

**Towards a Path of History Education
Improvement in Lebanon**

Towards a Path of History Education Improvement in Lebanon

*Summaries and Recommendations of the Conference
“Talks about the Trends and Approaches
for History Education in Lebanon”
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to Lebanese Assosiation for History

About LAH

The Lebanese Association for History (LAH) is working towards contributing in developing History Education through a disciplinary approach that fosters historical thinking, inclusiveness, multi-perspectivity and communication skills. LAH also aims at incorporating dealing with the past in the teaching of history to contribute to the transformation of the conflict. LAH was established in 2013 by a group of history teachers, educational specialists, and historians who noticed a dire need to work on history education in Lebanon to overcome the history curriculum knot that occurred as a result of the failure to produce a new history curriculum in the postwar period and the resulting marginalization of history education.

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“Academic Committee”

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Preface

This is the launch of our path, we, the people of history, teachers, educators, historians, and decision makers in the Lebanese curriculum.

The Lebanese Association for History brought us together to openly “chat” about the realm of history and history education in Lebanon. The outcomes and recommendations of these debates shall serve as beginning of the conduit to open a broad country-wide discussion among the experts and everyone involved with the subject.

Our goal is to drastically alter history from a rigid and neglected subject matter into a field of knowledge. Thus, the ultimate goal is to reconcile history with the enthusiasm and pleasure of learning, and with its mission to be a means of learner’s competencies and abilities’ empowerment.

Based on the latter, the crux of empowering the teacher through training to be a qualified guide for learners to metamorphose from mere recipients of history to active and involved learners, researchers, and perhaps, young historians, able to build their historical narratives with the proper capacity that accompanies this process. Achieving the latter will enable the learner to search, scrutinize, verify reliability, analyze documents and sources, then compare them to other documents, draw conclusions, and turn them into a guide for building historical arguments, and thus use them in their historical writings.

Adding to this, the teachers and educators shall go through several activities such as team work, presentation, discussion, debate, listening, time management, and role distribution, that in turn will enhance the concept of freedom and freewill of learners to turn them into free, democratic, receptive, tolerant, and empathetic individuals; such characteristics are greatly needed nowadays to build a better and prosperous global world. As well as to prepare them to interact with the community to boost their sense of citizenship, shared dreams, challenges and hopes for a better country.

In addition to being the foundation of an innovative trail in the world of history, this work serves as an invitation for history scholars and educators to discourse in a positive, honest and transparent dialogue with education decision-makers in Lebanon to collaborate to recuperate the Lebanese educational approaches and

systems of the curriculum in general, and history education in particular.

In a nutshell, the time has come for us to assert Lebanese politicians that we are honchos, and that we are capable and willing to liberate the education sector from the communal ideologies struggle, and to once again make it the first line of defense for the Lebanese Republic values, and a means to transfigure the Lebanese citizen into an advocate of the person as an end and a value him/herself and devoted citizenship.

Dr. Amin Elias

President of the Lebanese Association for History

Towards a Path of History Education Improvement in Lebanon

Dr. Amin Elias⁽¹⁾

Overview

The Lebanese Association for History (LAH) organized, in partnership with the Peace Building Project at UNDP-Lebanon, a conference entitled “A Conversation about Transformations of and Approaches of Teaching History in Lebanon.” The conference was held in three sessions: on January 27, February 10, and March 17, 2021.

In order to pull off this event, the Association formed an academic committee of teachers and academics like Mr. Jamal Arafat, Mrs. Nayla Hamadeh, Dr. Bassel Akar, Dr. Maha Shuayb, and Dr. Amin Elias (conference coordinator) to contribute to the conceptualization of the conference and its program and to communicate with specialists. The committee has identified five main goals for this conference: 1- Launching a scientific debate among specialists to contribute to the curriculum-making process at the national level, and thus transforming this conference into a ground for debates among specialists regarding history education in Lebanon, curriculum making, and training history teachers ; 2- Launching new conversations with the aim of developing a new approach to designing the history curriculum; 3- Reflecting on the teacher-training programs for history teachers at different Lebanese universities and ways for these programs to meet the new discussion. 4- Evaluating the newly suggested approach advanced by LHA through its training program; 5- Raising interest in research in the field of teaching history and encouraging it. The ultimate goal is to launch a common path between those involved in teaching history in Lebanon such as academics and teachers, whether they are specialized in history or education, so that they think together about the most effective ways to develop teaching history in Lebanon.

In addition to history teachers across Lebanon, the conference committee sought to approach academics in the departments of history and education at Lebanese universities, such as the Lebanese University, Saint Joseph University, the American University of Beirut, the Lebanese American University, the Lebanese International University, and Al-Manar University, in order for this conference to be a space

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for meeting and reflecting on how to prepare history teachers in Lebanon and on launching a common path to reflect on approaches to a new history curriculum in Lebanon, especially as it became clear to us that coordination between history departments and education departments (in charge of teacher education) is either non existing or quite weak. In both cases, the matter reflects negatively on preparing history teachers in Lebanon. It should also be noted that this conference was held in the presence of a representative of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Lebanon, Dr. Nada Hassan (representing Director General of MEHE, Mr. Fady Yarak), and a representative of the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD), the Head of the History Department at CERD, Mrs. Ghada Al-Ali (representing CERD President, Dr. George Nohra).

This paper contains a summary of the debates that took place between specialists during these three sessions and that focused on three topics. In the first session, the debate revolved around approaches to teaching and learning history in schools. In the second session, the debate focused on how to prepare history teachers at the Lebanese University, Saint Joseph University, the American University of Beirut, and the Lebanese American University. In the third session, the debate revolved around the curriculum and how to create it, starting with how to set its philosophy all the way up to the evaluation process, and passing through the content and teaching methods.

The discussion among participants ended with a set of recommendations that will be discussed in our paper. These recommendations will be the cornerstone of a national campaign during which LAH will launch a nationwide dynamic in order to develop history teaching in Lebanon, including curriculum, teaching methods, and training teachers. This is in cooperation, of course, with the two main educational references in Lebanon: the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Center for Educational Research and Development.

First - The Status of History Teaching in Lebanon: A Never-Ending Crisis

To understand the ongoing crisis regarding the history subject in Lebanon⁽²⁾, it is enough for the observer to reflect on the words of Dr. Nada Hassan, the representative of Mr. Fadi Yarak, Director General of the MEHE in Lebanon, and the words of Mrs. Ghada Al-Ali, history coordinator at CERD and the representative of Mr. George Nohra, President of the CERD.

(2) On the reality of the situation of history teaching in Lebanon, check the important study prepared by Dr. Fadi Tawa and Dr. Suzanne Abdul-Reda Abourjeili, "A Field Study on History Teaching in Lebanon: Reality and Perceptions," Beirut, Ministry of Education and Higher Education in the Lebanese Republic, Center for Educational Research and Development, Adyan Foundation, and the British Embassy in Lebanon, 2017.

In her speech, Dr. Nada Hassan expressed the reality that “teaching history in Lebanon is a worrying concern for those in charge of education and teaching in the Lebanese Republic,” and that the specialists must convey a clear academic picture to these people, meaning that the coordination between the specialists and the decision-makers in Lebanon is not at the level that would lead to the development of teaching history in Lebanon.

In a detailed statement, Mrs. Ghada Al-Ali explained how history books in Lebanon had not been updated since 1968 because “the political leaders in Lebanon did not allow this to happen,” despite the importance of the subject in “raising citizens proud of their history.” From the beginning of her speech, it was clear that the political dispute in Lebanon had put its weight on all the aspects of history, which led to the subject’s failure to evolve and to the inability to develop and approve new methodologies for it. This slowly led to its death. Although there have been many attempts, especially since the late nineties of the last century (the 20th century), to get this material out of the “bottleneck,” to quote Mrs. Ghada Al-Ali, the new history curriculum has not seen the light to this day.

Among these attempts, which saw the participation of the educational institutions, along with the MEHE in Lebanon and CERD, is one that happened in 2000, whereby CERD succeeded in designing a new history curriculum (although the objectives and competencies stipulated in the reference frames for the national curricula were not linked). However, the curriculum and the few books that were issued based on it were introduced. They were subsequently withdrawn from circulation. As a result, the process of renewing the history curriculum was halted.

A second, more ambitious attempt took place in 2010, when the MEHE cooperated with the CERD to implement a new curriculum. Mrs. Ghada Al-Ali describes the attempt by saying it was “really good.” Three potential competencies have been identified from this subject: 1- An objective reading of social organization based on historical documents, 2- a logical explanation of the changes affecting social organization, 3- positive interaction with diversity within societies. The result was the same as the previous one; the work on this new curriculum has been suspended for reasons that Mrs. Ghada Al-Ali describes as “unknown information.”

The CERD made the third attempt in 2017 by organizing a workshop called Exchange of Experiences with the LAH to work on the curriculum approaches adopted in foreign countries, including Britain, Australia, and Finland. The CERD and the LAH cooperated on introducing strategies in the classroom by training a team of certified trainers at the center. The MEHE contributed to the support of the LAH and its partners in the Civil Peace Forum to introduce an approach based on adopting oral history to teach the civil war, through a pilot project with eight official high schools in the region of Mount Lebanon. The LAH and the CERD

also cooperated on strategies for developing “historical thinking” based on the conceptual approach, and on how to introduce this approach in classes.

Based on the intervention of Mrs. Al-Ali, it seems clear that one of the main causes of the history education crisis in Lebanon is the political tug-of-war over the sharp sectarian disagreement, and the absence of academic scholarly references. Instead of this scholarly reference prevailing, it seems excluded from the decision-making positions, which keeps the education affairs, in general, and teaching history, in particular, subject to political interference which is far away in its approach from the science of history.

Second - The Supreme Goal: To Build a Free, Democratic, and Intellectual Person

The first session of the Talks conference (January 28, 2021) focused on approaches to teaching and learning history in schools.

In the manner of the classical Greek philosophers, the general debate in this session started off with the following question: What is the ultimate goal of teaching history in school? The debate centered around three axes: 1- Citizenship and building identity and a sense of belonging. 2- building the knowledge, concepts, skills and competencies necessary for the individual to be a contemporary free-thinking person; 3- Freedom of thought among teachers and students.

1. Citizenship, and Building Identity and a Sense of Belonging

a. Many history professors in Lebanon still cling to the idea that teaching history is an important means for strengthening citizenship and building a single Lebanese identity and sense of belonging. These have had their voices heard in the conference, as they openly expressed the importance of history in building a collective and inclusive memory that would be a solid basis for Lebanese identity and sense of belonging, and for strengthening Lebanese citizenship. Hence, within this framework, the importance of the unified history book, which, according to this point of view, is not only an implementation of what was agreed upon in the National Accord Document approved in 1989 in the Saudi city of Taif between Lebanese MPs, but rather a way to build collective memory by consolidating the unified narrative about the history of Lebanon.

2. Building Concepts and Skills: History as a Discipline

b. Facing this trend of history teachers defending the unified book and narrative and the collective memory, there was another trend that saw the compulsive or fusion unification process as a threat not only to the subject of history, but to the Lebanese person whose features we seek to build in proportion to the

necessities of modernity. This trend opposing the idea of the “unified narrative” believes that the experience of building a “unified memory for the Lebanese” was previously experienced during the first republic, and it did not give the desired results because the Lebanese society, like many contemporary societies, is diversified by the nature of its social and intellectual structure⁽³⁾. For this reason, the adoption of the one-big-narrative approach no longer corresponds to the new orientations in history teaching in the world, especially those that emphasize the idea that history is a discipline and not a narrative transmitted from one generation to the next. When considering that history is a discipline based on a conceptual approach, history becomes treated as a means to build the features of a contemporary person who is not only a recipient, but a participant in the process of historical learning and research, so that history is a means for the learner to acquire the competencies necessary to be a researcher, a free individual, an intellectual, a critic, an analyst, and a thinker who is able to compare and who is open to the diversity of historical narratives, and who is ultimately able to build his/her own historical narrative. Also, a remarkable opinion emerged at the conference and was indirectly supportive of the second trend, stating that it is unfair to load all the burden of building a unified collective memory on history, especially in the pre-university stage. This is exactly what reinforces the idea that history should be a subject in pre-university education through which learners acquire knowledge, experiences, and ways of thinking that they can benefit from in their future lives. If we want to summarize the general orientation in the conference about the supreme goal of teaching history in schools, we can say that it consists of training the learner to be a “young historian” capable of being, in his/her life, a free, democratic, and intellectual person. Accordingly, the mission of the teacher becomes to train male and female learners and to convey to them the method of the historian in building historical knowledge. If the teacher does not have the necessary competencies, then he or she will not be able to transfer them to the learners in order for them to become “investigators of the truth,” as this investigation process requires critical thinking and the ability to build a historical narrative.

3. Freedom of Thought for the Teacher and the Learner

The opinion stressing the importance of freedom of thought supports the trend claiming that history in schools should be a discipline and not a ground for the

(3) It may be useful here to review Dr. Amin Elias’ book, where he presents how the Lebanese mythology was built during the 40’s and 50’s of the 20th century through the works of the Lebanese symposium:

Dr. Amin ELIAS, *Le Cénacle Libanais (1946-1984), une tribune pour une science du Liban*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 2019, 338 pages.

transmission of a single unified narrative. Regarding this orientation, everything, including the unified history book that leads to the death of freedom of thought among teachers and learners, is unacceptable. The teacher will not teach any history topic if he or she is not convinced of it. Hence, it is futile to impose a unified history book or a unified historical narrative. The work here should not be on unifying the history book, but rather on qualifying teachers so that they are able to break free from any affiliation, be it partisan, factional, religious, sectarian, regional, ethnic, or cultural, in a way that enables them to be objective when addressing any history topic with the learners.

In terms of approaches, the participants focused on the importance of developing higher thinking skills among students, intelligently reconstructing the history program, reading history conceptually and from varied perspectives, as well as changing the description of the official exam, provided that the professor is at the engine behind the learning process; i.e., that teachers are well trained, qualified and free to help students develop and build their expected features, in an atmosphere of fun and participatory teamwork. Here, some of the discussants noted the importance of the educational process being based on two foundations: The first is based on active methods by engaging the learner in an enjoyable and beneficial way in the learning process, and the second is based on the cognitive-scientific production, so that the scholarly reference is the basis. Moreover, the professors did not fail to point out the challenges facing these ideas, especially the obstacles stemming from political interference in the teaching of history, and that these obstacles could be overcome in two possible ways: first, the re-appropriation of history education by specialists; Second, by developing a new curriculum that is flexible and capable of accommodating multiple narratives, whereby historians supervise its development and implementation based on scientific knowledge rather than political interference.

As for the challenges, there was almost unanimity among the participants that the most prominent of them was the fact that most history teachers in Lebanon are religious, political, or partisan. Accordingly, the point of view of each of them differs on the issues according to their religious, party, and political positioning. Another challenge is to allocate one hour per week to teaching history in all educational cycles. There is also a big challenge in the evaluation system. Most of the work of the teacher of official certificate classes is based on preparing learners for official exams, which makes all his efforts focused on how to make learners succeed and obtain the highest grade. Another fundamental challenge is embodied in the fact that most teachers of basic education, whether in public or private schools, lack specialization, while teachers of secondary education in public schools hold degrees in history and are therefore prepared to teach this subject.

1. Third - A Complex Relationship between History and Educational Sciences

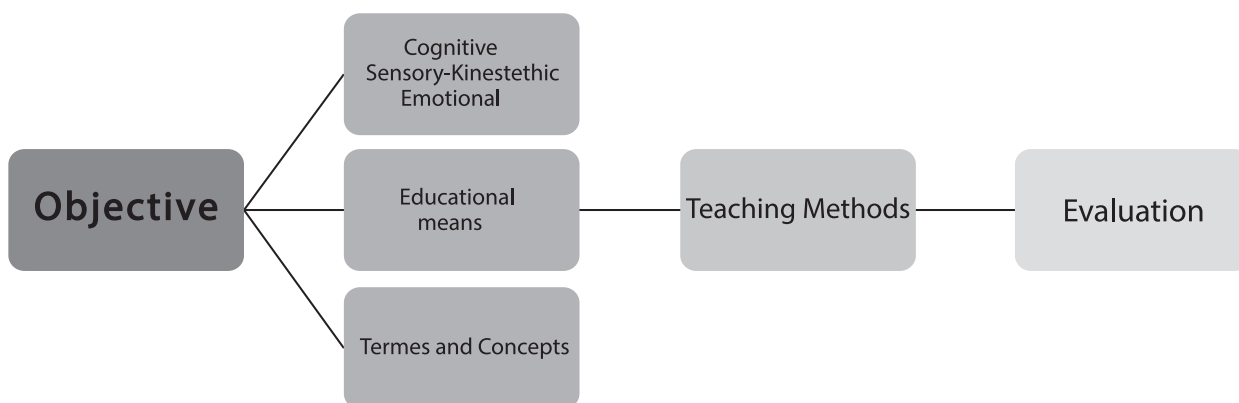
In the second session (February 10, 2021), representatives of the Lebanese University (the Faculty of Pedagogy), Saint Joseph University, the American University of Beirut, and the Lebanese-American University presented programs for training teachers in general, and history teachers in particular. Then, a joint debate on ideas that could be proposed to develop the preparation process took place⁽⁴⁾.

At the beginning, the coordinator of the teacher-training program at the Faculty of Pedagogy at the Lebanese University, Dr. Asia Qais Al-Mohtar, showed how to train history teachers. From her presentation, it appeared that the Faculty of Pedagogy at the Lebanese University possesses the most integrated program in this field because it trains teachers specialized in social studies (including social sciences, history, geography, and civics).

According to Dr. Al-Mohtar, the Faculty of Pedagogy at the Lebanese University teaches history within a package called “social studies teaching” for the first and second cycles of basic education, for a period of three years at the end of which the student gets a “Bachelor of Education.” The courses taught are: ancient history, medieval history, modern and contemporary history, and modern history of Lebanon. History courses during this training process are not limited to the purely historical topics mentioned, but rather go beyond them to include courses related to methods of teaching history and evaluation. The specific goals of teaching history in the Faculty of Pedagogy are as follows: 1- Contributing to building national and human culture among learners, 2- The learner’s acquisition of the principles of scientific research (stages of research), 3- Providing communication between generations to understand the present and benefit from its lessons, 4- Seeking the truth and presenting historical documents related to multiple narratives, 5- Urging the learner to discuss and draw conclusions, 6- Understanding the concept of time, 7- Educating young people on the concept of public affairs, political practice, and the dialectical relationship between the citizen and the authority based on democracy, 8- And finally, developing moral values. As for the main components of preparing a history course, they start from the following objectives: cognitive, sensory-kinesthetic, and emotional, all the way to educational means, terms, and concepts, to reach teaching and evaluation methods, which are embodied in the drawing below⁽⁵⁾.

(4) You can find these ideas in the final section on the recommendations.

(5) The drawing is taken from the intervention of Dr. Asia Al-Mohtar, “Training History Teachers in the Faculty of Pedagogy at the Lebanese University,” February 10, 2021, Talks Conference, Beirut, LHA.



In addition to this theoretical aspect, a student who is being prepared in the Faculty of Pedagogy at the Lebanese University to become a teacher of social studies also undergoes practical or field training. Therefore, the student must carry out the following tasks: 1- Attend history classes in schools or remotely (during the Covid-19 pandemic), in each of the third, fourth, and fifth university semesters. 2- Prepare a history lesson and have it corrected by the trainer; this preparation includes educational means prepared by the trainee, 3- Practice teaching history in school classes at an average of one class per year in each of the fourth and fifth semesters.

As for the trainer/supervisor training students of social studies, one of his/her tasks is to build the following competencies for the trainee: preparing educational activity, implementing educational activity with learners in host schools or on approved platforms for online education (Microsoft teams, Zoom), and performing the evaluation. Moreover, there is also the implementation of a reflection exercise on his/her performance while teaching. In addition to all these matters, the student in the Faculty of Pedagogy is pursuing a course on the curricula. The student must do two types of research before graduating: documentary and procedural (the procedural one lasts for a whole year, in which the student/trainee addresses a problem and follows a certain procedure regarding it).

In turn, the Dean of the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Dr. Patricia Rached, and the Master Program Coordinator at the aforementioned Faculty, Dr. Mirna Al-Hajj, presented the preparation program at Saint Joseph University. It was clear from the beginning of the presentation that, unlike the Faculty of Pedagogy at the Lebanese University, education and history are separate specializations. The Faculty of Educational Sciences at Saint Joseph University is concerned only with educational affairs and educational training; as for history, it is left to the history department. Accordingly, the Faculty of Educational Sciences does not intervene with the history content, which remains within the prerogatives of the history

department at the university. Saint Joseph University does not grant a Bachelor of Education, but a Master's in Educational Sciences that is both research-based and professional, which allows the student to directly enter a Ph.D. program. Therefore, the training of male and female teachers at Saint Joseph University takes place within the general context of all specializations. The student applies his/her education in the context of his/her specialization. History figures among these specializations. Accordingly, and within the part related to history, there are history specialists who accompany the trainees in the training and research carried out by these trainees. In other words, it is true that there is no intervention between the Faculty of Educational Sciences and the Department of History at Saint Joseph University, which prevents any encroachment on the competence of the other side. However, there is coordination and cooperation so that the History Department is concerned with the content, while the effort of the Faculty of Educational Sciences focuses on the educational aspect. For example, in the historical epistemology courses, there is an intervention by a history teacher. Also, in training, there are two teachers who follow up the student-trainee: a teacher specialized in history and affiliated to the History Department to monitor the content, and a specialized teacher from the Faculty of Educational Sciences to monitor the educational part. Both teachers work together to carry out the evaluation process. The same applies to the research part. There are two supervising teachers: the main supervisor is specialized in education, while the assistant supervisor is specialized in history.

The situation is different in the Anglo-Saxon universities: the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the Lebanese American University (LAU). In LAU for example, as explained by the specialist in educational sciences, Dr. Mona Nabhani, students-trainees in social sciences are trained in general with a focus on the theoretical and practical sides (i.e. field training). The student completes his/her general education in what is known as the Liberal Arts System, which includes general courses aimed at acquiring a diverse and comprehensive education, thus the student pursues courses in philosophy, ethics, history, arts, sports, and nutrition. On the other hand, there are courses related to special education. This process lasts over two years before the student-trainee goes to school in order to observe classroom teaching as a first step. Then, in the second stage, he/she connects what he/she had learned at the university and what he/she saw in the classrooms, and this is done according to a critical approach. He/she is also trained to build a complete educational unit as a pre-final step prior to performing this unit in the classroom.

As for AUB, it does not have a special program for teaching history, as Dr. Rima Karami, Associate Chair of the Education Department, explained. The specialization at the AUB is in education and revolves around a vision aimed at building features required by the student-trainee, such as: leadership, teaching methods, educational

leadership, the ability to combine theoretical research and the ability to provide social service.

In a review of the four interventions, it seems clear, with the exception of the Faculty of Pedagogy at the Lebanese University, that private universities in Lebanon focus on qualifying and preparing the student-trainee to become a teacher in general and not to become a history teacher. Students in these private universities are not specially trained on how to teach history. Whereas at the Faculty of Pedagogy at the Lebanese University, the student-trainee is prepared to become a teacher of social studies, including history, and thus, he/she is trained to become a teacher of history, geography, and civics. However, it is worth noting here that Dr. Asia Al-Mohtar expressed facing some struggles at the Faculty of Pedagogy such as weak and sometimes lack of coordination between the teachers who give specialization courses and the trainers who follow up the students-trainees in the field.

Here, we must ask some questions that are left without definitive answers, such as: is the lack of training in teaching history in Faculties of Educational Sciences in private universities a matter related to the commercial dimension represented by the lack of demand for specialization in history teaching? Did the reality of having one hour of history teaching lead to the lack of many job opportunities in teaching history, which in turn led to a decrease in students of history teacher education at the university? Why is there such a big difference between training on history teaching and field practice? Why is there a crisis in all curricula, in all subjects, and in the whole country, and not only the level of the subject of history?

Fourth - Curriculum is a Necessity, not a Luxury

In the third session (March 17, 2021), it was necessary to approach the problem of the history curriculum in Lebanon, how it is made, and the challenges facing this path.

The debate began with an intervention by Dr. Nada Hassan, who started from her experience as an employee in the Ministry of Education for twenty years, through which she was familiar with the aspects of educational decision-making and the mechanism for implementing legal texts, as a researcher in history and a professor of history at the Institute of Social Sciences at the Lebanese University, as a former professor of history within the context of public education, and as a participant since 1990 in the preparation of official exams as an examiner, rapporteur, and participant in the committees⁽⁶⁾.

(6) See the research paper published by Dr. Nada Hassan, "Teaching History in the Lebanese

At the beginning, Dr. Hassan explained how the mechanism of history teaching is subject to four pillars: 1- The educational plan or the curriculum (from which many components branch out, including educational philosophy, national strategy, educational policy, educational goals, general goals, competencies, and special goals), 2- Teaching strategies (from which teaching methods, teacher training, and means of explanation branch out), 3- The content (from the historical stages which branch out since history is considering a school subject in Lebanon, the stages of preparing the content, the books and their options), 4- And finally the evaluation (from which the evaluation systems in the Lebanese school and in the official exams branch out).

Recalling the attempts to create a curriculum for history in Lebanon presented by Mrs. Ghada Al-Ali in the first session, Dr. Nada Hassan explained how the CERD tried in 2000 to create a curriculum based on clear and measurable competencies in order to build a sound curriculum in the Lebanese Republic, and how this center set in the process itself the foundations of evaluating the history course according to the competency evaluation system by identifying three areas: 1- Using historical terms and concepts, 2- Reading and analysing historical documents, 3- Producing historical texts. In 2010, the Center identified three competencies for teaching history, mentioned above by Mrs. Ghada Al-Ali in her intervention.

However, according to Dr. Nada Hassan, these attempts always overlapped with politics and the educational process, which led to the suspension of all paths that the CERD had tried to open in order to create a new curriculum for history.

Dr. Hassan told us that she relied on her position as an expert on how to make educational decisions in political circles and the difficulties of developing and adopting a new curriculum for history in Lebanon in light of the ongoing political, ideological, and sectarian conflict, in order to suggest that the tables be turned and the evaluation system start to be reformed instead of starting with the curriculum. Instead of starting the reforms with the curriculum and ending with the evaluation (i.e. starting with planning a curriculum, then proceeding to the content, and then to writing books and building the text, to reach the evaluation), they should start with the evaluation with the aim of gradually reaching the creation of a new curriculum, i.e. returning to the reality of the evaluation system in official exams.

What are the evaluation criteria in the official exams? 1- Adopting the Arabic language (decree 2001), 2- The exam lasts for one hour, the grade for the Intermediate Certificate shall be graded over 20 points, and for the General Secondary Certificate graded over 30 points, 3- All evaluation foundations are based on memory and

Republic, between Reality and Prospects,” *Al-Manafez Al-Thakafiya Journal*, Issue 33, Winter 2021, Beirut, Dar Al-Nahda Al-Arabiya, p. 14-51.

on measuring the amount of knowledge acquired, 4- One approved style by the committees which is based on developing the cognitive questions. What did this lead to? The result was that the learners began to study the subject for goals other than the ones for which it was intended. The grade became a goal, and the exam became a bet between them and their teachers. Moreover, students settled for studying what they had anticipated would be included in the exam. Accordingly, history teachers in public and private schools are evaluated through the grades their students get on the exam. Therefore, no matter how much teachers are trained, they revert to adopting the pattern that leads to the success of learners and their obtaining the best grade in the official exam.

To break this deadlock, Dr. Nada Hassan proposes that the subject of history be given a new profile, by allocating three academic years as a preparatory phase, extending from its adoption to its actual implementation. During this period, history teachers are first trained on the techniques underlying this new profile. Secondly, students are taught the new necessary skills. Thirdly, the necessary resources are made accessible to teachers. According to Dr. Nada Hassan, this step will help dispense with the political decision and its makers, as amending the profile of the history exam requires no political decision, law, or decree. It can be achieved through a decision issued by the Minister of Education. Moreover, the new profile of the history subject will develop students' higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis, correlation, comparison, expression of opinion and production of the historical text. It will also require both teachers and students to rely on historical texts and documents (timeline, realistic picture, photographs, historical map), while maintaining a set of cognitive questions (including memorization and comprehension, i.e. the lower-order thinking skills).

The direct objective of this step is to measure the competencies that lie in the three main pillars of the history subject (terminology, document analysis, historical production). Dr. Hassan identifies seven expected results of this procedure: 1- Helping students interpret the content from a new perspective, 2- Achieving the skills defined in 2000, 3- Developing the independence of students and their ability to defend their choices, 4- Helping the students acquire the skills that, when practiced, will change their mindset and approach to historical texts, 5- Addressing the problem that the student has to be formed in history before entering the classroom (teaching the students to build their historical narratives in the classroom and not outside it), 6- Organizing training courses, especially for teachers who are not specialized in history, 7- Cooperating with the publishing houses to make this change happen, through the drafting of textbooks. The reason is that these houses have what it takes thanks to their specialists and qualified people in the field, 8- Easily adapting with any potential change in the curriculum.

Dr. Nada Hassan specified the goals expected from giving the official exams

a new profile:1) Planning or curriculum-wise, trying this examination model objectively tests the education vision and evaluates skills, paving the way for the other amendments envisaged in this planning, like philosophy, policy, strategy, and goals. In other words, this new profile will set the foundations of the new philosophy of the desired new curriculum. 2) As far as teaching strategies are concerned, the new profile of the official exams will prove the need for active methods of teaching that will be taught to teachers through training workshops. This trend can further demonstrate the growing need for specialized teachers. 3) As for content, this new kind of questions in the official exams will force publishing houses to accompany it by reconsidering the drafting of textbooks. For this end, they will work on securing resources, such as reliable texts, maps and historical documents. This is promising, according to Dr. Nada Hassan, and stirs hope that someday a unified history book in form will be drafted, meaning that it would include texts that reflect the diversity of the historical narratives in Lebanon.

On the other hand, another trend is championed by Dr. Simon Abdel Massih, a history professor at the Faculty of Pedagogy at the Lebanese University, who has written many books related to curricula in general⁽⁷⁾ and to the history curriculum in particular. He says that there is no alternative to a curriculum reform in order to develop history teaching in Lebanon: “A new curriculum must be issued. A binding curriculum for all sectors and schools, including foreign schools, the private and public sectors, a curriculum that is applied by them all.” In his opinion, there is no way out of the dilemma of history teaching in Lebanon except through knowing “how to overcome the curriculum problem.” According to him, the solution is both simple and difficult: “The curriculum-making process must be based on scientific production. The most important reference is the historical scientific reference. Every other reference is rejected.” Dr. Abdel Massih says: “It is solely based on scientific reference that I can teach a sensitive historical period in Lebanon.” In his opinion, these matters are “essential starting points” in the curriculum-making process. If this process is not based on “scientific historical knowledge,” it is of no value. This said, Dr. Abdel Massih, who has conducted a detailed study on the crisis of the history curriculum in Lebanon, entitled **Teaching History, between Epistemology and Ideology**⁽⁸⁾, proposes several ideas to overcome the curriculum crisis. The

(7) Considering reading his book, Simon Abdel Massih, *Systematic Introduction to History Teaching in the Arab World*, Beirut, Publications of the Regional Center for Documentation and Pedagogical, Political, and Historical Studies, 2012.

(8) Simon Abdel Massih, *Teaching History, between Epistemology and Ideology*, reading of the crisis of teaching the history subject in primary education: *The Lebanese Model*, Beirut, Publications of the Regional Center for Documentation and Pedagogical, Political, and Historical Studies, 2012.

bottom line of these ideas is to invest in the 2010 curriculum, as he considers it to be a paradigm shift in the epistemological evolution. Dr. Abdel Massih argues that the 2010 curriculum has set off two main developments. The first is epistemological, in the sense that it contained historical and scientific knowledge as accurate as could be, striking an important balance between history of Lebanon, history of the Arab world, and world history. In fact, it equally spoke about Lebanon, the Arab countries, and the world. The 2010 curriculum has also balanced, very cleverly, between the history of the region that was the nucleus of Lebanon, i.e. Mount Lebanon, and its surrounding areas, by highlighting the interactions that took place between them. This can be found in the curriculum of grade five and eight. As for the second development, it is methodological. This development is seen in the transition from the indoctrination-based education mode to that of working on historical documents.

Dr. Abdel Massih is well aware that it is very difficult to obtain the approval of the political elite, let alone a political consensus, on any method, as the last twenty years testify to. Hence, he suggests that a curriculum that is flexible in both form and content be created in a way that achieves the desired epistemological and methodological developments, on the one hand, and preserves the institutional, cognitive and educational cohesion on the other hand. The biggest challenge is to keep the curriculum aloof from any political influence, which can only be achieved by giving the task of drafting the curriculum to historians and educators. Hence the need to review the past works of historians, provided that the content of this scientific work is suitable to active teaching methods and adapted to the different age groups. Surely, Dr. Abdel Massih is not oblivious to the fact that the entire educational process must be integrated, interdependent and continuous, starting from the curriculum itself to the teaching and assessment methods. “The system should work in a circular and coherent manner. It mustn’t deal with each stage separately.”

For her part, Dr. Maha Shuaib, Director of the Centre for Lebanese Studies at the Lebanese American University, seems to agree with Dr. Abdel Massih in considering the 2010 curriculum to be an important milestone, whether in terms of knowledge or methodology, through the emphasis on the use of different historical texts and documents, and the use of more sophisticated thinking techniques such as application, conclusion, analysis, and deduction.

While Dr. Abdel Massih sheds more light on the content of the curriculum, Dr. Shuayb focuses on the stages of the curriculum-making process in order to chart the new path for creating this curriculum. In this context, Dr. Shuayb breaks this path for us into goals and ideologies. In terms of goals, they include building a national identity, building a unified memory, or building a mechanism of democracy and pluralism. As far as ideology is concerned, Dr. Shuayb believes that the curriculum is first and foremost an ideology, and that is why she calls us to acknowledge the fact

that the education process cannot be neutral. Consequently, politicization is ever-present in the curriculum and its drafting process. Education cannot be “apolitical.” Every attempt to understand the curriculum is based on the need to understand issues of power, politics and ideology inside and outside the school. Ultimately, the curriculum is nothing but a social and political construct that reflects a specific set of interests, beliefs and values. In other words, the curriculum, in the opinion of Dr. Shuaib, represents “authority, politics and ideology.”

It seems that Dr. Abdel Massih somewhat agrees with this perception of the curriculum, especially with its ideological trends. Ideology, according to Abdel Massih, is “a set of ideas that reflect the concerns of a historical group at a specific historical moment.” However, Dr. Abdel Massih distinguishes himself from Dr. Shuayb by preferring that the curriculum be closer to historical science than to ideology. He explains how an ideology can be a major roadblock to curriculum-making, especially in a country like Lebanon. He builds this explanation on his studies of the ideology that the political system in Lebanon tried to reflect in the curricula of history. Furthermore, he explains that the political system in Lebanon, well before the Taif Accord, had built its ideology on a set of ideas, including: Lebanon dissociated, separated from the Arab world; the Emirate and its heroes such as the two Emirs Fakhr al-Din II and Bashir II; Lebanon, the refuge and space of coexistence between religious sects; Lebanon with an Arab face and the mediator between the West and the East. This ideology has been criticized since the 1980s by many Lebanese historians⁽⁹⁾. This criticism, according to Dr. Abdel Massih, has paved the way for building a scientific method. In fact, the ideology that was prevalent before the Taif Accord, which was mainly developed by the Maronites, embraced the Lebanese diversity, and accepted the narratives of all groups into the system. For example, it gave the Druze community a major role in shaping the Lebanese personality, especially in the era of the Emirate. Then came the post-Taif ideology that tried to torpedo this unified ideology and replace it with a set of ideologies associated with the various groups in Lebanon, Islamic and Christian. Accordingly, Lebanon moved from a unified ideology that accepted the narratives of all the groups, to a set of ideologies, each trying to exclude the other. According to Dr. Abdel Massih, all attempts, from the Taif Accord to the present day, have focused on “reconciling the different ideologies and striking a balance

(9) Check out the following works pertaining thereto: Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions*, Beirut, Naufal Publishers, 2000; Ahmad Beydoun, *Conflict Between Our Contemporary Historians Over Lebanon's History, Identity, and Time*, Beirut, Lebanese University Publications, 1989; Jean Sharaf, *Societal Ideology or an Introduction to the Social History*, Beirut, Lebanese University Publications, 1996; Abd al-Rahim Abu Husayn, *Lebanon and the Druze Emirate during the Ottoman Rule (1711-1046)*, Beirut, Al-Nahar publications, 2005.

between them,” which is practically impossible in his opinion. For this reason, he proposes to go beyond “the attempt to find a balance between ideologies and draft a curriculum based on academic scholarly references instead.” Dr. Simon Abdel Massih therefore thinks that the curriculum of 2010, especially in grades five and eight, is an important step forward, and the best option currently at hand.

How is the curriculum made? Dr. Shuayb attempts to answer this question by comparing different approaches. One approach for example focuses on the content of the curriculum. It is characterized by creating a curriculum that serves the interests of the group, thus attaching importance to the group and not to the individual. In this kind of curriculum, knowledge is sacred and semi-eternal, while the teaching process is based on the transmission of information in a doctrinal manner. What matters here is not how but why. A second approach is based on goals. It overlooks the individual, and attaches importance to the content and objective of the curriculum, not to the individual per se. This approach does not address individual needs, nor does it give any importance to freedom. A third approach is based on the process. This specific approach views the individual as an active being, and democracy as the central value in the learning process. This said, the overriding concern of the curriculum becomes how to empower the individual through engaging him in the process of self-development and knowledge building. In fact, enabling the individual to practice his independence involves developing and improving his understanding and critical and personal thinking. The third approach also prioritizes teaching the individual certain skills other than pedagogical practices and applications. This approach can be summarized as follows: “Self-realization, not knowledge, should be the goal. Hence the need for active education and the participation of the individual in the learning process.”

Convinced that there can be no separation between methodology and ideology, Dr. Maha Shuayb draws our attention to various types of ideologies, including religious, national, social, Marxist, post-colonial, postmodern, and feminist ideologies. She argues that ideology is not limited to the ideology of religious groups in Lebanon. It can also extend to those listed above, and it is presented as curriculum objectives.

Dr. Bassel Akar⁽¹⁰⁾, Assistant Professor at Notre Dame University (NDU) and a specialist in pedagogical sciences, stressed in his intervention on the importance of scientific reference in the approach to history in general and the history curriculum in particular. Dr. Aker mainly made a comparison between history as a major narrative, and history as a cognitive field (see table below).

(10) Noteworthy, Dr. Maha Shuayb and Dr. Bassel Akar are both members in the Lebanese Association for History. They have prepared a joint intervention, and each presented a part.

Essential pedagogy objectives: Strengths, determinants of political philosophy	Major Narrative	Cognitive Domain
Objectives	Interdependence	Critical thinking
Pedagogy	Memorization	Evidence for Allegation
Strengths	Social cohesion	Promoting the idea that the individual is a value per se
Determinants	Impossible consensus, dogmatic book	Critical review of interpretations, threatening the collective memory
Political Philosophy	Authoritarianism	Liberal Democracy

After presenting all these opinions, the important question posed by Dr. Simon Abdel Massih remains at the heart of this discussion: What are the administrative and legal mechanisms to draft the curriculum, knowing that the administrative and legal procedures in Lebanon are complex?

This question is perhaps inviting us to understand how decisions are taken in the politico-educational decision-making process in Lebanon. It also constitutes an explicit call to stakeholders, i.e. the specialists in history and in history teaching in Lebanon, to strengthen their position in this decision-making process. Therefore, it looks like some kind of pressure needs to be exerted by specialists in order to retrieve education in general and history in particular from the grasp of politicians. In order to do so, they should form a lobby in the educational decision-making circles.

Fifth - Recommendations: A Path towards Developing History Teaching in Lebanon

These recommendations represent the summary of the proposals submitted by experts participating in the Talks conference, whether regarding teaching history in Lebanon, curriculum making, or history teachers training. These recommendations are three-fold:

I-Philosophy of the Curriculum

1.The curriculum should incorporate the following goals:

- a. The political goal: observing the parameters of the Lebanese Constitution and all global conventions that it abides to, such as shaping a democratic person who exercises their rights and freedoms and actively interacts in society. This goal includes building a comprehensive, collective memory that encompasses multiple memories, mirroring the diversity and coexistence in society:
- b. The social goal: promoting concepts of social justice, equality and respect of diversity, studying the narratives of marginalized groups in history, including the history of women and minorities.
- c. The cognitive purpose: including in the content of the curriculum a number of titles and concepts that ensure a balance between history as a cognitive field (a disciplinary approach) and a baseline of knowledge.
- d. The formative goal (political-intellectual): shaping a thinker, a critic, an analyst, an entrepreneur, and an interlocutor.
- e. The skills-development goal: developing the historiography-related competencies and skills of the student, through teaching methods that include research, investigation and exploration of multiple narratives, as well as the use of various sources, analysis and construction of historical interpretations. The student is trained to become a “young historian” able to build their historical knowledge out of research, investigation and discoveries based on multiple sources that vary in type and perspective. Accordingly, the teacher is also expected to have the skills needed to train students on how to become “investigators” of historical truths.
- f. The critical goal: creating and developing critical thinking among students, to enable them to question inconsistent sources and interpretations, use higher-order thinking skills, and contribute to the development of the intellectual stock at the national level.
- g. The cultural goal: creating a historical culture that is rich, varied, open and intersecting with many fields, including law, art, science, environment and politics.

2. The making of the history curriculum should be:

- a. Based on scientific and historical academic reference, and reliant on historical and scientific evidence.
- b. A continuous process that is nourished by the experiences of teachers, giving them a margin of flexibility to adapt their teachings to the educational needs

of students.

- c. Aimed at building an academic curriculum that provides an objective reading of past events and reality.
- d. A participatory process that brings together a significant number of actors from many fields, with academics and teachers at the forefront.
- e. An oasis for diverse stories, narratives, interpretations, and their production, with the help of historians who demonstrate how to approach them.
- f. A bridge for the transition from the approach that adopts the traditional unified narrative to considering the subject of history as a cognitive, constructive and active field.
- g. An agent of social history (including artistic, cultural, intellectual, educational, economic and historical aspects, etc.), in other words, the history of ordinary people, societies, groups, and various marginalized social groups.
- h. Aimed at limiting or reducing its content to give teachers room to entrench its understanding, thus shifting from quantitative to qualitative education.
- i. Looking at these stages as one integrated phase, thus enabling teachers to continuously participate in the process of developing the curriculum and reviewing its scope and sequence.

3. Concerning teaching methods and assessment, it is necessary to:

- a. Look at the educational process as a whole, i.e. from the curriculum to the methods to assessment. The curriculum should operate in a circular, consistent way.
- b. Adapt the teaching methods to all levels.
- c. Empower first-level students to develop their own knowledge, make decisions, suggest topics that reflect their choices and contribute to the learning of their peers.
- d. Link the curriculum content to current affairs and developments, whether at the local, national or global levels.
- e. Ensure the diversification of narratives and historical sources where there are multiple and varied perspectives that learners analyze to build their understanding and formulate new hypotheses about the past.
- f. Value the tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and incorporate it in the teaching-learning process, including archaeological sites, history of ideas, arts, etc.

- g. Ensure the intersection of history with other subjects such as geography, economics, art and science when teaching an era from different aspects (economic, social, artistic, intellectual, cultural, critical, political, legal, etc.)
- h. Highlight formative assessment, which contributes to building concepts, competencies, skills and knowledge in a balanced and integrated way.
- i. Adopt an assessment approach that identifies how deep the students understand the historical content, and how capable they are to analyze and compare resources, find facts, build new hypotheses and communicate them through a variety of means, including written and digital text, drawings, etc.

II. Concerning teacher training, it is necessary to:

- 1- Define the profile of the history teacher. They should be a researcher and a critic, free, motivated and open to others and new ideas. They should also have communication skills and competencies that enable them to be a successful facilitator, a leader and a leading example for their students.
- 2- Constantly train teachers to develop their historical culture, build their capacity to promote historical thinking, think at second-order, and adopt new approaches.
- 3- Reconsider the graduate programs of history teachers at the Lebanese universities. Newly graduated teachers should be followed up for a full year regarding their history teaching at school.
- 4- Train teachers in a way that ensures the development of freedom of thought inside and through them, as well as constructive dialogue skills.
- 5- Focus in the teacher training process on developing teaching methods according to a conceptual approach.
- 6- Try and guarantee the access and follow-up of teachers in their working environments.
- 7- Enhance communication between the teachers through learning and support groups.
- 8- Develop the teachers' skills in researching and utilizing a source platform (or other platforms), where they can research and collect documents.
- 9- Link the teacher's career development to self-development, through ongoing follow-up and assessment.
- 10- Develop and enhance coordination and cooperation between history and pedagogy departments, especially social sciences majors in universities, in

order to adequately form history teachers.

- 11- Establish partnerships between schools in order to strengthen cooperation in terms of history teaching and to give more importance to this subject.
- 12- Support teachers who wish to return to university to obtain a BA in teaching.
- 13- Prompt universities, authorities and institutions that are interested in teaching history to make efforts to link history to the labor market. This will encourage the new generation to major in history.

III- Concerning future steps, it is necessary to:

- 1- Uphold the status of the history subject at the schools' administrations through efforts done by the CRDP.
- 2- Support scientific research in the field of history teaching through universities and research centers. There would be held laboratories specialized in strengthening scientific research related to history and history teaching in universities and schools.
- 3- Organize a pressure campaign by universities, schools and various society groups to improve the status of the history subject and increase the number of weekly history classes in schools.
- 4- Motivate cooperation between universities to establish a "House for Human Sciences". It would host and organize conferences, seminars, and activities related to human and social sciences. It would therefore be a hub for specialists in these fields.
- 5- Seek to change the nature of the official examination.
- 6- Enhance communication between secondary and tertiary education.
- 7 - Design educational units that teach a specific topic from various aspects (i.e. to combine civics, geography, economics and sociology).
- 8 - Activate the role of Faculty of Pedagogy at the Lebanese University.
- 9 - Lastly, it is necessary that all educational institutions have private libraries that include a wide range of history books to serve as permanent sources to both teachers and students.

Discussing pedagogy and history teaching in Lebanon and anywhere in the world begins and ends with politics. If Lebanese politicians cannot agree on advanced

curricula, specialists can, especially regarding the history subject.

A great responsibility rests on the shoulders of historians, educators and specialists in teaching history in Lebanon. They draw their strength from having the needed assets, qualifications and competencies to make history education in Lebanon a driver for building individuals that are free, critical thinkers, democratic, cooperative, open to pluralism and to others, analysts, creative, loving, and connoisseurs of beauty. What could challenge them however, is how to gather these competencies and qualifications, and close ranks to wrest back the educational decision from politicians. If education and politics go hand in hand, then specialists should envelop politics in their fields, and not the other way around. Therefore, they bear the responsibility of how to transform politics, from dragging education and history to the political conflict, into serving education and history by being a political and a pedagogical philosophy. Hence, it would help develop the kind of individual we want in Lebanon: modern, enthusiastic, interactive, and active in building the universal human civilization.

Unlocking History Curriculum Reform in Lebanon

Dr. Bassel Akar⁽¹⁾

Acronyms

CERD Centre for Educational Research and Development

MEHE Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Lebanon

Introduction

History education has served a number of significant roles in social reconstruction and political transformations in Lebanon. The significance of history education in sustainable peace was recognized in the Ta'if Accord, the peace agreement after the Lebanese 1975-1990 civil war, that called for publishing one history and one civics book per grade level. However, post-civil war education reform efforts managed to only produce a common civics book. Differences in religious and political confessional ideologies and other cultural and institutional approaches to development interrupted attempts in 2000 and 2010 to officiate a grand narrative and publish history textbooks for schools. Since then, over the past decade, neither the MEHE nor the CERD have made progress that parallel subsequent efforts, demonstrating a state of curricular gridlock for history education.

The political stalemate of history education reform has left schools teaching the 1968-71 history curriculum, especially in grades 9 and 12, where official exams for the Lebanese Baccalaureate and Lebanese General Secondary Certificate, respectively, are administered. Equally concerning is how the history education curriculum reform process is hostage to an exclusive political sphere that only involves actors like teachers and academics based on their confessional identity. By virtue of this exclusive undertaking to produce a negotiated, single narrative, the reform leaves out other public actors, such as teachers and students, who are position to potentially contribute more to the design of a history education program. These actors are essential to any education reform because their agency, when supported,

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feeds into the growth of disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge fields. Their active participation in education reform also demonstrates a democratic political philosophy of governance, one that the Lebanese Constitution upholds.

In this position paper, I examine the elements that have led and sustained the history education curriculum under political gridlock and discuss approaches that critically address these elements. I draw on three principles of curriculum reform and development generically used by curriculum scholars such as Walsh (1997) and Kelly (2009) in studying curricula: (1) ideologies and aims; (2) politics of knowledge, content and process; and (3) control and access. I argue that the current practices of history education reform in Lebanon suggest authoritarian-like principles that conflict with a democratic philosophy of education. Moreover, transforming approaches to history curriculum reform requires a professional movement that empowers school-based practitioners – teachers and principals – to exercise their agency as curriculum-makers.

Ideologies and aims

All dimensions of education policy and practice in any context are expressions of an underpinning belief system, whether an ideology, values or philosophies. In nation-formation, nationalist discourse has been seen as instrumental for sovereignty, national identity and unity (A. D. Smith, 1994), especially in post-colonial reformation to memorialise cultural distinctions between the colonial power and liberated nation-state (Chatterjee, 1993). Hence, nationalist ideologies commonly frame the aims of history education (Delanty & O'Mahony, 2002), for example to construct a common sense of patriotism to the nation-state. Especially within contexts of histories riddled by armed conflict and violence, a nationalist discourse serves a history curriculum that aims to construct a collective memory. The assumption is that the grand narrative would strengthen a common identity, mainly national, by presenting a selection of events typically claiming victors and victims and the legitimacy of ideologies and borders (Soysal & Schissler, 2005). Seductive themes like freedom have also been effective in creating a common memory of historical events (VanSledright, 2008). However, as Seixas (2000) maintains, the explicit aim for social cohesion through collective memory strengthened by the grand narrative limits or denies opportunities to use second-order concepts like change and causation to construct or interpret past events.

Nationalist ideologies in Lebanon and the wider region have transpired and transformed over time triggered by and responding to socio-political changes like post-colonial reform and balances of power between religious and political communities. During these changes, negotiations of nationalisms motivated the three curriculum reforms in Lebanon. Lebanon gained independence from the French mandate in 1943 and prompted education policy reform that resulted in

the 1946 national curriculum. Education policymakers from Christian and Muslim sects differed on what cultural elements would define a post-colonial Lebanese identity and found consensus on emphasising Arabic as the main language of instruction, expressions of Lebanese patriotism and the influence of the Arab culture on Lebanese nationalism (Frayha, 1985). Indeed, the 1946 curriculum acknowledged history education as “the most useful study to enhance patriotic affection and national pride” (1946, p. 27 cited in Frayha, 1985, p. 231) and, hence, narrated histories that mostly celebrated Lebanese heroes and historical events. In 1948, Israel came to appearance and started its apartheid in Palestine. A few years later, Gammal Abdel Nasser (Egypt’s second president), called for Arab solidarity against the occupation of Palestine and gave rise to another political expression of Pan-Arab nationalism. The growth of Arab nationalism during this time prompted a second national curriculum reform in Lebanon in 1968-71 that significantly shifted the focus from “Lebanism” to “Arabism” praising the history, geography, heroes, values and other cultural elements of Arab countries (Frayha, 1985).

The third and most recent curricular reform took place after the 1975-1990 civil war in Lebanon. The 1997 national curriculum negotiated the competing Lebanese and Arab nationalisms into a Lebanese national identity (Albrecht & Akar, 2016). Although the history education program was not prepared in time for the 1997 curriculum publication, the Council of Ministers approved a revised history program on 8 June 2000 (Presidential Decree 3175). A first set of textbooks were then drafted by the CERD for grades 2-6. However, the minister and selected advisors at the time halted production. Expressing an unwavering commitment to an Arab nationalist ideology, they protested against how Arab and Islamic historical events were inaccurately interpreted and called for more critical claims against the West [sic] (Frayha, 2010). The stalemate appears to be less a direct result of competing ideologies of nationalisms, but more when the aim of history education is to generate a collective memory, which requires high-level decision-makers to reconcile interpretations of the past that safeguard the integrity of the nationalisms at stake. Indeed, the stalemate can be seen as a natural consequence of forcing a consensus of historical narratives; an effort that contradicts the inherent discipline of history, a collection of diverse and even conflicting narratives.

Politics of knowledge, content and process

Educationalists approach the learning and teaching of history through the classic dichotomy of content and process. Lee and Ashby (2000) describe the learning of historical content such as events, names and dates as substance or substantive historical knowledge and the learning of process using historical concepts such as causation, change and significance to investigate inquiries about the past as disciplinary knowledge. The sole emphasis on each of these two approaches has contrasting and even conflicting political philosophies and implications in

curriculum design, pedagogy and assessment. Table 1 outlines Seixas' (2000) attempt to illustrate the implications of these two approaches. Policymakers designing a history education program to foster a collective memory focus almost entirely on the acquisition of substantive knowledge by selecting one narrative of historical events and accounts. This single narrative approach, as shown in table 1, makes logical sense when attempting to foster a unifying identity. However, the production of one officiated narrative results in a dogmatic textbook. Assessment, therefore, merely tests the ability of students to accurately recall the information provided. Not only does the curriculum for a single narrative limit or deny opportunities to use second-order concepts like change and causation to construct or interpret past events (Seixas, 2000), but the institutionalized pedagogies of rote learning leaves students "intellectually disabled" (Howson & Shemilt, 2011, p. 80). Freire (1970) describes such pedagogy as dehumanizing because students behave as receptacles uncritically receiving information. Moreover, the single story is not necessarily elicited from remembrances among under represented communities (Zembylas & Bekerman, 2008). Seixas (2000) is therefore quite accurate in attributing the single narrative approach to an authoritarian political culture, despite the intention of a government explicitly committed to upholding principles of democracy and human rights.

Table 1. Approaches to history education

	Single narrative	Disciplinary
Aims	Establish sense of commonality and solidarity	Promotes critical thinking, learner responsibility and necessity of evidence
Pedagogy	Memorization of textbook material for recall	Requires active participation to construct history and critically review accounts
Strengths	Gives theoretical framework for identity, cohesion and social purpose.	Values cultural differences. Prepares students to critically review the various interpretations they will continuously encounter.
Limitations	Agreeing on the 'best version' is difficult. Books become dogmatic, information meaningless and easily prone to rejection, and history education a weapon.	A serious threat to collective memory and, thus, political agendas. Does not explicitly aim to create a common identity via commonly experienced struggles and victories.
Political nature	Authoritarianism	Liberal democracy

Adapted from Seixas (2000).

We cannot divorce political philosophies from the theory of knowledge upheld

within an education system. A history education curriculum that facilitates the learning of history as a discipline is an expression of a liberal democratic political philosophy. Learners and historians engage in disciplinary approaches when examining the significance of various party's individual historical accounts, explaining degrees and processes of change from different perspectives and identifying similarities and differences among various accounts (Counsell, 2011). Different interpretations of history also support and reinforce freedoms of cultural expression and knowledge production (e.g. article 22, UDHR). Hence, different histories are a **requirement** of learning history as a discipline and an outcome of intellectual freedom.

In Lebanon, the avoidance of different narratives is indeed by design. The overarching “do no harm” approach to education development in conflict-affected areas can be misused to produce single versions (e.g. in language, historical events) and avoid sensitive topics such as armed conflicts and critical classroom pedagogies such as debates (A. Smith, 2014). The single narrative approach to history education reform is stipulated in the Ta'if Accord. The vision of a single narrative is not only to construct a collective memory, sense of patriotism towards Lebanon and identity towards the Arab culture. The grand narrative is to also avoid the diversity of interpretations of historical events.

The diversity of history textbooks during the Lebanese civil war revealed competing narratives from various sectarian communities in conflict with each other. Frayha (1985) surveyed 25 different history books published after the 1968-71 curricular reform. He found that books published for schools with a Christian identity focused more on the events related to the independence of Lebanon, Phoenician influence on the Lebanese culture and Christian-related political figures as heroes. Schools with a Muslim identity used history books that gave more emphasis to the Arab League, pro-Arab politicians and perceptions of injustice to Muslims during state-formation of Lebanon. Thus, history education in school was seen as a form of battleground fighting for historical truth (Salibi, 1988). Consequently, the Ta'if Accord mandated the unification of history textbooks so that only one version of the past is studied or remembered. However, the failure of producing a consensus of historical interpretations for the post-civil war Lebanese history curriculum demonstrated the unnatural act of consolidating histories into one single narrative. In the next discussion section, I illustrate the unsustainability of authoritarian-like practices in the inclusion and marginalization of stakeholders within a governance structure that attempts to uphold democratic principles.

Control and Access

An education for democracy must demonstrate democratic principles such as inclusion and active participation in the various dimensions of the educational experience, including learning, teaching, planning and evaluation (Dewey, 1944 [1916]; Kelly, 2009). Understanding who participates and in what capacity and who is marginalised – whether by design or default – illustrates the political ideology that underpins curriculum efforts in Lebanon. Governance and public administration structures in Lebanon have reflected the consociational democratic model through the religious and political representation of individuals across various public workforce sectors. However, the Constitution recognizes the threat to democracy in assigning professionals based on religious or political sect, overlooking qualifications and merit. To address this, Article 95 calls for the “abolishment of political confessionism” and instead instate “principles of expertise and competence” (Ministry of Justice [Lebanon], 1997 [1926]). In Lebanon, under Presidential Decree 2356 (10 December 1971), the CERD is mandated and authorized to produce and approve all textbooks to be used in schools. The CERD communicates all progress with the MEHE. The MEHE presents all education policy to the Council of Ministers for officiation. Hence, the minister is positioned as a gatekeeper to the Council of Ministers.

Observations of inclusion, marginalisation and abuse of power can also be attributed to the stalemate of the history curriculum reform. At the CERD, the intention to do no harm guided the selection of individuals who carried out the 2000 history education reform. Dr Nemr Frayha was President of the CERD during the production of the history books for grades 2-6. In his reflections (Frayha, 2010), he recalled the careful selection of members for the writing committees, each comprising a historian or history scholar, history teacher, specialist in pedagogical knowledge and author of previous history schoolbooks. Frayha also ensured that each committee had representation of different religious groups “to circumvent and short-circuit objections from any religious groups who could put the new curriculum in jeopardy on the grounds that their faith was not represented” (p. 108).

Once the first set of history books were completed for grades 2-6, Frayha sent them to the education minister for endorsement. The minister exercised caution in reviewing the books by sending them to “people close to him” whom some ended up being the same individuals who were intentionally not part of the writing project and later expressed their “intense ‘Pan-Arab’ and ‘anti-Western’ [sic] ideology” when objecting to the books (Frayha, 2010, p. 108). Among the individuals who voiced that historical accounts in the books were either false or inaccurate were a physics teacher, secondary school English teacher and middle school teacher. Frayha reported that he was dismissed from his position at CERD President largely after the conflict in interpretations over events, particularly regarding the Arab cultural identities of Lebanon prior, during and after the Arab conquest in 636 A.D and

how this era intersected constructs of Lebanon's Phoenician and Christian identity. Since then, the books have been shelved and a decade passed before another attempt was made to draft another history education curriculum led by MEHE minister, Hassan Mneimneh in 2010. The curriculum was drafted but prompted protests in the streets over content and, consequently, did not pass the Council of Ministers. Political actors have, therefore, heavily guarded the reform of the history education curriculum into producing a single narrative and, in doing so, have failed.

Conclusion

The history education national curriculum is hostage to an exclusive circle of political actors, cultural practice of confessional representation and dream of a single narrative as a pathway to sustainable peace. I argue that these are some of the complex factors that have pushed history education reform into stalemate. I briefly discuss three inter-related factors as pathways to unlocking the gridlock of history education reform in Lebanon. Although sensitive and controversial for many, such pathways can establish a democratic and sustainable history curriculum development process and design a history education that nurtures a citizenship of inclusion and deliberative dialogues.

The first is the understanding of the nature of learning history. Currently, the primary aim of history education is restricted to fostering social cohesion through unifying nationalisms and conflict prevention through a collective memory. History education policy in Lebanon has completely overlooked the disciplinary functions of engaging learners in thinking historically and doing history, which include critical examinations of inquiries about the past, using diverse sources as evidence and reading interpretations from various sources. Such an approach does not necessarily threaten the construction of a collective **memory** when we recognize that collective memories can also serve a unifying and cohesive purpose.

We can only advance the disciplinary knowledge of history into the national curriculum if we address the second barrier, the need for diverse narratives, sources and interpretations. recognize that the root to or weapons of conflict lie not in the diversity of narratives but in the **collective of single narratives**, which are designed to construct ideas of "us versus them" and indoctrinate one conclusion or interpretation as dogmatic truth about the past. Gathering, embracing and preserving various testimonies, relics and records over a particular historical event is likely to generate painful memories and resistance from different communities. Building such a repository also challenges the dominant history education reform discourse whereby scholars have attempted to provide a model or formula to producing the

unified history textbook.⁽²⁾ Some may also find that building a library of multiple narratives may challenge the Ta'if Accord's call for producing a unified history textbook. On the one hand, yes, it does. Indeed, scholars like Khalaf (2002) have identified how the Ta'if Accord has sustained or exacerbated roots of conflict in after the civil war. I argue that the production of a single narrative about the past is another form of sustaining conflict. On the other hand, a collection of diverse narratives can still [and arguably should] be published as a common history textbook used by all schools in Lebanon as an initial step in the transformation of how history education is reformed, designed and developed.

Third, history curriculum reform must pave way for **school-based practitioners**, education researchers and the collaborations between the two. When empowered as researchers of pedagogical and disciplinary knowledge, the agency of teachers and school leaders can lay the foundations of inclusive, evidence-informed and sustainable change in education when advancing disciplines and cultures of learning (Fullan, 2001). Especially in the field of history education, teachers are essential and effective agents of education reform as curriculum-makers (Counsell, 2011a, 2011b) when they are empowered as researchers in the classroom (Stenhouse, 1975) and disseminate their documentation of practice and critical observations under theoretical frameworks (Fordham, 2016).

Unlocking the factors that have stalemated history education reform will require more than a detailed outline of action points. The process is a transformation in the political and social culture of policy development and visions of sustainable peace in Lebanon. The transformation is from an authoritarian-like culture of governance and approaches of avoiding harm to inclusive participation and intentional design of introducing sensitive and controversial histories for students [and teachers] to examine using carefully set methodologies. A complete shift in education culture requires risk-taking, trust, transparency and other approaches that institutions in Lebanon have avoided during peacebuilding.

(2) See selected chapters from the 2011 LAES conference on history education in Ghusayni, R., Karami, R., & Akar, B. (2012). Learning and teaching history: Lessons from and for Lebanon: Proceedings of the Third Conference on Education organized by the Lebanese Association for Educational Studies held in Beirut, Lebanon, 25-26 March 2011. Retrieved from http://laes.org/_publications.php?lang=en&id=87.

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Lebanon's History Curriculum Crisis and How to Get out of It

Dr. Simon Abdel Massih⁽¹⁾

“History is probably the only school subject that opens a term entry into multiple humanitarian activities.”

In describing the present state of the history education curriculum⁽²⁾, three texts provide a comprehensive report, two of which were published by the official governmental gazette and approved by the political body. The first is the 1968–1971 curriculum still implemented in the school system today. The second is the 2000 curriculum, which maintains a legal validity despite being discontinued in 2002 after a failure to produce a unified textbook. The third is a curriculum drafted in 2010, geared towards the secondary level and resulted in adverse political reactions. Nevertheless, it is my opinion that the third curriculum, despite the negative reception, has achieved two necessary milestones in terms of its historicity and topography.

The Shift of the 2000 Curriculum

The 2000 curriculum will be compared against that of 1968–1971, and its implementation will be analysed within the framework of the 1997 Lebanese curriculum (rather than the 1996 French curriculum). Further, the noted positive qualities of the 2010 draft will be outlined and discussed under the pretense of its productive mechanisms. To conclude, intervention mechanisms and their implications in both France and Lebanon will be compared and discussed.

(1) History professor at the Faculty of Pedagogy at the Lebanese University (Brach II).

(2) Between 1996 and 2010, five committees developed a History Curriculum:

The First Committee: on the 28th of February 1996, eight pages were drafted comprising an introduction and general objectives, then approved by the Council of Ministers on March 26, 1997.

The Second Committee (1997): set the objectives for History subject at educational levels.

The Third Committee: was formed on the 20th of June 1997 and continued operating until June 2000. (Subsequently, book-writing committees were formed following the meeting of the Council of Specialists by Law and an educational committee of specialists teaching social subjects).

The Fourth Committee (2002): to develop a new curriculum (no different from the 2000 curriculum).

The Fifth Committee (2010).

Section 1: The National Conciliation Document

The starting point for discussion is a line often cited in the National Conciliation Document of 1989, wherein the national values of education are oriented towards “reviewing and developing curricula to promote national belonging and fusion, spiritual and cultural openness, and the merging of historical and civic texts.”

The constitutional amendments reflect the principle of the NCD and likewise comprise a fundamental reference for the philosophical foundations of the Lebanese education system and its objectives. The constitution states that Lebanon (1) is a sovereign nation, (2) is unified by its land, people, and institutions, within its nationally and internationally recognized borders, and (3) has an Arab identity and is a co-founder and abider of the Charter of the United Nations and Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Lebanese state is thus constitutionally bound to fulfill its duties in the stated areas without exception.

Following the adoption of the constitutional amendments, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education organized a conference in April 1991, during which the general principles and objectives of the history curriculum were drafted. These include:

1. a focus on the unity of constitutional norms
2. teaching the history of Lebanon in relation to its geography
3. a unified belonging as a collective, and not preferring one entity over another
4. connecting Lebanon’s history to the rest of the Arab world
5. the principle of nation building as opposed to conflict and violence
6. introducing religious backgrounds and texts as a value of civilization
7. democracy and liberty
8. the negative consequences of historical conflicts
9. highlighting Lebanon’s role in the development of civilization
10. a focus on freedom of thought, speech, and cultural communication and harmony
11. the historical reality of power structures and their relation to Lebanese citizenship

The First Committee of 1996 was likely inspired by the 1991 conference, hence the similarities in objectives, with an emphasis on the Lebanese identity, its Arab relations, and the geographical and religious aspects of the culture. These goals were

approved in 1997, remained foundational frameworks for the 2000 curriculum, and were central to the 2010 draft.

The question of a unified history book has been a perennial topic of interest in the curriculum development, the irony of which coincided with the political and institutional collapse of the 1990s, rendering the previous systems and values based on ideology and citizen formation void.

Section 2: Curriculum Evaluation

During the 2000 history curriculum evaluation (*issued later than the other curricula*), the relationship between the curriculum and standard historical knowledge, research, and developments were considered weak and insufficient. The centrality of external didactic conversations (*La transposition didactique externe*) coupled with scholarly aptitude (*savoir savant*) reflect the objectives of the framework, but ultimately failed to adapt to the renewal of the Lebanese curriculum and its historical faculties. In addition, the general and specific goals of educational seminars do not explicitly reflect the ongoing developments of didactic history, psychology, and theories of learning (*e.g. social constructivism.*)

The focal issue of the curriculum is the extent to which it complements the historical literature accumulated since the early 1990s. The resulting conflicts may be resolved in a consensus wherein Lebanese citizens may define the characteristics of their nationalism and culture, but this may only occur in the event that a common and collective memory of the country's history is established.⁽³⁾ Some examples of a conflict in ideology include the concept of the Ma'ani Emirate as a hereditary Emirate, Fakhr al-Din's principedom in Lebanese territory, and Lebanon's status as a refuge. Perceived historical figures, myths, and events may have their place in a history curriculum as cultural symbols of significance, but in Lebanon, the sensitive structure of politics and sectarianism can lead one group to be satisfied, while another is misrepresented. This once again reveals the need for a collective historical agreement, as education cannot progress or adapt to the present reality otherwise. Thus, the consolidation of the curriculum will be made possible with the introduction of open enquiry, rational discussion and understanding, and effective research methods both at school and in immediate communities.

This is a feasible venture, as Lebanon has shown great durability and resilience since its establishment, and the Lebanese citizens themselves show a great esteem for their nation. Moreover, there has been an increasing acceptance of Lebanon's structure by the rest of the Arab world in recent decades. The following conclusions may thus be drawn:

(3) Kamal Al Saliby. *A Home with so many Houses*, Dar Annahar, Beirut, 1990.

1. No one group can impose its point of view on the other, therefore problems must be solved through rational and mutual concessions.
2. There is a basic political consensus among citizens of the country's history pre-1920, and so the curriculum in that respect will not require any rigorous adjustments.
3. The Arab world has expanded its understanding and appreciating for Lebanon's structure, and so their relations in the history curriculum may be discussed accordingly.

Positive developments must be taken advantage of for furthering the integrity of the curriculum. Examples of such developments include the acknowledgment of Lebanon as an Arab nation by Christian institutions, in addition to a strong sense of entity and state privacy among Lebanese citizens. Such articles therefore require no further historical justifications or rationalizations, and the reframing of the curriculum may proceed accordingly.

There is additionally an increasing criticism of past ideological institutions whose research methods and resources have been under question. One archaeologist and researcher⁽⁴⁾ rejects the drama of historical research and writing: he revokes the concept of Lebanon as a nation prior to 1920, as it is historically established that the region has always been part of some larger empire throughout the centuries, and thus attributing the culture to one source is ahistorical and misleading. The emergence of a Lebanese identity, he argues, is inherently multi-cultural and influenced by the greater geo-political climate.

This section concludes that Lebanese history is ultimately a set of relevant dates that promoted significant changes in the region's culture, politics, and structure, and to establish a unified history is not synonymous with erasing the multiplicity of the region. The nucleus theory prevalent in the contemporary discourse of Lebanese state privacy ultimately furthers the nation's isolated status and diminishes its cultural distinctiveness and richness.

Section 3: Curriculum of 2000

The 2000 curriculum is structurally a transitional project, its features largely content-oriented rather than methodological, providing a chronology of events without the promotion of critical thinking, research, or learning abilities.

(4) Hassan Salamé-Sarkis wrote as much in the Magazine *Annales* (1991) (published by the Saint Joseph University of Beirut in both Arabic and French) and in the book, *The Next Generation: A New Pedagogy for the Lebanese Youth of our Time* (published by the Pedagogic Office of Saint-Coeurs Beirut, 1989).

The curriculum falls short in its implementation as it is divided into three teaching cycles but creates a muddled timeline in execution. The end of the second cycle and beginning of the third are incompatible as the second ends with an introduction of contemporary history, while the third begins with an introduction to the Middle Ages. Moreover, at the secondary level, political history is ultimately replaced by socio-economic and cultural history. The problems and the solutions regarding the 2000 history curriculum may thus be outlined as follows:

- **Compatibility:** The objectives of the curriculum must be congruent with those of citizen formation, and essentially be rearranged under the categories of cognitive, critical, civic, and cultural development.
- **Chronology:** The division of history according to major time periods (namely ancient, modern, and contemporary) has not proved to be a significant obstacle, but this is counterbalanced by the geographical and substantive implications of the content itself, which fails to provide an accurate political dimension to the nation's history.

There is thus a noticeable gap within and between cycles, largely stemming from the repetitive content and its failure to adapt to students' increasing cognitive capacities.

Section 4: International Evaluation Standards

This section aims to contextualize the Lebanese history curriculum against that of France, dating between the years 1996 and 2000. The two curricula are similar in that they adopt a centralized view of history with a focus on historical periodization but differ in characterizing their respective national histories. The French curriculum focuses on its local history in the wider context of Europe, while the Lebanese divides its content into three major categories, Lebanon, the Arab world, and the world in general, thereby preventing a deeper investigation and discussion into any one aspect of national history.

Another distinguishing feature of the French curriculum is that it is introduced in kindergarten in the "Discovery of the World" segment, wherein students are taught to develop a sense of time and space through interactive developmental activities that are then built upon with each cycle, something that is not available in the Lebanese system. Moreover, the French system maintains an inter-disciplinary approach to history, connecting its contents to geography and civic education; an example of this integration can be found in the "Today's World" curriculum, drafted for the express purpose of introducing the intersection between history and geography.

The French curriculum additionally merges knowledge with methodology, where chapters include major sources and references for history, and assignments

include maps, timelines, and other historical documents, also not available in the Lebanese teaching method. The French system also uniquely delves into modern and contemporary news cycles during the final year, utilizing resources such as news articles, photographs, official documents, and other media.

Section 5: Epistemological and Methodological Development in the 2010 Curriculum Project⁽⁵⁾

The 2010 curriculum project achieved two significant developments compared to that of 2000, both in epistemology and methodology. While the 2000 document did emphasize the exploration of historical documents, there was little encouragement for further investigation and establishing a theoretical framework of history. Questions such as “What is History?,” “How does the historian or archaeologist work?,” and “How are historical truths established?” were not considered, therefore allowing for historical knowledge without the element of critical thinking.

In 2010, however, the methodology was reformulated to include the adoption of timelines, maps, texts, documents, images, and graphs to signal a shift towards higher-level cognitive functions such as comparison, extraction, and analysis. This reformulation led to 55% of the third cycle curriculum consisting of methodology and critical thinking.

Regarding the epistemological dimension, a qualitative transformation led to the inclusion of social, economic, and cultural history as reflected in the external didactic conversation. There is a clear effort to reconcile ideology with the educational requirements, beginning in the second cycle which focuses on Lebanon under the rule of the Ottoman Empire.

To expand upon these improvements, the curriculum may benefit from being developed with specific child developmental theories as its guiding point. Child psychologists such as Jean Piaget have stressed the relationship between the environment as a scaffolding tool and the child’s mental and cognitive capacities. Therefore, as students grow, the curriculum must allow the students’ increased mental abilities to be properly exercised and challenged. The curriculum thus will benefit from taking into consideration the students’ developmental needs in terms of

(5) In between the 2000 and 2010 curricula, a fourth committee was formed to develop a curriculum and textbooks, but nothing was released except for an intervention in French by a member of the Committee, Dr. Antoine Hokayem, entitled “The Principles for Writing a Unified Textbook in Lebanon”, an article presented at a conference at the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK) in 2010, and later published by the university that same year in *Journal of East Civilizations*.

introducing time spans as well as geographical structures in each cycle, particularly the first, as children may not have the cognitive ability to visualize or comprehend larger timelines or navigational images.

The 2010 draft still suffers in the second cycle with the repetitive nature of its content. The prevalence of socio-economic, cultural, and urban subjects disrupts the political context of the history, and the formation of a national Lebanese identity during discussions of the Ottoman Empire ignores the historical accuracy and complexities of the time period, creating an epistemological rift in the students' historical conceptions.

Section 6: The 2010 Draft and the Goal of Unified Lebanese History and Geography

Significant historical and geographical events bear titles that precariously attempt to include the political dimensions of the subjects. This can be observed in the titles of “The Ma’ani Emirate and other Lebanese Aspects: 1516–1697” and “The Chehabi Emirate and Lebanese Aspects in the 18th Century until the End of the Egyptian Rule in 1840.” These titles portray a political element in tandem with historical context, the values of which are represented in the 2000 curriculum evaluation, balancing politics and history without erasing one or the other (see the textbook *Teaching History: Between Epistemology and Ideology* for more detail.) This balance can be further observed in the third cycle curriculum, where history reflects the epistemological/ideological overlap. This overlap can be navigated with minimal difficulty by increasing curriculum flexibility and allowing for such a wide-range discussion. The titles intrinsically warrant this process as they expand the context of historical knowledge into politics, geography, and ideology. Creating a centralized and dynamic curriculum will thus foster critical thinking and cultural openness.

In order to resolve the issue of contemporary history in the third cycle, the political and academic paradigm must be addressed, and in doing so, a problematic history may be more favorable than a narrative/factual history. The former would allow the multiplicity of viewpoints rather than enforcing a singular truth, which alone encourages healthy debate and discussion, furthering the research methodology/epistemology framework of the 2010 draft. If a problematic history is to be established, it is essential to accumulate definitive and sound historical references, interpret historical documents in various ways, and adopt the value of challenging dialogue. In pursuing this motion, persuasion is preferred to an annulled viewpoint, and the integrity of the history curriculum as a multi-faceted whole is preserved.

Moreover, adoption of consensual democracy in the curriculum may reframe the issue of ideology and identity: in shifting the focus from conflicting theories of past

events, the discussion can be centered on a common pain and shared experience of resistance, thereby expressing Lebanese history as a humanistic discipline. This framework additionally aims to establish a collective memory for the victims of past trauma and tragedies, and looks to build a culture of peace, conscience, tolerance, and national repentance⁽⁶⁾.

Section 7: The Mechanisms of Producing a History Curriculum

In order to facilitate the reformulation of any educational curriculum, the former President of the Educational Centre for Research and Development⁽⁷⁾ explains that certain administrative bodies must be involved: (1) the Advisory Committee specifically formed to monitor the curricula and textbooks of civics, philosophy, history, and religious education, (2) a Council of Specialists, to whom the curricula are submitted, (3) the Ministry of Education, who transfer the curricula to the (4) State Shura Council and (5) the Council of Ministers.

These bureaucratic agencies are mentioned to showcase the limitations in reformulating any curriculum, as they bring into question where the majority of the power rests, and by extension, the responsibility of providing a quality and upright education. The issue of how committees are formed, the role of political and ideological lobbies, and the extent of influence that the Minister of Education possesses are all factors that must be taken into consideration when considering a curriculum production.⁽⁸⁾

Nemr Freiha proposes a convergence of the history curriculum and its consequences within the culture of the Lebanese educational system, thereby including the cultural perspective of political structures, citizenship, and education within the historical context rather than providing a one-dimensional overview of legislative practices (p. 131). Freiha considers the view of Lebanese educators to be devoid of any future perspective, instead focused exclusively on the past. In addition, any appointed educational officer, according to Freiha, is largely preoccupied with public relations rather than advancing the curriculum quality.

In Freiha's opinion, there is a lack of a sincere educational foundation in Lebanon, in addition to a lack of educational strategy: the dissociation between the economic state and education is only further deteriorating, much to the surprise of World Bank delegates.

(6) Dr. Antoine Messara expressed his ideas and contributions to the completion of the history curriculum on several occasions and articles. For further reading: *Citizen Culture in a Multi-Community Society: Lebanon in comparative perspectives*.

(7) Nemr Freiha, "History Curriculum and Textbooks (Testimony for History)", Beirut, 2014.

(8) Freiha, *ibid*, p.74.

In 2000, the “Strategic Orientations for Education in Lebanon for 2015” were developed with the interests of educational opportunities, advancement of educational quality, the contribution of education to social fulfillment, fulfilling the needs of the labor market, spending on education, and the management of the educational system at large. However, in 2010–2011, a review of this document resulted in a new educational strategy, the results of which are yet to be determined.

Section 8: Curriculum Production – Lebanon versus France

For comparison purposes, we will review swiftly the production mechanisms of the history and geography curricula in France, as presented by a specialist at a Conference at the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK)(9):

The decision to change the curricula is made at the Ministry of Education, and is then implemented by the Department of Complementary and Secondary Schools (DLC). A technical group of professors are given the task to develop a draft curriculum, which will be reviewed by the aforementioned Department (DLC), the opinion of the National Council of Curricula (NCC), and hence the various concerned parties. The Technical Group for Disciplines (GTD) comprises concerned specialists and currently has 15 members presided over by a university professor, a General Inspector, and the Dean of the History and Geography Group of the General Inspection. Out of the 15 members, the majority are teachers (8) who teach in complementary and secondary schools in Paris and in the provinces, downtown and in the suburbs, in general, technological and vocational education. They also have four members of the inspection body and one university professor.

The NCC is responsible for giving an opinion on the compatibility of curricula projects with the goals of formation in the educational system, and for drawing the attention of the various GTD to consider the multidisciplinary aspects (les aspects disciplinaires) of these objectives through deliberating with their colleagues in other technical groups for disciplines.

Curricula production is composed of three fundamental stages:

1. **Building a draft curriculum:** the GTD develops a scheme/budget based on information provided by the inspection body, the DLC, spontaneous contributions from teachers, and the particular experience of the group members. They also consider the aims of teaching history and geography in the French educational system. This process finds its way through the new curriculum presentation document.

(9) Bruno Mellina, “Elaborating History and Geography Programs in France,” *Civilizations of the East Newspaper*, USEK, 2010.

2. **Broad national consultations** (*une très large consultation nationale*): The new project is subject to extensive consultations; the opinion of the NCC is taken into account, and the opinion of various bodies are also taken into consideration (e.g. general inspection, trade unions, associations of specialists, students' parents, etc.) This national consultation, new and democratic, reflects distinct benefits and is a major advancement in the implementation and development of curricula. It allows a clear and precise approach based on the Group's opinion, provides the intended changes, and lists the developments to be undertaken and the objectives to be achieved.
3. **A final curriculum** (*un programme définitif*): Following these national consultations, the GTD adopts, in the light of criticism and suggestions, the necessary adjustments. It takes into account the opinions expressed by the majority during consultations, while maintaining the necessary coherence of the overall curriculum. It changes or alters in part or in whole its original project, and sometimes the class curriculum is modified or changed.

This final formulation is presented to the DLC, which transfers it to the Higher Council of Education. Following these consultations, the Ministry publishes the curriculum in the OBME, 14 months in principle, before it enters into force.

Section 9: Proposed Ideas to Resolve the Crisis

The dialectical relationship between the crisis of the political system and the crisis of History curriculum contains an absence of an inclusive national ideology, and the subsequent loss of the driving power within the system. The idea of a unified textbook and the conditions for its transformation therefore are an issue of conviction: the emphasis must be on the quality of its scientific, democratic, and educational content rather than a singular political or ideological agenda.

A flexible curriculum is one that maintains institutional, cognitive, and educational cohesion while giving importance to aspects related to learning skills and theories. This does not mean that political expression is not encouraged, but rather its expression is better informed by historical data and a multi-faceted context. A common history is aspirational, but given the circumstances of Lebanon, a multidimensional history with multiple narratives is a better alternative. Traditional forms of teaching thus shift from a knowledge-based format focused on a single chronology to one that is enquiry-based.

This approach implies the following three conditions:

1. A cultural review by scientific historians in Lebanon that challenges and criticizes the ideological interpretations built by all groups of the past, i.e. an academic correction is a vital step forward for the history curriculum.

2. The school curriculum should not be influenced by local politicians, and history teachers as a consequence should not be partial to one ideology; instead, social cohesion and multiplicity is encouraged.
3. Adoption of a student-centered teaching approach allows for students to foster investigative and critical thinking skills, thereby drawing informed conclusions based on research and analysis.

Thus, the proposed features of any new approach are:

- Investigative skills and critical thinking according to students' levels
- Lebanese history taught in its local, Mediterranean, Arab, and global contexts
- Lebanese history as a multi-narrative drawing from several groups rather than a story about the struggle of one group to justify its sovereignty
- Alternative perspectives and interpretations via critical examinations as the curriculum's endgame
- Students' awareness of the precarious nature of historical accuracy

Additionally, with the rise of global trends, the following may be proposed:

- Adopting a multi-perspective approach where students are encouraged to think about how peoples view their past
- Starting from the present to understand the past: for example, in order to understand the events of the 19th century in Lebanon, students can be encouraged to examine the contemporary conflict (1975–1990) and its effect on how the past is seen
- Enhancing students' awareness on how history affects their personal identity, culture, and lifestyle
- Seeking to build students' awareness on how history is abused in order to create structured perceptions as justification for opinions
- Finding an intersection between history and citizenship education

The aims of teaching history can also be inspired by some curricula:

- To gain a historical understanding of terms such as empire, civilization, parliamentary, and peasantry
- To understand historical concepts such as change and continuity, cause and effect, similarity and difference, and historical significance. Subsequently: how they are utilized to build connections, influence critical trends, and create structured accounts in writing and analysis

- To use the methods of historical enquiry, including how to use evidence rigorously to create historical allegations
- Students' awareness of how and why history is built through contradictory arguments and interpretation
- To acquire a historical perspective and understand the connections between local, regional, national and international history; cultural, economic, military, political and religious history; and between the phases of short and long history
- To focus on social, economic and cultural history
- To present contemporary Lebanese history as a problematic rather than a narrative one
- To provide citizenship education

History and Citizenship

The importance of the dialectic relationship between history and citizenship is highlighted by the following points:

1. Citizen discipline and education: Individuals are sovereign as citizens of a sovereign state; by extension, students must be aware of and exercise their sovereignty responsibly as part of a contemporary school curriculum, particularly history.
2. Understanding social realities: There is no systematic or clear causality in real-world phenomena, but rather history is the interpretation of events where in cause-effect can be theorized and therefore used to predict future events.
3. Understanding the facts: The familiarization of students with terms such as liberalism, inflation, and globalization must occur not only in historical terms but in political and cultural contexts as well.

Abstract: Returning History to the Household

In conclusion, reaching a consensus on the accuracy of historical events is neither feasible nor desirable in reformulating the history curriculum. Instead, in proposing a new curriculum, its structure must be flexible in both form and content and aim to achieve both epistemological and methodological objectives. Additionally, the curriculum must remain objective politically and instead be developed and reviewed by historians and educators rather than political figures. In terms of implementation, active teaching methods adapted to various age levels must be utilized to form an integrated, interdisciplinary, and holistic curriculum in both teaching and evaluation methods. "The system must operate in a circular and interdependent manner, not by addressing each stage as a separate island."

Adopted Program for Training Teachers of Social Sciences (History) at the Faculty of Pedagogy, Lebanese University

Dr. Asia al-Mohtar⁽¹⁾

The Faculty of Pedagogy at the Lebanese University is the only academic faculty in Lebanon that adopts a comprehensive program to prepare History teachers via the integration of both theoretical and practical methods. This program targets and trains students at the Institute of Social Sciences.

The theoretical approach tackles Ancient History, the Middle Ages, and the Modern History of both the world and Lebanon. In addition, it includes courses pertaining to the curriculum, teaching, evaluation methods, ethics, citizenship education, philosophy, critical thinking, and teaching protocols. Training is a cornerstone of the faculty, as the practical aspect forms the bulk of the student trainee effort, an opportunity to apply the theories learned in class.

Training can be defined as the process of teaching an individual a certain practice, such as riding a bike. However, training may also refer to an organized activity focusing on the individual to develop his/her pre-existing knowledge and skillset. Training is a continuous process aimed at enhancing one's knowledge and professionalism and their subsequent application in the workplace.

Objectives:

Training aims at developing different aspects in the student trainee for the purpose of:

1. Recruiting new qualified teachers, who can assume responsibility and replace retired teachers.
2. Enhancing the skills, abilities, and critical thinking of trainees as well as developing their research skills.
3. Equipping the trainees with the proficiency to carry out their roles in an optimal manner.

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Importance:

The importance of training the student lies in:

1. Promoting or motivating the trainee in the educational institution in which he/she works
2. Developing the educational path of the trainee
3. Enhancing the positive behavior of the trainee

Courses:

The following courses are geared towards promoting the theoretical knowledge of the student trainee:

1. Ancient History (3200 BC–476 AD): Given in the first academic year
2. The Middle Ages (476 AD–1453 AD): Given in the second academic year
3. Modern History (1453 AD–1945 AD): Given in the second and third academic years
4. Modern History of Lebanon: Given in the third academic year (additionally available as an elective.)

In addition to pure theory, pedagogical courses with the intent of teaching History in Lebanese schools are provided:

1. History curriculum issued by The Center for Educational Research and Development (CRDP)
2. Teaching methods for History
3. Standards for evaluation.

The current history curriculum has certain objectives that the student trainee should strive to achieve, most importantly:

1. Building the national and humanistic identity and culture of the student
2. Creating an inter-generational link in order to understand the present in light of the past and learn from it
3. Seeking facts and presenting historical records through various narratives
4. Encouraging students to discuss and form opinions
5. Recognizing the concept of time

6. Gaining a basic understanding of the stages of scientific research
7. Teaching the future generations the concepts of public affairs, political practice, and the struggle between citizen and authority in a democratic society
8. Developing a moral compass

From Trainee to Teacher:

Prior to teaching, the trainee is expected to prepare the lesson plan according to active teaching methods, the process of which includes three types of objectives (knowledge-based, sensory-motor, and sentimental objectives) as well as opting for teaching methods that promote the objectives, terms, and concepts that the students are expected to learn. Additionally, the lesson plan must outline the types of evaluation that will be used to ensure that the objectives are achieved.

The trainee is expected to carry out several objectives in training, particularly the attendance and observance of History sessions in school, whether physically or online. The trainee is expected to undergo this mission in the third, fourth, or fifth semester of the program. Following this objective, the trainee is to prepare a History lesson plan that includes the aforementioned factors, provided that the teaching methods included are derived from outside sources and not only the class textbook. Before teaching, the trainee must review the plan, identify its strengths and weaknesses, and alter it accordingly.

Following the preparation phase, the trainee will teach a class, physically or online, for one session in the fourth and fifth semesters each. During this process, the instructor evaluates the performance of the trainee according to a pre-established evaluation network curated by the Faculty. The trainee shall consider the notes and improve in accordance with this feedback, in addition to writing a report reflecting on his/her development as a teacher.

Therefore, after completing this theoretical and training program, the student trainee can teach all Social Sciences subjects including History after graduating from the Faculty of Pedagogy.

Challenges and Potentials:

Despite the strengths of this integrative program, it has several weaknesses that must be addressed. A key detriment is the limited financial means of the Faculty, which decreases the quality of the trainee's performance, whether in theoretical classes or practice. The limit of financial resources affects the classroom, available technology, access to laboratories and libraries, etc. This situation has unfortunately been aggravated by the present economic turmoil, which in turn has decreased the morale and performance of professors and students alike, especially given the

employment instability at the university.

The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly been a negative influence on the educational sector, and the shift to online learning was a jarring one, followed through with minimal preparation or staff training. As a consequence, the teaching process has not yielded the desired results in proportion to the allocated time and energy.

Furthermore, a significant gap has emerged in recent years regarding the coordination between instructors and hosting schools. In fact, there appears to be disagreement between History teachers and Pedagogy instructors. This warrants intensive work to bridge the gap between the fields to maintain the integrity of the program and subsequently ensure the quality of the trainees' education and development.

Regarding the relationship between the hosting schools, the trainee is required to attend and observe 40 sessions, physically or online, and this poses the issue of a bias towards one school or teacher, the trainee thus depriving him/herself of a diversified perspective. In addition, several hosting schools have limited modern techniques, which inevitably slows down the trainee's progress and experience. Another limitation is the teachers themselves who are required to continuously improve their teaching methods and professionalism to ensure that the trainee is encouraged to pursue the educational path.

Suggestions to improve the execution of this training program at the Faculty of Pedagogy are as follows:

1. Reducing the number of classes required to attend and observe in order to avoid repetition and inefficiency
2. Focusing on the quality of the hosting schools and their teaching staff
3. Continuous coordination between the university and the hosting school administrations
4. Choosing different hosting schools, private and public
5. Keeping up with the trainees in their classes and practical training
6. Ensuring the trainees use the various means of educational technology and distance learning available
7. Developing the trainees' skills to keep track of modern developments and the crises the world is currently facing
8. Keeping pace with developments related to the training content, particularly adopting the historical thinking approach, i. e. beginning the teaching process with a big-picture question based on a historical concept, followed

by corresponding activities and discussions to explore possible answers and narratives. This is intended to develop critical thinking skills

To conclude, there are three key factors behind the success of any training program for teachers specialized in Social Sciences generally, and those specialized in History particularly:(1) a qualified university staff, in terms of both historical and educational knowledge, (2) a systematic coordination between History teachers in the Faculty and those specialized in Pedagogical Sciences for a more serious and professional follow-up with the student trainee, and (3) the qualifications of the hosting schools in terms of humanistic, technological, and pedagogical developments to promote a sustainable learning and training environment for up and coming History teachers.

A Discussion on History Education in the Lebanese Republic: Between Expectation and Reality

Dr. Nada Hassan⁽¹⁾

Following the end of the civil war in 1989, the date of the adoption of the National Conciliation Document, the education curriculum of the Lebanese Republic underwent a review and development since its last update in the 1960s. While the review was in accordance with the educational and legal mechanisms, the subject of History was excluded from the process.

This exclusion has led to the introduction of Lebanese history to students prior to their formally entering the education system, as Lebanese regions tend to be shaped by social, religious, and political affiliations. As such, History as a subject has been replaced by the interests of various groups invested in propagating their characteristics and culture, opting out of creating a collective memory that Lebanese citizens may connect to. Students therefore enter the classroom with preexisting frameworks of history, drawing their conclusions and ideals from their immediate familial, religious, social, and ideological environments.

The mechanism for academic History education is governed by four pillars: Educational Scheme, Teaching Strategies, Content, and Evaluation. Each of these pillars is further divided into multiple components and can be illustrated as lines emerging from a central point, similar to the rays of the sun: if one pillar crosses over or scrapes at the focal point to take advantage of its components, it burns from the friction and heat generated in Lebanon by both its political and educational institutions, and thus collapses.

The data showcases an unfortunate situation in which History taught at the pre-university level in both public and private Lebanese schools is faltering. In this study, I propose the following questions in order to present suggestions that would eliminate this faltered and muddled approach to History education:

- Does the development of one of these four pillars contribute to the development of History education in Lebanon?

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- Does this development require a political decision?
- Is this development an academic matter for those involved in education?
- Are there priorities among the development of these pillars?

Among the suggestions I previously addressed in my expanded study⁽²⁾, I chose in this intervention a proposal—which I consider constitutes a crucial and direct entry point for ridding History education from its current muddled state—that primarily relies on “the exploitation of the official examination system through a new characterization of History exams in official examinations.”

This proposal relies on the interests of students, parents, and the entire educational body regarding the official examinations, beginning with the fourth educational pillar, that is, the evaluation process of the official examination and their standards.

The reality of History exams in official examinations suggests that all the foundations for evaluation are based on memory, the evaluation relying on the efficacy of knowledge-retention. Students therefore shift their studying goals so that they take a grade-based approach in learning, turning their education into a competitive field, and studying only what they expect to be evaluated on during the exams. This pattern is perpetuated by teachers’ evaluations in public and private schools, students’ grades continuously being placed as the ultimate determinant of the evaluation. Parents likewise are occupied with their children’s grades and tend to dismiss the quality of the education, particularly in History, as well as their children’s interest in their schoolwork.

The application of this proposal depends on the following: knowledge, understanding, analysis, connectivity, comparison, expression of opinion, and production of a historical text. Subsequent preparation is text-based, citing historical documents (timelines, photographs, historical maps) and a set of cognitive questions (memory and understanding). This process is developed in congruence with the objectives identified by the Educational Centre for Research and Development (ECRD) regarding a history curriculum: use of terminology, analysis of historical documents, and production.

The application of the new description requires mechanisms based on a three-year course of study as a preparatory interval between its adoption and its introduction. The objectives of this course would be to (1) train teachers on the appropriate teaching methods, (2) teach students the corresponding skills required for enhanced learning, (3) prepare question samples provided by the ECRD,

(2) Hassan, Nada (2021). “History Education in the Lebanese Republic, Between Expectation and Reality”. *Al-Manafeth Cultural Magazine*, N°33 / Winter / 2021

and (4) secure and maximize teachers' accessibility to the necessary resources.

The expected results after the implementation of this proposal are:

- A new reading by students of the content of the curriculum based on understanding, connectivity, analysis, expression of opinion, and production of a historical text. Students are expected to prioritize learning over memorizing, thereby shifting their intrinsic motivation for learning from one that is grade-based to a genuine curiosity and interest in the historical subject matter.
- An opportunity for students to compare and contrast preexisting ideas of history in the context of a classroom with a clearly defined historical framework. This will foster students' critical thinking, expand their analytical skills, and allow them to make more informed opinions by drawing from verified historical data.
- The ease of adaption to any changes in the curriculum, as its flexibility is inherently embedded in its framework. New additions to the curriculum will then be included with minimal changes to the overarching structure.
- The launching of training courses for History teachers in public and private schools, granting them the opportunity to practice modern teaching techniques, become active educators, benefit from a mutual exchange of ideas, strategies, and experience, and consolidate the vision of this subject as teachers.
- Assigning History to competent teachers that are familiar with the subject matter and can adapt to the changes in the evaluation methods, keeping in pace with the changing classroom climate.
- To meet with textbook publishers concerning this development, through the drafting of textbooks that are consistent with the proposal's ideals, thereby dispensing standard and restrictive terms to include more diverse and contradictory historical texts that will facilitate nuanced critical thinking and analysis in students' educational career.
- Achieving general and specific objectives for teaching this subject.

The proposal's objectives and characteristics do not warrant a political decision or rift, but rather is geared towards academic discourse from reliable authorities, primarily the ECRD, intended to further the three other pillars for teaching History:

- In terms of planning the curriculum, criticism is used as a reference point to enhance and alter the vision of education and evaluation, the results of

which allows for the necessary modifications to ensure that History is being taught according to the set values.

- In terms of teaching strategies, when a student is considered to be the focus of the learning process, criticism and analysis tends to be more nuanced and showcases a deeper understanding of the content that does not rely on knowledge-retention alone. History teachers are thus required to be trained in active and student-centered teaching methods, creating a body of teachers in the educational system that consolidate the vision of the Lebanese curriculum.
- In terms of content, it is expected that Lebanese publishing houses will accelerate the production of textbooks that emulate the style of the proposal and provide its resources from documents, maps, historical texts, etc., producing a uniform textbook in format but not substance, and instead prioritizing contradictory historical texts to further develop the aforementioned skills of criticism and analysis. This will make the demand for a uniform text obsolete, as the textbook would integrate a milieu of subjects and issues that transcend political, religious, ideological, and social demands.

To conclude, this is a proposal that I believe in and intend to fulfill, but it is open to debate, alterations, and development. In addition, it requires the support of the designated parties responsible for educational decision-making.

