



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

INVESTIGATION OF THE LEBANESE GRADE 4 ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE READING CURRICULUM: THE WRITTEN  
AND THE TAUGHT CURRICULUM IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by  
HADEEL JIHAD DBAIBO

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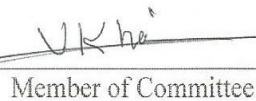
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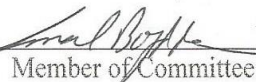
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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

{اَقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ \* خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ \* اِقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ \* الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ \* عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ\*}

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Life Long Learner,  
Hadeel Dbaibo.

# AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Hadeel Jihad Dbaibo for Master of Arts  
Major: Elementary Education- Language Arts

Title: Investigation of the Lebanese Grade 4 English Language Reading Curriculum: The Written and the Taught Curriculum in Public Schools

The purpose of this study was to explore the design of the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum with reference to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 21<sup>st</sup> century basic literacy skills and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). This study investigated the planned learning experiences for reading that teachers prepare to meet the objectives of the existing Lebanese curriculum and the extent to which these also meet 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills/CEFR criteria. Data was collected from 12 Grade 4 English language teachers and English coordinators in 6 representative public Lebanese schools, through semi-structured individual interviews, to ask teachers about their planned learning experiences for reading. The method used to analyze data was based on grounded theory and constant comparison. The findings show that there is partial alignment between the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills/CEFR criteria framework, the Lebanese Grade 4 English reading curriculum, and the planned learning experiences developed by coordinators/teachers. Several hindering factors that made the participants use extra resources were identified.

**Keywords:** EFL; written curriculum; taught curriculum; grounded theory; education reform; curriculum alignment, curriculum re-evaluation.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

“Could it be that the current education reforms have not yet fully dealt with what teaching and learning is all about? In a word, yes” (Williams, ASCD President, 2003, p. 1). This is a powerful question and answer for curriculum designers to consider. The core of the current study is related to the above quote in the sense that it compares the existing written curriculum of the reading skills developed by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and Center for Educational Research Development (CERD) in 1996 with the taught curriculum by teachers of Grade 4, English language Arts. The original idea behind this study came from a course in the Department of Education at the American University of Beirut. The course is entitled “Curriculum & Methodology/Elementary Education Language Arts” which triggered an interest in me to research what elementary students are being taught through the Lebanese English curriculum. To focus this research interest, the Grade 4 English reading curriculum was set as the context for the study. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) were used as the framework for this study; the rationale for selecting these two as the framework for the study is presented in another section of this paper.

In this chapter, an overview of the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum in Lebanon will be presented, and a description of the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum will be discussed. A definition of the different types of curricula will be reviewed, and the origin of the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR

skills criteria will be explained. These sections are meant to set the parameters of this study.

### **A Brief Historical background of the Lebanese Curriculum**

The Arabic language is declared by law to be the national language in Lebanon although French is allowed to be used in certain cases (Article 11 Lebanese Constitution, 1923). However, this has not been the case historically.

**Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century until 1875.** The Maronite School in Rome started in 1584, and many Maronite Christian men went to Rome to get their religious education where they were also taught logic, philosophy, theology, and languages (Latin, Greek, French and other languages) (Bashour, 1978). After that, these Maronite priests came to Syria and Lebanon to open schools where French was taught concurrently with Arabic from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. Aintoura's College was first opened in 1728, but was closed in 1773 due to the expulsion of the Jesuits by the Turkish authorities. In 1834, Aintoura's College reopened. Years later, in 1893, the Aintoura College's principal procured an American Printing Press from Malta which helped in spreading education in Arabic and French, however, no curriculum was developed for English at the time (Bashour, 1978).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many missionaries came to Lebanon, especially Catholic missionaries from France and Evangelicals from the United States and England (Bashour, 1978). These missions established the pioneering universities in Lebanon, the Syrian Protestant College (subsequently the American University of Beirut) in 1866 and Saint Joseph's University in 1875 which was the original name since then until now.



After that, various schools were established by different religious sects. The English language did not have a role during this period (Bashour, 1978).

**From 1875 until 1943.** From 1875 until 1918, Lebanese school education followed the Ottoman curriculum and Christian missionary curricula brought from western countries (Bashour, 1978). After War World I, Lebanon came under the French mandate of the League of Nations of 1920 with the intention to make Lebanon independent in the foreseeable future. French became the language of schooling and an English language curriculum especially in the elementary school was not established during that period (League of Nations Official Journal, 1922).

The Ministry of Education in Lebanon was established in 1924, and it was based on the French model in terms of structure and curricula for all subjects. During that period of time, the Ministry of Education modeled the French curriculum until 1975 while including Lebanese geography and history. The Lebanese Ministry of Education also brought in from the French education system the *Certificat d'Etudes Primaires* in 1928 and the *Brevet* and *Baccalauréat* in 1929. English as a foreign language was not taught explicitly (Bashour, 1978).

**From 1943 until 1968.** In 1943 Lebanon became independent from the French mandate, and it was a period of time where Lebanon had to modify and reflect on economic and social local conditions. There was little or no attention given to the education sector since it was already well established (Bashour, 1978).

**From 1968 until 1994.** Before 1968 the Lebanese curriculum was in the French language modeled after the French curriculum. However, in 1968, the curriculum was redeveloped and written in English and Arabic as well as French. The theoretical framework of the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum was based on the traditional Grammar-Translation Method which was widely used for all second-language teaching (Richards, Rodgers, & Theodore, 2001). Later on, in 1994, a committee of 35 language and literature education experts and practitioners – university professors, Ministry of Education English language experts, and classroom teachers coordinated by Dr. Kassim Shaaban – participated in a curriculum development project. The assigned committee adopted the underpinnings of the English curriculum based on Cummins’s Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and Basic Interpersonal Communications Skills (BICS) theoretical framework which was established in 1979 (Shaaban, 2013). The committee used two frameworks to revise the curriculum: Carter’s 1991 *English National Curriculum in England and Wales* and Van Ek (1991) *Threshold Level for Modern Language Learning in Schools* (since they were seen as matching the learning needs of EFL students in Lebanon (Shaaban, 2013).

**From 1994 until present.** The elements that constituted the new curriculum as stated in the 1994 *Plan for Educational Reform*, include alignment between the needs of the job market and the school, alignment between the academic, vocational, and technical education, staying up to date with the technological development and interaction with the other cultures, and raising the new generation based on values related to rejection of violence and forgiveness (CERD, 1994).

The new 1998 curriculum was grounded in the 1989 Taif Accord that ended the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990). In the Taif Accord, part III- Article F.5, the curricula should be reviewed and constructed in a way that strengthens the sense of national belonging, spiritual, and cultural openness (Taif Accord, 1989). These criteria are mentioned in both the *Plan for Educational Reform* and in the actual English curriculum (CERD, 1998). However, nothing specifically addressed EFL curriculum (Taif Accord, 1989).

### **Lebanese Curriculum Law**

Before discussing the Lebanese curriculum, it is important to have a look at the policies related to regulating and developing the Lebanese curriculum among which is the English curriculum at the elementary school level. Haydmous, Gharib, Al Said Kassim, and Al- Doueihy (2012) identified in the section entitled “Determining the Pre-university General Education Curriculum and its Goals” Decree number 10227 of date May 8, 1997 eight articles related to the Lebanese curriculum two of which are directly related to the current study. Article 3 states that the curriculum is to be under a continuous process of revision by the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD), and should be revised every four years at least (Haydmous et al., 2012). At the elementary level and especially the language component, Supplement #1 named as “The general objectives of the curriculum” specify that the child should acquire linguistic communication skills in terms of understanding, reading, comprehending, writing, and speaking (Haydmous et al., 2012). This means that teachers need to teach the receptive and productive skills taking into consideration new

instructional techniques that will stimulate students to learn in a more effective and interactive way.

### **English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in the Lebanese Curriculum**

In the literature, there are different descriptors used when referring to the teaching of English language in relation to the current study. Some of these abbreviations are: Teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL); Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL); English for Specific Purposes (ESP); English as a Second Language (ESL); Teaching English as a second language (TESL), English Language Learners (ELL); English Language Arts (ELA); Second Language Acquisition (SLA); and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). However, the one that is relevant to the current study and to its context is EFL since the English language is taught as a language in addition to Arabic, the vernacular (Wright, 2010), This is moreover the term used in the Lebanese curriculum (CERD, 1994, 1998).

The existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum is based on Stephen Krashen's theory in relation to the methodologies used to teach language in the Naturalistic Approach (Shaaban, 2013). This approach posits five hypotheses for Second Language Acquisition: acquisition-learning distinction, natural order hypothesis, monitors hypothesis, input hypothesis, and affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1988).

The Lebanese curriculum states that the goal behind EFL is to increase students' motivation to learn and to promote communication in the classroom. These goals were translated into general goal statements and then into more specific performance tasks for

each Grade level in term of: listening, speaking, reading, and writing; in addition to critical thinking, study skills, and cultural awareness (Shaaban & Ghaith, 1997).

### **Brief Overview of the Lebanese Curriculum for Elementary EFL**

The existing Lebanese English language reading curriculum is spiral in nature from Grade 1 until Grade 6 where similar objectives are repeated at different levels to ensure mastery of the objectives (CERD, 1998). The same concepts and skills being taught at different levels of sophistication and complexity throughout the different Grade levels (CERD, 1998). The existing curriculum is characterized by several features. While students are learning the various English language skills, they will also develop their thinking skills. The curriculum is set based on measurable skills with samples of tasks that teachers can follow easily (CERD, 1998). The curriculum highlights the role of group work and communicative language skills (CERD, 1994, 1998).

### **Existing Curriculum**

In the next section there will be a closer look at the existing Grade 4 English language reading curriculum in terms of the underlying principles of the 1998 curriculum, and the actual objectives of the Grade 4 English curriculum. The results of an earlier study (El Amin, 2003) indicated that there was a significant gap between the written curriculum and student outcomes as measured by examinations.

**Underlying principles of the 1998 curriculum.** According to CERD (1998), the underlying principles of the English Language Curriculum are based on meaningful

interactive tasks of social and cognitive nature. The language skills are interdependent which means listening, speaking, reading, writing, and visual representations should work together to ensure an effective communication process.

**Objectives of the 1998 curriculum.** The general objectives of the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum should be looked at to understand the foundations that this curriculum is based on. The objectives are as follows:

- Enabling students to communicate effectively with native and non-native speakers;
- Enabling students to communicate effectively in subject matter areas;
- Equipping students with linguistic skills for pursuing university education;
- Developing students' critical thinking skills; and
- Promoting students' positive attitudes toward the target language and culture (CERD, 1998, p. 8).

The English Grade 4 curriculum is based on themes developed by the *Plan for Educational Reform* (CERD, 1994), such as animals, hygiene, beyond my world, art, and technology. The themes serve the delivery of the objectives through providing a concrete tool to help students learn about the seven skills areas of language: listening, oral communication, reading, written communication, thinking skills, study skills, and cultural awareness (summarized in Appendix A).

### **Types of Curricula, 21st C Skills /CEFR skills, and Reading Skills**

In the following part a definition of the written, taught, and learned curricula will be presented. In addition, a definition of reading skills will be provided.

## **The Written, Taught, and Learned Curriculum**

The **written curriculum** is defined by Glatthorn, Boschee, Whitehead, and Boschee (2005) as “the intended curriculum to ensure that the educational goals of the system are being accomplished” (p.6). This means that the written curriculum is a document that contains all the objectives, goals, and planned learning experiences for reading needed to reach the outcomes of the curriculum.

The **taught curriculum** is defined as being the delivered part of the curriculum, and it is manifested in the teachers’ ability to execute the written curriculum depending on teachers’ methods, resources, and material (Glatthorn et al., 2005).

The **learned curriculum** is defined as, “what the student understands, learns, and retains from both the intentional curriculum and the hidden curriculum” (Glatthorn 1984, p.17). This means that the learned curriculum is about the students’ learning outcomes.

## **OECD 21<sup>st</sup> Century Basic Literacy Skills**

To investigate the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English Language reading curriculum, the OECD 21<sup>st</sup> Century Basic Literacy Skills (hereafter referred 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills) which has been developed through combining the curriculum objectives of different countries OECD (1998) will be used as a point of reference.

The original development of the objectives of the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills curriculum started when twelve member countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States) merged skills found in all of their national curriculum to come up with four groups of competencies in terms of the learning and innovative skills (4Cs): Cooperation;

Communication (technology); Creativity (study skills); and Critical Thinking (literacy) (Rychen, Salganik, & McLaughlin, 2003). The framework has been used as a tool for aligning the curriculum in a number of studies including non-OECD members (Kizildag, 2009; Nardi, 2009; Su, Yang, & Hsiao, 2011).

Figure 1.1. The Partnership for 21st Century Learning (2015): Key subjects, Students' Outcomes, and Support Systems

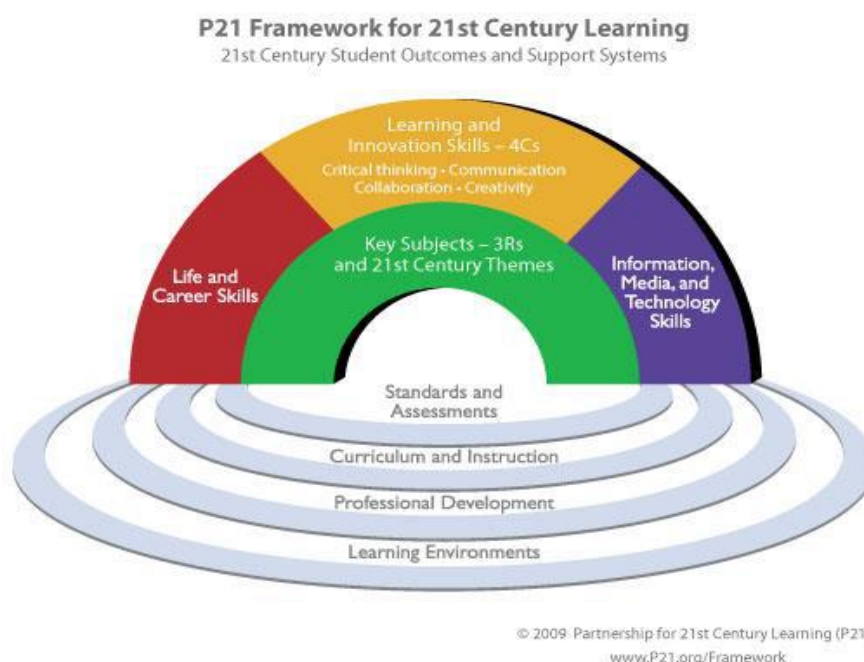


Figure 1.1: Key Subjects in green: Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic

Lebanon has received Official Development Assistance (ODA) from the OECD on several occasions including in year 2011 in relation to the implementation of the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills (DAC List of ODA Recipients Effective, 2011 as cited in OECD, 2014)

For the purpose of this study the specific objective for Grade 4 reading that students should acquire for learning the English language is “Use language, symbols and texts interactively” (Dede, 2009; OECD, 2005).



## CEFR Skills

Since the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills include only one objective regarding reading, the CEFR is used as a support to the original framework. CEFR came out in 2008 including the following language skills: listening, spoken interaction, spoken production, reading, and writing (CEFR, 2008). These five skills were identified in the different cycles: elementary, intermediate, and secondary for the three levels of users: basic, intermediate, and proficient. The CEFR B1+ level was used due to the variation in the level of language that students use (CEFR, 2008). This framework also has been used in curriculum alignment studies (Uygun, 2013; North, 2014). Table 1 lists CEFR reading skills.

Table 1

### *CEFR Language Skills*

<b>Types of Objectives</b>	<b>Specific Objectives</b>
<b>Reading Objectives:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Understand the main points in straightforward texts on subjects of personal or professional interest.</li><li>* identify information that might be of practical use through looking quickly through simple, factual texts in magazines, brochures or on a website, and</li><li>* Identify the main conclusions in texts which clearly argue a point of view.</li><li>* Understand clear instructions for installing computer software.</li><li>* Read simplified versions of novels, plus stories with a clear structure, with little use of a dictionary.</li></ul>

Source: CEFR, 2008

## Reading Methods and Reading Skills in the Elementary School

In order to examine the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum, the study investigated the definition of reading objectives and methods of teaching them. The general definition of reading involves an understanding of written texts through word recognition (perceiving written symbols related to the spoken

language) and reading comprehension (making sense of words and connecting text) (Bernhardt, 2000). The main methods used to teach reading are context clues, literal/inferential questions/comprehension, and integrated reading skills in subject matter areas using authentic and personal planned experiences which are important for teaching techniques (Block & Pressley, 2002; Clay, 1985; Nagy & Scott, 2000). The types of reading skills are the literal, interpretive, critical and creative (Roe, Smith, & Burns, 2005). **Literal comprehension** is defined as reading and getting the meaning as it appears in the text – it is not reading between the lines. **Interpretive comprehension** is defined as reading and understanding the meaning based on the students’ analysis abilities and background information, while **critical comprehension** is reading and getting the meaning based evaluating the state and the quality of the text, and **creative comprehension** is reading and getting the meaning based on different factors including text-grounded factors, such as the quality of the writing, the determination whether a statement is fact or opinion, the objectivity of the author, and whether the text is believable (Pang, Muaka, Bernhardt, & Kamil, 2003). In what follows, the term “planned learning experiences for reading” is going to be used to refer to learning activities, classroom and homework activities, lesson plans, and others. The sub-skills that are going to be addressed in this review of literature in chapter 2 are literal questions, context clues, and integrated reading skills since they are the ones available in the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum objectives (CERD, 1998).

## Rationale

The problem that triggered the current study is the fact that the drop-out rate in Lebanese primary schools is increasing (MEHE, 2011). Many attribute this increase to the low achievement of students in key subjects. Researchers found that low language proficiency hinders students' comprehension of sciences and mathematics in English language (Luykx, 2015). In 2010, MEHE introduced a decree to improve teachers' language and provide extra sessions to improve students' language proficiency in cycle one (MEHE, 2011). In 2013, with the Syrian crisis aggravating the dire conditions of public schools in Lebanon (Fadel, Annhar Newspaper, 2016), and more than 300,000 school age Syrians having come to Lebanon which placed an additional pressure on English teachers as they were not only faced with increased numbers, but also with school age students that have low second language proficiency, specially in reading. This had implications for the existing written, taught, and delivered English curriculum, and projects to overcome the issue were initiated (MEHE, 2011; Save the Children, 2014; UNICEF, UNHCR, Save the Children, & World Vision, 2013; War Child Holland, 2012; D-RASATI, 2013; Mouvement Social, 2011). However, none of the above reports represent empirical studies. These reports did not tackle the alignment between the written curriculum and the planned learning experiences for reading that the teachers prepare to teach students inside the classroom.

A few studies in Lebanon have dealt directly with the English language arts curriculum at the elementary level (El Amine, 2003; El Amine & Jurdak, 2005; Orr, 2011; Shaaban, 2013), but none has tackled the curriculum implemented by teachers, the Taught curriculum. The Ministry of Education in Lebanon benchmarked the Grade 4 English language curriculum in 1994 using the *English National Curriculum in England*

*and Wales and the Threshold Level for Modern Language Learning in Schools*

(Shaaban, 2013), but it has not been benchmarked or reviewed since that time.

Moreover, a preliminary examination of the MEHE planned curriculum reveals that it provides teachers only with preliminary guidelines rather than detailed plans for instruction. As a result, Lebanese teachers need to develop their own plans and in many instances end up making changes and introducing planned experiences to the mandated MEHE curriculum (pers. comm., CRDP employee, 2014).

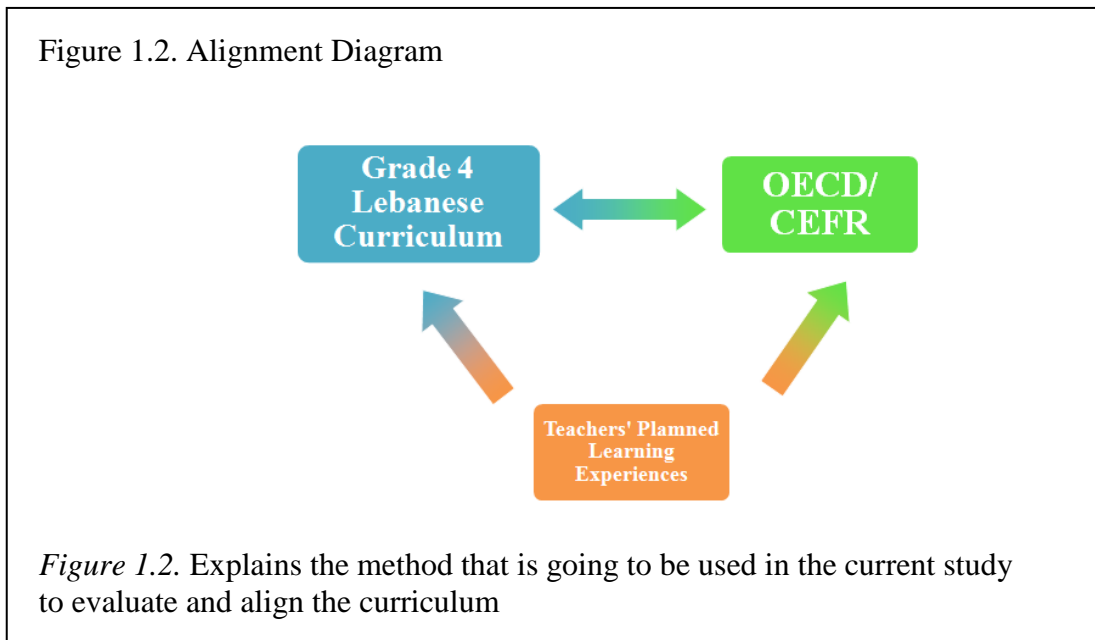
When reviewing research on the English language curriculum in the elementary school in Lebanon, it is found that the main focus of these studies is either on evaluating the textbooks published in Lebanon, or on examining the preparation of teachers to teach English as a foreign language in Lebanon. Other studies have evaluated the elementary science and mathematics curricula as these subjects are taught in French or English (Abdel Ghafour, 2013; BouJaoude, 2003, 2007; Hariri, 2008; Khoury, 2008). However, no studies were found that examined simultaneously the curriculum as planned by MEHE (Written) and the one teachers plan to be implemented inside the classroom (Taught).

As noted earlier, international studies that have investigated the English language curriculum have used 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills/CEFR to benchmark them (Kizildag, 2009; Nardi, 2009; Su, Yang, & Hsiao, 2011; Uygun, 2013; North, 2014). Hence these two frameworks are going to be used to investigate the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum as planned by MEHE and enacted by teachers. The current study will address a major gap in the literature.

## Purpose and Research Questions

The purposes of this study are to explore the design of the Lebanese Grade 4 English language curriculum using the 21<sup>st</sup> C and CEFR skills frameworks as benchmarks, and to explore the planned learning experiences that teachers prepare to teach students the reading skills based on the criteria arising from 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills, CEFR skills, and the curriculum itself. The research questions are:

1. To what extent does the design of the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum address the objectives defined by 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills and CEFR skills?
2. To what extent do the reading planned learning experiences that teachers use, specifically those related to developing the reading skills; align with the objectives of the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum, 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills and CEFR skills as perceived by Grade 4 teachers?



## Overview of the Methodology

The study is conducted in six public schools using four sources for data collection:

1. *Existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum objectives and*

*21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criteria checklist:* An instrument was devised based on the Lebanese curriculum, and 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criteria.

2. *Individual Semi-Structured Interviews:* An interview with 12 public schools’

English coordinators who are also Grade 4 English language teachers were

conducted to investigate how they develop the planned learning experiences for reading to teach reading skills.

Table 2 provides an overview of the methodology.

Table 2

### *Overview of the Methodology*

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Instruments</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<u>Q1:</u> To what extent does the design of the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum address the objectives defined by 21 <sup>st</sup> C Skills and CEFR skills?	- existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum - 21 <sup>st</sup> C Skill /CEFR objectives checklist (Document Analysis)	To explore the design of the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum, with the 21 <sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills match.
<u>Q2:</u> To what extent do the reading planned learning experiences that teachers use, specifically those related to developing the reading skills; align with the objectives of the reading skills of the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum, 21 <sup>st</sup> C Skills and CEFR skills as perceived by Grade 4 teachers?	Individual Semi-Structured Interviews	To explore public schools’ English coordinators and English Grade 4 teachers’ perceptions on how they develop reading planned learning experiences aligned with the curriculum.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of the current study is three-fold: First, none of the studies done related to English language investigated the curriculum as planned by the MEHE and by the classroom teachers of Grade 4; therefore, the study fills this gap. Second, this study tried to benchmark the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum benchmarking shows the strengths and weaknesses of the existing curriculum. Third, this study will provide a framework that can be generalized to evaluate other Grade 4 English language components, and throughout all the elementary school Grade levels.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In an attempt to address the research questions of this study, this chapter will survey the literature. The chapter has two major sections, review of the theoretical literature and review of the empirical research literature concerning English language curricula, reading teaching techniques in the Arab world, and teachers' role in delivering the curriculum.

#### **Review of Theoretical Literature**

##### **Introduction to Curriculum Evaluation**

Planning is an intricate process especially in academia, and more so in schools, where planning for learning is achieved through different phases including articulating a vision, mission, and goals; designing the curriculum; teaching students towards the different objectives and skills that they need to learn; evaluating what students learned; and reflecting on the effectiveness of teachers' delivery of the curriculum (Richards, 2010). The important aspect is designing and evaluating the curriculum through all its pre- and post- planning steps and their alignment with criteria which depends on the accuracy of the written objectives, skills, and teaching strategies (Richards, 2010). This study will investigate the design of the written and taught curriculum to benchmark it to criteria and to what teachers are doing inside the classroom when it comes to planning experiences for reading. Before exploring any type of curriculum, a historical overview of how curriculum definitions were established is in order before presenting a survey of the different types of curricula.



**Curriculum definitions.** The literature provides a variety of curriculum definitions, where each focuses on certain elements. According to Glatthorn, Boschee, Whitehead, and Boschee (2012), curriculum is one of the most difficult concepts since it has been used in different ways throughout history. According to Tyler (1949) as cited in Bailey and Yussuf-Khalil (1998), “curriculum can be defined as a plan for action or a written document that includes strategies for achieving desired goals or ends” (p. 1). This means that the curriculum is a map which includes methods to help reach the desired objectives as prescribed by curriculum designers. Taba as cited in Anglin (1999) claimed that “a curriculum usually contains a statement of aims and specific objective. It indicates some selection and organization of content; it either implies or manifests certain patterns of learning and teaching” (p. 2). This definition presents curriculum as including a list of specific goals organized in a certain way to reach the intended results as planned by the teachers.

Robinson (1983) as cited in Bailey and Yussuf-Khalil (1998) defined the curriculum as:

...a course of learning planned experiences set out for the learner to perform. It denotes those experiences and planned experiences which are devised by the school or other institutions of learning for the purpose of changing a learners’ behavior, acquiring or reinforcing certain skills and preparing them to fit properly into his society. (p. 1).

The authors defined a curriculum as a path that identifies the tasks that students have to do in order to reach the end results and become active members in the society. This shows that the curriculum is defined both from the society and the teachers’ perception. Marshall (2006) defined the curriculum as:

Curriculum as Grade level expectations are clear statements of what students should know and be able to do by the end of each year.

Districts sometimes provide a scope and sequence those maps out the topics for the year, the order in which they should be taught (p.1)

The last definition describes a curriculum from the Grade level perspective where a curriculum is what students will learn each year, and the lessons that should be taught each year based on scope and sequence arrangement.

Although the above definitions agree on stating objectives as an integral element in curriculum design, as for the purpose of this study, focus will be placed on the written and the taught curriculum which would lead to identifying criteria to evaluate the curriculum.

**Definitions of the written curriculum and taught curriculum.** The **written curriculum** is defined as being the actual document that contains the content and material which students are going to be interacting with in the classroom. The written curriculum has its own systematic language that describes the content that teachers should deliver inside the classroom (Porter & Smithson, 2001). The **taught curriculum** is the one delivered to students by the teachers inside the classrooms through using different teaching strategies to transmit the written curriculum. According to Shkedi (2009), the taught curriculum is also called the curriculum. Richards (2010) notes that teachers develop their own curriculum that fits students' needs although the textbook will guide the various planned learning experiences that take place in the classroom. In other words, the teachers combine what they know based on their professional experience, education, and knowledge of their students' abilities; they take the written curriculum and reduce it to manageable pieces to develop the needed tasks from worksheets, to hands-on activities, to different teaching techniques, in order to try and communicate the new modified curriculum (Shkedi, 2009).

What can be inferred from the above definitions is that the written curriculum is developed by professional curriculum designers, yet these definitions are not complete in terms of all the steps needed to design the curriculum. The taught curriculum emerges as a result of the teacher as professional contributor to interpret the intended written curriculum. The teachers – as professionals – supplement the content with tasks, actions, and resources based on their education, experience, and students' abilities.

### **Curriculum Evaluation and Alignment**

One of the widely used methods for evaluating a curriculum is Tyler's Objectives-Centered Model (Backward Design or Understanding by Design) that targets aligning the objectives of teaching with teachers' planned experiences, and evaluation of the outcomes (Tyler, 2013).

Squires (2012) stated that curriculum alignment is the state of matching between two or more elements such as criteria, objectives and goals, competences and skills. A matrix called *The Alignment Matrix* developed by Fenwick English in 1992 was used to align the taught with tested curriculum, tested with written curriculum, and written with taught curriculum (Squires, 2012). The process used to align the written curriculum with the taught curriculum was developed by Porter and Smithson (2001) using the math and science curriculum as an alignment example. They used daily teacher logs and teacher survey instruments to understand how teachers delivered the written curriculum. They then aligned the school's curriculum with that of the national science and math curriculum to determine the congruency between the written and taught curricula for various states (Squires, 2012).

Figure 2.1. The Alignment Matrix

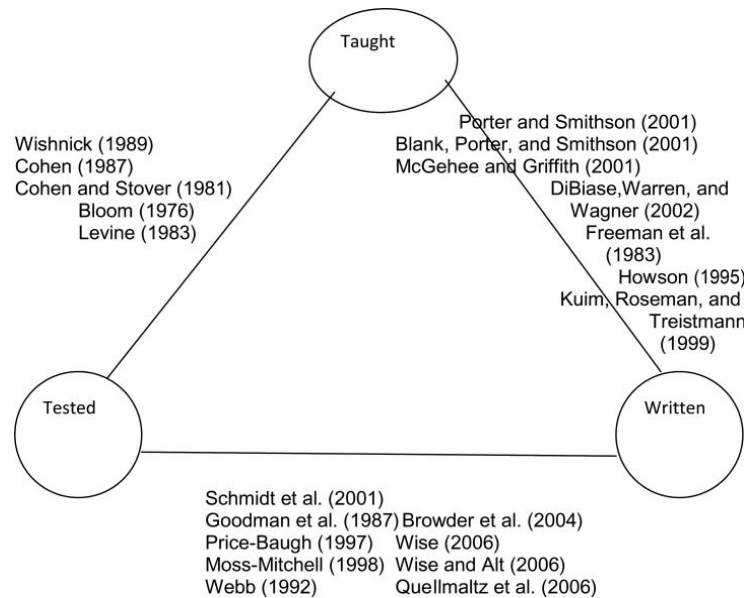


Figure 2.1.: This matrix is used to align the following curricula: taught with tested, tested with written, and written with taught. Adapted from “Curriculum alignment research suggests that alignment can improve student achievement” by Squires, D. 2012, *The Clearing House*.

### Review of Empirical Literature

The previous section discussed the various approaches for designing and evaluating a curriculum, this section will survey some studies that evaluated the curriculum in terms of how it was planned, developed, and delivered in Turkey, Finland, Italy, UK, Taiwan, and the USA. This will provide insights into the methodology that can be used to evaluate a curriculum and will help map what has been done around the world in terms of curriculum studies.

## **English Curriculum Evaluation around the World**

In this part of the empirical literature review, there will be an investigation of different studies that used several criteria in order to evaluate different curricula around the world.

Korkeamäki and Dreher (2011) described the method used to evaluate the core criteria curriculum in Finland. These core criteria provided methods and ways for teachers to know how to teach literacy and English (Korkeamäki & Dreher, 2011). The authors studied eight sections of Grades 1 and 2 through two months of observation to see how teachers taught students literacy. The results show that there was a lack of consistency between the taught curriculum and written core curriculum. This showed also that the effective classrooms were the ones where students did not use workbooks, but learned the English language through concepts, skills, and vocabulary from daily interaction and learning about things freely (Korkeamäki & Dreher, 2011).

Two studies evaluated the curriculum on the national level using 21<sup>st</sup> C skills as a frame of reference for curriculum evaluation. The first study by Kizildag (2009), done in Turkey, involved asking 20 English teachers through interviews about the problems that they faced while implementing the curriculum and how it could be improved. The criteria that this study was based on in terms of curriculum evaluation were the efficacy of language teachers, student motivation and interest, instructional methods in terms of what the techniques were used by teachers to teach students in the best way possible, and the learning environment and materials (Kizildag, 2009). Results showed that the challenges faced by teachers were a lack of understanding of the nature of language teaching, heavy workloads, and crowded classrooms (Kizildag, 2009). The challenges posed by the curriculum were unrealistic learning goals and lack of flexibility,

inappropriate textbooks, lack of supplementary materials, and incompatibility with the realities of the English learning and teaching context of Turkey (Kizildag, 2009). The study also indicated that there was an extra demission to curriculum evaluation which was the socio-economic one, described as lack of support from families students through being unable to learn the English language at home (Kizildag, 2009; Ghaith Shaaban & Harkous, 2007; Paker, 2007; Tilfarlioglu & Ozturk, 2007).

The second study was done in Italy for a similar purpose which was curriculum evaluation (Nardi, 2009). In Italy, the curriculum had never been evaluated in a systematic way using specific criteria; on this occasion, the curriculum was evaluated using students' achievement (Nardi, 2009). Regardless of teachers having had an excellent higher education preparation, they had never been part of the assessment process for the curriculum (Nardi, 2009). An important aspect about the Italian system is that there is no nationwide English Language Acquisition (ELA) curriculum, and each school develops its own which makes it more difficult to reliably assess students' achievement (Nardi, 2009). Curriculum evaluation in Italy according to Nardi (2009) first requires that they unify the curriculum and decide on specific skills and competencies, then develop criteria for curriculum evaluation based on specific objectives, authentic planned experiences, and lifelong skills is a reliable way to use in curriculum evaluation, and the criteria that could be used to evaluate the curriculum are efficacy of language teachers, instructional methods, learning environment, specific objectives, authentic planned experiences, and lifelong skills (Nardi, 2009).

In an attempt to evaluate the English as a Second Language curriculum in the United Kingdom (UK) several reviews were conducted to understand the effectiveness of the curriculum –*The Rose Review*, *The Assessment Report*, and *The Cambridge*

*Review* (Richards, 2010). Criteria used were results from national testing at ages 7 and 11, monitoring of national performance using a bank of items associated with the English curriculum; and professional development related to ELA assessment (Richards, 2010). Richards (2010) claimed that the government did not take into consideration any of the above reviews, and it decided to go back to the curriculum's original purpose which is to stipulate minimum content for subject disciplines (Richards, 2010).

### **Evaluation of the English Curricula in the Arab World**

Upon surveying the literature on studies conducted in the Arab world, it can be noted that most of the studies on curriculum design and assessment investigated the taught curriculum through the teaching techniques rather than the written curriculum which shows that there is a scarcity in evaluating the written curriculum in the Arab world.

Most studies done in the Arab world, mainly in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates Kuwait, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon, studied the effectiveness of the teaching techniques on students' achievement, and a couple of studies evaluated the curriculum objectives. Most of the results came out to say that the techniques used are not effective for teaching language arts.

In Egypt a study done on oral questioning techniques investigated whether this technique enhanced students' critical thinking skills needed for teaching reading (Sheir, Abdel Khal, & El Nabawy, 2014). The results show that different questioning techniques, such as probing, increased students' critical thinking skills; the study

recommended that asking questions should be included in the curriculum document to encourage teachers to use it regularly during teaching (Sheir el at., 2014).

A study done in Kuwait by Al Yaseen (2007) tried to investigate the use of story-telling in EFL. The author used two sources to collect data – interviewing and observation of teachers. The results showed that teachers were using story-telling, but were facing a lot of problems such as content load, lack of training in story-telling, and class size. The study proposed that there should be collaboration between policy makers, teachers, and curriculum designers to include story-telling and training of teachers to apply it in the classroom (Al Yaseen, 2007). Another study in Kuwait was conducted to understand how creativity affects students' learning of EFL through the communicative approach (Alothman, 2012). Alothman (2012) used the correlation method between giving students' creative experiences for reading and improving their EFL communicative skills. Results showed that when both experiences for reading and the objectives of the curriculum contained creative and real life planned experiences, students' achievement improved (Alothman, 2012). The study suggested that the objectives of the EFL curriculum were in need of more authentic experiences for reading, and recommended that this should be one of the criteria to evaluate the current curriculum (Alothman, 2012).

A study was conducted by Al Salmi (2011) in Saudi Arabia on schema (background knowledge) and reading comprehension. The aim of the study was to list the different types of schemata and how they are related to reading comprehension in enhancing students EFL learning. The elements addressed were linguistic schemata, formal schemata, content schemata, and how they are related to reading comprehension. The author came to the conclusion that background knowledge can improve students'



reading comprehension since it builds on previous knowledge, and this could be a criterion for evaluating the current curriculum if scaffolding is included in the curriculum objectives (Al Salmi, 2011).

Sulayman (2011) carried out a study in Iraq to investigate the effects of the pictorial story style on sixth Grade students' vocabulary acquisition. The methodology used was the experimental study with pre-test and post-test design. The theoretical framework used was defining the different types of stories and the usage of each for different purposes. The results showed that the experimental group using pictorial story style did significantly better than the control group (Sulayman, 2011). The author recommended that the curriculum should include a list of specific teaching techniques and methods for teaching reading (Sulayman, 2011). This is relevant to the current study in the way the curriculum should be evaluated, and the reading planned learning experiences and teaching techniques provided for each objective to improve the quality of the curriculum.

In Jordan, Al-Omari and Abdul Rahman (2009) led a study aimed at understanding the problems that teachers face in cycle one when teaching English and tried to find ways to address these problems. The authors used closed-ended and open-ended questionnaire items that addressed the four skills needed to acquire a language (listening, reading, writings, and speaking) (Al-Omari & Abdul Rahman, 2009). The main problem that was identified by the English teachers is the difficulty in teaching reading, and one of the recommendations that came out of the study was to provide authentic and real-life experiences to help students learn reading skills in a practical rather a theoretical way (Al-Omari & Abdul Rahman, 2009).

Al-Subahi (2013) conducted a study to investigate the English curriculum in Saudi Arabia (ESA) in order to understand the drop in grades and the incompetence of intermediate students in using English, in order to produce a better English language syllabus. The author investigated the various domains involved in teaching English: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. He also looked at the teachers' background and the techniques they used to teach English. The tools that he used to conduct his investigation included document analysis, and interviews and questionnaires for intermediate English coordinators teachers, parents, and students. The results of the study included a model for the perfect scenario of an English syllabus after identifying the problems that students are facing, recommending different techniques for teaching, and proposing a set of criteria for English teachers (Al-Subahi, 2011).

In the United Arab Emirates a study was conducted to understand the feelings of teachers during curriculum change (Troudi & Alwan, 2010). Semi-structured interviews were used as well as member-check and document analysis. The results that came out of the study showed that teachers had low morale and were indifferent when it came to changing the curriculum since they were not involved in the process of curriculum change, which was top-down and in which they had no say. The recommendations stressed that teachers are a crucial part of the curriculum change process because they are the ones who deliver the curriculum in the classroom and who know what works (Troudi & Alwan, 2010).

## **Curriculum Evaluation in Lebanon**

Several studies have been done in Lebanon on curriculum evaluation in general and the English language curriculum in particular. The Lebanese curriculum was developed around developmentally appropriate themes for the students' immediate setting at the lower intellectual level and then going to more difficult themes as they move to higher Grade levels (CERD, 1998). The Lebanese curriculum in general has not been evaluated since 1998 which actually contravenes Lebanese law that requires periodic evaluation (CERD, 2014).

A study done for the Lebanese Association for Educational Sciences (LAES) by El Amine (2002) investigated whether there is consistency between the different elements of the existing reading Lebanese Grade 4 English language curriculum and students' achievement. The study concluded with a number of problems including problems in articulating the competencies, scope and sequence not related to culture, and themes to be expanded based on content approach. The study provided a set of recommendations for the Ministry of Education to improve the curriculum (El Amine, 2002).

Another study was conducted by El Amine and Jurdak (2005) who aimed to study reform in general education in terms of the curriculum. The study aimed to illustrate the reasons behind developing a new curriculum and the different elements including books, evaluation, student achievement, and professional development for teachers. This study also investigated the steps taken to develop the new curriculum, and how committees were formulated to represent all the educational community in Lebanon, and the entire Grade levels and subjects. El Amine and Jurdak (2005) ended the study with a number of observations, one of them is that school stakeholders, mainly

the principals and teachers, did not have an active role in terms of planning the curriculum; rather, they were only recipients of what the committees had developed which produced difficulties in the application of the curriculum in the classroom. Another observation was that while this curriculum planning project was a huge and very important step, it did not produce an environment for continuous curriculum evaluation (El Amine & Jurdak, 2005).

Chamout (2007) subsequently conducted a project for her Master of Arts requirement in the Department of Education. Her project aimed to investigate how the integrated curriculum in Lebanon is being delivered across the Grade levels for the entire school. She looked at the reading component to understand how professional development sessions, especially workshops, helped teachers to implement the curriculum correctly (Chamout, 2007). The study resulted in developing a professional development workshop to show how teachers can benefit from such workshops in implementing the integrated curriculum concerning reading in the classroom (Chamout, 2007).

Orr (2011) tried to understand how teachers taught the written curriculum. The study was done to profile Lebanese English teachers through looking at the pre-service and in-service training. Orr (2011) surveyed 715 using semi-structured. Results showed that teachers needed more training in order to deliver the existing curriculum objectives. The recommendations stated that English language teachers should have a reflective and practice-based approach to explore the knowledge of local students and develop their critical reflection skills (Orr, 2011).

The review of literature in the Arab world showed that there are some studies that have explored curriculum evaluation and teaching techniques; however, more

studies that follow structured and standardized techniques are still needed in most Arab countries when it comes to English curriculum investigation.

### **Reading Skills**

The following section will review reading sub-skills because they are the most important ones when it comes to acquiring the reading component of English language acquisition, and they are the ones in the MEHE curriculum (Cox, 1999). The reading sub-skills that are going to be looked at when examining the reading learning experiences planned by teachers are literal questions, context clues, and integrated reading skills through authentic learning because these are the skills identified in the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language curriculum.

#### **Literal Questions**

The argument about the effectiveness of literal versus inferential questions is an ongoing one. A study was done to understand the relation between teachers' literal and inferential questions as a response to 4-year-old children's questions, and how this affects children's vocabulary acquisition (Zucker, Justice, Piasta, & Kaderavekc, 2010). The researcher used classroom observations to detect how teachers and children interacted in terms of inferential and literal questions, and how it affected their vocabulary learning. The study results showed that teachers needed to engage students in questions in order to increase their inferential level of understanding. In addition, the study concluded that literal questions provided a strong background for students to develop their inferential skills (Zucker et al., 2010; Basaraba, Yovanoff, Alonzo, & Tindal, 2013).

Basaraba, Yovanoff, Alonzo, and Tindal (2012) examined the tools used to assess inferential and literal comprehension. The study was conducted with 2,400 Grade five students in fall and spring to understand the tools teachers use to evaluate students' acquisition of inferential and literal comprehension skills. Data was collected by giving students a text, and then asking them a set of inferential and literal questions. The results showed that both are needed for students to gain all the skills associated with acquiring reading comprehension skills (Bassaraba et al., 2012).

### **Context Clues**

These are also becoming an important topic when teaching reading. Ford-Connors and Paratore (2015); and Ghaith and El-Malak (2004) did a review of the literature to survey the studies about teaching vocabulary to older students, and found that traditional ways of teaching vocabulary are still used regardless of their ineffectiveness. The authors discussed new ways of teaching vocabulary were more effective especially the ones related to context. Results of their research showed that the direction of the current research was heading more towards context clues in teaching vocabulary rather than using the traditional memorization ways. Recent research addresses the following topics in teaching vocabulary through reading: extensive reading to gain new vocabulary words; learning strategies including context clues, morphological analysis, awareness of polysemy, and developing word consciousness; direct instruction of single words; and a mixture between direct instruction and specific strategies (Ford-Connors & Paratore, 2015; Ghaith & El-Malak, 2004). This shows that the domain of context clues is well studied and greatly affects the way students acquire reading skills.

Dowds, Rogers, Haverback, and Parkinson (2014), conducted a study to identify the types of context clues that are present in children's literature and that could be used for students to infer meaning. The study was conducted by giving specific clues to students from k-12 and asked them to identify the meaning of certain words and how they knew the meaning (Dowds et al., 2014). The authors were able to identify 15 types of context clues that can be used from k-12. These were association of cause and effect, comparison or contrast, definition or description, language experiences, modifying phrases, nonrestrictive clauses, prepositional phrase, question and answer, referral clue reader, synonym, and tone, setting, and mood.

### **Integrated Reading Skills through Authentic Learning**

Another important aspect is trying to integrate reading skills across other subject areas in the curriculum, such as science. In a study done by Enfield (2014) the aim was to ascertain whether first and second Grade students could transfer the skills they learned while reading narrative and informative texts in science. Results showed that this was true especially in several topics such as weather and motion where students were able to use the skills they learned to read and comprehend the passages (Enfield, 2014). The author ended up by recommending that teachers should use similar topics across subjects to motivate students to use the same skills across all subjects as well.

Bradbury (2014), showed how integrating reading skills in other subjects across the curriculum helps students acquire these subjects in a better way. This study was mainly reviewing what the literature has reported over the past twenty years on integrating reading skills in science; the strategies mostly used were reading aloud, independent reading, reading at home, and hands-on reading planned learning

experiences that linked science content to that of reading skills. Results showed that when language arts and science were combined in different Grade levels, a positive effect on students' outcomes in science was detected. In terms of language arts, eight studies out of eight studies showed that when teachers used integrated instructions, students had a better achievement level than when teachers used traditional method for teaching language arts (Bradbury, 2014).

When it comes to authentic learning and personal experiences, and how they affect students' learning, a number of studies have verified this connection. A study by Carreker, Swank, Tillman-Dowdy, Neuhaus, Monfils, Montemayor, and Johnson (2005), aimed at understanding the connection between interactive video conferencing and how teachers enrich reading lessons through authentic reading planned learning experiences and personal experience. The study measured this connection throughout the academic year of Grades 1 and 2 of schools in Texas through Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). In the case of the teachers who used interactive reading planned learning experiences and authentic learning, students had a higher level of achievement in reading in Grade 3 (Carreker et al., 2005; Nicholas, Rossiter, & Abbott, 2011; Diab, Diab, & Awada, 2016; Arshad, Hoon, & Hashim, 2012).

### **Teachers' Role in Delivering the Taught Curriculum**

This section will explore teachers' role in delivering the taught curriculum. This will also explore how teachers' preparation and professional development help them in preparing reading planned learning experiences that meet the competencies of the Lebanese curriculum.



Teachers define and perceive curriculum in different ways. They define it either as a “go as I teach” curriculum or the more common one is a “follow the book” curriculum (Perna & Davis, 2007). It was found that using criteria as a framework for systematic development of curriculum will reduce the chances of having a gap in learning that is based on teacher preferences or textbook chapters (Perna & Davis, 2007). Rather, teachers’ instructional decisions will become based on a unified document which is the curriculum with the flexibility to change it according to students’ needs (Perna & Davis, 2007).

A study done in Turkey addressed the characteristics that an effective teacher should have (Karakas, 2013). The results came in the form of 22 teachers’ narratives describing that the characteristics of an effective teacher were personality, teaching style, job attitudes, and being knowledgeable in their field (Karakas, 2013; BouJaoude & Ghaith, 2006). For a curriculum to be implemented in the proper way, the teacher needs to have the above characteristics.

### **Conclusion**

The written curriculum was chosen for alignment because it uses specific and systematic words that tell teachers what they should implement in the classroom (Porter & Smithson, 2001). The taught curriculum is chosen for alignment because it is the one delivered in the classroom to students using methods and materials (Shkedi, 2009), and it shows evidentially what is done inside the classroom to align it with the skills intended by the written curriculum. To make this alignment valid, there should be a theoretical framework used to compare both, and in this case the selected theoretical framework is the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills/CEFR specifically because it was applied in many studies

which proves its effectiveness (Kizildag, 2009; Nardi, 2009; Su, Yang, & Hsiao, 2011; Uygun, 2013; North, 2014).

The method used to evaluate the curriculum is Tyler's Objectives-Centered Model (Backward Design or Understanding by Design) to align the curriculum with learning experiences (Tyler, 2013). In terms of curriculum alignment, Porter and Smithson (2001) made use of teacher survey instruments such as interviews to understand how they delivered the written curriculum using the Alignment Matrix to align the written with the taught curriculum (Squires, 2012).

Curriculum mapping involved collecting data as a needs through conducting group interviews with different stakeholders in order to understand what is needed, identifying the points that need revision, developing scope and sequence, and developing the evaluation elements (Jacobs, 2007). In addition to what Richards (2010) stated in terms of the process of English curriculum mapping which included needs analysis, goals, objectives, and competencies, language testing, material development, methodology of language teaching, and on-going program evaluation.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This section will describe the proposed methodology: research design, study site and participants, data collection tools, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures. Another component of this chapter is the trustworthiness criteria of transferability and dependability. Finally, ethical considerations and limitations are addressed.

#### **Research Questions and Scope**

**RQ1.** To what extent does the design of the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum address the objectives defined by 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills and CEFR skills?

**RQ2.** To what extent do the planned learning experiences for reading that teachers use, specifically those related to developing the reading skills; align with the objectives of the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum, 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills and CEFR skills as perceived by Grade 4 teachers?

#### **Research Design**

The research design of this study is qualitative which is “any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Strauss & Corbin, 2008, p. 10). The final results of this study will be reported in the form of word narratives and diagrams rather than numbers. Qualitative research is mainly used to provide rich descriptive data of a certain phenomenon under study and to capture the perspective of those that are experiencing that phenomenon

(Strauss & Corbin, 2008). In this study, the curriculum data will be analyzed qualitatively, described, and data on teaching strategies will be collected from 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Arabic teachers.

Grounded theory methodology guided the data collection and analysis process. As explained by Bryant and Charmaz (2007), grounded theory methodology can help researchers develop categories grounded in the data collected and to also derive properties and connections between the different categories. The basic process of grounded theory is theoretical coding (memos) that consists of writing theoretical notes and connecting them to the conceptual theories that came out from the review of literature (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Then comes open coding which involves line-by-line coding and analysis of data in order to come up with accurate codes without leaving any phrase uncoded (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). After that there is selective coding where the researcher has a role in constructing meaning out of these codes and offering his or her interpretation of the data that was collected (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

Data analysis under the grounded theory methodology follows the constant comparative method whereby codes are compared within and across categories as well as compared against the theoretical codes that were developed. Constant comparison is an on-going process that continues until theoretical saturation of data is reached where there are no more patterns or categories that can be inferred from the data to form the properties of the categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967 as cited by Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). This will result in linking all the individual categories together into a conceptual understanding of the field data that is grounded in that data as well as constructed while taking into consideration the insights derived from the review of literature initially conducted and analyzed (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

## **Study Site and Participants**

### **Study Site**

The population from which the sample was drawn was all public schools that use English as a medium of instruction in the Greater Beirut area. The reason for choosing public schools is that they exclusively follow the official Lebanese curriculum, unlike private schools which in many instances supplement the Lebanese curriculum with elements of foreign curricula (CERD, 1998). This amounted to 63 public schools (CERD, 2015). The criteria to choose the schools for this study were:

- English-medium (alongside Arabic)
- Schools that operate cycles one and two (Grades 1-6)

After exploring the public schools in Greater Beirut Area, a total of 6 schools were found to be both English-medium and to operate cycles one and two.

### **Participants**

The selected participants consisted of English language coordinators of the six public schools, and 12 Grade 4 English Language teachers in those schools.

The following table offers demographic information about the 6 selected schools and the coordinators/teachers interviewed. Table 3 includes the following: total number of students in the school; cycle 1 & 2 number of sections; cycle 1 & 2 numbers of students. Table 3 shows the academic background and the years of experiences of the 12 participants.

Table 3

*Schools' General Demographic Information*

	<b>Total Number of students in the school</b>	<b>Cycle 1&amp;2 Number of Sections</b>	<b>Cycle 1&amp;2 Number of students</b>
<b>School 1</b>	206	9	206
<b>School 2</b>	457	13	271
<b>School 3</b>	897	31	798
<b>School 4</b>	262	7	190
<b>School 5</b>	550	17	436
<b>School 6</b>	247	6	178

**Data Collection Tools**

The following table shows the research questions each with the corresponding tool that was used to collect the needed data to answer that question.

Table 4

*Relationship between research questions and tools*

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>LC, OECD/CEFR Checklist</b>	<b>Tools</b> <b>Coordinators' and Teachers' Semi-Structured individual Interviews</b>
RQ1. To what extent does the design of the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum address the objectives defined by 21 <sup>st</sup> C Skills and CEFR skills?	X	
RQ2. To what extent do the reading planned learning experiences that teachers use, specifically those related to developing the reading skills; align with the objectives of the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum, 21 <sup>st</sup> C Skills and CEFR skills as perceived by Grade 4 teachers?		X

### **Public Records (Curriculum)**

This study employed public records as the main source of data collected to answer the research questions. Public records are defined as “official documents of ongoing records of an organization’s planned experiences. Examples include: curriculum, policy manuals, and strategic plans” (Administration methods, 2012, p.1). The current study used the Lebanese Grade 4 English language curriculum (CERD) adopted in 1997. Also used were documents that reflect the taught curriculum in the light of the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills (See Appendices A & B).

### **Semi-Structured Individual Interviews**

The Semi-structured individual interview is a combination between structured and unstructured interviews where the interviewer does not have all the questions that s/he will pose. Rather, the interviewer will have a set of questions that different weighting will be given to during the process of data collection depending on the flow of the ideas from the interviewee (Berg, 2001). The semi-structured interviews were conducted with coordinators and teachers to examine the planned classroom experiences for reading that they prepare for students in order to learn the reading skills. This was done to understand what English coordinators and teachers develop in terms of classroom planned learning experiences for reading (See Appendix C).

The interview questions were written in English and they were posed in English, however, the coordinators/teachers used Arabic most of the time to respond. Therefore, the researcher had to translate their Arabic responses to English.

## **Data Collection Procedures**

The data collection procedure was derived from the purpose of the current study and was guided by the review of studies that share its purpose and/or methodology (examples: Caulkins, 2010; Volante & Ben Jaafar, 2008; Elwood, 2009; Korkeamäki & Dreher, 2011; Nardi, 2009; Richards, 2010; Silverman, 2010; Shaaban, 2013; Willis, 1996). In this section the steps taken for the data collection will be presented.

### **Document Analysis**

This process included: gaining permission from MEHE to enter public schools, getting access to the national curriculum document, and obtaining classroom teaching material. The last of these consisted of: teachers' guide (instructional objectives, listening skills, oral skills, reading skills, writing skills, thinking skills, cultural awareness, grammar objectives, reading book, activities/answers, workbook activities/answers, ideas for teachers, and unit assessment activities/answers); textbook part 1 & 2 (themes, units, lessons: (listening activity, passage, comprehensive questions, vocabulary planned experiences, and grammar planned experiences)); and workbook (themes, units, planned experiences (sentence completion, sentence fragments, make a story using pictures, passage/comprehension questions, matching activities, and group work planned experiences)).

Documents were also collected from the participants who were asked to provide the planned learning experiences for reading that they have prepared individually to supplement the content of the curriculum such as *دفتر الصف* = (Classroom Book in Arabic); activities on scratch papers prepared by teachers, and handout planned experiences from the internet and private schools' books. As a part of member checking



and to verify the results of this analysis, an expert in elementary Language Arts at the American University of Beirut verified them.

### **Semi-Structured Individual Interviews**

The first step was to get the administrative approval from MEHE to access to public schools. The second step was to approach principals by telephone to get the administrative approval to conduct individual interviews with English coordinators and Grade 4 teachers. The third step was sending an email to the administrative assistant of the elementary level to ask coordinators and teachers to participate in the study. For the fourth step, individual interviews were conducted with coordinators and teachers who accepted to voluntarily participate. Individual interviews took place in a private room in the school. The duration of the individual interview was around 15-30 minutes. An expert in qualitative methodology verified the results of the interviews.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

This study aimed to investigate the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum by comparing it to international criteria, and then explore the taught curriculum through interviews carried out with coordinators and teachers. Grounded theory guided the data analysis. The constant comparative method was used to derive categories and formulate propositions on the level of similarity between the Lebanese English curriculum as designed and as planned and the selected international criteria. Constant comparison was applied to compare the data from the documents as well as the transcribed data from the individual. Participants were asked about the themes derived from the individual interviews, and not direct questions about their answers, to

avoid conflict of interest between coordinators and teachers, as a form of member check. All data collected was examined against the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criteria adopted for this study (See Appendices A & B).

Following the constant comparative method of data analysis of the grounded theory methodology, themes were derived. The criteria adopted for the study were grounded theory terminology held provisionally while attention was given to the theme emerging from the data itself. Comparisons were made along the process and decisions made in term of the level of alignment. Notes were taken to document evidence that supports the judgment, and also to provide descriptions that capture the nature of this alignment.

### **Trustworthiness Criteria**

Trustworthiness criteria are chosen to judge the quality or goodness of qualitative inquiry (Schwandt, 2007). The trustworthiness criteria for this study were transferability and dependability.

### **Transferability**

Transferability is defined as providing enough information that makes the study replicable in another context (Gall et al., 2014). In the current study this was ensured through providing a detailed description in terms of the participants, site, tools to explore the curriculum, and through triangulation. Triangulation is the strategy to collect the same data through different sources to verify the results of the findings and omit discrepancies in the results (Gall et al., 2014). For this study, triangulation was achieved through collecting the same information from different sources. For example,

for the second research question data was collected from document analysis, semi-structured individual interviews.

### **Dependability**

Dependability is a criterion used to describe the findings that represent the phenomenon being studied that are strong enough and backed up with authoritative evidence where the process is logical and traceable (Schwandt, 2007). For this study, dependability was ensured through gathering data from two sources which aimed at member checking. Member check is done through sharing the developed codes/themes by one or more researchers to check if they came up with the same results, and refinement is carried out accordingly (Gall et al., 2014).

### **Ethical Considerations**

This study followed the ethics code for conduct for social science research adopted by the Institute Research Board (IRB) that is adopted at the American University of Beirut. The current study did not pose any to the participants (English coordinators and Grade 4 English teachers in public schools). The study was not conducted until full approval was given by the American University of Beirut Institutional Review Board (AUB-IRB). Before conducting any interview, consent was given by the participating coordinators and. The participants had the right to withdraw at any time they wanted from the study without any consequences. They were promised that this would not affect their professional career, their position in the school, or their relationship with the American University of Beirut.

A code was created for the schools where each of the six schools was coded by a flower name (Daisy, Lavender, Lilac, Orchid, Mariposa, Jasmine, and Rose). Participants were coded by the school and the type of participant they represent: C for coordinator and T for teacher. For example, Daisy: C/Daisy – T1/Daisy. The planned learning experiences for reading (documents) provided by the teachers were anonymized.

### **Limitations**

The study was intended to investigate one Grade level and one component of EFL which is reading. A larger study would need to extend the scope of the work to include all Grade levels and other English skills.

The scope of the study was limited to only six urban public schools. A more comprehensive study would involve both English and French-medium schools in both rural and urban areas. The current study can therefore not be used to draw general conclusions about EFL in Lebanon.

The study is also limited to the fact that it did not collect data pertaining to how the planned curriculum was actually taught at the classroom level. Rather this study has investigated the planned learning experiences for reading of teachers before they enter the classroom to teach students the needed skills to reach the intended reading objectives.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the design of the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum with reference to the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills/CEFR criteria as a framework to benchmark this curriculum, and to investigate the reading planned learning experiences that teachers prepare in order to reach the learning outcomes of this curriculum and examine their alignment with the national criteria and international criteria set by 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills/CEFR framework. The research questions were:

1. To what extent does the design of the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum address the objectives defined by 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills and CEFR skills?
2. To what extent do the planned learning experiences for reading that teachers use, specifically those related to developing the reading skills; align with the objectives of the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum, 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills and CEFR skills as perceived by Grade 4 teachers?

This chapter consists of two sections, which present the following: (1) a comparison between the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR criteria with the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum skills; (2) an examination of the alignment between the planned learning experiences for reading pertaining to English language reading skills that teachers prepare with the learning objectives of the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum and 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR framework.

## **Comparison between the 21st C Skills/CEFR Criteria and Existing Lebanese Grade 4 English Language Reading Curriculum Skills**

This section answers the first research question: to what extent does the design of the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum address the objectives defined by 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills and CEFR skills?

There are a total of six criteria examined in the respective tables, which include:

1- Use language, symbols and texts interactively; 2: Understand the main points in straightforward texts on subjects of personal or professional interest; 3: Identify the main conclusions in texts, which clearly argue a point of view; 4: Read simplified versions of novels, plus stories with a clear structure, with little use of a dictionary; 5: Identify information that might be of practical use through looking quickly through simple, factual texts in magazines, brochures or on a website; and 6: Understand clear instructions for installing computer programs.

### **Criterion1: Use Language, Symbols and Texts Interactively**

According to the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criteria, the first criterion that should be present in a curriculum to ensure that students acquire the needed reading skills is “Use language, symbols and texts interactively”. This criterion is covered in the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum as: “*Generate and discuss various types of literal questions*” and “*answer inferential questions*”. Fourth Grade students use language, symbols and texts interactively as a result of being engaged in discussions focused on answers generated by literal and inferential questions.

Table 5

*Use language, symbols and texts interactively*

<b>21<sup>st</sup> C Skills/CEFR criteria</b>	<b>Existing Lebanese Grade 4 English Language Reading Curriculum Skills Objectives</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Partially Present</b>	<b>Not Present</b>
- Use language, symbols and texts interactively	- Generate and discuss various types of literal questions - Answer inferential questions	✓		

**Criterion 2: Understand the Main Points in Straightforward Texts on Subjects of Personal or Professional Interest**

According to the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criteria, the second criterion that should be present in a curriculum to ensure that students acquire the needed reading skills is “*Understand the main points in straightforward texts on subjects of personal or professional interest*”. This criterion is reflected in the existing reading curriculum through the following statement: “*Relate information to personal experience and other content areas*”. Fourth Grade students can better understand the main ideas present in straightforward texts when exposed to topics and different content areas that are related to personal experiences.

Table 6

*Understand the main points in straightforward texts on subjects of personal or professional interest.*

<b>21<sup>st</sup> C Skills/CEFR criteria English Language Reading Skills Framework</b>	<b>Existing Lebanese Grade 4 English Language Reading Curriculum Skills Objectives</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Partially Present</b>	<b>Not Present</b>
- Understand the main points in straightforward texts on subjects of personal or professional interest.	- Relate information to personal experience and other content areas	✓		

**Criterion 3: Identify the Main Conclusions in Texts which Clearly Argue a Point of View**

The third 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criterion that should be present in a curriculum to ensure that students acquire the needed reading skills is “*Identify the main conclusions in texts which clearly argue a point of view*”. This criterion is not inherent in the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum objectives “*Determine the mood, setting, characters, plot, etc. of a story*” and “*Sequence events in chronological order and chart events in a story*”. It can be inferred that for Fourth Grade students to be able to argue from differing points of view, they need to identify main ideas of a story/passage and sequence events chronologically. However, the way the objective is stated does not highlight how students can formulate their point of view



through identifying main ideas and different events of the passage, as an outcome of this examination.

Table 7

*Identify the main conclusions in texts, which clearly argue a point of view.*

<b>21<sup>st</sup> C Skills/CEFR criteria English Language Reading Skills Framework</b>	<b>Existing Lebanese Grade 4 English Language Reading Curriculum Skills Objectives</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Partially Present</b>	<b>Not Present</b>
- Identify the main conclusions in texts which clearly argue a point of view	-Determine the mood, setting, characters, plot, etc. of a story. - Sequence events in chronological order and chart events in a story.			✓

**Criterion 4: Read Simplified Versions of Novels, Plus Stories with a Clear Structure, With Little Use of a Dictionary**

The fourth criterion that should be present in a curriculum “*Read simplified versions of novels, plus stories with a clear structure, with little use of a dictionary*”.

This criterion is present in the Lebanese Grade 4 curriculum as follows: “*Demonstrate awareness of the linguistic and organizational structure of written discourse*”;

“*Recognize the meaning of common prefixes*”; and “*Use context clues to get meaning*”.

By demonstrating an understanding of organizational structure of written discourse such as deriving the meaning of prefixes and using context clues, fourth Grade students are

enabled to read with little use of a dictionary simplified versions of novels and stories with a clear structure.

Table 8

*Read simplified versions of novels, plus stories with a clear structure, with little use of a dictionary.*

<b>21<sup>st</sup> C Skills/CEFR criteria English Language Reading Skills Framework</b>	<b>Existing Lebanese Grade 4 English Language Reading Curriculum Skills Objectives</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Partially Present</b>	<b>Not Present</b>
- Read simplified versions of novels, plus stories with a clear structure, with little use of a dictionary	- Demonstrate awareness of the linguistic and organizational structure of written discourse - Recognize the meaning of common prefixes. - Complete short cloze passages. - Use context clues to get meaning.	✓		

**Criterion 5: Identify Information that Might be of Practical use Through Looking Quickly Through Simple, Factual Texts in Magazines, Brochures or on a Website**

The fifth criterion that should be present is “*Identify information that might be of practical use through looking quickly through simple, factual texts in magazines, brochures or on a website*”. This criterion is partially present in the existing Lebanese

Grade 4 English language reading curriculum and is stated as follows: “Develop basic comprehension of written discourse”. Fourth Grade students might learn to identify information that might be of practical use when they develop better comprehension. However, the fact that the objectives do not specifically target the skills needed to skim-read any related different types of written discourse and identify information in it for practical use, in different media including websites, leaves this criterion short of completely being met.

Table 9

*Identify information that might be of practical use through looking quickly through simple, factual texts in magazines, brochures or on a website.*

<b>21<sup>st</sup> C Skills/CEFR criteria English Language Reading Skills Framework</b>	<b>Existing Lebanese Grade 4 English Language Reading Curriculum Skills Objectives</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Partially Present</b>	<b>Not Present</b>
- Identify information that might be of practical use through looking quickly through simple, factual texts in magazines, brochures or on a website	- Develop basic comprehension of written discourse		√	

**Criterion 6: Understand Clear Instructions for Installing Computer Programs**

The sixth criterion is “Understand clear instructions for installing computer programs”. Careful examination of the objectives of the existing Lebanese Grade 4

English language reading curriculum did not yield any statement or indication that this criterion is addressed.

Table 10

*Understand clear instructions for installing computer programs.*

<b>21<sup>st</sup> C Skills/CEFR criteria English Language Reading Skills Framework</b>	<b>Existing Lebanese Grade 4 English Language Reading Curriculum Skills Objectives</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Partially Present</b>	<b>Not Present</b>
- Understand clear instructions for installing computer programs				✓

The next section presents the results of the examination of the different reading planned learning experiences, the resources and strategies teachers used while implementing the curriculum.

### **Alignment of the Reading Planned Learning Experiences with the objectives of the Written Curriculum**

This section addresses the second research question: to what extent do the reading planned learning experiences that teachers use, specifically those related to developing the reading skills; align with the objectives of the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum, 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills and CEFR skills as perceived by Grade 4 teachers?

According to the twelve English language coordinators and teachers interviewed (see Appendix D for sample transcript), the reading planned learning experiences covered the following reading skills as outlined in the Grade 4 reading curriculum and that align with the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR framework: (a) context clues-vocabulary exercises; (b) comprehension skills planned experiences through collecting supplementary reading texts; (c) inferential/literal (literary) questions reading planned learning experiences; (d) experiences to identify story elements; (e) skills for planning authentic experiences; and (f) Using the Internet to develop reading planned learning experiences.

### **Planning Context Clues-Vocabulary Experiences**

According to nine out of the twelve coordinators/teachers, designing reading planned context clues vocabulary learning experiences was one of the reading learning planned experiences that they introduced in the classroom. The coordinators/teachers talked about how they develop such learning experiences. These included answering multiple choice items, writing new words on the board, cloze procedure, engaging in dialogue using vocabulary words, reading a short story to explain vocabulary words, and examining pictures and using flash cards to derive the meaning of words. A Grade 3 teacher, who had taught Grade 4 before, T6-Jasmine, noted that, “I used to ask students to understand the meaning of the passage from understanding the meanings of the difficult words using context clues. Context clues are to use clues or words from the sentence that explains that difficult word.”

One Grade 4 teacher, T12-Lilac, mentioned that

Usually I have to select the main vocabulary words, bring some pictures, to try to get from students the main words, put them in

sentences, on cards, and then I show them cards and pictures. I start with this, then when they know the vocabulary word that I want to highlight in the lesson, they know the meaning of them, but in the English Grade 4 books they don't start with this, they start directly with the reading passage...

The context clues-vocabulary planned learning experiences designed by coordinators and teachers seemed to address both objectives of the curriculum and the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criteria. Through these reading planned learning experiences, students will be able to develop the skills needed to understand the meaning of the words and use them to understand the text they are reading.

### **Planning Comprehension Skills Planned Experiences for Reading**

According to eight out of twelve coordinators/teachers in this study, designing reading comprehension reading planned learning experiences was another practice that they presented in the classroom. The coordinators/teachers shared ideas related to developing reading planned learning experiences related to reading comprehension exercises. These included paraphrasing, summarizing passages/events, conducting conversations, introducing a variety of passages, asking student's comprehension questions and recording their responses on the board, engaging in structured dialogues, and filling in charts/Venn-diagrams. A Grade 4 coordinator teacher, C2-T2-Liliac, stated that:

We start with brain storming using some pictures read a passage and have conversations about it and then make some questions and fill in the blanks we focus on the new words that can be used in another text then this is for the comprehension... We start with brain storming using some pictures to read a passage and have conversations about it and then make some questions and fill in the blanks we focus on the new words that can be used in another text then this is for the comprehension... I do a lot of conversation, we do a lot of questions and answers and we write the answers on the board and they write it. But I can't use the old preparation at all... I do a lot of conversation, we do a

lot of questions and answers and we write the answers on the board and they write it. But I can't use the old preparation at all.

The reading comprehension learning experiences designed by coordinators and teachers seemed to address the objectives of existing Grade 4 reading curriculum and the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills/CEFR framework. Through these reading planned learning experiences, students will be able to develop the needed skills read text, process it, and understand its meaning.

### **Planning Inferential/Literal (Literary) Questions Experiences**

None coordinators/teachers claimed that designing inferential and literary questions/exercises was one of the reading planned learning experiences that they introduced in the classroom. Two out of twelve of the coordinators/teachers mentioned planning experiences for responding to inferential questions, although only two coordinators/teachers mentioned planning experiences for responding to literal questions. According to Grade 1, 2, and 3 coordinator; and Grade 3 and 4 teachers, C4-T4-Orchaid and T11-Rose, these reading planned learning experiences were “The Wh-questions”. Another said, “The book should contain questions that the students can answer them [sic] directly from the text... how to pull out the answer from the text...”

The inferential/literal (literary) questions planned learning experiences designed by coordinators and teachers seemed to address both objectives that of the existing curriculum and the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills/CEFR framework. Through these reading planned learning experiences which are asking Wh-questions related to the passage (no specific example was given), students will develop the skills needed, to dig for answers and use

hints/clues from the text after comprehending it in order to answer literal/inferential questions.

### **Planning Experiences to Identify Story Elements**

According to two of the coordinators/teachers in this study, designing learning experiences to identify elements of a story was another practice that they presented in the classroom. The coordinators/teachers included the following in planned learning experiences: games, puzzles, having another ending for the story, and imagination exercises. A Grade 1, 2, and 3 teacher, who taught Grade 4 before, T12-Lilac, described her planned experiences as follows: “Let’s try to find other solution(s) for the problems, things to do after reading. One thing I did for them is to let them imagine that this is not what happened, and imagine a new ending or new events to help them develop further comprehension skills and read in a deeper way.”

The planned learning experiences to identify story elements designed by coordinators and teachers seemed to address the objectives of the Lebanese Grade 4 English language curriculum and the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criteria. Through story elements reading planned learning experiences, students will be able to develop the skills needed to identify the story elements including characters, plot, setting, conflict, and theme to analyze them and understand the moral behind the story. However, the practice did not appear to be widespread. One of the reasons for this is that any deviation from the official curriculum is severely frowned upon.



## **Planning Authentic Experiences**

According to two of twelve coordinators and teachers who participated in this study, designing authentic reading learning experiences was another practice that they. The coordinators/teachers revealed that they planned authentic learning experiences such as role play, simulation games, and solving real-world problems. A Grade 3 teacher who had taught KG before, T11-Rose, teacher described her planned experiences as follows:

You need to give students main themes and examples that they live in, they should feel it and relate it to previous experiences... I ask them at the beginning general questions. For example, if I ask them, to which park did they go? They tell me, "I went to Kaskas or Sanayeh."

The authentic learning experiences designed by coordinators and teachers did seemed to address the objectives of the curriculum and the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills/CEFR framework. Through these planned learning experience, students will be able to explore, discuss, and meaningfully construct concepts to help solve real-life problems that are relevant to students. Again, however, only a few teachers appear to enact this alignment because it represents a deviation from the official curriculum.

## **Using the Internet to Plan Learning Experiences**

According to three of the twelve coordinators/teachers interviewed, designing internet based reading planned learning experiences was another practice that they engaged in. ideas related to developing such learning experiences. These including: pulling out worksheets, exploring new cities, and getting ideas to explain abstract concepts. A public school Grade 1, 2, and 3 coordinator and teacher, C4-T4-Orchaid, explained how she used the Internet to plan her experiences: "I get a lot of things from the Internet like games and passages, for my lessons". Another public school Grade 3 teacher, who taught KG before, T10-Rose, said: "We don't have plan experiences, we have

reading text 1-2 pages, we have pre-reading steps of course from the internet and I took some from private schools that I know”.

The internet based reading planned learning experiences designed by coordinators and teachers seemed to address the objective of the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum objective and 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills/CEFR framework. Through this internet based reading planned learning experiences designed by teachers and coordinators, students will be able to develop skills of how to read, using interactive reading planned learning experiences, and learn about other cities using virtual replications of different cities around the world.

The next section is going to address the resources that the participants used for planning the experiences.

### **Resources for Planning Learning Experiences**

When asked to describe the learning experiences they designed to support the available materials in the national curriculum, teachers and coordinators in this study provided information about the three sources they relied on while planning the learning experiences. These resources were (a) relying on prompts, personal contributions; (b) books and planned experiences from private schools; and (c) pre-planned lesson plans in teachers’ guides.

### **Relying on Teachers’ Creativity and Personal Resourcefulness**

Eight out of the twelve coordinators/teachers talked about relying on their creativity and resourcefulness. These participants stated that they developed planned learning experiences based on selecting ideas from stories and magazines, activity

booklets, and the teachers' guide. A Grade 1, 2, and 3 coordinator and teacher, C4-T4-Orchaid, explained how she planned experiences based on her own initiatives:

For example, I have a lesson about garbage how to recycle, sometimes I don't have Internet or anything, I usually use the water bottle as visual aids, and I used the pyramid shape of the Bonjus bottle. Sometimes there are a lot of things that I don't have, so I invent them from my own. I depend on my own effort...

Another Grade 3 teacher who taught KG before, T6-Mariposa, noted that:

Sometimes I rely on the teachers' guide; sometimes I rely on my own experience... I Studied in *مركز المعلمين* (Teachers' Training Center in Arabic - HD); and I did training on the new curriculum. I have the books and the lectures at home ... They train us directly in schools. I also take into consideration the students' needs. I jot down the skills, for example today students should be able to identify the pictures, tell about them, and try to explain what is in each picture.

### **Consulting Books and Activities Used In Private Schools**

Two of the twelve coordinators/teachers reported that they make use of English language school books especially private school English language books because they believed that the planned experiences for reading are more enriching and effective than the textbook produced by MEHE. According to the participants they also used visual aids, flash cards, and games. One Grade 3 teacher, who taught KG before, T10-Rose, described how she used these resources to plan her leaning experiences:

For example, teachers can use different resources like visual aids and flash cards to explain the words in English. Thus, teachers are not obliged to translate English words in to Arabic. However, such ideas for different resources are not found in public schools, that is why teachers look at what private schools do, so that they can use them.

Another cycle 1 teacher, who taught Grade 4before, T12-Lilac, likewise noted:

I tend to consult private schools when it comes to activities since they use games and puzzles which help students to learn sentence structure and vocabulary in a better way. However, this is not available in the public schools' books or guides.

## **Using Teachers' Guides**

Coordinators/teachers reported using pre-planned lesson plans from the Teachers' Guides as resources while planning the learning experiences for their students. They contended that these resources were rich with creative planned experiences. Five out of the twelve coordinators/teachers talked about lesson plans when it came to developing planned learning experiences for reading. According to the participants, they referred to pre-planned lesson plans to develop their own student-related learning experiences based on Bloom's taxonomy and appropriately adjusted to students' abilities and learning needs. Hence, these pre-planned lesson plans served as a reference to help the participants develop their own lesson themes, units, warm-up planned experiences, and pre-, during, post-, reading strategies as a means to improve students' reading skills. A Grade 4 teacher, T1-Daisy, described her planned experiences as follows:

I put what they are going to learn from this lesson, mainly the skill, warm up questions, I developed two units' activities and material that I am going to use explanation, even the explanation I don't do it[sic], I ask the students and they help me with those things activities like matching change the fragments to sentences, things related to sequence as well.

## **Strategies to Deliver the Planned Learning Experiences for Reading**

According to participants, two strategies are implemented to deliver the planned learning experiences: integration of English reading skills including English language sub-skills with other disciplines taught at school, development of, and communication and recitation through visual aids and role play planned experiences.

## **Integration of English Reading Skills in other Disciplines**

Participants gave a clear description of two types of integration. The first is to integrate the different skills of one subject area with another subject area (e.g. sciences, math, and geography). The second is to teach a certain English language sub-skill, i.e. reading, writing, listening, and speaking, across different disciplines. Participants believed that both strategies facilitated students' ability to grasp and master the reading skill and practice this skill in multiple scenarios and different circumstances. However, only two of the twelve coordinators/teachers identified using both types of integration. A grade 1, 2, and 3 teacher, who taught Grade 4 before, T12-Lilac, described her planned experiences as follows:

You can do more activities especially its integrated learning...I mean that all of them should be parallel like if they are studying about pollution in science, it should be similar in reading in English and Arabic, to compare and make it parallel, they should also be in the same place not in the beginning or end of the book, this will help students.

## **Conclusion**

The comparison between the six criteria of 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criteria and the English language reading skills curriculum showed that three criteria were present in the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum, two were partially present, and one of the six criteria, related to technology, was not present in the Lebanese curriculum at all.

When comparing the six planned learning experiences for reading present in the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills/CEFR framework that are designed/developed by teachers and coordinators to deliver the existing curriculum, it was found that three out of six were present in the Lebanese curriculum. One out of six was partially present in the Lebanese curriculum, but teachers used additional planned experiences which met the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR

criteria. Two out of six were not present in the Lebanese curriculum, but teachers once again made up for this through extra planned experiences.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

In this study qualitative design and methods were implemented to collect and analyze data in order to investigate the alignment between the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criteria, and the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum, and the alignment between that written curriculum and the taught curriculum that arises from learning experiences devised by teachers/coordinators in the classroom. The purpose of this study is to explore the design of the official curriculum with reference to the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills and CEFR skills framework as a benchmark (OECD, 2005; CEFR, 2008), and to explore teachers' planned learning experiences for reading in relation to English language reading skills based on the international criteria of 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills and CEFR skills, as well as the official Lebanese written curriculum.

This chapter discusses the results and reports on the implications for practice and further/research. The first section discusses the answers of the research questions in relation to the literature. The second section concludes the challenges faced by teachers while delivering the curriculum. The third section covers the implications for practice and research.

#### **Discussing the Results: Comparing between the Written and Taught Curriculum with 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR Criteria**

After comparing the planned learning experiences for reading designed by teachers and coordinators (the taught curriculum) to deliver the Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum (the written curriculum) and comparing them to the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills CEFR framework criteria, three out of six of these planned learning

experiences were present in the Lebanese curriculum. One out of six of these planned learning experiences was partially present in the Lebanese curriculum, but teachers were found to use additional planned experiences which met the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criteria. Two out of six of these planned learning experiences were not present in the Lebanese curriculum, but teachers once again made up for this through extra planned experiences.

### **Planned Learning Experiences Addressing both the Curriculum Objectives and the International Criteria**

This section is going to discuss context clues, inferential/literal questions, and authentic planned learning experiences (taught curriculum) that address both the objectives in the Lebanese curriculum (written curriculum) and the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills framework while linking them to the international and regional literature.

**Planned learning context clues-vocabulary experiences.** Through the planned learning for reading experiences related to context clues which are the taught curriculum, students are set to achieve the objective of the Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum which is: “*Use context clues to get meaning*”. Through *context clues-vocabulary planned learning experiences* students will acquire the ability to infer out the meaning of the passage that will help the students understand the message behind it (Burns, Roe, & Ross, 2002). These planned context clues experiences also help students to understand the meaning of the words in order to understand the meaning of the text without using any additional resources. These learning experiences help students identify words with similar prefixes, for example, “tri” meaning three for



tripod or triangle, which will facilitate the process of understanding the meaning of the whole text (Burns et al., 2002). When students acquire these skills through the planned learning experiences, they will achieve the objectives of the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criteria that are related to context clues which are “Demonstrate awareness of the linguistic and organizational structure of written discourse”, “Read simplified versions of novels, plus stories with a clear structure, with little use of a dictionary”, and “Recognize the meaning of common prefixes”.

The planned learning experiences designed by teachers and coordinators, as the taught curriculum, to teach students vocabulary through context clues under the reading section, are found to address both the written Lebanese curriculum and the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills/CEFR framework. Teachers and coordinators included context clues in the planned learning experiences in ways similar to what is encountered (Ford-Connors & Paratore, 2015). According to Ford-Connors and Paratore (2015), the methods used to teach vocabulary through context clues are morphological analysis, word consciousness development, and direct instruction of single words. In other studies, the authors identified nine types of context clues that can be used to teach vocabulary and hence the linguistic and organizational structure of text including association cause and effect, comparison or contrast, definition or description, language experiences, modifying phrases, nonrestrictive clauses, prepositional phrases, question and answer, and referral clue reader (Dowds et al., 2014). It is interesting to find fourth Grade Lebanese teachers aware of the added value of these skills and designing class planned experiences to support their students’ learning of these skills (Shabaan & Ghaith, 2007; Ghaith & Abd El-Malak, 2004). By doing so, the learning experiences that the students are exposed to are more likely to align with the practices mentioned in the literature in terms of

teaching context clues. A Grade 3 teacher, who had taught Grade 4 before, T6-Jasmine, noted that, “I used to ask students to understand the meaning of the passage from understanding the meanings of the difficult words using context clues. Context clues are to use clues or words from the sentence that explains that difficult word.”

**Planning inferential/literal (literary) questions experiences.** The planned learning experiences designed by some teachers to help students acquire learn reading skills include answering literal/inferential questions (Basaraba, Yovanoff, Julie Alonzo, & Tindal, 2013) which seems to address simultaneously the Lebanese written curriculum and the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criteria. (Burns et al., 2002; Cox, 1999). When students acquire the skill related to inferential/literal (literary) questions through planned learning experiences, they are more likely to achieve the objective of the Lebanese curriculum objectives “*Generate and discuss various types of literal questions*”, and “*Answer inferential questions*”. These learning experiences help students develop skills to analyze and comprehend the reading text and answer literal and inferential questions. When students acquire these skills through the planned learning experiences, they will be equipped to achieve the objective of the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills framework criterion that is related to inferential/literal (literary) question planned experiences “*Use language, symbols and texts interactively*”.

In the literature, answering literal/inferential questions included in planned learning experiences for reading are found to be used by teachers and coordinators (Sheir et al., 2014). According to Sheir et al., (2014), the results of a study done in Lebanon, Egypt, and US showed that using inferential questions increased students’ critical thinking skills, and the authors recommended that asking inferential questions

should be included in the curriculum document as means to encourage teachers to ask such questions regularly (Zucker et al., 2010; Shabaan & Ghaith, 2007; Ghaith & Abd El-Malak, 2004). The same authors also showed that teachers needed to engage students through questions to increase their inferential level of understanding, and those literal questions are needed as well to support the ability of students to answer inferential questions. According to a Grade 1, 2, and 3 coordinator; these reading planned learning experiences were “The Wh-questions”.

Therefore, answering literal/inferential questions as part of planned learning experiences are mentioned in the literature. Some teachers and coordinators are exposing students to the planned learning experiences for reading that seem to align with these practices mentioned in the literature. Another Grade 3 and 4 teachers, C4-T4-Orchaid and T11-Rose, stated that, “The book should contain questions that the students can answer them [sic] directly from the text... how to pull out the answer from the text...”

**Planning authentic learning experiences.** The authentic and personal learning experiences which are part of the taught curriculum are used to help students achieve English language objectives which address both the Lebanese curriculum and the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criteria. When students acquire the ability to solve problems using authentic learning skills through planned learning experiences, they will achieve the objective of the official written curriculum “*Relate information to personal experience and other content areas*”. Through these authentic learning experiences, students also develop the ability to relate the information in the text that they are reading to the experiences on the personal level which will help them solve real-life problems (Burns

et al., 2002). Hence, students will achieve the objective of the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criterion “*Understand the main points in straightforward texts on subjects of personal or professional interest.*”

In the literature, authentic and personal learning experiences are reported to be used by teachers and coordinators (Carreker et al., 2005; Alothman, 2012). According to Carreker et al. (2005), when teachers in the U.S. used authentic learning, students demonstrated higher level of achievement in reading. Another study completed in Kuwait recommended using more authentic learning experiences to deliver the objectives of the EFL curriculum (Alothman, 2012). Teachers and coordinators are exposing students to the planned learning experiences for reading that seem to align with the practices mentioned in the literature.

### **Planned Learning Experiences for Reading Addressing the Curriculum Objectives and reading Planned Learning Experiences that Go beyond the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills/CEFR Framework**

This section is going to discuss story elements, comprehension planned experiences, and understanding instructions through using internet applications that address the objectives in the Lebanese written curriculum, align with and go beyond the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR framework – where the planned learning experiences address extra competencies – while linking them to the literature.

**Planning learning experiences to identify story elements and for comprehension.** The learning experiences designed by teachers to help students comprehend and identify the different elements of a story seem to address the existing

Lebanese Grade 4 reading curriculum, while they go beyond the Lebanese curriculum objectives to address criteria that are unique to the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criteria. When students learn how to identify story elements skills, they will achieve two objectives of the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum, namely “Determine the mood, setting, characters, plot, etc. of a story” and “Sequence events in chronological order and chart”. Learning experiences to identify story elements achieve the stated objectives of the Lebanese curriculum and can contribute to achieving the criteria of the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criteria. Through these learning experiences students will be able to not only identify elements of a story but also be able to develop skills related to inferring the conclusion of the story and developing their own point of view towards it. Hence, when students acquire this skill, they will achieve the objective of the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills framework criterion “Identify the main conclusions in texts which clearly argue a point of view”. However, these learning experiences to identify story elements go beyond achieving the stated objectives of both the Lebanese curriculum and of the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criteria where the participants address an extra dimension which is engaging students in higher thinking skills such as finding different solutions to the problems in the story.

In addition, when students acquire reading comprehension skills through teacher-devised learning experiences, they will achieve the objective of the Lebanese curriculum “Develop basic comprehension of written discourse”. Moreover, these learning experiences can contribute to achieving the related criterion of the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skill/CEFR skills framework. Through these reading comprehension learning experiences, students are also able develop the skill to survey different media from text books to websites through skimming, analyzing the features of the passage, and

understanding its meaning (Burns et al., 2002). When students acquire this skill, they will achieve the objective of 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills/CEFR skills framework criterion “Identify information that might be of practical use through looking quickly through simple, factual texts in magazines, brochures or on a website”. These comprehension learning experiences go beyond achieving the stated objectives of both the Lebanese curriculum of the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criteria where the participants address an extra dimension which is engaging students in dialogue and discussions to comprehending the meaning of the reading passage in a deeper way.

The literature identifies different elements of story used by teachers in their planned learning experiences to teach reading skills for students. According to Al Yaseen (2007) and Nicholas, Rossiter, and Abbott (2011), using comprehension strategies and stories to teach reading were implemented as a result of a study initiative to improve students’ ability to learn the English language. Based on the current study results, coordinators and teachers are exposing students to the learning experiences pertaining to comprehension strategies and story elements that seem to align with the practices mentioned in the literature.

**Using the internet to plan learning experiences.** The planned learning experiences for reading develop skills that are not addressed in any objective in the existing Lebanese English language reading curriculum. Internet-based learning experiences contribute to achieving the criteria of the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR framework through virtual experiences for reading to learn better how to read and comprehend passages. Thus, when students acquire this skill, they will achieve the objective of the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills framework criterion Understand clear instructions for installing computer programs.

Learning experiences designed by teachers help students learn reading skills through using technology and Internet. This demonstrates that Grade 4 language teachers are going over and beyond what is required by the existing curriculum (Arshad, Hoon, & Hashim, 2012; Diab et al., 2016). Many of these planned experiences seem to be addressing additional objectives that are aligned with the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills framework. Experiences for reading related to technology and the Internet are used by teachers and coordinators (Rychen, Salganik, & McLaughlin, 2003). According to Rychen, et al., (2003), using technology and the Internet is part of the language skills that elementary school learners should acquire. The 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills criteria originally came up with four groups of competencies with respect to learning and innovative skills (4Cs), and one of them is related to communication and technology (Rychen, et al., 2003). Only a small number of teachers and coordinators were found to be exposing students to experiences for reading related to technology and the Internet in a manner that aligned with the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criteria.

It is evident from the interviews with the participants in the study that coordinators and teachers do extra work to design the learning experiences to make up for the missing elements in the existing Lebanese Grade 4 English language reading curriculum. They faced many challenges while designing these planned learning experiences, but through this process they were able to get closer to achieving the international criteria [i.e. the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criteria].

### **Conclusion: Hindering Factors for Delivering the Lebanese Curriculum**

As shown in the previous section, the curriculum is missing key components that would align with 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criteria. Teachers seem to be engaged in

rescue missions emanating from personal initiative to supplement the official curriculum with planned experiences that can broaden and enrich the learning experiences of their students. There was no indication from the interviews that these initiatives are standardized or monitored at the system level to ensure that all students are exposed to same quality of learning experiences. This section will present what the researcher believes to be systemic and contextual barriers to design a curriculum that aligns with 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills framework and that targets the unique needs of Lebanese students attending public schools. These barriers are resulting in shortcomings that risk negatively impacting the quality of learning that the students will experience. The following hindering factors will be discussed: the socioeconomic background of the students, the level of expertise of teachers/coordinators, and the role of policy and legislation.

A lot of public school students come from a working class background. In Lebanon, public schools cater mostly for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds with parents who have received no or little formal education (Paker, 2007). These students bring along with them a plethora of special social and emotional needs. When it comes to language acquisition, most of these students go back to homes where there is no follow-up with the student to practice the English language after school hours (see Tilfarlioglu & Ozturk, 2007 for the parallel situation in Turkey). Hence, children cannot communicate in English and practice other related English language skills because parents cannot effectively follow up on their child's/children's academic needs (i.e. speaking, reading, listening and writing). According to Kizildag (2009), the results of another study completed in Turkey showed similar challenges to the learning of reading in English were posed by the lack of support from families and other care takers. These



realities place an additional burden on the curriculum designers, as they have to take these conditions into consideration and adjust the amount of time allocated to acquire a certain set of skills and calls for including in the curriculum a myriad of planned experiences for the students to practice their language reading, writing and speaking skills within school hours or in organized literacy circles on the school premises after regular school hours.

Another factor that seems to be preventing teachers from helping students acquire the necessary English language reading skills were the lack of preparation of teachers to cater for all students within their socioeconomic conditions (World Bank, 2008).

Encouraging teachers to design better learning experiences is critical to helping students grasp the needed English language reading skills. According to Chamout (2007), professional development workshop should be conducted to show how teachers can benefit from each other and the training that the teachers receive from these workshops. Hence, teachers would be more likely able to implement the English language reading curriculum in their classrooms. This point further affirms the notion that teachers and coordinators need to be trained and learn how to collaborate with each other, the lack of which is considered a hindering factor preventing students from learning the reading English skills needed to grasp the objectives of the Lebanese curriculum and 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criteria (BouJaoude & Ghaith, 2006).

The final hindering factor is the enacted policy and legislation. First, current policies and budget allocations prevent teachers and coordinators from disseminating to their colleagues the learning experiences for reading that they prepared. According to MEHE (2010), there was only one decree to improve teachers' language skills and

provide extra sessions to improve students' language proficiency in cycle one which is not enough to solve all the barriers currently faced by practitioners at the school level.

In Lebanon public sector schooling there is a considerable gap between the written curriculum and the taught curriculum. Teachers and coordinators face major hindering factors to meet the written curriculum objectives, which put them at a further disadvantage when it comes to meeting international criteria as represented by the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills /CEFR skills criteria (English, 2010).

### **Implications for Practice and Recommendations for Further Research**

The implications of this study include setting proactive measures in place as means to improve English language proficiency. This section discusses the implications for practice and recommendations for research.

#### **Implications for Practice**

The implications for practice are going to be listed in terms of recommendations for action. Stakeholders like teachers, coordinators, and principals should increase collaboration to develop a portfolio or resource book focusing on a compilation of planned learning experiences for reading, including hands-on planned experiences for students and summarizing long passage. Coordinators and teachers are already developing planned learning experiences additional to those in the curriculum that match the international criteria without having had that intention in mind.

It should also include a selection of workshops specifically targeted at meeting students' learning needs in both private and public school settings.

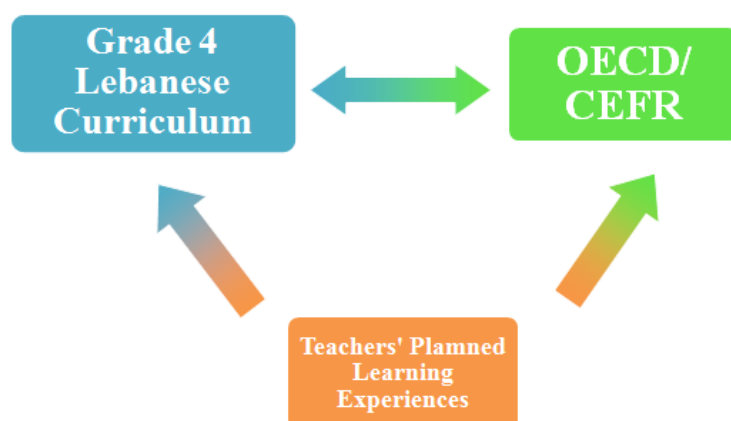
CERD should review and develop a new and updated English curriculum based on the criteria of the 21<sup>st</sup> C Skills/CEFR skills framework since it is the most recent and updated framework used over the world. The objectives that should be included based on the planned learning experiences developed by coordinators/teachers which went beyond the Lebanese curriculum to meet the international criteria could be:

- Develop objectives and activities to help students identify story elements;
- Develop objectives and comprehension activities to help students understand the passage in a more comprehensive way;
- Develop objectives and activities that cater for today's most important need which is the ability for students and teachers to use technology in their learning and teaching processes using the internet.

Curriculum designers could use the curriculum investigation cycle derived from this study, as shown below, to have a wider overview on alignment between the written and taught curricula, and international criteria.

Figure 5.1.

*Alignment Diagram*



## **Recommendations for Further Research**

The study indicated that some practices are common while others are rare in public school classrooms. A quantitative study involving numerous schools in both the public and private sectors would enable us to gain an accurate picture of how common certain methods and approaches actually are in teaching reading and aligning with the international criteria.

An area for research could entail expanding this study to other Grade levels and across other English language skills (writing, listening, speaking, thinking skills, and culture awareness), and as well as increasing the number of the schools selected for the study.

Other research could tackle curriculum investigation by comparing private and public schools, and include a larger sample of stakeholders such as parents and students to be part of the study as well.

## APPENDIX A

### EXISTING LEBANESE GRADE 4 ENGLISH LANGUAGE READING CURRICULUM: OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE/SEQUENCE

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Language Skills	Objectives and Scope/Sequence
<b>Reading Objectives:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Generate and discuss various types of literal questions.</li><li>* Relate information to personal experience and other content areas.</li><li>* Determine the mood, setting, characters, plot, etc. of a story.</li><li>* Use context clues to get meaning.</li><li>* Develop basic comprehension of written discourse<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Sequence events in chronological order.</li><li>-Chart events in a story.</li><li>-Answer inferential questions.</li></ul></li><li>* Demonstrate awareness of the linguistic and organizational structure of written discourse<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Recognize the meaning of common prefixes.</li><li>-Complete short cloze passages.</li></ul></li></ul>

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## APPENDIX B

### EXISTING LEBANESE GRADE 4 ENGLISH LANGUAGE READING CURRICULUM; BASIC LITERACY SKILLS; AND CEFR OBJECTIVES CHECKLIST

<b>21<sup>st</sup> C Skills/CEFR criteria English Language Reading Skills Framework</b>	<b>Existing Lebanese Grade 4 English Language Reading Curriculum Skills Objectives</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Partially Present</b>	<b>Not Present</b>
- Use language, symbols and texts interactively	- Generate and discuss various types of literal questions - Answer inferential questions			
- Understand the main points in straightforward texts on subjects of personal or professional interest.	- Relate information to personal experience and other content areas			
- Identify the main conclusions in texts which clearly argue a point of view	-Determine the mood, setting, characters, plot, etc. of a story. - Sequence events in chronological order and chart events in a story.			

<p>- Read simplified versions of novels, plus stories with a clear structure, with little use of a dictionary</p>	<p>- Demonstrate awareness of the linguistic and organizational structure of written discourse  - Recognize the meaning of common prefixes.  - Complete short cloze passages.  - Use context clues to get meaning.</p>
<p>- Identify information that might be of practical use through looking quickly through simple, factual texts in magazines, brochures or on a website</p>	<p>- Develop basic comprehension of written discourse</p>
<p><b>CEFR:</b></p>	
<p>- Understand clear instructions for installing computer programs</p>	

## APPENDIX C

### INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH ENGLISH COORDINATORS AND ENGLISH TEACHERS

1. What preparations did you do as a teacher before you entered the classroom as part of your planning to deliver reading skills?
2. What are the planned learning experiences for reading that you developed for students? (Anything that you used to teach reading skills)
3. What is the rationale behind your decisions while planning the learning experiences you have developed for the students?
4. Were you the only one involved in the process of planning the experiences or did it include other Grade 4 English language teachers, and English coordinators?

#### **Probing Questions:**

1. From where do you come up with planned experiences for reading, please can you give me an example how you start the class and what do you do next, and how you end the lesson (tell a story)?
2. If you worked with other teachers or coordinators, what are the challenges that you faced? Why were you correct in using this strategy or why not? Why do you think this is the best strategy to transfer the needed reading skills?
3. What did you use this strategy and not the other? Why this and not the other? What activities do you use for vocabulary, comprehension, authentic learning, and literal/inferential questions?



4. What are the problems that you faced with the book and curriculum? How can you solve them? Who should be included in this process of curriculum investigation?

## APPENDIX D

### SAMPLE OF TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW

R: Researcher who conducted the interview.

T2: Is the second teachers that the interview was conducted with.

- R: First please can you tell me what do you teach and you are the coordinator? And which classes do you teach?
- T2: I only teach grade 4, in both section A and B
- R: How do you prepare for the lesson, what do you do before you enter the class and when you enter the class, please can you give me an example on a lesson that you are giving now or you already gave?
- T2: We have for example, now we are still at the beginning of the academic year and we are taking about animals, homes of animals and the names of babies of animal, we start with the familiar animals that they know and ask about where do they live and where do you stay at night and rest at night and put some pictures, and then everyone will explain something about what they know, you know children grade 4 they are not exposed to lot of animals but they know about the dog and cat house something that is familiar for them, they talk about them they explain that they have homes like us, this is for homes and then we move to their names of their babies, and when we finish from all of that we are going to differentiate between the birds and the mammals and we are still at the beginning of the yea this is how we prepare. We start with brain storming use some pictures read a passage and have conversations about it and then make some questions and fill in the blanks we focus on the new words that can be used in another text then this is for the comprehension, and then we move to the grammar from we start with the sentence as subject predicates and fragment and sentences and differences between them and this is how we start.
- R: DO you prepare before, do you talk with somebody, and do you consult anybody? What do you do before you enter the classroom?
- T2: Before I enter the classroom, I read the lesson and know what do I want from this lesson, give to the children the objective from the lesson, and start preparing the steps, and sometimes because we are still in the beginning of the year we don't know the level of students and the different levels, we don't have composite class, some students go directly with the program, and some students they are away from what we are talking, so we have some difficulties in these areas, we plan for a lesson and then we find ourselves, shifting to a lower level, and I try as much as I can to finish what I plan and from this lesson I know what to prepare for the second lesson. We don't consult anyone; we consult our situation in the class.
- R: You don't sit with anybody when you do the lesson plan, you o it on your own?
- T2: Yes
- R: there is not another teacher?
- T2: No, single teacher in the classroom, we don't have another teacher in the classroom aid, if we have another teacher than this would be better teachers will collaborate with each other, and they ask how do I do this thing, but in the same class when there are students from different levels we are obliged to take streets

from other schools, there are Syrian students who don't know the letters and they never took English or words, but they are good in other things and they passed to grade 4 so we can't do anything with them, we need to accept them and we can't reduce the level of the whole class because of them, if we had another teacher then she would focus on them in order to bring them to the upper level, but we don't have this.

- R: Mainly you use the book and you don't get extra activities from outside?
- T2: No, I get, for example I take from a story, magazine, but even the book we don't have time in order to finish it all, the book is made for students who are doing well in English and they don't need help or even they are getting help from the home in order to follow up the curriculum he passes grades 1234 m, cycle 2, we never finished the book, we give from each theme a lesson in order to cover more area, but to finish the book it is difficult
- R: Do you think the book is strong on the students and it need to be lessening a little bit?
- T2: yes it should be, the student when he finds himself he can't memorize this passage or he will have a little bit of frustration, I try as much as I can to simplify the lesson and I try to repeat it in class, it is strong for this group of students, maybe if for other groups who started together they can work, but I need to differentiate them 10 students, 5 students very good they write and they follow up, but if you have a student you gave him an assignment and he comes and he doesn't do it and nobody follows him at home, you can't work and leave him, we are trying to push the weak students upwards and the strong students we are trying to help them more.
- R: There is the curriculum and it has general objective on the vocabulary on inferential and literal question, do you do these things in the classroom?
- T2: Yes of course vocabulary always we put the new words on the board and we explain them and we say that it has different meanings from one sentence to another and the students explain and there are really good students who can use the words in its place, I give them all after each other and I ask them to write each day once not five times, and at the end of the week I do a test in them and there are students who are getting grades in the vocabulary. I focus a lot on them because even on the dictation there are very familiar words but I focus on the new words, when they write it every day and I see the words, this word is being repeated with them on a daily basis so they will memorize it and also we are focusing on the grammar as well because even it is the basis they stopped the grammar and they say it's not important, but we are not mother tongue and students are doing mistakes in them and we are supposed to give grammar in order to know why this is like that, they tell you the child when he is young the mother teaches him how to talk and when he makes a mistake she directs it to him and she repeats the words and she makes it and it is being repeated, but here the English session is over, it's impossible for them to talk English outside and their mothers are not related to language at all we have a difficulty in the language and because it is a second language, and students come from a background that the English language is not used a lot the parents might talk English with them or watch TV in English all of it is Arabic this will not help and the language needs repetition (...).
- R: You told me that there were problems in the book can you tell me more problems or these are the only ones that its length?

- T2: I didn't say that it has problems but is said that it is too intense for our students maybe for other students it is very good, but it's not, they go in to much details they can for in to other themes, there should be verity
- R: I don't have the book, but I need to get it because I am feeling that it is important.
- T2: It's not the only source, we are supposed to work with it to save time, it has the exercise in the work book we don't have a lot of access to make pictures, the budget can't carry the expense of photocopying, however, in education in the world the book is not the only resource ego use, we can bring a text about the sticks and what is happening now, we need an authentic texts, from there reality, why do I need to know about the dinosaurs and the frog.fro expel there is a student you talk to him about the mountains and he is living in a city he will not understand., he will not excel in writing., more authentic and from the real life. I don't have a problem with the book because I keep getting extra texts and activities, in a story they read, the plot and we are not connected a lot with the book.
- R: they are doing a review for eh curriculum, and the teachers where not related a lot in this process, do you think that the teachers should be part of this prices?
- T2: She should be, especially these new teachers because they have energy and the result of their experiences with the students they can give opinions, the workshop should be holistic and includes everybody there should be teachers from all the grade level.
- R: The curriculum is can why the students still have problems, what is it, is it in the curriculum or students, environment?
- T2: No its in the students in everything, why the students in private schools are working, their books are more difficult but there is who is following them at home, we have a very good students in class, but here are also other weak student who are assign the time of the good students , for example a student hits his friend and I need 30 minutes to solve it, because they come from low SES, and there are students from the soma SES and they are serious, in the private schools they do an entrance exam and he passes, so he gets accepted, in public schools he comes and he has an افاده and he enters the class and he do it (She showed me a dictation sample) and the parents at home don't help there chide if he is a little bit weak, I taught in public schools in Australia and they have composite class and there are two group, and the students who are weak they have two hours per day where they go to special teacher they work, and when they come back they can follow up, and all the class will learn all the skills there are students who can't sit in class, they go to special needs class and there is students who you need to make him sit probably and this goes from the time or other students and the planning and the curriculum, and if you have a lesson that needs an hour it will take an hour, but when you have a lesson that needs 1 hour an it takes 5 hours it is a disaster and this done prepared in the teachers' guide for an hour in the school there should be more focus in special needs, and there are students who get bored and students get bored when they don't understand something. Students are getting bored and fidgeting because they are younger than their classes and they don't understand what is going on in the class and they are frustrated and it affects the lesson den the curriculum.
- R: I want to ask you two more things, you talked about teachers' guide what is that?
- T2: it's like they prepare the lesson plan and everything is present and we use it a lot its amiable for all teacher, you can go inside the classroom and give it to

students, but this is also not working with students, for example they put the lesson of birds and mammals it needs 2 hours it takes 5-6 hours. The objective is to differentiate between them and second they need to give the characteristics of each, and there are new vocabulary words and we need to all explain it for them and you need also to explain the grammar lesson maybe its plural and singular, how are you going to explain all of this in one hour in the teachers guides,, we use it to start with the lesson, but then we end up based on the students needs. I used to teach grade 9 now I am teaching grade 4, the older ones they used to sit and listen, these you need more control over them, I prepare this lesson for two sections, but I can't use it the same for next year because there are different sections and different needs. Concerning the reading I do a lot of conversation, we do a lot of questions and answers and we write the answers on the board and they write it. But I can't use the old preparation at all. The teachers guide I can use it but I can't follow it exactly.

- R: you are a coordinator as well, what does your role differ between what you do as a coordinator and as a teacher?
- T2: I teach and then if they have a problem they ask me, we make a common meeting and find the common problems and try to find a solution, I make them meet, I am not the expert between them, and each teacher has energy and they are really good and we sit together and we study the test, and we say this question is not clear for the students, and it's a big paragraph and this is a big paragraph for this class, we collaborate and let the administration know what are the things that they want, I transfer their problems to the administration or we try to solve it together.
- R: Asked her about other teachers.
- T2: If you want you need to see what they were taught before grade 4 so that they were reached to grade 4 weak students.
- R: Do you want to add anything at the end of the interview?
- T2: all that matters for me is to benefit students and to make things simple for them and to give them more exercises and focus more on the grammar since there is not grammar in grade 4.
- R: in the curriculum they didn't talk on grammar they talk mainly about general objectives.
- T2: there is a period that the grammar was neglected but it is important, we don't need to memorize it, we only need to know how to apply it, I give the rule and they know how to apply it. I don't care if the students know the definition of the sentence but what I care is that they know it starts with a capital letter ends with a point, and has a subject and predicate and give us a meaning in any language. Identify a sentence from a fragment as well. Somebody learned grammar from reading from her mother tongue language, from the reprobation. The s for plural it took us a lot of time to stop doing mistakes in it since we learned it as a rule and not to use it as part of the language.

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