

Cumulative Loss of Instructional Days Between 2016 and 2025

**Decline in Educational
Quality in Lebanon**

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The Decline in Educational Quality in Lebanon

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This graph is an update of the cumulative loss of instructional days compared to the OECD benchmark from 2016 to 2024. It is sourced from the study titled "[The Cost of Education in Lebanon -Treasury and Society Expenditure](#)," Centre for Lebanese Studies. (2023), figure 11-pages 53.

Executive Summary

The education sector in Lebanon has experienced a severe and prolonged decline in the number of actual instructional days provided in schools, starkly contrasting the global standard of 180 days annually observed in OECD countries. Over nearly a decade, Lebanese public schools have lost up to 880 days out of the expected 1,800 instructional days (global average 180 days per year)—a staggering 49% deficit.

This alarming trend is a result of compounded factors, including administrative inefficiency, recurring crises, and inadequate recovery measures. These challenges have significantly undermined the quality of education and impeded students' acquisition of essential competencies.

The situation reflects a broader systemic failure in the education sector, emphasizing the urgent need for targeted, evidence-based interventions to address structural and financial gaps. Immediate action is critical to restoring the integrity and functionality of Lebanese education.

Over the past decade (2016–2025), Lebanon has endured a series of profound compounding challenges and crisis, beginning with the Syrian conflict in 2011, the 17 October 2019 uprising, the global COVID-19 pandemic, the Beirut Port explosion in 2020, the subsequent economic collapse, and most recently, the ongoing Israeli aggression since October 2023, persisting as of the date of this study.

These compounding crises have inflicted profound and multifaceted disruptions on the education sector, primarily because of the policy measures and actions adopted by the Ministry of Education and the government. These interventions, while aimed at crisis mitigation, have inadvertently accelerated the deterioration of educational quality and the reduction of learner competencies and knowledge benchmarks when measured against internationally recognized standards.

Currently, the education system is experiencing an accelerated structural decline, with the systemic reduction in instructional time emerging as a key destabilizing factor. The 1997 national curriculum—still in effect—was originally designed to distribute its content across 170 instructional days, aligning closely with the OECD average of 180 days. However, since the post-COVID-19 crisis until 2023/24 the instructional days were limited to 93. Today's reality allows for only 93 instructional days annually, equating to approximately 50% of the international benchmark. This significant reduction of instructional days necessitates that the core curriculum be condensed and shortened to fit the shortened timeframe, ultimately compromising the depth and breadth of knowledge, skills, and competencies outlined in the 1997 curriculum framework designed for 170 instructional days.

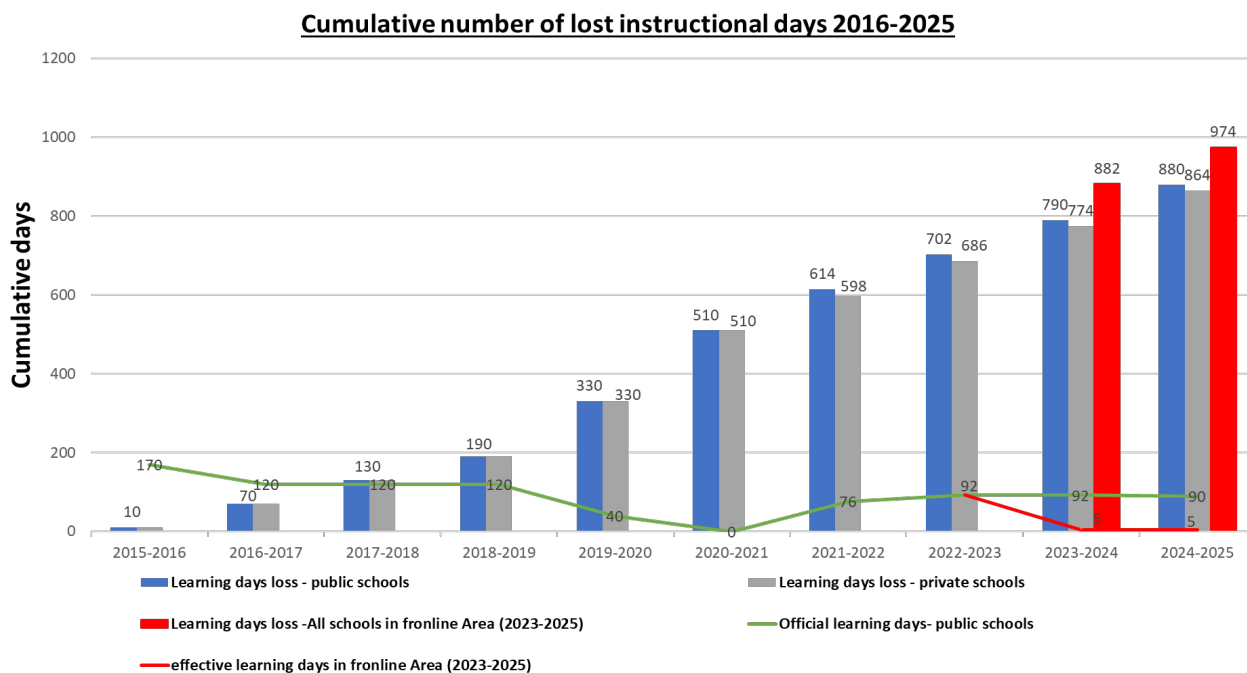
This issue transcends short-term interruptions or transient learning losses experienced during isolated crises. Instead, it reflects a cumulative, sustained decrease of instructional days dating back to 2016–2017, when Minister Elias Bou Saab implemented a directive reducing the academic year from 170 to 120 instructional days (Circular 21/2016). This decision has been driven primarily by financial and administrative considerations such as reducing 100m\$¹ in expenditures on salaries, wages, and operational costs—rather

¹ The Cost of Education in Lebanon Treasury and Community Expenditure. (CLS.2023) [Figure 1, page15.](#)

than pedagogical imperatives grounded in curriculum design or evidence-based reform. Consequently, the 1997 curriculum was scaled down to nearly a third of its content, and subsequent years have witnessed further reductions and curricular compressions justified by the recurrent crises Lebanon has faced.

This series of decisions has led to a staggering 49% reduction in instructional time and a corresponding decline in the knowledge and skills acquisition aligned with the 1997 curriculum.

Figure 1: Cumulative number of lost instructional days 2016-2025



As illustrated in “figure 1” above, over the past decade, Lebanon’s education system has experienced a severe decline in instructional days, with public schools losing nearly half of the expected teaching days due to policy decisions, crises, and ongoing conflicts. This trend, reveals a stark contrast between Lebanon’s educational trajectory and the global standard of 180 teaching days per year in OECD countries. The decline in instructional days can be traced back to the **2016** reduction of the academic year from **170 to 120 teaching days**, which caused a decline of 10.5% of the instructional days before the 2019 crisis and COVID-19 pandemic. These decisions set the stage for an ongoing pattern of reductions that would significantly impact students’ learning experiences.

The compounded crises have also deepened disparities across socio-economic groups, geographic regions, and vulnerable populations, including refugees. Inequities are evident between public and private schools, among private institutions themselves, between marginalized border areas and more central regions, and between socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged families². Access to education has become a critical challenge, particularly in the South and along border regions since October 2023, where more than 44 schools were closed. One year later, many of these areas have

2 The Cost of Education in Lebanon Treasury and Community Expenditure. (CLS.2023) [Figure 5, page 30 & 50](#).

seen widespread destruction of homes and educational infrastructure³, with no coherent governmental emergency response plan to re-enroll displaced students or integrate them into alternative educational settings while at the time of writing, 14 schools are still used as shelters, 33 completely damaged, and 349 partially damaged⁴.

The measures adopted by the Ministry of Education have demonstrably failed to yield the intended outcomes. This pattern of reactionary policymaking is devoid of any coherent, research-informed vision for mitigating the impact of successive crises. It has failed to halt the ongoing educational decline and engendered new challenges such as increasing the learning loss, learning poverty⁵, and deteriorating education. This is visible as well in the declining interest among university students to pursue teaching careers, which is exacerbated by the deteriorating socio-economic status of the teaching profession. Furthermore, declining competency levels, and increasing dropout rates particularly among vulnerable groups (302,000 enrolled in public schools in 2022/23⁶, 278,000 enrolled in 2024/25⁷). It has also curtailed access to higher education for many students where we noticed a decline of 20,000 students (25%) between 2020/21 and 2022/23⁸ enrolled in the Lebanese University.

3 [National Center for Natural Hazards & Early Warning - NCNE](#)

4 MEHE. [Fact Sheet_ Week 8_ Draft 1](#)

5 See figure 3 below.

6 [Statistical Bulletin 2022-2023 DEC01.pdf](#)

7 MEHE. [Fact Sheet_ Week 8_ Draft 1](#)

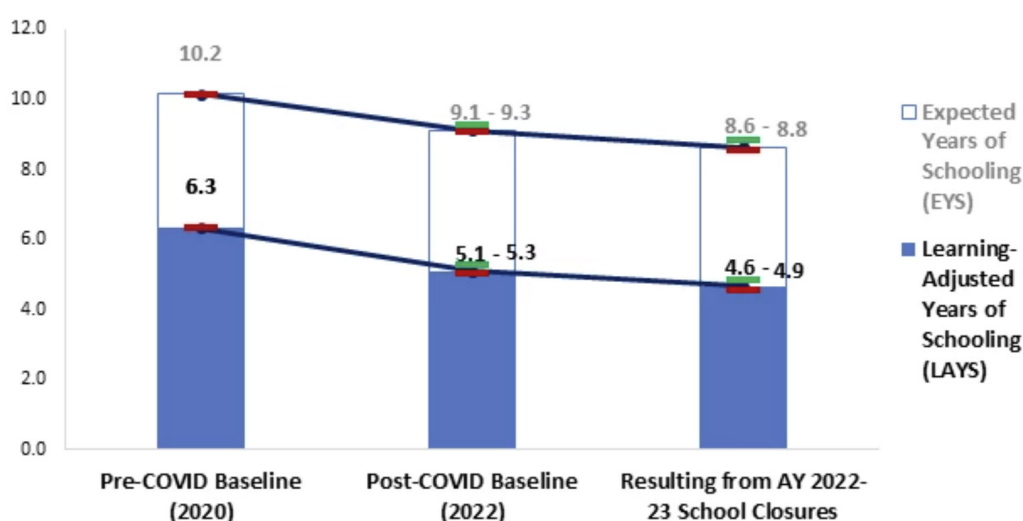
8 [CRDP](#).

How Does the Loss of instructional days Affect the Educational Level in Lebanon?

The loss of instructional days in Lebanon has significantly impacted the education system and the quality of learning among students. The World Bank highlighted this issue in an article titled “*Learning Loss and Income Loss: The Educational and Economic Costs of Public School Closures in Lebanon*” (October 25, 2023). The article outlines several points about the impact of this issue, comparing the state of education before and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

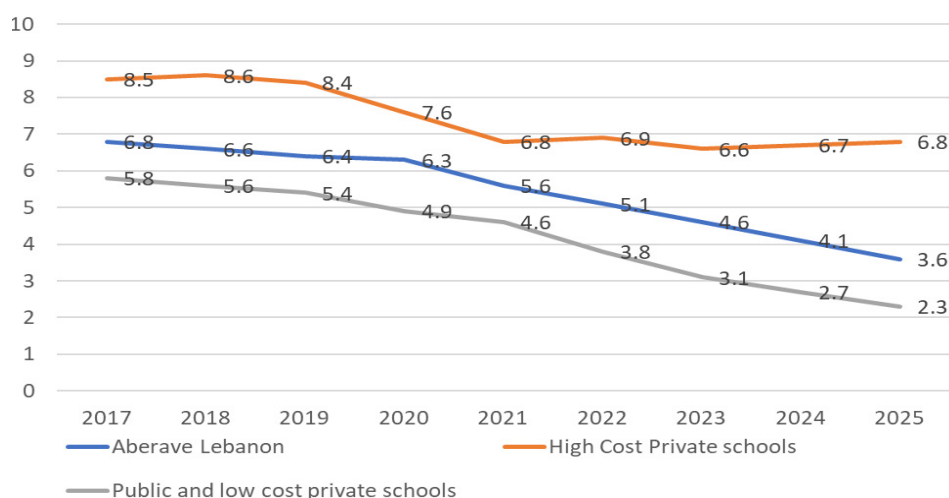
Based on the PISA report, the article notes a disparity in educational outcomes between the highest and lowest income quintiles, specifically between elite private schools and public or low-cost private schools, equivalent to an average difference of 4 years of learning prior to the pandemic.

Figure 2. Potential Learning Losses in Lebanon between 2020 and 2023



Source: [Learning and Earning Losses: The educational and economic costs of Lebanon's public-school closures. \(WB, 2023\).](#)

Figure 3. Simulation: Learning-Adjusted Years of Schooling- LAYS. 2017-2025



Source of Data: [Learning-Adjusted Years of School | World Bank Gender Data Portal](#)

Between 2020 and 2023, Lebanon experienced significant educational loss. In 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic, actual instructional days accounted for 10.2 effective years out of 12 total years (figure 2), while Learning-Adjusted Years of Schooling (LAYS), measuring the actual learning achieved, stood at 6.3 years compared to the international pre-COVID average of 10.8 years. Since the Ministry of Education has maintained the instructional days to 92 teaching days per year, teaching days are projected to decrease by 0.5 points annually. By 2023, teaching days were expected to fall to 8.6 effective years out of 12, reflecting a 36% loss of teaching days and a corresponding decline in students' skills and knowledge and LAYS decreases to 4.6-4.9.

The decline in LAYS mirrors this trend. From 2017 to 2019 (Figure 3), the effects of reducing the academic year from 170 to 120 teaching days became evident, particularly in public and low-cost private schools. Between 2020 and 2022, during school closures, the lack of enforced learning standards caused Lebanon's LAYS to drop from 6.3 pre-COVID to 5.1 post-COVID, a loss of 1.2 points according to the World Bank. In 2023. Without significant policy changes, Lebanon's LAYS average is expected to decrease further to 3.6 points by 2024–2025, representing a 40% reduction compared to pre-COVID levels.

Conclusion

Against this backdrop, the election of a new president and the formation of a new government in Lebanon present an opportunity for transformative reform. The incoming Minister of Education must undertake a rigorous, evidence-based assessment of the education system's current state. Such an assessment should serve as the foundation for designing a comprehensive national strategy aimed at halting the systemic decline, narrow the learning gaps between different socio-economic groups, in order to build a comprehensive strategy, and to address the entrenched inequities across different social groups. This would include the development of a transitional flexible curriculum framework that fosters equitable learning outcomes and narrows disparities in knowledge acquisition and skill development.

In addition to demonstrating a commitment to reforming the education sector, the government must significantly increase its investment in education to ensure the availability of adequate resources, equitable access to quality education, and the socio-economic protection of educators. This entails guaranteeing teachers a dignified standard of living, ensuring schools operate effectively, reducing exclusive school-related benefits for public sector employees, and promoting public education within an integrated national plan. The societal and economic repercussions of a collapsed education system far exceed the investment needed for its recovery and revitalization today.