

DEFENCE FOR CHILDREN
INTERNATIONAL
LEBANON

Connect Children Now



TOWARDS EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT IN LEBANON

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1- Context Analysis

Education in Lebanon has continuously been the concern of the Lebanese Government, especially the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and The Education and Research Center for Development (CERD). The private sector, as represented by Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs), private schools and the teaching and administrative bodies within them, as well as students and their parents, have also shown interest and concern for the education system. Over the years, a number of laws and decrees have been passed concerning schools and students' that lead to education improvement.

Before signing the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), Lebanon passed decree No 134 dated 12/6/1959 for free education. Article 49 of the decree stated, "Education is free for the primary level, and is the right of all Lebanese". In May 1960, this law was amended by another law Number 14 to state, "Students are accepted free in all levels and types of state schools". However, this was not accompanied by any enactment decrees, thereby leading to a lack of any implementation decrees and procedures. In 1971, the Lebanese Government issued law No 2352 dated 10/12/1971 creating the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD). It is attached to the Ministry of Education and is responsible for revising state schools' curriculum, as well as research and statistics.

The Lebanese government's signing and ratifying of the CRC in 1990 gave strength to the MEHE to push towards issuing laws and changing regulations that lead to compulsory free education for all children on Lebanese territories.

The Lebanese government passed the law Number 686 dated 6/3/1998 for compulsory free primary-level education. However, the implementing decrees have not been issued and therefore there are no mechanisms in place to apply this law. MEHE has committed efforts to make education free by issuing circular Number 56/M/2003. Article 1 of the circular states, "Do not charge students of KGs, levels one and two of basic education in state schools to pay any registration fees", but students are still required to pay the parents' fund (\$60) used to pay 1) insurance fees for the children while at school, 2) salaries of cleaners and guardian staff, and 3) emergency expenses (e.g. broken windows).

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education can by no means make education compulsory without the joint efforts of all concerned stakeholders, including:

- a) The governmental/public sector: MEHE, CERD, and the government's ministries and municipalities.
- b) United Nations subsidiary agencies and regional bodies (UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, EU among others)
- c) International donors.

MEHE and CERD have made many efforts towards education improvement, three of which are mentioned below.

I- Plan for restructuring education 2004-2015

In 1994, CERD put forward a plan for restructuring education. It tackled the main topics that lead to school improvement and had six objectives¹ :

Enforce civism and spiritual/cultural openness by revising and refining the

¹Plan for Restructuring Education 2004-2015, Page 4, MEHE, CERD, May 8, 2004.

school curriculum.

Empower the new generation with knowledge and skills emphasizing civism and Lebanese values such as freedom, democracy, forgiveness and the abolishment of violence, in addition to strengthening youth activities such as sports and art.

Improve the quality of education before university level.

Adopt a holistic approach promoting academic, vocational, and technical education; and strengthen these institutions' affiliation with higher education.

Relate education to the needs of the market in Lebanon and the Arab states.

Follow global trends in educational and technical development to facilitate interaction with international cultures.

II. Education for all 2004-2015

After Lebanon took part in the international forum of Dakar in 2000, the UNESCO regional office prepared a regional plan named "Education for All" to be implemented in each country of the region in collaboration with its respective government. In Lebanon, MEHE and UNESCO prepared the "National Education for All Plan 2004-2015" This plan undertook ten different topics² :

Early Childhood (3-6 years)

Basic education 1st and 2nd levels (6-12 years of age)

Basic education 3rd level (12-15 years of age)

Literacy for youth and adults

Special needs

Teaching body

Curriculum

School environment

National Administration of Education

School Administration

Each of these ten topics has its respective objectives and programs, responsible for implementation and remarks.

III. National Strategy for Education 2010-2015

In 2010 MEHE has put a National strategy for Education, complimented by an implementation strategy "Quality Education for Growth" 2010-2015 which addressed five main topics³

The general education sector Facts and Figures

National Education strategy framework

Priorities and suggested programs

Working mechanism and working groups

Suggested sources of funding

This strategy has five priorities⁴ with ten corresponding programs. Each program has several associated projects, timetables, deliverables, and sources of funding as follows:

Priority 1 Equal Access to Education Services

Program 1 - Early Childhood Education.

Program 2 - improving retention and achievement.

Program 3 - Development of infrastructure.

² National Plan Education for All 2004 – 2015, Lebanese republic, MEHE, pp108-110.

³Quality Education for Growth 2004-2015, National Education Strategy Framework, Education Sector Development, p. 1, MEHE, March 2010.

⁴Ibid, pp. 20-22.

Priority 2 Quality education towards building a knowledgeable society

Program 4 - Professionalization of the teaching work force.

Program 5 -Modernization of school management.

Program 6 - Achievement, assessment and curriculum development.

Priority 3 Education towards strengthening Social Integrity

Program 7 - Citizenship education.

Priority 4 Education towards strengthening economic development

Program 8 - National classification framework.

Program 9 - ITC Education.

Priority 5 Governance of education

Program 10 - Institutional Development.

2-Main Challenges and Opportunities in Education

As seen in the context analysis, MEHE, CERD, and UNESCO have made several attempts to understand the problems of education and identify areas where future effort should be directed to make quality education free for all.

The following different components of education have been the main topics addressed throughout all attempts to improve education.

School enrolment

Early childhood

Class failing, repetition, and drop outs

Children with special needs

Curriculum

Teachers

School administration

Infrastructure

School environment

In this paper, we will address the components mentioned above using the figures of the Statistical Bulletins from the 2006-2007 academic year. This was the year after Education for All was launched, and data from the scholastic year 2010-2011 was corroborated to track the progress made at its half term, and the different obstacles that hindered education improvement. It is also the scholastic year before the influx of Syrian refugees and the scholastic year 2012-2013 when schools started having big numbers of Syrians which had effects on education especially in the state schools. It must be noted that all numbers and figures mentioned in this paper related to students, their nationalities, failures, repetition, promotion, and teachers are the numbers of the yearly statistical bulletins published by CERD.

2.1 School Enrolment

In Lebanon there were 2777 schools operating during the scholastic year 2012-2013 distributed as follows: 1275 state schools, 1075 private schools, 358 semi-private schools, and 69 UNRWA schools inside the Palestinian camps. While during the 2006-2007 scholastic year, the number of schools was 2812. The decrease was in the state schools and the semi-private schools while there was an increase in the number of private

schools.

MEHE directly runs the state schools (pre-school to baccalaureate) and subsidizes semi private schools which provide educational services solely up to the primary level and are run either by NGOs or by religious groups. These schools are designated as free private schools but in reality they are not free. The MEHE pays one and a half times the minimum wage salary per child at the beginning of the scholastic year and the school charges the parents as part of the school registration fees at the beginning of the second semester. The student who does not pay the requested fees is put out of school, denied receipt of the school bulletin, and as such is unable to attend any school the follow-

ing scholastic year. As schools subsidized by MEHE, they should be under the jurisdiction of the directorate of the regional departments of education as they are all primary level institutions. MEHE, through the regional department, will be able to supervise the quality of education, have a say in the qualifications of appointed teachers, and in then treatment of teachers and students.

In principal, any child in Lebanon who wants to enroll in a state school can have the chance to do so without any discrimination, except for children with special needs. Table No 1 below shows the distribution of students in accordance with their nationalities in the different types of schools.

Table 1 Distribution of Students according to Nationality and School Type

Type of school	Year	Lebanese	Syrian	Palestinian	Arab nationalities	Foreign nationalities	Not stated	Total
STATE SCHOOLS	2006-7	309,071	10,117	1391	1297	449	1178	326,503
	2010-11	254,038	14,522	4630	1481	380	1068	276,119
	2012-13	247,723	43,537	4782	1894	332	977	299,245
SEMI-PRIVATE	2006-7	119,508	2241	1700	570	154	108	124,281
	2010-11	120,783	2794	1361	553	147	90	125,728
	2012-13	119,949	5207	1865	629	120	76	127,846
PRIVATE SCHOOLS	2006-7	454,379	2779	5177	1649	2835	274	467,093
	2010-11	486,332	4029	7101	2281	4021	260	504,024
	2012-13	491,832	11,231	6813	2412	4137	202	516,627
UNRWA SCHOOLS	2006-7							
	2010-11	1203	297	30,433	107	5	14	32,059
	2012-13	1235	389	30,262	72	7	12	31,977
Total	20-06-7	882,958	15,137	11,268	3516	3438	1560	917,877
	2010-11	862,356	21,642	43,525	4422	4553	1432	937,930
	2012-13	860,739	60,364	43,722	5007	4596	1267	975,695

As can be seen from the above table, the school enrollment of Lebanese children in Lebanon has decreased over the last few years in spite of population growth and all efforts made to enroll children in schools and retain them. The percentage of Lebanese students enrolled in schools in Lebanon versus the total number of students has decreased even before the influx of the Syrian refugees. During the 2006 – 2007 scholastic year, the number of the Lebanese students attending schools was 309071 (96.2% of the total number of students attending state schools), which decreased to 254038 (91.0%) for the scholastic year 2010-2011, and

299245 (88.2%) for the scholastic year 2012-2013. In accordance to UNHCR Data sheet March 2014, 138877 Syrian students enrolled in the state school (99920 in the morning shift and 39633 in the afternoon shift). The percentage of Lebanese Children decreased dramatically as there was a great increase in the number of Syrian students enrolled in the state schools. Indeed, school directors and teachers within certain state schools feel they are no longer catering to Lebanese children.

Table 2 Number of Lebanese students enrolled in all types of schools

Year	State	Semi-private	Private	Total
2006-2007	309,071	119,508	454,279	882,958
2010-2011	254,038	120,783	486,332	86,1153
Difference	-55,033-	+1275	+32,053	-2,1508

The number of Lebanese students in mainstream education has decreased. In state schools over the period of five years (2006-2007 till 2010-2011), the figure has decreased by 55033. While there has been an increase in the number of Lebanese students in other types of schools (mainly in private schools) still there remains a general decrease of 21508 Lebanese students over that period. There are children of school age who live in residential institutions (orphanages). Of those, some study inside the institutions, while others reside in the institutions and are sent to state schools to receive their education. MOSA subsidizes all living expenses of this segment of children including education. The number of children in residential institutions did not change during this period.

Regarding the levels of education, it is noticeable that the percentage of students attending state schools is well below the percentage of students attending private schools at the primary level, but this percentage improves at the intermediate level. When reaching the secondary level, the difference in percentages decreases, as seen in Table 3.

There are currently 358 semi-private schools in Lebanon subsidized by MEHE. They currently get between 37 and 40 billion Lebanese pounds per year depending on the number of students. For each Lebanese student, each school is paid 150% of the minimal wage salary. The subsidy fee was pegged to the Lebanese minimum wage to ensure it remains dynamic. 289 of these schools are run by religious groups, while the rest are run by NGOs and individuals.

During the scholastic year 2006-2007 there were 4.4% of all school children attending UNRWA schools. In the scholastic year 2010-2011 the percentage was 3.3% and during the scholastic year 2012-2013 it was 3.4%.

Table 3 Percentage of Students in all Levels of Schooling [Preschool-Primary-Intermediate-Secondary]

Year	State				Private				Semi-private			
	Pre	Pri	Inter	Sec	Pre	Pri	Inter	Sec	Pre	Pri	Inter	Sec
2006-2007	3.7%	16%	8.9%	7%	10.2%	22.3%	12.1%	6.3%	2.6%	10.9%		
2010-2011	3.1%	12.8%	7.7%	5.9%	10.8%	22.9%	13.3%	6.8%	2.5%	10.9%		
2012-2013	4%	13.6%	7.4%	5.7%	11.1%	22.2%	13%	6.6%	2.6%	10.5%		

MEHE is attempting to put more emphasis on Pre School and primary levels as more than half of the student population is in these two levels. Throughout 2006-2007, the percentage of students in these two levels was 65.7%, and dropped to become 21% for intermediate level and reaches 13.3% at secondary level. Many questions can be raised here as to why so many children leave school after the primary level. Where do students

who attend semi-private schools go after primary level? We know they either have to find other schools or drop out. What is the reason that makes numbers of students in secondary level in state and private schools almost equal to each other? Why are there bigger numbers of students in private schools than in state schools when it comes to primary and intermediate levels?

Table 4 Distributions of Students According to Level of Education

Year	Type of school	Pre-school	Primary	Intermediate	Secondary	Total
2006-2007	State	23,364	145,862	81,855	65,422	226,503
	Semi-private	24,247	100,034	–	–	124,281
	Private	93,261	204,670	111,274	57,888	156,093
	UNRWA					
	Total	150,872	450,566	193,129	122,310	917,877
2010-2011	State	28,420	120,376	71,035	55,388	276,199
	Semi-private	23,912	101,816	-	-	125,728
	Private	101,733	215,243	1,247,273	62,775	504,024
	UNRWA	103	19,550	8998	3408	32,059
	Total	154,168	456,985	205,206	121,571	937,930
2012-2013	State	38,924	132,780	71,903	55,638	229,245
	Semi-private	25,254	132,780	-	-	127,486
	Private	108,090	216,953	127,093	64,491	616,627
	UNRWA	136	19,301	8893	3647	31,977
	Total	172,404	171,626	207,889	123,776	975,695

2.2 Early Childhood

Schools under the patronage of the MEHE used to accept children starting the age of six years. The child was to know the alphabet, the numbers, colors and sizes. This made children whose parents are illiterate start their education with a disadvantage when enrolled in state schools, and hence lagged behind from the very beginning of their education. Later, MEHE created two kindergarten classes in the primary schools for ages four to six to provide equal opportunities for children when starting school. Subsequently, it moved another step forward by creating nurseries in some of schools where there are KGs, and where the child could be accepted at the age of three years.

Three ministries in Lebanon deal with early childhood.

The Ministry of Public Health (MoH) gives the license to open nurseries in the private sector. It has criteria that include safety of the premises, space per child, number of staff (childcare workers), nurses and contracted pediatricians. It does not, however, refer to the curriculum, which remains an important issue to be addressed. At present, there are 280 licensed nurs-

eries and day care centers that have acquired a license from the MoH.

The Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) contracts several NGOs and subsidizes them to provide services for children in nurseries and KGs. These NGOs run 32 nurseries for children of three to four years. In addition, MoSA sponsors children in residential institutions (orphanages) who accept children at a very early age (from birth). During the 2013-2014 academic year, there were 44 residential institutions from those subsidized by MoSA who had 960 children from birth to age four.

MEHE has nurseries and KGs as part of pre-school education in many state schools. When opening pre-school classes they inform the Muhafez (Governor/Lord Mayor) who in turn informs the Ministry of Public Health. CERD, as part of MEHE, has developed a strong curriculum with friendly exercise books for K.G.s

Here, we notice each of these ministries emphasized a different aspect of early childhood, which are all crucial and important to the continuity of the education system. MEHE focused on the curriculum, MoH prioritized safety and health, and the MoSA worked towards aiding marginalized and needy children.

2.3 Failures, Repetitions and Dropouts

MEHE and CERD are aware of the high rate of student dropouts, grade failures and class repetitions. In the state schools, a student who fails after repeating his or her class once is not allowed to remain in the same school. He or she may move to another state school. Directors of other schools do not make it easy for students who failed more than once to be accepted in their schools. They prefer to have students who perform well. The student's family often prefers for children who have failed more than once to drop out of school to start working at an early age with the aim of learning a profession. To overcome this problem, and avoid this high rate of drop outs, especially in levels one and two of education, MEHE issued a decree in the year 2000⁵ which made all students of level one have automatic promotion, while in level two, it was easy promotion. Grading started at level three. This led to several instances where students reach intermediate level and are almost illiterate as they complete primary level without a tangible yearly assessment of their performance. This decree of promotion also stated children who are academically weak are to be given remedial classes in school. This part of the decree was not applied. Failures reached a very high rate in grades four and seven. This decree was amended in 2010 after ten years of failure to achieve its objective by another decree⁶. An additional factor contributing to students drop out in grade seven is that more scientific materials tend to be taught in foreign languages (English and French).

Students who fail and repeat their classes or drop out of school at an early age have a negative effect on the national economy (the budget of MEHE), especially those who are in state schools or semi-private schools as they are subsidized by MEHE. The money invested in these children's education is hence wasted..

Table 5 Percentages of Over-Age Students in Different Levels of Education

Year	Education Level	One –two years	More than two years	Total percentage
2006-2007	Pre-school	2.8%	0.4%	3.2%
2010-2011		3.4%	0.6%	4%
2012-2013		3.6%	0.9%	4.5%
2006-2007	Primary level	12.3%	10.2%	22.5%
2010-2011		18.3%	20.9%	39.2%
2012-2013		11.2%	8.2%	19.4%
2006-2007	Intermediate	19.5%	19.2%	38.7%
2010-2011		26%	31.9%	57.9%
2012-2013		17.3%	14.6%	31.9%
2006-2007	Secondary	19.7%	14.2%	33.9%
2010-2011		24.5%	18.1%	42.6%
2012-2013		17.9%	9.6 %	27.5%

Regarding over-age students in state schools for the pre-school level, the percentage of students who are one or two years over-age is acceptable and may be attributed to the prevailing poverty, lack of awareness, and security conditions within the country. Conversely, the dramatic rise in the percentage of students who are two years behind after primary level made the MEHE amend the decree of promotion to reinstate grading the performance of students starting the first grade. However, as stated before, the decree of the year 2000 which expedited promotion in the primary level was not fully applied (it required that weak students who are promoted must be given help in the form remedial classes to address their inherent weaknesses, thereby allowing them to succeed in later grades).

Table 6 Percentage of Students in State Schools versus Total Number of Students Over -Age at Different Education Levels

Year	Level of Education	State School	All schools
2006-2007	Pre-school	3.2%	3.2%
	Primary	40.8%	22.5%
	Intermediate	61.1%	38.7%
	Secondary	46.1%	33.9%
2010-2011	Pre-school	4%	3.3%
	Primary	39.2%	18.7%
	Intermediate	57.9%	34.2%
	Secondary	42.7%	29.5%
2012-2013	Pre-school	7.4%	4.5%
	Primary	38.2%	19.4%
	Intermediate	55.1%	31.9%
	Secondary	40.1%	27.5%

Table 6 shows the significant differences in the percentage of students lagging behind between the state schools and schools as a whole, across all ages. Solely for the pre-school level, there is no big difference, which means more of the students in state schools are starting their education at the right age. However, they do lag behind as education progresses,

showing that the problem has been shifted to later years rather than fundamentally and sustainably resolved.

Table 7 Percentage of Promotion and Class Repetition according to School Type

Year	Type of school	Promoted	Repeated one grade	Repeated more than one grade	Home schooled
2006-2007	State schools	76.8%	16.9%	0.1%	6.2%
	All schools	84.1%	8%	0.1%	7.8%
2010-2011	State schools	75.3%	18.8%	0.1%	5.8%
	All schools	84,5%	8%	0.1%	7.3%
2013-2014	State schools	77.2%	16.5%	0.1%	6.2%
	All schools	84.9%	7.2%	0.1%	7,8%

As Table 7 shows, the overall percentage of student promotion in state schools is lower than the rest of the schools in spite of automatic and easy promotion activated in state schools. In semi-private schools, the administration keeps the students in school by promoting them to avoid their transfer to another school. These schools are paid for by the MEHE per number of students that attend each school.

Class repetition for one year is above average in state schools. The repetition of more than one year is very low in all schools, including state schools. The reason is that at a certain time a student was not allowed to repeat the same grade more than once in the same school. The student was then obliged to find another school to attend. Although this regulation has changed, most school directors continue to encourage the parents of children who are to repeat their grades more than once to transfer schools, thereby allowing the student to change environments which might help him or her make better efforts to prove himself or herself.

2.4 Children with Special Needs

In the late 1960s, MOSA established a national committee for people with special needs. Before that time it used to simply support some NGOs who offer services to people with special needs, which it still continues to do. This committee was to identify needs and offer services. It started by giving ID cards to people with special needs and made it possible for them to get certain services like wheelchairs or crutches. In addition, imported equipment like vehicles to be used by people with special needs were exempted from customs dues.

MOSA continue to have contracts with some NGOs that cater for people with special needs, especially children. At present, there are 86813 people with special needs who are registered with the MOSA committee and have IDs: 55.18% of them have motor (physical) disabilities, 28.29% have mental disabilities, 6.74% have hearing problems, and 7.79% have visual disabilities⁷.

I. As for their age distribution, 2.5% (2170) are below the age of 6 years, 13.14 % (11412) are between 6 and 18, 18.26% (15853) are between 19 and 34, 38.34% (33288) are between 35 and 65 and 27.76% (24107) are 66 years of age and above.

In addition there are 2603 children who have hearing difficulties.

It should be recognized that the above figures and percentages cover only

⁷Rights and Access Health, MOSA, Committee for the Disabled, July 24 2014.

those who applied for the committee of MOSA and received special needs IDs. Many people do not apply because they do not believe they will receive significant benefits.

All rights of children and adults with special needs were addressed in the law number 220 issued in 2000.

In article 59 of the above law, all children with special needs have equal rights to education in all mainstream schools and institutions, including the provision of special classes if required.

MEHE issued a law no 11583 dated 11/2/2004 for creating a special committee, stating clearly the responsibilities of MEHE in catering for children with special needs including slow learners. This law was set aside, unpublished in the official journal, and therefore never came to light in the social and political arena.

2.5 Curriculum

Before 1997, teachers in state schools used to choose textbooks used in class in agreement with the school director. This resulted in changing textbooks almost on a yearly basis without any price control. In many instances, textbook costs exceeded \$100 per student.

CERD has produced and amended the school curriculum within its mandate and jurisdiction. In 1997, CERD revised the curriculum and produced textbooks to be used by all state schools. After being approved by MEHE, CERD organized bidding where the winning publishing house is awarded a three-year contract. This was a step forward, as it led to unified textbooks and reasonable prices approved by CERD. The cost of textbooks per child at the primary education level is between \$10 and \$15. Numerous private schools use the same textbooks as state schools, after having examined and tested the content and quality of these resources.

In 1997, when CERD revised the curriculum, it added to the materials taught (Operational Disciplines). This included sports, art, drawing, theater, computer skills, and an optional third language. Prior to this, only sports were offered as an extra curricular subject. These materials are not always taught due to the shortage of qualified instructors able and willing to teach such subjects at a relatively low wage. Other times the problem lies in the lack of needed equipment such as computers.

Currently, out of all the subjects within the Operational Disciplines, sports are being taught, computer is taught at the secondary level, and a third language is optional.

Many teachers in the state schools used to ask the students to buy additional textbooks. Another positive change is that the Minister of Education issued a circular⁸ forbidding schools and teachers from such practices.

2.6 Teachers

Teachers appointed in the cadre of education may maintain their post until the age of retirement. They can move between schools, to another post within MEHE, or be seconded to another ministry (albeit remain considered as teachers and receive their salaries from the budget of MEHE allocated for teachers). This creates significant challenges when assessing the cost per child in state schools. Table 8 shows the number of students to the number of appointed teachers in state schools, together with the number of teachers actively performing teaching duties. It is also noticeable that the number of appointed teachers is increasing while the number of acting teachers is decreasing.

⁸Circular No 55/M/2003 dated 22/9/2003, "Forbidding Asking Students to Buy Supporting Books".

The number of appointed teachers in Table 8 is made up of the three categories, which are teachers in the cadre, contracted teachers, and volunteers. All teachers employed on a contract basis do teach as they are paid per hour of teaching. Voluntary teachers also teach. The difference in the number of appointed teachers and acting teachers is included in the category of teachers in the cadre.

It can also be noted that there is a decrease in the number of students in the state schools in general, mainly due to the decrease in the number of Lebanese students. However, starting the scholastic year 2010-2011, the number of students in general started increasing again, while the number of Lebanese students continued to decrease.

In spite of the fact that teachers are not all teaching, MEHE continue to employ teachers who work on a contractual basis who get paid per hour of teaching. They are not entitled to any sort of social or health insurance or to any indemnity. The procedures for their appointment are as follows: 1) The director of the school identifies a need for a teacher for a specific subject, 2) a letter is sent to MEHE through the regional educational director of the area, 3) MEHE assesses whether it has an available teacher in its cadre with the required qualification, 4) in case of no available qualified teachers within the MEHE cadre, a search is conducted through the files of teachers who have applied to teach this subject, and 5) The identified teacher gets appointed on contract basis.

Table 8 Numbers of Students and Teachers in State Schools

Year	Number of students	Number of Lebanese students	Number of appointed teachers	Acting teachers	Teachers not teaching
2006-2007	326,503	309,071	39,445	37,343	2102
2010-2011	276,119	254,038	37,971	35,321	2650
2012-2013	299,245	247,723	41,307	27,451	3856

Five years ago, contracted teachers received their salaries from the parents' fund within the school budget. This has been changed. At present, they are paid from the teachers' budget. This allows MEHE to have better knowledge in relation to this category of teachers.

Table 9 Status of Teachers in Different Schools

Year	Type of school	Teachers in cadre	Contractual	Volunteers
2006-2007	State	27,714	11,127	1104
	Semi-private	5018	1365	213
	Private	5018	1365	213
	UNRWA	23,497	17,018	671
2010-2011	State	27,613	9095	912
	Semi-private	5129	1453	168
	Private	25,121	1765	661
	UNRWA	1287	339	0
2012-2013	State	26,084	14,308	915
	Semi-private	5229	1453	156
	Private	26,402	17,649	652
	UNRWA	1331	269	0

Regarding the state of the teachers in different types of schools, we find a large number of teachers who work on a contract basis since they are not entitled to any kind of indemnity or social and health security, and therefore do not feel obliged to show loyalty or a sense of belonging to the school in which they teach.

The voluntary teachers are mainly missionary men, religious, and clergymen, who go to schools to give lectures and lessons in religion.

Table 10 Average Number of Students to Teachers in Classrooms in Different School Types

Year	State schools	Semi-private schools	Private schools	UNRWA schools
2006-2007	19	24	22	
2010-2011	18	24	22	30
2012-2013	18	24	22	30

Upon comparing the ratio of teachers to students in schools in all types of school we find the lowest ratio of students and teachers is in state schools, as seen in table10.

2.7 School Administration

Schools are run by directors who were originally teachers and were delegated by the director general of MEHE to take the job of director of a school. A few years ago, MEHE realized school directors should be given training to become more efficient and knowledgeable of how to run a school. Over the last two years, 340 school directors were trained, including 40 who received extra capacity building to become trainers. In addition, five new trainers were appointed from outside the teaching body, raising the number to 45 trainers who carry out in-service training for school directors. A decision has been taken by MEHE to discontinue delegating the post of school director to a teacher, without receiving training for the job of director.

The law states that state schools cannot be run with less than 50 students. In spite of this, there remain 153 state schools operating with less than this number.

State schools are run by directors who have a team of teachers who are delegated to do an administrative job apart from teaching. For every 150 students, there is a supervisor whose responsibility is to supervise the students during recreational activities. One of the supervisors acts as a senior supervisor and assistant to the school director, and may substitute for the position in his/her absence.

The school director is responsible for running the school from the time of students' registration till the end of the scholastic year. If the school is for basic education (primary and intermediate levels), it is attached to the regional Educational Department in the Educational area where the school is located. Lebanon is divided into six governorates (Mouhafazat). In each governorate there is a regional education department. If the school is a secondary school it reports directly to the directorate of secondary education inside the MEHE.

School directors are responsible for distributing the hours of teaching and follow up on all issues related to running the school and all that takes place on school grounds. MEHE issued a decree⁹ in 2001 that deals with

all the details of running the school. It consists of fifteen chapters as follows:

- Conditions for student registration
- Preparations for registration and teaching
- Educational material
- School administration
- Supervision and guidance
- Rules
- Teaching
- Councils and committees
- Vacations
- Students responsibilities
- Preparations of school tests and final exams
- Cleaners, office assistants and workers
- Miscellaneous regulations
- Intermediate regulations
- Final regulations

Within the above mentioned document article 41 entitled “Things prohibited for all those in education”, point 14 states, “It is prohibited for them to practice any physical punishment on their students or any verbal insult that affects their education or self respect. Still, there are numerous cases of physical and verbal punishment in schools. The director general of MEHE has issued a circular¹⁰ enforcing the prohibition of physical and verbal punishment by teachers and school employees. It states, “School directors of all state schools should ask the teaching body, especially those who have direct contact with children, to have a humane and educative approach, and apply the regulations that forbid any physical or moral punishment (apparent or disguised) regardless of its kind,, or any verbal abuse that is not accepted by educational attitudes in addition to self respect, whether directly or indirectly. The general directorate of MEHE is asking for the utmost collaboration of all teaching bodies in this respect for the interest of education and humanity”.

Regarding financial issues in the school, there are two accounts. The first supposedly comes from MEHE as school registration fees and amounts to \$100 per student. The signatories for this fund are the director of the school and the senior school supervisor. The second account is the parents’ fund, which comes from the students (\$60 per student) for minor expenses. This fund has to have its budget approved by the Parents Fund Committee. The expenditures must be submitted and approved by the director of the school and the parental committee before submitting it to the ministry. The signatories of this fund are solely the parents committee.

2.8 Infrastructure

Most state schools as well as semi-private schools in Lebanon are not purpose- built. In addition, they are not owned by MEHE. It is therefore impossible to carry out changes in the buildings without the approval of the landlord. Since most rented schools have been rented for several decades, the rent is well below the existing rate. This is one reason why landlords do not allow any changes to be done in the buildings. In the early seventies, the Lebanese government carried out a research study about the physical conditions of state schools and tried to improve building conditions, but landlords of schools did not give their permission. It should be recognized, though, that MEHE is not rehabilitating the schools owned by the Ministry. With the objective of building more purpose-driven schools,

⁹Decree No. 1130/M/2001 dated 15/9/2001, “Internal Regulations for KGs and Basic Education in State Schools”, MEHE.

¹⁰Circular No. 95, dated 29/7/2008, “Forbidding School Violence in All its Forms”, MEHE.

the Ministry of Education carried out a project in which several schools would be combined into one building.

Table 11 Ownership of State Schools for the Scholastic Year 2006-2007

Ownership	Number of schools	Percentage
Government property	536	39%
Municipality property	54	4%
Private property	567	41%
Municipality rented	19	1%
Private property contribution	214	15%
Total	1390	100%

A certain amount of rehabilitation is required to be able to have schools apply some of the laws mentioned. This especially applies to laws related to inclusive education, since the government only owns 39% of schools in Lebanon. Several years ago, five schools from those owned by MEHE, one in each region, were rehabilitated to serve children with special needs (e.g. ramps, elevators, toilets). MEHE realized that if only a minimal number of schools are able to accept children with special needs, those schools will be labeled as such and therefore children not in need of special attention will attend other schools.

After the Israeli war on Lebanon in 2006, many schools in South Lebanon were either partly or completely destroyed. It was an initiative started to make these schools inclusive but it was unfortunately impossible as many donors who subsidized the renovation insisted on renewing schools as they were. Another opportunity that was missed during this rehabilitation was the building of shelters in these schools as South Lebanon is liable to attacks from Israel at any time. Child Safety was therefore not sufficiently taken into consideration.

2.9 Education Environment

The education environment includes the environment both inside and outside the school. MEHE is directly responsible for the environment inside the schools, while the environment outside the schools remains a collective responsibility.

2.9.1 School Environment

MEHE has four different departments that help build and maintain a healthy environment inside schools.

A) The Development and Orientation Program (DOP)

This department has been established in the late 90s of the last century. Its purpose is to help teachers and the school administration improve the relationship between the school, the students, and their families. There are 17 extremely well trained DOP coordinators across the country. They were chosen to be coordinators after 10 years of teaching experience and five years working as DOP staff in guidance departments of schools. They visit schools and give advice upon the request of the school administration directly or by contacting the Ministry General Director. These coordinators supervise 84 DOP staff that work in schools. Because they are few in comparison to the number of schools, each of them works in more than one school.

B) The MEHE Scouts (National Scouts)

The National Scouts were established in the year 1954 under the Law No 3848 dated 8/9/1954. It is a member in the scouts union, which is made up of 33 different scouts organizations. It is the only one authorized to act in state schools. It has six aims, namely:

Spread the teachings and attitudes of the scouts.

Train scouts with discipline, collaborate with others, and take part in public service.

Help scouts build self-confidence and a spirit of forgiveness and responsibility.

Build a spirit of brotherhood between scouts by having them go through an experience of living together.

Help youth to take part in social, cultural and artistic life.

Help scouts to be outstanding in their schools and create good relationship within their families and others.

C) Parents' councils (PTA)

In each state school there is a Parents' Council, acting as Parent Teacher Association (PTA), as stated in the internal regulations of the state schools issued in 2001 and reinforced by a decree¹¹ in 2007. All parents take part in electing members of the parents committee which consists of two bodies, namely: a) the general assembly which is made up of representatives of every class, and b) The Executive board. The general assembly meets three times a year. The first meeting takes place between mid-October and mid-November of every scholastic year to elect the board, consisting of a president, a vice president, a secretary, and a treasurer. The second meeting is in February to approve the budget presented by the Board. Lastly, the third meeting is during the month of June to present the balance of the year.

The board meets monthly and it collaborates very closely with the school director.

Neither the general assembly nor the Executive board share in any decision related to any activities in the school. Their responsibilities solely consist of putting up the budget of the Parents' Fund, present it for approval, and prepare the balance of the budget.

D) Health guidance

In each school there are one or two health guidance staff members who have three main responsibilities¹²

1) Medical services

Make a medical file for every student

Take part in the national health campaign for the prevention of disease-

Take part in the national annual campaign for the prevention of mouth and teeth diseases

Take part in the national vaccination campaigns

Secure basic first aid material needed for school accidents

Supervise the school health room or infirmary

2) School environment

Supervise and secure a healthy and safe school environment.

Ensure having continuously potable drinking water. Health guidance staff

¹¹Decree No. 2153/M/2007 dated 3/10/2007, "Regulations of parents Councils in KGs, Basic and Secondary Education in the State Schools", MEHE.

¹²Circular No. 2199 dated 12-7-2007, "Responsibility for Health Guidance", MEHE.

is required to check on the cleanliness in schools.
Supervise any food item sold in the school shop and set criteria for it

3) **School activities**

Encourage health education activities in accordance with the circular number 7/M/98 dated 12 /11/98, "Inclusion of health components in education throughout all basic and secondary levels of state schools"

Involve students, teachers, parents, and the local community in all activities.

Although each one of these four departments of MEHE has its distinct objectives, they all aim at improving the relationship between the school administration, the students, and their parents, as well as create a healthy environment. There must be a stronger link between them to coordinate together for the best interest of the students. This would positively influence students' socialization inside schools, thereby developing their personalities and allowing them to grow up as more responsible citizens, aware of their civic duties towards their families, society, and country.

2.9.1 External School Environment

It is not enough to provide the students with a healthy environment inside the school in order for them to grow up as responsible citizens. The surroundings outside the school should also share in the responsibilities (i.e. the municipality, the family, the NGOs, the clubs amongst others).

Municipalities

The municipal ACT¹³ has two articles that clearly define its relationship and responsibilities within its municipal territories related to education.

Article 49: "The Municipal Council shall be in charge of:

- 1) Establishing public gardens, playgrounds and public libraries.
- 2) Sharing in school expenses.
- 3) Helping those most vulnerable, and people with special needs.
- 4) Supporting clubs and NGOS in all their health, cultural and social activities.
- 5) Supervising all educational activities in state and public schools and reporting to the responsible educational authorities."

Article 50: "Within its area, the Municipal Council shall be entitled to establish, directly or indirectly manage, contribute to, or help in the implementation of works and projects of public schools, nurseries, and technical schools."

Basic Services centers of MOSA (SDC)

In December 1971, MOSA created the first SDC in Bourj El Barajneh as a community center to offer direct multi services to the people residing in the area, thereby taking their needs into consideration. After satisfactory results, MOSA began opening one center after another in hopes of eventually covering all Lebanese territories. At present, it has 260 SDCs all over Lebanon. The last two were created last year in Hasbayya and Rachayya. Out of the 260, about 100 are truly active. Inside MOSA there exists a department for the SDCs. Each SDC has a committee of four employees from MOSA to take part in the planning and supervision of the activities. SDCs at present are the main source of information in their area of operation. They offer versatile services: health and social services, light voca-

¹³Municipal Act Law No. 118 dated 30/6/1977 and its amendments published in 2009, Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, p.12.

tional training, awareness-raising for mother-and-child issues, and several activities for children.

Active SDCs have very good relations in the areas where they operate. They collaborate with the municipalities, schools and NGOs in their respective areas.

NGOs and clubs

In Lebanon there are about 8000 licensed NGOs working all over the country. This number includes sports clubs, cultural clubs, political parties, family councils, and welfare organizations. Many NGOs have branches in different areas, and a significant number of them are inactive. Their work has not been properly followed up. In the first month of every year, all NGOs are required to submit a financial report for the previous year and the expected budget for the year to come. With the names of the board members. NGOs offer different kinds of services, and are ubiquitous in Lebanese villages. Most of them have relations with the SDC in their area and organize joint activities.

3- Effects of Syrian Refugee Children on Education in State Schools

The war in Syria that has been occurring for the past three years has caused a large influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon, including a great number of children of school age that reached 394,409 children in March 2014 (according to UNHCR statistics). This has affected education in state schools because the MEHE sought to give equal opportunities to Syrian children in terms of school attendance and cost. During the scholastic year 2011-2012, Syrian children got accepted in state schools. UNHCR and UNICEF paid the schools for the family fund and were exempted from paying the registration fees like Lebanese students. National students were not excused from paying the fees of the family fund, although numerous families of a low economic status were unable to pay the fee. A conflict therefore erupted between Lebanese and Syrian families leading to a sound decision by the UN to cover the family fund for the Lebanese students up to 30% for Lebanese children.

During the scholastic year 2013-2014, the number of Syrians increased to become much greater and was therefore more than the Ministry could handle. Thus, MEHE had to take other measures and asked the UN to pay the registration fees as well, which amount to \$100 per child in addition to \$60 for the family fund. This resulted in confusion as UNICEF and UNHCR did not follow the same approach in accepting to pay the \$100. To be able to support more Syrian students, MEHE, with the financial support of UN agencies opened some state schools to operate in the afternoon, open only to Syrians and teaching the Lebanese curriculum. This second shift program took long negotiations between UN and MEHE and therefore did not begin before January 2014. This delay was not in the best interest of children. While it is true that the MEHE agreed on the number of teaching hours as 750 hours in order to properly cover the curriculum, the delay in starting the program resulted in some schools teaching less than 700 hours. Such schools had less than a 50% success rate, while those who taught 750 hours had an average success rate of 70%. Few had higher rates than 70%.

During the scholastic year 2013-2014 there were 138,877 Syrian students enrolled in formal education in state schools. 99920 of them were in the

morning shift and 39033 were in the afternoon shift¹⁴.

UN agencies paid for all expenses in the second shift including \$100 per child for school rehabilitation and maintenance. This means that \$3,903,300 was contributed to rehabilitation and buying furniture or material that was needed for the school at the time. These schools and other schools who have ALP programs supported by UNHCR and UNICEF also received other minor financial support for rehabilitation. This support was of great use to both the morning and afternoon shifts.

Students who attended the morning shift in schools that had two shifts lost one hour of teaching per day because they attended school for five hours a day instead of six. This is because students had to leave school at 1:00 p.m. instead of 2:00 p.m. to give way to the second shift, which starts at 2:00 p.m. In short; students lost five hours of studying per week.

It is true that teachers had to make a bigger effort when teaching Syrian students, as it is a different curriculum from the Syrian one; however because their salaries are relatively low, they were glad to teach during the afternoon shift. MEHE took a sound decision allowing second shift teachers to teach a maximum of three hours to avoid teachers' exhaustion. It also allowed more teachers to benefit and earn some extra income. In addition, the fact that state school teachers working throughout the morning shift were the same as those working the later shift made way for more sympathy on the teachers' part towards Syrian students.

More problems arose in the morning shift due to the high number of Syrian students. Conflicts between Lebanese and Syrian children are continuously escalating, and many Lebanese students transferred out of some state schools that accommodate a relatively large number of Syrian students. The general belief could be that some Syrian parents send their children to school even if they have contagious diseases like lice, which makes Lebanese children drop out of school and seldom return. Syrian students are reported to be more violent than Lebanese students. Disadvantaged Syrian children often come from communities that practice, face, and sometimes encourage violence. Overall, MEHE has allowed for up to half of the morning shift students in state schools to be non-Lebanese.

The large number of Syrian students in state schools and the problems they created as mentioned in the previous paragraph has hindered the implementation of the different programs MEHE had designed for school improvement thus far.

4- Conclusion

Through the MEHE and the CERD, the Lebanese government has made numerous efforts towards education improvement in Lebanon. For decades, it has tried to make education compulsory and free. Several attempts and laws were issued but were not applied, as they were not followed up by implementation decrees. The government signed and ratified the CRC, and passed a law for compulsory free education. It exempted state school students from paying the annual \$100 registration fee. What students now pay is nominal in comparison. State school students only pay 60\$ for the family fund and \$10 to \$15 for textbooks. It unified textbooks and unified their prices at affordable reasonable ranges. Over the past few years, the government received donations to cover the cost of the textbooks for all the state school students. It also passed laws, decrees and circulars prohibiting corporal punishment.

The MEHE attempted to prevent students from dropping out of school by changing regulations concerning promotion. When the results did not meet

¹⁴The Education Sector datasheet, March 2014, Activity Reporting, UNHCR.

the aim of the plan, MEHE returned to the old system of grading students' performances. It carried out several projects and strategies for education improvement, especially in state schools.

However, there were no real efforts towards activating compulsory education, which requires the joint efforts of all ministries including the police. Although MEHE is technically able to provide a seat for every child who wants to enroll in school, dropout students and unschooled children remain large in number.

MEHE realized that many students in state schools were dropping out after repeating a grade. Trying to find out the causes for this phenomena and how to overcome this problem, it passed a decree in the year 2000, changing the promotion system in state schools to automatic and easy at primary level, in addition to providing remedial classes for the students who are lagging behind. This law was applied, though not to its fullest extent, for ten years. The section on remedial classes for weak students was neglected. This law did not achieve the required results, as it was not applied properly. After ten years, MEHE reverted back to the previous grading system.

Teachers also pose a problem to the MEHE, because once a teacher is appointed, he/she can avoid actually being involved in any teaching activities until retirement. Indeed, a large number of teachers move to alternative employment within the government while continuing to receive their salaries as teachers. Moreover, there is no system in place to provide incentives that encourage teachers to improve their performance, be creative and take initiative, especially in relation to new technological skills (e.g. computer skills).

MEHE does not have specialized teachers in its cadre who may deliver disciplinary materials, especially in subjects like computer, theater, and art. They therefore must contract teachers. The fact remains that the rate of financial compensation does not attract qualified instructors.

In terms of inclusive education and early childhood, the problem is that mandates are scattered amongst several ministries without any coordination and collaboration mechanisms in place. Furthermore, these mandates are not divided amongst the relevant line ministries in an effective and complimentary manner; thereby causing both overlaps and gaps in roles and responsibilities.

The same problem applies to early childhood development as well as for children with special needs. Three ministries are involved: MEHE, MOH and MOSA.

The infrastructure in some schools is disappointing and borderline catastrophic. Most rented schools have been designed as homes for families to live in. Renovation of these schools requires the approval of landlords, who in most cases refuse to comply since the rent is minimal in comparison to present values. Only 39% of state schools owned by the government. Many of these schools also need rehabilitation to become safe against both operating conditions and a variety of natural hazards (including earthquakes and floods), in addition to being able to accommodate children with special needs. The project on grouping schools and having purpose-built school buildings was halted because of the 30-year civil war in Lebanon. It is now under reconsideration.

5-Recommendations

In collaboration with the CERD, the MEHE has directed significant efforts towards improving the quality of education and school attendance. It conducted several trials and well-designed strategies of which three have been mentioned in this paper. These strategies need both financial resources as well as political will to be implemented. In addition, the wars, conflicts, and the Syrian refugee influx with the high number of school children hindered the implementation of these strategies. MEHE now needs to continue seeking funds to implement the projects within its strategy, which will make great strides in state schooling when correctly applied. Meanwhile it must enforce the, school regulations, and promote DOPs and health guidance. It also needs to redirect only a small portion of its budget to cover essential projects within its strategy. Some recommendations stated below are within these categories:

Make state schools a friendly environment by encouraging school administrations to invite the National Scouts to give a presentation in every school. School directors need to call for a meeting with all teachers and all employees the first week of each scholastic year and familiarize them with the internal regulations of state schools and the circular that forbids any physical or moral punishment of students. There should be a code of conduct to be signed by all employees in school, including teachers, at the beginning of every scholastic year.

Extra-curricular activities that are defined in the curriculum (sports, art, theater, computer and third language) should be implemented as they attract children to schools and avoid high drop rates.

Have remedial classes inside schools for students who lag behind during the academic year. The extra hours that teachers put in to teach remedial classes must be compensated for as appropriate.

The school regulations that define the responsibilities of the parents' councils need to be amended to give parents a more significant role to play, especially regarding their children's behavior and attitudes.

School directors need to coordinate between teachers, the parents' council. DOP staff, health guidance staff, and the national scouts. It is advisable for the school director to arrange a meeting with the entire staff at the beginning of the scholastic year to set an action plan for the coming months. Parents need to have more responsibilities, take part in certain decisions, and in school activities as they are all part of the parents' councils.

MEHE needs to increase the number of DOP staff so that there is a permanent member in every school. This would help deal with daily miscellaneous problems without risking their growth into a bigger, more detrimental issue.

The semi-private schools subsidized by MEHE should be under the jurisdiction of the directorate of education in MEHE, and not under the directorate of private education. MEHE needs to have more control regarding staff appointment and administrative matters within this category of schools. In relation to semi-private schools, when the minimum wage increases, subsidy fees will escalate, having a detrimental effect on MEHE budget. This is another reason why these schools should be directly under the jurisdiction of the directorate of education within MEHE. The mechanical increase in the subsidy attached to the raise in the minimal wage salary needs to be reconsidered.

A study is needed to find out where semi-private school students go after they finish primary education, especially because these schools are subsidi-

dized exclusively for the primary level.

A study to identify reasons for students drop out should be carried out. MEHE pays teachers who are not currently teaching. Any teacher who does not teach and has been transferred to another job should have his/her salary moved to the budget of the real job he/she is performing. The money budgeted to them should be removed and will become financial resource redirected at teaching activities,

Teachers who work on a contract basis do not have any loyalty to the school they teach in, as they come solely to teach their allocated hours and leave. They do not have any out-of-class contact with the students and do not feel like an irreplaceable asset of the school. MEHE needs to solve this problem by decreasing the number of teachers hired on a contract basis. Meanwhile, each contracted teacher must have at least one hour of office work per week where any arising issue can be directly discussed with the school staff/administration.

To attract teachers with impressive credentials and qualifications, the rate of teaching per hour should be raised, especially for the specialized subjects (e.g. computer skills).

Start a system of moral and financial appreciation for devoted teachers, which gives incentive to those who take initiatives and perform well. Naturally, there must be defined criteria in place regarding this matter.

Collaboration and coordination between MOSA (Committee for the Disabled) and MEHE needs to be encouraged, to highlight the importance of children with special needs who can achieve progress in mainstream education.

Regarding early childhood, there should be collaboration and coordination between the ministries of Health, Education and Social Affairs. Delineation of their respective mandates and responsibilities is necessary in order to effect positive relations between them and change. The Ministry of Health needs to provide health safety licenses for children's centers, focusing on children from birth to age three.

School directors need to have contacts and collaboration with SDCs of MOSA and the municipality in their respective areas, which will be in the best interest of the students. A meeting at the beginning of every scholastic year is necessary to set an action plan for joint activities.

Schools owned by MEHE must be accessible for children with special needs, and shadow teachers should be present when special needs students attend a class.

All schools need to be rehabilitated to ensure safety and health. This includes the provision of safe playgrounds, available drinking water, and enough washroom facilities taking into consideration the ages and gender composition of students.

Every school that provides only basic education needs to hold a seminar for grade seven students around the middle of the scholastic year. Directors of secondary schools in the area should be invited to explain the details of the next three years (secondary education) to the students. Emphasis could be on elective subjects like computer teaching. The benefits of finishing a secondary education should be highlighted and clarified, with specific focus on the need for a secondary education certificate when applying for any job, or when applying to university. This informative session would best be accompanied by a visit to the secondary schools of the respective area.

In partnership with children's rights NGOs and the United Nations, teachers in public and semi-private schools should be invited to attend con-

ferences, workshops, and training sessions that teach the importance of peaceful methods in teaching. The emphasis should remain on the prohibition of corporal and emotional abuse on and off school grounds, with the best interest of the children/students in mind.