

# A Silhouette of the Lebanese Educational System and the English Language in Lebanon



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## **Abstract:**

Lebanon is very well known for its famous and good standard educational system. The right to education is preserved in the Lebanese constitutions. Moreover, Lebanon in accordance with the policy of 'Education for All' and with the help of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) has laid the foundations for the reorganizations within the education sector, providing quality, equal opportunities and contributing to social integration and economic development. This education helps shape the culture of the Lebanese citizen and offers him/her higher order thinking skills to live and work in a changing society and be proficient in learning through his entire life. This paper aims to provide a profile of both: the Lebanese educational system and the English language in Lebanon.

Key words: Lebanon, Educational system, English language, Lebanese schools, Lebanese universities

## **نبذة مختصرة:**

يشتهر لبنان بنظامه التعليمي. يتم الحفاظ على الحق في التعليم في الدساتير اللبنانية. علاوة على ذلك ، وضع لبنان وفقاً لسياسة "التعليم للجميع" وبمساعدة وزارة التربية والتعليم العالي (MEHE) الأسس اللازمة لإعادة التنظيم داخل قطاع التعليم، مما يوفر الجودة وتكافؤ الفرص والمساهمة في التنمية الاجتماعية والتنمية الاقتصادية. يساعد هذا التعليم في تشكيل ثقافة المواطن اللبناني ويوفر له مهارات التفكير العليا للعيش والعمل في مجتمع متغير ويكون بارعا في التعلم طوال حياته. تهدف هذه الورقة إلى تقديم نبذة عن كل من: النظام التعليمي واللغة الإنجليزية في لبنان. الكلمات المفتاح : لبنان ، النظام التعليمي ، اللغة الإنجليزية ، المدارس اللبنانية ، الجامعات اللبنانية

## **OVERVIEW**

Lebanon is 10,452 sq km with 87.8% of the population living in urban areas. It currently has six governorates: Beirut, Mount Lebanon, North Lebanon, South Lebanon, the Bekaa and Nabatiye. A further two new governorates (Akkar and Baalbek-Hermel) were legislated and implemented as of 2018. The population is estimated at 6,237,738 as of 2018, of whom 24.65% are below 15 and 6.64% over 65. Annual population growth is estimated at 0.85% in 2017. In 2018, literacy was 93.9% for adults (15+) (CIA, 2019).

In 2018, gross domestic product in Lebanon was some \$47.103 billion and its gross national income (GNI) per capita was \$7,930, down from a high in 2011 of \$8,670(World Bank, 2019b). Accordingly, the World Bank classifies Lebanon as an 'Upper Middle Income' country, putting it in the same income bracket as Turkey, Romania, Brazil and Venezuela (World Bank, 2019a).

In 2018, unemployment stood at 6.4%, with youth unemployment (between ages of 15 - 24) at 22.1%. The leading economic sector is services, mainly banking and tourism; the country's main exports include jewellery, foodstuffs and tobacco (Trading Economics, 2018).

In 2012, public expenditure on education reached 2.2% of GDP or 7.1% of total government expenditure. The education plan of the 2017-2018 Lebanon Crisis Response Plan calls for \$388.1 million in funding, out of a total \$2.45 billion in aid Lebanon received in 2017.

However, in-country aid is now inflated due to the Syria crisis (Trading Economics, 2018).

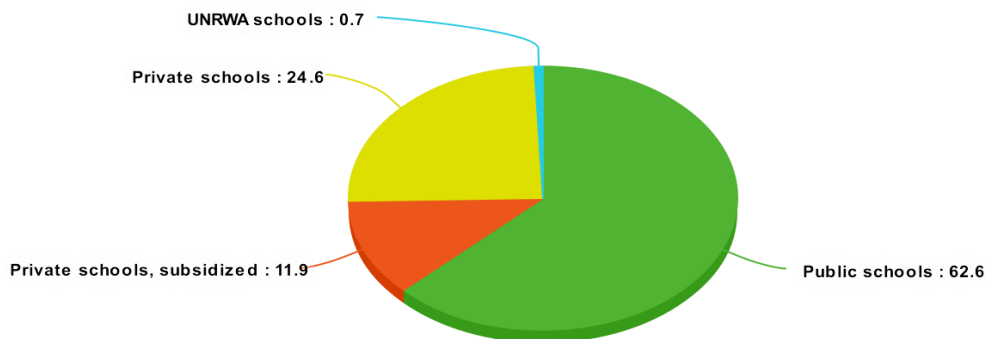
## **NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES**

### **Primary and Secondary**

In the 2017-2018 academic year, there were 1,002,277 students enrolled in 2,874 schools (including UNRWA schools and private subsidized schools) at pre-university level in Lebanon. There are 229 public primary schools in Lebanon and 260 public secondary schools, making a total of 1,267 public schools. In addition, Lebanon has 84 primary online private schools and 1,166 private secondary schools: a total of 1,166 private schools. Schools in Lebanon are divided into three main categories: public ('official' in Arabic), private subsidized and private non-subsidized. Private subsidized schools are not funded by the government but are affiliated to religious institutions, who do not charge fees for enrolment. An additional category of schools are those that cater specifically for Palestinian refugees, which are managed by UNRWA and considered as private institutions by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). Of the 1,002,277 students enrolled in schools at pre-university level in Lebanon, 35,922 are in UNRWA schools (Amnesty International, 2018).

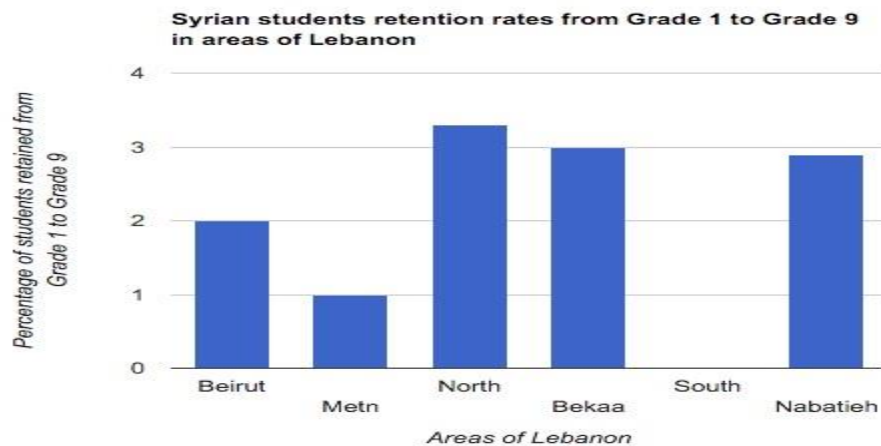
In the 2017-2018 academic year, there were 151,741 Syrian refugees enrolled in public schools at pre-university levels, including 7,486 Palestinian refugees from Syria, out of nearly 487,615 school-aged Syrian refugees currently in Lebanon. 64,546 Syrian students have been absorbed into the regular school system, and an additional 131,194 are being catered for in 313 'second shift' schools which operate in the afternoon using existing school buildings upon the end of the first shift. This places significant pressure on resources and staff (CERD, 2018).

Syrian learners in the Lebanese education system



Public schools Private schools, subsidized Private schools  
UNRWA schools

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Statistics for 2017-2018 reveal that 44.1% of schools in Lebanon are public, 40.6% private, 12.9% private subsidized and 2.4% in UNRWA streams. MEHE recognizes that low enrolment in public schools is problematic and mainly caused by unqualified teachers (34% of public school teachers do not hold a university degree), poor infrastructure, and poor educational resources (CERD, 2018).

Engaging with Syrian parents who have sought refuge in Lebanon is a key challenge for staff of public schools, particularly in poor rural areas where parents may not have been educated themselves. UNRWA schools, in turn, also suffer from issues of quality and overcrowding in classrooms due to limited funding and the general conditions of social and economic hardship faced by Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

UNRWA is also providing educational services to over 5,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria, in their schools. 31,500 Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) currently reside in Lebanon. For the scholastic year 2017-2018, UNRWA accommodated 5,318 PRS students, in addition to 31,231 Palestine Refugees from Lebanon (PRL) students. PRS students were studying at 63 of UNRWA's 67 schools in Lebanon (UNRWA, 2019).

Students at the secondary level choose from one of the following specializations: Economic and Social, Humanities, General Sciences and Life Sciences. Following the French national education system, Lebanese students sit for two national exams at pre-university level, the Brevet at the end of Grade 9 and the Baccalaureate at the end of Grade 12.

Primary and secondary education institutions can either use English or French as the medium of instruction, determining the language taught as a first foreign language, and the language of instruction of Mathematics and Sciences as of KG1 at age of 3. Historically, there are more French medium schools than English in Lebanon, but in recent years the number of English medium schools has increased considerably (El-Ghali & Ghalayini, 2019).

Lebanon has achieved significant progress in the education system since the end of the Civil War in 1991. In the primary cycle, net enrolment rates are almost universal, standing at 97.1% as of 2015. As of 2012, 97% of boys transitioned from primary to secondary school; 99% of girls made the transition in the same year. Retention rates to the last grade of education reflect a similar slight gender difference, at 90% for boys and 96% for girls (El-Ghali & Ghalayini, 2019) Nevertheless, other studies indicate that the Lebanese education sector suffers from problems of opportunity and the provision of quality education. Lebanese people characterized by the United

Nations Development Program (UNDP) as ‘poor’ (living on less than 4 USD per person per day, representing 27.4% of the total population) often have particularly limited access to education. The formal education attained by the main income earner in poor households is likely to be up to the intermediate level. Regional discrepancies are also a major concern, with educational attainment in poorer areas such as the Bekaa and Akkar standing far lower than in Beirut and Mount Lebanon (Oxfam International, 2018).

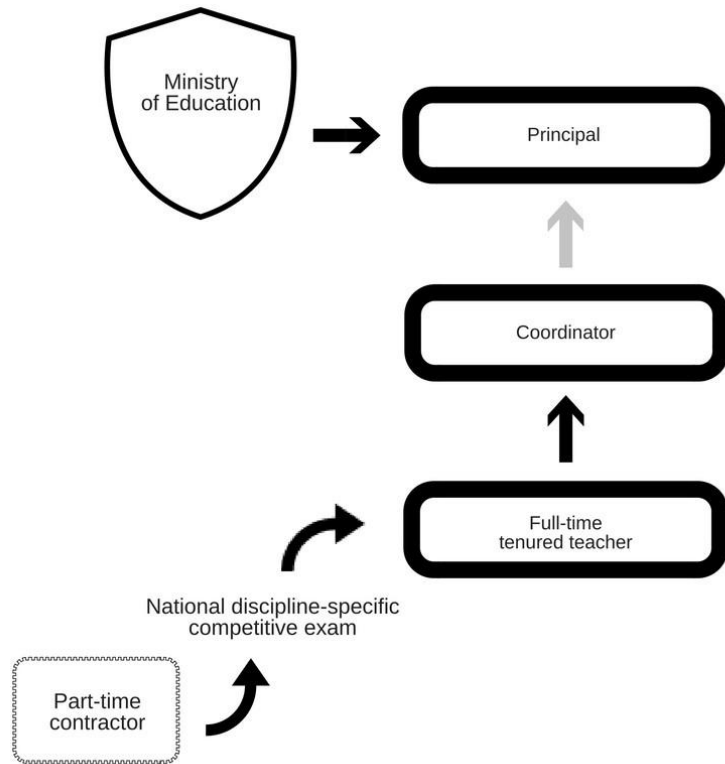
In order to address issues of equal access to quality education, MEHE drafted a National Education Strategy Framework, the 2010-2018 Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP), which sets five priority areas for educational development:

1. **Ensure equal access to education:** promoting Early Childhood Education (ECE), improved retention and achievement of students and development of new infrastructure
2. **Build a knowledge society:** offering teachers opportunities for professional development, modernizing school management and improving curriculum
3. **Enhance social integration:** promoting active citizenship in education, for example through student councils and community service programs
4. **Promote economic development:** integrating ICT into the teaching and learning process and improved monitoring and evaluation of teacher competencies
5. **Support good governance in education:** improving coordination amongst different MEHE units and developing a Management Information System to support policymaking and means of assessing the outcomes of the ESDP according to specific indicators.

In order to implement the ESDP, the government estimated that \$262 million is needed over five years. The MEHE budget, however, stands at \$20 million annually, meaning that less than half of the expected costs can be met by the regular budget. The project secured around \$189 million from key donors including USAID, World Bank, EU and the French Agency for Development (AFD). Programs under ESDP are running until 2018 due to delays caused by the political situation in Lebanon, including the fact that the country was without a government for most of 2013 and 2018.

Teachers in the public system begin their careers as part-time contractors and can only transfer onto a full-time tenure contract upon completing a national competitive exam in their discipline. Once on a full-time contract, teachers can progress to the role of coordinator, the person responsible for organizing exams and deciding teachers’ allocation by class and subject in a school. Coordinators are presided over by school principals, whose responsibilities are mainly administrative and policy-bound, ensuring that the school follows the curriculum set by the Ministry of Education. Consequently, school principals do not necessarily have to come from an education background. It is, therefore, rare for a teacher to progress through to the position of principal.

There are no formalized guidelines and procedures that govern promotion opportunities for teachers in Lebanon, for example, required length of service before promotion. Consequently,



promotion does not occur uniformly. The EDSP aims to address this issue through reforms aimed at the professionalization of the teaching workforce, including formulating and implementing a new law for teacher recruitment and developing a teacher salary scale that is linked to a system of incentives (MEHE, 2018). Following a series of calls by the Union Coordination Committee, teachers began organizing a series of strikes beginning in 2013 and every year since then, joined by the Association of Private Schools, Syndicate of Lebanon (TSL), the League of Teacher of Public Schools in Lebanon (LPESPL), the League of Technical and Vocational Teachers (CETO) and public

sector employees. The strikes aimed to put pressure on the Lebanese government to implement the revised salary scale.

### **Higher Education**

In the 2017-2018 academic year, 190,157 students were enrolled in public and private universities in Lebanon. Of these, 36.81% were studying at the Lebanese University (LU), the only public institution for higher learning in Lebanon. LU was established in 1951. The limited government funding and conflicting political interests affect its ability to accommodate increasing numbers of students. The LU now has two branches in Beirut and three others in different regions of Lebanon, with 18 faculties (European Commission for Higher Education, 2019).

In addition to the LU, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education recognizes 40 private institutions of higher education. The largest and most prestigious private universities use English or French as a medium of instruction, and include the Lebanese International University (LIU), St. Joseph's University (USJ), American University of Beirut (AUB), the Lebanese American University (LAU) and the Beirut Arab University (BAU). Of the 40 licensed higher education institutions, 36 use English as the medium of teaching. Université La Sagesse, Université St Joseph, Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik and the Académie Libanaise des BeauxArts (ALBA) offer their classes in French. The Ecole Supérieure D'Affaires(ESA) also

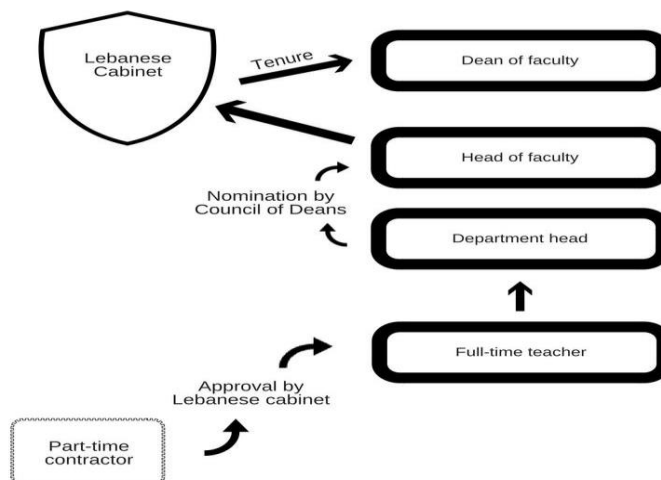
offers its courses in French only but is considered a business school rather than a university (CERD, 2018; European Commission for Higher Education, 2019).

## Educational Research

The principal body for educational research is the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD). CERD is presided over by a governing body composed of the Director General of Education, the President of CERD, Education Inspectors and representatives of the Directorate of Basic Education, Directorate of Secondary Education, and Department for Pedagogical Orientation (DOPS). The role of CERD is to conduct research and planning as a means of informing education policy making. Its activities include both qualitative and quantitative assessments, including compiling an annual bulletin of education-related statistics and evaluating teacher's levels of proficiency. CERD presents the findings of these assessments to the Minister of Education, who has the sole power of deciding educational policy (CERD, 2018).

CERD's national plans are developed by a Steering Committee, which is composed of members of each department of MEHE and determines nationwide priorities. Educational planning also takes place regionally: each regional office holds at least one conference per year in order to set their priorities for the school year, based on the MEHE Five-Year plan (MEHE, 2018).

CERD writes the curriculum and submits it to the Director General of Education for approval, and is responsible for formal, in-service training of all teachers, including language teachers. The content of all internal training must be approved by the Director General for Education. CERD's project for continuous training began fourteen years ago under the coordination of the Maktab al Adaad w Al Tadrib (Office for Preparation and Training). Every year, it organizes and delivers internal training to between 15,000 and 20,000 teachers. Training in English language teaching is considered a priority for this office, given the increasing demand for English as a second language in schools. Interest in English language teacher training depends on the geographical area; schools in Beirut for instance demonstrate a higher demand for English than those in Jounieh. CERD also approves training provided by external institutions such as the British Council, USAID and others (CERD, 2018).



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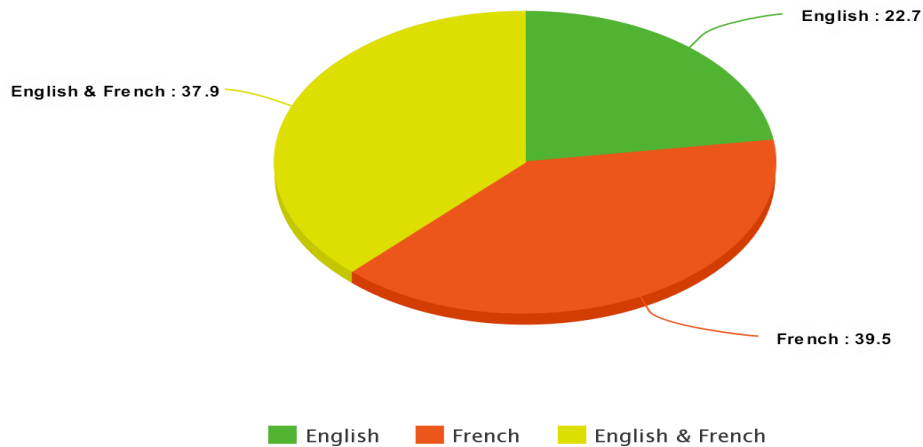
## **ENGLISH IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM**

Lebanon has a long history of second language learning. As a consequence of the French mandate in Lebanon from 1923 to 1946, French dominated as the main second language throughout the twentieth century. In the past few decades, however, English has become increasingly popular, due in part to its role in the global financial markets.

Schools in Lebanon are either English or French medium, meaning that in addition to the first foreign language being taught from KG1, Mathematics and Science subjects are also taught in the foreign language from Grade 1.

Despite an increase in the popularity of English, the number of public and private schools teaching English as a first foreign language still trails behind the number of schools offering French, at 1,134 and 652 respectively. A further 1,088 schools offer both French and English. 1,000 public schools offer English language only (276) or both French and English curriculums while 888 private schools offer English language only (260) or both French and English curriculums. When considered as a percentage of the total schools in Lebanon, only 22.7% of schools offer English as the first foreign language, compared to 39.5% that offer French and 37.9% that offer both. By sector, English medium teaching accounts for 16.9% of public schools, 18.3% of private subsidized schools, 22.3% of private schools and 68.6% of UNRWA schools (CERD, 2018).

Percentage of schools offering foreign language education, 2014-2015



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Over the past decade, there has been an increase in the number of English medium schools which further indicates the growth in the popularity of English. In 2000-2001, a total of 524 schools across Lebanon offered English as the first foreign language, compared to 1,585 French medium schools. In addition 562 schools offered English or French as the first language. In 2017-2018, 690 schools offered English as their first foreign language, and 1,088 offered English or French as the first language. Nevertheless, notable variations exist according to regions.

The increased popularity of English as a first foreign language can also be seen in increased enrolment rates. Student enrolment in English as a second language has seen a year-on-year increase in the private and private subsidized streams over the past decade, which is a clear indicator of the growth of English in Lebanon. Over the next few years, if this trend continues, we may see an even bigger increase in the number of public schools which provide both English

and French as second language. In the 2000-2001 academic year, a total of 294,202 students were enrolled in English compared to 460,192 in 2017-2018, an increase of 66%. Conversely, enrolment in French as a second language decreased by 8.4% over the same period.

The increase in enrolment in English, however, varies according to sub-sector. In the public sector, numbers increased from 96,391 students in 2000-2001 to 109,865 students in 2017-2018. Yet in the private sector, the increase is noticeably greater, growing from 157,262 students in 2000-2001 to 249,531 students in 2017-2018; an increase of 58.6%. 71% of all English students were enrolled in private schools (CERD, 2018; MEHE, 2018).

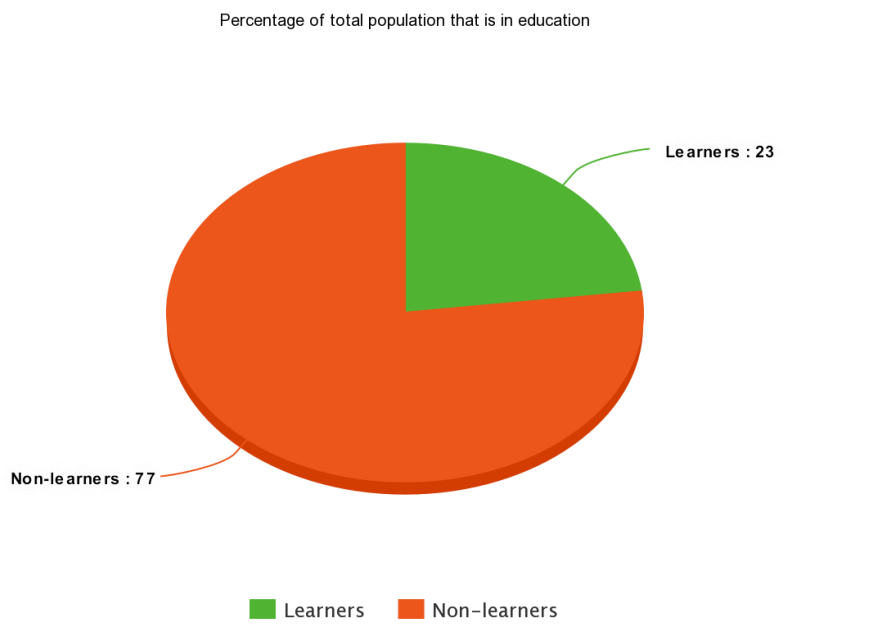
The demand for English in Lebanon has grown with the onset of the Syrian crisis. In the school year 2017-2018, 58% of second shift schools are using English as their medium of instruction, while 42% are using French. This represents a significant increase. For Syrian students, English is seen as a tool to emigrate and become a global citizen. Parents see English as an opportunity for their children and have been requesting more English language education in schools (Shakya, Guruge, Hynie, Akbari, Malik, Htoo, & Alley, 2018).

English is perceived to be a more accessible language than French by the Lebanese, especially those who are looking to emigrate. It is also perceived as a more global language than French given that most relevant internet content is in English, as is much of the radio, TV and cinema that comes to Lebanon.

In order to accommodate the growth of interest in English, MEHE has dedicated resources specifically to the development of ELT in Lebanon. A unit in CERD is responsible for ELT curriculum design at pre-university level, teacher training in public schools and the development of national ELT textbooks. These books are obligatory for public schools, but not for private schools. However, private schools are still required to follow the curriculum for Lebanese schools developed by CERD (students with a foreign passport are eligible to follow other internationally recognized curricula).

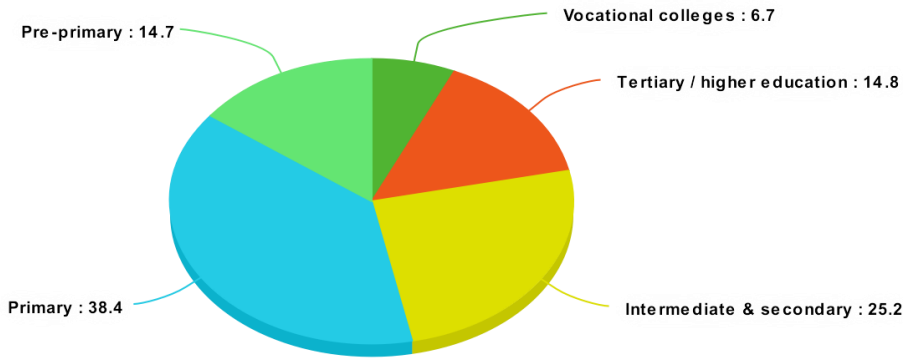
## **ELT PROVISION SUMMARY STATISTICS**

### **Learner Statistics**





Distribution of total learners in Lebanon

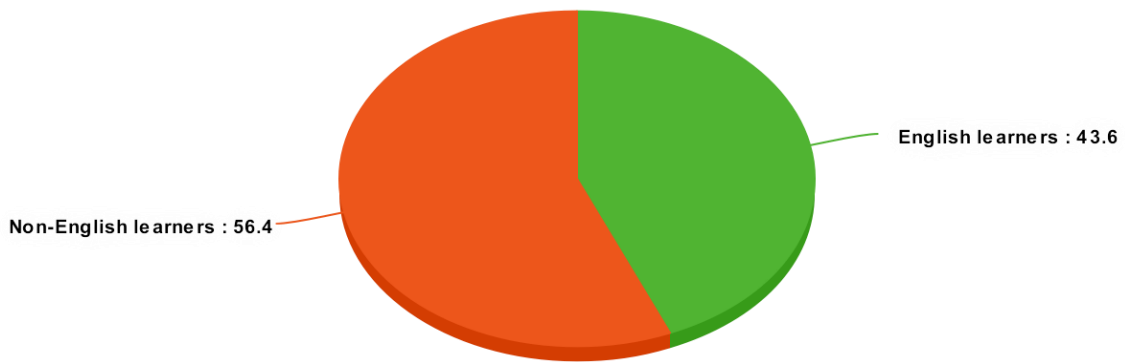


Vocational colleges    Tertiary / higher education    Intermediate & secondary  
Primary    Pre-primary

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English vs. non-English learners



English learners    Non-English learners

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## **Teacher Statistics**

Number of public school teachers in Lebanon\*

|                                    |                                       |  |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| School teachers (tenure contracts) | School teachers (unpaid or volunteer) | School teachers (hourly paid or part-time) |
| 24,012                             | 886                                   | 17,164                                     |

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Number of English Teachers in Lebanese public schools\*

| Pre-Primary schools | Primary schools | Intermediate Schools | Secondary school | Total number of English teachers |
|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2, 683              | 7,325           | 3,630                | 2,877            | 16,515                           |

<http://www.crdp.org/sites/default/files/Nachra%20i7saieh.pdf>

\*These figures do not include teachers working in vocational schools, tertiary level and language schools.

### **Public School Teacher Qualifications**

In Lebanon, guidelines exist for teacher qualifications at each educational level. Overall, a minimum requirement for teachers is to have a university-level qualification, or a 'License', equivalent to a Bachelor of Arts (BA). At the Lebanese University, there are two types of BAs: those that are considered 'teaching diplomas', issued by the Faculty of Education; and those considered 'non-teaching' diplomas, issued by specific specialist faculties (such as Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences). The difference between non-teaching and teaching diplomas is that the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences focuses on theoretical knowledge in a discipline, whereas the Faculty of Education combines such knowledge in a given subject with teaching methodologies. For example, a BA in English Literature and Language issued by the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences is not considered a teaching diploma, while a BA in English from the Faculty of Education is.

In general, teachers at the primary level (Cycles 1 and 2) are required to have a teaching diploma in their area of expertise (English, Mathematics, Science etc.) At the secondary level, however, a non-teaching diploma is accepted (BA in English Literature).

These requirements, however, are not always adhered to, due to the general lack of qualified teachers, particularly in rural areas. Because of this, teachers often work without the required qualifications.

### **Pre-Primary State Education**

In 2016-2017, 188,344 children were engaged in preschool education (aged 3-5 years).

According to CERD, 85% of those enrolled are in private kindergartens, with the remaining 15%

in the public system (CERD, 2018). There are numerous reasons for this discrepancy. For one thing, the majority of public kindergartens lack the proper facilities; it is estimated that 50.6% do not have the necessary educational equipment. Moreover, kindergartens are not distributed equally amongst the different regions of Lebanon, with the poorest regions facing a lack of pre-primary facilities, and there is an overall lack of qualified teachers.

An initial early child education (ECE) policy was set out in the MEHE's Education Sector Reform Action Plan 2007-2009. This sought to expand access to public preschool education, specifically in poor and rural areas. According to the UNDP, however, MEHE lacked the appropriate structures to ensure the implementation of these policies, and there were significant regional disparities in both access and coverage (MEHE, 2018).

In the 2015 EDSP, MEHE sought to address previous shortcomings by including ECE reform among its developmental priorities. There have been calls for reform of this sector. Policy and planning strategists, which incorporate increasing the number of kindergartens; improving the quality of learning environment; providing pre-service and in-service training for kindergarten teachers; establishing early discovery programs in kindergartens (in cooperation with UNICEF); and implementing family awareness raising programs. Reforms also call for a review of laws regarding ECE and the establishment of an ECE unit within the MEHE to follow up on the implementation and development of national strategy and to monitor and evaluate progress. The ESDP progress report published in 2017 indicated that 123 public KG schools have been rehabilitated and 13 schools are piloting the newly developed learning materials (MEHE, 2018).

## **Primary and Secondary Schools**

### **Policy Plans and Development**

English in the school system varies considerably across different sectors (private, private subsidized, public and UNRWA). MEHE priority areas for ELT development in public schools include improving teachers' language skills and certifying teachers' foreign language teaching abilities, which are implemented through in-service training developed by internally by CERD or externally by private ELT providers. Public schools have received direct support for development of English from both American and British sources.

Private schools in Lebanon are free to determine their own policy direction. Due to better funding, private schools can attract better-qualified teachers and therefore have fewer issues with teaching quality. They usually offer in-service teacher training to boost the capacities of teaching staff.

### **Curricula**

Public schools in Lebanon follow a national curriculum which is defined by the Ministry of Education. In 2006, a process of curriculum reform began to update the first cycle of schooling (Grades 1-3), with a view to incorporating new methodologies and materials. This process was informed by importation of a model from abroad, namely the 'integrative' system used in Canada and Belgium (CERD, 2018).

Following UNRWA central educational policy, UNRWA schools use the Lebanese curriculum. Private schools follow their own curricula and update these regularly, but they are guided by the national curricula given that students in both private and public streams must pass national exams at the Brevet and Baccalaureate level.

### **Teaching Materials**

English language teaching coursebooks (English in Action and Themes) in the public schools are based on the national curriculum and determined by MEHE. Some teachers perceive the books as outdated in terms of both content and methodology, and feel the level of English is too

difficult for their students. In response, the MEHE is considering updating the curriculum and textbooks with the goal of increasing interactivity (CERD, 2018). In private and French medium public schools, English teachers are not bound to use the Ministry coursebooks and so many of these schools use alternative published materials.

UNWRA has developed ELT textbooks that are based on the Lebanese curriculum but in the Palestinian context. They were introduced to schools at the beginning of the 2013-2014 academic year. They are also looking into incorporating e-learning and are working with Al Jazeera children's television network to develop interactive teaching resources in all subjects, including English, such as videos and supplementary materials on themes relevant to the curriculum (UNRWA, 2019).

### **Teaching Qualifications**

In public schools, teachers of English must have a minimum of either a BA in English from the Faculty of Education, or a BA in English Language and Literature from the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, which include a module of teaching methodology. Both qualify teachers to teach at the primary, intermediate and secondary level. The requirement is the same in private schools and UNRWA schools for teachers of Grade 7 and above. As at 2014, for Grades 1-6, UNRWA requires teachers to have a university degree in any subject, not necessarily English. Public secondary school teachers are required to have a Certificat d'Aptitude au Professorat de l'Enseignement du Second Degré diploma from the LU, which is a Lebanese qualification. UNRWA secondary teachers of English must have an English degree. In private school, secondary teachers need a Master's degree in ELT, English Literature or related subjects such as translation.

Although in English medium schools both Mathematics and Science are nominally taught in English from Grade 1, in both public and UNRWA schools, teachers often lack the language capacities to do this. This is because Mathematics and Science teachers at intermediate and secondary level are required to have a specialized degree in the subject of instruction, either a teaching diploma from the Faculty of Education or a BA in Mathematics and Sciences from the Faculty of Sciences. They are not, however, required to have qualifications in the language of instruction. As a result, textbooks are in English and technical English terminology may be used but explanations given in Arabic. For these reasons, in 2016, CERD adopted the Functional English training program from the British Council to train subject teachers in English. Recently, IELTS has been adopted as a pass requirement for graduates from the LU Faculty of Education who will be English teachers or teach Mathematics or Science through English but it is still not the case for teachers who pursue subject degrees through the Faculty of Sciences.

In the public system, teachers are most likely to enter the system on a part-time contract. Transfer to a full time contract can only be secured upon completion of a national competitive exam in each discipline, which takes place every time public schools are in need of teachers. Similar to the French 'concours', the national competitive exam does not function on a 'pass' or 'fail' system. Rather, each discipline specifies the number of teachers needed, thereby determining from the outset that a limited number of teachers will be successful. Those who achieve the highest marks are accepted on to full-time contracts.

Following this, teachers must complete a national civil service exam, which is administered by Majlis al Khadamat al Madaniyya (Council for Civil Services) and is required by any public servant in all fields. For teachers, the exam consists of two papers. The first paper examines the discipline of specialization and can be held in English, French or Arabic depending on the

language of the major. The second paper examines general knowledge in the field of education, structured around a text that informs a series of questions and an essay. This paper is in Arabic.

**Working Conditions of English Language Teachers**

Both the public schools and UNRWA are experiencing a shortage in the number of properly qualified English teachers (El-Ghali & Ghalayini, 2019). This is not as much of a problem for private schools as better pay and conditions attract better-qualified teachers.

Within the public school system, around 57.1% of teachers have full-time, permanent contracts while 40.8% have part-time contracts. The remaining 2.1% are volunteers. Full-time contracts are coveted by teachers because they provide stability and a ‘job for life’, whereas part-time teachers are not guaranteed work from week to week. Full-time contracts also come with a range of benefits and incentives, including a pension scheme, family health insurance and subsidies for children’s schooling (Trading Company, 2018).

In the public system, many teachers are part of the Lebanese Teachers Syndicate. This body is very popular, as it lobbies for teachers’ best interests in terms of wages and benefits. If needed, the Syndicate can call for strike action to increase pressure for reforms. Teachers in UNRWA schools can also join a union, which works to ensure their interests are represented and communicated to management.

**Assessment and Qualifications**

Across all sectors, students sit for two national examinations: the Brevet (Grade 9) and the Baccalaureate (Grade 12). All other school examinations are produced internally and there is no benchmark that can be used as a standard for comparison. A total of 9,092 students across Lebanon sat for the Brevet in the academic year 2017-2018. A total of 122,106 students sat for the Baccalaureate Official Exams first round.

**English in Further Education (including Vocational Training)**

In addition to formal education, 86,610 students (7.2% of the total students of Lebanon) were enrolled in public and private vocational and technical training centers (VTTCs) at intermediate, secondary and tertiary levels in 2017-2018. Of these, 57.9% were studying in private VTTCs (CERD, 2018). This is shown in the next table:

|                    | Public | Private | Total  |
|--------------------|--------|---------|--------|
| Number of VTTCs    | 123    | 247     | 370    |
| of                 | 41,982 | 44,628  | 86,610 |
| Number of teachers | 15,273 | 6,455   | 21,728 |

<http://www.crdp.org/sites/default/files/Nachra%20i7saieh.pdf>

A wide range of subjects are available in VTTCs. The most popular options include IT, accounting, mechanics (auto and industrial), chefs, hospitality, administration and graphic design. Instruction is in Arabic, French or English, and the national official exams are prepared in three languages accordingly. There is no data available on the distribution of students/VTTCs

according to the language of teaching in the vocational training sector; however, all VTTCs students are taught a first foreign language and a second foreign language as part of their curricula. In some subjects, where English is taught as first foreign language, there are special English curricula known as Technical English.

At secondary level, the Baccalauréat Technique (BT) is a three-year curriculum. Student enrolment starts at Grade 10 and the Brevet is a prerequisite (whether academic or professional). The Diplôme Technique Supérieur (TS) is the first vocational accreditation at tertiary level, and also comprises a three year curriculum. Students must hold a BT accreditation in order to join. Following this, students can pursue a two-year course of study towards the License Technique (LT).

In addition, special certificates are awarded upon completion of short term training programs. These can last between three months and one year, and are provided by private VTTCs. UNRWA has two vocational training centers, one in Sibling and one in the north, the latter of which graduated 314 students in July 2018. There is a compulsory English component in all trades and semi-professional courses, which are delivered by eight English Language instructors. The syllabus and assessment processes are devised internally and include technical language adapted to the students' specializations.

### **English in Higher Education**

Tertiary education institutions in Lebanon teach different subjects in different languages. The choice of Arabic, French or English for a given subject is governed by the universities themselves. In addition to long-established universities such as the American University of Beirut (AUB), in the late 1990s a number of private universities were established which had English as a medium of instruction (Commission for Higher Education, 2019).

Currently, 36 out of 40 licensed Higher Education institutions use English as the main medium of instruction.

Aside from language and translation courses, roughly 40% of teaching in the Lebanese University (LU) is delivered in English (Lebanese University, 2018). Meanwhile, in private universities such as the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the Lebanese American University (LAU), which adopt the American system, all subjects are taught in English. Prior to starting courses taught in English, students are required to take an English entrance exam. These exams are written and administered by individual universities. Consequently, no standardized data is available for Lebanon as a whole, and there are significant variations in the level of English required by different institutions. Some universities, such as LAU and AUB, offer English language courses to prospective students whose language is not of the required level. The Lebanese University offers this service, too.

In 2017-2018, 18,341 students were studying literature (this includes English, Arabic, and French) at the LU, compared to 2,641 in private institutions (studying literature and the arts). In contrast, 2036 students were enrolled in education at the LU, compared to 881 in private institutions.

At the tertiary level, English language instructors need a minimum of a Master's degree in a relevant field (linguistics, education, English language, translation or literature). At the private universities and at the Lebanese University, teaching experience is also a requirement. There is consensus amongst both public and private universities that recruiting properly qualified staff is a challenge (Lebanese University, 2018). Private universities sometimes offer far higher levels of pay than the Lebanese University.

### **English in Other Contexts**

### **English in the Private Sector (Language Schools)**

There are two major private English language teaching schools in Lebanon, namely, International House and AmidEast, alongside a host of smaller centers.

The American Lebanese Language Centre (ALLC International House) has four branches in Lebanon and is affiliated with International House (International House, 2018). The ALLC Beirut and Saida branches are the only centers in Lebanon that offer CELTA training. Other products include general and business English and exams classes (FCE, CAE, CPE, TOEFL and SAT).

AmidEast also offers English classes, including courses for General English and test preparation for exams (TOEFL, SAT, GMAT, GRE and TOEIC) (AmidEast, 2018). With sponsorship from the US Department of State, AmidEast runs the English Access Microscholarship Program, which targets Lebanese youth at public secondary schools and offers English language tuition alongside workshops to introduce American culture and career development resources. Launched in 2004, over 6,000 youth across the region are benefitting from the program. AmidEast also facilitates such academic and cultural exchanges as Fulbright scholarships.

### **EDUCATION POLICY AND THE SYRIA CONFLICT**

There are currently 487,615 Syrian children under 17 registered with UNHCR in Lebanon (Inter-Agency Coordination, 2018; Shakya et al., 2018). When the refugee influx from Syria first began, most Lebanese government services underwent a period of uncertainty as the government adopted a ‘disassociation’ policy in relation to the Syria crisis. Since 2012 policy responses have been emerging, backed by donor funding but with the Lebanese government firmly in the driving seat.

As the Lebanese government adapted to the new reality of the Syrian influx, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) recognized the need to support at-risk Lebanese youth as well as Syrian children displaced by the conflict. This led to the development of the Reaching All Children with Education Programme, known as RACE (MEHE, 2016).

#### **RACE**

RACE has been the strategic, policy and programmatic response to the education challenge from 2014 to 2018, supported by a wide range of bilateral and multilateral donors including the World Bank, the UN, US, EU and UK. MEHE estimates that the education sector in Lebanon received a total of US\$ 272 million for RACE 1, an estimated 30% of which was channeled through MEHE (MEHE, 2016).

RACE included the following components:

- 1) Ensuring equitable access to educational opportunities;
- 2) Improving the quality of teaching and learning;
- 3) Strengthening national educational systems, policies, and mentoring.

To deliver this, the Ministry oversaw the implementation of practical measures such as opening a second shift in selected schools, waiving documentation requirements for non-Lebanese children, providing a certificate of completion, and allowing non-Lebanese children to sit for official national exams for Grades 9 and 12. In addition to those in school, a further 11,878 children were enrolled in regulated Accelerated Learning Programs (ALP) to support their entry into formal schooling. As a result, RACE has benefited approximately 413,000 Syrian and Lebanese school-aged children. The number of Syrian students in Lebanese schools has increased from 18,780 in the 2011-2012 school year, to 141,722 in the 2017-2018 school year (World Bank, 2019a).

## **RACE 2**

RACE 2, which was launched in August 2016, represents a continuation of the efforts of RACE. The second iteration of the program includes formative assessments at schools, student support program, placing psychosocial and academic counselors in schools, supporting schools to embrace a learner-centric pedagogy and promoting community engagement to encourage accountability. Additionally, RACE 2 increasingly targets two under-enrolled age groups: the very young, and those who have been out of school for 1-2 years. RACE 2 strongly focuses on the quality of education, in terms of curricula, teaching, learning environments and learning materials, and seeks to strengthen education data systems to inform more data driven decision making (United Nations, 2018).

## **Implementation Structures**

The implementation of RACE 1 and RACE 2 is overseen by the Project Management Unit (PMU), housed within MEHE and reporting to the Minister of Education, via the Director General of the Ministry and the RACE Executive Committee. The Project Management Unit (PMU) is the emergency response arm of the MEHE; set up after the Syria Crisis. Directly under the Minister of Education, the PMU is responsible for all education interventions related to the Syria crisis, including both formal and non-formal education. The PMU Program Manager is currently Mrs. Sonia Khoury.

## **Conclusion**

This study has provided general information on Education in Lebanon and a general outlook at the English language in different sectors.

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