

EDUCATION IN LEBANON





written by: **Haifa Hamdan**
Revised by: **Markus Balazs**

Lebanon has made significant strides in improving education in recent years, but much remains to be done.

A signatory of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, Lebanon still needs to ensure that education be free, available and accessible for all, and that drop-out rates be cut from their currently very high levels.

Educational facilities need to be improved, especially for children with special needs, and as the Committee on the Rights of the Child has pointed out the government should do more to provide state education in a country where the trend has been towards privatising education.

This latter point applies particularly at the basic educational level, where the quality of the instruction in state establishments is often far inferior to that offered by private institutions or by state schools at the secondary level.

Furthermore, a number of progressive laws that have been passed in recent decades have not been followed by implementing decrees and have therefore not entered into force. Ensuring that such decrees are issued would do a lot to improve the educational situation in the country.

A dynamic, high quality and inclusive educational system can do a lot to improve the life prospects of Lebanon's people while also promoting understanding and respect between the many religious and political groups living in this diverse country.

Schools play a key role as meeting places for people from different backgrounds.

It is in the interest of everyone that the schools provide the best education and the most supportive and open environment possible.

Historical Background

Compulsory education has a long history in Lebanon. Already in 1736 a conference was held on the subject in the Loueizeh convent on Mount Lebanon. The conference declared itself in support of “free compulsory education,” and even went on to affirm that if “some of [the students] are hungry they should be fed.”² In 1869, the Ottoman rulers of Lebanon took an important step towards realising this ambition by passing a law in favour of compulsory education, which they proceeded to implement in the Beirut governorate. The law remained in force until the fall of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War in 1918.³

But despite the long history of discussing compulsory education, education has never been either free or compulsory in Lebanon, save for a short time during the Ottoman Empire. This has been in spite of many attempts to change the situation. In 1959 a law was passed with the stipulation that “education is free at the primary school level and is the right of every Lebanese.”⁴ The law was amended in the following year with the insertion of a clause stating that all students should be “accepted in government schools free of charge at all levels of academic and vocational education.” However, the two pieces of legislation were not followed by implementing decrees and so never took effect.

An important development took place in 1971 when the Educational Centre for Research and Development (ECRD) was established. It began its work in 1973 and remains in place today. Its responsibilities include, among other things, setting the curriculums, drafting the textbooks used in state schools and overseeing the education and further training of teachers.⁶

In 1990, Lebanon took part in the World Conference on Education for All that was held in Jomtien Thailand. Delegates from 155 UN member states at the conference adopted a World Declaration on Education for All, which reaffirmed education as a basic human right.

A companion document to the declaration was also issued: the Framework for Action to Meet the Basic Learning Needs. This articulated a number of objectives to be achieved by the year 2000, along with strategies for achieving them. The objectives included universal access to learning, the promotion of equity and the broadening of the means and scope of basic education. In keeping with the last of these objectives, the ECRD changed the Lebanese educational curriculum to include new subjects such as Arts, Theatre and IT at the basic level of education.

In 2004, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) published A National Strategy for Education for All: 2004-2015 based on the objectives set out at the Jomtien conference.

The document outlines a number of goals, objectives and programmes and defines which stakeholder is responsible for which of these.

It groups the programmes under ten headings:

1. Early Childhood
2. Primary Education age 6-12
3. Basic Education age 12-15
4. Literacy for Adults and Youths
5. Children with Special Needs
6. Teachers
7. Curricula
8. School Environment
9. Educational Administration
10. School Administration



In 1991, Lebanon ratified the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which states among other things the following: “Children have the right to education. Primary Education should be free and all children should be required to attend. Secondary Education should be accessible to every child.”⁸ The convention also makes clear that “Education should develop the child’s personality, talents, mental and physical abilities.”

To date Lebanon has submitted three reports to the International Committee on the Rights of the Child on its progress in realising the CRC. The response from the Committee has been mixed. Its concluding observations to the first report highlighted a number of areas of concern, specifically in health education, the teaching of values and the teaching about environmental issues. The Committee also recommended that Lebanon do more to prioritise “public education and the social welfare system,” in view of the “growing role of private educational and health institutions” in the country.¹⁰

Commenting on the second report submitted by Lebanon in 2002, the Committee expressed its satisfaction with the fact that Lebanon was undertaking a large number of measures to improve the education in the country. Yet it also voiced concern over the fact that public education was still “not entirely free” and that school drop-out rates remained very high. It also advised the Lebanese state again to “place stronger emphasis on public education.”¹¹

The Committee reiterated the same points in relation to Lebanon’s third report in 2006.

In its comments to this report the Committee noted that “parents are still charged with some costs despite the legal guarantee of free education” and that “drop-out rates have increased.” It recommended that Lebanon “Ensure that primary education is free for all children and attended by all children,” and that it “adopt effective measures to decrease repetition and drop-out rates in primary education.”¹²



In 1997, the Lebanese government passed law No. 10227, adopting a new educational curriculum for the country, which was the fruit of the work of the ECRD. The law stressed the need for compulsory education and that it should be guaranteed for all children aged 6-15.

This was to be achieved in two steps. First, compulsory education should be realised at the primary level (ages 6-12). Then it should be extended to cover all children up to and including fifteen years of age.

For the first time in Lebanon, the law also articulated a vision and mission for the MoEHE, centring on providing quality education in a manner that respected the principle of equal opportunity and contributed to the “building of an information society, to social integration and to economic development.”¹³

In 1998, another law was passed on compulsory education (No. 686). However, as had been the case with similar laws in the past, it was not followed by an implementing decree and therefore never took effect.

In 2010, the MoEHE published another important document entitled Quality Education for Growth 2010-2015. This document emphasised the right to education of all and the need to ensure equal opportunities and accessibility in Lebanese education. It laid out a strategy for improving education in Lebanon which centred around five priority objectives drawn from the various international conventions and declarations that Lebanon has signed, including those on human rights, the CRC and the Jomtien Declaration on Education for All.

Meanwhile, the document also gave careful consideration to the educational realities in Lebanon with its particular traditions, especially the close partnership between the public and private sectors.

The five priority objectives are

- I** Education based on equal opportunity
This is to be promoted by providing compulsory basic education to all children until the age of 15, by developing infrastructure in order to make schools accessible for students with special needs and by introducing an early childhood development programme.
- II** Quality education that contributes to building a knowledge society
This will involve setting up programmes for professionalising the teaching workforce and modernising the school management, and also by improving methods for achievement assessment and curriculum development.
- III** Education that contributes to social integration
This will involve introducing programmes on citizenship education.
- IV** Education that contributes to economic development
This will involve introducing courses on ICT in Lebanese education.
(The ECRD is currently helping to formulate a national strategy on the incorporation of ICT into education in state schools.)
- V** Governance of education
This will be promoted by introducing programmes on institutional development.

School Types

There is an array of different school types in Lebanon. The ECRD, attached to the MoEHE, publishes an annual statistical bulletin containing figures on the various schools in the public and private sectors. There are three main school types: state schools, free-private schools and private schools. In addition to these, there are also UNRWA schools and residential institutions, where education is sometimes provided for the residing children.

The MoEHE has two directorates: one for state schools and one for private schools.

The free-private schools are attached to the second directorate even though they are subsidised by the MoEHE and the students pay fees, which makes them neither free nor private.

The following table shows the breakdown of schools by type and number of enrolled students:

Breakdown of schools by type and number of students Scholastic year 2010-2011

| Type of school | Schools | | Students | |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| State School | 1281 | 45.9% | 276119 | 29.5% |
| Free-Private | 363 | 13% | 125728 | 13.4% |
| Private | 572 | 38.4% | 504024 | 53.7% |
| UNRWA | 74 | 2.7% | 32059 | 3.4% |
| Total | 2792 | 100% | 937930 | 100% |

As we can see there are more students enrolled in private schools than in state schools in spite of the fact that there is a larger number of state schools. This can partly be explained by the fact that state schools are provided throughout Lebanon, even in small villages where the student intake is at least 50 students.

A large majority of all types of schools are co-educational: 89.4% of state schools, 99.4% of free-private schools, 98.8% of private schools and 62.2% of UNRWA schools. Poor and middle-income families tend to prioritise the education of sons. As it is often believed that private and free-private schools offer a higher standard of education, the boy-to-girl ratios in these schools are higher than in state schools and UNRWA schools.¹⁴

Girls and boys in different types of schools Scholastic year 2010-2011

| Type of school | Schools | | Students | |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| State School | 149532 | 54.2% | 126586 | 45.8% |
| Free-Private | 60592 | 48.2% | 65136 | 51.8% |
| Private | 243974 | 48.4% | 260050 | 51.6% |
| UNRWA | 17116 | 53.4% | 14943 | 46.6% |
| Total | 471215 | 50.24% | 466715 | 49.76% |

State Schools

The state schools are run by the MoEHE.

They are free of charge apart from a nominal registration for the primary level, 70.000 L.L.(\$47) for intermediate level 90.000 L.L. (\$60) and 120.000 L.L.(\$80) for secondary level. As for the mandatory contribution that the student pays to the school 'family fund'. The size of the contribution is decided by the ministry before the start of each scholastic year. For the 2010-2011 scholastic year as well as for the scholastic year 2011-2012 it was set at 70 000 L.L. (\$47) for the primary level, 90 000 L.L. (\$60) for the intermediate level, and 120 000 L.L. (\$80) for the secondary level of education.¹⁶ The fund is used to cover unexpected expenses, such as damages or unexpected wages. Saudi Arabia, covered the registration fees and textbooks but not the family fund for all of the students enrolled in state schools at the primary level in the previous two academic years.

Free-Private Schools

In theory, free-private schools are free and non-profit but in reality they are neither.

Their tuition fees range from the equivalent of 135% of the national minimum wage (675 000 L.L. – or \$450) to the equivalent of 160% of the national minimum wage (800 000 L.L. – or \$533).¹⁷

In addition to this, the MoEHE pays them subsidies in the order of 37-40 billion Lebanese pounds annually.¹⁸ There are 363 free-private schools in Lebanon. Of these, 289 are run by religious groups and the rest by either NGOs or private individuals.¹⁹

Private Schools

There are 572 private schools in Lebanon. These were attended by 32 059 students in the 2010-2011 scholastic year. Their tuition fees, which are not regulated by the MoEHE, range between \$1500 and \$15 000 per year.²⁰

UNRWA Schools

There are 74 schools for basic education in the twelve Palestinian camps that are scattered around Lebanon. These schools accept only children of Palestinian families registered with UNRWA. The schools are completely free of charge and the students receive textbooks which they have to return to the school at the end of the scholastic year.²¹ Stationery is provided to children who come from families experiencing particular hardship. UNRWA schools had 32 059 students in the 2010-2011 academic year (see table). Other Palestinian students who are not registered with UNRWA attend the Lebanese state schools under the same conditions as Lebanese children.

Residential Institutions (Orphanages)

The residential institutions are often thought to be orphanages, yet most of the 30 000 children residing there are not orphans. They are usually placed in the institutions in response to social problems in their home environments – most, however, do have families. Many of the children residing in the institutions suffer from their experiences there and often develop psychological and social problems as a result of these. Education is often provided in the institutions, where the children are taught under the supervision of institutional staff.

The name and nature of the residential institutions have changed in important ways since the institutions were first set up, mirroring changing trends in Lebanese society. First called shelters, they were later renamed as orphanages before receiving their current designation. Today some are evolving in yet a new direction: a number of them have reorganised themselves as small villages, where children live in small family-like units under the overall supervision of the director, referred to as the ‘mother’.

Most of the children in the institutions come from poor families or from families in the lower middle class. At the institutions they receive an education completely free of charge.

The Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) even pays the institutions a small daily allowance for every child. In 2002, this allowance was 4439 L.L. for children in regular education, 5700 L.L. for children in vocational training and 3500 L.L. for children in vocational training who do not sleep at the institutions.²²

A committee consisting of representatives of the residential institutions and the MoSA has been formed to review the size of the allowances in light of the significant price rises in Lebanon in recent years.

The committee believes that a substantial increase in the allowances is warranted and suggested in 2004/2005 that the daily allowance should be set at 14 098 L.L. per child.²³ When considering this figure it should be borne in mind that the MoSA pays for 365 days per year whilst most of the children return to their families during the three-month long summer holidays as well as during other holidays. Many residential institutions also send their children to receive education in state schools, where the costs of their tuition are already covered by the MoEHE.²⁴

Teaching Staff

Before the civil war teachers had to obtain a teaching diploma at a training centre run by the MoEHE, in addition to completing a university degree. The centre was closed eight years ago and was replaced by a training-on-the-job scheme organised by the resource centre of the ECRD.

Today teachers have usually completed both a university degree and teaching courses at the Lebanese University.

Teachers in state-run secondary schools have a very good reputation. Indeed, many qualified teachers in these schools, and particularly those teaching maths and sciences, have been contracted to teach in private schools on an hourly basis. Many families who enrol their children in private schools at the basic level move them to state schools at the secondary level because of the high reputation of these schools.

It is believed that groups tied to free-private schools and residential institutions resist raising the quality of the education offered by state schools at the basic level, because doing so would increase the competitiveness of these schools and possibly draw over students from the other institutions. Under this logic, the high quality of state-run secondary education can be explained by the fact that free-private schools and residential institutions do not offer education at this level.²⁵

Academic Degrees of Teachers and Other Staff in State Schools²⁶

| | |
|---|-------|
| Higher education doctorate, engineering | 6.7% |
| Diploma | 5.0% |
| University degree + training | 41.0% |
| Teaching baccalaureate | 20.6% |
| Second baccalaureate (high school) | 19.9% |
| First baccalaureate | 0.5% |
| Basic education | 1.5% |
| Technical baccalaureate | 0.8% |
| Other degrees | 4.0% |

Teachers' salaries are set according to the level at which they teach and the level of their academic degree. In basic education only teachers with university degrees are appointed at present. The starting salary of a teacher at this level is 1 000 060 L.L. (\$700), which increases automatically by \$40 every two years.²⁷

The violence and upheaval of the civil war years forced many people, sometimes entire communities, to move. However, most schools remained in place. This has led to a situation where some schools are overcrowded, while others are attended by only a small number of students.

Male & Female teachers

| Type of school | Female | | Male | | Total (no.) |
|----------------|--------|------------|--------|------------|-------------|
| | number | percentage | number | percentage | |
| State School | 27190 | 71.6% | 10781 | 28.4% | 37971 |
| Free-Private | 5893 | 87.3% | 857 | 12.7 | 6750 |
| Private | 33505 | 77.1% | 9942 | 22.9% | 43447 |
| UNRWA | 924 | 56.8% | 702 | 43.2% | 1626 |
| Total | 67512 | 75.2% | 22282 | 24.8% | 89794 |

Most teachers and school administrative staff are women: 75.2% compared to 24.8% for men. As shown in the table above, women predominate in all types of schools, including in UNRWA schools where the male-female ratio is more even. One possible reason why there is a higher proportion of men working in UNRWA schools compared to in other schools is that Palestinians are not granted work permits for many types of work outside of the camps, compelling men to accept jobs that they might otherwise not have preferred. One reason why women are attracted to the profession of teaching is that the school hours run from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., which gives them more time for their families after work. Another advantage is that they have holidays at the same time as the children, which enables them to take time off at the same time as their own school-aged children.

Not all of the teachers working in state schools teach full-time. Many of them perform administrative tasks, either for the MoEHE or for other ministries, which makes the actual ratio of teachers to students very low. This ratio also varies considerably between different parts of the country. The average class size in state schools is 18 students²⁹, yet this masks significant regional differences.³⁰ In the cities there are often as many as thirty students to a class, but in some villages, where the student intake is low, there may be only six students.³¹



The Age of Teachers

| Age | State | Free-Private | Private | UNRWA | UNRWA |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| 30 & below | 6% | 2.7% | 14.5% | 0.6% | 23.8% |
| 31 - 40 | 12% | 2% | 13.4% | 0.5% | 27.9% |
| 41 - 50 | 8.2% | 1.8% | 12.4% | 0.3% | 22.7% |
| 51 - 60 | 13.2% | 0.8% | 5.8% | 0.4% | 20.2% |
| 61 & above | 2.9% | 0.2% | 2.3% | 0% | 5.4% |
| Total | 42.3% | 7.5% | 48.4% | 1.8% | 100% |

In this table we can observe that the different age groups are more or less evenly represented among teachers, with the exception of the group of people aged 61 and above, which is much smaller than the other groups. This is, however, explained by the fact that 61 is close to the retirement age which naturally makes this age bracket smaller. The 31-40 age group is slightly better represented than the others, although the difference is by no means stark. Furthermore, we can note that a full 51.7% of all teachers are 40 years old or less, indicating that the young generation is also attracted to the profession. Another observation is that the youngest teachers tend to work in private schools in greater numbers than older teachers, who seem to prefer state schools. State schools and private schools are the most popular employers among all age groups, which can be explained by the fact that there is a much larger number of these schools than either free-private or UNRWA schools.

Drop-out of School

Although Lebanese people generally place a high value on education, drop-out rates are very substantial in schools, as is the proportion of children who have never attended school.

A number of reasons for this are a) that some children fail and are forced to repeat a year, which discourages them from staying in school, b) the low standard of education at the level of basic education in the state schools and semi-private schools, c) physical and moral punishment of children who misbehave or do not advance rapidly enough (such punishment was expressly forbidden by ministerial decree 807/M/2001 but remains widespread), and d) poor parenting, with some parents withdrawing their child from school after he or she fails a year on the assumption that the child is not good enough for education.

Poverty is also a very important factor behind the failures and drop-outs.

Poor families often have to send their children to state schools, where the basic education is generally of a very low standard and the children do not always receive the support that they need. Sometimes children from poor families begin studies at semi-private schools but are forced to leave before the end of the year because they are unable to pay their share of the school fees.

When this happens the children frequently do not even receive a certificate proving that they have been enrolled in the school during the year, which precludes them from sitting an entrance exam for another school in the following year. In those cases they are left with little choice but to withdraw from education altogether.

There are often considerable differences in the requirements between the different grades, which represents an additional challenge for weaker students. In the seventh grade in state schools, for example, the main subjects are taught through a foreign language (either French or English), which represents a very big step up from earlier grades, where most of the subjects are taught through Arabic. The change in the language of instruction raises the hurdle for students to successfully complete the year, as many students struggle to comprehend the lessons.



The MoEHE has taken several steps to reduce the rate of drop-outs and repetitions.

One measure has been to try to enable children to start school at an early age and to keep them in school throughout at least the primary level of education.

Another one has been to introduce three

new grades before the primary level: pre-school, kindergarten I and kindergarten II, all of which are to be provided by state-run establishments.

This is intended to ensure equal opportunities for all children. Many poor families cannot afford to send their children to private kindergartens, and since no state-funded alternative to these institutions has been available before, poorer children have tended to be disadvantaged, having often begun primary school without possessing many of the basic skills that other children have had, for example, knowledge of the alphabet. The MoEHE has also changed the regulations for allowing students to progress from one grade to another in state schools. Under the new system, students progress automatically through the first three years of education, and progression is easy for the following three years. This is intended to keep children from dropping out of school until at least age twelve.

Vocational education and training

Lebanon has a special ministry for vocational education and training, which supervises the schools and institutes that offer this type of instruction and issues diplomas and certificates to students who have successfully completed their training or education at them. The ministry also supervises exams at these institutions, including the private ones.

In the 2009-2010 scholastic year, 4.9% of all students at the intermediate level were enrolled in technical vocational education.³⁴

There are three different levels of technical and vocational education and training in Lebanon:

- 1 Vocational preparation, which is for students who have completed the primary level of education.
- 2 Secondary technical and vocational education, which qualifies the student for a technical baccalaureate or a technical secondary diploma and is intended for students who have finished the intermediate (basic) level of education.
- 3 Technical and vocational higher education, which leads to one of four degrees:
 - > Technical Superior (TS) (3 years)
 - >> Technical degree (2 years upon completion of the TS)
 - >>> Technical teaching degree (5 years) and the Master's degree.

In addition, there is the accelerated vocational training, lasting between three and nine months. The Ministry of Labour has a special department for accelerated vocational training; attached to it is a vocational training school, which offers training in a number of vocations free of charge.

Vocational training is also supported by the National Employment Office, an autonomous office under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour.

It focuses on accelerated vocational training in the private sector and in NGOs.

The ministry has three mobile training units which are meant to offer certified training in electrical work, mechanics and leather handling in villages and remote areas; however, they have not been used for more than ten years due to the absence of coverage for their running costs in the ministry's budget.³⁵

Vocational Education and Training

| Type of school | Number of Schools | Number of Students | | | Number of Staff | | |
|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------|-------|-----------------|-------|-------|
| | | Female | Males | Total | Female | Males | Total |
| State | 110 | 18617 | 19463 | 38080 | 5777 | 6582 | 12359 |
| Private | 320 | 34211 | 39575 | 73786 | 3153 | 3191 | 6644 |
| Total | 430 | 52828 | 59038 | 59038 | 8930 | 9773 | 18703 |

Other Issues

School regulations in state schools

In 2001 a decree issued by the minister of education lay down a series of regulations pertaining to the basic level of education in state schools. The issues which it covered included teaching hours, the relationship of students to teachers and administrative staff, parent-teacher associations, holidays, penalties, etc.³⁷

Children with special needs

Under Lebanese law, children with special needs are to be fully accepted into state schools. In practice, very few state schools are equipped to accommodate these children, lacking the necessary facilities, equipment, teaching aids and qualified special educators.

Parents' associations

Official regulations require the presence of a parents' association (P.A.) at every school, with a membership comprising the parents of all of the children attending the school. Every year the P.A. is to elect a general committee. This, in turn, is to elect a special board that is to work closely and meet regularly with the director and the administration of the school. The general committee is to convene only three times per year: in November when it is to elect the board, in February when it is to discuss the work that the school administration has undertaken thus far, along with possible ways to improve the running of the school, and in June when it is to discuss work during the school year as a whole and also submit a financial report.

Guidance and orientation

Since the mid-1990s, the MoEHE has maintained a department of orientation and guidance. Among its staff are ninety teachers with degrees in sociology or psychology who are on temporary leave from their teaching duties in order to provide counselling and advisory services to students.

These teachers go some way towards alleviating the desperate shortage of counsellors in state schools – yet they are far too few, serving a full 1281 state schools across the country.³⁸ This means that many state-school students experiencing social or psychological problems have little or no access to qualified professionals who might help them to overcome their difficulties.

Universities

Institutes of higher education in Lebanon are affiliated with the MoEHE, which maintains a special directorate for higher education. There are 39 universities and institutes for higher education in the country, some of them being divided into multiple branches. One multi-branch university is the Lebanese University, the state university, which has six branches in various parts of the country. During the 2010-2011 scholastic year, 192 138 students were registered as attending universities in Lebanon; 83.4% of these were Lebanese, the others non-Lebanese.³⁹ 52.4% of university students in Lebanon are females, 47.6% are males.



37% (72 507) of the university students in Lebanon during the scholastic year 2010-2011 attended the Lebanese University, whose fees are much lower and which offers more flexible course hours, enabling many young people to combine their studies with paid work. At the Lebanese University, the tuition fees are lower for Lebanese and Palestinian students than for other nationalities.⁴⁰

In the Lebanese University 46427 (64.03%) are females, 26080 (35.96%) are males.⁴¹

While in the rest of the universities 45.35% are females, 54.64% are males. Families tend to send females to the less expensive universities than males.

Many students receive scholarships to attend private universities, which are typically very expensive. Some scholarships are earmarked for particular groups. Each year the European Union offers 100 scholarship to Palestinian students who have graduated from UNRWA schools or Lebanese state schools. They cover all of the educational fees and include a yearly allowance of \$1000 for a period of three to five years. They are channelled through and monitored by UNRWA. China offers annually ten to fifteen scholarships to Palestinian girls attending private universities.⁴²

There are other scholarships offered in universities earmarked for some categories of students example the U.S.AID has offered distinguished students who come from the state schools 70 scholarships during the scholastic year 2011-2012 at the Lebanese American University (LAU), During the coming scholastic year 2012-2013 there will be 100 scholarships under the same conditions.



Municipal Support to Education

Municipalities in Lebanon operate under Municipal Law No. 118, promulgated in 1977 and amended in 1999. In four articles it outlines the responsibilities of the municipality regarding education. They include “[c]ontributing to the tuition fees related to the public schools pursuant the provision of the schools” and “[r]escuing the needy and the displaced people and assisting clubs, associations and other health, social, sports and cultural activities.” Article 50 furthermore states that the municipal council is to “be entitled, within the area, to establish or manage directly or indirectly or contribute to or to help in the execution of... [p]ublic schools, nurseries or technical schools.”

Conclusion

Education is of fundamental importance for the social and economic development of any country, but it is particularly crucial for developing countries, which cannot realistically improve their societies unless they also raise the quality of their educational systems.

Even though Lebanon has taken steps to improve education in the country in recent years, much remains to be done. The International Committee on the Rights of the Child has repeatedly expressed its concern about the high drop-out and repetition rates in Lebanese schools. However, no effective solution has been found to this problem to date. The problem has been discussed repeatedly at workshops and seminars organised by NGOs, UN agencies and the MoEHE. The last such workshop was held on 29 September 2011 at the MoEHE and was organised jointly by the ministry and the European Union under the heading “Improving school achievements for children at risk of dropping out or failing.” French and British experts took part in the workshop and presented experiences from their own countries.

The population of Lebanon is estimated to be around 4 million.

The population of Lebanon is estimated to be around 4 million.

According to the Educational Statistical Bulletin, 1 372 132 people, or 34.35% of the population, were involved in education in the year 2010-2011. Of these 1 241 934 were students, enrolled in either public or private education from kindergarten up until and including university, including vocational education and training. The total number of staff (teachers and administrators) was 132 198.

The Lebanese government realises the importance of education and is looking for ways to improve the situation. It encourages parents to register their children for school and has adopted various measures to reduce the drop-out rate. Since the establishment of the ECRD, several attempts have been made to improve education. This has involved conducting studies about the problems confronting education in Lebanon and introducing new laws and decrees aimed at raising the quality of the education in the country.

Yet, the efforts are hampered by two main problems.

The first is that a series of laws passed on education have not been coupled with implementing decrees and have therefore never been implemented. These laws include the ones on compulsory free education and people with special needs. The second problem is that many students, parents and other members of local communities are unaware of the official regulations that apply to schools and municipalities regarding education and therefore miss one important form of leverage could be used to demand better service from schools and local government.

Free-private schools are subsidised by the MoEHE and are attached to its directorate for private schools; yet the ministry has no power over the appointment of teachers or other issues at these schools. The Lebanese government has raised the minimum salary by 48.14%, to 1 000 000 L.L. (\$650)⁴⁴. This means that the MoEHE's financial subsidy to the free-private schools will also be raised by 48.14%, as the subsidy is attached to the minimal wage salary, which will impose a considerable financial burden on the ministry.

Recent years have seen an increase in the proportion of students going into vocational and technical education. Most of the vocational schools are located in the cities and the mobile vocational training units of the Ministry of Labour have not been in use for over ten years. If these units were to be made operational again, they could easily provide vocational training in villages and remote areas.

Lebanon is an open society notwithstanding the presence of eighteen confessional groups and a history of civil war.

This is reflected in the fact that more than 90% of the schools are co-educational, which makes schools an important place where people of different confessions, political affiliations and gender meet on a regular basis. It is in this type of atmosphere that attitudes can change and relations between different groups can improve. Schools perform a vital function of providing meeting places where people from different groups can discuss their differences in a sound and respectful way, increasing their acceptance and tolerance of each other.

Recommendations

- 1 The implementing decrees for the laws on compulsory free education and people with special needs should be passed and applied.
- 2 The equipment and infrastructure at state schools should be improved so that the schools can fully accommodate children with special needs.
- 3 Parents should be encouraged to become more active in the parents' associations of state schools.
- 4 Students lagging behind in education should be given additional support in order to prevent them from dropping out of school.
- 5 The teaching of foreign languages should be improved at the primary level in order to make it easier for students to study subjects taught through foreign languages from grade seven onwards.
- 6 At every state school there should be a student counsellor trained to aid students facing academic or psycho-social problems.
- 7 Efforts should be taken to raise parental awareness about the responsibilities of schools and municipal governments on matters of education.
- 8 Institutions for vocational training should offer courses in more creative subjects as well, including photography, ICT and media, which reflect labour market needs.
- 9 Improve the coordination between the Ministry of Social Affairs and the MoEHE regarding school drop-outs, out-of-school children and working children in order to facilitate the reintegration of these children into mainstream education.
- 10 The mobile vocational training units set up by the Ministry of Labour should be made operational and deployed to villages and remote areas.

Foot Notes

- 1 Younis, Assad. Compulsory Education: Internationally and in Lebanon. Feb. 1997. Educational Research and Development Centre, Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Lebanese National Educational Strategy, Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
- 5 National Strategy for Education for All: 2004-2015, MoEHE.
- 6 Centre de Recherche et Développement Pédagogiques. Available at: <http://www.crdp.org/CRDP/French/formation/formation.asp> [Accessed 26 March 2012].
- 7 World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs. Available at: http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/JOMTIE_E.PDF [Accessed 26 March 2012].
- 8 International Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 28.
- 9 International Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 29.
- 10 Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Lebanon 1st report. 1996.
- 11 Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Lebanon 2nd report. 2002.
- 12 Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Lebanon 3rd report. 2006.
- 13 World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs. Available at: http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/JOMTIE_E.PDF [Accessed 26 March 2012].
- 13 International Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 28.
- 13 International Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 29.
- 13 Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Lebanon 3rd report. 2006.
- 14 Statistical Bulletin for the Year 2010-2011, Educational Research and Development Centre, p.47.
- 15 Statistical Bulletin for the Year 2010-2011, Educational Research and Development Centre.
- 16 Interview with Nada Fawaz, Head of the Residential Institution Department, September 2011.
- 17 Education in Lebanon study, International Institute for Information, 2 June, 2011.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Statistical Bulletin for the Year 2010-2011.
- 20 Statistical Bulletin for the Year 2010-2011.
- 21 Ali, Rafif Ahmed. 2012. Working Palestinian Children in Palestinian Camps.
- 22 Interview with Nada Fawaz, Head of department of Residential Institutions, MoSA.
- 23 Study on cost per child in residential institutions, National Council for Social Welfare.
- 24 Ministry of Social Affairs, Head of the Residential Institution Department, September 2011.
- 25 Interview with Khalil Arzouni, MoEHE.
- 26 Statistical Bulletin for the Year 2010-2011: Age Group, Educational Research and Development Centre.
- 27 Interview with Khalil Arzouni, Head of Administrative Department, MoE.
- 28 Statistical Bulletin for the Year 2010-2011: Age Group, Educational Research and Development Centre.
- 29 In free-private schools there are on average 24 students to a class, in private schools 22 and in UNRWA schools
- 30 Development of Educational Indications (2002-2010), Educational Research and Development Centre.
- 31 Development of Educational Indications (2002-2010), Educational Research and Development Centre.
- 32 Statistical Bulletin for the Year 2010-2011: Age Group, Educational Research and Development Centre.
- 33 15.4% repeat the fourth grade, 15.5% repeat the seventh grade and 9.2% repeat the tenth grade. Cited in Development of Educational Indications (2002-2010), Educational Research and Development Centre, p.88.
- 34 Statistical Bulletin for the year 2010-2011, Educational Research and Development Centre, p.45.
- 35 Interview Mariam Akoum, Head of Vocational Training Department, MoL, 6 December 2011.
- 36 Statistical Bulletin for the Year 2010-2011, Educational Research and Development Centre, pp. 61, 62 and 65.
- 37 Decree number 1130/M/2001, Internal Regulations for Kindergartens and Basic Education in State Schools, issued on 10 September 2001.
- 38 Interview with Mona al Tawil, Head of Department of Guidance and Orientation, Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
- 39 Statistical Bulletin for the Year 2010-2011.
- 40 Statistical Bulletin for the Year 2010-2011.
- 41 Statistical Bulletin for the Year 2010-2011, p. 91.
- 42 Interview with Dr. Rafif Ahmed Ali, Education Department in UNRWA.

Foot Notes

- 43 The articles in full are: 'Article 49: "The Municipal Council shall be in charge without limitations of the following: -14 " Contributing to the tuition fees related to the public schools pursuant the provision of the school;-18 Rescuing the needy and the displaced people and assisting clubs, associations and other health ,social ,sports and cultural activities; -21 Controlling educational activities and work progress in public and private schools as well as drawing up reports to the competent educational references."; Article 50: "The municipal Council shall be entitled, within the area, to establish or manage directly or indirectly or contribute to or to help in the execution of the following works or progress. -1 Public schools, nurseries or technical schools"; Article 51: " The Municipal Council shall give its consent to the following: -5 Creating and transferring or closing public schools, Governmental hospitals and dispensaries"; Article 59: "-4 Helping the disabled and supporting the educational ,cultural, sports and social activities when the total of donations does not exceed ten million Lebanese pounds per year.'" Municipal ACT, decree law number 118 and its amendments, Ministry of the Interior and the Municipalities.
- 44 Al jarida alrasmiah, issue of January 2012.