



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

CASE STUDY: PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT IN TWO LEBANESE PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN  
THE BEQAA

by  
MAYA SALIM MADDAH

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
to the Department of Education  
of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences  
at the American University of Beirut

Beirut, Lebanon  
April 2021

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\_\_\_\_ Maya Salim Maddah \_\_\_\_\_

May 6, 2021



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you, God, for empowering me and providing me with the hope to continue pursuing my degree. The power you gave me in my most challenging and demanding times strengthened my faith and made me resilient to all the challenges I faced since the beginning of my master's journey. I devote this work and all the achievements in my life to you. When I thought that I couldn't do it anymore, you rescued my health and gave me another chance to live, created from me a solid person, opened the doors of success in front of me, and showed me the beauty of life. Alhamdulillah!

First, a special thanks to Teach For Lebanon (TFL) for offering me the opportunity to enroll in my dream university, AUB. I also would like to thank AUB for providing quality education that supports us in having a better life and having it more abundantly.

Thank you, Nour, my supportive, considerate, caring husband and best friend who never skipped a chance to support me to achieve the best. I won't forget all the sacrifices you made so that I reach this level and graduate. For him, I say: I promise that I will always make you proud.

For my family members, my mom and dad, my three sisters: Darine, Haifa, Diana, and my brother: Majd, I want you to add this success to your plate as it happened because you believed in me and trusted my abilities.

Thank you, Dr. Lina Khalil, for being my thesis advisor and an extraordinary professor who supported me academically and personally. Thank you for your time and for all your efforts in boosting my confidence to continue despite all the hardships. You are my role model. I hope I can reach your level in professionalism, patience, and knowledge.

Thank you, dearest professors and members of the thesis committee:

Dr. Rima Karamy Akkary, thank you for challenging my abilities to get the best out of me. Your comments, feedback, and words cannot be forgotten, and they are the reason behind my success wherever I go.

Dr. Anies Al-Hroub, thank you for your guidance and orientation that made me choose the MA in Education Administration and Policy Studies. This is one of the best decisions that I have ever made, and I will never forget that it was you behind it!

Finally, for the spirit living in me, for this profound part of my heart and soul, for this holy creature that we are waiting to see in one month, I dedicate not only my success but all my life to you, to my baby girl *Vera* I say: I always want you to look at me and feel blessed, gratified, and proud my daughter!

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# ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Maya Salim Maddah for Master of Arts  
Major: Education Administration and Policy Studies

Title: Case Study: Perceptions of Teachers' Professional Development in Two Lebanese Public Schools in the Beqaa

The teachers are the foundation of any education system as they impact the quality of teaching and learning. They need to be knowledgeable of all changes happening at the level of knowledge and instructional practices to provide students with quality education. One way to support teachers in keeping them up-to-date is by providing them with coherent, effective professional development. Lebanese public-school teachers undergo professional development training each year. This study aimed at identifying and understanding the perceptions of the Lebanese public-school teachers in the two selected Lebanese public schools in the Beqaa on the effectiveness of the professional development programs designed and delivered by the government. A qualitative instrumental case study design was applied in which 27 semi-structural interviews were conducted with Lebanese public-school teachers in the Beqaa. The findings showed that the teachers do not document the professional development (PD) experience as a successful one, and they relate these programs to neither schools' nor students' achievement. Moreover, situating the study results in the literature showed that the present PD do not match effective professional development criteria in terms of content, context, collective participation, coherence, time and duration, follow-up procedures, and role of leadership. The discussion implied that the teachers live a situation of professional isolation caused by the lack of collaboration on both school and government levels and lack of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning System.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

CERD : Center for Educational Research and Development

CSC : Civil Service Council

DOPS : Didactic Orientation and Pedagogy Strategies

IRB : International Review Board

MEAL : Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning

MEHE : Ministry of Education and Higher Education

NEA : The National Education Association

OECD : Organization for Economic Corporation and Development

PD : Professional Development

PISA : Program for International Student Assessment

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

The teachers are the most important source in schools. Current policy innovations call for higher performance of teaching as the most likely factor for an increase in students' learning and performance. However, the presence of various recruitment practices, and having teachers with several backgrounds and job contracts receiving different preparation programs and the same in-service professional development programs create challenges to the sustainability of qualified human resources within the public school system. Consequently, threatening the quality of teaching and learning. This research study aims at identifying public school teachers' experiences with professional development programs and exploring their perceptions on the effectiveness of these programs in public schools.

The first section of this chapter provides an overview of Lebanese public-school teachers, the context and the current practices of the professional development in Lebanon. This will be followed by the study's rationale, the research questions, and the significance of the study.

### **The Problem Statement**

The problem statement section highlights the background of the Lebanese public-school teachers, teachers' recruitment policies and the current professional development practices.

### ***Background of the Lebanese Public-School Teachers***

The data show that the Lebanese public education system depends to a great extent on the contractual teachers. According to the Center of Educational Research and

Development (CERD) statistics, the total number of public-school teachers is around 417, 92 employed in the country. Out of the total number of teachers, only 55% are tenured teachers who have fixed-term contracts with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), and 38.6% are contractual teachers who have hourly-based contracts. The remaining 6.6% are distributed among temporary and backup teachers<sup>1</sup> who have contracts and receive their salaries from international donors (CERD, 2019).

Several research studies have emphasized the relationship between the quality of teaching and teachers' professional development in enhancing teachers' competencies and professional skills (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Desimone, 2009; Guskey, 2000; Mattar, 2012). It is crucial to note that according to the Lebanese context, there is a political tension, unclarity in the policies on role distribution and the connection of evaluation with professional development among the relevant stakeholders such as Lebanese College of Education, Educational Center for Research and Development, Educational Inspection. Therefore, questioning the quality of the professional development delivered to public-school teachers on one hand and the application of the present professional development policies and their impact on the quality of the Lebanese public-school teachers on the other hand (CERD, 2019).

### ***Teachers' Recruitment: Policies***

In the case of the public schooling in Lebanon, Blominvest research showed that there are uncertain and unresolved matters associated with Lebanese public schools. Generally, one of the major matters is the low students' passing rates and high classes repetition rates (Vilis, 2016). The problem of the low quality in the public education

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<sup>1</sup> According to CERD statistical Bulletin, the exact Arabic label for temporary and backup teachers are: المستعان بهم ، التقدمة، متمرّن، غير

sector is relatively related to the percentage of qualified teachers (AlJammal & Ghemrawi, 2013; Vilis, 2016). Therefore, it is crucial to understand how the teachers are recruited in the public schools and what are the standards and criteria behind their recruitment, because recruiting unqualified teachers creates a weakness in the educational and learning processes of public schools (Vilis, 2016).

Recruitment for Lebanese public-school teachers has changed over the years. In the 1930s, graduation from the training center for primary teachers<sup>2</sup> was the condition to appoint candidates as tenured teachers for the primary and middle school levels in Lebanon, and graduation from the College of Education<sup>3</sup> was the condition to select and appoint tenured secondary teachers. In addition to that, teacher preparation was the major condition of both appointments at both school levels. The candidates at that time had to pass an entrance exam to enroll in the preparation training. After a three-year preparation program, only successful candidates were appointed to teach in Lebanese public schools (الأمين, 2012). This training was a pre-service training for public school teachers before starting the teaching profession. This phase of recruitment was ensuring the enrollment of top-quality teachers in the public education sector. Later, in 1971, CERD was established, and it became responsible for preparing primary and middle school teachers and training all general education teachers, as well as other tasks such as setting curricula, planning and carrying out statistics, and others (الأمين, 2012).

Receiving pre-service training was a condition for the recruitment of tenured public-school teachers. However, in the year 1961, a decree (number 6111) was issued permitting MEHE to contract with individuals who hold at least senior primary

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<sup>2</sup> دار المعلمين والمعلمات الابتدائية والمتوسطة

<sup>3</sup> كلية التربية



certificate<sup>4</sup> to teach in some of the remote villages (الأمين, 2012). Later this decree was amended to require at least a bachelor's degree to sign a contract with the government (CERD, 2019). As a result, changing teachers' recruitment in the public sector has led to recruiting qualified and unqualified teachers especially that there are no present policies that asks for compulsory teacher preparation programs. Based on the previously stated CERD statistics, 40% of the contractual teachers in the public sector did not enroll in pre-service training. In fact, the Civil Service Council (CSC) stood against many of the decisions regarding the process of providing the contractual teachers with fixed-term contracts because those teachers did not participate in any pre-service training and the process of their enrollment in in-service professional development programs is not well-documented (مجلس الخدمة المدنية, 2017).

On the other hand, CERD (2019) published statistics about the educational qualifications of Lebanese public-school teachers. The statistics show that teachers holding a university degree constitute 52.6 % of the total public-school teachers, and those who have the certificate of Lebanese Baccalaureate represent 6.12 %. The percentage of Master's degree holders is reported as 7.1 %. Besides, 23.5% of the teachers hold a degree, which is equivalent to Teaching Diploma. 7.5% have Education College Competence (كفاءة كلية التربية), 10.2 % have Baccalaureate or Elementary Education Diploma (البكالوريا التعليمية او التعليمية الابتدائية). The remaining 5.8% hold other equivalent degrees distributed with little percentages among each other (CERD, 2019). According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2005), teachers' certification has a direct impact on students' achievement since it equips the teachers with pedagogical knowledge prior to starting their teaching career. Therefore, one of the required certifications that

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<sup>4</sup> Equivalent to Grade 9 certificate

enhance the teachers' quality is the Teaching Diploma or equivalent certification, since its major focus is on pedagogical practices. However, only 40% of the total number of public-school teachers in Lebanon hold this certificate. This ensures the importance of professional development as a process to enhance the public-school teachers' pedagogical skills and professional competencies especially that there is weakness in the pre-service preparation of teachers. Given the absence of completion of pre-service training among all teachers, the burden is on in-service training to ensure that teachers are sufficiently equipped to deliver quality education.

### ***Current Professional Development Practices***

After the teachers complete the training at the Lebanese Faculty of Education, the teachers are required to attend a series of CERD in-service training each year. In fact, CERD's mission is to help building a healthy and effective school climate and providing the necessary human resources to achieve the anticipated educational goals (CERD, 2019). These strategies are aimed at increasing the number of qualified teachers who are capable of enhancing the quality of the public school system. Additionally, the Didactic Orientation and Pedagogical Strategies (DOPS) has a role as an authorized governmental entity to observe, monitor, offer on the job support for the teachers, and guide them in the scope of the curricula and teaching strategies.

According to the information stated by several government-related entities<sup>5</sup>, the professional development of the public-school teachers is questioned in terms of its consistency and relevancy. Referring to the CERD and the Civil Service Council CSC, the graduates who are willing to work as tenured teachers in the public sector need to

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<sup>5</sup> In this study, Government related entities are entities that have a direct relation with teachers' training either in designing or delivering or mentoring the professional development programs for the Lebanese public-school teachers. Those entities are CERD, CSC, CEI, DOPS, LU. Several informal meetings were done with those entities.

apply for the official exams designed by CSC. Those exams intend to solely test the content knowledge of the major of expertise of those graduates. There is no exam that tests the pedagogical knowledge of the candidates. During their first year of “employment<sup>6</sup>”, MEHE requests that the teachers assigned participate in the in-service training delivered at the faculty of Education at the Lebanese University for one year. However, according to the courses listed on the Lebanese University website (refer to Appendix A), the content delivered to those teachers is theoretical, and the teachers do not engage in practicum courses to develop their teaching experiences.

### **Purpose and Rationale of the Study**

Nowadays, teacher competencies have become increasingly pivotal to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner. Additionally, the community has high expectations of teachers which keeps teachers apprehensive (Ekinci & Acar, 2019). According to Mattar (2012), the quality of the teachers is essential because it establishes a base for lifelong learning and improves the quality of instruction.

Additionally, the literature is scarce in terms of research focusing on Lebanese public-school teachers. In fact, in the context of developing countries, there are rare efforts done to understand the perspectives of teachers regarding the tension between societal expectations and their working conditions (Ali, 2018). Despite the fact that public-school teachers are often less trained than those in the private sector, Nabhani and Bahous (2010) have mentioned in their research study on the Lebanese Teachers’ views on the continuing professional development, that their research sample does not include public schools because of the various constraints in the public system. The

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<sup>6</sup>The word employment is highlighted based on the information given by CERD and CSC to explain that the candidates who pass the exam designed by CSC are assigned as tenured (fixed-term) public school teachers despite their teaching experience or pedagogical knowledge.

literature also showed that the studies related to the Lebanese teachers were done with a great focus on the Beirut area and private schools only (AlJammal & Ghemrawi, 2013; Mattar, 2012; Nabhani and Bahous, 2010). Moreover, it is worth noting that the studies done in Lebanon about teachers' professional development showed that the professional development training provided in different contexts were ineffective neither in private nor in public schools (AlJammal & Ghemrawi, 2013).

Furthermore, professional development, among the Lebanese schools, focuses on workshops as a one-time event, and there is no follow-up on teachers' application inside their classrooms (Nabhani & Bahous, 2010). They added that there is an urgent need to organize more structured and systematic professional development programs rather than fragmented and disjointed workshops (Nabhani & Bahous, 2010). Lebanese teachers' professional development consists mainly of the one stop-training or lecture in which teachers are either encouraged or obliged to attend by the school administration (Bahous et al., 2016). McCray mentioned in a study about the teachers' perceptions of their professional development in the USA, that for professional development to support and develop the teachers' career as a professional, it needs to be appropriate to their needs with teacher leadership and contribution (McCray, 2018). However, MEHE does not mandate professional development programs for certifying teachers. Therefore, schools and teachers decide on choosing the professional development training (Bahous et al., 2016). For this purpose, this study aims at having a sample from two public schools in the Beqaa to identify, examine the experiences, and understand in depth the perspectives of the public-school teachers on the effectiveness of the public-school teachers' professional development.

The Beqaa governorate is selected because it is a developing area 51.9 km away from Beirut. The public schools in the Beqaa area are often neglected, and the teachers are marginalized because they are less exposed to resources that enhance their professional career. Additionally, rural educators face additional difficulties such as lack of funding, poor technology infrastructure, and professional isolation resulting in a lack of access to professional development opportunities available in populated areas (Perry & Bevins, 2019).

According to a study on professional development for rural and remote teachers by Maher and Prescott (2017) in Australia, it was observed that rural teachers value the opportunity to communicate with other rural teachers, who have similar experiences and problems. The teachers reported that these communications reduce their sense of isolation, as most of the times they are the only teachers in the school teaching particular subjects. Therefore, there are limited opportunities for mentoring within subject areas given the lack of staff expertise both in the subject area and in the process of mentoring<sup>7</sup> in the time that they are more likely to be in the position of teaching subjects for which they have no training. The marginalization of this area is presented in the scarcity of studies considering, in particular, the Beqaa public school teachers. Additionally, this study aims at contributing to the broader international literature on professional development.

The purpose of this study is to identify the Lebanese public school teachers' experiences with professional development and understand their perceptions of the effectiveness of these programs especially that according to Polkinghorne (2005), the experiential life of people is the area which qualitative methods are designed to study.

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<sup>7</sup> According to the literature, mentoring is a long-term relationship between a more experienced teacher and a less experienced teacher (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015) as cited in (Maher & Prescott, 2017).

## **Research Questions**

The research questions in the study are broad and open-ended, leaving the platform unrestricted to the participants to express and share their perspectives (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, based on this premise, and on the purpose of the study, the research questions were formulated as follows:

- 1) What are the experiences of the Lebanese public-school teachers from the two selected schools in the Beqaa with the professional development programs designed and delivered by the government-related entities?
- 2) How do the Lebanese public schools in the two selected schools in the Beqaa perceive the effectiveness of the professional development programs designed and delivered by government related entities?

## **Potential Significance of the Study**

This study will present the situation of the professional development of the Lebanese public schools by highlighting the experiences and perceptions of public-school teachers on the effectiveness of the professional development programs delivered at the Lebanese public schools. It aims at reaching out to policy and decision-makers on a national level, and advocating for developed and comprehensible professional development programs that level-up the teachers' personal, academic, and instructional skills. Consequently, enhancing the quality of education in the Lebanese public system.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature is conducted to better understand teacher professional development by introducing the knowledge of several educators and researchers who are directly engaging with teacher professional development topics and focus. Research is scarce on studies related to teachers' professional development in Lebanon. For this reason, this chapter presents an international literature review and it is divided into several sections. The first section is defining teaching as a profession. The second section is professional development definitions and significance. The third section is about effective professional development including an overview of international teachers' perceptions regarding professional development. The fourth section is on organizational culture and professional development. The fifth section presents some models of effective professional development in order to conclude with the sixth section which is the conceptual framework that will guide the research study. The last section of this chapter will present a summary of the literature.

#### **Teaching as a Profession**

A profession is a well-organized group of individuals who have specialized and esoteric knowledge supported by a substantial amount of training as a condition to pursue and maintain the job (Strike, 1990). Several researchers agreed that there are five criteria to define a profession, which are social function, knowledge, professional values, practitioner, and collective autonomy (Hoyle 1995; Strike, 1990; Evans, 2014). It is crucial to highlight, according to Strike (1990), that the occupation is considered a profession if it has an authoritative association that represents and speaks on its behalf

such as a teacher agency that supports their role in promoting teaching as a profession and advocating for having a voice in the policies that governs their work.

According to Marzano (2010), in the 17<sup>th</sup> through the 18<sup>th</sup> century teaching was not acknowledged as a profession where any individual with minimal knowledge on a certain subject would be permitted to teach it (Marzano, 2010). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, teaching started to be considered as one of the essential professions associated with societal improvement (Tarhan et al., 2019). At this time, teaching became acknowledged as a complex process that requires the practitioners in the field to enroll in rigorous preparation and receive consistent feedback to enhance their pedagogical skills (Marzano, 2010). Therefore, the practitioners develop to behave within the boundaries of professionalism. As cited in Evans (2014), professionalism is a form of social coordination and application of specific knowledge in specific areas following a set of standards, ethics, and quality. Evans (2014) identified three major components that define professionalism, which are the behavioral, the attitudinal, and the intellectual components. Considering teaching a profession requires enhancing their occupation, develop more policies related to teacher education, certification, and evaluation.

Burbules and Densmore (1991) defined professionalism as an undemocratic concept that connotes superiority of mental over manual labor. On the other hand, some researchers are advocating that teaching becomes a profession mimicking doctors and lawyers (Burbules & Densmore, 1991). Based on the latter, being a profession has potential benefits and drawbacks. Sykes (1989), as cited in (Burbules & Densmore, 1991), stated that professionalism might lead teachers to lose their concern for caring and compassion. Moreover, they might distance themselves from the practical life of teachers to become remote technical knowledge experts.



Nevertheless, according to McWilliams (2012), teachers can be considered professionals in the sense that they act as life-long learners. Professional development providers are always in a rush to introduce the new information as the best practices regardless of its relevance to the individuals themselves (Mcwilliam, 2002). According to Burbules and Densmore (1991), teachers deserve the best salaries and more job benefits. However, teachers cannot act as professionals because the latter are more technical individuals and teaching requires a lot more than that. In summary, teachers should not prioritize their professional status and shift their concentration from their teaching goals.

### **Definitions and Significance**

This section presents the professional development definitions highlighted in the literature, types of professional development, professional development and school improvement.

#### ***Professional Development Definitions***

According to Hassel (1999), professional development is also called professional learning. However, Webster-Wright (2017) stated that professional development might not result in professional learning. Webster-Wright (2017) mentioned that professional development programs need to be designed to be flexible and learner-centered, but many of these programs remain “episodic” which means deliver the knowledge following a didactic manner, separated from engagement with authentic work experiences. Moreover, this decontextualization disregards the value of ongoing and situated learning, thereby reinforcing the perceived divide between theory and practice. Based on Guskey (2000), professional development is the progression of the teachers as they move through the professional career cycle. Becoming a teacher

requires a long-term learning process that necessitates intensive and appropriate supervision and guidance from specialists to develop practical teaching skills, acquire teaching knowledge and promote ethical standards of the teaching profession (Calderhead & Shorrock,1997). Hassel (1999) defined professional development as a process of developing educators' competencies to have exceptional results for students. In other words, it is a structured process of enhancing the competences of the personnel through education and capacity building opportunities. Moreover, it is perceived as a long-term process as it acknowledges the fact that teachers learn with time and become lifelong learners. Additionally, professional learning is the professional growth that the teachers attain from gaining different teaching experiences and as a result of observing and evaluating their instruction thoroughly (Marzano, 2010). Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) added that professional development is a participative process where the participants share their ideas and experiences for the purpose of development.

Several researchers argue that professional development is not only what the practitioners do to enhance student learning. In fact, it is a participative process that may engage other beneficiaries to enhance their competencies beyond classroom instructional practices (Badri et al., 2016; Birman, 2000; Evans, 2014). Therefore, professional development is multidimensional, which means it is not only about changing teachers' behavior, it is also changing their attitudes, intellectual capacity, and mind-sets (Evans, 2014). Guskey (2002) believed that professional development programs are systematic efforts to change in the teachers' instructional practices, their attitude and beliefs, and in the students' achievement. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defined professional development as the activities that develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise, and other

characteristics as a teacher (OECD, 2009). As a concluded definition based on what is mentioned earlier, professional development is a collaborative learning process between all the relevant stakeholders and aims at providing the teachers with specialized credentials to develop and grow as lifelong learners and professionals.

### ***Types of Professional Development***

The literature presents two major types of professional development programs. These programs can be introduced in formal or informal ways (Ganser, 2000). Formal programs include activities that are required in the organizational policy such as action research within the institution, conferences, study groups, classroom observations, cooperation and partnership between institutes, etc. (AlJammal & Ghemrawi, 2013). Informal programs include learning experiences as personal initiatives not required by the institution; such as reading academic and professional publications, surfing the internet for professional purposes, watching documentaries related to the teachers' discipline, etc. (Ganser, 2000). According to the OECD study on professional development of teachers in twenty-three countries (Lebanon is not included), 93% of the participative teachers engage in informal dialogue to improve teaching, 83% engage in courses and workshops, and 79% read professional literature (OECD, 2019).

### ***Professional Development and School Improvement***

According to Fullan (1993) cited in Karami-Akkary (2019), successful school improvement depends on the collaboration among top-down support with bottom-up change initiatives where mainly teachers are equipped with the needed skills such as building their leadership capacity and supporting learning school communities to ensure the quality of learning. Guskey (2000) added that improvements in education rarely happen in the absence of professional development. Research studies on this topic have

shown that professional development marks an improvement in teachers' instruction, research skills, leadership skills, and students' performance (Darling- Hammond et al., 2017). In other words, the teachers must be aware of knowing what their job is, why they are doing it, when they will be doing it, and how they will best perform it (Calderhead & Shorrock,1997).

According to the OECD (2009), the development of teachers beyond their initial training can achieve several objectives. These include updating the teachers' subject knowledge, develop the teachers' skills and attitudes in the presence of new teaching techniques and educational research, and exchange expertise between teachers and others. Moreover, professional development supports building and maintaining staff morale and quality (Darling- Hammond et al., 2017).

Many researchers highlighted the importance of teacher professional learning in building and maintaining the student's ability and personality. According to Darling- Hammond (2006), the teachers who are engaged in continuous professional development programs are aware of integrating the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the content delivered to the students as a preparation for their future education and career. Thus, the teachers' abilities are fundamental contributors to students' teaching and learning (Darling- Hammond et al., 2017). In other words, the teachers must be equipped, prepared, and qualified to deliver valuable and updated information to their students despite the complexity of the content (Darling- Hammond et al., 2017). However, if teachers are expected to teach new standards, including complex thinking skills, they must have a sophisticated understanding of the content and of how students learn that

content (Birman, 2000). Therefore, relevant professional development is essential for school improvement.

### **Effective Professional Development**

The majority of professional development programs fail because they do not take into consideration two crucial factors. First, what motivates teachers to engage in professional development. Second, the process by which change in teachers typically occurs (Guskey, 2002). According to the National Education Association (NEA) that is cited in Tarhan et al. (2019) and according to Mohan et al. (2017) most of the existing systems did not succeed in improving the teachers' practice and students' learning because most of the professional development frameworks are developed to evaluate teachers' effectiveness instead of assessing the teachers' professional growth needs, and identifying the proper support to meet their needs. According to OECD (2009) study, most of the teachers reported their need to have professional development programs on teaching students with special needs, information, and communication technology skills. The lowest demand was having classroom and school management and administration. These data show that the teachers are often aware of their needs and the needs of their students. Therefore, they are key in identifying the needed and relevant PD topics.

Some studies show the teachers' perceptions on the effectiveness of the teachers' professional development programs. Based on a study in Abu Dhabi, Badri et al. (2016) stated that the professional development programs were successful because the knowledge they provided was transferrable, which means that the teachers were able to relate the program's knowledge to the curriculum, didactic knowledge, and student evaluation and assessment techniques. In Fiji, the study results showed that the rural

teachers considered the on-going training effective when it presents new knowledge to implement in the classroom (Mohan et al., 2017).

Generally, based on several studies, the teachers stated that successful professional development is the one that is relevant to the context, needs-based, participative, and enhances students' quality learning. On the other hand, the teachers identified the challenges they faced in their school, which are the scarce resources at schools that hinder the organization and the implementation of the professional development programs such as time shortage, lack of expertise, lack of finances, etc. (Ali, 2018, Nabhani & Bahous, 2010; McCray, 2018).

Pharis et al. (2018) stated that the teachers perceive the duration of the professional development activity, the implementation of multiple learning activities, and collective participation among teachers are the most important elements to consider if the professional development program is to be considered effective. Moreover, Fullan and Miles (1992), as cited in Guskey (2002), stated that most of the teachers want to participate in a professional development that provides practical, concrete, and specific materials related to their daily teaching tasks.

The several mentioned studies showed that teachers believe that effective professional development may increase the possibility of their retention. The literature shows that teachers remain in the profession when they are supported and informed in their practice (Maher & Prescott, 2017). However, McCray (2018) stated that if the proper resources are not present, professional development may not be fully implemented.

### ***In-Service Professional Development***

The pre-service training, regardless of its importance, is not enough to prepare the teachers to manage with all the challenges that they will encounter throughout their professional journey (OECD, 2009). Teachers' daily work in hard conditions reflects many tensions and challenges (Ali, 2018). For that, the literature shows that the most effective and recommended form of professional development is that which is grounded in schools, on the job, and is directly associated with the daily tasks and activities of teachers and learners (Birman, 2000; Desimone, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Ganser, 2000). As cited in OECD (2009), effective professional development is on-going with adequate time and follow-up support. Thus, the most applied form of professional development is the in-service training which generally consists of short-term courses, workshops, etc. (Ali, 2018) that would support teachers to acquire new knowledge related to their work and run over the scholastic year.

Birman (2000); Desimone, 2009; Guskey (2002); Scribner (1995); Darling-Hammond (2006) agree on general characteristics of effective in-service professional development which are: focusing on specific content, engaging teachers in active learning, allowing the collective participation of teachers, coherence, sufficient duration. On the other hand, Guskey (2000); Scribner (1995); and Desimone (2009), emphasized on the importance of considering the context to plan an effective professional development. According to OECD (2019), there are barriers such as irrelevant objectives, time conflict, and cost, which usually prevent teachers from participating in professional development programs. The following presents an elaboration on the barriers that reduce the effectiveness of professional development.

**Context.** The literature shows that planning effective professional development requires a significant consideration of the professional development context, as teachers participating in the professional development programs belong to different backgrounds and different school contexts (Desimone, 2009).

Referring to Scribner (1995), it is crucial to consider the economic, social, and political frameworks of the school before planning and designing professional development programs. Moreover, professional development leaders and educators must identify the needs of the teachers and students, their context, including their cultural values and beliefs to specify the appropriate professional development model relevant to the teachers' and students' context (Desimone, 2009; Scribner, 1995). Guskey (2002) argues that the significance of context is an essential criterion for effective professional development planning.

Moreover, professional development opportunities that do not consider the policies and structure of the organization fail to develop the teachers' skills and expertise, since it is not embedded in the school context (Darling-Hammond, 1995).

**Content.** Teachers do not find generic professional development effective if they only focus on teaching techniques without also emphasizing the content to be effective (Birman, 2000). For instance, when professional development focuses on what teachers actually learn, it is almost promising to improve classroom practice, and enhance student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Successful professional development programs involve teachers in learning activities that are similar to the ones they will use with their students (Darling-Hammond, 2006; OECD, 2009).



**Collective Participation.** According to Birman (2000), professional development experiences that are based on collective participation that is defined by Adams & Casteleijn (2014) as the synergetic interaction between various parties to benefit the group through sharing experiences and ideas. Additionally, it better enhances teachers' knowledge and skills, and increase the possibility of initiating a change in classroom practice. Moreover, it motivates teachers to contribute in meaningful discussions; provides them with chances to observe and be observed while teaching; allows them to share their experiences; and to integrate their learning with other teachers in the same school, especially if they share common curriculum materials and assessment. Another layer of collective participation was stated by Pharis et al. (2018) who supported the argument by stating that effective professional development requires the presence of collaborating coalitions of teachers and principals learning together along the academic year through conducting in-house training, which is a school-based professional learning.

As this research study will be conducted in rural areas in Beqaa, it is crucial to highlight some of the results of a study of rural school professional development by Allen (2014), which shows that in-house training helps in creating professional learning communities that in its turn enhance teaching and leadership practices, facilitate instructional collaboration, and strengthen the commitment to the school vision.

**Coherence.** Coherence designates the degree to which professional development opportunities are embedded in an incorporated program of teacher learning (Birman, 2000). Birman (2000) added that professional development activities should be coherent by aligning with the national standards and assessments. If the activity that the teachers are receiving forms a coherent part of a bigger package of activities, it is more likely that it will play a significant role in improving teachers' knowledge and skills.

**Time and Duration.** Several researchers agree that the time frame in which the professional development is delivered is crucial because a one-off professional development session brings little change to the teacher practice (Birman, 2000; Maher & Prescott, 2017). Pedder and Opfer (2011) believe that the teacher learning should be theorized as a complex system rather than as a one-time event. Therefore, providing sufficient time for professional development means giving the teachers the opportunity to change. However, Pharis et al. (2018) stated that professional development leaders should also consider the difficulty of the change initiative. In other words, professional development leaders should be aware that the process of learning requires time and should communicate this to the teachers. Guskey (2000) stated that for the purpose of having effective professional development, educators need to understand and need to make the teachers aware that the implementation of change in classrooms is a gradual process and does not happen once at a time. One example is a study done by McCray (2018) in the USA, where most of the teachers reported that they need enough time and proper support in order to be able to implement the new instructional and pedagogical knowledge.

**Follow-up Procedures.** Follow-up is the further observation of a teacher in the classroom in order to constructively monitor the success of applying the knowledge presented in previous training sessions or individual meetings. Several research studies emphasize the importance of the regular follow-up which facilitates the development of teachers' instructional skills (Ali, 2018; Evans, 2014; Perry & Bevins, 2019). According to Pharis et al. (2018), the teachers need to listen to authentic feedback concerning their instruction. Guskey (2000), added that for a new instructional practice to be sustained, the teachers should be involved in this change process and receive regular feedback for development.

School policies should take the lead in supporting the teachers, especially the novice teachers, who are new to the school or the teaching profession through applying consistent follow-up sessions with the teachers. According to OECD (2019), the challenges of the novice teachers are similar across countries and they are mostly related to classroom management, students' assessment and evaluation, and students' motivation. The most highlighted form of teachers' support, preparation, and follow-up in the literature is the mentoring (Birman, 2000; Guskey, 2002, Darling-Hammond et al., 2005).

Empirical research findings emphasize the potential efficacy of coaching and mentoring as professional development tools (Evans, 2014). OECD study shows that one-quarter of the teachers are in schools where no formal mentoring procedures practiced. Besides, 38% are in schools that provide mentoring for teachers who are new to the teaching profession, and 37% are in schools where they provide organized mentoring for all new teachers, despite their teaching

experiences. According to Birman (2000), two possible methods for follow-up could be applied “Teacher-leaders approach” and “Train-the-Trainer approach”.

Birman (2000) highlighted the Teacher-Leader and Train-the-Trainer approaches by considering the teacher who has new knowledge accountable for transferring this knowledge to the other teachers and train them to become trainers to support the other teachers. Margolis (2012), as cited in (Perry & Bevins, 2019), named those teachers as “hybrid teacher leaders”. According to Perry and Bevins (2019), the teachers, in this case, maintain their teaching role while leading the learning of the other teachers. This transfer of knowledge requires the teacher-leader or the trainer to help other teachers to implement new instructional practices and serve as mentors in the classrooms who follow-up on the knowledge implementation phase (Birman, 2000). Moreover, Pharis et al. (2018) supported the idea of peer-teachers who observe other teachers implementing the new knowledge in their classrooms and provide their constructive feedback for the purpose of development, this would enhance their confidence which offers credibility in the role of supporting others (Perry & Bevins, 2019).

**Role of Leadership.** Referring to Bredeson (2000), the school principal possesses a unique position in affecting the quality of professional development for several reasons. First, they are considered stewards, who value learning and identify the relation between professional development programs, student learning, and school quality. Second, they are models, who have influence on the beliefs and values of the teachers. Third, they are experts, who are credible to lead a successful school. Fourth, they are instructional leaders, who are responsible for the design of teaching and learning in the school. Based on Pharis et al. (2018), principals should be as supportive as possible to achieve the instructional change in their schools.

Moreover, the responsibility of educational leaders is to understand how teachers develop and not only what they should learn (Evans, 2014). According to Bredeson (2000), the school principals are essential contributors to teacher professional development because they can support moving the teachers to higher levels of independence and autonomy. According to Hassel (1999), the professional development leaders are responsible for designing a needs assessment research before initiating any professional development program to facilitate the change and work on supporting the teachers with all the needed resources to facilitate the change. Evans (2014) added that if the professional development does not incorporate the stated dimensions, it will lack the main ingredient for change to which teachers may be committed. Therefore, leadership for professional development requires leaders to be flexible, resourceful, and to advocate for the school's vision.

For that professional development leadership must be learning-focused, supportive, and knowledgeable about the teachers' and students' needs to better identify the suitable models. Furthermore, the leaders must be aware of the importance of following a teacher-centered approach to leadership and avoid considering teachers as homogenous groups and acknowledge the fact that one size does not fit all (Evans, 2014). Moreover, it is crucial to note that most of the instructional pedagogies are often imported from higher-income countries (Evans, 2014). In contrast, in low- and middle-income countries most of these pedagogies and policies become predominant regardless of its relevancy and appropriateness (Perry & Bevins, 2019). Therefore, the role of professional development leaders is to unpack the packaged professional development programs and take what benefits the teachers as professionals.

### **Organizational Culture and Professional Development**

In England and Wales, Australia, Korea, Northern Ireland, and Switzerland, the teacher appraisal and promotion system is centered on professional development (Evans, 2014; Huang et al., 2015). Finland's professional development form the basis for evaluating and assessing the teachers. This system aims at improving teachers' personal and professional skills and competencies through providing the teachers with an explanation of how they are performing based on what is expected and what needs to be improved to perform better (Tarhan et al., 2019). Additionally, an exceptional case to consider is that of the system in Finland, mainly due to the consistent competitive performance of Finland's students in PISA<sup>8</sup> test, the education system in Finland is considered one of the successful systems worldwide (Ali, 2018).

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<sup>8</sup> Program for International Student Assessment

There are significant differences between the Finnish and the Lebanese public education systems. However, Andere (2013) and Sahlberg (2007) discuss one of the major differences appropriate to state in this research study, which is teachers' professional development.

In Finland, according to Sahlberg (2007), teachers are considered professionals; teaching is considered a research-based profession, and the teachers' professional development is highly valued. Becoming a teacher requires two main conditions. The first condition is holding a masters' degree, which is considered an essential requirement for the job. The second condition is the teachers' preparation, where the primary school teachers are required to enroll in a 5-year university program to join the teaching profession. Besides, the current outlook on teacher professional development has included a shift from viewing it as a one-time training to an entire process that occurs gradually and builds on the skills previously acquired. In this sense, the compulsory traditional in-service training has disappeared. Instead, schools and municipalities design sustainable and lengthier professional development programs.

Andere (2013), stated the teachers' recruitment process in Finland. In other words, teachers in Finland have to be of a certain caliber which makes it challenging to aspiring teachers. Candidates have to have a teaching diploma to be able to participate in the standardized national exam. After that, successful candidates will pass through a second filter, which is another exam at the university. Later, successful candidates will have an interview with specialized and professional educators. The university itself decides on acceptance to the preparation program. As a result, Finnish teachers are mindful and critical learners who appreciate their professional development programs and value its importance. Additionally, the teachers experience more freedom in

curriculum planning, as there is no need to focus on annual tests because there is no standardized test for all the students. Parents trust teachers as professionals who know what is best for their children. The teachers in Finland have a voice. They can identify problems in their schools and classrooms, apply informed alternative solutions, and evaluate, assess, and analyze the impact of the new strategies (Andere, 2013; Sahlberg, 2007).

### **Effective Professional Development Models**

Professional development models are either conceptual or processual (Evans, 2014). According to Evans (2014), conceptual models focus on what is professional development and processual models focus on how it occurs. This section will provide four of the major processual professional development models that the literature presents, which are “quality learning circle model (Lovett & Gilmore, 2003)”, “developmental supervision model (Glickman et al., 2014)”, “model of the process of teacher change (Guskey, 2000)”, and “integrated professional development model for effective teaching (Kuijpers et al., 2010).”

#### ***Quality Learning Circle Model***

Quality Learning Circle Model of Professional Development is an appraisal model that is based on a collegial approach in which it connects the teachers to collaborate. For example, teachers would conduct regular meetings on specific themes and could support each other inside the classrooms through consistent observations and constructive feedback.

#### ***Glickman’s model of professional development***

On the other hand, Glickman’s model (Glickman, 2002) of professional development aims at improving the teachers’ competence. It is constituted of five



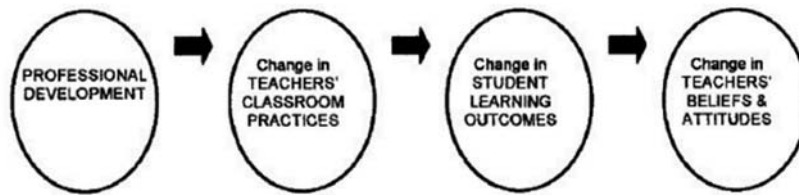
phases which are: pre-conference, observation, analysis, interpretation, post conference, and critique. In the pre-conference phase, the teacher and the facilitator collaborate to identify the points of instruction that the facilitator will be looking at during the observation. Later, the facilitator or instructional supervisor observes the teacher teaching in the classroom. After that, the facilitator analyses the data collected during the observation to better focus on providing informed strategies. Lastly, in the post-conference, the teacher and the facilitator collaborate to reach an agreed plan to develop the teachers' instructional practice. These two models aim at supervising and following up with the teachers and they solely focus on teacher learning but do not provide a deep meaning of how the professional development is happening in practice.

***Model of the Process of Teacher Change (Guskey,2002)***

According to Guskey (2002), maintainable change in teachers' instructional practices happens if the teachers' attitudes and beliefs changed as a result of recognizing an improvement in students' learning. This model is constituted of several phases. The first phase is the professional development, in which teachers receive the content of the training. The second phase is the change in teachers' classroom practices in which teachers start to utilize their knowledge inside the classroom. The third phase of the model is the change in students' outcomes as a result of the new instructional practices. The fourth phase represents the outcome of the model which is the change in teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward the new knowledge because of the change in students' learning outcomes.

**Figure 1**

*Guskey's Model of Teacher Change*

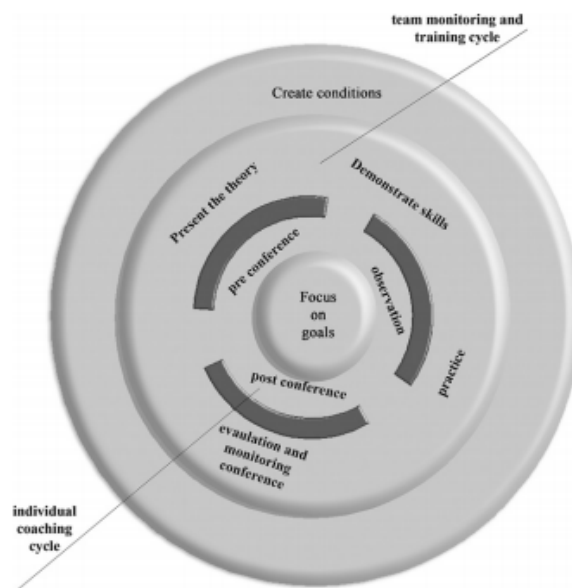


***Integrated Professional Development Model for Effective Teaching (Kuijpers et al., 2010)***

This model is a combination of more than one professional development models. One of the obvious models is Glickman's supervision model of professional development. Its elements are: presentation of theory, demonstration of skills, and practice in a secure environment, pre-conference, observation and post-conference. Additionally, the model focuses on internal conditions, adopting integrated implementation strategies; including external support and using integrated information from various research domains (Kuijpers et al., 2010).

**Figure 2**

*Integrated Professional Development Model for Effective Teaching*



## **Conceptual Framework**

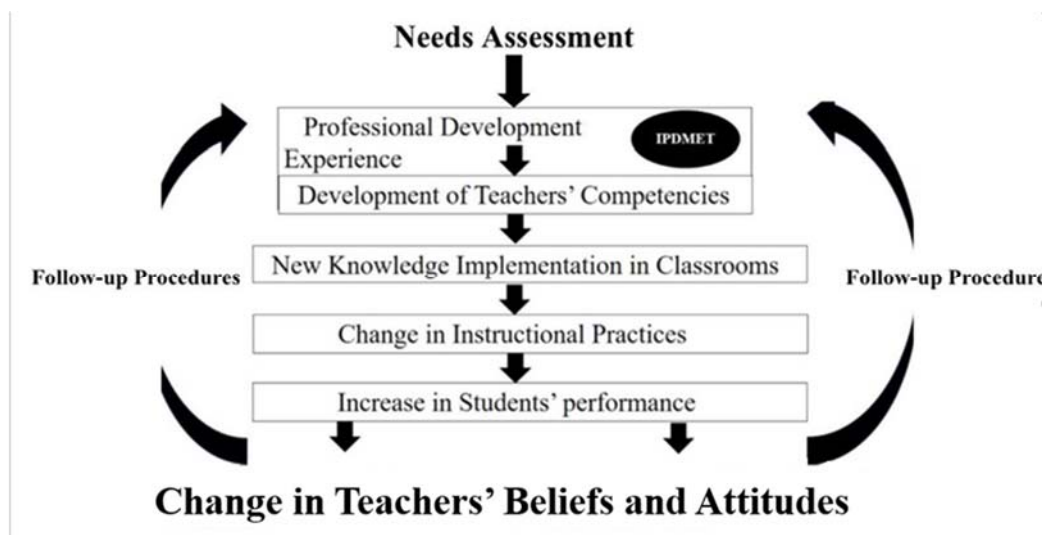
The complexity of teacher learning and professional development is that it progresses as a “nested system” involving systems within systems (Pedder & Opfer, 2011). According to Guskey (2000), there is a positive relationship between the teacher quality and high-quality professional development. Therefore, change in teachers’ practices should happen. However, for this change to happen, it must occur on the level of teachers’ beliefs. Referring to Guskey (2002), an important factor that many professional development programs fail to consider is the teacher change in teachers’ beliefs. In addition to that, according to Kuijpers et al. (2010), it is crucial to identify how the professional development is designed and how it is happening to avoid pitfalls and make the program as beneficial as possible. Moreover, Hassel (1999) indicated the importance of conducting a needs assessment before designing the professional development programs is a key to cater for the teachers’ individualistic needs. For this purpose, the conceptual framework presents the design of an effective professional development program. It is based on a combination of different models, with a foundation in Guskey’s model of professional development, as follows:

As shown in Figure 2, the first phase shows that professional development leadership should conduct a needs assessment to scan the teachers’ needs and prioritize professional development topics. The second phase shows professional development experience from the perspective of the teachers with a great focus on identifying the different models adopted to conduct the professional development based on the integrated model of professional development. The third phase is development of teachers’ competencies and this will guide the participants to reflect on their own learning from the various training programs. The fourth phase is the implementation of

the new knowledge in the classrooms and this will better clarify whether this knowledge can be transferable or not. This leads to the fifth phase which is the change in teachers' instruction. Participants will have to reflect on whether their performance is developing as a result of the professional development programs. The sixth phase is related to the enhancement of students' performance and whether the information received by the teachers is applicable to the needs of both the teachers and the students. The last phase is the change in teachers' beliefs and attitudes after experiencing the professional development. Nevertheless, according to Karamy-Akkary (2019), the highest growth in teachers' knowledge is followed by their attitudes where the development of skills and the practical transformation of acquired knowledge into practices seemed to develop last. This conceptual framework complements both approaches leading to having a cyclic process where there is no start or end opposed to linear methods.

**Figure 3**

*Conceptual Framework*



## **Summary of the Chapter**

In brief, the role of schools is changing, and so the role of teachers. Teachers nowadays are asked to engage with multicultural classrooms, be inclusive of all students, technology, etc. For this reason, the literature emphasized on the factors that contribute to having an effective professional development and its role in enhancing the teachers' competencies and skills. Thus, empowering the teaching and learning processes. Professional development is a learning process resulting in changes in teachers' actions, how they think about their professional practice, and how they see themselves as teachers. According to the literature, for professional development programs to be effective, teachers must consider it content-related, coherent within the teaching and learning context, collaborative, and accompanied with consistent follow-up. Moreover, another important aspect is the role of the professional development leadership in maintaining those factors and emphasizing on providing the teachers with needs-based professional development programs to support having quality teachers' learning and capacity building programs which play a major role in conducting change in schools and communities (Pedder & Opfer, 2011).

Despite the rich international literature on professional development, Lebanese schools still need to learn what works for their teachers and students by bringing-up teachers' views and perspectives regarding the effectiveness of the professional development programs designed for public school teachers and state their experiences with these programs. This research study is based on the belief that teachers are experts and professionals with a special mission in the society and that they should be receiving high-quality and effective professional development that ensures that they are enhancing their personal and professional skills and are qualified enough to teach

students in schools. For these reasons, the teachers will engage in expressing their opinions regarding the professional development systematic processes such as the needs assessment, training, and follow-up.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter will describe and explain the methodology of the research study. It will begin by re-stating the research question that guides the research study. Followed by a discussion of the perspectives that were adopted to collect data, analyze, and interpret the phenomenon studied. This is followed by a detailed explanation of the procedures and tools that were utilized to implement the data collection phase of the study. The data analysis phase is then explained, the procedures for analyzing the data collected, and the procedures followed to ensure the quality of the data.

This research study aims at identifying public-school teachers' experiences with professional development programs and understand their perspectives regarding the effectiveness of these programs designed and delivered by government-related entities in the Lebanese public-school teachers.

#### **Research Questions**

The research question has a fundamental role since decisions regarding the research design and methods are supposed to be made in order to answer the research question(s) (Bryman, 2007). As a result, this study's design and methods are guided by the below question. This research study aims to identify and understand the perspectives of the Lebanese public-school teachers on the effectiveness of the professional development designed and delivered by government-related entities in the Lebanese public-school teachers.

- 1) What are the experiences of the Lebanese public-school teachers in the Beqaa with the professional development programs designed and delivered by the government-related entities?
- 2) How do the Lebanese public schools in the two selected schools in the Beqaa perceive the effectiveness of the professional development programs designed and delivered by government related entities?

### **Paradigms**

The philosophy shapes the researcher's point of view regarding both the research problem, research questions, the data collection and data analysis approaches (Creswell, 2013). This study adopts the social constructivist philosophy. Social constructivism is a philosophical and interpretive framework in which individuals develop their subjective multiple meanings for a certain specified phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). For that, this study adopted the interpretivism paradigm. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the ontology of this paradigm is based on the belief that social reality is not objective, however it is shaped by social context and human experiences. Moreover, the interpretive paradigm epistemology is collecting and analyzing the subjective interpretations of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This research study adopted the interpretive approach where the teachers are the major participants who will state multiple realities about their experiences with professional development programs and the effectiveness of these professional programs delivered to them.



## **Research Design**

The previous section described that the interpretive paradigm is utilized to better study the phenomenon. Furthermore, a qualitative instrumental case study design was used to provide a comprehensive and contextual description of the phenomenon under study that is the perception of public-school teachers on the effectiveness of teachers' professional development designed and delivered by government-related entities.

Qualitative research is an activity that localizes the research in the world (Creswell, 2013). According to Erickson, cited in Denzin and Lincoln (2018), qualitative research seeks to explore and narrate how a number of selected individuals act and what their actions mean to them. Moreover, qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices which presents evidence for the research topic (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Moreover, the qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting in an attempt to make sense of the phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011 cited in Creswell, 2013).

This research study follows a qualitative research approach because it permits to identify and explore various realities constructed by the different individuals who are participants in a social institution such as the school (Gall et al., 2014). Therefore, the participants would better express their perspectives regarding the effectiveness of public-school teachers' professional development. The researcher organized and analyzed these findings to give it a better meaning based on its context. Most contemporary qualitative researchers promote the belief that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered (Stake, 1995). Moreover, multiple realities are constructed

through lived experiences and interactions (Creswell, 2013). In this research study, the public-school teachers are the key sources of data. This methodology leads the researcher to identify the complexities of the participants' views and strongly depend on their participation in the research study. Hence, the instrumental case study design was employed in this research study.

The instrumental case study design explores a current phenomenon especially when the limitations between the phenomenon and context are not evident (Yin, 2009). In this case, there is scarcity in research studies on the phenomenon under study which is the public-school teachers' perceptions on the effectiveness of teachers' professional development designed and delivered by government related entities, and the context of the Lebanese public education system. Creswell views the case study as the research methodology which is a type of design in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). Case study research involves the study of a case within the real-life, contemporary context or setting to better comprehend its elements within a particular setting (Stake, 1995). Yin (2009) stated that the case study inquiry copes with various variables, depends on multiple sources of data and on the previously developed theoretical models to guide their data collection and analysis.

This research study is a single-case study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009) that focuses on one issue which is the perceptions of the public- school teachers on the effectiveness of the professional development of public-school teachers. However, two embedded units of analysis are selected which are the two Lebanese public schools in the Beqaa. Based on Yin (2009), one rationale for selecting the single-case design is its significant contribution to knowledge and theory building. Another rationale is the uniqueness of the research study (Yin, 2009). For instance, this research study is limited to target the

two selected public schools in the Beqaa with a specific number of teachers from each school. This leads to considering such research a typical one. However, a potential vulnerability of the single embedded design is its intensive focus on the subunits and the ignorance of the original phenomenon of interest (Yin, 2009).

The qualitative research case study consists of thorough investigation and inquiry into occurrences of a phenomenon in its natural and normal setting. Moreover, the qualitative research case study considers the etic (the researcher) and the emic (the research participant) perspectives (Gall et al, 2014). In this study, the qualitative approach was used to explore the perceptions of the Lebanese public-school teachers on the effectiveness of the professional development programs designed by government-related entities and delivered to the Lebanese public-school teachers.

Although the case study is a distinctive form of empirical inquiry, many investigators disregard this approach. According to Stake (1995), the case study research is not applicable to scientific generalizations. In this study, the qualitative findings cannot be generalized to all the public-school teachers over Lebanon because there are only two schools that are being studied in one area in the Beqaa Governorate. Referring to Stake (1995), the results of such a study do not highly implicate the practice. However, the generalizations are naturalistic and mainly applicable to the studied group (Stake, 1995). Moreover, the case study is subjective in nature (Stake, 1995), this is due to the naturalistic approach that guides the qualitative research in which the researcher has great authority in the various research processes especially in the interpretation phase. Additionally, Stake added that such qualitative studies are usually personalistic studies in which it targets a specialized audience and threatens their privacy (Stake, 1995).

According to Denzin & Lincoln (2018), firm scientists have criticized qualitative researchers as journalists who end up being unscientific and only exploratory. On the other hand, Bryman (2007) stated that the researchers encounter well-known dilemmas regarding the planned aspects of research. For instance, choosing between employing a structured interview or self-administered questionnaire, etc. According to Yin (2009), the major concerns entailed to the case study approach are that the case study consumes a lot of resources such as time and money, and its results are becoming causal-approached in which the evidence shows that case studies and other types of non-experimental studies cannot address such issues.

## **Methods**

This section will describe the sources of data and the reasons for their selection. First, it presents a description for the data collection phase and explains why and how the data collection tools were employed to conduct the study. Second, this chapter presents how and why the two public schools, and the research participants from the Beqaa governorate were selected. Third, the chapter will provide an explanation of how the data were analyzed. After that, there is a section describing the role of the researcher in case study research. And at last, the chapter presents the ethical consideration that the research should follow while conducting the research study.

### ***Data Collection***

For this study, the researcher got the approval of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education for accessing the selected two schools in the Beqaa to conduct the stated semi-structured interviews and got the IRB approval from the American University of Beirut (refer to Appendix C). Kindly note that for anonymity reasons the

names of the public schools were removed from the attached approval MEHE form.

**Data/ Accounts Collection Tools.** In a qualitative research, some of the common forms of data collection are the semi-structured interviews (Gall et al., 2014). This qualitative tool is specifically designed to take account of the particular characteristics of human experience and to facilitate the investigation of the participants' experiences (Polkinghorne, 2005). Therefore, these tools were used to collect data from the two selected public schools in the Beqaa. The researcher conducted individual semi-structured interviews with public school teachers from the selected two schools.

**Semi-Structured Interviews.** The interview is one of the most important sources of case study research (Yin, 2009). They are informal and similar to a natural conversation (Gall et al, 2014). They are guided not structured conversations (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) stated that in-depth interviews require asking the interviewees about their opinions about an issue or event. The interview questions were developed to explore critical issues related to the teachers' experiences with the professional development programs and their perceptions on the effectiveness of these program that the public-school teachers are receiving. For that and based on the literature review findings, the interview guide included questions related to the challenges and the opportunities related to the professional development programs provided. Additionally, the interview guide included questions about the elements of effective professional development such as the context, content, coherence, collective participation, time and duration, follow-up procedures, and leadership role. Each interviewee is expected to have a unique story and perspective (Stake, 1995).

The interview aimed to highlight the perceptions of public-school teachers on the effectiveness of the professional development programs designed and delivered by

government related entities. According to Yin (2009), the researcher performed two tasks during conducting the interview; First, following up on the line of inquiry in order to make sure that the ideas and the interviewee's responses are as coherent as possible. Second, supporting the conversation with “how” questions to avoid bias. Additionally, it is crucial to highlight that the interviews were conducted in a secure place (Creswell, 2003), for that interviews were conducted online as a result of COVID-19 pandemic for the safety of both the participants, researchers, and their communities (refer to Appendix D).

### ***Selection of Participants***

Sampling implies that the people selected are representative of a population (Polkinghorne, 2005). The selection of qualitative research cases is based on purposeful sampling in which the participants were selected based on their rich knowledge regarding the topic (Gall et al., 2014). According to Polkinghorne (2005), the goal of qualitative research is enriching the understanding of an experience, and qualitative researchers must select fertile exemplars of the experience for study. Moreover, according to Creswell (2013), it is crucial to select cases that provide different perspectives on the issue. The sample targeted in this study includes key informants that are directly involved in the process of the professional development: The public-school teachers who are the individuals who receive the training sessions. Therefore, the participants are strongly involved in the training phenomenon and their experiences and perspectives are crucial to this study. Those teachers according to Polkinghorne (2005) can provide relevant descriptions of their experience with the professional development experiences designed and delivered by government-related entities because they are primarily those who have had or having the experience.

According to Stake (1995), the purpose of the case study is the particularization. Particularization implies the use of a particular research design and method appropriate for the research question investigation (Bryman, 2007). In this case, particularization is selecting the appropriate participants to help answering the stated research question. Hence the balance and the variety in the sample selection are important in a case study research, to maximize the possibility of learning (Stake, 1995). For this purpose, the maximum variation purposive sampling strategy that is also stated as heterogeneous sampling was applied in the selection of the research participants. According to Polkinghorne (2005), this strategy is used to capture a wide range of perspectives relating to the phenomenon under study. The major aim of this technique is to gain greater insights into a phenomenon by looking at it from various viewpoints. In such a way, the researcher collected a significant amount and rich data, where the selection procedure may not assure representativeness but is concerned with the variety of the sources (Stake, 1995).

First, the researcher reached out to the school principals via phone calls, explained the purpose of the research study and provided them with MEHE's approval form via email (refer to the approval form in Appendix C). Then, the researcher got the lists of tenured and contractual teachers with their contact numbers from both schools and randomly chose the names. Those selected were invited to be interviewed via phone calls to book appointments with them based on their preference. . After consenting to participate, setting the date and time of the interview, and the mode of the interview (WhatsApp, Zoom, etc.), the researcher contacted the participants. Most of the participants preferred to communicate over WhatsApp calls. A total of 27 semi-structured interviews were conducted: 15 contractual and 12 tenured teachers.

### ***Selection of Public Schools***

Based on the particularization, and on the positive relationship between the quality of professional development and the quality of learning presented previously in the literature, two schools were selected as two extremes as follows: one low achieving and one high achieving schools in the Beqaa of Lebanon as identified by CERD criteria for low and high achieving schools. After identifying the two public schools, the researcher explained the purpose and the procedure of the study for the school principals of the selected public schools and take his/her permission to meet with the school teachers.

School principals were not involved in the selection of the teachers to be recruited to participate in the study to assure that no perception of undue influence or bias is practiced with the teachers. However, the researcher communicated with the two school principals who were the gatekeepers and the permission was sought from them to gain access to the participants. Only the researcher contacted the teachers at the schools after receiving information about their type of job contract from the principal.

### ***Data Analysis***

The researcher followed the procedures of the qualitative instrumental case study to analyze the collected data. One of these procedures is the thematic analysis approach (Bryman, 2017). According to Stake (1995), the case study depends on two strategic ways that the qualitative researchers do to provide meanings for the data observed and collected. The first strategy is through the direct interpretation of the individual case, and the second strategy is through accumulation and combination of instances for the purpose of having a coherent and comprehensible set of meanings (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995). Hence, the most distinctive characteristic of qualitative



inquiry is its emphasis on sustaining vigorous interpretation (Stake, 1995). The principles of the interpretational analysis, as stated by Gall et al. (2014) and Creswell (2013), involve coding data sections into categories and grouping them to recognize several themes that play a major role in providing meaning to the data collected. According to Terry et al. (2017), thematic analysis is the analysis that moves from familiarization of data to some form of theme development and then coding. Several researchers stated that the purpose of coding is finding evidence for the themes (Creswell, 2013; Terry et al., 2017).

Consequently, the researcher transcribed the recorded interviews into a written format. After that, the research read each transcription and coded the participants' statements to have a set of codes that was organized under inductive themes. These themes were then categorized under the two main deductive themes which are the experiences and effectiveness (refer to Appendix B).

The researcher included a mix of deductive analysis that is based on existing themes, and inductive analysis that may form as a result of emerging themes (Terry et al., 2017). This approach was useful to examine the perceptions of the teachers based on the conceptual framework of this research study (Figure 2) that represents the existing themes.

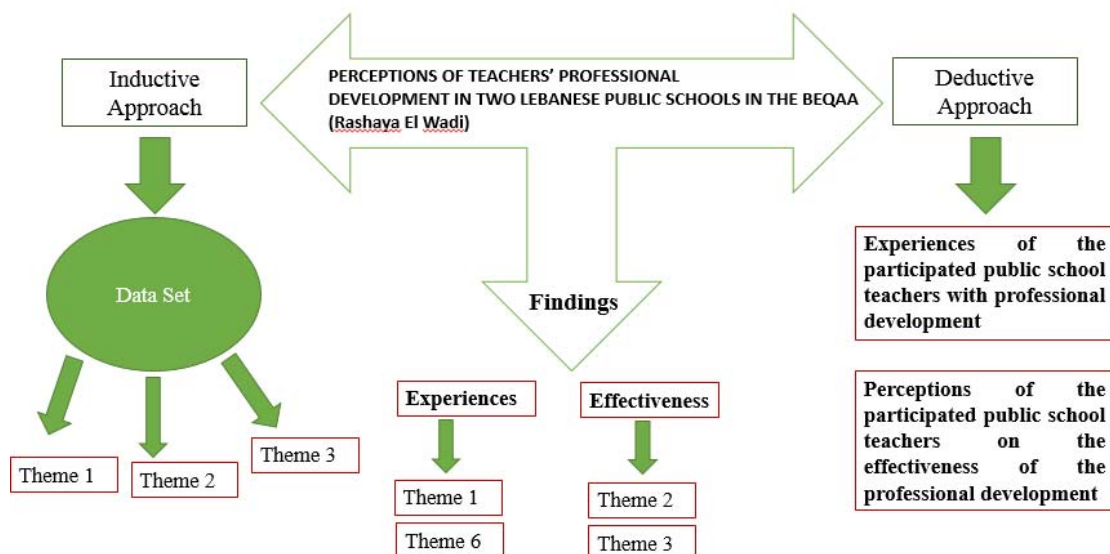
### ***Overview of the data organization***

The process to organize and analyze the data collection was the thematic analysis. According to Terry et al. (2017), Thematic Analysis is a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning that is also called themes across a data set. Therefore, after conducting the semi-structured interviews with the tenured and contractual public-school teachers, a set of data was

shaped as written interview transcriptions, and was organized into themes. These themes allowed the researcher to make sense of the collective and shared experiences and commonalities (Terry et al., 2017). The deductive approach is characterized by what the researcher in this study brings in to answer the set research questions. The researcher brought in two main topics (themes) which are the public-school participated teachers' experiences and their perceptions of effectiveness regarding the professional development programs provided to them in the Lebanese public education sector. On the other hand, the inductive approach is characterized in a bottom-up approach where the researcher elicited themes from what is in the data and organized these inductive themes under the previously stated deductive themes to shape the case study findings. Figure 4 below better describes both applied approaches by numbering the themes for the purpose of showing their variety and distribution.

**Figure 4**

*Overview of Data Organization*



## **Role of the Researcher**

Researchers are non-interventionists (Stake, 1995). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018), the researcher may be interpretive and produce a set of representations that describes a complex situation. Stake added that the case researcher has different roles, besides being an interpreter, to play while conducting the research study such as being a teacher, an advocate, an evaluator, and a biographer (Stake, 1995). According to Creswell, the approach of the researcher is to explore the real-life, contemporary bounded system or systems over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and reports a case description and themes (Creswell, 2013). According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research requires explanation, interpretation, and analysis of the data collected. Therefore, the researcher is typically involved in various experiences with participants and inquirers to explicitly identify reflexively their biases, values, and personal backgrounds, such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status that shape their interpretations formed during a study. Moreover, the qualitative researcher embraces the uniqueness of the individual cases and the context as a major element in understanding the case that is being researched (Stake, 1995). In addition, gaining entry to a research site and the ethical issues that might arise are also elements of the researcher's role. The researcher's role in this study was to follow the study's methods and ethical guidelines in reaching out to the participants. Moreover, the researcher interpreted the data from the teachers' perspectives and assured the impartiality to any stakeholder mentioned in the study.

## **Quality Criteria**

The major criticism for conducting interviews is that although it is one of the best tools to conduct case study research, there are pitfalls that the qualitative researcher

should identify. Yin (2009) stated that the interviews should be considered as verbal reports only and that reporting the responses is subjected to bias and inaccurate articulation. In addition to that Stake (1995) stated that inaccurate questions or unsuitable communication style may disqualify the data.

However, in a qualitative-interpretive research, research is based on different ontological and epistemological assumptions about the phenomenon under study. Therefore, the researcher, in such a case, is an interpretivist. The task of the interpretivists is to elaborate on what is beyond epistemology and beyond the abstract criteria that judge and evaluate the quality of a qualitative research, particularly because interpretive researchers consider criteria not as abstract standards, but as an open-ended, evolving list of traits that characterize what researchers think research should look like (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

Several researchers have contributed to define and identify quality criteria to evaluate qualitative research studies. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018), the constructivist-interpretivism paradigm and the naturalistic approach in qualitative case study research requires adopting a set of criteria. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), these criteria are: credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and reflexivity.

**Credibility.** Credibility is the same as internal validity in quantitative research. It is the degree of confidence in the research findings. In this study, triangulation was one of the approaches to achieve credibility. According to Yin (2009), a major strength of case study data collection is the triangulation of data sources. This diversification permits the development of converging lines of inquiry in which the case study evidence is considered more valid and reliable if it is based on several sources of information (Yin, 2009). Triangulation is collecting information from different resources (Gall et al., 2014). In this research study, the data were collected from the Lebanese public-school teachers who are contractual and tenured from two different Lebanese public schools in the Beqaa.

**Transferability.** Transferability is the degree to which the study's results can be transferable to other contexts with different participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Transferability was achieved in this research study by providing thick descriptions of the behaviors, experiences, setting, and context of the study to give the reader the meaning of the results. In addition, the results of this study can be transferable to other public schools in Lebanon because these schools have unified-national professional development programs designed and delivered by government related entities.

**Dependability.** Dependability is the consistency of the research findings over a period of time. The best way to achieve dependability is the audit trail strategy which engage participants to evaluate the research results and provide recommendations (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). It also involves describing the research procedures from the start of a research project to the development and reporting stage (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). In this research study, the researcher ensured to engage a number of public-school teachers from the community to provide their input regarding the research tools and the preliminary results. Moreover, in this final version of the thesis, the researcher provided a detailed description of the processes and procedures that took place during the several phases of the research study. Moreover, member checking also supported reviewing the analysis of the findings and made sure that they respond to the research questions of the study.

**Confirmability.** Confirmability is the level to which the findings of the research study could be confirmed by other researchers, and to the level to which the findings reported by the researcher can be independently confirmed by participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). In this research study, the researcher conducted several meetings with public school teachers and discussed the results and made sure to adjust accordingly.

**Reflexivity.** Reflexivity is the process of self-reflection about oneself as researcher. In this research study, the researcher examined the personal conceptual lens, assumptions, and values, and determined if they are impacting the research procedures and decisions during the different phases of the study. In this sense, the researcher reviewed the interview recordings and notes and reflected on the style of asking the questions and reacting with the interviewee and adjusted it accordingly.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Researchers are required to develop situational ethics that apply to all forms of the research and its human-to-human relationships (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). As a first step, the researcher got the university IRB approval and MEHE's permission for conducting the research. For that, the researcher met with the participants, explained the purpose of the study, and asked them for their written informed consent to participate in the research study. This form included signing an agreement for participation and notified the participants about the confidentiality of any information shared. The researcher explained to the participants how the data will be used and that any answers linked to their names or to the public school they work at will not be shared publicly. Instead, the data will be used to serve the research purpose only and will be deleted afterwards. Conversations during the interviews were voice-recorded after receiving the consent of the participants. Participants who agreed on the voice-recorder were informed that the voice notes will be used for the research purpose only and will be deleted at the end of the research study.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions of Lebanese public-school teachers in two Lebanese public schools in the Beqaa. Therefore, this chapter will be representing the findings. This phase follows the data collection phase in the process of qualitative research. It highlights the data analysis process applied in detail in reference to the conceptual model that was formed in [Chapter II](#). First, this chapter will identify the two main deductive themes: the participated teachers' experiences with PD, and the participated teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of PD as the two main themes. Each theme will include a summary of the findings and a set of inductive themes. These inductive themes are as follows.

Under the experience deductive theme, the following inductive major themes were added: Unheard Teachers' Voices in Professional Development Planning, teachers' resentment, purpose of participation in PDs: between compulsion and freedom, and COVID-19 Pandemic worsens the PD experience. On the other hand, under the effectiveness deductive theme, the following major inductive themes were added: classroom application of PD content: a gap between theories and practices, the dilemma of old national curriculum and modern teaching methodologies, absence of follow-up procedures and feedback overlap, crowded classrooms, and PD ripple effects on students and teachers.



## Participants' Background

**Table 1**

*Participants' Background*

Participants' background: Number of Participants Per Each Category																	
Contract Type		Gender		Age Groups (Average=41)			Specialty					Teaching Subjects					
Tenured: 12	Contractual: 15	Female: 22 (81%)	Male: 5 (19%)	30-40: 15	41-50: 7	50 and above: 5	English Literature: 8	Arabic Literature: 5	Physical Education: 1	Social Sciences: 4	Geography: 2	English: 4	Math: 2	French: 1	Preschool Teacher: 7	Civic Studies: 6	Administrative Work: 5
							Biology: 5	Mathematics: 2	History: 1	Chemistry: 3	Psychology: 1	Arabic: 4	Physics: 2	Science: 1	Sports: 1	Geography: 5	History: 6

A total of 27 semi-structured interviews with tenured and contractual public-school teachers were conducted. These interviews included the teachers' positive and negative perceptions based on their own experiences and their point of view. The participated teachers were per the selection criteria tenured and contractual teachers. Table 4.1 below shows the number of participants per each of the following groups: Type of Contract, Gender, Age, Specialty, and Teaching Subject.

As per the selection criteria, 10 teachers were selected from the first school: 5 tenured teachers out of 10 and 5 contractual teachers out of a total of 10. In addition to 17 selected teachers from the second school: 7 tenured teachers out of 14 and 10 contractual teachers out of 20. The total number of contractual teachers from both schools is 15, and the total number of tenured teachers from both schools is 12. As the data show: 22 of the participating teachers were females, which constitutes 81% of the sample; 5 of the participants were males, which constitutes 19% of the sample. This shows that the sample in this study is representative to the gender representation in the sector where same percentages for males and females are registered on the statistical bulletin of CERD (2019). Regarding the specialty, the table shows various educational backgrounds in different disciplines. It also shows the various teaching subjects that the

public-school teachers, especially the tenured teachers, could be teaching and that could or could not be related to their specialty.

Both tenured and contractual teachers admit the importance of professional development in increasing their professional and personal skills. Additionally, the participating teachers agreed that they believe in the mission of PDs in developing their professional skills and improving the quality of teaching and learning in the Lebanese public education sector. However, the participants reported their concerns regarding several gaps that lead to unsuccessful experiences and that hinder PDs effectiveness in the Lebanese public school. The researcher coded the participating teachers from T1 to T27 to avoid identification and used this coding throughout the chapter to highlight the teachers' major quotes.

### **Participants' Experiences with Professional Development**

The data showed that the participants' perspectives regarding their experiences with professional development are based on the level of teachers' engagement in PD planning, teachers' resentment, and purpose of participation. This section will present an elaboration of the mentioned inductive themes and highlight the PD teachers' experience during COVID-19 pandemic.

#### ***Unheard Teachers' Voices in Professional Development Planning***

Both tenured and contractual teachers approved that they do not identify the professional development programs topics. This is not based on their personal choice, but because they are excluded from choosing the training sessions' topics. Nevertheless, they yearly receive packaged handbook stating all the training sessions for the academic year with all the needed details such as the topic of the session, the target teacher

groups, the dates, the place of the session, and the name of the trainer, with a brief description of each session on a separate page.

Figures 5 and 6 demonstrate how the handbook is designed. The names of the trainers are removed for anonymity.

**Figure 5**  
*Example from Handbook*

المادة : روضات	
العنوان : كيفية بدء عام دراسي ناجح <b>How to start the school Year Successfully</b>	
الفئة المستهدفة : معلمة الروضة والحلقة الأولى - مرحلتي الروضة والأولى	
المجال :	- الممارسات المهنية المتخصصة
الكفاية :	- يستثمر مختلف الموارد المرتبطة بمادة الاختصاص في ممارسته المهنية
الهدف :	في نهاية هذه الدورة يصبح المتدرب قادراً على: - التخطيط منذ أول يوم في المدرسة لإدارة العوائق والصعوبات التي يتعرض لها المعلم والطفل والأهل وتخطيها بنجاح.
التوصيف :	هل يبدأ المعلمون عامهم بنجاح باستخدام أساليب التدريس والتخطيط المختلفة؟ يتوق المعلمون إلى جعل اليوم الأول خالياً من الحوادث، ومحاولة جعل حياة الأطفال أسهل، عن طريق جعل فصولهم مكاناً آمناً وجذاباً لهؤلاء الصغار. لذا كي نجعل بدء العام انطلاقاً ناجحة على معلم الفصل: 1. مساعدة الأطفال من طريق التخطيط بعناية لبداية ونهاية ناجحة باستخدام أنواع مختلفة من الأنشطة التي تلائم جميع أنواع المتعلمين. 2. تحديد نصائح مهمة لمشاركتها مع أولياء الأمور من أجل جعل اليوم الأول ناجحاً وسليماً للأطفال والمعلمين وأولياء الأمور.
التوقيت	التاريخ
8:30 - 13:30	مركز التدريب
1-1 إدار المعلمين والمعلمات	

**Figure 6**  
*Example on PD Session Description*

رمز الدورة	عنوان الدورة	الفئة المستهدفة	التواريخ	المكان	العدد الصفحة
S-22-1	From Reading to Writing in Kindergarten and Grade One Classes	معلمو/ معلمات الروضة الثالثة والأول أساسي	13-Sep-2019 20-Sep-2019 27-Sep-2019 04-Oct-2019	دار المعلمين والمعلمات	62
S-22-2	From Reading to Writing in Kindergarten and Grade One Classes	معلمو/ معلمات الروضة الثالثة والأول أساسي	14-Sep-2019 21-Sep-2019 28-Sep-2019 05-Oct-2019	دار المعلمين والمعلمات	62
S-23-1	How to Use Classroom Language in the Math and Science Classes	Math and Science teachers in cycles one and two	12-Oct-2019 19-Oct-2019 26-Oct-2019	دار المعلمين والمعلمات	63
S-23-2	How to Use Classroom Language in the Math and Science Classes	Math and Science teachers in cycles one and two	02-Nov-2019 16-Nov-2019 23-Nov-2019	دار المعلمين والمعلمات	63
S-24-1	How to Cater for the Students' Different Learning Styles	الحلقتين الأولى والثانية	30-Nov-2019 07-Dec-2019	دار المعلمين والمعلمات	64
S-24-2	How to Cater for the Students' Different Learning Styles	الحلقتين الأولى والثانية	14-Dec-2019 21-Dec-2019	دار المعلمين والمعلمات	64
S-25-1	How to Help Students Become More Proficient Writers	الحلقتين الأولى والثانية	11-Jan-2020 18-Jan-2020	دار المعلمين والمعلمات	65

The participants consider themselves totally isolated from the process of PD planning. Sessions were pre-designed and allocated prior to the beginning of the academic year. Teachers' needs were not asked for during or after the training sessions. Additionally, they were not fully aware of the procedures that the government entities follow in this regard. T20 stated that: "we as public-school teachers running the public school with our efforts despite the lack of resources, we do not have a voice in choosing the professional development program which helps us in our teaching journey and helps our students and our school as well." Many teachers shared similar sentiment.

However, the analysis of the qualitative data provided better understanding of the teachers' knowledge regarding needs' identification processes. The process starts with the public-school principal, who completes a yearly report stating the teachers' needs based on their classroom observations or informal/formal conversations with the school teachers. The principal then sends this annual report to the Center of Education Research and Development (CERD), the national organization responsible for teachers' training. Some other participating teachers added that CERD has the prominent role in deciding on the topics of the training sessions. The teachers emphasized that they are not asked about their opinions regarding the PD topics.

### ***Teachers' Resentment***

Based on the participating teachers' experiences stated during the semi-structured interviews, tenured and contractual teachers expressed their resentment from the professional development programs that they attended. Besides, they reported that they have low expectations regarding future programs.

Most of the tenured teachers who participated in this research study had a negative attitude towards attending the training sessions. Those teachers believe that

they are experienced, qualified, and trained enough not to attend the provided sessions. As a result, they reported that they attend the PD programs because they are forced to register and attend, not because they believe in these programs' importance in levelling up their professional skills. They thought that they became qualified enough not to receive any additional instructional support from the training sessions because of their long teaching journey, age, and experience. T14 stated that: "I am not saying that I do not like to learn more, but I think I am a 55-year-old teacher, and I can train other teachers on the subject I have been teaching for more than 17 years." The teachers believe that the PD experience is of little value as it does not meet their level of theoretical knowledge and practical skills. As a result, they feel that their skills and their teaching years of experience are underestimated.

Moreover, the data showed that the tenured participants have criticism on the trainers' profiles. For instance, they stated that the trainers are very young and cannot possess robust repertoire of skills to excel in training tenured teachers who, in their turn, are skilled in their speciality. For this reason, those teachers feel inferior because they are being trained by what they named as "novice teachers/trainers" while they could be promoted after their long experience to a trainer level and benefit the other novice teachers from their theoretical and practical knowledge. Other teachers reported that in such cases, they choose the training session with the most suitable logistical conditions: the timing and location of the workshops because they believe that they are just doing their duty by attending a certain number of training sessions per year and not because they are interested in what is provided to them.

On the other hand, the contractual teachers' perspectives ranged between two significant extremes. The first group stated that they prefer not to attend the professional

development programs provided to them in the public education sector for several reasons. First, most of the training sessions' timing is during the weekdays that include in its turn most of their teaching hours. Therefore, if they attend, they will skip their teaching hours at school, resulting in losing their hourly compensation and losing time to finish the mandated curriculum by MEHE. As T6 stated: “What is the benefit of going to the training session and not being able to cover for the material that we should cover within my assigned teaching hours.” T20 added: “What should I tell the Educational Inspection if I did not reach the target set by MEHE and expected by them?”

Another reason for contractual teachers' resentment is the financial consequences resulting from attending the PD sessions. The contractual teachers stated that they are not compensated for any non-teaching activities including the PD training sessions. T13 highlighted the following: “I am a mom for three kids, and I am the only caregiver; I have been teaching as a contractual teacher for seven years now, and I wait for several months to get my payment, I cannot afford losing any penny as a result of attending the training sessions.” T9 added: “I am a dad for four kids, I am supposed to pay for my children's education, house rental, and all the living expenses...I will not prefer attending the training session on the expense of my family...”

Nevertheless, both tenured and contractual teachers reported that they feel resented because the system restrict them from having a successful PD experience. They stated that public school teachers are restricted to teaching to the tests and books. However, entities such as the Education Inspection would visit the teachers and check if they are pacing with the curriculum as required by MEHE regardless of the interesting and up-to-date activities that the teacher is or might be implementing. “We are not

rewarded by governmental entities if we are excited, committed, and up-to-date teachers... We are always afraid not to have the traditional preparation book that should be placed on the teachers' desk and the other traditional routines...we need to satisfy everybody, but this will never fulfil the needs of our students." as mentioned by the participating teachers.

On the other hand, few participants were more positive in their perspective. They mentioned that despite what is reported regarding the differences in tenured teachers' and trainers' experiences, they hold themselves accountable to regularly attend all the workshops with a positive attitude to benefit as much as possible from what is delivered. On this note, T2 mentioned: "There is no way that I benefit nothing from a training session...impossible...even if the benefit does not exceed 10%...we must consider the training beneficial by concept."

### ***Purpose of Participation in PDs: Between Compulsion and Freedom***

This section includes five stories as shown in figures 7 and 8. The researcher concluded them from the data analysis. Each of these stories is repeated among many participants and thus they are considered shared stories. In this section these stories are considered evidence from the participants' experiences. The participating teachers have stated that their participation experience has a significant impact on their motivation level to engage in more of the designed professional development programs. It either excites them to engage and attend or demotivates them as professionals and creates a sense of disbelief in the training sessions' aim. The researcher organized the data and extracted five significant purposes: Freedom of Choice, Logistics, Trainer's Profile, PD Content Coherency, and Fear of Attendance Policy.

The first purpose is freedom of choice. Some of the participating teachers

reported that they are committed to the training sessions they choose from the yearly handbook, mainly because they better know the ones that cater to their instructional and classroom needs. However, most of the participated teachers reported that the school principals take the decision on their behalf in many situations and register the teachers' names in the training sessions that they believe necessary. The participants consider this behavior as an act of obligation to attend the training session without referring to their preferences or needs. As reported, when this happens, they feel demotivated because they feel that they are coded as numbers and not as educators and professionals who have the right to choose based on their needs and preferences. Refer to Story 3.

## **Figure 7**

### *Shared Stories from Teachers' Experiences*

#### **Story 1**

"...I took an Arabic workshop once, and I don't teach Arabic; I teach social science. I don't know who chose it on my behalf. The principal said it wasn't him, but it wasn't me who decided it. I also took a workshop on google and zoom, and I didn't benefit. After all, I couldn't implement what I learned because I do not have a personal laptop to practice, and the training was about indoctrination instead of being practical enough for us to learn. However, it is obligatory because we get called in for interrogation if we don't go. If we cannot attend, we have to send a signed medical report that explains why we couldn't participate. They will either force you to take the workshop the following year or ask you to choose another workshop. I don't object; what can I do in the end? I can either get a medical report, but sometimes that costs more than attending the workshop. Honestly, if there is training that I've chosen and I know it will benefit me, then I get excited. However, if it is a random workshop, I do not get excited at all."

#### **Story 2**

"...Last year in January, I applied for a workshop in Rashaya, but it was moved to Zahle. I didn't go the first day, and I got a medical report. The next day I went, and I got a lot of grief; they started asking me why I didn't show up the first day and told me that I should've sent in my medical report beforehand, not present it on the same day. I told them that I couldn't come to Zahle because I was sick and couldn't drive to give the report, but they told me that I should've dropped off the medical report beforehand. I received a lot of negative comments while I was sick. I just attended the session normally, and they gave me a certificate that I attended only one day. They called the administration the day I didn't attend to ask where I was because they think that I do not want to lose my teaching hours. After all, I am a contractual teacher. On that day, I couldn't go to school either. I was very upset that I had chosen a session in Rashaya, and they moved it to Zahle. I skipped the first session, but because I like to fulfill my duty, I attended the second session, but I was met with a lot of hostility.... Later there was Corona in the country, and I did not receive any written warning..."



## Figure 8

### *Shared Stories from Teachers' Experiences*

#### Story 3

“The titles and the content of the training session are just randomly chosen. They made me attend a workshop for four years concerning grades I don't even teach (grades 1 to 4). It wasn't just attending; I had to study and submit an exam. This is ridiculous. I talked to the administration and the educational region, and I told them that another teacher could benefit way more from these training session, but they wouldn't listen. In the last two years, we as teachers started choosing for ourselves, but not because we wanted to but because we had to. My entire teaching experience and expertise do not rely on these training session; I worked on my self-development... I do my online research to be able to develop my skills. Some training sessions are essential, such as dealing with students' mental health, but this issue does not concern me. Some specialized professionals are trained to deal with such things; why should I attend training for that so many times? Or, for example, violence in schools does not concern me. It is the responsibility of the principal. I cannot do anything as a teacher; why should I waste a week of my time and sit in the cold to learn something that I can do nothing about.... We cannot even implement most of what we learn....”

#### Story 4 |

“In the session I attended, the trainer made us feel like we were students and we felt super comfortable with her. The trainer taught us that we need to be humble with the kids and she even changed my perspective on how to treat the children. I used to have a more serious approach to teaching children, but she made me realize that I have to be more lenient and I have to sympathize more with the kids. I feel that more trainings should be offered for teachers that teach primary in order to fill this gap that exists...”

#### Story 5

“In my experience, the training session has been beneficial. I feel the focus has been on higher classes rather than primary classes, which creates a massive gap in students' education levels. They are not offering any training for primary school teachers, and they often provide training that is irrelevant and impractical.... I've been teaching in the public sector for five years, I've attended maybe three training sessions. My teaching style changed immediately after attending specific workshops, and the slight change I implemented made a huge difference in the students' understanding and performance. However, my motivation depends honestly to a large extent on the trainer. Some training sessions are crucial and beneficial, but others are just to fill time... I do not like to say that I do not want to go because 'I don't think I will benefit because, as I mentioned, the one session I attended, I felt the difference it made in my classroom and how responsive the students were to the changes I made. However, I do not think that these sessions cover my needs as a public school teacher, and they in most of the time, do not consider the setting of the public school. My friends attended a training session once and told me that it was good. I didn't attend because it was useless from its title. They said that it didn't even entail making a work plan; the trainer only talked for a while and left. I have no idea how they choose the topics. We receive a booklet with all the listed training sessions, some mandatory, some not, and we are told to register...”

The second purpose is logistics. The data identified a group of teachers who are less motivated to attend training sessions located in far locations and that requires several attendance days. They reported that they choose the training session according to its time, place, and duration and not based on its topic. For instance, T10 stated: "I do not see a point of spending three days on a training session that requires 60-minute one way drive each day, I am staying away from my kids, losing my teaching hours, and my money." T27 added: "I am obliged as a teacher to choose at least one training session, so I pick the nearest and the shortest in duration." The recurrence of such perspectives in the data showed that this particular group of teachers consider their engagement in the training sessions as an obligation or duty within the public education sector that would avoid them from having any job consequences. Their participation, as reported, is not because of their belief that these professional development programs support them in their teaching journey. Refer to Story 2.

The third purpose is the trainer's profile and experience. The participating teachers stated that the trainer's profile plays a significant role in boosting their spirits to choose a training session with a sense of excitement and pleasure. Few teachers mentioned that they usually select the training session delivered by a trainer they know in person or who is known by some of their colleagues. However, similar attitude was concluded among most of the participating teachers, which is choosing the training session based on the trainers' profile, including his/her experience, age, and professional skills. Many participating teachers stated that they do not value the training session if the trainer is not up to the expected standards. As many participants highlighted: "We cannot but comment on a trainer that asks the teachers to do all the search in the session or who only provides copied theoretical ideas from Google." Consequently, they prefer

not to attend a training session where they feel that they possess more knowledge than the trainer delivering the training session's content. A general agreement was made among the participated teachers that some trainers are recruited based on their socio-political background and not based on their knowledge, qualifications, and degrees, which leads to forming a negative image to attend and benefit from the session. It is crucial to highlight a repetitive statement in the data that states: "... while attending some training sessions, I feel that I am a number that completed the number assigned to open the training session, so the trainer can deliver the material and get paid his/her hours.... It is all about the trainer's benefit .... Not adding anything to our knowledge as professionals....." Most of the teachers have mentioned that it is all about "benefits and interests."

On the other hand, they insisted that they appreciate a high level of qualified trainers who are well prepared to deliver the material and support and guide the teachers as much as possible. Many of those stated that such trainers made them leave the session with positive feedback, even if they previously had a negative attitude towards attending the session. T27 mentioned: "I register for one of the training sessions because I was afraid of the written warning, but I did not want to attend honestly.... From the first 10 minutes of the session, I was more than sure that I want to attend all the training sessions of that trainer." Additionally, T11 mentioned: "I left the training session and was thinking all my way back home in new and creative instructional strategies to apply in my classroom because of all the motivation I recharged from the trainer." Refer to the Stories.

The fourth purpose is the PD content coherency. As a conclusion out of the participated teachers' shared experiences, it is crucial to highlight that the content of the

professional development is key to the success of the teachers' experiences with professional development and a major factor in motivating them. As defined by the participants, content is not only the written material provided to the teachers in the training. Besides, it represents the degree of coherency of the written material with the title, objective, and activities of the session on one hand; and the coherency of the topic of the session itself with the teachers' speciality and instructional practices on the other hand. The data collected showed that many of the participating teachers attended training sessions that are unconnected to their domain of teaching. Other participants expressed their experiences being obliged to attend several repeated training sessions yearly with very slight changes in its design. Refer to stories.

The fifth purpose is the fear of attendance policy. As mentioned earlier, most of the participated teachers, both contractual and tenured, noted that they attend the training session because they want to avoid any job consequences. One of the mentioned consequences was the official warning from the government or MEHE as they expressed. As stated by the participants, this official warning could cause the contractual teachers to lose their teaching hours and the tenured teachers to have a delay in their promotion that is characterized by getting higher levels of employment degrees<sup>9</sup>. They believe that even if they know that some teachers are not receiving a written notification in case of absence, they still prefer to stay on the safe side. As T11, T15, T24, and other participated teachers mention: "Based on our experience, we are always worried about MEHE's decisions and adjustments, so we do what is required from us and protect our jobs for the sake of protecting our families... This is our only

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<sup>9</sup> Employment degrees: الدرجات الوظيفية

concern." On the other hand, it is crucial to note that very few participants mention that despite the mentioned risk, they prefer not to attend the required PD sessions and hold the responsibility of any consequences if they happen. T21 is one of those participants who stated that: "I do not register at all, and I do not attend if the principal registers my name on my behalf... I just do not attend...I only received a warning once in my 7 years of teaching and I replied stating that I do not believe that these PD sessions are beneficial...I am doing my Masters and developing my professional skills on my own...I never received an answer back..."

### ***COVID-19 Pandemic Worsens the PD Experience***

The qualitative data collected showed that the teachers did not receive a written booklet for the training sessions for Academic year 2020-2021 because of the Corona Pandemic. However, certain training centers initiated their own training project - with the efforts of the trainers themselves- that is called "Mawredi" training online sessions. However, the participating teachers reported that these sessions are elective. As a result, some said that they tried to attend for one time following the previous routine of attending at least one training session. Others reported that they are not attending because they are already overloaded with all the online teaching tasks and so they cannot reserve time for the online training sessions. Other teachers reported that they do not have the needed equipment such as good internet connection and a laptop. Nevertheless, it is crucial to highlight that many of the interviewed teachers did not even know that such program exists.

In addition to the mentioned program, all the interviewed teachers mentioned the online training session that was provided by the government for all teachers on how to use software programs and how to work on the online educational platform properly.

Still, the interviewed teachers reported that it was a very quick session that they did not benefit from. One of the teachers mentioned that she is a 50-year-old teacher who needs time to cope with this urgent change. Other similar age participating teachers repeated the following statement: “Technology was never a priority in the public school, we teach for the books and the tests only...how can we totally change our instruction and depend on technology ...we still use the green board not even the white board and markers.”

A concluding remark mentioned by the participated teachers is that one of the major gaps that hinders their work in the current COVID-19 situation is the weak foundation that the Lebanese public system has in terms of integrating technology in the curriculum. Moreover, the participants added that the professional development programs from its initiation did not provide the enough support in this regard. Therefore, in such a case of emergency, public school teachers are facing problems dealing with the online teaching especially those who are soon to retire. Many teachers mentioned that they depend on their relatives, siblings, and children to help them lead an online lesson because they have no other reference to depend on.

### **Participated Teachers’ Perspectives on the Effectiveness of Professional Development**

The participating teachers considered the questions designed to ask for the professional development effectiveness are paramount, especially those related to implementing new knowledge and instructional concepts in the classroom. and those related to students' performance. The participants expressed their need to clarify their perspectives regarding these topics and highlighted several examples from their daily teaching practices. It was clear from the data collected that the participants have many

things to share with professionals who possess an educational background to validate or disapprove their perceptions. Additionally, they expressed that they need to speak out and express the hardship they pass through. Furthermore, the participants clarified the opportunities that result from classroom application of PD content and its effect on the students and teachers. As reported, the participants need to feel heard because they have vital information to share to improve the effectiveness of the current PD program provided in the Lebanese public schools.

### ***Classroom Application of PD Content: A Gap between Theories and Practices***

The data showed that the effectiveness of the PD is demonstrated by the participants through the effective implementation of new concepts in classrooms. The qualitative data collected showed that the participating teachers are always encouraged to learn something new but they often face many difficulties implementing the new knowledge in their classrooms. As many teachers reported: "We always try to benefit from the training to help ourselves as professionals and our students as learners to have the best learning....". However, the same teachers who are eager to learn are feeling disappointed and deterred either at the end of the training session or at the level of classroom application. The reoccurrence of such incidents reported by the participants is caused by the teachers' own evaluation and analysis of the new concepts suggested, follow-up procedures, feedback overlap, and the crowded classrooms.

Transferring learned concept to the classroom has been challenging. Many teachers expressed satisfaction with the training sessions but these concepts were not relevant to their own classroom context. In addition to being "not fitting", these concepts were not adaptable to the classroom context. From their perspective, this repeatedly happens for different reasons.

There is limitation in two major resources: Equipment and Time. As reported, these limitations are the major factors that hinder the implementation of the new concepts and strategies teachers learn from the training sessions. Starting with the issue of equipment, it is crucial to highlight as an introduction as reported, the public schools have old structured buildings where it is very cold in winter, the classrooms are weakly designed as cabins with very limited spaces, the walls need rehabilitation as a result of water precipitation along the years, and the unavailability of proper heating system. Despite all of these challenges, public-school teachers expressed their optimism and focusing on the quality of their teaching

Participants reported that the topics of integrating technology in the classroom workshops were essential to improve the quality of teaching in public schools. However, most of the public schools either lack in such equipment or are poorly equipped. Moreover, in the latter case, the participants reported that they lack access to the needed resources. As T26, T11, T3 and other participating teachers reported: “We are always more than happy to learn more in technology and learn how to deliver an exciting lesson to the students, but the public school is not equipped as should: we have only one computer, one active board, no LCD projector in the classroom...this is limiting us from completing our mission as teachers who really want to deliver the best learning...”. Therefore, teachers cannot depend while planning their lessons on the technological tools available. For instance, using the active board would be an occasional event that may happen once or twice per academic year because of the big number of classes in the school. “I wish that I can make the students engage every day the same way they do when they sit in the active board room...It is their right to feel engaged and interested ...books and papers are not all that they need in this era...” T22



mentioned. T16 added “students in lower grades know how to use software programs that we as teachers and adults do not know about.... We cannot teach in the traditional way that the public-school setting force on almost all the teachers...” Another example is the lack of A4 printing white paper sheets and ink in their schools. If the teacher wants to provide extra sheets for the students, they do the printing outside the school at their own expense.

Another factor that assures a gap between the theory of the professional development programs and the practice is the time. The teachers reported that most of the activities stated during the training sessions need a substantial amount of time during classroom implementation and that they cannot reserve the needed time at the expense of the curriculum. Therefore, in such a case, the teachers can not benefit from the opportunity of implementing a new strategy or activity especially that they are restricted with a certain number of hours and they need to complete the curriculum requirements within pre-set yearly timeline.

### ***The Dilemma of Old National Curriculum and Modern Teaching Methodologies***

All the participants strongly agreed that the national curriculum represents the major problem hindering the effectiveness of PD programs as the content of PD does not complement the curriculum. It is highlighted by all the participants that the content of the current curriculum is out-of-date, timeworn, and its topics especially in languages and social sciences are out of order. One of the participants is an English teacher, she mentioned that a theme in the national English book is titled technology, and the first lesson is about the Computer then she stated: “Do you really think that the students still do not know what a computer is? They know more than us in technology...” Other teachers added that in our era the students need to have books that cater for their needs

and interests complemented with the technological tools that became a major part in students' life. Other Mathematics teachers mentioned how the lessons are disorganized in the book. Arabic teachers added that the essays and topics in the national Arabic book are rigid enough not to interest any student in the classroom. Additionally, the teachers added that they perceive the professional development programs as ineffective because of the current national curriculum that is forced by the government and monitored by the education inspection. Therefore, teachers have to teach to the book, they are not allowed to remove or change any detail of the content and thus they cannot apply what they believe they could apply at the expense of the curriculum.

#### ***Absence of Follow-up Procedures and Feedback Overlap***

An additional hindering factor for PD effectiveness is the lack of follow-up with the public-school teachers and the feedback overlap during the phase after attending the training sessions. The participants reported that there was no follow-up. Teachers were could either implement or not. If they implemented the learned concept and had questions, they could not go back to the trainer to ask questions. As a teacher lamented: "No one is there to watch us, help us, and guide us..." As far as the participating teachers are concerned, the issue of lack of follow up is a structural one. CERD trainers are not allowed by law to engage in teachers' monitoring and observation inside the classroom. The only two governmental entities that are allowed by MEHE to conduct classroom observations and provide feedback to the teachers are DOPS and the Educational Inspection. The teachers explained that this was disruptive to their teaching and learning: they were investing their time and energy despite all the mentioned challenges to attend the training sessions while receiving contradicting comments from other governmental entities. The teachers reported that this was a

massive hurdle because they were confused as to whom to depend on as a reference to guide them. The teachers believe that if the follow-up is the responsibility of CERD trainers, it would enhance the effectiveness of professional development as it would close the circle on the professionals involved for the purpose of achieving the maximum effectiveness of professional development programs in the public classroom context.

### ***Crowded Classrooms***

Another factor that hinders the effectiveness of the professional development programs especially in the classroom practice, as mentioned by the interviewed teachers is the number of students in each classroom. In one of the selected schools, the number of students per classroom reaches around 35-40 students. In the other selected school, the minimum number of students is 25 per classroom. In both schools these students sit in the traditional setting on wooden tables, two per table, turning backs to each other in a vertical shape. As an agreed argument among all the participated teachers, this current setting deters and delay the delivery of the curriculum and the regular follow-up with each student due to all the restrictions mentioned earlier such as the time and the official yearly plan of the curriculum. Therefore, applying new concepts or trying new instructional strategies would be impossible in such an atmosphere. As T27, T25, T20, T4 and many others reported: “It is impossible to have group work in our classes because of the huge number of students, the tables that cannot be shaped any other way because of the small spaces we have in the classroom, and the official yearly plan that we have to finish...”

### ***PD Ripple Effects on Students and Teachers***

The data showed that the professional development programs provided in the public education sector have ripple effects on students and teachers. These effects indicate the PD effectiveness.

The participating teachers have clearly expressed their perception of whether the professional development programs provided affect students' performance. They reported that prioritizing students' needs is the key to effective PD. They explained that when the content is applicable and relevant to the students' needs, and can be adjusted to the public classroom setting, they as professionals feel the development in their students' achievement. The participated teachers mentioned that they could measure the achievement and confirm its relation to the professional development content in many ways because they are the "front liners" in receiving the training and delivering it to their students in the classrooms. The participating teachers stated two levels of achievement: psychological and academic as means to evaluate the effectiveness of a professional development training session. This differentiation was done to identify the training topics' effectiveness.

On the psychological level, the teachers reported that the effective PD demonstrates a strong relation to students' daily life and mental well-being. Many teachers reported that the training on psychological topics such as: how to deal with students who are facing violence at home, how to deal with students with excessive energy, and other topics made a difference in their personality in the first place. As professionals, they are more aware of the social cases and background that each student in their classrooms possesses to understand better how to treat those children and speak with them. Many of the interviewed teachers mentioned that identifying each student's

psychological needs and being considerate while dealing with them accordingly means providing those students a chance to achieve more. Moreover, the students become more self-confident and more engaged. As a result, the students' and the teachers' sense of belonging to the classroom increase where both parties feel that they want to give their best and consistently seek to become a better individual. It is essential to highlight that the teachers did not differentiate between their development as professionals or individuals and the students' achievement because they genuinely believe that they are, as mentioned by the teachers, "The river that as it gets stronger, it strengthens all the plants."

Most importantly, for a training session to be effective, it needs to be translated by improved student achievement due to the implementation of the new knowledge and skills. The participants reiterated the importance for students to experience the development through new learning experiences rather than the traditional teaching and learning experiences that public schools suffer from. One of the most important training sessions, where almost all the teachers mentioned, is the "QITABI<sup>10</sup>" training that the preschool teachers attended a few years back. The teachers said that they could apply the content of this particular training session smoothly and efficiently, as it is designed explicitly for Lebanese public preschool teachers.

On the teachers' level, the participants highlighted the positive effect of PD gatherings. They expressed that the professional development training sessions' effectiveness could be improved dramatically if they could meet with a group of professionals who could speak the same professional and academic language. The

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<sup>10</sup> Quality Instruction Towards Access and Basic Education Improvement

participants labelled the professional development programs as a "Platform for Expression" because, during the training sessions, they have the opportunity to share their experiences, problems, and success stories in times where their voice is not heard at any other place. Moreover, the participants added that this platform helps renew their ideas, refresh their energy, and heal their stress. "We always benefit from each other, some introduce their problems, and others offer their solution..." as T26 mentioned. T16 added: "I had problems managing a big classroom because I used to teach small classrooms...meeting with my colleagues and discussing the problem with them helped me in overcoming this problem...I felt that I am not alone"

Another positive effect for PD programs is the support and backup it provides to teachers who are obliged to shift their teaching subjects. The interviewed teachers highlighted a critical challenge that they face at the public school as a system which is the administrative decisions at the level of MEHE and the educational regions that the participants considered random and ad hoc decisions. Such decisions are the yearly mandatory schedule adjustments that the Educational Regions issue to public schools. In other words, many of the participants reported that they are suddenly asked to teach a subject that they are not specialized in to a grade level that they did not lead before. For instance, T13 reported a similar case: "I am an Arabic preschool teacher for years, and suddenly I was asked to teach French to KG3 class because there is a shortage in French tenured preschool teachers". T8 stated the following: "I was teaching science as full schedule around 30 teaching hours, suddenly they reduced my hours to 10 teaching hours and gave my classes to a tenured teacher who teaches English to other classes..." As the data show, these incidents repeatedly occur because of the financial issues at MEHE. Describing this case is essential to clarify that the participants consider the

professional development programs as a reference to help them teach various subjects. For this reason, the participants emphasize the importance of having this variety of options in the CERD booklet because irrelevant training on a particular subject in one of the academic years might become very relevant for the same teacher in another academic year.

### **Conclusion**

The findings covered the two main deductive themes; the participated teachers' experiences with PD and their perspectives on the program's effectiveness. In the scope of teachers' experiences, the participants expressed that they are neglected in defining their needs and choosing the training topic that best caters to teachers' and students' needs. Moreover, the participants expressed their resentment from the current practices at the level of PD irrelevant and inapplicable content design that does not fit the Lebanese public-school context. Other factors such as cases where unqualified trainers train the teachers, the financial burdens resulting from attending the workshops, especially in the case of contractual teachers, and the system restrictions on teachers' instructional practices and curriculum modifications are significant sources that strengthen teachers' resentment and disappointment. The participants also related their purpose of participation to motivation and engagement in professional development sessions. If teachers feel autonomous in their decisions and choices regarding which PD to attend, when, and where; they would have a different and better PD experience than joining by force. At the level of effectiveness, the participants emphasized the importance of classroom implementation to ensure PD effectiveness. However, the teachers reported many hindering factors: the outdated national curriculum, the absence of consistent follow-up, and the crowded classrooms. Nevertheless, the teachers said

that the PD is the only platform to share and benefit from other teachers' experiences. Besides, it represents a backup for various subjects where any teacher could benefit from its resources.



## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative interpretive study was to identify public school teachers' experiences with professional development programs and understand their perceptions on the effectiveness of these programs provided by the government-related entities in the two selected Lebanese public schools in the Beqaa. The researcher was able through this study to cover the previously set [research questions](#), and interpreted the major findings as related to the literature. The discussion will start with an overview of the key findings. Then the interpretation will be divided into two major sections as per the organization of [Chapter 4](#). A detailed and literature grounded interpretation will run in both the Experience and Effectiveness sections to better discuss the findings in both themes.

This section presents the interpretation of the findings of the two main sections that are the teachers' experiences with professional development programs and their perceptions on the effectiveness of these programs.

#### **Participants' Professional Development Experience**

This section presents the discussion regarding teachers' experiences with the professional development programs through discussing: the lack of collaboration leading to professional isolation on a system level and the consequences of isolation. Then this section ends by providing recommendations for a successful professional development experience.

### ***Lack of Collaboration leading to Professional Isolation on a system level***

The data showed that the tenured and contractual teachers shared similar experiences in high and low-achieving schools. The only difference was established in the section related to the motivation level. The financial consequences of attending a training session hinder the contractual teachers' motivation to participate in the PD programs. In contrast, the teaching experience of the tenured teachers is considered a significant reason for considering professional development as an obligation and not perceiving it as an opportunity for development and learning. However, teachers from both contract types agreed that they feel inferior, unheard, professionally isolated, and confused as they are forced by the routine embedded within the system for years to attend PD sessions. They also share a feeling of lack of trust in the system policies because they, as personnel working under the same governmental authorities, are not on the same level of knowledge. The teachers' isolation is caused by a significant gap in the public education system, which is the lack of collaboration on two primary levels. First, at the level of the public school: Collaboration at the teachers-teachers and administration-teacher levels. Second at the level of the governmental entities: Collaboration at the Government related entities (CERD)-Government-related entities (DOPS) and Education Inspection (EI).

The literature emphasizes the importance of collaborative participation in having a successful PD experience. According to Birman (2000) and Pharis et al. (2018), professional development experiences based on collective participation lead to synergetic interaction between various parties to benefit the group by sharing experiences and ideas. Moreover, collaboration is considered by its consistency and regularity that includes the highest levels of collegiality among all the stakeholders

through frequent meetings (Bouchamma et al., 2012). Nevertheless, this study's findings confirmed that there is no collaboration neither at the school level nor at the government level where no consistent meetings are conducted neither between teachers and administration nor between teachers and Government-related entities.

Consequently, the lack of collaboration is the reason for the public-school teachers' feeling of inferiority. Lebanese public-school teachers have no role in the decision-making processes, especially concerning professional development planning, design, and content. Referring to Hadar and Broder (2010), as cited by Davidson and Dwyer (2014), teachers work alone with unconnected classrooms with no time reserved on their schedule for engaging with other teachers and discussing the different instructional practices that they use each in those separated classrooms. Adding to that, the lack of time is the most critical challenge for teachers in their collaboration with their colleagues (Bouchamma et al., 2012). This general conclusion is stated in different studies in the world and not specific to Lebanon. For instance, the results in one of the studies done in Australia, it was concluded that 40% of teachers currently do not have the opportunity to discuss their teaching and implementation of the curriculum with other teachers who may possess enough knowledge to help and guide other teachers (Davidson & Dwyer, 2014). Therefore, teachers are already isolated due to their job conditions of being present and leading the classroom on their own during school days.

### ***Consequences of Isolation***

According to Davidson & Dwyer (2014), teachers' isolation might cause teachers' burnout. According to West et al., (2018), "burnout is a work-related syndrome involving emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and a sense of reduced personal accomplishment." Thus, the study findings showed that the Lebanese public-

school teachers are reaching the level of burnout because the Government related entities continuously isolate them from participating in decisions strongly related to their professional development as teachers. According to West et al. (2018), major causes of staff burnout are: short follow-up periods, little focus on single interventions/ instructional practices rather than combined and adjusted approaches, comparatively limited time for pilot application of PD new concepts and ideas, application of randomized concepts, improper and unmapped transfer of new knowledge or results across specialties.

Moreover, teachers' isolation is reflected at each level of the hierarchy where each governmental entity is working alone in isolation. In other words, each of these entities is entirely independent of the other entity even if they all belong to the same governmental ministry, MEHE. In such a case, these entities made the teachers feel and act as if they are working alone. For instance, the public-school teachers neither participate in choosing or recommending the topic of the training sessions, nor they have a voice in suggesting better content nor rejecting attending a training session. As cited in (Smith & Benavot, 2019), the case of teachers' isolation is common among many countries since many studies reported that there are few available rooms for teachers' views and voices to express their concerns about educational policies, including PD planning policies. The findings of this study presented that teachers prefer to depend on their own style, strategy, and approach, relying on their individual experiences and personal efforts instead of going through uncertain and inconsistent policies.

Based on Hildreth and Anderson (2016), the system adds burden on the teachers by following procedures that widen the gap between the teachers and the external

environment outside their classrooms. For instance, the literature categorizes teachers as novice and experienced teachers, while in the Lebanese public system, teachers are categorized as tenured and contractual teachers, and this creates a sense of discrimination in policies and practices and unfair judgment.

This emphasizes the presence of different needs based on teachers' experiences and validates the findings that showed that tenured teachers, who are experienced, and the contractual teachers, who are novice relatively have different motives and needs to engage better in professional development. For instance, according to Kyndt et al. (2016), more experienced teachers reported better PD learning through reading professional literature, not engaging in trial-error experiments, and mentoring novice teachers. In contrast, novice teachers reported learning through regular interaction with their educational mentors. There is a "curvilinear" relationship between age and the learning experience to a reduced need for information and knowledge, as reported by Van Daal et al. (2014) cited in Kyndt et al. (2016). Cameron et al. (2013) added that more experienced teachers are more selective in terms of which learning opportunities they engage in. However, the findings show that the public education system does not cater to the needs of the teachers despite their categorization in title and government logistical practices such as the different wages, teaching rates, and PD attendance policies.

Additionally, these teachers are not correctly and consistently followed-up, and they do not have a reference to guide and support them during their professional learning journey regularly. Teachers feel that they are constantly "used" by the system to achieve the target number of attendees of the training session, not because the mentioned entities want them to develop professionally. After the training sessions, the

teachers are left alone without any assistance or support. For this reason, teachers have a lack of trust in the PD system. According to (Smith & Benavot, 2019), this lack of trust is caused by the presence of unshared aims and purposes from both sides: teachers and government-related entities. Smith and Benavot (2019) added that the limited trust in the profession or the process weakens teacher participation in decision-making processes. For instance, in Africa, lack of trust in teachers is the cause of their restricted contribution to policy-making procedures in times of apartheid.

Moreover, according to Govender (2008), as cited in (Smith & Benavot, 2019), despite the transition to a more participatory government, teachers in Africa were frequently neglected in education reform planning because the system does not trust them. As the literature presents, these are the consequences of not considering teaching as a profession in contrast to Tarhan et al. (2019), who stated that teaching started to be regarded as an essential profession since the 19th century because of the social improvement it does in the community. In Lebanon, teaching is still not considered a profession despite the critical impact it has on the development of Lebanese society. Based on Marzano (2010), teaching is a complex process that requires the practitioners in the field to enroll in rigorous preparation and receive consistent feedback to enhance their pedagogical skills. However, based on the findings of this study, teachers are considered workers such as any worker in any field and not specialists, experts, and professionals who are supported by a system. For instance, there is a difference in the Lebanese public education system between tenured and contractual teachers' preparation.

On the one hand, tenured teachers must pass the Civil Service Council's exams (CSC). They have to enroll in the Lebanese University- Faculty of Education to

complete one to two years of what is known as "Al Kafa<sup>11</sup>." In contrast to the contractual teachers, who are not asked to do any written or oral testing. They only need a decision from high authorities at the level of MEHE and the school principal's agreement.

Nevertheless, teachers are professionals just like professionals working in the medical field, such as doctors, for a simple reason that they are both responsible for the life of the humans they are treating or teaching (Agarwal, 2019; Beck, 2009; West et al., 2018). Furthermore, many studies in the medical field have found that increased emotional exhaustion levels of professionals are associated with higher standardized patient mortality ratios and lower perceived quality of interpersonal teamwork (West et al., 2018). The same level of danger is applied to public school teachers. Teachers' low level of motivation in developing on a professional level is affecting their practices in their classrooms, especially that they are not only feeling exhausted from being isolated on different levels, but also because of the financial situation and the socio-political insecurity in Lebanon that may lead to financial and structural failure in the public education system as a whole. Thus, affecting teaching and learning.

For these reasons, despite the teachers' comments on the content, design, and structure of the training sessions, consider professional development as a platform for expression to boost their motivation. They can share their experiences and run formal and informal conversations with their colleagues from different regions and schools. They try to benefit from the PD as a gateway to escape their isolation, overcome their burnout, and protect their jobs, especially the females. As per cross-sectional studies done by West et al. (2018), 20–60% increased odds of burnout and higher exhaustion

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كفاءة كلية التربية من الجامعة اللبنانية<sup>11</sup>

levels amongst women physicians, whose burnout was notably linked with work-home conflicts, and higher disengagement levels amongst men, in whom burnout was most strongly predicted by workload. This is crucial to note as most of the participants in this study were females as per [table 1](#) (81% females, 19% males), and this is proportional to the number of teachers as per the CERD statistical bulletin (2019). This is significant evidence that public school teachers' professional development programs should be catering to the teachers' needs and better consider the teachers' conditions.

### ***Recommendations for a successful PD Experience***

In order to establish a coherent professional development program that aims to develop the teachers' skills as professionals and make them want to engage and participate, the program itself needs to be PASS: Practical, Applicable, Systemized and Specific for it to be a successful journey for the teachers. As referring to Scribner (1995), it is crucial to consider the economic, social, and political frameworks of the school before planning and designing professional development programs.

Moreover, the literature provided several implications for reducing teachers' isolation and burnout and increasing collaboration on different levels to guarantee a successful PD experience. Kelly (2005) stated, as cited by West et al. (2018), that providing opportunities for professional development discussions with mentors and colleagues assist in reducing teacher isolation overall. Additionally, designing professional development programs such as stress management, communication skills, self-care efforts, and teachers' group work would reduce burnout and boost teachers' motivation, thus increasing interest and productivity (West et al., 2018). Another possible approach is the "hybrid teacher leaders" stated by Margolis (2012), as cited in



(Perry & Bevins, 2019), where experienced teachers become coaches and trainers to novice teachers so they always meet and share their experiences.

For instance, in the United States, several studies have shown benefits from reducing physician hours in intensive care units and on teaching rotations. Therefore, a possible choice would be reducing teachers' teaching hours without reducing their compensation per month for tenured and per year for contractual teachers. In addition to replacing the reduced teaching hours by meeting hours to understand teachers' needs and design professional development programs based on teachers' points of view and opinions.

As cited in Smith and Benavot (2019), The Federal Republic of Brazil exemplified a structured democratic voice model in education planning by conducting a series of consultations with civil society, professional organizations, academic institutions, and students' organizations together to establish a draft of the educational plan. Based on Sahlberg (2007), in Finland, a collaborative movement has started in the 1970s and led to forming a greater school autonomy where they reached a level nowadays where they have a trust-based school culture that prioritizes teachers to participate in curriculum development and policy reforms. Moreover, although some research studies state that monetary rewards could be a good initial incentive, but not necessarily an enhancement, for teacher learning (Kyndt et al., 2016). Based on the low motivation level that the teachers expressed regarding attending the workshops, incentives such as transportation fees, certificates, and job promotion scale would help teachers to feel that they are appreciated and not forced. According to (Carson et al., 2020), such incentives increased teachers' attendance to 95% in one of the PD research studies done on physical activity leaders.

Moreover, the effectiveness of workshop incentives for increasing attendance rates is supported by previous teacher research (Forster et al., 2015; Qian et al., 2018), as cited in (Carson et al., 2020). In addition to monetary incentives, teachers need to feel appreciated. According to Lohman (2005); Retallick (1999); Wilson & Demetriou (2007), as cited in (Kyndt et al., 2016), appreciation and recognition from school leaders, colleagues, and students were deemed to be essential to raise the teachers' interest in attending PD sessions.

### **Participants' Perceptions towards the Effectiveness of the Professional Development Programs**

This section presents the discussion regarding teachers' perceptions towards the effectiveness of the professional development programs through discussing: the lack of MEAL system embedded in PD. Then this section ends by providing recommendations for effective professional development programs.

#### ***Lack of MEAL system embedded in PD***

The teachers agreed that the professional development programs provided to them are not as effective as they should be. They perceive these programs as a governmental procedure that should happen even if its effectiveness is below the standards. In this regard, the teachers related the effectiveness of these programs to its relevancy to the public-school context, students' needs, curriculum update, and a reference to support and guide them through their learning journey.

Our findings showed that the teachers consider the professional development ineffective because they consider the content of the PD sessions is ineffectual and does not relate to the context of public schools. School systems need consistent procedures to ensure that professional development programs comprise high quality content to support

their teachers master valuable skills and appropriate to their individual needs (Jayaram et al., 2020). Moreover, the study findings showed that these PD sessions might add to their theoretical knowledge, however, they did not state any relation between the PD sessions they are taking and the students' performance. Additionally, the findings showed that there is a huge gap between the effective models of professional development along with the conceptual model described in [Chapter 2](#) and the professional development practices in public schools.

Many education systems invest substantial amount of money in PD programs but repeat this yearly as a routine and provide the same set of training sessions each year disregarding how these courses might fit into a comprehensive and coherent program or how effective they are even if teachers complain that some of the courses are not beneficial (Jayaram et al., 2020). In agreement with Guskey's Model of Teacher Change (Guskey, 2002), there is no proper transfer of PD information to the students. For instance, teachers attend the PD sessions and they try to implement the new knowledge gained from those sessions, but they most of the time face challenges such as the national curriculum, time and duration, the huge number of students per classroom, logistics, etc. Thus, they cannot identify if any change in the students' outcomes occurs as related to the PD sessions. This can be explained by stating that they either couldn't achieve the implementation phase or this achievement resulted in producing negative outcomes such as wasting the instruction time or receiving destructive comments from the administration either because the students are being noisy or because the teachers are not running the routine class. As a result, the teachers rarely change their beliefs and attitudes and stick to what they are used to do and that is considered accepted in the school, therefore the teachers' stay on the safe side: If they

are contractual teachers, they prefer to protect their teaching hours, and if they are tenured teachers, they prefer to avoid conflicts.

Moreover, based on the Integrated Professional Development Model for Effective Teaching (Kuijpers et al., 2010), it is crucial to highlight that the findings did confirm that effective professional development needs the proper follow-up efforts. However, this is not the case in the Lebanese public schools. According to Kuijpers et al. (2010), effective PD should first create the appropriate conditions in terms of studying the context of the public schools and adjusting the content of PD to meet the studied context. Then the PD forms of two follow-up levels. The first level is the group coaching cycle where the trainers present the theories, demonstrate the skills, practice with the group of teachers, and then evaluate and monitor the session including teachers' performance while providing general feedback. The second level is the individual coaching cycle that requires individual follow-up with a special focus on the pre and post conferences and regular classroom observations (Glickman et al., 2014). However, the PD system is about level one only and that is the group coaching cycle. The purpose of such an ineffectiveness is the lack of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) system in the public education system. As stated by Bartholomew et al. (2006); Glasgow et al. (2004) cited in Carson et al. (2020), the evaluation of the process of designing, impacts, and outcomes of the professional development program is crucial to quantify the authenticity of the implementation of the project. Regarding accountability, according to (Smith & Benavot, 2019), it is the foundation of "contemporary education policy". Moreover, accountability requires a shift from focusing only on education inputs such as the book information, routine lesson plans, training content, etc. to a greater focus on PD results and learning

outcomes where government entities place responsibility for improved PD outcomes at different levels: teacher, students, and school (Smith & Benavot, 2019). According to (Carson et al., 2020), MEAL system requires six conceptual phases for effective PD programs. These phases are the recruitment of participants in the PD, the regular measurement of the participation rate, the level of required theoretical comprehensiveness, the level required for practical implementation, the extent to which quality program intervention were implemented as planned, and the potential challenges and opportunities accompanied with the PD programs provided.

### ***Recommendations for effective PD program in the Public System***

Teacher professional development programs that are integrated within a system for evaluating teachers' strengths and areas of development can provide a serious boost to teacher performance and student outcomes (Jayaram et al., 2020). Opposing to the participants' negative perceptions and the undesirable effects it has on the public-school teachers in specific and teaching and learning in general; designing PD based on MEAL criteria would change the situation to have a structured PD system that provides equity in teachers' learning and avoid the one-size fits all concept that Evans (2014) stood against. Additionally, MEAL system aims at improving teachers' personal and professional skills and competencies through providing the teachers with an explanation of how they are performing based on what is expected and what needs to be improved to perform better and Finland's successful professional development is based on evaluating and assessing the teachers (Tarhan, et al. 2019).

The literature provided an explanation for the importance of creating a strong PD foundation and set clear procedures that increase teachers' engagement and PD effectiveness. According to Mckinsey on Society, five implications for practice were

suggested to design PD programs. First, clearly state the PD vision of effective teaching through designing comprehensive rubrics that include items of effectiveness of pedagogical instruction and management skills, set clear lesson objectives and goals, engage students in planning, consider all the differences in learning styles and differentiated instruction. Second, segment teachers and deliver PD tactically by eliminating the one-size-fits-all and considering that every teacher learn differently. This requires the system to segment teachers into groups based on shared characteristics especially teaching experience. Third, make coaching the focus of PD by recruiting experts who are called “teacher developers” and who receive stipends for supporting teachers in their classrooms during their learning journey from the start of their teaching career. Besides coaching, they have the role of forming teacher professional communities through bringing together novice and veteran teachers from different schools to meet, share their experiences, and support each other. Fourth, move from “push” to “pull” where the PD program seeks to build skills awareness through encouraging teachers to explore their needs, work on fulfilling it, and stepping into higher competence levels. Fifth, offer PD with demonstrated impact through research-based evaluations (Jayaram et al., 2020). A successful example is the Washington, DC, public school system where they developed the Teaching and Learning Framework to outline clear expectations for all educators to guide the teacher-evaluation system and related PD activities (Jayaram et al., 2020).

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

This chapter aims at providing a brief description of the study, its purpose, findings, and key points from the discussion chapter. First it presents final thoughts and general summary section, then moves to stating the implications for adjusted PD model. The remaining other sections present the limitations of the study, policy recommendations, recommendations for future research, and the researcher's personal thoughts.

#### **Final Thoughts and General Summary**

The researcher selected to study the perceptions of the teachers in the Lebanese public education sector for two significant reasons. First, the literature emphasized the importance of professional development in enhancing teachers' quality and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Second, the existence of public-school teachers' recruitment practices that marginalize professional development in Lebanon. Both stated reasons hinder the development of a public school that adopts high teaching standards and recruits the country's best teachers. As a result, this study aimed at discovering the perceptions of Lebanese public-school teachers in two Lebanese public schools in the Beqaa. It successfully covered the research questions related to the teachers' experiences and their perceptions on the effectiveness of professional development programs at public schools.

The researcher reported the findings from the teachers' perspectives and discussed them within the boundaries of the Lebanese public education system. This allowed to identify many crucial points to discover in further research. For instance, the

policy and decision-makers' perceptions and feedback and MEHE's point of view that will result in a comprehensive framework representing the current PD situation in Lebanon and may better highlight other reasons behind such a situation. This will present all the strengths and points of improvement from the perspective of all the stakeholders. Such a collegial approach in the decision-making processes will result in planning inclusive policies that consider the system as a whole and do not consider it shattered pieces.

Regarding the methodology applied in this study, the instrumental case study research design aligned with the interpretivism paradigm, and the qualitative approach were suitable for this particular study. It led to answering the research questions and responded to the conceptual framework, extracted from a combination of different effective professional development models stated in the literature, and adopted in this study. Based on the qualitative analysis, it can be concluded that the public-school teachers did not have previous positive and encouraging experiences with PD. Additionally, those teachers did not find a relation between the effectiveness of the available PD programs and their personal and professional development on one hand, and students' performance on the other hand.

The results indicate that the teachers are professionally isolated with a strong feeling of lack of appreciation as professionals. This study provided them with a sense of gratitude and importance for several reasons. First, they were treated as professionals who are the foundation of the public education sector. Second, they freely expressed their points of view and challenges during the semi-structured interviews, especially that they built a strong bond of trust and confidence with the interviewer/researcher.



The above-mentioned options were not provided to public school teachers in the sector and this what makes this study an exclusive one that it is worth looking at its results. Furthermore, these results can be transferable to other public schools despite the differences in the school's level of achievement, size, number of students, number of teachers, etc. because professional development is stationed on the national system level and does not just belong to specific Lebanese public schools. The public-school teachers share many common characteristics that are the reason for the results stated in this study. Moreover, the sample of the teachers from both selected schools was representative of the population of Lebanese teachers in terms of contract and gender. The percentages of the sample were very close to the percentages of the national population: 50% tenured, 50% contractual, and 19% male, 81% female.

Nevertheless, this concluded evidence does not deny the subjectivity of the qualitative approach and interpretivism, especially that the teachers expressed their opinions based on their personal experiences. However, the commonalities among the participants, their different educational background and the variety seen in the age groups, increased the level of objectivity and persuasiveness.

For this reason, the adjusted new model suggested by the researcher could be applied to a group of randomly chosen public schools to pilot and study its effectiveness in enhancing the quality of professional development for public school teachers on a national level. This could happen in the future in collaboration with the government related entities, who are non-collaborative stakeholders, through presenting and discussing the results of the study to them so they have the teachers' point of view that they may or may not know about and they better understand where to start and what to do to reduce the challenges. Collegiality in decision-making is necessary to maintain

the bottom-up approach that motivates those who are working as practitioners (teachers) by being respected, appreciated, and heard. Consequently, leveling-up the quality of education in the public sector where the study concluded a positive relation between teachers' engagement in decision making and their perceptions towards PD programs and the sector. This positivity is reflected on quality of teaching and students' performance.

### **Implications for a Well-Systemized PD Model for the Lebanese Education Public Sector**

The researcher developed an adjusted PD system that could be implemented in the Lebanese public school system and falls under the formal professional development type of PD. The researcher synthesized this model based on the study findings, literature review, and discussion. The suggested PD system's vision is the cooperation among all the stakeholders to reach the optimal learning experience and effectiveness. Additionally, this platform is divided into three phases; the first is Identifying PD; the second is professional development experience; the third is professional development effectiveness. The major common component of this cooperation platform in all its phases is forming a united committee under the authority of MEHE that consists of experts from MEHE, DOPS, CERD, and Educational Inspection. The committee members work in harmony to achieve maximum collaboration to organize an effective and successful PD program.

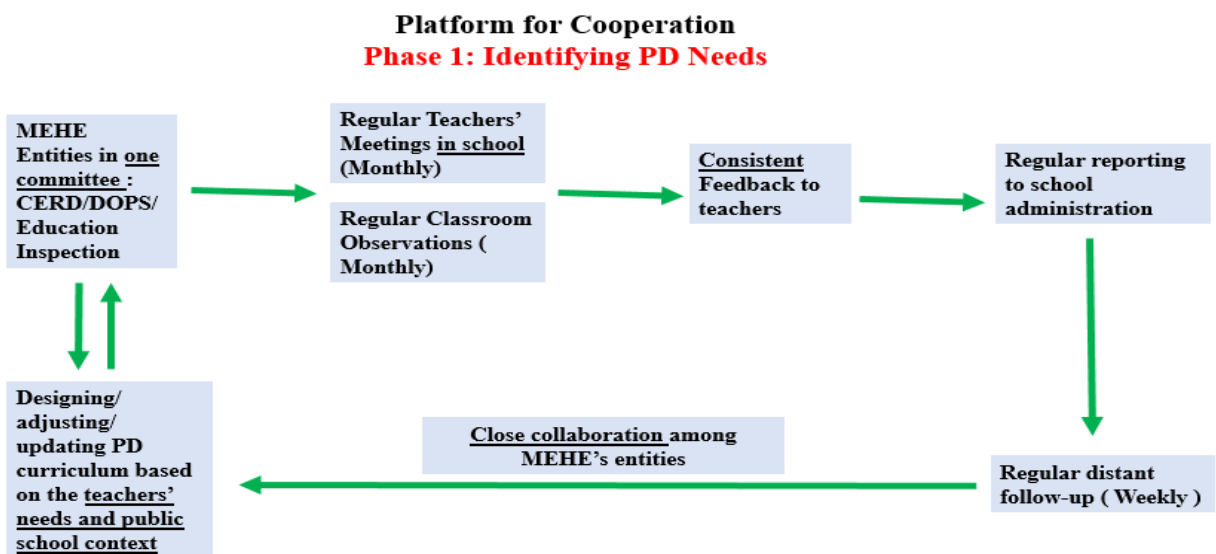
The first phase as shown in figure 9 below, is where the collaboration occurs at identifying the needs. In this phase, the MEHE committee organizes various public school teachers' meetings and conducts several classroom observations. They plan consistent school visits per month while informing teachers ahead of time to prepare their agendas and suggestions. In these meetings, the teachers are given the time to

express their challenges and needs and share their experiences in terms of what would or would not work on an instructional and classroom level. After the classroom observations and the teachers' meetings, the committee provides each teacher with detailed feedback.

Additionally, the committee also provides the school administration with the written feedback to keep records and track. After that, the committee offers teachers regular distant follow-up where the teachers can reach the committee members anytime as a reference to support and guide them. As a result of this collaboration, the committee designs, plans, and adjusts PD plans and topics accordingly.

**Figure 9**

*Phase One of the Adjusted PD Model*



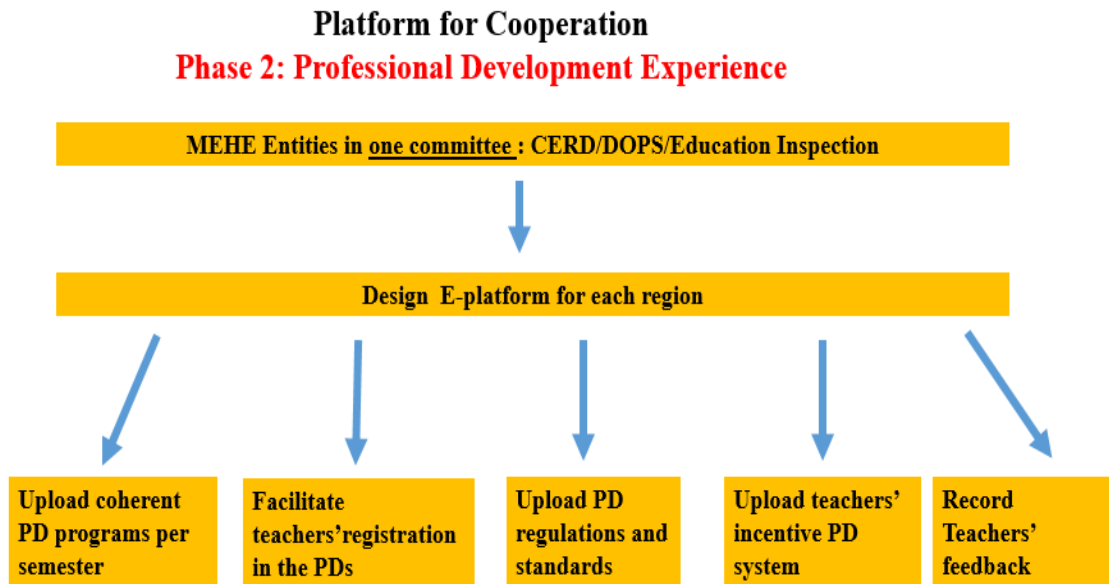
The second phase of the platform is the professional development experience as shown in figure 10. In this phase, the purpose of the collaboration is to have a successful and productive PD experience that requires the MEHE committee to design

an electronic platform for each educational region and engage all the stakeholders in accessing it. The committee uploads the PD topics with all the information related to the sessions' logistics on this platform. As the committee agrees on the PD topics based on phase 1 of the platform, they upload the updates each semester based on their adjustments. Besides, the committee facilitates transparent and smooth teachers' registration in PD sessions. It is crucial to note that only teachers can choose the PD sessions and register their names. There is no possibility that someone writes on their behalf.

Additionally, on this E-platform, teachers could read all the information related to the PD incentive system. It is crucial to highlight a similar practice could be having extra degrees while attending several workshops on specific topics, moving from being contractual to being a tenured teacher if committed to a series of PD training sessions or PD year-long program, getting extra money, etc. Moreover, teachers will be asked to keep written feedback on this E-platform where they have the opportunity to express whether their training experience was successful or not and the reasons behind each case. Also, teachers can contact any teacher in the region or the sector if they need any help from each other. Figure 11 shows an example adopted from Jayaram et al. (2020) on possible incentive programs.

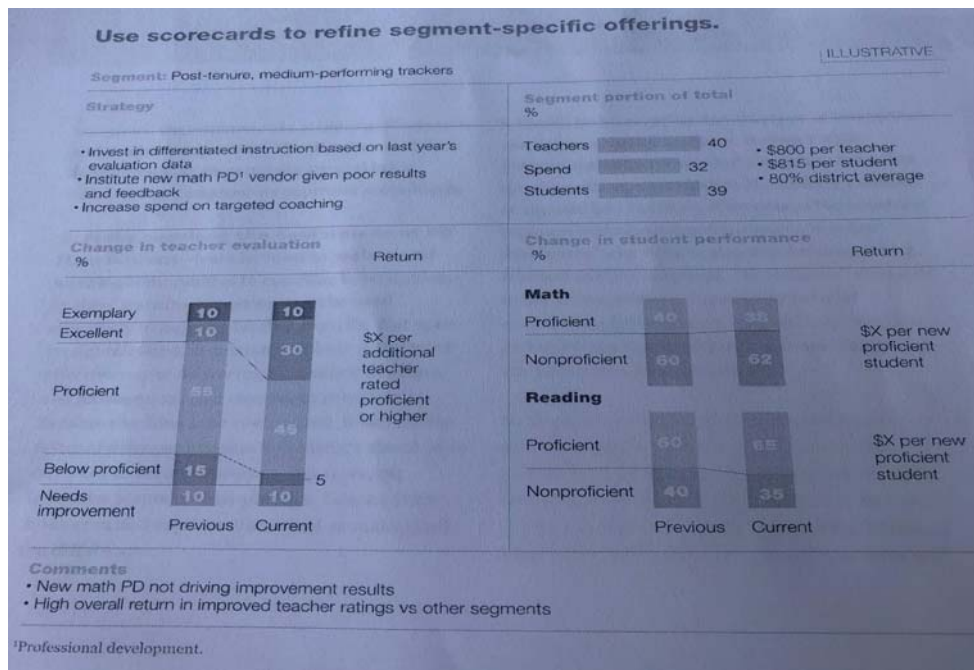
**Figure 10**

*Phase Two of the Adjusted PD Model*



**Figure 11**

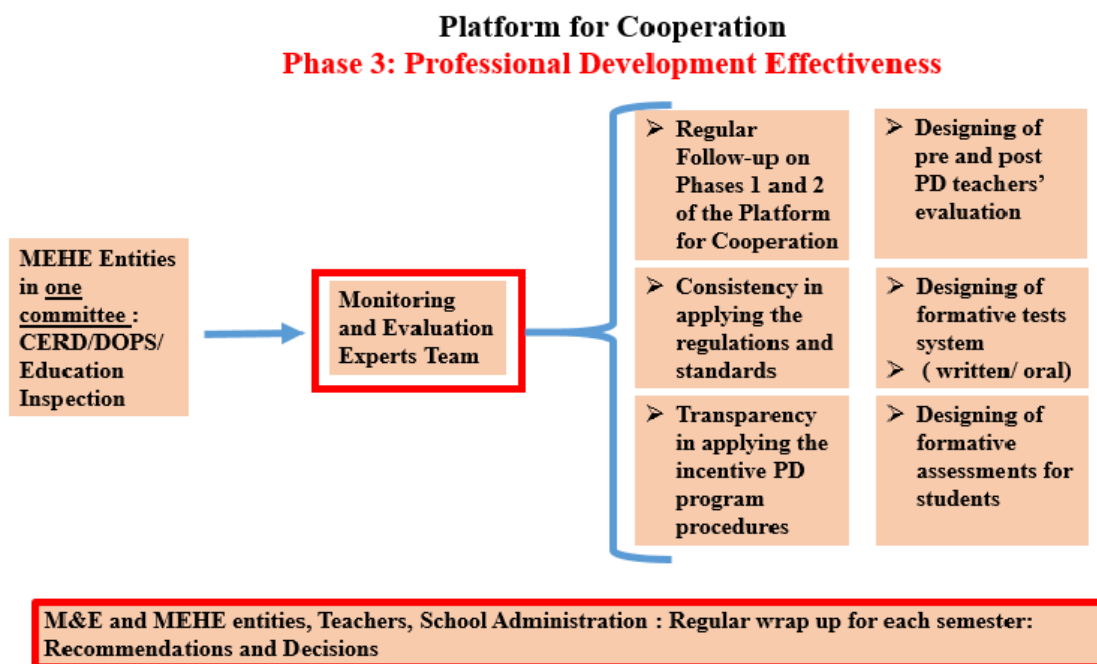
*Possible Incentive Program*



The third phase is the professional development effectiveness as presented in figure 12 below. In this phase, the MEHE committee recruits MEAL experts to form separate entity under MEHE's authority to control and regulate tasks. These experts are responsible for performing regular follow-up on phases 1 and 2 of the platform, consistent monitoring on the application of the policies, rules, and regulation, transparent and fair application of the PD incentive system, the design of pre and post PD training tests for teachers in addition to the design of formative tests for teachers to measure their PD learning and for students to measure their performance in relation to the PD effectiveness items.

**Figure 12**

*Phase Three of the Adjusted PD Model*



This platform's design is cyclic, moving from phase 1 to phase 3 and then starting all over again with phase 1. At the end of each cycle, all the stakeholders: the MEHE committee, MEAL experts, teachers, and school administration work together on reflecting on the PD processes and develop a new plan for the coming semester.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are some limitations in this research study. First, although the educators studying professional development in Lebanese public schools could benefit from the findings of the current study, however the study findings may not be generalizable to all schools in Lebanon especially to private schools. Additionally, according to Polkinghorne (2005), the translation of the reflective awareness of the teachers' experiences into a language experience might distance the evidence from the experience itself. This leads to a high possibility of having subjective responses based on the teachers' own interpretations and definitions of professional development. Second, some of the selected participants apologized for not being able to participate in the study because they have Corona death cases in their families and so they do not have time to share their perspectives. Another limitation is that the data collection was implemented at a distance and semi-structured interviews were conducted through phone calls, Zoom meetings, and WebEx meetings. Therefore, the researcher did not have the opportunity to observe the teachers' body language and face and eyes expressions, as most of them preferred not to open their cameras, to delve more into what the teachers feel when expressing their opinions.

The researcher in this regard depended to a large extent on the participants' tone of voice and focused on the repeating ideas in each interview. Additionally, the researcher did not have the chance to visit the school to have a better idea on the

structural conditions of the public schools selected in this study in terms of the age of the building, heating, classroom setting and space, etc. This kind of data could have helped in understanding the situation of those teachers in details.

### **Policy Recommendations**

Nowadays, more than any time, schools are changing to having a different structure that cannot be finalized shortly neither by researchers nor practitioners in the field. The teachers' role is also changing as they are the steerers of the wheel. To be able to cope with all the challenges and benefit from all the opportunities, the teachers need to feel embraced by the system. In other words, teachers need to be engaged in the decision-making processes and become active members in the sector where they do not need to wish obtaining their rights. Instead, their power should dominate any other external factors to successfully and effectively advocate for adjusting policy and practices on both instructional and administration levels.

Therefore, adjustments in policies related to teachers' recruitment should happen. Teachers without any exception should enroll in pre-service professional development programs as a requirement for the job. This is crucial to ensure that the teachers, despite their contract type, know these programs' seriousness and importance in refining the teachers' personalities and empowering them to become professionals. The pre-service preparation program should follow the instructions of having an effective PD to fit in the system and engage teachers as they are the major partners. After graduating from the pre-service training, the teachers may move to the "employment level" they teach in the public school. They attend consistent and coherent PD programs structured for the first and foremost: Teachers and Students!



## **Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research may focus on exploring the government budget per year for the education sector, what is the cost of the current PD program, and what does the adjusted new PD plan cost to check its feasibility. Additionally, research on the effectiveness of teachers' preparation and induction is paramount as the public-school teachers' preparation is not a priority for the government. Therefore, it is crucial to discuss how the current preparation practices are affecting teachers professionally and its impact on teaching and learning. Another point that is of interest to research is exploring if there is any difference between the instructional practices of the tenured and the contractual teachers for the purpose of advocating to initiate policies that preserve equal rights for both and treat them as teachers who belong to the system instead of distinguishing them based on the type of contract.

### **Researcher's Personal Thoughts**

Wrapping up this study does not mean reaching the end of the story. However, there should be follow-up research on what has been discussed. As the researcher was in direct contact with public-school teachers, she sensed their misery that is indirectly reflected on the students. It is the researchers' responsibility to focus on the Lebanese public schools and provide the needed research-based evidence that supports those schools in meeting the standards of quality education. The researchers in the field who possess the knowledge and the experience gain the credibility and authority from the community and policy makers. More research studies in this field should be conducted at the national level despite the complexity and complication that accessing the public school or writing about it could entail.

On a personal level, the researcher benefited a lot from this enriching experience from delving into the literature and discussing the findings. The researcher learned how to understand theories in adjustable models in practice and understood the beauty of qualitative research in identifying the meaning of the data collected. The teachers' statements turned out to be a chain of reasons and purposes that produced an adjusted PD model. Moreover, the researcher believed after this experience that Lebanese public schools as whole entities represent a cause that she must continue fighting for through research: Education is the key to lift our community and secure a better future for the coming generations and our country. Providing quality education in public schools for our students is a must and not a choice.

## APPENDIX A

### Relevant Documents

. (n.d.). Retrieved from الجامعة اللبنانية  
<http://www.legallaw.ul.edu.lb/LawView.aspx?opt=view&LawID=243848>

. (n.d.). Retrieved from الجامعة اللبنانية  
<http://www.legallaw.ul.edu.lb/LawView.aspx?opt=view&LawID=180502>

الجامعة اللبنانية. (n.d.). Retrieved January 20, 2021, from  
<http://www.legallaw.ul.edu.lb/LawView.aspx?opt=view&LawID=258151>

دليل كلية التربية (2016-2017)  
Retrieved from: <http://ul.edu.lb/files/pedagogy>

# APPENDIX B

## Coding and generating inductive themes: sample work

### Interview 9/ Transcription 9/ Coding Process

Maya: In general, how do you feel about the professional development program?

Teacher: 90% useless because we cannot implement what we learn in the workshops. Sometimes we even attend workshops that are completely unrelated to our fields.

Maya: Can you please give me practical example?

Teacher: **Not an Arabic workshop once, and I don't know how to teach the social sciences.**

Maya: Who chose the workshop for you?

Teacher: **Don't know who chose it. The principal says "Don't know but it was some administrative who took workshop on google and zoom, and I didn't benefit because I wasn't able to implement what I learned."**

Maya: How can you rate your commitment in attending the PD programs?

Teacher: **It is obligatory to attend because if we don't I will get called in for an interrogation. If we cannot attend we have to send in a signed medical report that explains why we couldn't attend.**

Maya: When they register your name in a workshop that you do not want to attend, what do you do and how do you react?

Teacher: **Don't object, what can I do in the end?**

Maya: How excited do you feel when you have to attend a workshop?

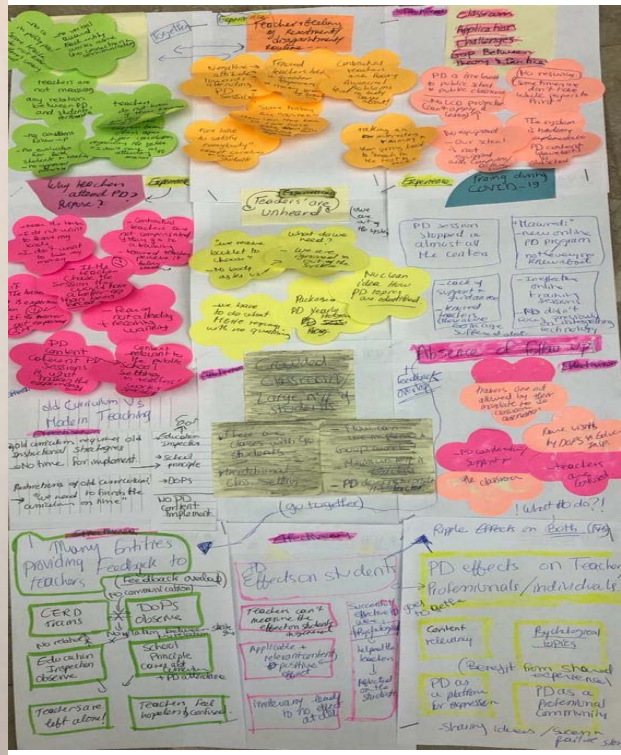
Teacher: **[Redacted]**

Maya: What happens in the follow-up?

Teacher: **[Redacted]**

**Interview Themes:**

- The feeling that the PD sessions are useless
- Irrelevant training content to teacher specialty
- Teachers are forced to attend PD
- PD irrelevant to the context of public schools
- Consequences / punishment of not attending the PD
- Teachers are forced to attend
- Teachers lost hope of their role in active participation in decision-making
- Teachers are conforming to the system: out of fear!
- Purpose matters: -Freedom of choice motivates teachers/ Obligation makes them lose interest



Teachers are left alone with no guide or support

Teachers are forced to attend PD

Teachers lost hope of their role in active participation in decision-making

Teachers are conforming to the system: out of fear!

Purpose matters: -Freedom of choice motivates teachers/ Obligation makes them lose interest

development comes from Personal efforts and not the PD programs provided

No relation between PD and low-high achieving schools (Repeated many times among the participants). The management of the school and the quality of teachers is the key to high performance.

handle, so it becomes very difficult to get the information through to the students.

Maya: Have you ever expressed your opinion in this regard?

Teacher: Yes, many have addressed these issues with the trainers, but they simply reply that they do not have the answers or the solutions to our problems. They themselves are trained to give us the information in the workshop and not beyond. I even asked one of the supervisors (مدرسة) in geography if she was willing to give us some tools that could help us, she couldn't help us and told me to do the research myself.

Maya: How do these PD sessions helped you to develop as a personal / professional?

Teacher: they have very little benefit, the workshops, I have to do so myself in my own time because the workshops are useless. Maybe you get one idea, but most of the development comes from experience and personal research.

Maya: In the same region, there are high achieving and low achieving schools, whereas the teachers that teach in both schools are often times the same. My question is, why do you think some schools achieve better results than others, despite both being in the same region?

Teacher: it goes back to the administration. If the school is organized and the system is strict then they are more likely to succeed. Some schools have had to close down because of the complete lack of proper management, while others due to their well-managed and organized system, they were able to achieve high achievement results.

Maya: So you relate this specifically to the administration?

Teacher: yes, it goes back primarily to the administration because teachers tend to slack off if they do not have proper administrative

### Interview 14

Duration: 40 minutes

Maya: Based on your experience, in general how do you perceive the trainings you receive?

Teacher: In my opinion, they truly benefit the teacher and they can develop the skills of the teacher. I learned, for example, about child development and how to deal with every student according to their strengths and weaknesses. These things were very nice, on the other hand, we contracted teachers for the training, for the time we spend in the training, which is very short. I lose my time and my money, and there's nothing in return. If I want to go to a session, I have to spend money to get a physical report. The content of the training is nice though, and the trainers have an interesting way of teaching and they are very engaging. The information we receive is very beneficial, but I wish they wouldn't stress us to let away locations to attend, logistics (Prices of attendance).

Maya: Based on your experience, how can you describe the content of these PD sessions?

Teacher: You know something, what's sad is that we find some difficulty implementing what we learn in the classroom. Some things we will not understand our new style of teaching, or we might not have enough time, but in general all the information we learn is very beneficial but not for implementation in public schools.

Maya: If you are unable to implement what you learn in the classroom, how then do you benefit?

Teacher: As a kindergarten/pre-school teacher, I find it difficult to implement a lot of the things we learn (gap between theory & practice).

Maya: Can you give me an example and why you weren't able to implement?

Teacher: They teach you, for example, how to use a method of teaching that is specific to children. If I was to follow this specific method, the year will end without having finished the curriculum. I will have more problems with the education approach.

Maya: Who else might disagree?

Teacher: You also have the principle that is always following up to make sure you finish the work plan you set at the beginning of the year.

Maya: On what basis is the content of the training set? Has anyone ever asked kindergarten teachers what your needs are?

Teacher: Unfortunately they rarely design PD sessions specific to kindergarten, often times you will find teachers that teach very different grades in the same workshop. We inform the trainer in the session that I, as a kindergarten teacher for example, cannot implement this specific thing in my class, whereas the 9<sup>th</sup> grade teacher will be able to implement. When we were in Habbaya, I did attend a training that was just for kindergarten, but in Rabhaya they haven't been any.

**Interview 14 Mind Map:**

- Positive thought
- Benefit of classroom experience
- PD is important BUT: 1-time, 2-difficultly in implementation
- No specialized content
- Again to the relevant feelings of anxiety, worry and no hope!
- Teacher's perspective
- Teacher's profile
- Teacher's engagement
- Teacher's importance of PD
- Teacher's follow-up
- Teacher's feedback
- Teacher's principle
- Teacher's DPs
- Teacher's PD

# APPENDIX C

## IRB and MEHE's Approval

**AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT**  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)  
APPROVAL OF RESEARCH

January 22, 2021

Dr. Lina El-Khalil  
American University of Beirut  
01-350000 Ext. 3077  
lkhal@aub.edu.lb

Dear Dr. El-Khalil,

On January 22, 2021, the IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial, Expedited
Project Title:	Case Study: Perceptions of Teachers' Professional Development in Two Lebanese Public Schools in The Beqaa
Investigator:	Lina El-Khalil
IRB ID:	SBS-2020-0429
Funding Agency:	None
Documents reviewed:	Received December 17, 2020 & January 20, 2021: Response Letter, Approval from MEHE, Amended IRB Application, Amended Proposal, Invitation Script, Amended Consent Form (English and Arabic versions), Interview Guide (English and Arabic versions), Letter to Principal (English and Arabic versions).

The IRB approved the study from **January 22, 2021 to January 21, 2022** inclusive.

Before November 21, 2021 or within 30 days of study close, whichever is earlier, you are to submit a completed "FORM: Continuing Review Progress Report" to request continuing approval or study closure.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of **January 22, 2022** approval of this research expires on that date.

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Please find attached the stamped approved documents:

- Proposal (received January 20, 2021),
- Invitation Script (received December 17, 2020),
- Consent Form English and Arabic versions (received January 20, 2021),
- Interview Guide English and Arabic versions (received December 17, 2020),
- Letter to Principal English and Arabic versions (received January 20, 2021).

**Only these IRB approved consent forms and documents can be used for this research study.**

Thank you.

The American University of Beirut and its Institutional Review Board, under the Institution's Federal Wide Assurance with OHRP, comply with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Code of Federal Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects ("The Common Rule") 45CFR46, subparts A, B, C, and D, with 21CFR56; and operate in a manner consistent with the Belmont report, FDA guidance, Good Clinical Practices under the ICH guidelines, and applicable national/local regulations.

Sincerely,  
Michael Clinton, PhD  
Co-Chairperson IRB Social & Behavioral Sciences

Cc:  
Fuad Ziyadeh, MD, FACP, FRCP  
Professor of Medicine and Biochemistry  
Chairperson of the IRB  
Ali K. Abu-Alfa, MD, FASN, FAHA  
Professor of Medicine  
Director, Human Research Protection Program  
Director for Research Affairs (AUBMC)

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رقم الصائر: ٣/١٠٩٩٠

بيروت في

جانب - مديرية التعليم الابتدائي  
- الإرشاد والتوجيه

الموضوع: تسهيل مهمة الدكتورة لينا خليل والطالبة الجامعية مايا مداح.

المرجع: كتاب الطالبة مايا مداح تاريخ ٢٠٢٠/١١/١١.

إشارة إلى الموضوع والمرجع المبينين أعلاه،

بعد الاطلاع مع الموافقة على تسهيل مهمة الدكتورة لينا خليل والطالبة الجامعية مايا مداح - الجامعة الأميركية في بيروت، لإعداد دراسة تشمل إجراء مقابلات مع أفراد الهيئة التعليمية في مدرسة الرسمية ومتوسطة الرسمية للعام الدراسي ٢٠٢٠/٢٠٢١، وتهدف إلى معرفة وفهم تصورات معلمي ومعلمات المدارس الرسمية في راشيا الوادي - البقاع حول فعالية وتأثير برامج التطوير المهني التي تم تصميمها وتقديمها من قبل الجهات ذات الصلة، وذلك من أجل نيل الطالبة مايا مداح شهادة ماستر في الإدارة التربوية ودراسات السياسات في الجامعة الأميركية، شرط أن يتم تطبيق ذلك عن بعد فقط، بدون الحضور إلى المدارس، وأن يصار إلى التنسيق مع إدارتي هاتين المدرستين من أجل تنفيذ المطلوب، لإجراء اللازم ./.

- تبلغ نسخة عن الموافقة إلى الطالبة مايا مداح.

المدير العام للتربية

فادي يرق

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# APPENDIX D

## Semi-Structured Interview Guide/ Questions

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

#### Semi-structured Interview Guide Public School Teachers

#### **D** **EXPERIENCES**

- 1- In general, what do you think of the professional development (training sessions/ workshops, etc.) provided to you as a public school teacher? Please describe the scope of these training sessions, workshop, or courses?
- 2- Can you describe the professional development offerings at your school? How many workshops/ training sessions do you receive per year? How often? Is there any follow up procedures after receiving the training?
- 3- How can you describe the relationship between the professional development that you are receiving in the public school and your needs? How relevant? Please elaborate on how the needs are identified.
- 4- What is the level of your commitment and participation in professional development programs? Please elaborate by stating the reasons that drive such a level of commitment.
- 5- How do the professional development programs provided for public school teachers play a role in enhancing your professional development as a teacher? If No, why. If yes, How? Please support with evidence from your professional experience.

#### **II** **EFFECTIVENESS**

- 6- How do you measure the efficiency of your classroom practice when you apply the new knowledge gained from the professional development programs that you received? What are the challenges and the opportunities in this scope? Please state examples to clarify your perspective.
- 7- How can you rate the impact of your application of new knowledge to the increase in students' performance?
- 8- How can you rate the impact of your application of new knowledge to the change in your behavior as a professional?
- 9- In your opinion, what is the role of professional development to change you as a person, teacher, educator? Please elaborate.
- 10- Please elaborate on possible recommendations and suggestions for improvement in this regard.

**Do you have any question or additional comment?**

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Thank you! Your participation is appreciated!

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