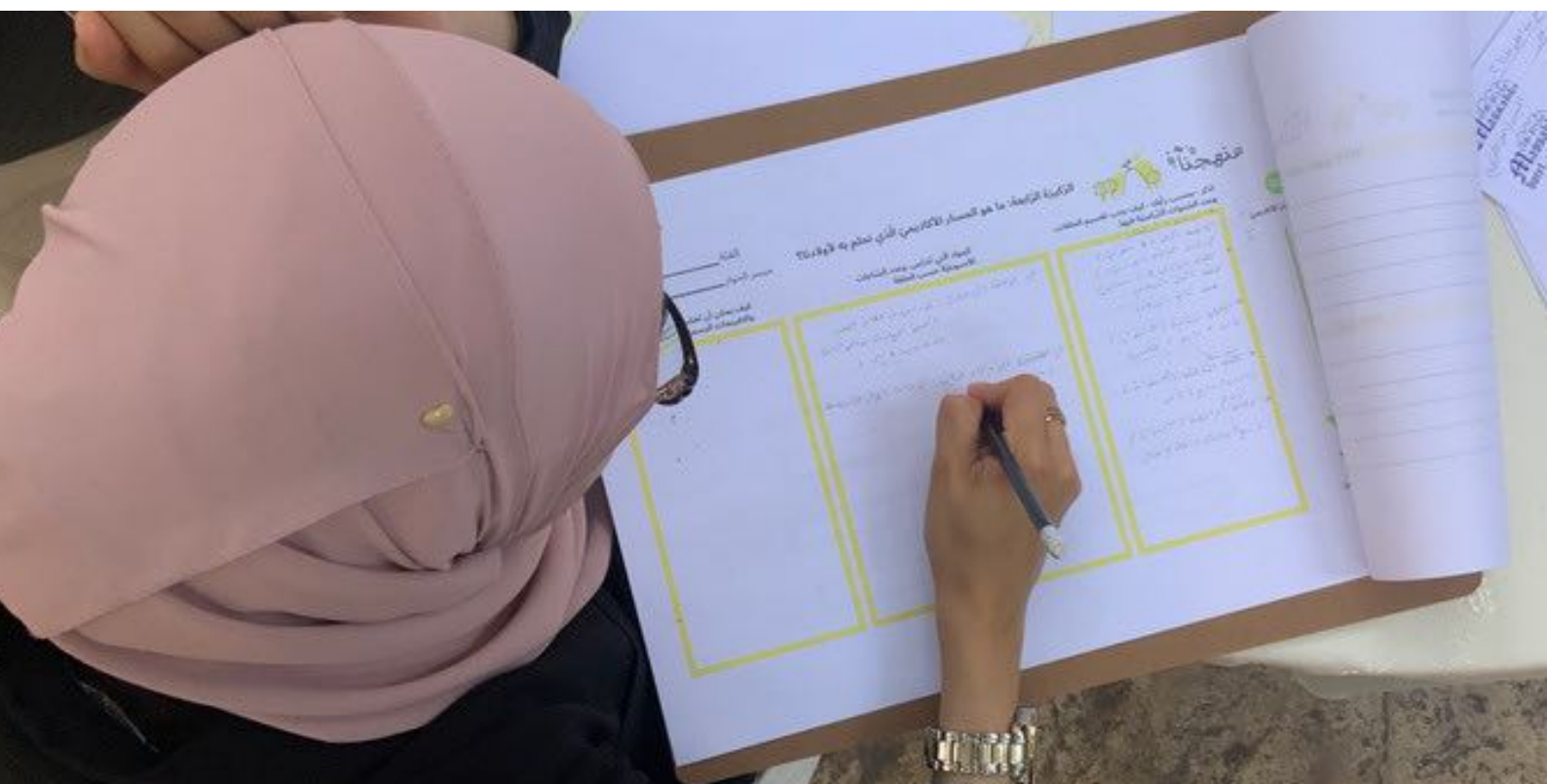
Curriculum Development Process

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 that we need to include?
- How can we ensure developing 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 be undertaken. 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
- The work sector
  - Business owners
  - Businessmen
  - Employers
  - Economists
- Education experts
  - Researchers
  - Teachers
  - Professors
  - Curriculum experts

- Policymakers
  - Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE)
  - CERD
  - Government representatives
- Mental health professionals
  - Psychologists
- Other
  - NGOs
  - Politicians

Curriculum Development Process

Who should have the main role in developing the curriculum?

Policymakers

Education professionals

Researchers' Insights:

Participants considered that education professionals should play a main role in curriculum development. However, they believed that the it is MEHE and CERD should not take center stage in the curriculum reform

What the curriculum development process should look like.

Student based

Participants stated that the curriculum development process should be student based. This could be done through focusing on the contextual needs of students, in addition to surveying their needs and thoughts.

Collaborative

Participants stated that the curriculum development process should be collaborative where all stakeholders have a role to play. Participants stated that such collaboration could be achieved through disseminating surveys on stakeholders to gather feedback, or through focus group discussions including representatives from MEHE and CERD and different stakeholders that represent the community.

Curriculum Development Process

Research based

Participants stated that the curriculum development process should be based on research conducted by curriculum and educational experts. The research will form a base to construct the new curriculum upon.

Process based

Participants stated that the curriculum development process should go through several stages starting from research and needs assessment, followed by providing suggestions to a professional committee. The committee will take the recommendations into consideration in the development process. The process leads to prototyping and testing in various settings where shortcomings would be addressed before wide scale implementation.

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.

4/4

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

- Knowledge of language and content
- Knowledge in technology
- Highly knowledgeable in educational strategies and methods
- Knowledge of students' learning styles
- Educational certificates

Educator Profile

Educators' Characteristics

Skills

- Tolerance and patience
- Positivity
- Acceptance of criticism
- Ready for change
- Interactive and cooperative with students
- Playful
- Good listeners
- Development of students' ideas
- Smooth teaching methods
- Planning skills
- Problem solving skills
- Competence

- Flexibility when dealing with parents and students
- Promotion of a positive and interactive environment in the classroom through activities
- Inspirational
- Administrative
- Ability to detect and correct errors
- Ability to take into account the requirements of the current era
- Acquisition of 21st century skills
- Separation of private life from the educational process

Values

- Neutrality
- Mercy and humility
- Commitment
- Morality
- Fairness
- Anti-racism
- A humanistic view of excellence
- Dedication
- Empathy

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**
    - Acceptance of others' opinion
    - Fairness
    - Humility
    - Openness
    - Inclusiveness

- **Skills**
    - A focus on the positive things
    - Role Model
    - Good communication and listening skills
    - Motivator
    - Ability to criticize, cooperate, and guide
    - Flexible
    - Good time management
    - Good planning ability
    - A role model for the team
    - Leader
    - Support and motivation for learners
    - Strict not harsh
    - Supportive
    - Problem solver
    - Up-to-date
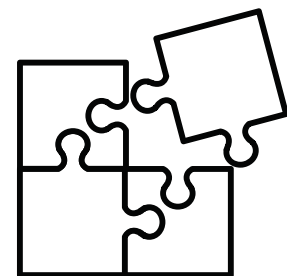
Educator Profile

Educational Leaders' Characteristics

Knowledge

- **Instructional Support**
  - Follow up on teachers' work
  - Follow up on classes
  - Knowledge of educational administration
  - Research and training
  - Performance evaluation and follow-up
  - Assessment and training
  - Moral support for the teacher
  - Teacher development, assessment, and feedback
  - Facilitating teachers' lives within the educational frameworks
  - Training courses in educational technology
  - Coordination between teachers
  - Teacher development

- **Beyond Instructional Support**
  - Equipping the school will all needed material
  - Directing and setting educational policies
  - Funding research and curriculum development
  - Supporting strategic planning
  - Supporting the teacher psychologically and educationally
  - Involving teachers in the curriculum development process
  - Playing a role in educational reform

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

- Provide psychological aid

Rewards

- Recognition for effort
- Promotions and rewards
- Nomination for missions and conferences
- Monthly vacations
- Higher salary
- Payment for extra work and not only for teaching
- Constant support and encouragement

Professional Development

- Training courses in educational technology
- Support and development programs
- A variety of information resources
- Necessary equipment
- More facilities
- Follow-up on how to apply the curriculum
- Close and vigorous follow-up in the early years
- Support not inspection

Role Outside the Classroom

- Involvement in the society
- Part of placing school policies

Educator Profile

Curriculum Opportunities

School-Based Autonomy

- Independence and self-sufficiency
- Partnership between teachers and administration
- Involvement of teachers in decision-making
- Educational, not political, unions
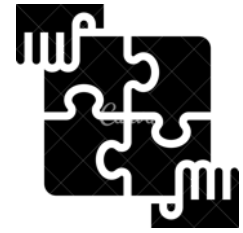- Opportunity to participate in regular meetings

Teachers' Rights

- Fair salaries
- A change in the labor law relating to women
- Financial self-sufficiency
- A decrease in age of retirement
- Health insurance
- Old age security

COLLABORATORS & CO-CREATORS

Beqaa Region Champion & Dialogue Facilitators

Rasha Halat
Beqaa Community Champion

Senior Researcher at the Centre for
Lebanese Studies & University Lecturer

Amal Farhat
Assistant Professor
Lebanese International Universtiy

Amal Moghrabi
Principal at Thimarina School for
Learning Difficulties

Fahd Jamaleddine
Co-Founder & Chief
Visionary
Inspiration Gardens
Lead Manhajna Researcher

Hala Hashem
University Instructor
Lebanese International University

Katya Franji Etre
English Language Instructor
USEK

Mahmoud Farhat
Jeb Jannine High School Principal
University Professor in Arabic Language

Nabiha El Khatib
English Instructor
American Lebanese
Language Center

Rana Makki
Junior Researcher
Centre for Lebanese Studies
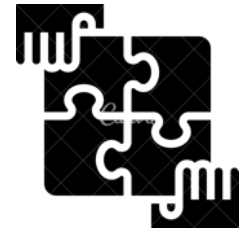
Taghrid Abou Haikal
English Teacher
Ministry of Education

Wassim Abou Yassin
Assistant Dean- School of Education
Lebanese International University

COLLABORATORS & CO-CREATORS

Inspiration Garden & Learning Land Team

Fahd Jamaleddine
Co-Founder & Chief
Visionary
Lead Manhajna Researcher

Naji Talhouk
Impact Imagineer
Lead Manhajna Researcher

Alaa Al Zahab
Programs Manager
Research Assistant

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Mai Abu Moghli
Senior Researcher
Manhjna Project Lead

Maha Shuayb
Director

Disclaimer:

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