Rethinking the Curriculum in Lebanon & the Arab World

Reconciliating Ideologies & Pedagogies Conference

January 29-30 & 5 February 2021

Virtual Conference
We present the following report of the conference ‘Rethink the Curriculum in Lebanon and the Arab World: Reconciling Ideologies and Pedagogies’, which took place over three days: 29, 30 January and 5 February 2021. This conference was organised by the Centre for Lebanese Studies, with the vision and guidance of its academic committee and the support of the Open Society Foundation.

The planning for this conference started in the third quarter of 2019. However, the political instability in Lebanon followed by the COVID-19 outbreak hindered our ability to hold this international conference as originally envisioned: a critical and engaging space for educators, academics and practitioners from around the world to meet in Beirut and engage in critical discussions around curriculum reform. Despite all the challenges, we were able to organise this conference online, which in fact allowed us to connect hundreds of educators, academics, and practitioners from around the world. The abundant level of interest and participation exceeded our expectations, which is an indicator that issues related to curriculum reform in the Arabic speaking countries in particular and the world is of great importance and there is a need for a collaborative, inclusive and critical discussion around it. We believe that this conference has kick started this process.

With the overall aim to widen the debate on curriculum reform, the conference was able to engage the speakers and audiences in discussions concerning curriculum theories, ideologies and approaches. By presenting real case studies and particular contexts, the speakers and audiences were able to examine and reflect on normative and empirical questions related to what to teach why and how. Additionally, with the presence of a wide range of speakers and attendees including academics, educators, policy makers, researchers and students, the conference created a space for critical reflections on the role of the various stakeholders in the process of curriculum development as well as reflecting on local practices, as well as political, cultural, and social aspects of curriculum design and implementation with a particular focus on Arabic-speaking countries.

While the curriculum reform in the Arab world has been a recurrent issue in the past two decades, the conference made clear that reform should reflect the needs, aspirations and knowledge from the grassroots; that is, away from the elitist/expert approach to curriculum reform that historically dictated and hegemonised the process. Without actively engaging students, parents, civil society actors and teachers in the reform process, the numerous attempts at curricula reform will continue to yield disappointing educational outcomes, maintaining, if not increasing, inequalities, poverty and deprivation of large sectors of our societies. For that, we would like to express our appreciation to all who contributed to the success of this conference and we know that this conference will be followed by tangible steps for an inclusive, critical, and meaningful curriculum reform process.

Finally, we hope that you enjoy reading this report, which aims to capture the main debates and outputs of the conference. By compiling this overview of the main topics discussed by the conference participants, we shed light on how move from goals to actions. We hope that you can help us achieve this by sharing your reflections and opinions with us or our partners.

Centre for Lebanese Studies
Team / Academic Board
Academic Board

Dr. Scarlet Sarraf
Professor at the Lebanese University (LU) and Head of Department of Educational Sciences at the Faculty of Education

Dr. Suzanne Abou Rjeily
Professor at the Faculty of Pedagogy at the Lebanese University (LU) and President of The Lebanese Association for Educational Studies

Dr. Anies El Hroub
Associate Professor of Education Psychology and Special Education and the former Chairperson of the Department of Education at the American University of Beirut (AUB)

Nayla Khodr Hamadeh
President of the Lebanese Association for History (LAH)

Dr. Maha Shuayb
Director of the Centre for Lebanese Studies at the Lebanese American University (LAU)

Dr. Rima Bahous
Associate Professor of Education with an emphasis in applied linguistics and TESOL at the Lebanese American University (LAU)

Dr. Hagop A. Yacoubian
Associate Professor of Education at the Lebanese American University (LAU)
Conference Overview

Due to the travel restrictions and social distancing conditions as a result of COVID-19 outbreak, the three-day conference was held online. Initially all interested participants were asked to use a ZOOM registration. However, due to a high level of interest that exceeded the ZOOM capacity, the conference was streamed live on Facebook. This allowed more than 600 participants from 15 countries to watch the sessions and engage in the discussions. Presenting in three languages (Arabic, English and French), over 70 speakers, including 5 keynotes, the conference covered a wide range of issues, namely:

- Curriculum theories and trends
- The politicisation of curricula, including planning, design & content
- The personal, social & cultural in the curriculum
- Equity, gender, diversity & inclusion
- Teaching, learning & assessment

The conference covered all grade levels from (K to 12) and subjects (STEM, languages, and social studies).

With a wide range of topics in both theory and practice, the conference was a unique platform for exchange and deliberations. The conference was built on the understanding that there is a great need to move the curriculum from its holy state where it is discussed and planned within elite circles. The conference allowed for a critical engagement with themes related to the curriculum from an interdisciplinary approach, and engage a wide range of teachers, practitioners and academics in debates around the curriculum. Speakers' presentations and the discussions with the audience(s) centered three main themes: the curriculum and its role in social and political change; the ability to build transferable experiences from micro-scale practices; and the role of the curriculum to provide learners with skills for employability. Under these three themes, a number of sub-themes emerged, namely:
The curriculum and its role in social and political change

- Reproduction of social, political and economic ideologies through the utilisation of curricula that are detached from real life experiences;
- Ways through which the curricula can engage learners and educators with controversial and sensitive issues such as history, citizenship and rights under restrictive social and political contexts that does not allow for critical thought and expression;
- Relevance of curricula to social changes which require rethinking of language and terminologies;
- Teaching and learning in diasporic contexts and the emerging types of education in such contexts.

The ability to build transferable experiences from micro-scale practices

- Linking teacher professional development (TPD) with the need to professionalise the field of education without considering connections between TPD and socio-political consciousness, and overlooking the agency of teachers outside of schools;
- Assessments and their links to values and skills;
- The meaning, impact and role of the hidden curricula;
- Integrating values education in STEM subjects.

The role of the curriculum in providing learners with skills for employability

- Leadership of teachers and its reflection on their role(s) in leading curriculum development;
- Problematising the concepts related to 21st century skills and their relation to TPD;
- The idea of success that is limited to the ability to access the job market.

All conference documents are available in English and Arabic on the website of the Centre for Lebanese Studies as well as its social media pages. Through these links all the sessions of the conference are available, in addition to the speakers’ biographies and abstracts of their presentations and papers.
Alongside the main conference sessions, during the first two days the participants were asked to take part in an opinion poll. The poll covered the issue of the types of reform that need to take place in relation to the curricula. The majority of the participants in the poll (101 of 129) stated that radical changes need to take place and not only reform. According to the participants’ priorities, the type of reform that was on the top of the list was related to teacher professional development, while the last was improving students’ performance in international tests.

There was also a clear indication for the need to include a wide range of representation from the community in curriculum reform efforts and increasing the awareness towards the social role of teachers. Reformed curricula should prioritize educational and social equity in addition to being in touch with the latest developments in knowledge production and technology. The opinion poll highlighted that the main problems in current curricula that they are decontextualised, particularly detached from the political and social changes in the region and particular countries. Also, they dwarfed the issue of identity into a narrow and limiting nationalist scope: current curricula do not appreciate diversity nor consider identity through an intersectional lens. In effect, current curricula tend to gloss over diversity and ensure a unifying identity that is highly nationalist and exclusionary. Additionally, current curricula sideline the importance of the role of the unions, meaning that the creation of the curricula is top down, monopolized by bodies and groups in ministries, without the inclusion of teachers’ opinions and their representative bodies. Finally, curricula creation is not based on ongoing research that ensure linking content and framing to lived contexts and experiences and highlighting the priorities of the communities.

### What types of reform need to take place?

80% Radical changes need to take place, not only reforms

### What are the types of reforms in order of priority?

1. Teacher professional development
2. Community representation
3. Increase awareness of teachers’ social role
4. Prioritize educational & social equity
5. Keep up with the latest development in knowledge & technology
6. Improve students' performance in international tests

### What are the main problems of current curricula in the Arab world?

1. Decontextualized from political & social changes
2. Dwarfs the issue of identity into a narrow nationalist scope
3. Sidelines the role of unions
4. Follows a top-down approach monopolized by ministries
5. Lacks basis in ongoing research
Welcome Session

Maha Shuayb, the director of the Centre for Lebanese Studies officially opened the three-day conference, welcoming the speakers and the attendees and explaining that this conference was planned to take place in Beirut during the last quarter of 2019. However, due to the political instability in Lebanon followed by the restrictions imposed on gatherings and travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the conference was rescheduled a number of times to finally take place in its digital form over three days on 29, 30 January and 5 February 2021.

Shuayb highlighted that students are not represented in this conference, however students’ voice is heard across Lebanon, particularly in Tripoli where many have been subject to violence while calling for their rights. This echoes historical event in 1976 when a student who was calling for change in education curricula was martyred by police bullets. In line with this powerful demand and the great sacrifices, this conference calls for changing the curricula to connect education to our realities and the calls on the streets. As academics, practitioners and education institutions, this is our responsibility to enter this discussion and connect with the broader community. It is our responsibility to remove curricula from the high position of elitism and bring it back to the ground where it matters.

“What needs to be done is to recognize a number of problems, particularly in higher education institutions where students who are being trained to become teachers are not connected to or given the opportunity to engage with creating the curricula.”

Dr. Maha Shuayb

Curricula are perceived as merely textbooks. In reality, curricula creation has been compartmentalised and commercialised which stripped teachers of their agency. The relationship between teachers and civil society needs to be built. This is the ethical role of higher education institutions, academics, and researchers.

Shuayb added that this conference will be the first step in a series of other steps including consultations locally with teachers and internal dialogue among us as academics in universities to build bridges with the community. With COVID-19 and its dire implications the teachers have become the weakest link: they are not being paid, their salaries are diminishing and sometimes they have to sacrifice their own time and resources for the benefit of their students. Schools and universities in this case have a responsibility towards teachers and need to support them.

Rola Diab, the representative of the Lebanese American University (LAU) welcomed the speakers and attendees and highlighted the role and commitment of the LAU to academic excellence which is linked to engaging with academics and practitioners regionally and globally in spaces such as this conference. Diab stated that LAU is committed to the discussions around curricula where they are relevant to students. Curricula that promote mere acquisition of information are obsolete. It is essential that curricula is formulated to enhance the ability of learners to critically engage with information. Relevant curricula should build problem solving skills and competencies such as social responsibility and leadership. Diab also said that while we realise there are vast challenges in our region including poverty, economic inequalities, and conflicts. We are marking the first steps for real curriculum reform. We should think about equity, particularly in these difficult times where we have been forced to fast track changes due to COVID-19. While challenges are vast, we were given the opportunity make changes and establish good practices that can remain with us in the post-COVID-19 world.
Suzanne Abou Rjeily, professor at the Lebanese University and President of LAES said that we see that rethinking the curricula in the Arab world and Lebanon is timely, but it is always left unaddressed. Hence, it is important to be discussing this topic at this critical time. When we talk about the curricula it is important to consider how they dictate the direction where communities are heading and how they formulate human beings and cultures. Curricula are related to politics and governance, contrary to the common thinking that the curriculum if only the responsibility of academics and education experts. Curricula are close and tied to political decisions, and reflects the monopoly of the ruling elite, rendering them far from our realities, hopes and voices. Additionally, donors’ agendas exacerbate the estrangement of the curricula. Abou Rjeily stated that in Lebanon and possibly it is similar in other Arab countries, donors come with their ready-made agendas and foreign experts, so the money is spent on those experts with aims and strategies and mechanisms that do not look like our societies. Unfortunately, our ministries of education take these agendas with no change and produce curricula that do not look like our reality(ies).

“In Lebanon, and possibly it is similar in other Arab countries, donors come with their ready-made agendas and foreign experts, so the money is spent on those experts with aims and strategies and mechanisms that do not look like our societies. Unfortunately, our ministries of education take these agendas with no change and produce curricula that do not look like our reality(ies).”

Dr. Suzanne Abou Rjeily

What needs to be done is to adopt research that is linked to curriculum design. This research needs to be based on participatory approaches where policy makers meet with teachers, parents and experts. Pedagogy must be highlighted, and the aims of the curriculum are connected to reality. Abou Rjeily maintained that, we are currently witnessing the impact of detaching curricula from pedagogy; with COVID-19 teachers are forced to use technology with limited preparation and support and with no vision, now technology substituted pedagogy.

Curricula should reflect and engage with our reality, where knowledge comes from our daily lives, this is what we want from our curricula: to be linked to justice. These issues will be addressed in this conference and maybe a start to this challenging discussion.

The final word during this welcoming session was by Imad Sabi from the Open Society Foundation (OSF). OSF aim is to end authoritarianism including within education. Education is a medium through which authoritarianism tames and controls. Sabi stated that OSF started to build partnerships with many institutions and critical researchers, the aim of these partnerships is to support all efforts to imagine an education system and expand democratic processes to formulate solutions to educational problems in our societies. Sabi gave an example of a study done on curricula in the US and how the different administrations between Trump and Biden accept or reject findings on discrimination and slavery according to political affiliations and leanings.

This illustrates how the issue of curricula is a space for the struggle between ideologies, which results in complicated and controversial dialogue around curricula, especially in the Arab world. Another example Sabi gave was on selecting models from different countries and imposing them on other contexts, such as taking models from Singapore or Finland and imposing them in other countries. This is exclusionary of the society, where the curriculum is connected to and shapes the society. In Finland, a pioneer in education, educators focus on the process of reform in terms of reaching the end goal. In a participatory process, societal healing prevails and allows for understanding the reforms and changes necessary in the curricula. In this case this allows for ownership, which becomes an effective part of the curriculum design.

For full presentations, click here (00:00 - 28:30)
Keynote Speakers (1) Adnan El Amin – Arab Educational Curricula and the Excess of Ideology

El Amin discussed his overall topic under four main aspects:

- Ideology and curricula in international literature
- New sociology of education is not enough
- Ideology in the curricula
- Education reform

The theory of dominant ideology is part of many studies such as Michael Apple’s book, which was published in 1976 and focuses on authority and education as well as ideology, social inequality, and marginalisation. He considered the school as a political institution. Politics in his language is not linked to political parties. Apple is linked to a school of thought that is called the new sociology of education: this school of thought includes many names such as Giroux and Bourdieu.

There is also the theory of resistance. This is in opposition to the theory of control. In 2001, the resistance theory was labeled as a paradigm shift. In 1983, Giroux published a book about resistance theory in line with the ideas of Freire. The best example about the theory of resistance in education is combating discrimination against women. This led to the emergence of the feminist educational theory. In summary, resistance is a theoretical issue and a social act.

The second point is related to the idea that the new sociology of education is not enough. How can we understand ideological control and hegemony under these two theories? And how can this be resisted in Arab curricula?. There are four issues that we need to keep in mind.

In terms of control
- Following a foreign model embodied in the work and dependency on the foreign expert.
- Oppression and imposition of the authority through ideology where education becomes a representative of the political ruling party

In terms of resistance
- Resistance but also in relation to the ideology of political parties.
- Resistance based on political identity.

The main two questions El Amin answered were:
- What about ideology and our curricula?
- What are the main titles and themes to face and challenge the excess and interrelated ideologies?

The third point is ideology in curricula. El Amin tackled this point under three main aspects.

1. Explicit or written curriculum
- General political values
- Political values related to the ruling figure
- Political values based on the discourse of the ruling party and stated in school textbooks
- Social values
- Religious values

2. Hidden curriculum
- General social values (ex. Gender stereotypes)
- General political values
- Political values of the ruling party
- Political values of the political group (case of Lebanon)

Ideology in our curriculum: the level of ideology varies in our curricula based on the topic/subject. It’s a spectrum between ideology and knowledge.

3. Parallel curriculum
it is similar to the hidden curriculum in the literature. But this term is used due to the various relations between sources of ideologies and types of resistance that take place at the same time.

4. Ideology of curricula
El Amin discussed two issues under this theme: decision making and sources/forces of pressure. He asks: Does the curriculum form the students? To what extent? And according to what external forces does this influence.

5. Curriculum reform
There is no society without ideologies and the tendency for those in power to take excessive control. Humanity developed and progressed into two main fields: knowledge and participation in decision-making. These two form the basis to resist excess ideologies around the curriculum in it and about it and the route to reform the curriculum.

To face excess ideology needs excess knowledge and create knowledge groups and networks.

For the full presentation, click here
(30:00- 01:04:50)
Counsell highlighted issues related to teaching history and how teaching history as facts is dangerous and problematic. She stated that substantive knowledge is the material that teachers teach as established fact – whether the conventional meaning of a concept such as ‘parliament’ or ‘peasantry’ or a warranted account of reality such as the dates and chronology of events or the names of people. In calling such material ‘substantive’, we are treating it as given. She added, it should be part of any school subject where pupils learn to understand it as a tradition of enquiry with its own distinctive pursuit of truth. This quest can be through empirical testing in science, argumentation in philosophy/history, logic in mathematics or beauty in the arts. The disciplinary describes that part of a subject’s curriculum where pupils learn about the conditions under which valid claims can be made, and associated conventions such as what constitutes evidence or what counts as argument in that subject. Counsell also claimed that it is through due attention to the disciplinary dimension that pupils learn that what a teacher teaches is not all that there is. In those subjects where Truth is sought through argumentation, pupils learn that even the choice and juxtaposition of two facts in a narrative, amounts to an interpretation, and that such interpretation can be conducted responsibly or irresponsibly, but never definitively.

One of the main issues Counsell highlighted in regards to history teaching is that we cannot make sense of the facts of the past unless they are embedded in stories; and stories, of necessity, are not neutral collections of facts. Stories are necessarily selective, subjective and seductive. The shortest of stories is the result of choices, conscious and unconscious. Story influences subtly, invests power, makes hidden moral judgement and always distorts by omission, whether intentionally or not. This is why all educated citizens need not just substantive facts about the past, but history as a discipline. Considering this is vital if history is to achieve its emancipatory potential within mass education and if pupils are to be alert to the dangers of the abuse of history – the deliberate distortions and manipulations of the past by the powerful.

Counsell stated that with the efforts to make history a disciplinary knowledge came a gradual realisation of the many problems and challenges in so doing. If we have arrived beyond some of those challenges, it is through a process of continuous problem-solving, mostly by history teachers themselves. To face the challenges teachers adopted mechanisms and they fell under three categories: first, teaching pupils how to recognise and build arguments in response to types of historical question; second, teaching pupils how to constitute evidence from sources; third, teaching pupils to recognise and analyse diverse interpretations. Counsell said that teachers need a relationship to the knowledge that they teach. Curriculum cannot be separated from its curriculum makers. The challenge for history teachers is to ensure that both substantive and disciplinary knowledge work to serve one another, and to sustain responsible conversation about content choices.

For the full presentation, click here (01:06:00- 1:27:10)
Panel (1): General Curriculum

Chaired by Nayla Hamadeh, this panel tackled various themes related to the curriculum including influences impacting school curricula to language issues and alienation. The four panelists discussed curriculum related issues on a theoretical level as well as showcased real life experiences in Lebanese schools within the charitable sector such as Mabarrat Charity Association.

Samir Jarrar from LAES gave the first presentation in this panel highlighting issues related to teaching and learning in the 21st century. In his presentation Jarrar examined the theory of transformative education and how it can link to a movement within teaching and learning approaches to impact the society positively. Jarrar shed light on a number of educational approaches that can be utilised in the journey towards transformative education, such as human rights based systematic approaches and humanist approaches. Jarrar argued that quality education enhance individual empowerment and lead towards the creation of an environment that allows for social solidarity through life skills related to citizenship. According to Mr. Jarrar, this can only happen when education systems are unified.

The second panelist was Karma El Hassan from the American University of Beirut (AUB). El Hassan posed the following question: How can comprehensive curriculum align with instruction and assessment?

How can comprehensive curriculum align with instruction and assessment?

El Hassan spoke about building curriculum assessment alignment and coherence. She said that curriculum coherence and alignment, broadly defined as the degree to which components of an education system work together to achieve desired goals, have gained importance in recent years and been raised in many international and regional studies, such as the TIMSS and PISA reports. While countries, including Arab States dedicate increased efforts to better align learning content, objectives and approaches (curricula) with teaching practices and assessment procedures, lack of alignment persists a major hindrance towards the quality of learning outcomes for all, and an education system’s ability to achieve its desired goals. Alignment brings coherence at both national and school levels which is a prerequisite of setting a vision for education and preparing its translation into practice through action plans and the development of key learner competencies. El Hassan clarified the significant of assessment and curriculum alignment as an important policy lever in enhancing overall education quality and reaching SDG4. Various definitions of alignment were presented (such as the vertical and horizontal alignments), in addition to the levels and types of alignment. El Hassan explored reasons for misalignment in terms of teacher skills and competencies, school facilities and resources, and how to address and overcome these problems.

Moreover, El Hassan identified consequences of misalignment on instruction and learning, and diagnosing system, school, and student needs. She mentioned the impact on content and overburdening textbooks. After this, El Hassan exemplified the steps for building system alignment. Finally, she stated challenges that an education system might face in building curriculum coherence. El Hassan used examples from various countries around the world where alignment has taken place, such as Finland and the UK. She said that lack of alignment will lead to lack of efficacy. She also gave examples from South Africa where there is a plan to follow the Finish model but there is the challenge of lack of resources, and here she highlighted the importance of context. El Hassan also gave examples from Shanghai and Jordan. In conclusion, El Hassan stated that curriculum alignment and coherence is vital and associated with high-performance. We should look at our context and education philosophy for full integration.
The third panelist was Fayez Jalloul. This presentation moved from the theoretical and global to the very local level. The presentation utilised the experience of Al Mabarrat Charity Association, as their charity schools have over 20,000 students, to showcase a journey of contextualised curriculum reform. Jalloul described why Mabarrat started the journey of curriculum change and development. He highlighted the main challenges that face the education system including the lack of connection between education and the requirements of a dignified and productive living. He also talked about the need for providing young people with skills to enter the job market. Based on research, Mabarrat made changes to its curricula to face these challenges. Mabarrat worked on the adaptation of the Lebanese curriculum of 1997, to direct it towards education that is based on planning and evaluation through student activities that are linked to their lives and daily experiences. Mabarrat also included psycho-social learning that leads to building resilience and ability to manage pressure and feelings. Additionally, it focused on competencies that help students acquire needed skills in addition to the main values of the association. Jalloul highlighted a number of questions based on Mabarrat thorough research which covered issues related to the challenges in assessing PSS/SEL which is almost completely absent in the Arab world.

The final panelist was Vicky Panossian who tackled the issue of Ideological Alingualism. Panossian started with reflecting on the reality of the contemporary Lebanese youth. She said that now we have a generation who was taught to be ashamed of using their own language to assert their identity. She highlighted the conundrum of globalisation, but she said that it is not the only challenge we are facing. Lebanese youth are predisposed to a far more culturally fatal plague, one that’s coupled with an intense notion of intellectual inferiority. Panossian stated that her work is a postcolonial reading of our contemporary society’s pedagogical curricula, which illustrates a pathological hindrance in the Lebanese youth’s identification process. She identified two subsets that lead to a novel gap within the Lebanese culture: the procession of foreign languages and the resultant ideological misapprehension. Panossian stated that most third-world countries are beginning to face this issue; they are cultivating hordes of individuals who speak a variety of languages but lack the connection with any single one of them. The emerging problem is not that of miscommunication or a state of a-communication. It’s a fundamentally psychological struggle of misidentification and alienation. The latter is employed as an escape mechanism from the cultural trauma that comes with being a Lebanese post-war citizen. Yet, if the predominant ideological limitation of the Lebanese youth becomes a persistent phenomenon, there would be no a priori schematic template for the advancement of Lebanese consciousness. She said that youth today are prone to cultivating a chaotic cognitive state that has no fundamental ideological reference to lean upon. While immersed in the contemporary culture of globalization, the adolescent is said to absorb the most-prominent sociopolitical values at hand. Our educational curricula put Western principles and thought processes on an intellectual pedestal. Orientalism is no longer being dispersed as the West looking down on the Middle Easterner and considering them “primitive creatures,” but rather it’s about the Middle Easterner herself glorifying the unattainable western ideological schema. The latter may be due to capitalist purposes or based on the need to fit into the international picture; however, the Lebanese youth today are trading their language, identity and culture for this integration and they are doing so because of their primary educational system. In the case of the Lebanese youth emerging from high schools and headed to academia, we are witnessing a surge of a generation that vilifies its own language and limits itself to the constricted ideological offerings of western principles that contradict that of the local ones. The emerging intellectual is one with difficulties of identification as well as intense alienation from the self and its predecessors. Ergo we must return to the very root of the problem and target it through reform of the educational system. We need a modern yet Lebano-centric ideological implementation, instead of a traditional and implicitly Arabophobic one.

I ideological Alingualism & the Spectrum of Alienation at the Gates of Contemporary Lebanese Academia, Vicky Panossian, Understanding the Integration Scale in Lebanon

Vicky Panossian
While immersed in the contemporary culture of globalization, the adolescent is said to absorb the most prominent sociopolitical values at hand. Our educational curricula put Western principles and thought processes on an intellectual pedestal. Orientalism is no longer being dispersed as the West looking down on the Middle Easterner and considering them “primitive creatures,” but rather it’s about the Middle Easterner herself glorifying the unattainable western ideological schema. The latter may be due to capitalist purposes or based on the need to fit into the international picture; however, today’s Lebanese youth are trading their language, identity, and culture for this integration and are doing so because of their primary educational system. In the case of the Lebanese youth emerging from high schools and headed to academia, we are witnessing a surge of a generation that vilifies its language and limits itself to the constricted ideological offerings of western principles that contradict that of the local ones. The emerging intellectual is one with difficulties of identification and intense alienation from the self and its predecessors. Ergo we must return to the root of the problem and target it by reforming the educational system. We need a modern yet Lebano-centric ideological implementation instead of a traditional and implicitly Arabophobic one.

To watch and listen to the full presentations, click here
This panel was chaired by Hagop Yacoubian and included a symposium covering three presentations. All the presentations focused on the issue of science education in complex settings, focusing on learners with different abilities and other contexts where multiple languages are used for teaching and learning. The panel started with Sara Salloum who discussed textbooks as culturally supportive tool in the classroom and as a mediating tool for the teachers. Each of the presenters talked about a different aspect of what that entails. Saouma BouJaoude, from AUB, talked about the representation of 21st Century Skills and Islam in Science Textbooks in Arab Countries. BouJaoude presented a paper that was published in the International Journal of Science Education.

The study investigated how science textbooks prepare students for the 21st century and if and how science and religion are depicted in science textbooks in Arab countries where religion, especially Islam, plays a role in the lives of individuals and possibly in the understandings of science. Textbooks can be products of that have an important cultural mission with formative influence on the development of individuals and the cultural reproduction of society. Science textbooks of eight Arab countries were analyzed using a tool that included 11 questions focused on 21st century knowledge and skills and if and how Islam is presented in the textbooks. The analysis shows that textbooks of Arab countries included in this study have the potential to prepare students for the 21st century to some extent as indicated by the identified knowledge and skills emphasized in the book. However, in the six countries whose textbooks included Quranic verses, these textbooks play a mediating cultural role in encouraging students to think and act in a religious context in addition to equipping them with 21st century knowledge and skills. In summary knowledge and skills about environmental issues and information technology were presented in all the textbooks analysed. Thinking and problem-solving skills were presented in varying degrees in the textbooks analyzed. These results were clear in the results of TIMSS. The study also looked at reflective skills. Creativity and innovation were seldom found in the textbooks of the Arab countries included in the study. Autonomy and self-reflection were absent from all textbooks. In these textbooks Quranic verses were used to give legitimacy to the information. In conclusion, BouJaoude stated that the textbooks analysed have the potential to prepare students and give them 21st century skills, but they are expecting he students to think and act within a particular religious framing.

The second paper focused evaluating materials for highly able learners in science and mathematics Textbooks. The presentation was by Maya Antoun, Rayya Younes and Sara Salloum from University of Balamand. The presenters stated that results from TIMSS 2011 and 2015 show that only 1% of Lebanese students were able to perform at the Advanced International Benchmark level. Furthermore, whereas Lebanon has comparable percentages of students scoring at the Low International Benchmark level with other countries in the region, such countries have a higher percentage of students scoring at the Advanced International Benchmark. These results indicate that most able students may not be supported enough to perform at advanced levels. Since addressing diverse students’ needs is a complex issue, it is important to explore how highly able students are supported in terms of science and math textbooks as well as teacher capacity and perceptions. This can inform curricular reform on one hand and teachers’ professional development needs and classroom practices on the other. This research was based on qualitative methods, data sources such as textbook analysis and teacher interviews were used. An analytic framework was developed based on Tomlinson’s (2005) features of ‘quality curriculum and instruction for highly able students’ to guide textbook analysis. The researchers’ focus was on aspects within ‘appropriate pacing’ and ‘degree of challenge’ exhibited in science and mathematics textbooks. While the analysis illustrated an overall lack of consideration to the needs of highly able learners in Science and Math National curricula and textbooks, there was ample evidence of teacher participants’ desire to become more informed about such practices.
The third paper was by Sara Salloum, who focused on science textbooks and highlighted that textbooks are the only place where students were exposed to disciplinary knowledge. Using the social constructivist perspective, Salloum focused on the concept of Intertextuality within Science textbooks and how that supports for conceptual learning in multilingual settings. Salloum ascertained that textbooks are a major linguistic resource in the science classrooms. Since several EU, Middle Eastern and North African countries are using an international language as the language of learning and teaching in science (e.g., CLIL, in EU), it is of importance to analyze ways science textbooks support deep conceptual learning for second language learners. Salloum’s research aims to develop a multi-level framework for analysing science textbooks for dialogicity levels and affordances for science conceptual learning for second language learners. Her research explores perspectives of Lebanese science teachers on textbook affordances for promoting conceptual learning for second language learners. Dialogicity within textbooks was examined through intertextuality, which is the juxtaposition of different forms of text to support understanding.

The analytic framework of Mortimer and Scott (2003) was adapted for textual analysis of dialogicity and conceptual learning and to discern aspects. Salloum used a purposeful sampling approach to select from grade 8’s life and physical science textbook, which were analysed using the framework. Teacher interviews were conducted on role and features of textbooks in supporting conceptual learning and needs of language learners. The analyzed chapters displayed various intertextuality levels and content that support conceptual learning through juxtaposition and ensembles of semiotic systems. Three issues emerged from the analysis: (a) limited explicit real-life problem-solving, (b) over reliance on complex disciplinary vocabulary with little scaffolding for language learners, and (c) limited bridges between “Recounting events” (connections to everyday life) and student-formulated scientific explanations. Teachers’ perspectives shed practical implications and recommendation for addressing limitations of textbooks.

To watch and listen to the full symposium, [click here](#)
This panel was chaired by Scarlet Sarraf. All the presentations in the panel took place in Arabic. This panel included three presentations focusing on the hidden curriculum, and reform of curricula in post-colonial contexts. The panel started with a presentation from Mohammad Al Darabee, from the Palestinian Ministry of Education. Al Darabee focused in his presentation on the hidden curriculum aiming to answer three question: What is the hidden curriculum? How does it manifest in school textbooks? What are the teaching and learning skills needed to engage with the hidden curriculum? Al Darabee focused on the new Palestinian Mathematics textbooks and observed various teacher training workshops to reach his conclusions. Al Darabee highlighted the national values embedded in Mathematics textbooks presented either in text or graphs and photos used in the textbooks. He also talked about how the hidden curriculum is impacted by a number of elements such as cultural and social changes. One of the main themes that came out of this study was the role of teachers in reflecting on curricula, hence the formulation of the hidden curricula. Finally, Al Darabee concluded that it is important to be aware of the hidden curriculum and its relation to the written curriculum to be able to benefit the learners. It is also important, according to Al Darabee, to introduce the concept of the hidden curriculum in teacher professional development programs.

The second presentation was by Ali Ben Saad. Ben Saad talked about the experience of Tunisia in designing curricula based on theoretical norms and ideological backgrounds. The research aimed to highlight the Tunisian experience in terms of curriculum reform through analysing the limitations and interconnection between the requirements of educational theories and the trajectories of ideologies and how that reflects on political and social changes. The research highlighted the educational, political and ideological aspects and their impact on building and directing the curricula and how each of these aspects have limitations. The research concluded that the Tunisian experience has the potential to reflect other experience in other Arab countries in terms of curriculum reform. Also, that there is a clear and strong influence for ideology and its hegemony on the direction of curriculum reform which aims to formulate the society according to the dominant political powers. Arab curriculum reform experiences are struggling between global and regional models. Finally, Ben Saad stated that there is a question around the possibility of finding a middle ground between ideology and pedagogy in the Arab world.

The third presentation was by Fatima Louati. Louati talked about the reality of building curricula in Algeria, and how this process is tied to technical reform and ideologies. Louati stated that the Algerian education sector witnessed a number of stages and approaches to reform since the country gained independence from French colonisation. The aim of the reform processes was to change the curricula that negatively impacted the education system and create a system that will support the creation of a more contextualized curriculum. Louati ascertained that instead of considering the education system as a victim to conflicting ideologies, it can actually be a tool to direct these ideologies and rebuilding them. Louati also stated that the contradictions and conflicts that arise amongst the different stakeholders actually allow for the intrusion of external actors, and in the case of Algeria allow for the French-isation of the education system in the country.

In her research, Louati tackled a number of questions related to particular changes that took place within the process of creating the curricula since independence and how these changes were dealt with in light of ideological conflicts between the francophones and those who call for an Arab identity. In addition to that, there is a third group that calls for highlighting the Amazigh identity as a major political component. In light of this, Louati questions how all these factors impacted the education process for the learners and what impact did the foreign experts have.

To watch and listen to the full symposium, please click here.
The final panel of the first day of the conference was also chaired by Scarlet Sarraf, presentations were in Arabic. This panel focused on language teaching and learning within various country, socio-economic and disciplinary contexts.

The first presentation was by Fadia Hussein, who talked about learning Arabic by adopting an interdisciplinary curriculum in humanities. In her presentation, Hussein reflected on her research in a public school in Beirut. Hussein started with explaining the concept of interdisciplinarity, then she discussed the importance of the concept and its application. The research question was inspired by the issue of low attainment and low grades observed for students. The solution to this problem was discussed amongst various bodies and some solutions were presented, including: excluding grammar and complicated topics; reviewing the Arabic language curricula as a whole; linking the lessons to daily experiences. Based on this, the research question tackled the possibility of having an interdisciplinary approach to Arabic language teaching to improve students’ attainment and grades. The empirical research in the school showed that there is a need to restructure the Arabic language curricula as well as the methods of teaching, learning, and assessment. This is an interconnected system and any change should reflect on the other aspects.

Unfortunately, the two other speakers in this panel were unable to participate.

To watch and listen to the full presentations, click here.
Citizenship is a product of a healthy relationship on the level of the individual and the level of the collective. This leads to political agreement on the higher level. Abou Chakra talked about the model of Mobile schools, with the aim to reach the most vulnerable and marginalised. However, this model has challenges. The main challenge is that this type of school represent an old and new paradigm at the same time. Greeks for example used to utilize walking around cities to complete their knowledge. On the primary level, there are many complaints about having school walls (internal and external). We need to remove these walls and bring the school out to life so there will be an interaction of knowledge. The educational system that we have now, does not allow for that. To be able to reach the mobile school approach, we need to look at education with fresh eyes and perspectives. We need movement to explore. The challenge to that in many contexts is contradicting identities and separated localities. Academics need to ask if we have succeeded. The dire realities we are living show that academics and educational institutions have failed and the proof is the collapse of our communities. based on this analysis, what do we need to cross this bridge?

The relationship between pedagogy and ideology is in many cases contradictory, i.e. when ideology is the poison, pedagogy tries to be the antidote. However, we need both. Societies are unable to be neutral and free of ideologies. On the education level, we need to produce thought that embodies freedom and practices it. Responsible freedom is what citizenship is. Our project is a citizenship project in a state and not a homeland. We need the sense of belonging to turn the state/country to a homeland.

There was a friendship agreement between Lebanon and France before the independence of Lebanon. In this agreement, there is a mentioning of balanced development, establishment of local councils, financial independence and control over education. Striving for financial and budget decentralisation as well as education decentralisation has been a goal since that time until this very day. What we need is a curriculum that is related to needs and what can be turned into skills and competencies that are correlated and link the individual to the family, environment and community. What do we mean by: localities that lead to success in terms of citizenship? Why do we all need to go to school at 8 am? Why do we not consider the difficulties that face various students and groups that does not allow them to follow these rigid guidelines. Municipalities should have more responsibilities. This is a collective work and decision-making. We need to break the cycle of the traditional narrative and move towards knowledge that meet their realities and societies.

The final point that Abou Chakra said: school administrations, parents, students and teachers should keep in mind that curricula consider information acquirement is not based on the scholastic year but on the level of education (cycles). Considering the content of education, skills and competencies, the year is not our confine, we can play around time, and not the year, to push us to finish the content within the academic year regardless of the quality.

To watch and listen to the full presentation, click here
This panel was chaired by Anies Hroub and included three presentations that considered the school as the unit of analysis to examine issues related to environmental education and students’ and teachers’ leadership.

The first presentation was shared between Samar Bouzeineddine and Hanin Fuddah from the Modern University of Business and Sciences. Hanin started the presentation by stating that environmental problems have become challenging affecting the balance of the ecosystems on Earth. In Lebanon there are major environmental problems such as solid waste and water pollution, these have implications on future generations. Therefore, Environmental Education (EE) at schools should be a basic pillar in curriculum to enrich students’ ecological awareness and reach the environmental goal of SDGs. There are a number of components that need to be taken into account: Education about, through and for the environment. Context and teaching methodologies are also key. While environmental education was introduced into the Lebanese curriculum in 1997, the curriculum lacks contextualisation through active learning, where teachers connect to students’ authentic life experience through interdisciplinary strategies, and this is why this research is essential.

A new model of EE program was designed to educate school children about environmental issues and engage them in short and long terms solutions. The research conducted in a private school in Mount Lebanon aimed to describe how EE, that included a unit on Lebanon’s Pine Forests, was integrated into the school curriculum in intra and extra curricula in grade 10, and assisted its influence on students’ environmental knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior. It answered two research questions: 1. How is environmental education integrated in the curriculum of grade 10? 2. How does environmental education program including Lebanon’s Pine Forest unit influence grade 10 students’ knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior?

The research design included qualitative as well as experimental method, and proceeded as follow:
First, the pre assessment, students’ questionnaire was administered to all grade 10 students forty-five (27 males, 18 females) of different academic performance. Second: the integration of environmental education in formal and non - formal contexts. Third, in post assessment, students’ questionnaires were administered to all grade 10 students under the same conditions. The mean, frequency distribution percentage of responses were done using the software Excel. Then, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the principal, and a questionnaire was administered to seven grade 10 teachers of humanities and sciences in addition to analysis of documents collected from teachers’ lesson plans and students’ portfolios to cross check results. Data were analyzed, coded, and categorized. Validity, credibility, and reliability were established by utilizing triangulation and were later cross checked for similarities. Qualitative data from the principal interview, teacher’s questionnaire, and school’s documents showed that students learned about local environmental topics (Pine Forest) in grade 10 subjects. Quantitative results from students’ pre- and post-assessments showed that EE program had a significant impact. Students improved their environmental knowledge and skills and reinforced their positive attitudes and behavior. Findings suggested that further longitudinal studies are important to sustain the improvement of EE impact on students’ characters in all school cycles.

The second presentation was by Samar Zeitoun from the Lebanese University. In her research, Zeitoun aimed to answer two research questions: What are the characteristics of students’ leadership in Lebanese public schools? And what are the fundamental competencies to design a curriculum for students’ leadership in Lebanese public schools? In her research, Zeitoun conducted focus groups with students in a public school and analysed the data thematically. The study results showed that students’ leadership skills in the school is developed through various activities and experience. The time spent on engaging with these activities and experiences impacts the level of acquiring leadership
skills. There are external aspects that impact leadership skills for students such as interaction with peers, living away from home, enrolling in clubs and conducting presentations in the classroom. must envision shaping students’ personalities and developing students’ social responsibility.

The third presentation was by Paul Said from AUB. Similar to Zeitoun’s research, Said’s work focused on the issue of students’ leadership, but he conducted his research in a private school in Lebanon. The study is divided into three aspects: (1) identifying the perceptions of school principals and secondary students of student leadership identity, (2) identifying the factors and organizational conditions that contribute to the promotion of student leadership identity, and (3) building a grounded profile of student leadership identity through comparing school principals’ conceptions of student leadership with those of secondary students within the context of Lebanese Private Orthodox schools. Said mentioned that theoretical and empirical literature agree that students’ growth into leaders is essentially a personal learning experience that is fostered by outer organizational effects, among which is the school curriculum. It is therefore essential to have a curriculum that integrates all understandings on student leadership development within the academic bodies of knowledge as well as one that provides opportunities for practicing leadership skills and thus, making the leadership learning experience meaningful and impactful. Such curriculum must entail two dimensions: (1) a self-formation dimension that triggers students’ self-discovery and identification as leaders; and (2) a social transformation dimension that envisions equipping students to induce positive change within their communities. The research consisted of a multicase study conducted in three selected Lebanese Private Orthodox schools. It employed a qualitative research design along with the grounded theory methodology. Data was collected through individual interviews with the school principals and focus groups with students in each of the selected cases. The data was analyzed and coded in order to extract the categories. The findings of the study revealed that the perceived dimensions of a curriculum for student leadership development rely on: (a) connecting academic content to real life; (b) supporting students’ ethical and moral development; and (c) building students’ personalities. These findings inform curriculum reform initiatives by suggesting that a facilitative leadership-learning curriculum must envision shaping students’ personalities as well as developing students’ social responsibilities.

“Said mentioned that the research results suggested that any attempt to introduce leadership learning within our Lebanese curriculum must enable student voice, facilitate service-learning, and, most importantly, stem from the empowerment needs of our youth to guarantee their active involvement and leadership developmental efficacy.”

To watch & listen to the full presentations, [click here](#)
This panel that focused on social sciences curricula included experiences from Iraq, Lebanon and Morocco. The panel was chaired by Nayla Hamadeh.

The first presentation was by Fadhil Ibrahim who researched the extent to which citizenship concepts are integrated into Islamic education textbooks in Iraq. In his research Ibrahim asked three questions: 1. What are the citizenship concepts that are agreed upon by literature and curriculum designers that are suitable to be included in Islamic secondary education textbooks? 2. To what extent are these concepts integrated in these textbooks? 3. Were these concepts distributed correctly in the Islamic education textbooks?. Through textbook analysis, Ibrahim concluded that: the most concepts that were mentioned and included in the textbooks were coexistence, belonging and rights. Ibrahim suggested that these concepts need to be better distributed throughout the textbooks and included in the primary Islamic education textbooks as well.

The second presentation in the panel was by Dolly Sarraf from the Lebenses University who focused in her research on gender awareness in high school sociology classes. Sarraf’s research aimed to identify gender issues included in secondary level education material, highlighting weaknesses, and suggesting amendments. The was built on content analysis which was applied to three textbooks used for high school students in Lebanon. Additionally, Sarraf conducted an opinion poll with a sample of high school students to measure their knowledge of gender issues. Sarraf concluded that the blatant gender stereotypes and discrimination against women included in the textbooks have over the years negatively reflected on women’s political and social participation in Lebanon. For that, there is an imminent need to change the curriculum and school textbooks to positively promote equality in the society.

The third presentation was by Bassel Akar from Notre Dame University, Louaize. Akar’s presentation shed light on the role of teachers as agents of change particularly in conflict contexts. Akar reflected on stories of citizenship and history education teachers who participated in reform activities initiated by civil society or their school. These teachers received professional development support to critically review and develop their teaching materials and classroom approaches. His research over a decade led him to five main conclusions regarding good practices: teachers unit plans around sensitive historical moments and events to be shared with a public; teachers passing their experience to newly appointed history teachers (experience sharing); enhancing the collaboration between non-government organizations such as LAU, MEHE and CERD; creating a new public discourse to challenge prevailing ideas regarding a unified historical narrative; finally Akar stated that the experience with history teachers has been transferred to a wider teachers’ cohort, particularly citizenship education teachers. This work started early this year and aims to advance new knowledge in the field of citizenship inside classrooms. Akar concluded by stating that even for the most contested of educational programs a new theory of change is required, where teachers’ views are included and where teachers exercise humility as agents of sustainable change through grassroots professional movements.
The fourth and final presentation of this panel was by Aziz Ghnym who talked about the use of digital resources in teaching philosophy in Morocco. Ghnym aimed to highlight the realities and challenges to using digital resources to enhance and support the teaching and learning of philosophy for secondary level at a particular school in Tenzit/Morocco. He also discussed the solutions and techniques that teachers use to overcome the challenges they face and hinders the use of digital technology. Ghnym conducted interviews with philosophy teachers and based on these interviews he reached the following conclusions:

“It is necessary to focus on activating the ability of teachers to use participatory approaches with the students and differentiated teaching and learning. Teachers should also conduct seminars and create networks. Nonetheless the availability of electricity and internet connection is vital to enhance the success of participatory and active teaching and learning.”

Aziz Ghnym, Morocco

To watch & listen to the full presentations, click here
Panel (7): General Curriculum

This panel was chaired by Suzanne Abou Rjeily and included three presentations issues related to curriculum development, inclusion and language policies.

Alfat Mahmoud from the Tunisian ministry of education started the panel with her presentation on theories and ideologies that influence the development of School Curricula. Mahmoud aimed to give an overview of the pedagogical and epistemological groundings for curriculum reform in Tunisia and how that reflected on education programs and programming. Mahmoud utilized various policy and legal documents related to curriculum reform in Tunisia such as the guiding law, executive plan and the sectoral strategic plan. She analyzed these documents and concluded that each reform process aimed to mend the problems and gaps that occurred in the previous reform process. Each educational reform process was impacted and influenced by the ideologies and directions of the ruling party.

The second presentation was by Siham Harb from the Lebanese University who talked about Language Policies, both explicit and implicit, within the Lebanese curricula and their relationship with identity and the future. Harb located her research topic within global, regional and local dynamics. She stated that our world is facing multiple conflicts where language and identity are key factors, where they might actually be the reason behind calls for separation and independence. In the Arabi world, while governments insist that Arabic is the national language, we witness that this language is taking a back seat when it comes to education, the economy, media and other sectors. In light of this context and in light of the reality of the Arabic language in Lebanon and other Arab countries, Harb identified the importance of examining language policy in relation to curricula in Lebanon as a key factor to building a national identity. Hence, Harb’s research aimed to identity and follow the trajectory of this policy and how it reflected in the overall objectives of educational material, in addition to the time given to teaching and learning Arabic and its weight in national examinations. Harb's research adopted a descriptive approach as well as a qualitative method where the discourse of policy makers are being analyzed. Based on her research, Harb reached to a number of conclusions: There is language insecurity that is based on the fear of the future; that is, the problem is an issue of civilization not a problem of the language. In terms of curricula, there is an equal distribution in terms of lessons between Arabic and other languages, and STEM subjects are taught in foreign languages. Only teaching humanities in Arabic, reflects negatively on Arabic as a language in the perception of the learners. Introducing foreign languages as more important than Arabic is perceived as key to accessing the job market. Finally, the problem is not the language but an issue of knowledge and knowing.

The final presentation was a video recording of Mozynah Nawfal who critically analyzed diversity and inclusion in the field of education. Nawfal started with a question ‘how not to talk about diversity?’.

She stated that this is a critique of what is happening, leading to possible solutions through her research. Nawfal highlighted the importance of the process, starting with understanding what we mean by diversity, how we define it in various contexts, as well as understanding the motive behind and the goal why we are talking about and including issues of diversity. A final step in this process is to bring diversity alive, asking ourselves how the big ideas are translated in particular contexts and the implementation of this concept. Nawfal's research highlighted the importance of not only identifying theories behind the concept of diversity and implementing them, but also identify the particularities of each context and exchange the experience and knowledge around this topic.

To watch and listen to the full presentations, click here
This panel was chaired by Hagop Yacoubian and included four presentations ranging from the use of technology to language policies within mathematics and science curricula in Algeria and Lebanon.

The first presentation was by Rana Aboul Hosn. Her presentation and research answered questions related to the use of representation to assist educators and learners within the Lebanese mathematics curricula on the middle school level. Aboul Hosn reported the results of an analysis of the Lebanese math curriculum and textbook for grade 8, in terms of the importance and functions that they attribute to representations. Her research method was based on analysing representations included in the Lebanese curriculum document and ‘Proportionality’ and ‘Proportional Reasoning’ unit in the textbooks at the middle school level, with a particular consideration to: objectives, context, type of representation, use in problem solving, function with respect to problem solving and to that of proportional reasoning. Her research concluded that the Lebanese math curriculum disregards the use of representations as tools for thinking and problem solving. The representations that are used in the current grade 7 and grade 8 textbooks are used to express mathematical information in a way that helps detecting proportional sequences, ignoring their effective role as tools for problem solving. Aboul Hosn stated that it is important to note that the presented results are part of a wider quasi-experimental research conducted to examine, as well, the effectiveness of using a representation-based approach in improving grade 8 students’ problem-solving abilities.

The second presentation was by Sarah Chellali from Algeria, who also talked about Mathematics education but with the focus on the importance of integrating technology into teaching and learning of Mathematics. Chellali’s research was conducted with mathematics teachers in various high-schools in the city of Laghouat. Her research was based on a quantitative approach where she collected the data based on a survey. The results of the data analysis showed that teachers of mathematics in these schools are interested in using technology which in their opinion enhances learning and engagement of the students. However, this interest is not enough as teachers are not trained to use technology as a tool for education. Teachers face many challenges when using technology in the classroom. These challenges include: the lack of interest of the institutions to invest in technology, the geographical location of the city and the school where there is lack of infrastructure and resources, the load of work that hinder the teachers’ ability to invest in their skills development as well as the lack of awareness in the importance of using technology for education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

‘Problem solving’ is recommended as a learning approach. Students’ understanding should be self-generated instead of imposed by a teacher or textbook.

Awaiting a complete reconstruction of the Lebanese mathematics curriculum and textbooks, after a long period of stagnation, teachers are advised to properly include and implement multiple representations in their approaches.

The Lebanese authorities are advised to collaborate with education specialists in order to integrate representations in both curricula and textbooks, not only as a ‘communication’ tool but also as a ‘problem solving’ tool.

Integrating Representations as Tools for Thinking & Problem Solving,
Rana Aboul Hosn & Iman Gsta
The third presentation was by Manal Kiwan from the Lebanese university. Kiwan focused in her presentation on the coherence of mathematical terminology and Lebanese mathematics curriculum objectives. Her research included terminologies such as ‘variable’ and ‘unknowns’ used in the textbook. Kiwan put these terms in their historical context and how the change in conceptualisation of these terms reflected on the teaching of mathematics. Her main question was if the Lebanese mathematics textbooks allowed students to understand these complex concepts.

“His research showed that the concepts and terms variables and unknowns’ are used in various manners in the textbooks for the different levels (grades 7-9) with no explanation, which leads to misconceptions.”

This confusion is exacerbated as the use of these terms is also different in the French and English textbooks. To understand the impact of this incoherence, Kiwan conducted qualitative research using semi-structured interviews with the authors of the textbooks. The results of the research show that there is an ambiguous understanding of these terms and concepts even amongst the authors; there is also a random implementation of the terms in the various textbooks. These issues lead to lack of understanding of these terms and concepts amongst the students which also create misconceptions and hinder the process of learning.

The fourth and final presentation of this panel was by Janet Jabbour, also from the Lebanese University. Jabbour’s research focused on using technology in social sciences particularly for high school students in the north of Lebanon. The research questions that Jabbour presented included the following: What is the reality in terms of technology use in higher education, particularly for social sciences? To what extent is technology available in public high schools? How do social sciences teachers use technology in their training? How does the curriculum engage with the needs and changing social reality in an increasingly digitised world?. Jabbour compared the results found in public schools with randomly selected private schools and concluded that the majority of the teachers are aware of the importance of using technology in their teaching strategies and techniques, however in reality the level of use of technology is low and that is due to the lack of support from the public institutions as well as lack of teacher professional development opportunities.

To watch and listen to the full presentations, click here
This panel was chaired by Maha Shuayb and included four presentations focusing on science education in Lebanon, Palestine and Canada.

The first presentation was by Hanadi Chatila and Nadeen Fayad from the Lebanese University. Their research focused on investigating creativity in Lebanese science curriculum. They started by stating that creativity becomes crucial in modern societies, and this requires new ideas to solve problems. Creativity has the potential to solve a range of social, political, and economic problems. Based on this, their research talked about preparing young people for an unknowable future, equipping them with the skills to face uncertainty, generate new ideas, approach challenges with an enquiring mind and all this within a global context through creativity. They mentioned that creativity is currently included in the sustainable development agenda and considered as a renewable resource and cornerstone that develops and sustains vibrant economies. In addition, creativity is included in the 21st century skills; therefore, fostering creative thinking has become a global interest and one major goal of education, including science education. Chatila and Fayad stated that their work on this research project is ongoing, and through it they aim to investigate creativity in Lebanese science curriculum. They have adopted a qualitative approach and aimed to investigate the extent to which creativity is present in 1. the general and specific objectives of the Lebanese Science curriculum, 2. the National Science textbooks from grade one to grade 12, 3. official exams in grades 9 and 12. For this research project, they develop an original framework to detect the presence of creativity implicitly and explicitly. Their research concluded that creativity is a multidimensional concept, and while there is intention for it to be included in the Lebanese science curricula, in reality this is lacking.

The second presentation was by Nazek Safsouf and Hagop Yacoubian. Their research examined diversity of scientific methods in Lebanese elementary science textbooks. They stated that the representation of diverse scientific methods is important for enhancing students’ scientific literacy and continued to highlight that the Lebanese science curriculum targets the development of various components of scientific literacy. In their research, they used the national textbooks developed by the Lebanese Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD), which are written based on the Lebanese science curriculum and are used by public and some private schools in the country. Textbooks are pivotal tools and primary resources for teachers and students. Safsouf and Yacoubian used an analytical framework based on how scientific methods were described in the introduction sections of the textbooks, in the examples provided throughout the lessons, and in all the activities found in the textbooks. Their analysis showed that the introduction sections of grades 1, 2, 3, and 4 textbooks promoted a broad view of scientific methodology, where the authors had communicated the idea that scientists use different ways to reach scientific conclusions, whereas description of scientific methods was absent in grade 5 and 6 textbooks. Unlike the portrayal of diversity of scientific methods in the introduction sections, the examples provided in the grade 2 and 4 textbooks relied dominantly on experiments. In contrast, grades 3 and 6 textbooks portrayed various non-experimental methods to reach scientific conclusions. Additionally, implicit, non-experimental activities were dominating in all the six textbooks, meaning that they encouraged students to do science and reach scientific conclusions using nonexperimental methods, without explicitly relating those methods to how scientists do their work. In light of the findings, the paper highlights the particularities of the Lebanese textbooks, in relation to other contexts regarding messages that they provide to students about how to do science. In their recommendations, the authors highlighted how diversity of scientific methods could be portrayed and how the alignment of this diversity could be maintained throughout the textbooks. The third presentation was by Mahmoud Ramadan, who talked about integrating 21st century skills in grade 4 Science textbooks and the level of acquirement of these skills by teacher in Ramallah.
This research was conducted by Ramadan and his supervisee Karima Ali. Additionally, it aimed to shed light on the level to which teachers possess these skills in schools in Ramallah and Al-Bireh governorate. The researchers aimed to identify the effect of some variables such as gender, type of school, years of service and specialization of the teachers. A descriptive approach was utilized in this research. The researchers used a questionnaire, which was distributed to a number of teachers. The questionnaire covered the following topics: learning and innovation skills, information technology and media skills, life and profession skills.

The researchers found that the skills of the 21st century were generally available in the science textbook for grade 4 with a percentage that reached 30.90%. As for science teachers, the data showed that they possessed the skills of the 21st century with a percentage of 81.79% regarding teachers’ responses to all the items in all fields. In regards to the ranking of fields, life and profession skills ranked first, followed by learning and innovation skills. The field of information technology and media ranked third. In light of these results, the researchers recommended the need to develop criteria for building the science curriculum for grade 4, which systematically includes the skills of the 21st century to achieve integration, focusing on including information technology skills and media in the textbook because of their importance in relation to other skills.
The final presentation was by Sara Halawany, her research was on the level of higher education, unlike previous presentations. She introduced the concept of be-longings with STEM Education in a College Microbiology Lab and how that can be shifted. Halawani stated that STEM education is believed to be complicit with a neoliberal machine of economic production, selecting the few who will become scientists and engineers while perpetuating ‘rituals of exclusion’ that dismiss other ways of knowing and often deny opportunities for exploring wider problematic impacts of science and technology on societies and environments. Halawani used an ethnographic approach in her research to examine how desires inside a microbiology lab at a community college in Toronto are shaped/interrupted amongst future bio-technicians. She said that desires are examined through notions of ‘be-longings,’ understood as affective forces that may orient students towards what is ‘good’ and desirable vis-à-vis STEM. Be-longing interrupts neutrality and takes for granted desires to make students belong to STEM fields and is, rather, concerned (hence the hyphen) with affective politics that shape how and what we are made to desire (value), and could be made to desire within science education. Affect and desires remain underexplored in science education, symptomatic of science education practices that maintain distinctions between mind and body, portraying science as disembodied and emotion-free practices. In the context of her work, she collected data such as audio and video recordings of most lab interactions (6 hours/week, over 11 weeks), interviews with students and their instructor, field notes and classroom artefacts. Constructivist grounded theory was used to analyze her data for emerging codes and themes. Halawani’s analyses revealed that college students embody technical efficiency, objectivity, and obedient dispositions, often highly valued (desired) by STEM industries.

On the other side, she noted disruptions in students’ belongings with introduction of an unconventional pedagogical approach, in which the instructor was particularly eager to get his students to see ‘the bigger picture behind science and technology beyond cause-effect relationships’. STEPWISE involves connecting issues of science and technology with societies and environments (STSE education, a main stated goal in Canadian science curricula). The instructor adapted STEPWISE to shed light on: 1) powerful stakeholders related to fields of science and technology and 2) ways media manufacture desires leading to excessive consumption behaviours of science and technology products associated with harms on societies and environments. Students reacted to the STEPWISE framework by mentioning how it is ‘new’, ‘different from other classes’, ‘unexpected’. Halawani’s research suggested that be-longing could be used as a curricular response to map how desire works both as a stabilizing force serving desires of powerful groups, but also its transformative potentials in orienting pedagogical bodies away from instrumentalism in higher education towards longing for more just and equitable ways of being with others (humans and environments).
This final panel of the second day of the conference was chaired by Rima Bahous and included two presentations. The first presentation was by May Abdul Ghaffar, Megan Khairallah and Sara Salloum from University of Balamand. Their research was about the effects of co-constructed rubrics on Lebanese second language (English) learners' writing skills and attitudes. Their research was in a one middle school as their case study. The researchers stated that students' proficiency in English Language is becoming increasingly important in a globalised age. Thus, it is highly important to generate and study aspects that contribute to developing English Language writing skills, especially for middle learners, who usually exhibit various challenges in developing high writing competency. This study explored the effectiveness of co-constructed rubrics on students' writing competency; the influence of co-constructed rubrics on students' attitude towards writing; and the implications of writing curricula for L2 students. The research questions addressed included the following: How do co-constructed rubrics impact middle L2 students' writing skills and attitudes towards writing? What are teachers’ and students’ perceptions on the effectiveness of the co-constructed rubrics? How does the process of co-constructing and using the rubrics affect classroom interactions and writing curricula for L2 students?

The researchers based their analysis on constructivist and sociocultural learning theories. Moreover, the intervention, conduced with a grade 8 class, involved changes in the students' writing process, through purposefully integrating opportunities for discussion and interactive brainstorming and feedback. A mixed methods approach was used. Data sources comprised of classroom observations, pre and post-writing tests and a pre and post-writing attitude questionnaire for the intervention and comparison groups, and a pre and post-teacher and student interviews. The results revealed that the average of the intervention class increased significantly in the post writing test, while the average of the comparison group did not. Moreover, questionnaire data showed enhanced students' attitudes towards writing in the intervention class. Class observations noted positive changes in class dynamics with higher levels of student interaction and engagement. Both the English Language teacher and students reported that co-constructing rubrics together and utilising them to revise and assess writing were highly effective. The teacher was very satisfied with the improvement her students exhibited over the two-month period.

“Generating and using co-constructed rubrics demonstrated that writing is a skill that can be taught effectively and can be a solution for teaching and assessing writing”

especially that writing is declared as problematic and challenging. The researchers concluded that the co-construction and use of writing rubrics enhanced students’ writing performance, positively influenced students’ attitudes and perceptions towards writing, increased students’ interaction and active role in the classroom, and reflected positively on the whole teaching, learning, and assessment process. Implications around curriculum planning and teacher professional development on co-construction and use of writing rubrics as assessment of and for learning were discussed in light of findings.
The second presentation was by Anke Al-Bataineh who talked about the creation of a new curriculum for Western Armenian language instruction. In her presentation, she questioned what is linguistically and culturally sustaining?

Al-Bataineh started her presentation with positioning the importance of Lebanon for the Armenian diaspora and what that means in terms of Armenian language teaching and learning. She said that the Lebanese Armenian community has long operated under the assumption that Western Armenian language is the most vital in Lebanon because Lebanese Armenian schools are the most effective at perpetuating its use and transmission. The assumption led to private Armenian schools around the world to hire Lebanese and Syrian Armenian teachers to teach the language. The disappointing results of this model outside of the Middle East present the question: Are these assumptions accurate? Is the model of curriculum and instruction that prevails in Lebanese Armenian schools the most effective one, one that inspires the transmission and maintenance of the language and culture in other diaspora contexts? And further, is this model the most effective one for the Lebanese context?

Based on research into language vitality, student transnational identity, and education for minority students, a program has been designed to train teachers of Western Armenian language in new approaches, which has led to the creation of a website with innovative curricular resources. The program takes as its starting point that student-centered, highly interactive learning will be most effective in motivating students to learn and use the language, and will empower students to develop positive, transnational Armenian identities. The contrast between this approach and the participating teachers’ own academic experiences and training creates significant challenges for adopting new approaches, as do the differences between their own processes of identity formation - generally growing up before the internet and the destabilization of the Syrian-Armenian community- and those of their students. The program seeks to align with and augment elements of traditional language teaching/transmission in Lebanon, such as the use of the arts, linguistic immersion, and community integration, while introducing new approaches to align with the increasingly Western cultural landscape of young Armenians, project-based learning, translanguaging, writer’s workshops, and international connections through social media. Both the program and the challenges it has encountered are potential models for the teaching of other languages, and particularly for minority and non-Western languages. The experiences of the program frame the steps needed to introduce student-centered pedagogy more widely in the Arab world, as well as questions as to if and how this approach can and should be applied to the social, cultural and political context of the Western Armenian community in the Middle East.

To watch and listen to the full panel, click here.
The first panel of the third day was under the overall title of general curriculum. Just like this conference, panel (11) exemplified diversity and richness. The first presentation was by Reem Hassan reflecting on her experience and work in Qatar in relation to theories and trends in developing curricula. Hassan started with explaining that preschool is a space for socialization and development that prepares children for schooling. Her mission which started in 2015 was to change the program to meet accreditation recommendations and implement child-centered class work. This posed some challenges. These challenges pushed her team to design a participatory curriculum demonstrating more commitment on the part of the students in order to make them actors in their learning with the skills needed for schooling. Hassan’s research question was: What are the curricular approaches capable of meeting the needs of students in preschool in a Lebanese environment abroad?

To answer this question the research team used a mixed methods approach centered on the child, his/her environment, personality, experience and socio-emotional development. Then, they opted for the skills-based approach promoting the development of the capacities of the child. They also adopted the integrative pedagogical approach emphasizing the interactive socio-constructivism to promote the construction of knowledge by learners. In addition, they relied on the theory of interdependence or contingency considered by Saussois (2012) This interdisciplinary approach called for project-based learning around which all disciplines revolve. Hassan’s research lasted three years, at the start, they noticed resistance of the teachers, so they engaged through a culture of reflection. They introduced the desired change in an organizational learning context with the support of specialised training. They also created an intrapreneurial culture through the curricular approaches employed which have fostered innovation and the development of teachers’ ideas.

The second presentation was by Violla Makhzoum who discussed the role of secondary education in the acquirement of the 21st century skills for students. Makhzoum stated that these skills include critical thinking and problem solving. The research followed a descriptive approach. Makhzoum started with describing the phenomenon she studied, gathering accurate information about it and describing it quantitatively and qualitatively, in addition to choosing the intentional sample to complete the field study, which included six private schools in Beirut region. The data was generated through the use of a questionnaire. The research concluded that it is essential for educators to use various teaching methods as well as possess the skills that they would like to convey to learners. The focus of this research was on the skills of critical thinking and problem solving due to the specificity of these skills and their positive impact on the life of the educators and the students.

To watch and listen to the full panel, click here
This panel included diverse topics focusing on gender integration and conceptualisation within the curricula, competencies based education (CPE) for learners with special needs and education for displaced populations in the time of conflict. The first presentation was by Patricia Azoury. Her presentation focused on the impact of competency-based education on the academic pathways of students with special needs. Azoury’s research was based on action research and highlighted new ways and methods for teaching and learning. The research question was: To what extent is the implementation of the CPE by the teacher of French language in terms of written language improve the performance of the learners. The results of the research revealed that there is a high importance for teacher training to allow students to be more engaged. Students under the CPE model make the rules, are more aware how the French language works and have a better understanding of the topics covered in other disciplines (mathematics-science). The training provided for the teachers as part of the action research acted as a leitmotif among teachers as well as students. The training roots resilience for teachers and allows a large number of students to develop academic skills.

The second presentation was by Mira Alameddin from the University of Arts and Sciences in Lebanon. In her presentation Alameddin discussed addressing feminist and gender issues in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. Alameddin stated that incidents of harassment and attacks against women globally can be attributed to the lack of inclusion and presence of gender issues and raising awareness against discrimination in the educational sector. Much has been written on sexism since the late 1970s. Since the 1990s, the use of sociopolitical issues, including gender and sexuality issues, have been discussed in ESL. There is inherent male bias in some textbook which can have different repercussions for male versus female students. Moreover, schools make it hard for females to achieve and be self-confident because of stereotypes and the ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’. In the case of Lebanon, to establish equity, gender and diversity, the problem of sexism has to be addressed and solved. Educators in Lebanon and around the world have been divided into two camps, the first believes that we should not address sociopolitical issues in language classes as that would be a form of indoctrination, and that language teaching should only focus on grammar, vocabulary, etc. The second group believe that we should address these issues, as ESL teachers have ‘social’ and ‘moral’ role. Alameddin believes teaching sociopolitical issues should not be criticized as indoctrination. Critical and feminist teaching are both needed and appropriate in ESL classes as that can raise the consciousness of all students toward equality and social justice.

The third presenter was Massa Mufti, who reflected on her experience from the perspective of the NGO sector, which is different from the experiences presented earlier by academics, policy makers and researchers. In her presentation, Mufti aimed to shed light on quality education at times of conflict, and how educators and practitioners can move from response to pedagogy. Mufti started with highlighting the problem of Syrian children dropping out of school in Lebanon.

“Many reasons affected the drop out from the education system including harsh regulations to obtain legal residency, child labor, high cost of transportation and lack of spaces in public schools, in addition to bullying and harassment by other students, safety concerns, classes taught in unfamiliar languages, such as English and French.”

Massa Mufti
Mufti argued that one of the key determinants for low enrollment amongst refugee children and lack of commitment to education in the context of crisis and conflict is the poor quality of education they receive and not merely related to the barriers to access. The methodology of study relied on three steps: First, to review the local context and policy process in which Syrian refugees have access to public education; second, to conduct an extensive literature review and analyze most recent reports issued by national, international and UN agencies on the outcomes of the Education Response to Syria’s humanitarian crisis; third, to draw results from qualitative semi-structured interviews with key participants to assess quality education which affect refugee children’s retention and learning. The findings of the study demonstrated the extent to which education response as defined by host and donor governments in the context of crisis and conflict can contribute to the growing inequality, poverty and subjugation of vulnerable and refugee children in the absence of a holistic pedagogy that addresses the specific needs, challenges, and aspirations of highly vulnerable communities. Mufti concluded by raising further questions on the need for re-thinking the curriculum for refugee education in the Arab region and re-imagining an education for the unknowable future.

To watch and listen to the full panel, click here.

Panel (13): Human Rights Education

This panel was chaired by Nayla Hamadeh and included issues related to human rights education, oral history, linguistics and geography. The first presentation was by Josiane Azar. Her research aimed to answer the question: How can the geography curriculum in the elementary stage of basic education in Lebanon keep pace with rapid global changes?

To answer this question, Azar used a descriptive and analytical approach to engage with the four elements of the geography curriculum (objectives, content, activities, and evaluation). She conducted a survey with teachers and learners in a number of schools in Mount Lebanon Governorate. Based on her research, Azar concluded that the reality of education in Lebanon, especially “geography education,” indicates that we are in an educational crisis. The gap that exists between our official curricula, and global changes is widening day by day, and to get out of this problem the social, cultural, and political foundations of the curriculum must be addressed. Getting out of this reality is possible, and the school is the institution that should bear its full responsibility in contributing to building a good and active citizen for the country and community. Schools should produce citizens who are committed to human values, able to solve problems and base their decisions and plans on scientific thinking.

The second presentation was by Mai Abu Moghli whose research examined the content of the Palestinian civics curriculum and how it is understood and perceived by teachers and students in the Occupied West Bank. The civics curriculum was chosen for this research as it is human rights heavy, and human rights education (HRE) is inherently revolutionary: If implemented effectively. It has the potential to generate social opposition, alongside rising demands for justice and accountability. Within the Palestinian context, HRE is key to linking education to the struggle, not only against the colonial occupation, but also for political and social change and reclaiming a narrative dictated for generations by various occupying powers, and currently dictated by a ruling body that assumes building of a state under colonialism. Abu Moghli’s research questions led her to the conclusion that HRE, embedded in the civics education curricula, is flattened, decontextualised, and depoliticised to serve the interests of the ruling party. Thus, this creates an illusion of a state under colonialism that perpetuates oppressive socio-cultural practices and structures and implements donor agendas. She asked: What are perceptions of teachers and students on human rights in general and HRE in particular in selected Palestinian Authority schools in the Occupied West Bank? To what extent does HRE inform students’ engagement in social and/or political activism in the Occupied West Bank?
The third presentation was by Saliha Sebgag who talked about competencies and language education. Sebgag stated with stating the aims and objectives of primary education in Algeria, then moved to explaining the aims and objectives of Arabic language education. Sebgag explained how the reform of the curricula in Algeria has moved from the goals-oriented approach to competencies approach. This reform took place in 2003. Hence, her research aims to assess the impact of the competencies approach on the quality of education of Arabic language for students in primary education. Sebgag research was based on curriculum analysis, considering reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. Through her research she concluded that acquisition of language is a priority, but there is a need to ask how to invest to reach this goal.

“There is a need to encourage participation of learner and show the unique characters of each one. There is a need to move from knowledge to performance, linking theories to activities and finally the adoption of the learning based on competencies.”

Saliha Sebgag

The final presentation was by Maria K. Georgiou. In her research she aimed to differentiate between disciplinary history and memory, questioning if oral history has a place in school curriculum. Georgiou stated that in the recent past there has been growing interest in memory and oral studies both from NGOs and institutions as well as in academic research. Yet, memory studies and oral history remain weakly institutionalized in school. Georgiou’s research builds on Rusen (2005) as taken on by the English literature (Chapman, 2009; Lee, 2004; Megill, 1994) and Seixas’ (2016). She maintains that, although memory and history do have different epistemologies, they can be combined. She conducted a qualitative exploratory research exploring 17-18-year-old Greek-Cypriot students’ ideas about historical accounts, a British meta-concept which has been used around the globe in researching students’ historical thinking, and one that connotes differing interpretations about the same historical event. Reflecting on her data, she argued that memory and oral should not be discarded, they should be studied on informal history education. This is because students often come into classrooms with unofficial material from the practical past such as eye-witnessing and first-hand experience all around the world. As students’ non-disciplinary ideas might impede the development of powerful historical understanding these ideas must be addressed. Furthermore, as meaning-making is always social, especially in contexts where the past is very much alive, such as in Lebanon, meaningful history teaching and learning cannot take place without taking into account students’ reference context. Hence, being dissimilar but not opposed, history and memory should be combined. Georgiou concludes that the function of memory should be re-evaluated in history teaching, and that oral history should be actively used in the classroom.

To watch and listen to the full panel, [click here](#)
This panel was chaired by Maha Shuayb and included three presentations. The first presentation was by Sarah Dryden-Peterson. She used the example of history education in South Africa to exemplify how pasts, presents and future are and can be connected and how that reflects on teaching and inequalities within education. She started her presentation by giving quotes from teachers and students in South Africa and how the history of Apartheid is presented/ or not in the education system. Dryden-Peterson talked about current problems in the community that hinder access to education and jeopardises quality education and safety of the students and how that is linked to underlying causes. She also said that the situation between 1998-2019 shaped the markers of success for teachers and students. In 2019, teachers focused on the success of individual students which in turn created a collective imagination of individualised success, while in 1998 education was a collective struggle. While teachers in the two eras realised their role for change, they considered and acted on different mechanisms.

The second presentation was by Martin Porter. Porter talked about UNESCO’S memory of the world project for the world’s schools and the national educational curricula: The Case of Lebanon. He asked how is it possible to use UNESCO’s Memory of the World International Register in the teaching of History in Lebanese schools? How can the Lebanese History curriculum transcend its nationalistic'Arab world' framework to become a basis for a global dialogue and the creation of a common culture of universal memories and histories? Finally he asked what would the narrative of a global ‘universal history’ programme look like in Lebanon and in the world more generally, and how would it relate to more traditional nationalistic narratives implicit in Lebanese History curricula?. In 2005, the commemorative stela of Nahr el-Kalb, Mount Lebanon, alongside the famous sarcophagus of Ahiram, were nominated by the Lebanese National UNESCO Memory of the World Committee and officially inscribed on the UNESCO MoW international register.

These items have now become the focus of UNESCO Memory of the World sub-Committee on Education and Research’s Working Group for Schools (Mow SCEaR WGS). The aim of the WGS is to have the world’s school children actively engage with the contents of UNESCO’s Memory of the World through the creation and provision of a series of inter-related pedagogical packages for school teachers and school children around the world based on the archives inscribed on UNESCO’s MoW international register as well as UNESCO’s World Heritage Programme (Edmondson et al. 2019). Notwithstanding considerable logistical and political obstacles, the first batch of school History lessons in this international experiment in global memory and school education, which are currently ‘at press’ includes two units based on these two aforementioned famous Lebanese archives. In his presentation, Porter outlined the aim of the MoW SCEAR Working Group for School’s pioneering project – the creation of a global dialogue around a common culture of universal memories. In addressing the issue of national curriculum reform, he focused on the History Curriculum. He also showed how these famous Lebanese ‘memories’ have been conceived and articulated in these innovative lessons plans with a view to presenting them to both the Lebanese and the global community at large, with a view to providing not only ‘content’ but also developing children’s conceptual, critical and independent thinking. Porter argued that just as any global or globally oriented curriculum needs to have a firm recognised basis in the Lebanese curriculum, any plans to reform the content of the curriculum should not only be rethought in terms of Lebanon and its relationship to the Arab World but also
the entire world and, ultimately, to a future global curriculum and future global citizens. He also argued that one way of doing this is to use material drawn from the internationally recognised UNESCO’s MoW international register, combine it with a notion of 'universal history' and large helping of imagination, innovative pedagogical approaches and a programmatic strategy.

Finally, in this panel there was a joint presentation by Wissam Abdel Samad, Zeina Dbouk, Nancy Karout, Tarek Khaled, Linaa Jibai and Ghyda Barada who presented their work at Lycée Célestin Freinet. The team reflected on their research which they entitled: The School Of Life. They started their presentation with the idea that they are a group of educators who dared to redefine school, with re-imagining the role of teachers, administration, learners and parents and the interaction between them. The team’s work was based on Freirean theory and methodology and stated that the aim of their transformative action research is to conceptualize, develop, implement and evaluate an interdisciplinary ‘Critical Inquiry Based Education’ (CIBE) curriculum that meets the students’ personal, social, and cultural needs through an inclusive whole-school-approach in Lycée Célestin Freinet. Their research drew on Critical Theory to pursue the following questions: To what extent does the integration of an interdisciplinary CIBE curriculum into the Lebanese education system enhance equitable access to knowledge regardless of students’ intersectional identities responding to the contemporary need in Lebanon for a more just society led by skillful and mindful young people? and how can a democratic and participatory approach to teaching, learning, and assessment empower an active and digitally savvy citizens, who are autonomous agents for change in school and their wider community?

The team showed a video that exemplified its activities in the school. The team said that the process of co-creating a curriculum with the students and parents through dialogue ensures building trust relationships, partnership, and the representation of both the dominant and marginalised views within the community to empower and engage all groups and to extend the idea of community engagement. The findings of this research contributed to knowledge methodologically as this kind of research is under-utilised in Lebanese contexts. Empirically, the findings gave insight into the context of curriculum reforms. Finally, the research conceptualized the processes through which curricula could be co-created toward a more just world.

To watch and listen to the full panel, click here
Panel (15): Sciences

This panel was the last panel in the conference and focused on issues related to science education. The panel was chaired by Hagop Yacoubian and included three presentations. The first presentation was by Fadel Moussawi who, through his research, shed light on an issue that is rarely discussed in our curricula, particularly science curricula, which is the issue of ethics. Moussawi discussed the integration of ethical issues in life sciences, in light of a curriculum based on socio-scientific issues and how that can lead to addressing controversial issues using a multi-dimensional approach. Moussawi used the example of COVID 19 and how we can imagine teaching it in a classroom in ten years from now. Will we only talk about it from a scientific perspective? Or will we talk about its social, political, cultural and even religious linkages and implications?

“The main idea Moussawi wanted to highlight and discuss is how to present scientific topics within their socio-economic contexts and how to present them to the students as moral dilemmas.”

Moussawi’s research utilised a mixed methods approach, was conducted in a private school with 55 students. Moussawi intended to integrate a social and environmental issue such as the rubbish incinerator in the area of Karentina within the environment regulation and protection lesson. After 5 weeks of discussions about the issue in person and on an online platform, and after the students and teachers had the chance to share resources and discuss, the researcher distributed a questionnaire and conducted semi-structured interviews with the teachers and students. The results of the research showed that allowing the learners to think of scientific issues from various approaches allow for better learning and helps them formulate their informed opinions that are more open and accepting.

The second presentation was by Enja Osman, who talked about learning progressions (LP) as a new trend in curriculum reform that enhances students’ conceptual understanding of learned concepts. The researcher conducted an LP study that adopted a mixed-methods approach and consisted of a descriptive phase and a quasi-experimental design-based learning phase. Participants included 729 students (Grades 7-12) and 20 biology teachers from three private and three public schools. Questionnaires and interviews were administered to identify students’ level of understanding of core genetics concepts and major misconceptions/difficulties (Phase I). Means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages of responses on individual items were calculated and compared across grade levels. Interviews were transcribed and categorized by two researchers to insure validity of results. Concurrently, a systematic analysis of the genetics curriculum evaluated its content in terms of possible conceptual gaps, organization, and coherence.
Then, an LP was developed for Grades 7-12 followed by the design and implementation of a LP-driven genetics unit for Grade 9; this unit was empirically tested in two classes (experimental and control) in a private school (Phase II). Data collected included a pre-test, post-test, and classroom observations. The results of the research revealed that students at all grade levels had inadequate conceptual understanding and misconceptions of basic genetics concepts and exhibited low levels of genetic literacy. Students carried misunderstandings and misconceptions to higher grade levels. Students and teachers attributed such problem to the poor quality of content in biology textbooks which lack coherence, logical sequencing of concepts, and meaningful illustrations.

The third presentation and final presentation of the conference engaged with issues related to the politicization of curriculum making and the personal, the social and cultural in the curriculum through exploring the STEPWISE pedagogy. The presentation was by a team of researchers: Sarah Halwany Minja Milanovic, Nadia Qureshi, Zoya Padamsi, Majd Zouda and Larry Bencze. The presentations started with Halwany explaining what the STEPWISE pedagogy is and how it is reflected in teaching approaches. This study examined experiences of grade 12 students in a public school in Canada after engaging with the STEPWISE pedagogical framework, in relation to the unit on organic chemistry. The team supported the teacher in planning and implementing the STEPWISE framework. They took field notes of classroom interactions, interviewed students and the teacher and collected teaching/learning artefacts. Data were analyzed using constructivist grounded theory for emerging codes and themes. They report on students’ experiences in relation to three ‘novel’ aspects that STEPWISE could potentially introduce into the science classroom. Students explored the importance of attending to non-human stakeholders and to field of semiotics in shaping decisions about science and technology. Students engaged in conducting their own primary research, in the form of correlational studies. Experiments in science (education) are often the norm.
Yet, not all investigations in science could be addressed through experiments for various ethical reasons. Correlational studies are further valuable in providing students with opportunities for open-ended investigations compared to confirmatory types of experiments, that are too-often structured and close-ended. A third aspect of STEPWISE that specifically sparked students’ enthusiasm was the ‘action’ component of the framework. The researchers discussed how students felt especially empowered to take meaningful actions on their issue. In conclusion, the researchers highlighted the importance of preparing a critical and active citizenry through science education and by inviting a discussion around possibilities and anticipated challenges of adapting STEPWISE approaches into the Lebanese school system.

To watch and listen to the full panel, [click here](#).

**Keynote Speaker**

*Rima Bahous facilitated the last keynote speakers’ session.*

1. *Sarah Dryden-Peterson - By the State but not for the State: History Education in Settings of Forced Migration*

Dryden-Peterson started with the idea of perspective taking and situated that within history education in conflict settings. She posed the question: What happens when what you study in school does not allow you to differentiate between the individual and collective past, present and future? Using her research in South Africa, Dryden-Peterson discussed the experiences of teachers who are able to teach, beyond the confines of an old history textbooks that still teach apartheid. Here there is an issue, where the past is still stuck in the present even if the political conditions, have allegedly changed. So how can education in these conditions can help learners envision a better future? What kind of learning can make the connections between past, present and future for refugees and other migrant young people?
This type of education needs to disrupt inequalities such as resource-based inequalities and identity-based inequalities. Resources need to be redistributed in order to rectify the existing inequalities. In order to disrupt identity-based inequalities, redistribution of resources must be accompanied by recognition. Recognition involves all people having equal respect and status and the ability to participate fully in society. No recognition creates a disconnect between the present and the future that was promised by the new post-apartheid government. In South Africa, textbooks in the post-apartheid era focused heavily on ideas of a united nation to overcome past divisions and promote basic conditions such as lack of overt physical violence in which equitable opportunities might be created. Yet South Africa has taken a guarded approach to individual and group identity recognition. What dominates curriculum and classroom discourses are race neutral discourses and commitment to include both sides of the story. In the field of peace studies, there is a useful and longstanding conceptual divide between the absence of personal violence, which Johan Galtung calls negative peace, and the absence of structural violence, which he calls positive peace. Positive peace is not only the absence of acute violence, but the presence of conditions that allow individuals and groups to access equal opportunities. In this way, positive peace rests not only on the intent of curricular recognition, but on its outcomes. Recognition is only realised when diverse children have equal chances at school success. How does history education disrupt possibilities for positive peace in settings of conflict and migration?

There are two possible responses to cultural diversity: recognition and toleration. In refugee contexts, Dryden-Peterson said that often refugees find negative peace. The need to maintain the negative peace means that critical issues and needs are often ignored. In these cases, refugee education follows the line of pragmatism, a situation of semi-death. Can education be a way of exiting this semi-death situation? Since 2012 there was the approach to integrate refugees into the national education systems, an approach not extraordinary, but prior to that, refugees were educated in separate schools from national students. For refugee education inclusion in the national system might mean many things: using the same textbooks but separated from national learners either geographically or in a shifts system, or in other cases studying in the same schools. To disrupt the inequalities for refugees we need to recognize that refugees are outside of the national imaginary. Dryden-Peterson followed by explaining a particular research in Lebanon that took place in a public school that has two shifts, morning shift for Lebanese children and afternoon shift for Syrian children. She identified signs of exclusion particularly in the use of resources that are prohibited for refugee students (structural message of exclusion). She also highlighted the exclusion within the textbooks. Dryden-Peterson also explained the idea of relational exclusion while refugee students are included in the public education system.

“The system of refugee education creates gaps between refugee children’s past, present and future. This means learning now but with the impossibility of being established in the future.”

Sarah Dryden-Peterson

Dryden-Peterson closed with asking: What possibilities are for positive peace when refugees are caught within national spaces in which they are marginalized from recognition that would enable learning, future opportunities and outcomes.

She added that rhetoric of refugee education focuses on avoiding the creation of a lost generation. Yet, a lost generation for refugee children has a different meaning, its missing out on accessing resources and recognition. Education that addresses historical complexity contrast with refugee education under the current approach of inclusion. Teachers with displacement background can better engage with their students with the intention of transforming underlying sources of conflict dynamics. These teachers disrupt the norm and imagine the links between the imperfect past, a present exile and an unknowable but aspirational future.
Our earthly world looks pretty nice from space. Upon closer inspection, however, many of us see that Earth is in trouble. We have several environmental problems, some of which, like those from climate change, habitat destruction and land, air and water pollution. Many of these problems appear connected to ways in which fields of science and technology are being used to develop products and services that appear to help private sector interests to concentrate profit while externalizing associated costs. Culpability of private sector interests among others, such as those with different forms of religious and ethnic power, for example, seems evident in dramatic, rich, poor divide throughout the world. Oxfam, for instance, suggested in a January 2020 that about 2200 billionaires had equivalent wealth of about 4.6 billion people. That is about half the world’s population. Although numerous individuals and groups have made valiant efforts to overcome harms many persist. Given most living and non-living things may be entwined in a global network of power, we might feel that mainly humans bare the blame for personal, social, and environmental harms should be mainly borne by humans. There is so much research suggesting that not all humanity should be blamed for our problems, but rather most blame must be laid on capitalism, thus naming our epoch the capitalist scene.

A group of 17 prominent scientists recently stated after their review of 150 studies that the gravity of the situation requires fundamental changes to global capitalism, education and equality, which include, for example, the abolition of perpetual economic growth, properly pricing externalities, a rapid exit from fossil fuel use, strict regulation of markets and property acquisition, reining in corporate lobbying and the empowerment of women. To promote civic engagement, educators might use the stepwise curriculum and Pedagogic Framework. Research informed and negotiated action may help overcome harms to wellbeing of individuals, societies and environments that appear related to science and technology or more likely to influence its powerful people and groups on societies. Stepwise has enjoyed successes in small, isolated pockets around the world. It seems to require relatively rare supportive networks of positives involving entities like supportive government curricula. He added, reforming curriculum or anything else must, however, be conducted democratically.

To watch and listen to the full presentations by the two keynote speakers, click here
Closing session:
Discussion about the Outcomes of the Conference

In this session, Suzanne Abou Rjeily, Maha Shuayb and Mai Abu Moghli consolidated the main ideas presented throughout the three days of the conference and reflected on some of the issues highlighted. They aimed to engage critically with the concepts and experiences presented by the participants, posed some questions and paved the way for further work, thinking and collaboration on a regional level towards meaningful, representative, inclusive and participatory curriculum reform.

Abu Moghli started with summarizing the main points discussed over the three days of the conference. She linked these main aspects/points to the main objectives of the conference as follows:

Conference objectives (1/2): Explore current debates concerning curriculum theories, ideologies and approaches; and normative and empirical questions related to what to teach for future generations, why and how. Here, Abu Moghli listed a number of issues, which are an amalgamation of the main ideas presented and discussed under these two overall objectives. In this report we put these main points into themes/categories.

a. Reproduction of ideas, concepts, and conduct
- Reproducing social, political and economic ideologies that are detached from the context and daily life experiences through the curricula;
- Assessments and their relation to knowledge and skills: Do we perceive assessment as a process that is connected to our realities and ensure the application of knowledge and skills? Or do we strive to follow international standards that are disconnected and do not meet the reality of our education systems including skills and competencies presented and included in these systems?
- The concept an idea of the 21st century skills and linking this concept to teacher professional development programs. This is also linked to the issue of accessing the job market.

b. Role of teachers
- Teaching methodologies of controversial or contested and problematic topics such as history, citizenship and rights in political and social contexts that limit freedom of expression and thought;
- Connecting teacher professional training programs to the need for professionalizing the field of education without considering the need to connect these training programs to raising political and social awareness, in addition to ignoring the role of teachers outside of the confines of the schools;
- Role of teachers in changing curricula and including particularities to the various subjects. This includes the issues of teachers’ leadership and their ability to engage in curriculum design and change;

c. Rethinking the curriculum
- The adaptation of the curricula to social, economic and political changes which require rethinking the language(s) used, concepts and terminologies which are presented and used by the education institution, textbooks and hidden curricula;
- Integrating values and ideologies in STEM subjects;
- Spaces and opportunities available for social interaction with curriculum development;
- Language policies in education and their relation to curriculum policies and their ability to bridge needs, issues of modernity and development;
- Thinking about the curricula to enable access and quality education for marginalised and displaced populations, including learners and teachers.
Conference objective (3): Reflect on the role of the various stakeholders in the process of curriculum development.

Under this objective, Abou Rjeily discussed the results of the opinion poll that was used during the first two days of the conference to assess the opinions of the participants. In her analysis of the results, Abou Rjeily stated:

The first question in the poll was about the type of changes that need to take place in regards to the curricula. The options were if the changes need to be partial or radical. 101 out of 129 participants answered that there needs to be radical changes. The second question was about the priorities where changes should take place. The top 3 changes were: rethinking teacher training programs; equity in access and quality to and of education; and opening the space for educationalists to discuss and think about the best approaches for curriculum reform. Abou Rjeily reflected on these results stating that there is a need to include various groups from within the community to develop the curriculum; There is an increased awareness and realization of the importance of the role of the teachers; the curriculum should have a role in working towards achieving educational and social equity; there is an interest in modernizing the curricula; the heightened attention of the importance of the inputs over the outputs; separation between the curriculum and politics; limitation of the issue of identity; there is no clear important of the role of the unions; and there is no clear importance given to the issue of research.

Conference objective (4): Reflect on local practices, and on political, cultural, and social aspects of curriculum in Arab countries, with the purpose of developing an in-depth understanding of curriculum.

Under this goal, Shuayb shed light on the importance of research especially in relation to all the changes that happened during the past 18 months, since CLS and its partners started conceptualising the conference. The conference aimed to achieve is to enhance agency, meaning the community as a whole can participate with no waiting for political will and external funding. The participation rate in the conference illustrates an appetite for various groups and individuals to participate in open spaces and critical discussions about the curriculum. Shuayb questioned the idea of the elitist interactional and the dichotomy between the intellectual and the activist. She ascertained that a public intellectual is an activist in the public sphere. Then she moved to categorise the types of research within the field of education. The first type, is research that is produced for external consumption without contextualisation or linking it to possible implementation. While this type of research is irrelevant in the local context, it is considered as high quality research as it is publishable in western journals. The other type of research is the one done for local consumption, however it does not create any change in policy and practice. So, what is the role of universities and academics? What is the implication of the detachment of academia from its community and surrounding? Additionally, there is the trend of decolonisation. Shuayb believes that there is a lack of analytical approaches and processes of auto-critique.

Abu Moghli built on these ideas to highlight the issues related to terminologies we use without engaging or questioning even when were are conducting research and producing knowledge. These terms and concepts include: 21st century and gender. She also highlighted how this makes us as, even as researchers, consumers rather than producers of knowledge.

Shuayb continued by saying that in this conference we only highlighted the knowledge in the Arab world or in the west. What we need to do is engage with other spaces of knowledge production such as other localities in the global south where there is a richness in knowledge production and criticality. What we also need to do is to rethink the programs we provide in higher education institutions to break the neoliberal education to employment cycle and include issues of theory, critical thinking, social justice and equity. We also need to think of the junior academics and researchers and create spaces for networking, fresh thought and engagement.

To watch and listen to the full session, click here (1:06:30-2:07:40)

Annexes
Annex (1): Conference Program
Annex (2): Speakers Biographies
Annex (3): Q & A sessions