



CEMOFPSC ROUND TABLE 2011:
An education of quality in the conflict area, as a
way of improving peace and integration

EDUCATION IN THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

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I- Education in the Palestinian Territories from a historical perspective

The Palestinian People has been under occupying powers from its very beginning: first the Ottoman Empire, the British Mandate, Egypt and Jordan, and after 1967 until 1993 the State of Israel. It is not until 1993 that the Palestinian National Authority has been created.

1.1 The ottoman Rule:

Since 1516 and until 1917 Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire and Istanbul appointed local governors. Napoleon of France briefly waged war against the Ottoman Empire (allied then with Great Britain), and held territory in Palestine in 1799 of Jaffa, Haifa, and Caesarea. Again on 1832, the territories of *Bilad ash-Sham*, which included Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine were conquered and annexed by Muhammad Ali's expansionist Egypt. In 1841, the Egyptian army retreated to its country and the Ottoman power recuperated Palestine with the help of the British army.

The rise of Zionism, the national movement of the Jewish people started in Europe in the 19th century seeking to create a Jewish state in Palestine. The end of the 19th century saw the beginning of Zionist immigration.

Ottoman rule over the Eastern Mediterranean lasted until World War I when the Ottomans sided with the German Empire and the Central Powers. During World War I, the Ottomans were driven from much of the region by the British Empire during the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, called by that time the *sick empire*.

1.2 Education in Palestine during the Ottoman Empire in the XIX century

The Ottoman Empire is being characterized by historians as a long period of stagnation and an era of failed reforms, and Ottoman science and technology which had been highly regarded in medieval times, had become regressive and conservative during the XIX century. In general it may be said that the public schools in the Turkish provinces were ill organized and that the methods of instruction were unsatisfactory. The use of a foreign medium (Turkish) even in elementary classes, when added to these initial defects, made the schools very largely ineffective.

Administratively, the empire was being governed at that time by what was called the *Tanzimat* reforms where Moslem, Christian, and Jewish communities of Palestine were allowed to exercise jurisdiction over their own members according to charters granted to them. For centuries the Jews and Christians had enjoyed a large degree of



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communal autonomy in matters of worship, jurisdiction over personal status, taxes, and in managing their schools and charitable institutions. In the 19th century those rights were formally recognized as part of the *Tanzimat* reforms and when the communities were placed under the protection of European public law. During the Ottoman period each community had their own schools, and there was not a unified school system.

During the *Tanzimat* period, the Christian populations of Palestine were able to set and manage their own school system. These schools were the first modern schools in Palestine, established by foreign and local churches of all confessions and rites. They offered a broadened curriculum that prepared students for entry into western-type colleges and occupations. The new schools followed the model of foreign institutions and their curriculum was westernized but they were also able to offer an Arabic language school curriculum. They were open to both girls and boys, from all religions; but Christians and Muslims students mainly attended them. Mission and Community schools of varying degrees of efficiency existed in all or nearly all the towns and in some of the larger villages.

While in the Jewish side, a fully functioning Hebrew educational system was created, built and maintained by the *Yishuv*, the pre-state Jewish community, inside and outside the country. These schools had successfully met the challenges of reviving the Hebrew language and integrating the *olimhadashim* (the new Jewish immigrants) who came to Palestine. There were mostly affiliated to the international Zionist movement which financed them, in three trends, secular-socialist, rooted in both Jewish and universal-modern culture or religious-Zionist trend while a tiny minority, non-Zionists, were attended by ultra orthodox circles. The first two kinds of schools were also opened to girls and boys, while in the third one the schools were completely male-oriented and its main focus was the study of the Torah.

Palestinian intellectuals (Muslims and Christians) took great part to the movement called *An-Nahda* (Arabic for “awakening” or “renaissance”) or cultural renaissance that began in the late 19th century until early 20th century in all Ottoman-ruled Arabic-speaking regions including Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and others. It is often regarded as a period of intellectual modernization and reform. The Arabic as a common language of the Arabic-speaking nations allowed that intellectuals within other Arab countries could quickly pick up the accomplishments of the movement.

1.3 The British Mandate

Two international agreements fixed the history of this land in 1916 and 1917. On the first hand, the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, between French and British powers



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which partitioned Middle Eastern region into 5 countries: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Palestine. It was envisioned that Palestine, would be governed under direct British mandate, and shortly thereafter, British foreign minister Arthur Balfour issued the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which promised to establish a "Jewish national home" in Palestine.

1.4 Education in Palestine during Mandatory Period

The British Occupation of Palestine began in 1917 but it is in 1920 when the civil administration of the mandate government began the work of educational reconstruction. Schools that had existed before were reopened in the larger towns, training colleges for men and women were instituted in Jerusalem, and Arabic was made the medium of instruction.

At the beginning of the mandate, an educational imbalance existed amongst the three religious communities. Proportionally, fewer Muslim children attended school than either Christian Arab or Jewish children. By the conclusion of the British administration of Palestine, there had been a great increase in school attendance of Muslim children.

During the Mandate period, the educational system for Palestinians was based both on government-run schools and on private institutions. By its end, close to 150,000 Palestinian students were enrolled in schools all over Palestine, most of them in elementary schools. About two-thirds of the pupils attended government-run schools, and one-third attended private institutions (run by various religious and public associations).

During the mandate, two public school systems evolved. One, for Palestinian students, functioned completely under the jurisdiction of the mandatory Palestinian government and the other, for Jewish people, developed largely as the responsibility of the Jewish community. Both, the Palestinian public school system and the Hebrew school system concentrated on elementary education. On the secondary level, private schools provided a significant complement to public institutions. During the mandatory era the number of schools increased, the education of girls received public support and secular studies became dominant.

The Hebrew public schools were nearly autonomous while the Palestinian public schools were dependent on foreign direction. The contrast in the political foundation of the two systems appeared to have influenced their degree of nationalization or denationalization. The Jewish community gave education a high fiscal priority, supported the rapid expansion of the system, promoted an eight-year period of



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schooling and related the curriculum to nationalistic aims. The Palestinian mandatory government set a lower minimal standard for school attendance, moderated the pace of growth, had a conservative fiscal policy and designed a course of Arabic studies which concentrated on those aspects of culture which were apolitical.

The British adopted a policy of classifying the population by religion, Muslim, Christian, Jewish and others, mainly Druze. Various foreign organizations and religious bodies maintained their interest in the problem of education. The French, German and Italian Consuls General control their respective national schools, while the Latin, Orthodox, Syrian and Armenian Patriarchs, the *Custode di Terra Santa* and the Archbishop of the Greek Catholic Church supervise those of their respective denominations. This period saw the establishment of numerous foreign Anglican and protestant schools. English, French, German, Italian, Greek and Armenian are variously used as the medium of instruction in schools controlled by foreign bodies, while both English and Arabic are also taught as subjects in nearly all these schools.

In 1926/27 the number of specifically Moslem schools was small. The Supreme Moslem Council controlled 7 schools or orphanages, of which 3 were in Jerusalem. In the Moslem Orphanage in Jerusalem, children were given instruction in certain trades. The Moslem Committee at Haifa maintained two schools, one for girls and one for boys.

Officially, in the Palestinian public school, elementary school lasted seven years, and high school another four years. In practice, elementary school usually lasted only five or six years. Elementary education was standard for Palestinian boys, at least for a few years. Education for girls, especially in the villages, was less common. In all, only about 30 percent of Palestinian children of the relevant age groups attended school in 1948.

On the eve of 1948, there were only ten Palestinian high schools (including two for girls). There were three teacher-training seminaries set by the mandate and not a single Palestinian institution of higher education.

Even if the mandatory period did not succeed in extending education for all, nevertheless, this period had an important impact in Palestine's education history. It embraced Christian and Moslem pupils in one public system, unified in a second one the majority of Hebrew schools, and concluded the transfer of the common school from a religious and traditional domain to the responsibility of the government, as the mandate progressed, private schools received some government financial aid; state schools were, of course, government financed. In 1946/47, the Palestinians attending schools reached 15.7%.



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1.5 The establishment of the State of Israel

On 29 November 1947, the United Nations General Assembly voted in favor of a plan to partition the territory into separate Jewish and Arab states, under economic union, with the Greater Jerusalem area (encompassing Bethlehem) coming under international control. Zionist leaders (including the Jewish Agency) accepted the plan, while Palestinian Arab leaders rejected it. Almost immediately, sectarian violence erupted and spread, killing hundreds of Arabs, Jews and British over the ensuing months. The rapid evolution of events precipitated into a Civil War. On 14 May 1947, the Jewish Agency declared the independence of the State of Israel, and more battles took place. At the end, some 750,000 Palestinian refugees caught up in the turmoil fled or were driven out of their homes.

On the other side, no Palestinian Arab state was founded: Jordan annexed the Arab territories of the Mandatory regions of the West bank, as well as East Jerusalem, while the Gaza Strip came under Egyptian administration.

1.6 Education under Egyptian and Jordanian sovereignty

From 1948 until the Israeli Occupation in 1967, the educational system of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza was the responsibility respectively of Jordan and Egypt as both territories were left under their sovereignty while for the Palestinians or Arabs living in the Israeli territories, the responsibility was of the State of Israel.

During that period, schools in the West Bank followed the Jordanian curriculum, while schools in Gaza followed the Egyptian curriculum, and schools in Israel followed the Israeli curriculum but with the possibility of learning Arabic. The situation of public and private schools did not change with regards to the anterior situation.

During that period, also a new actor of development in the field of Palestinian educational system irrupted, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War by the United Nations General Assembly in 1949.

UNRWA is the only agency dedicated to helping refugees from a specific region or conflict, it is a relief and human development agency which provide education, health care, social services and emergency aid to over the actual 4.8 million Palestinian refugees (in 1948 they were 750,000) living in 59 recognized refugees camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, as well as in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

UNRWA has been the main provider of basic education to Palestinian refugee children



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since 1950 and played, and still does it, an important role to extend education for all Palestinians. UNRWA provides schooling for the first nine years (elementary and preparatory levels). The education program is UNRWA's largest area of activity, accounting for half of its regular budget and 70 per cent of its staff. Basic education is available to all registered refugee children in all the countries cited before, free of charge up to around the age of 15. In the 1960s, UNRWA schools became the first in the region to achieve full gender equality.

1.7 Israel/ Arab wars

In the course of the Six Day War in June 1967, Israel captured the rest of the Mandatory Palestine, taking the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) from Jordan and the Gaza Strip from Egypt.

In the course of 1973, during the Yom Kippur War, military forces of Egypt crossed the Suez Canal, and Israel held the whole Sinai until it returned to Egypt as part of the 1978 Camp David Peace Accords between Egypt and Israel in hopes of establishing a genuine peace.

1.8 Education Under Israeli occupation

After the Israeli occupation of 1967 of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, education was taken in charge by the Israeli authorities, being the occupying power, under its military administration. However, the Jordanian and Egyptian curricula continued to be used in the West Bank and Gaza respectively. The same three types of schools still remained in the Occupied Palestinian Territories:

1. The Government schools: under the responsibility of the Israeli government, run by the Israeli Civil Administration depending on the Israeli Defense Forces.
2. The UNRWA schools: the largest providers of primary education as well as vocational and training center.
3. Private schools: run by a variety of local and foreign institutions, most with a religious affiliation, providing education at all levels. They provide predominantly secular education, following the same curriculum in the government schools except for English and some other subjects.

The textbooks pertaining to the Jordanian and Egyptian curricula, as it was mentioned before were still adopted by Palestinians at this stage, but were also subjected to complete censorship by the Israeli military government in charge of the Palestinian education from 1967 until 1993. Whole books were banned from schools; words and, sometimes, sections of textbooks were deleted.



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During the 27 years of Israeli control over the Palestinian education, as well as other sectors, they put a heavy pressure on collectivism strengthening the traditional way of life as an strategy to weaken the Palestinian people by freezing them in past.

The lack of expectations of the Palestinians facing a broken system under sovereignty of an occupying power not interested at all in its development, left most of the people with the only possibility of joining the wage in the Israeli labor market, this encouraged youths to leave the school looking for jobs in Israel. Having a source of income pushed them to marry at an early age, which also played an important role in fixing traditional thoughts and values¹.

The first Intifada (1987-1993) had a huge impact on this conservative and underdeveloped educational system. Israel closed most of the schools, universities and educational institutions, sometimes the periods of closure were prolonged over 6 months during the academic year, leaving students without the possibility of achieving the academic skills and habits. This strategy was dangerous because “starving minds is perhaps a more sophisticated punishment than embargoing food”².

The result of this policy which lasted for 27 years (1967-1994) was that a huge amount of Palestinians were pushed to illiteracy leaving an uneducated society unable to face its problems. Israel did not emphasize the basics of primary education for Palestinians, in order to keep them in the elementary stage with a minimum education. The Israelis refused, for example, to carry out any modifications of the curriculum. So, the education system in Palestine was greatly affected by the Israeli occupation policies.

Moreover, when the students were allowed to attend classes they came to the schools under such an alarming psychological state of mind that they nearly learned nothing. Many of the generation of the Intifada had problems in writing clearly and properly, thinking logically, using basic math skills and speaking fluently and confidently.

II- The peace process and the creation of the National Palestinian Authority

¹Education in Palestine, p.4; Dr.Hala Al-Yamani.

² Public Relations Office Birzeit University, 1989.



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Attempts at the peace process in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were made at the Madrid Conference of 1991. Following the historic 1993 Oslo Peace Process Accords between Palestinians and Israelis (the "Oslo Accords"), which gave the Palestinians limited self-rule in some parts of the Disputed Territories through the Palestinian National Authority.

The Palestinian National Authority was officially created in 1994, as a five-year interim body, during which final status negotiations between the two parties were to take place. As of 2011, more than sixteen years following the formulation of the PNA, a final status has yet to be reached. According to the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian National Authority was designated to have control over both security-related and civilian issues in Palestinian urban areas (referred to as "Area A"), and only civilian control over Palestinian rural areas ("Area B"). The remainder of the territories, including Israeli settlements, the Jordan Valley region, and bypass roads between Palestinian communities, were to remain under exclusive Israeli control ("Area C"). East Jerusalem was excluded from the Accords.

With the signature of the Oslo Agreement, and the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), the responsibility of the education in the West Bank and Gaza was transferred to the PNA³.

While for the around 1.4 million Palestinians living in Israel, education is in accordance with the Israeli system. Support and preservation of the Palestinian national identity in the Israeli curricula or schoolbooks is not allowed and usually the education system for Arabs does not enjoy the same benefits as the Jewish education system.

And finally the exceptional situation in East Jerusalem with around 90,000 Palestinian students, the responsibility of the schooling system is of the Israeli education ministry and the municipality of Jerusalem. The main problem they are facing is the shortage of classes (around 1000) and the high dropout rate of the students (about 50%), as well as the multiplication of illegal schools to cover the shortage.

Finally in the refugee camps, UNRWA is still the main provider of primary education. By December 31st 2009, there were close to 482,000 students enrolled in 691 schools. UNRWA schools follow the curriculum of their host countries. This allows UNRWA pupils to progress to further education or employment holding locally recognized qualifications and fitting with the sovereignty requirements of countries hosting

³In annex 1: Some data about the Education System in the Palestinian Territories.



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refugees.

**2.1 The Palestinian National Authority: creation, role,
achievements and challenges of the Ministry of Education and Higher
education**

The Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) was created in August 1994. At that time, the Ministry of Education had to simultaneously: (1) build its own structure, (2) recruit staff, (3) develop its management systems and its capacity for planning and management, (4) design development programs and fundraise for their implementation, (5) develop the first ever unified Palestinian curriculum for the West Bank and Gaza, and (6) manage the whole education system on a daily basis. It was an on-going uphill effort for the creation of the Ministry and for the reconstruction and development of the education sector after almost 30 years of Israeli occupation.

The conflict and almost 30 years of occupation made that the Ministry of Education inherited a Palestinian educational system in ruins. Throughout the 30 years of Israeli occupation, Palestinian educational institutions were neglected both at the infrastructure and the human resource levels. So when the MoEHE took the lead of the education in Palestine, it faced a broken system, so it sought the assistance of UNESCO and donor countries and set up the Palestinian Curriculum Development Centre (PCDC), with the first goal of developing a unified curriculum of their own, setting apart the Jordanian and Egyptian curricula used until then. It was actually conceived as a national achievement.

The implementation phase of the national curriculum began by implementing national textbooks in all subjects in 2000. By the beginning of the 2006-2007, all students in all grades were using the Palestinian national textbooks. It is worthy to mention some of the important changes made by the Palestinian curriculum, among them, introducing Civic Education, National Education, Christian Education, Technology, and Arts and Crafts into the syllabus in addition to introducing the English Language from the first grade instead of the fifth grade as was previously the case.

The Millennium Development Goals Progress Report 2005 pointed out that the MoEHE did an impressive job introducing the new curriculum in grades 1-10, and producing and distributing textbooks on a 1/1 ratio every year.

The absence of political stability and security under the Israeli occupation, especially during first Al- Aqsa Intifada (uprising), because over the four years of closure (1987-1993), and what followed from destruction in the educational process, occupation, deteriorating economic conditions, mobility restrictions resulted in the need for



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emergency programs in order to re-build the whole school infrastructure and also to regain some balance in the psychological and health conditions of students and teachers who were subject to the aggression of the Israeli occupation forces.

At the same time, many schools have also been operating in unsafe conditions, overcrowded and unhealthy environments with underpaid and often untrained teachers without the skills or knowledge necessary to cope with the requirements of the new curriculum.

So the second step undertaken by the MoEHE has been the physical reconstruction of schools, the increase in the gross enrolment rate (GER) and the access to learning materials, as well as the creation of the National Institute of Education Training in 1994, an important step leading to more systematic training for the trainers and a well established training system.

Another accomplishment has been the reduction of the number of dropouts, surveys conducted in 2005 on school dropouts in West Bank and the Gaza Strip concluded that the dropout rate was of 1.8% in 1999/2000 and decreased to 0.9% in 2003/2004.

Also, according to the World Bank report of Sep 2006, access to basic and secondary education is highly equitable with respect to gender, location (rural and urban), refugee status, and household income. These indicators put West Bank and Gaza in the lead in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

The gross enrolment ratio (GER) for secondary education is above 80 per cent. Equally important is the high enrolment rate in tertiary education, above 40 per cent for the 18-24 age group, which is high if compared with middle-income countries.

2.2 Challenges posed to Education in the Palestinian Territories

It is worth to be mentioned that the MoEHE deals with most of the challenges traced here in its Education Development Strategic Plan (2008-2012) and in its Teacher Education Strategy (2008)⁴.

The schools in Palestinian Territories face several difficulties such as:

1. High number of schools having a two-shift system, which starts at 7:30 a.m. and continues until 5:00 p.m.

⁴In Annex 1



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88% of the schools in Gaza are two-shift schools, and the number of two shifted classrooms is 37.5%, which means that to use twice the same building and classrooms the number of hours of schooling has to be cut. This responds to a serious problem of overcrowding and lack of infrastructure. This system creates educational problems, preventing some students from being involved in school activities.

The Educational Institutions census 2003/2004 shows that among 2,956 schools and kindergartens, 2,254 are located in the West Bank and 702 in Gaza, though the population density is much higher in Gaza. 1,605 schools are operating in morning shifts only out of which 144 schools are in Gaza. 239 schools are operating in afternoon shifts, out of which 174 are in Gaza. Therefore, more schools are operating double shifts in the Gaza Strip. Teacher and student ratio varies, 23 in PA schools, 32.6 in UNRWA schools and 14 in private schools.

2. The participation of the private sector is very limited at present.
3. UNRWA schools operate in West Bank and Gaza, covering 25% of overall enrolments in basic education, and as much as 70% in the Gaza Strip. The UNRWA school system operates under a separate management and delivery structure. Teacher and student ratio showed that UNRWA schools were on average more crowded than PA schools. As the classroom occupancy rates were likely to negatively impact on students' learning achievements, efforts were made to reduce class size (being initially 40 children per class) and improve infrastructures for learning. In addition, UNRWA schools only cover up to grade 9 (with a few exceptions in East Jerusalem). Although UNRWA and the PA are using the same curricula, achieving a higher level of consistency in schooling grades represent a key challenge in quality of primary education.
4. Some students take classes in rented rooms, which do not meet the minimum standards of classroom requirements. These rooms comprise about 8.7% of the total number of classrooms. Lot of work has been done to rehabilitate and fit out existing rooms or even build new ones.
5. The closure of schools during occupation and after the Second Intifada, and the consequence of the restrictions of movements imposed by the building of the separation wall and the multiplication of checkpoints are causing a decrease in the average achievement.
6. Student numbers are increasing as well as the proportional expenses. The very rapid expansion of school enrolments over the last five years (2001-2006) has also



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meant that the annual education budget has been increasing in the past 5 years by 8-9 per cent per year.

7. There is a shortage of classrooms for the number of students enrolled, with an expected rate of increase ranging between 4 and 7%. The number of students in the year 2012 is expected to exceed 1.5 million including kindergartens.

8. School drop out rates: These rates increase generally as the grade level increases according to the statistics of 1997-1998. However, the last reports of the MDG and the World Bank stated how this fact is fading away.

9. The student/ teacher ratio is relatively high.

10. High cost of building and running schools.

11. There are about 16,000 students who fail their secondary education exam each year in addition to others who are not accepted at the Higher Education institutions due to poor academic records. This requires a review of the current vocational and technical system.

12. Educational equipment, halls, various learning resources, and libraries that have become essentials of the learning/teaching process are inadequate.

13. The lack of an organized program for the in-service training of educators (teachers, principals, and supervisors) during the Israeli occupation has negatively affected the competence and performance of educators.

14. There is serious imbalance among the three streams in upper secondary education. Especially worrying is the shrinking student participation in the scientific stream due both to supply and demand factors and constraints. Conversely, the literary stream continues to grow in terms of student enrolments, and raises serious doubts in terms of both quality and relevance.

The growing imbalance in secondary enrolments has two important consequences: Firstly, it reduces the size of the potential pool of candidates entering science and technology programs in higher education, thus “exporting” the imbalance to that sector of the education system. Secondly, it increases the percentage of students in the literary stream who leave secondary school with no qualification or skills. These problems become even more serious when considering that vocational education is not a real option for secondary school students (its enrolment share was down to 3 per cent in 2005).



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15. With a high (91%) adult literacy rate, Palestinians are one the most educated population in the MENA region. However, as in other countries in the region, an educated workforce is not correlated with economic productivity. There are important mismatches between education profiles and the labor market, with substantive gender differences.

2.3 Topics for further reflections

Quality improvements. The combination of very rapid expansion of basic and secondary education with the effects of the on-going political conflict on the school system has led to a widespread perception that the quality of education is declining in Palestine. If learning outcomes are taken as a measure of quality of education, using national tests results, this seems to be the case. To a certain extent this is not surprising, taking into consideration the difficult environment in which schools have to operate. Therefore, the Palestinian education system has reached that turning point at which it is critical to introduce policy changes geared towards building on the achievements of the rapid expansion and focus on quality improvement.

Currently, around 7,000 children probably never attend school and one in 12 children does not complete Grade 10. Also, with more children facing psychological trauma as well as physical and mental disabled children, the limited ability of the school system to provide for students with special needs has also become more evident. Meeting the needs of children with special educational needs should therefore be among the key objectives in the next five-year education development plan.

Being the teaching force the backbone of the school system. There is a strong link between teachers' quality and learning achievement. In the West Bank and Gaza there are no standards for either pre-service or in-service teacher training programs, and the current offer –particularly pre-service- is focused on subject knowledge with very low emphasis on classroom-related teaching skills and competences. This fact is linked to the findings saying that the reasons for the dropouts are low academic achievements and no interest in study. This shows that great efforts needed to be made in the teaching and learning process.

In addition, there is no policy framework for professional development of teachers, with no incentives for teachers to enhance their performance or even to guide their practice. Implementing a new curriculum is a major challenge in any education system; thus, an assessment of how teachers and students have received the Palestinian curriculum, and how relevant it is for today's social and economic challenges is most needed.



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With public service being the main source of employment, and very limited possibilities for private sector development, the high rates of enrolment in higher education, in particular in education sciences are understandable, as the ministry of education is the largest employer in the PA. However, this leads into oversupply of graduates; for example, there were over 25,000 graduate applicants for 2,200 new teaching jobs advertised by the MoEHE in 2005.

Addressing the issues of relevance of education to the labor markets. Palestinian society is heavily dependent on youth as the driving force for economic growth. However Palestinian young people continue to suffer from various difficulties, the most important of which is the high rate of unemployment (40 per cent for the 15-24 year-old group). Increased emphasis on comprehensive secondary schooling and a diversified tertiary education system with advanced vocational training are a priority. Addressing the imbalance of the tertiary education system is a key factor to increase relevance to the labor market. Technical colleges and vocational education are costly and have little demand, as their offerings have little relevance for employability. A reform of technical education is therefore a main goal.

In the short term, the main challenge for the education system is to meet the financial requirements for keeping the school system operational. With 90 per cent of MoEHE's expenditures being salaries, finding the mechanisms to guarantee payment of teachers' salaries is the main goal.

By late 2005 in fact, the PA had already reached a position that was fiscally unsustainable, in which assets were being liquidated or mortgaged to meet current salary costs. While the future growth in school enrolments and thus recurrent and capital funding requirements will be considerably lower than during the last decade (at around 2-3 per cent per annum compared to 8-9 per cent between 2000 and 2005), the projected increase in fiscal resources, even under the most favorable conditions, will still not be sufficient to meet these additional funding requirements. This highlights the urgency of improving the efficiency and overall cost-effectiveness of service delivery by schools and other education and training institutions. This will be an important factor in determining availability of resources to move beyond delivery of services, to provide quality of education services.

One key aspect that policymakers in Gaza and the West Bank should take into account is a change in the spending policy of the last few years. To achieve improvement in learning outcomes, MoEHE's spending pattern will have to shift from construction, textbooks and increased number of teachers, to include a more sophisticated set of policies to develop pedagogical methods and practices, monitoring and evaluation,



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and human resources.

The Palestinian education system is characterized by a proliferation of supply-driven projects lacking a strategic vision and/or impact evaluation. Partly as a response to the increasing needs of the school system, combined with the tendency to react to emergency situations, and partly due to shortcomings of international donor coordination, recent years have witnessed a proliferation of donor-funded projects and initiatives, most of them supply-driven, whose sustainability and potential impact are not aligned with the overall goal of developing the education system. Too often, there is duplication of actions, very little coordination of initiatives and no built-in impact evaluation envisaged in these projects.

It is generally agreed that private schools are able to offer a better education than other types of schools. Only in private schools rote learning is being openly challenged, breaking with traditional, authoritarian teacher-centered-method of instruction. If this is a successful model, is it possible to export it to public and UNRWA schools?

ANNEX 1:

Some data about the Education System in the Palestinian Territories

There are three types of schools from perspective of gender in the Palestinian territories: boys' schools (37%), girls' schools (35%), and co-educational schools (29%).



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In the Palestinian territories education system, compulsory basic education includes Grades 1 to 10 and this is divided into the preparatory stage (Grades 1 to 4) and the empowerment stage (Grades 5 to 10). Secondary grade (general secondary education and a few vocational secondary schools) covers Grades 11 and 12.

In tertiary grade, there are 11 universities (10 private and one public) and 11 technical colleges (4 Palestinian Authority, 2 UNRWA, 4 public and 1 private), all of which mainly offer four-year courses. Additionally, there are 19 community colleges (1 Palestinian Authority, 9 public, 2 UNRWA, and 7 private) that mainly offer two-year diploma courses in technical and commercial specializations.

UNRWA schools offer Grades 1 to 10 and do not provide secondary education (Grade 11 and 12). UNRWA's education provision has played a major role in Palestinian territories education since 1967.

Education Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) 2008–2012

It has four goals:

- 1) To increase access of school-aged children and students of all education levels and improve the ability of the education system to retain them (Access).
- 2) To improve the quality of teaching and learning (Quality).
- 3) To develop the capacity for planning and management and to improve the financial and management systems used (Management).
- 4) To realize a gradual conversion of the higher education sector from a supply-oriented to a demand-oriented sector, which will gradually guarantee more compatibility between higher education outputs and labor market(s) need from qualitatively and quantitatively (Relevance).

Goal 1 to 3 is for pre-school, general, non-formal, higher education, and vocational education, and Goal 4 is only for higher education and vocational education.

Pre-Primary Education

Pre-primary education is for children, usually starting at 4 years and up to the age of 6 years. According to the 2004/2005 PCBS Educational Institutions Census, there were approximately 898 private kindergartens, and only 3 operated by the Palestinian Authority. Although most kindergartens are private, the MoEHE provides technical



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and educational supervision, teacher training and licensing, and some funding.

Most kindergartens have co-educational system. Gross enrollment ratios for pre-primary education are 29.9% in total, 30.3% for boys, and 29.5% for girls.

Basic Education

Preparation Stage

In the preparatory stage, a total of 383,748 students (male 195,618 and female 188,130) were enrolled in schools during 2005/2006 school year. Among them, 238,500 students (62 percent of total) were in schools provided by Palestinian Authority, 109,419 students (29 percent) were in schools provided by UNRWA, and 35,829 students (9 percent) were in private schools.

Gross enrollment ratios for preparatory stage are 80.4% in total, 80.4% for boys, and 80.4% for girls.

Empowerment Stage

In the empowerment stage, a total of 569,873 students (male 296,247 and female 283,626) were enrolled in schools during the 2005-2006 school year. Among them, 398,672 students (70 percent of total) were in schools provided by the Palestinian Authority, 145,133 students (25 percent) are in schools provided by UNRWA, and 26,068 students (5 percent) were in private schools. Gross enrollment ratios for empowerment stage were 97.5% in total, 95.7% for male, and 99.5% for female students.

There is a graduating examination in Grade 9. This examination is offered to students who have not completed Grade 9 or have left school and want to achieve a Grade 9 competency level equivalent to the Certificate of General Secondary Education.

Secondary Education

Secondary education consists of two years, and includes an academic and a vocational program. Students are able to select either of these programs, but their right to entry is based on successful completion of Grade 10 based on the results of their final assessments.

In secondary academic education in 2005/2006, a total 118,868 students were enrolled in schools. Among them, most students were enrolled in schools provided by



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the Palestinian Authority (114,790 students, 97 percent of total), and about 3 percent of the students were enrolled in private schools. UNRWA does not provide education at secondary level, gross enrollment ratios for empowerment stage were 97.5% in total, 95.7% for male, and 99.5% for female students.

In secondary vocational education during the 2005/2006 school year, a total of 5,999 students were enrolled in schools. Among them, most students were enrolled in schools operated by the Palestinian Authority (5,653 students, 94 percent of total), and about 6 percent of the students were enrolled in private schools. Gross enrollment ratios for empowerment stage are 97.5% in total, 95.7% for male, and 99.5% for female students. Gross enrollment ratios for secondary education were 75.2% in total, 69.2% for male, and 81.6% for female students.

In the secondary education 2005/2006 school year, there were in total 3,734 classes, of which 185 classes (5 percent) were co-educational. While in the West Bank the share of co-educational classes was 7.4 percent, in the Gaza Strip only 0.1 percent of the total classes were co-educational, in fact only one school.

Certificate of General Secondary Education Examination (Tawjihee) was issued for high school students in grade 12 to prepare them for admission to the universities.

Higher education

The university education consists of four years college education to obtain a bachelor's degree and additional two years for a master's degree. Some colleges provide two years of education for a diploma course. During 2005 in the West Bank and Gaza, there were 10 universities, 1 distance Education University, 13 university colleges, and 19 community colleges. Most of these universities were established and developed mostly since the period of Israel occupation begun in 1967. Majority of the universities are non-profit institutions. They combine fund-raise with funding received from the Palestinian Authority.

In Higher Education Institutions, 138,139 students were enrolled during the 2004/2005 academic year. Among them, 76,650 students (55% of total) were enrolled in universities, 46,453 students (34%) are enrolled in the distance education university, 6,034 students (4%) were enrolled in university colleges, and 9,002 students (7%) were enrolled in the community colleges. The male students share is greater than that of female students in the universities, Open University and university colleges. On the other hand, the share of female students is greater in the community colleges, (MoEHE 2005). Gross enrollment ratios for higher education were 46.2% in total, 41.6% for male, and 50.9% for female students in 2007.



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More students enrolled in certain academic programs such as social science, education, and humanities and arts in higher education, and the share of science and engineering is proportionately less.

Demand for tertiary education has increased significantly in the past decade with students enrolled in tertiary education institutions more than tripling between 1995 and 2006. The MoEHE has developed a new student loan scheme for tertiary education. The objectives of this loan scheme are: 1) to create a sustainable resource that will assist students into the future, 2) to ensure that students understand their responsibility to share the cost of their education, 3) to provide a strong, streamlined repayment system that is easy and fair (repayments of loans must be collected from all students), and 4) to provide a collection mechanism that will ensure sustainability (a revolving fund).

"Inter-university co-operation programs are underway, such as TOKTEN, PEACE and MEDCAMPUS. Partners such as the European Union, UNESCO and the UNDP support them. The PEACE program (Palestinian-European Academic Co-operation in Education) involves 23 Palestinian Authority and European universities. It has been particularly noteworthy for having allowed students and teachers from the West Bank and Gaza to be admitted to European faculties at a time when the university establishments of Gaza and the West Bank were closed. In a second phase, it is to provide for the dispatch of missions of volunteer academics, on sabbatical, from Europe, North America and the rest of the world to the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinian students wishing to obtain a doctorate must study either in Israel, or overseas."

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

There are five streams in school-based vocational training: industrial, agricultural, commercial, hotel and home economics. Fifteen secondary industrial schools offer 17 specializations and 2,185 students are enrolled in 2004/2005. Government funds all but three of these industrial schools. Sixty-four academic secondary schools offer commercial subjects and nearly 3,000 students are enrolled. The two hotel training schools are private. Total students enrollment for the five streams increased from around 3,000 in 1999/2000 to 5,561 in 2004/2005.

In addition to community colleges, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs provides other TVET opportunities. This Ministry runs twelve Rehabilitation Centers that target dropouts, slow learners and 'social cases'. Total enrollments were around 850 in 2004/2005 with 380 graduates. The Ministry of Ex-Detainees also offers TVET to



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around 1,000 students and most of them are males. 450 students are enrolled in the National Institute of Information Technology.

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