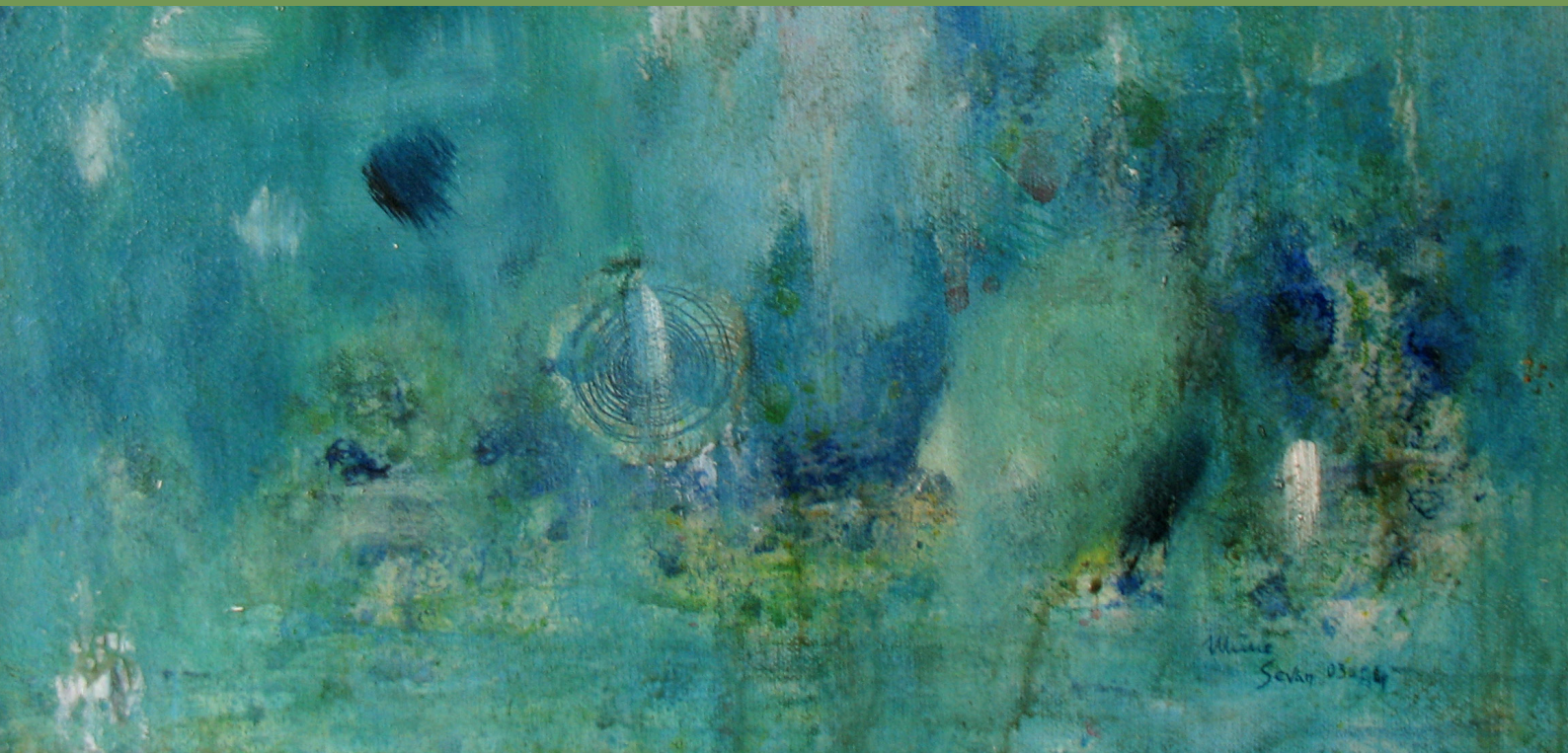# ARMENIAN SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION IN LEBANON

FOSTERING A NEW CULTURE
OF LEARNING, TEACHING, AND PRACTICE

Report prepared by

Dr. Hourig Attarian

CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN FOUNDATION

Armenian Communities Department

Armenian Schools and Education in Lebanon Fostering a New Culture of Learning, Teaching, and Practice

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Cover: *RAIN*, **Sevan Naccashian**, oil on canvas, 2004

Table of Contents

ARMENIAN SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION IN LEBANON
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study is to provide an overview of the main challenges facing the Armenian schools in Lebanon and to provide policy recommendations. It is not a secret that enrolment in Armenian schools has declined considerably, that the quality of education has suffered, and that Armenian schools face significant financial constraints. The study aims to analyse the causes of such trends and provide suggestions for innovative but realistic policy and programming solutions that could be implemented by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (CGF) and other concerned organizations, as well as the key stakeholders in Lebanon for the benefit of the Armenian public.

The study also attempts to capture the most important concerns raised during the two-week mission in Beirut in July 2013 and to highlight some of the findings which emerged from discussions that took place with a vast array of stakeholders – representative individuals, educators (including school principals and teachers, university professors and scholars), intellectuals, education council members, board of trustee and community representatives.

The challenges Armenian schools face in Lebanon are daunting. The turmoil in the region, the ripple effects of the post-civil war situation, the economic downturn, all continue to impact the reality the schools face. On another front, it is an inescapable fact that Western Armenian is in decline, the current generation of teachers is aging, and there are no clear plans for a generational transfer in place. It is evident that within this climate for Armenian schools to not only survive but also hopefully thrive, targeted innovative curricular, textbook and general educational reforms must be put in place. This study undertakes to chart recommendations which make such a reform path possible. Hence, despite the bleak reality of financial and pedagogical difficulties there are reasons to remain optimistic and to strive specifically for change with a visionary approach, one that embraces fostering a new culture of learning, teaching and practice.

FOREWORD

Martin Essayan

Trustee, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

The mission of the Armenian Communities Department of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is "to create a viable future for the Armenian people in which its culture and language are preserved and valued." Education and schools are clearly central to preserving culture and language, especially if they are linked to vibrant communities and the speaking of Armenian in the home. So education always has been, and will continue to be, central to our work. Lebanon is one of the few native language speaking centres for Western Armenian that we have left. Moreover, it has been a rich source of intellectuals, leaders and teachers for the rest of the diaspora and it can continue to be a feed for ideas and good practices if we can link it more closely to other communities with a less critical population mass.

However, as this report shows, with refreshing honesty, the Armenian school system in Lebanon is facing daunting challenges: political, demographical, pedagogical and financial. Over the last ten years we have invested over $11 million dollars in the Lebanese educational system, at least $7 million of this in schools. This may have prevented the situation being worse than it is but there is little data to evaluate this and our ambitions should be greater. Quite simply we cannot keep putting more money in without seeing results and a movement towards sustainability. This report makes clear that this will not happen without fundamental pedagogical and financial reform.

Our mission is a global one and therefore we see the Lebanese school system in a global context and as part of a worldwide diasporic web. Further we are realistic and recognise that the political situation in Lebanon will remain uncertain and we should not put "all our eggs in one basket" however much we admire the resilience of the community.

Our approach will be driven by this and what we, and other donors, have found to work elsewhere:

- Take a long term and systemic view
- Address root causes rather than symptoms
- Look for facts rather than long treasured opinions
- Make funding conditional on fundamental change and results
- Scan the world for innovative approaches and what has worked elsewhere
- Link Lebanon schools and its pedagogical community to the global one (which we may need to create)
- Be inclusive and collaborative.

All this is aligned with the recommendations in this report. We know that some will find it harsh, but we hope that many will welcome its willingness to articulate clearly the long standing issues that need to be addressed and to propose bold answers which nevertheless build on, and respect, what is already in place. The situation is too serious and urgent to allow prevarication.

PREFACE

Razmik Panossian
Director, Armenian Communities Department

We commissioned Dr. Hourig Attarian to undertake this study in order to improve our engagement with Armenian schools and education in Lebanon. The report first analyses the situation and then, crucially, provides many concrete recommendations to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, as well as to others. Based on this study and its findings, we will reorient our support to the educational sector in this critically important diasporan community.

We have been supporting schools and seminaries in Lebanon for decades. Our funding will continue, but not as before. Instead of providing small amounts of money to many schools, we will provide greater sums to fewer programme or project based initiatives by schools. We must honestly ask, does a few thousand dollars really make that much of a difference to a school, when the Armenian education system as a whole faces so many structural and pedagogical challenges (especially when it comes to the teaching of Armenian subjects)? We need to think of innovative solutions whereby our contribution is maximised for greatest impact.

Dr. Attarian was given a «carte blanche» to undertake the study at hand. We made it clear to her that while the report was primarily intended for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, to help it with policy decisions, it nevertheless had to be a public document to be shared with the community and all stakeholders. We hope that her analysis provides the opportunity for a collective, community-wide discussion.

Certain key ideas have emerged in this study: making funds conditional on obtaining results, the importance of research and evidence based decisions, the need to have a holistic approach in which pedagogical and financial sustainability are intertwined, the imperative of teaching *and* learning simultaneously and, finally, the vital need to embark on a reform process in small, incremental steps and in a coordinated, collaborative manner. The report is full of practical recommendations, some ambitious and others small-scale.

Most importantly, it shows that the situation is serious but not hopeless, that with good leadership, strategic vision and a lot of hard work, we can change things. In fact, the gloomy analysis of the first part of the report paves the way for the encouraging, recommendation-filled second part.

The preservation and advancement of Armenian language, culture and learning is central to our newly published Five-Year Plan, in which Lebanon and its Armenian school system play an important role. We are committed to the schools, the teachers and the students. The question is how to serve them better. We believe that this study provides all of us with a solid foundation for action and long term planning.

INTRODUCTION

No serious evidence-based research exists on Armenian schools and education in Lebanon. Apart from periodic editorials sounding alarms or lamenting the dire situation, there is also no critical public discourse shaped around this issue. At first glance, it seems the prevalent attitude is to rely on the inertia of a cultural capital created decades earlier in the heyday of the community. Looming financial deficits and the tangible impact felt of language decline in all facets of the community make critical examination of the education system an imperative. This report aims to provide an analysis of the salient problems and challenges of the Armenian education system in Lebanon based on in depth discussions with various stakeholders in the field, as well as offer a range of recommendations to ensure financial and pedagogical sustainability.

Given the dearth of research on this topic, unfortunately the current report cannot draw on any other previous studies in the field, with the exception of a slim volume on the crisis facing Armenian schools in Lebanon published in 2002 by Jirayr Tanielian, a former principal of the AGBU Tarouhi-Hovagimian school, literary critic and editor. His book,[1] *The Lebanese Armenian School: Numbers and Reflections* is a first attempt to provide a statistical overview of school enrolment figures and other related data. Since 2002, Tanielian also compiles an annual database covering enrolment in all the Armenian schools in Lebanon. His book identifies key factors leading to the current crisis in Armenian schools. Remarkably, not much has changed since:

- Post-civil war emigration from the country, leading to a major decline in Armenian population numbers in Lebanon. Although here as well there are no accurate or reliable figures, the circulating numbers are between 65,000-80,000, with the last figure considered very optimistic.
- Preference of some parents to send their children to non-Armenian schools – this is a complex issue with various layers some based on social attitudes (a preference for "elite education" as a status symbol) and others on economic realities (parents incapable of paying tuition and opting for the public system).
- Socio-economic conditions – the post-civil war socio-economic downturn, the erosion of the middle class, the dire straits lower income households face all in the context of the geopolitical regional unrest have an adverse impact naturally.

Tanielian maps the interlinked ripple effects of this situation with the decrease in enrolment leading to a decrease in income generated from tuitions, in turn leading to difficulties in ability of schools to pay salaries, leading to closures or mergers of schools, finally leading to layoffs of school staff to contain the budget deficits. He also remarks that while much was written about these situations in the media at the time, teachers kept silent – an interesting observation on how teachers have become voiceless as the crisis deepens. Some contributing factors to the financial crisis faced by the schools Tanielian mentions and still current are:

- The economic hardships the parents' face, affecting their ability to pay tuition. Two-thirds of parents is an often-cited number, while some informants mention a figure of 90% of parents either unable or simply unwilling to pay tuition.
- The raises in teachers' salaries based on state legislation that schools with constrained budgets are increasingly unable to meet.
- The contributions schools have to make towards the government pension plan for teachers (Ուսուցչաց սնտուկ), medical insurance and other taxes.

"The Armenian school, especially in Lebanon, is sick," declares Tanielian in 2002 and offers general recommendations, which largely still hold true, to amend the problem: To ensure that education council members are in fact connected to the education sector so that in their decision-making they understand the issues

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1. The initial five sections of the book have appeared as a series of articles in *Zartonk* daily in 2002.

at a deeper level; to appoint principals who have an educational administration and management background; to hire qualified teachers and set professional development programmes in place; to merge schools when needed; to maintain an inclusive relationship with parents and students.

In the last two years, due to the ongoing civil war in Syria, a number of Syrian-Armenians have taken refuge in Lebanon. The modest increase in school enrolment numbers in Lebanon in 2012-2013 compared to 2011-2012 correspond to the general number of Syrian-Armenian students in the system, almost all of whom have been offered various financial provisions to cover their tuition. The Syrian-Armenians are still mostly a mobile sector, some of them emigrating outwards after a while or moving back to Syria. (See Appendix 4 for a detailed distribution of Syrian-Armenian students in the school system.)

While all schools face the same issues in terms of enrolment, deficits, and teacher education concerns, there is a considerable distinction between neighbourhood schools in the Bourj Hammoud district[2] and those in other areas and suburbs in terms of priorities, difficulties, parental attitudes and awareness, and certainly socio-economic situation.

The school situation, the population exodus, lack of long-term planning all affect language vitality naturally. Western Armenian is clearly in decline at an alarming rate, which necessitates a critical examination of a plethora of interconnected issues in the education sector such as teacher education, curricula and textbooks. While this study explores the first two, apart from a general contextualization it excludes textbook reform which is complex and needs a separate study of its own.

"We have issues with both the textbooks and curricula of the Armenian-related subjects; both have not been renewed for a considerable time period. A professional approach is needed for this, hiring experts in the field, which in turn necessitates adequate funding," mentioned an educator referring to a sometimes catch-22 situation alternating between financial and pedagogical concerns. Several informants mentioned a new pan-community effort to look into the textbook reform, coming together to form a central committee with various subcommittees. There is a clear consensus that the textbooks should be prepared in the diaspora, despite efforts by the Ministry of Diaspora in Armenia to make inroads into the diaspora textbook market, simply because their textbooks do not fit the diasporan context. There are also existing individual efforts on the ground to prepare and publish textbooks, "which adds more to the labyrinthine situation," commented an informant. A common concern is to have the new textbooks designed in such a way that they can be adaptive to various diasporan contexts, with different in-depth teacher manuals explored as one possible solution. "One thing is clear, is that this needs to be a joint coordinated collaborative pan-community effort with a special committee and should not be the realm of individual efforts anymore," explained the informant. The plan in terms of priority is to start with history textbooks from primary to secondary, followed by kindergarten textbooks and finally Armenian language arts for primary and Armenian language and literature for secondary cycles. Preliminary work has started for grade one and two history textbooks. These will be experimental versions, to be tried out for a year or two in classrooms after preparation, before finalizing them. While it is commendable that a collaborative effort is finally in place on such an important initiative also including teachers in the process, some informants rightly point out the absence of experts in these efforts. Another very crucial issue is that textbook reform cannot exist in a vacuum in this case. It is imperative that textbook reform be tied in very closely to curricular reform with the latter preceding the former and not vice versa.

"A professional approach is needed [...] which necessitates adequate funding"

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2. Bourj Hammoud is heavily populated by Armenians. Although the district is a major commercial hub, in terms of population it is mostly a working class, lower socio-economic neighbourhood. Two other neighbourhood schools face similar situations as the Bourj Hammoud ones, Gertmenian Evangelical in Hajin and Roupinian National School in Khalil Badawi, both again areas with Armenian concentrations.

July 2013 mission – During the two-week mission (July 3-16) in Beirut I met with a wide range of stakeholders across the community and attempted to cover a representative sample of schools. I visited and met with officials from 14 schools, 4 institutional organizations, one education council, and one university, including 12 principals, 6 teachers, 4 scholars, 4 administrators, a school trustee, various intellectuals, an artist, and a publisher. Invariably, lack of time meant I was unable to visit some schools. Seminaries and special education schools are also not covered in this report, as they have far fewer numbers than the rest of the schools. In the long run, these are important places to consider, since the seminaries educate future religious leaders, while the special education niche is necessary in order to have important services in their mother tongue for students. A future study should also explore the involvement of parents and students in the education process, together with actual classroom visits.

The cumulative data I gathered consisted of over thirty hours of recorded one-on-one discussions, in addition to various statistical data (enrolment, tuition, etc.) and other diverse textual material collected from the schools. My inquiry centred on the dual axes of financial and pedagogical sustainability, with specific questions aimed at strategic long-term planning, pedagogical renewal and collaboration, teaching philosophy and innovation.

KEY ISSUES

Apart from a compilation of student enrolment figures across all the Armenian schools in Lebanon in the past thirteen years (undertaken as a personal initiative by Jirayr Tanielian), there are no studies on any aspect of the education system. "There is a general lack of research, no one talks with accurate data, because it doesn't exist. We have no research and have no conception about what research entails, why we should follow it and study it – we don't speak the same language! This is a serious difficulty we encounter in our dealings with institutions, schools and administrators," an educator described the situation fittingly. "There is no study, statistical or otherwise, on what youth today think about various issues," explained another educator bringing up the crucial issue of generational transfer, "we also don't engage in self-criticism. We need to not only conduct these statistical analyses, but also look at the root causes of the issues. We've wasted our cultural and social capital without investing in it. We have no plans and no sense of where this crisis will lead." This necessary preamble underlies the key issues explored in this section, which are mostly based on anecdotal evidence, long-term observations, experience in the field, and concerns expressed by the stakeholders.

Western Armenian is clearly in decline at an alarming rate

One universal observation all informants agreed upon was the centrality of the school in prevailing discourses of identity in the diaspora. "Schools are our anchor of survival and regeneration. Without it, none of the other infrastructures will survive or exist," explained an interlocutor. "Schools used to be the means, now they have also become the objective," argued another. A number of informants also expressed an opinion that while religious and political institutions may have slowly started relinquishing their hold on identity maintenance issues, the school is the only entity that can continue to play a vital role. Thus, it is important to regard the questions and expectations around the Armenian school and Armenian education in general, as part of the bigger questions that need to be asked critically of our diasporan predicament. Finding answers, defining and refining our vision will necessarily have an impact on how we also regard what the priorities of our diasporan communities will be.

The problems the schools face are both financial and pedagogical, therefore solutions sought should strive to create sustainability equally in the two domains as parallel tracks that feed into and support one another. A few informants talked about the prevalent attitudes around Armenian schools, which are at the root of the perceived problems. "The mission of an Armenian school should be to teach Armenian. Period. This is the second problem schools face after the financial one. There are two reasons for it: Decreasing number of Armenian classes in some schools [in higher grades], in order to give priority to other [government exam related] subjects, although this is not the case for all the schools;[3] and the lack of qualified teachers which will be more prominent as we go along," explained an educator. Another informant drew attention to the detrimental effects of a prevailing exam-driven culture in the community. While everyone agrees that Armenian schools should offer quality education and no one disputes the importance of success at government exams as a significant part of what Armenian schools should offer, what is referred to in this case, is different. "Schools resemble assembly lines and factories instead of places of education. They are seen at best as spaces that provide students with a *Brevet* or *Baccalauréat* degree and are judged by their success rate in government exams, without realizing that those exams are only one component out of many of what an educational institution and an Armenian school should provide," argued the informant. The implication here is that there is no clear core concept or definition in people's minds of what a school and an Armenian school in particular should be engaged in doing beyond

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3. The distribution of Armenian-related classes/week is different across the board and, as one informant stated, is based on different ideological and philosophical foundations. Apart from the National Schools and Jemaran, all other schools have considerably less hours devoted to Armenian-related subjects in the higher grades, with some schools having no classes at all in grade 12. While this is not an issue that can be resolved easily if at all, there are other ways to approach this which are discussed in the Recommendations section.

exam success rates. There are various floating concepts and slogans from past decades about "maintaining Armenianness" (հայապահպանում) or an "Armenian education" (հայեցի դաստիարակութիւն), yet no clear understanding of what these really mean and what is it that "an Armenian education" (vs. a non-Armenian one) should be achieving. A number of informants repeatedly alluded to this muddled approach pointing out that it is coupled with an absence of coherent definitions and deconstructions of decade-old slogans.

There is an overall perception that Armenian schools are judged as being "good" or "bad" against a backdrop of success rates at government exams, perpetuating a test-driven culture that deprives a school of other qualifications necessary for success. Apparently, all Armenian schools based on what is reported in the media, do have good success rates in the government exams. However, this evaluation and ranking system is not straightforward. Various informants talked of common practices some schools engage in, to strike deals with

Problems schools face are both financial and pedagogical

students based on the success rates during internal mock exams, to have the students register as independent candidates so that eventually the success rates of the schools in government exams would not be affected adversely. It is understandably difficult to verify to what extent this practice has taken hold among Armenian schools, but it clearly demonstrates the fallibility of evaluating the quality of schools against much-touted exam success rates and test-driven skills. Exam-driven milieus in general are skill-oriented which do not necessarily encourage critical thinking and creativity, generating attitudes that can affect the whole schooling atmosphere of teaching and learning. Considering that the general education program conceived by the Lebanese Ministry of Education may not provide much flexibility in terms of the exams, other avenues must be sought to create the necessary balance within the school system. As such, Armenological subjects have the potential to act as an anchor for an alternative teaching and learning medium, encouraging creativity and critical thinking.

"What gets lost in this conundrum is the conception of the school as an educational institution, a centre of learning in its widest sense, which demands a different understanding and attitude," explained an educator. Informants repeatedly mentioned a general passivity, an existence of a status quo, a reluctance to rock the boat, a perceived lack of leadership by "governing bodies," an absence of wider and practical collaboration among various cross-sections of the community, beyond the general sloganizing. "We need to strategize collectively, but it is very difficult to do it," admitted another educator. It is increasingly clear that the way forward implies a steady change in the culture of practice, where all stakeholders including community organizations, education councils, educators, and parents realize they all have rights and responsibilities towards making the schools successful.

The key issues emerging from the core of this tangled backdrop are: Financial issues, decline of Western Armenian, teacher education, parent-school relationships, and the distinctions between neighbourhood and integrated schools.

1. FINANCIAL ISSUES

The absence of any serious studies is felt very strongly when it comes to the financial aspect of the schools. All schools face deficits which they try to patch through various means, mostly through fundraising. Older schools face additional problems with maintenance. There are a number of factors complicating the financial situation, among them the declining enrolment numbers, parents' inability or unwillingness to pay tuition fees, and the issue of unpredictable salary raises by the government.

OVERVIEW OF ENROLMENT FIGURES

In his 2002 book, *The Lebanese Armenian School: Numbers and Reflections,* Jirayr Tanielian presents school enrolment figures in Lebanon over several decades. Comparing the numbers in the last decade with the

heyday in mid 1970s, the portrait of Armenian schools becomes quite bleak. Table 1 below uses his figures with the addition of the last two years based on current data.

While it is not clear whether the seminaries, special education and technical schools were calculated in the overall number of schools before the 2001-02 academic years, they are not included in school number calculations since then. Drastic changes in overall numbers occur between the mid 1970s and mid 1980s as a consequence of the civil war, with a 38.45% decrease in student enrolment figures, while the decline in number of schools remains minimal at 16%. The second wave of drastic changes is in the decade after the early 1990s, with a 30% loss in enrolment figures and 33.33% decrease in number of schools. The last decade from 2001-02 to 2011-12, has seen a further decline of 20.5% in student enrolment figures with further closures of two schools, bringing the figure to 6.6% decline in school numbers. The data for 2012-13 is still incomplete, but the projections based on estimated figures show a modest growth in student enrolment figures between 3-6%. Looking at the overall numbers of displaced Syrian-Armenian students who were absorbed into the education system in the preceding year in Table 2, it becomes clear that the growth is due to that influx. (For a breakdown of enrolment figures per school in the last two decades see Appendix 3.)

Table 1: Student enrolment figures

Academic year	Number of schools	Number of Students
1964-65	44	13,398
1974-75	56	21,000
1987-88	47	12,924
1991-92	45	11,939
2001-02	30	8,327
2011-12	28	6,618
2012-13	28	Between 6,951-7,063[4]

Table 2: Distribution of Syrian-Armenian students in 2012-13

School Affiliations	Number of Schools	No. of Syrian-Arm. Students
AGBU Schools	3	111
Catholic Schools	6	57
Evangelical Schools	6	64
National Schools	9	268
Other - Tekeyan	1	6
Total	**25**	**506**

Obviously apart from the exodus from Lebanon due to the fifteen-year-long civil war, there are other reasons for the decline in enrolment numbers. Among motives for parent preferences for non-Armenian schools two factors are frequently mentioned. Parents facing socioeconomic hardships prefer sending their

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4. The figures from two schools (Birds' Nest and Sahagian-Mgrditchian) are missing for 2012-13. 6951 is the total of all enrolments without these schools and 7063 is an estimated total, including these two schools, assuming their figures have not changed from 2011-12.

children to local public schools where tuition fees are minimal. On the other hand, more affluent parents favour non-Armenian schools for a variety of reasons, among which are cited:

- A prevailing attitude among some parents where expensive private schools are regarded as status symbols, coupled with a notion that their children would be rubbing elbows in the schools with "future leaders" of the country.
- A definite indifference towards the Armenian language and Armenian education. A few informants mentioned a recurring example of this when a certain non-Armenian private school had offered to organize Armenian language instruction for its sizeable Armenian student population believing that would be an attractive option for the parents, but had met with the latter's rejection of the idea.
- And finally, a perception on the part of some parents (probably based on their own schooling experiences) that Armenian schools are not well-equipped for integrating into the mainstream, Arabic language acquisition being one issue cited. All education stakeholders who mentioned this factor also alluded that this is mostly a misconception and that much has changed since the war, with Arabic instruction being on a better footing within Armenian schools.[5]

Looking at the bigger picture within Lebanon in the 1990s, based on the figures appearing in Jirayr Tanielian's book, a trend is seen in the general decrease of enrolment in private schools and an increase in enrolment in public schools. Contextualizing the situation of the Armenian schools, the trend is a clear indication of economic hardships across the country in the immediate post civil-war era, suggesting that the Armenian case is not an isolated one. A new study with a more pointed analysis should shed light whether this trend is still continuing in Lebanon and where the Armenian schools fall on this spectrum. It will also be interesting to see whether the loss of students in Armenian schools is across the board or there are differences with some schools retaining steady numbers and others declining.

TUITION

Less students translate to lower revenues for schools naturally. The revenue issue gets complicated with a realistic look at the tuition factor. There is a wide spectrum on tuition fees depending on the schools and their clientele. Smaller neighbourhood schools in the Bourj Hammoud district charge an annual tuition fee between a $400-600 range (registration fees not included) while other more expensive schools fall within a $1000-3500 range.[6] (See Appendix 6 for a list of school tuition fees in 2011-2012.) In the post-civil war era in Lebanon that has seen a socio-economic downturn and an ensuing erosion of its middle class, the paying ability of parents has become a common problem. Most Armenian schools cite figures of only one third of parents paying full tuition, while two thirds would get a range of discounts from 20-100%.

Schools cite figures of only one third of parents paying full tuition

Given their special circumstances, Syrian-Armenian students were offered a range of tuition discounts in 2012-13, including full waivers in all AGBU schools and major deductions in others. Most probably this situation will continue in the short term. However, the overall number of Syrian-Armenian students constitutes only around 7% of the total student enrol-

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5. There is an added nuance with Arabic instruction, where classical Arabic is taught in (all) schools as part of the official program, yet colloquial Arabic is quite different. Decades ago, this has been the perceived issue of the insularity of the Armenian community in Lebanon, where subsequent generations of Armenians did not master the vernacular giving way to stereotypes about Lebanese-Armenians. Anecdotal evidence paints a different picture nowadays however, with successful role models and public figures in local cultural and political scenes. Again based on anecdotal evidence, it should be noted that in prewar times, a number of Armenian schools such as Jemaran, AGBU schools, Armenian Evangelical College, were considered to be on a par with other private non-Armenian schools based on their success rates at government exams and subsequent university enrolments.

6. Traditionally, the more expensive schools have catered to middle and upper middle class Armenian parents, however it is hard to make that clear distinction today, given the fact that two thirds of parents across the board in all schools supposedly do not pay tuition.

ments and has negligible effect on the general tuition picture. There are other apparent gray zones in the tuition fee problem. Many informants pointed out that if a majority of parents pay full tuition the financial problems of schools will be resolved. They also added that while there is a considerable number of parents who face dire financial situations, there are other factors for tuition payment attrition. "Parents do pay tuition in non-Armenian schools, even when it is higher than in Armenian schools. The problem with Armenian schools is that they are concerned with numbers and enrolments, and so they try to give waivers and opportunities to parents, which the latter exploit," explained an educator frankly identifying a widespread mentality among some parents that sending their children to Armenian schools is an entitlement.

Better plans can be put in place, offering [...] a combination of merit and needs-based situations

Tuition payment attrition is a serious issue that has long-term implications. While students should not necessarily be deprived of Armenian schooling, better plans can be put in place, offering waivers and deductions on a combination of merit and needs-based situations. It is also imperative to explore new mechanisms that will create ownership and accountability frameworks around the schools, whereby parents and the community at large are given opportunities to participate more responsibly in these settings.

SALARY

"The problem with qualified teachers is that we cannot remunerate them accordingly," confided an informant. The Lebanese Ministry of Education has a standard salary scale which schools are supposed to follow. Periodically, the government passes legislation to raise teachers' salaries. Table 3 presents the official entry-level salary scale.

Table 3: Entry level salary scale for teachers

Degree	Salary/month in LL	USD equivalent
Minimum wage	675000	450
Minimum wage for teachers	640000	426
Bacc. II (Baccalauréat II)	640000	426
BA/BSc.	785000	523
BT (Baccalauréat technique)	785000	523
TS (Technicien supérieur)[7]	948000	632
BA/BSc.+TD (Teaching Diploma)	1088000	725
MA/MSc.	1130000	753

The salary issue is a thorny one. Usually, there is no transparency as to how schools handle the proposed scale by the government and no evidence-based direct comparisons with other private non-Armenian schools. Most informants mentioned as a fact though, that some schools pay higher fees for secondary classes and for subjects in which it is difficult to obtain teachers. Given the dire financial straits of Armenian

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7. The Lebanese Ministry of Education has established a Vocational and Technical Education stream in the post-civil war era, with BT (Baccalauréat technique), TS (Technicien supérieur), and LT (Licence technique) degrees. TS and LT are post-secondary diplomas, with LT (roughly) equivalent to a university-based Bachelor's degree. The Ministry also seems to encourage a technical degree stream in early childhood and elementary education licensing, apart from specialized Bachelor of Education and Teaching Diploma options through university education departments. This explains the comparative salary levels of BA/BSc. and BT holders, while a TS degree secures a higher salary scale than a BA/BSc (without TD).

schools, usually salaries are their general debt-accruing portions over the years. There are floating stories of some schools being in arrears in their salary payments, while others making arrangements to pay pensions to retired teachers in installments, instead of the regular lump sum. Naturally, a vicious circle is created, when schools look for qualified teachers to hire across all the subject matters, not just in Armenological ones, yet face major budget constraints. If the schools want to attract higher enrolment numbers and aspire to improve the overall quality of schooling, they must be able to offer competitive salaries to their teachers. The situation of teachers of Armenological subjects leaves much to be desired, since their average salary range (according to floating anecdotal evidence) hovers between $600-700, possibly reaching approximately $1100 with a 10-year experience range.

Recent opinion points to the possibility of new government legislation for a salary raise in the near future. According to all informants who spoke about this, the reality of this new raise can have catastrophic consequences for many schools, including Armenian ones. It is estimated that established private schools will not face as serious a problem as smaller and especially confessional schools, which will face closure as a result of the hikes.

It is unclear yet what the timeframe of the legislation proposal and its ratification will be, nor is there any definite knowledge of the raise percentage apart from speculations in a wide range between 10-50%. It is certain however, that any proposed salary raise will hit Armenian schools hard. It will also add a new burden on tuitions especially in the secondary sections, when schools will be obliged to increase them, with some hikes projected at over 90% according to several informants. Obviously, such a hike will in turn impact enrolment and create a new set of vicious circles.

Despite all the financial challenges and insecurities, various sources also commented that it is still possible to fundraise large amounts during various events in a school year, pointing to the fact that there nevertheless are financial resources in the community, but what lacks is the guidance to invest them intelligently. "Real assistance is one that will have long-term impact," said one informant, indicating the need for clear strategizing on fiscal and financial responsibility and on finding alternative creative solutions.

2. DECLINE OF WESTERN ARMENIAN

"Our roots have started to dry up," commented an educator, "the only long-term solution to save Western Armenian is to invest in teacher education, to have qualified teachers in Armenian-related subjects, both locally and transnationally."

Speaking about the factors affecting language decline, informants referred to several repeatedly. The first obvious factor is the negative impact of the decrease in enrolment numbers in schools. Fewer students in schools translate to fewer language learners in a formal setting, in turn contributing to a general atrophy. Some language purists also commented on how the local print and online media are not upholding the language as they should, adversely affecting the general atmosphere around language decline.

There also is no unified approach to the number of Armenian classes in primary and secondary cycles across different schools. Even though these classes get reduced gradually in the secondary in order to give priority to other (exam-related) subjects, in some schools the drop in the number of classes is much more drastic than in others. Table 4 shows a comparative view of schools and class distribution schemes,[8] where different Armenological subjects are grouped under a single rubric of "Armenian classes." (See Appendix 5 for a detailed distribution of Armenological subjects in different schools.)

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8. Each class is of 45-minute duration and within a 40-period week.

Table 4: Comparative view of Armenological classes/week (out of 40 periods)

Grades	Jemaran	National Schools	AGBU Schools	Evangelical (AEC)	Catholic (Mesrobian)	Tekeyan
Grade 1	11	11	10	10	7	8
Grade 2	9	11	9	10	6	8
Grade 3	9	13	9	11	7	7
Grade 4	9	11	9	10	7	9
Grade 5	9	11	9	9	5	7
Grade 6	8	11	7	9	5	7
Grade 7	8	9	7	8	5	7
Grade 8	8	9	7	8	4	4
Grade 9	7	9	6	6	2	3
Grade 10	6	7	5	5	3	
Grade 11	6-10	7	5	6	3	
Grade 12	2	6	0	1	1	

A number of informants, among them several teachers, talked about the "negative effects of globaliza-tion" as they termed it, with the proliferation of Internet and social media usage. Others contextualized this issue explaining how several years ago public announcements were made about the "dangers of the Internet" for Armenian language usage, contributing to a form of self-imposed alienation from technology in literacy contexts instead of embracing it, especially within educational settings. Numerous examples were given of the adverse effects of social media usage on the language among the youth, leading to a new form of "illiteracy" and "code switching" not only in the oral, spoken language, but also in writing. The con-cern expressed is not just about using the Latin alphabet instead of the Armenian in digital media, but the emergence of a new phenomenon of "crossover lettering," using letters of the Latin alphabet in the middle of Armenian words in other writing contexts (mostly at school). In general, beyond the specifics of cases and influences, almost everyone referred to a perceived lack of fluency in writing.

The cumulative effect of these concerns mentioned all point to a serious decline in language acquisi-tion among the youth. Curiously however, only a select few reflected on functionality and relevance is-sues in language and how these are perceived by the youth. Nor was much said about the correlation of teaching practices and literacy, or finding solutions through inclusion of the much-dreaded social media or other digital platforms into learning and teaching contexts. It is apparent that Western Armenian is not perceived as a functional language by youth, yet no questions are being asked about the root causes of this phenomenon. Any language needs to be functional and relevant for it to thrive. How is Armenian really taught? How much non-textbook oriented real-life reading and writing do students get to do in Armenian both inside and outside schools? What do they do with the language, how creatively do they use it? To what extent is the language part of their daily routines? How can we make Armenian a vibrant language connecting with teaching innovation, web access, inclusion of technology in education? These are the questions that must be asked.

3. TEACHER EDUCATION

This section examines three aspects of teacher education within the Armenian education system: Various institutional programmes that have existed in the recent past or continue to operate in the community, the current status and perceptions around teacher education, and teachers' voices and perspectives.

VARIOUS INSTITUTIONAL PROGRAMMES

While all Armenian schools now have a minimum hiring requirement of a BA/BSc. degree with a Teaching Diploma (TD) across all subject disciplines, the issue becomes complicated when approaching Armenological subjects for a variety of reasons. A large number of teachers of Armenological subjects employed presently do not hold accredited university degrees. However, they may hold degrees from various institutional programmes which may or may not be officially recognized by the Ministry of Education. For example, many of the teachers of the National Schools are graduates of the now closed Hamazkayin Armenological Institute. Their diplomas are treated internally as equivalent to a BA degree on condition that they also held the Bacc. II diploma prior to joining the Armenological programme. Similarly, some early childhood and primary cycle teachers in the last several years are graduates of the Khatcher Kalousdian Pedagogical Centre, while Mesrobian school employs its own graduates in early childhood education from its Technical School branch. The following is a list of various initiatives that have operated or currently run programmes associated with Armenological subjects and teacher education:

1. AGBU Yervant Hyusisian Armenological Institute – Currently non-operational (closed in 1994), this was initially a 4-year later reduced to a 2-year post-secondary Armenian Studies programme.[9] It was not accredited officially by the Lebanese Ministry of Education.

2. Hamazkayin Armenological Institute – Currently non-operational (closed in 2005), this was initially a 4-year and later a 3-year post-secondary Armenian Studies programme with an additional year at YSU, which offered dual streams in Armenian literature and history. The programme was not accredited officially by the Lebanese Ministry of Education.[10]

3. Hamazkayin Teacher Preparation Project – A recent initiative which aims to support interested candidates with a full scholarship to Armenia for a 2-year MA in Armenian Studies at Yerevan State University, upon completion of a BA and TD programme in their local communities and universities. The allocation is intended for a maximum of three candidates per year.

4. Khatcher Kalousdian Pedagogical Centre[11] – A 3-year programme established in 1987, initially conceived as a pre-service teacher education option operating in coordination with various existing Armenian Studies programmes (Hyusisian, Hamazkayin, Haigazian University), mostly focusing on teaching methodologies. Over the years it has developed into more of an in-service teacher education option and has secured accreditation from the Ministry of Education within its Vocational and Technical Education stream, preparing its candidates for the TS degree. Most of their graduates work in the early childhood and elementary cycle sectors.

5. Office of Armenological and Educational Projects – Set within the Catholicosate of the Holy See of Cili-

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9. The programme was originally established by noted poet, intellectual and educator Vahe Vahian under AGBU sponsorship.

10. It is interesting that the original committee of this institute in the mid 1970s comprised of then Bishop Karekin Sarkissian (later Catholicos Karekin II of Cilicia and Karekin I of Echmiadzin), Vahe Setian, Hratch Dasnabedian, Shavarsh Torigian, Vahe Oshagan and Yervant Pamboukian, all noted intellectuals in the Armenian diaspora. Together with the Hyusisian and Khatcher Kalousdian examples, this demonstrates the importance of the active involvement and leadership model of intellectuals and scholars in a similar endeavour.

11. In its first twenty years the centre was led by Krikor Chahinian, a prominent educator, scholar and intellectual, who was also the driving force behind it. The centre is named after another prominent educator and scholar who had served as principal of Melkonian Educational Institute and a professor at Haigazian University.

cia in Antilias, the mandate of the office is to coordinate projects related to the Armenian education system and teaching methodologies of Armenological subjects. The office oversees and organizes annual conferences and publications in various fields.

6. Mesrobian Technical School – The school offers a BT and TS stream in early childhood education. The majority of the educators working in the nursery and kindergarten of the school are graduates of this stream, where a specialized curriculum is created in Armenian to cater to the needs of an Armenian early childhood education programme for a TS degree.

7. Université St. Joseph – The Armenian Studies department was closed in 1975. Various informants spoke of attempts to reinstate this former programme in part or in whole with linkages to the education department of the university.

8. Haigazian University – HU has an established pre and in-service teacher education programme through its department of education, in addition to an Armenian Studies department. The pre-service program offers a BA in Education degree in various streams including one in Armenian Studies, as well as a Teaching Diploma (TD) programme. The minimum requirement for a TD is 18 credits. The university also offers a MA in Education in three streams: educational administration and supervision, counseling, and special education.

There is no clear consensus among various stakeholders on how to envision or create a coherent, coordinated pan-community programme that would cater to the needs of all the education institutions and prepare future teachers who would be well-versed in the fundamentals of an educational philosophy and innovative teaching methodologies on one hand, and have a solid background in Armenological studies. Some thought prospective students should study in institutions of higher learning in Armenia, while others referred to existing possibilities in local universities, such as Haigazian and St. Joseph. While the TS-based programmes appear to fill an important niche locally, a well-studied university-based programme that offers a combination of pre-service and in-service teacher education will ensure a pedagogical sustainability that focuses on continuity, generational transfer, and educational innovation. This will be an important endeavour not only locally, since it will have an impact on other diasporan communities both as a model and a project that prepares future teachers for Armenian communities worldwide. For such a programme to succeed, it should also coordinate all existing efforts on the ground, in the spirit of collaboration and to avoid unnecessary duplication.

CURRENT STATUS OF TEACHING AND TEACHER EDUCATION

Given that the median age of teachers of Armenological subjects across all schools in Lebanon is approximately around 40-45 years of age, it is clear that one of the most immediate challenges is the issue of generational transfer.[12] Who will be tomorrow's teachers is the question repeatedly asked. It is equally important though to contextualize that question and examine what the current status of teachers is in reality, what are the public perceptions about the teaching profession, what support mechanisms teachers have, and what are the possibilities of change so that prospects of potential teaching candidates can be assessed realistically in terms of professional and career growth within the existing structures of the education system.

To begin with, a unique feature of Armenian schools in Lebanon is the preference of employing Ar-

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12. The issue in this case refers to the absence of younger teachers in Armenological subjects. In the field of education it is common practice to enter a teaching career in early to mid twenties, after obtaining a Bachelor's degree in education. Some higher education institutions across the world even insist on teaching experience of several years as a prerequisite to pursue a graduate degree in education. An average age of mid-40s among the teachers indicates that they have been in the profession for a considerable time (anywhere between 15-20 years). Given the absence of regular in-service teacher education in the Armenian education system in Lebanon, this suggests that current teachers may not always be open and flexible to ideas of change and innovation. Moreover, an absence of younger teachers complicates matters, since this implies a lack of both generational transfer while the teaching force ages, and a healthy atmosphere of professional growth younger teachers can introduce with new ideas and methodologies.

menian teachers across all subject matters. This is seen as an important factor contributing to an overall conception of Armenian education within a school, where issues of identity permeate throughout different internal structures and mechanisms of the school. Various informants commented on how it is also becoming increasingly difficult to find prospective teachers for disciplines other than Armenological subjects. The cause cited is not a lack of students studying education in general, but their preference to work elsewhere, in non-Armenian schools after graduating. In fact, considerable enrolment figures in at least one local university's education department draw a clear picture of young Armenian students' interest in the field of education and its different teaching subject specializations. Anecdotal evidence also supports the fact that these graduates are in demand and sought after by non-Armenian (private) schools who recruit them early on, in informal ways. According to one educator, "the graduates go there, because they're recruited and are paid more anywhere by 25-50%. And according to the graduates, they can actually implement what they've learned in terms of new pedagogical methods more than they would ever be able to in Armenian schools."

An informant cited teaching status, attitudes towards teaching and towards the profession within the community and the school system as the main issues contributing to the preference of young Armenian educators to seek work elsewhere. "There is a lack of appreciation of teaching as a profession. Quite a lot of the teachers within the school system have university degrees, but that is not enough. There is a lack of *pedagogical content knowledge*. The problem is not just having knowledge of the content area, but the pedagogical know-how, the toolkit, of what to do with that content. Tradition and history repeat themselves and since it has been this way for a long time, people do not perceive this lack of pedagogical knowledge as a problem since a large majority have always not had any pedagogical background in teaching. Traditionally, there are no role models as such, that is why that perception continues to take hold," he explained.

"In our institutions we don't know how to attract young professionals and make sure that they develop within our structures"

Thus, the reasons why Armenian education institutions cannot attract and keep qualified young teachers have financial, professional and moral dimensions, which all point to a lack of a coherent long-term planning on the part of these institutions to secure pedagogical sustainability. Several informants mentioned the existence of an "inadequate atmosphere" within the schools, where young education graduates do not have the opportunity for professional growth, moral support, mentoring, or appreciation in general that their work is valued, that their contribution and new ways of thinking are important. Cases were also cited, when despite adequate qualifications and interest shown by young educators, preference was given to more "experienced senior" teachers in hiring.[13] Similar practices all reveal a serious dissonance and lack of planning in generational transfer strategies.

The issue of professional growth and development reaches beyond teaching to educational leadership and management. "You need key people in your institution to make it a success. It's not an individual's success, but that of the team. You need a good leader, but the team is very important," stressed an interlocutor. A good leader in an educational institution knows how to delegate and decentralize, how to create a team and pass on a whole work ethic to her/his team, including core values of collaboration, accountability, ownership which in turn lead to sustainability and a much needed generational transfer. When a principal gets quagmired in only trying to resolve financial issues of a school, s/he cannot find

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13. This seems to be a prevalent attitude within the secondary sector and not only in Armenian schools, based on misconceptions in a test-oriented culture that believes "senior" teachers can "deliver" results better on "proven" success rates. Apparently there is also an accepted practice whereby some teachers in the secondary sector across the board prefer part-time employment so they can teach in a number of schools instead of holding one permanent position, because it is a more lucrative option. This leads to a unique "supply and demand" chain and an altogether different philosophy of what a school community is about.

her/his central role within the educational and pedagogical axis of the school, which in turn becomes detrimental and creates another vicious cycle.

Among all the Armenian schools in Lebanon only one principal has a graduate degree in educational administration.[14]

Various schools have short-term workshops, not more than a few sessions at most, for their principals. However, educational leadership calls for a more in-depth approach and education, that cannot be addressed by a few workshops during an academic year. Some principals realize the gravity of the situation themselves and talked openly about the need for serious professional development in this area. Interestingly, also almost all school principals mentioned the need for and necessity of qualified teachers across the board.

It is within this important bigger context that the case of teachers of Armenological subjects is nested. If it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract young qualified educators into the Armenian educational system, then prospective teachers of Armenological subjects face even harder conditions. While there obviously is the need to revitalize the profession, it is becoming harder and harder to attract young candidates to enter the domain of teaching Armenological subjects for all of the reasons stated above. It is not hard to imagine that potential candidates would associate a sense of entrapment, sacrifice and helplessness with a career in teaching Armenian. What would compel a young professional educator to struggle against this existing entangled stagnated situation and commit the "ultimate sacrifice" to be an Armenian teacher? And why should teaching be considered a "sacrifice" in the first place, instead of a legitimate dignified profession like any other?

What all the evidence points to is that there is no coherent arrangement to ensure a smooth generational transfer which cannot happen in a vacuum and in absence of long term planning. What is needed is a well-studied and well-placed strategy of pre-service and in-service teacher education, where each of these components are organically fused to supplement and strengthen one another to make one whole. This holds true as much for the Armenological subjects as for the other content areas. Complemented with recruitment plans set in place that target graduating education students strategically, longevity and sustainability of educational institutions can become a realistic goal. Such strategizing implies a conceptual change in the culture of practice centred around learning and teaching.

Speaking of core concerns around education an informant described the urgency of the situation aptly, "when an education expert gives an opinion about an educational matter, it is considered one opinion among many, instead of it being given its due place. This is true not only in matters of teaching as a profession, but in other important details too, about what, for example, constitutes a curriculum, what we teach, why we teach and how. This attitude is dominant in everything. One major issue in this is that we have not understood our own *implicit curricula* well, *our hidden curricula*. It is important that we first correctly, explicitly, consciously define and discuss what our hidden curriculum is, so we understand as well what our expectations are from any other entity. For example, what does Armenian education (հայեցի դաստիարակութիւն) entail? What does it mean? Everyone understands this differently, it is natural that it be so, but there is no articulation of what it is in reality." The hidden curriculum in a school refers to principles, attitudes, beliefs and values that are conveyed indirectly to students. What the informant crucially identifies here brings to the fore the significant role educational research and scholarship can play in creating an academic and public

It is vitally important to listen to teachers' own voices and perspectives

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14. Within the discipline of education there has been a terminology shift from educational administration to educational leadership, emphasizing the importance of fostering leadership as the basis of administration, management and also more importantly institutional improvement in schools. I use the terms leadership and administration interchangeably throughout the report, since the terms of educational administration and supervision appear to be more in use in Lebanon.

discourse on education in the community. This is an essential step to articulate what the goals and targets in pedagogy are, to nurture through an Armenian education system uniquely tailored to the specificities of diasporan communities.

TEACHERS' VOICES AND PERSPECTIVES

It is vitally important to listen to teachers' own voices and perspectives within this larger context of teacher status and qualifications. How do teachers of Armenological subjects perceive themselves in an atmosphere without adequate financial compensation, general appreciation, and room for professional growth that evidently leads to a sense of disempowerment? How do they regard the lack of planning in the issue of generational transfer? What changes or measures would they like to see set in place?

Several teachers spoke very frankly of their situation and their ongoing concerns, identifying key problem areas. A repeated remark by them centred around public expectations from them, within both educational institutions and a larger public discourse. "The Armenian teacher must have superhuman inner strength [to endure]," said one teacher while another commented, "the Armenian teacher is not a supernatural being, s/he is human." They both referred to a complex set of ever-expanding responsibilities centred around the concept of the Armenian teacher, regarded in general as a composite symbolic personage who is the guardian of the language, the transmitter of heritage, the one who instills a sense of identity and belonging in the new generations, expected to work long hours and sacrifice all in the call of duty – a tall order indeed, especially given the circumstances most of the teachers work in. "No matter how much you give, you are still expected to give more; but I have my personal life too." confided a teacher. "No rest, no recess, no vacation, no respite," an informant described the situation. The references here are to an overloaded schedule, stretching beyond the teaching hours, with Armenian teachers

"The Armenian teacher is not a supernatural being, s/he is human"

sometimes taken for granted as they are expected to prepare and contribute to various events or spectacles. Given the low remuneration scales, it becomes understandable how resentment can set in. "As Armenian teachers, we often discuss among ourselves how the non-Armenian teachers are much more appreciated than us. They come late, leave early and do not feel the burden of expectations. In our case, you give and give but receive nothing in return," complained a teacher pointing to the prevailing attitudes with a distinct and unequal set of expectations from Armenian and non-Armenian teachers.

The burden of expectations, the remuneration levels, the general perceptions all combine to create an unfavourable image of the teaching profession, especially of Armenological subjects. All educators addressed this issue repeatedly, pointing out its adverse effects on generational transfer. They questioned the value systems transmitted in such an atmosphere. "You know so many things, why are you a teacher of Armenian? I am learning Armenian for your sake, but don't want to be like you," reported an educator quoting her students' questions and comments. The often-asked "are you going to be a teacher of Armenian?" has become a question fraught with anxiety and disparagement, reflecting attitudes in the community. Given such a stance, it is not surprising then that the generational transfer has stalled, that potential candidates would not come forth. What is needed instead, the teachers insisted, is a dual track approach that on one hand will eradicate the stereotypes consistently, and on the other cultivate the existing potential by making long-term plans. "We have the potential among our students, we have it in each classroom. There is no follow-up though to keep these students among us, to encourage them," argued a teacher explaining that long-term strategizing should start early. In such a scheme key areas are identified (such as editors, journalists, teachers), so that recruitment is targeted and carried on through various arrangements through the school years. "We have to find ways to encourage and value our deserving students so we can keep them in our midst. We should also think of having active alumni associations who will get involved with the students, so that

we can have a true bridging of generations," the teacher explained her vision. Several educators had similar ideas, reflecting a common concern, all also identifying that there is a general feeling of a lack of leadership in the community to take on these challenges, to plan and to put in place much needed change. Finally, all educators at various levels from elementary to secondary to post-secondary spoke of the lack of support mechanisms and the need for exchange and dialogue. "We need to establish contact with each other, to be able to discuss issues. We need to support each other. I feel all alone," remarked one teacher. "Collaboration and exchange need to happen at a deeper level, across different sectors in the community, not just based on political and denominational affiliations," insisted another.

Any move forward first and foremost must imply a policy of inclusion of teachers' voices in any process of reform whether curricular or in teacher education, so that a clear sense of empowerment can be created and teachers can tangibly feel that change can happen by them and for them. Empowerment leads to ownership of the process. When teachers can embark on the process of change, they can recreate that atmosphere within their classrooms, contributing to a healthy learning environment. An inclusive policy towards teachers also means raising their status in the public eye, with both moral and financial engagements towards them. Re-evaluation of salary scales or other forms of financial incentives through in-service teacher education, special teaching awards, mentorship roles devised for teachers must be explored as various avenues of encouragement. In addition, any long-term strategizing should examine the possibilities of different forms of internal and external support mechanisms for educators through several arrangements that encourage exchange, collaboration and dialogue in formal and informal settings.

Empowerment can be created and teachers can tangibly feel that change can happen by them and for them

4. SCHOOL-PARENT RELATIONSHIPS

School-parent-community relationships are an important part of a school governance framework and philosophy. "Schools do not encourage parents to be an active part of the school community. The concept of service is very important to emphasize. Parents should also know that they have a responsibility towards the school," insisted an educator, while another informant commenting on the primacy of school-parent relationships explained, "we have to educate our parents through our students." The two statements reveal the dual track that must be encouraged to create engagement patterns with both parents and within the community, to support a more sustainable model of a school community. Bringing in parents as allies and partners in the education system can have a positive impact in different spheres, from establishing trust in the community to public relations to financial assistance and fundraising efforts to generating ownership and accountability concepts.

Apparently to date the relationship with parents does not go beyond the traditional parents' auxiliary committees. "We need educated parents who also have certain specializations and we should use their expertise. We should try to engage them and get them to volunteer," stated an informant. A similar arrangement with parents opens up the possibilities of involvement in a number of long-term efforts such as mentorships and internships which could be coordinated together with schools' alumni associations.

It is clear that different schools face different issues with their parents, some of whom face economic hardships and have very divergent priorities from what more middle class parents would have. However, a baseline inclusive approach of "parents-as-allies" will go a long way in ensuring active involvement of parents in making schools a success. In order to create a new culture of practice with parents all stakeholders need to explore what kind of leverage parents can have in a school, what role can they play in it, so they can become collaborators with the rest of the school in creating a community of learning and maintaining an appropriate educational environment.

5. NEIGHBOURHOOD AND INTEGRATED SCHOOLS

On the backdrop of all the financial concerns of the schools and in a search for solutions, two different perspectives have emerged in the community: One calling for the merger of several smaller neighbourhood schools into an integrated larger one, the other insisting mergers are not an overall solution since neighbourhood schools have an important role to fulfill and must continue their vision. The AGBU schools for example, after an initial merger in the post-civil war years, have tried to consolidate their elementary, intermediate, and secondary schools into one larger integrated school, but so far the plans have not come to fruition. The National Schools have now decided to embark on a similar path, in an attempt to integrate their neighbourhood schools in the Bourj Hammoud district. A provision is in place to use a section of the new building for commercial purposes, as an income-generating option for the school. Since financial self-sufficiency is seen almost as an impossible option for some of the existing schools within the National Schools system, this new merger option is regarded as the only alternative by some, to resolve their issues.

Merging schools is not a new option for schools in the Lebanese-Armenian community. In the mid 1930s, as the Armenian survivor refugee camps dotting the Bourj Hammoud landscape proliferated, serious maintenance and structural issues rose with smaller kindergarten and elementary neighbourhood schools due to overcrowding and unhygienic situations. Several editorials and articles of the era in the *Zartonk* and *Aztag* dailies[15] made the case for the advantages of merging the Bourj Hammoud schools into a larger, new-build school centralizing all the elementary schools into one, while keeping the existing kindergarten

Parents as allies and partners in the education system

system to enhance the vibrancy of the neighborhood aspect. In addition to an obvious budgetary solution, a centralized school was also meant at the time to help create a sense of affiliation of "nation" and strengthen the collective identity, as opposed to the narrower "old country" town and city belongings evident in the refugee camps. Compared to the cumulative number of students in the district cited around a thousand in the elementary system in this "growth-based" vision of the 1930s, the picture emerging these days from the same district is quite different, both in numbers and reasons for the merger.

Not everyone agrees that merging schools into a larger integrated entity is the best solution for the financial and enrolment difficulties the schools face. Several informants insisted neighbourhood schools play an important role; keeping that niche is essential, since these schools cater to a specific clientele. Vocal opponents of the integrated "school complex" argued that serious financial investments raised to build physical structures should instead be geared towards creating sustainable human resources, specifically investing in pedagogical sustainability first and foremost, before sinking large finances into buildings without any clear long-term planning in education. What may be good for bigger more successful schools, they insisted, may not necessarily be so for smaller neighbourhood ones without adequate studies to back the integration. Even at a cursory glance, it is clear that there is no one solution that can fit all. Diversification is important, with different schools needing different solutions, based on their context.

For instance, Mesrobian Catholic School is a good example of a successful neighbourhood school that has high and consistent enrolment figures (See Appendix 3), expanding into a technical school alongside its regular nursery-grade 12 one. Even though not deficit free, the school has the only Armenian technical school stream in Lebanon in addition to active growth plans developing income-generating projects and striving towards a financial sustainability objective. The Evangelicals are another case in point. They operate several neighbourhood schools both in the Bourj Hammoud district and in other areas including West Bei-

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15. See Najarian, M. (1937, February 6). Անդր-Նահր [Beyond Nahr]. *Aztag*, p. 2 and Editorial, (1938, August 31). Մեր Դպրոցները [Our Schools]. *Zartonk*, p. 2 for more.

rut. Despite their financial difficulties, the Evangelical Schools have made a clear commitment not to close down their neighbourhood school network, believing firmly they are important in community building.

"There are general solutions that may fit all, but their interpretation and implementation has to be in different ways. I believe that some of the neighbourhood schools still have their place in the bigger picture in some cases. It's not like before, but they still do," explained an informant. Due to demographic shifts Armenians have moved away from neighbourhoods in the centre of the city which used to house once vibrant Armenian micro-communities, to new suburbs in the east. Yet some neighbourhood schools have a "flow" of students in the opposite direction, contrary to the new geo-demographic reality, with students from relatively new and prosperous suburbs coming back to study at these schools. This brings out an issue of loyalty and the importance of the school-parent-community triangle. The best examples of this phenomenon are two different Evangelical schools (Central High School in the Ashrafieh district and Armenian Evangelical College in West Beirut)[16] where the majority of the students come from all around Beirut. If parents show a commitment to send their children specifically to that school, it means that the school not only is successful academically, but is also able to create a community around it, bringing together parents and educators. Parents' explicit choice and loyalty for particular neighbourhood schools, despite the fact that there may be other Armenian schools in their vicinity, point to another aspect associated with concepts of heritage. The school in this case becomes a symbol, a "rootedness" with a certain memory and a history entrenched in its very physical manifestation. The history and tradition of schools interconnected with their location are significant layers of a collective legacy that need to be considered deeply.[17]

"There is no evidence that consolidating the schools would lead to financial sustainability," argued an informant, citing specific examples when closures of schools in neighbourhoods facing difficult socioeconomic conditions have not necessarily resulted in parents choosing to send their children to other Armenian schools, instead opting for either public or other non-Armenian schools for various reasons. "So those schools still play a vibrant role in their neighbourhoods," he insisted. The AGBU schools for example, continued to show steady decline in numbers and record deficits even after their merger, whereas with smaller schools operating in low income neighbourhoods, there is no guarantee that parents may choose to send their children to the new integrated schools. Anecdotal evidence points to a significant number of parents from low income areas choosing local public schools to the detriment of Armenian ones. Nevertheless, there should be a consistent and serious study to examine the shifts in enrolment figures in neighbourhood schools, especially when facing closures and mergers, to understand the trends and plan accordingly.

Since substantial financial resources and investments are needed to make integrated schools a reality, two core factors must be considered from the very beginning in order for "new school" concepts to take hold and contribute to any tangible change. First, the physical infrastructure of the proposed building should be based on progressive pedagogical notions and not be yet another replication of older school concepts on a bigger scale. Second, pedagogical sustainability must be an intrinsic part of the integrated school project from the onset, ensuring that the investment in human resources is on a par with the physical infrastructure, since buildings alone, no matter how big and new, can never make an education system work.

Finally, informants cited two significant issues specifically pertaining to the neighbourhood schools in

16. West Beirut used to have large numbers of Armenians who mostly moved away during the civil war, especially towards its end. Ashrafieh, particularly around the CHS, had a considerable Armenian population. Tchatalbashian National School in the same neighbourhood closed down a few years ago due to declining enrolment.

17. Diversification is another important issue to consider in the shifting internal demographic patterns of the last two decades. The presence of CHS, AEC, Sourp Nshan Church and Haigazian University as the last Armenian operational structures within the geodemographic mapping of the city of Beirut proper are significant markers for the present and the future of the Armenian community in the city. The only Armenian organization that has reversed the process of "depopulation" of certain areas is Haigazian University, with its purchase of real estate property in Beirut proper in recent years.

the Bourj Hammoud district which will not disappear with any integrated school project, hence needing special attention and further study to find solutions:

- There seems to be a steady dropout rate of boys around grade 8. There are no specific studies on this issue, only basic data exists of numbers dwindling longitudinally. One possible reason for it could be that students are not encouraged to go into the BT track for technical and vocational education, because parents are not aware of it as they should be. There is no serious campaign to educate the community more about the concept of vocational and technical training, and it's not a part of the general culture. More evidence-based research is needed to understand this serious problem and address it.
- Almost everyone spoke of the crucial need to "educate" parents alongside their children in order to create a sustainable whole, insisting on the importance of including parents in the education process which is a serious issue in neighbourhood schools. "Economic challenges have impacted parents, who have problems in child rearing and don't necessarily give a primary place to education in the lives of their children. Social problems among those families abound too," commented an interlocutor. "We should meet with parents regularly, on a monthly basis, so our meetings can be result-oriented and we get somewhere, we can have an immediate connection with them," added a teacher. The answer to this problem everyone felt, was in organizing a steady stream of seminars and workshops in informal settings, targeted for parents on topics that are important to them from financial and budgeting issues to social concerns to adult education programmes.

At first glance, the difficulties Armenian schools in Lebanon face appear insurmountable

At first glance, the difficulties Armenian schools in Lebanon face appear insurmountable. As seen, the key issues in financial and pedagogical problems the schools encounter are multilayered and interlinked. Planning income-generating avenues and cutting expenditures, strategizing on teacher education and curricular reform, diversifying solutions and thinking out of the box, will have to be the way forward to confront the challenges ahead. The following section on recommendations charts a possible roadmap to instigate change, emphasizing the importance of incremental steps.

RECOMMENDATIONS

When asked how they envisioned change that could have long-term transformative impact on the ground given the gravity of the situation at hand, some fundamental focus areas top the wish lists of the majority of stakeholders. These include investment in human resources, from teacher education to a serious planning of generational transfer; educational innovation, including curricular reform and modernization; commitment to structural changes; resource management and sustainability; establishment of a programme, centre or institute of Armenological Studies; and finally evidence-based studies leading to targeted strategizing. One oft-mentioned attribute is also a wish to see "the right person in the right place" from teaching to leading, to governance in various decision-making circles, referring to the necessity of professional and expert presence that will enhance the implementation of any serious changes. The recommendations in this section, while originating from the key issues discussed earlier, also reflect these concerns.

It should be noted from the outset that the political situation in the region is a factor to be mindful of, in dealing with Armenian schools and education in Lebanon. The whole region continues to face turmoil and there is an underlying volatility that is unpredictable at times. While the neighbouring Syrian-Armenian community faces decimation and hardships through the ongoing civil war, the Lebanese-Armenian community still continues to grapple with its own post-civil war difficulties. What needs to be recognized however, is that the issue of survival is central to understanding the situation. Despite the uncertainties they face, the resilience of the communities cannot be in doubt. During my brief visit in mid-July, while Lebanese-Armenian schools celebrated commencement exercises, news trickled from Aleppo of an Armenian school graduation there with 900 students – an act that can probably best be described as "diasporic defiance" in the face of devastation a community confronts. "As long as Armenians cling to their roots, culture and language, the diaspora will survive. The modes of that survival will change; nonetheless as long as there is any sort of congregation, then there is survival," pointed out an informant, insisting that what is needed is a *targeted assistance* program in terms of external funding, not restricting it, to yield maximum impact.

The Lebanese-Armenian community continues to play a primary role within the diasporic landscape by being a main transnational node in the production of cultural and linguistic capital. An investment in the vitality of the community will have a ripple effect and transnational impact on the vibrancy of Western Armenian, a key aspect of intangible heritage. While acknowledging there may be potential risks the geopolitical situation engenders, in order to mitigate any such risks it is possible to strategically plan so that envisioned initiatives for the Lebanese-Armenian community can have transnational aspects embedded in them and can be adaptable to other diasporic contexts with relevant modifications.

As evidenced in the Key Issues section, there are two dissonant strands within the education sector. On one hand, there are ossified and traditional attitudes resisting change, while on the other, there is the encouraging presence of young educators and a generally healthy interest among the youth to study education. In effect, the potential human resources exist. Nurturing and guidance coupled with innovative, out of the box thinking, will have to be the important next steps in envisioning solutions.

UNESCO classifies Western Armenian as "definitely endangered." the second level in its 4-scale classification of endangered languages based on intergenerational transfer. (The four levels are: Vulnerable, definitely endangered, severely endangered, critically endangered.) While the erosion of Western Armenian is an alarming reality of our times, it is still possible to arrest and hopefully even reverse the trend through a serious long-term and targeted investment in teacher education and educational innovation, which would involve the inclusion of creative technologies in curricular and textbook reforms, as well as research and development initiatives.

While the erosion of Western Armenian is an alarming reality of our times, it is still possible to arrest and hopefully even reverse the trend

An important step in this direction would be an assessment of successful global models of language revitalization projects reversing language shift. It is universally accepted by sociolinguists that the crucial stage to reverse language shift is ensuring intergenerational transmission of the language, meaning that the language is passed on in a home context and is actively used in community circles. Once that stage is firmly in place, then the following stages reinforce the language acquisition through literacy practices in informal and formal educational settings, local and major media and finally legislative acts.

Prominent examples in language renewal are the cases of various indigenous and/or minority languages as Welsh in Wales, Catalan in Catalonia, Maori in New Zealand, an array of First Nations languages in Canada, Hebrew in Israel, French in Quebec, etc., which have had varying degrees of success. Certainly, a majority of such projects have also had crucial state support, laws to protect them, targeted funding and other resources. Western Armenian is a diasporic language with no state mechanisms or leverage that may be comparable to other minority languages. Nevertheless, there is an important school infrastructure as well as community organizations across the diaspora, which can act as a veritable transnational network and should be used as an asset in any solution-oriented strategizing. In addition, youth must be ultimately targeted through any project envisioned, since they are the inheritors and consumers of the language.

This translates into using approaches that encourage functionality, relevance and creativity in literacy practices – the three pillars ensuring language vibrancy. Such a model includes strong web and multimedia presence, and embraces various arts-based digital platforms as a means to reach out to the youth sector. Revitalization of the language necessitates a revitalization of approach. Armenian schools in Lebanon can act as a vital link to reflect this approach.

"We don't need to be ambitious, build huge plans and then don't get to actualize them. We need to be realistic. Start with small but firm steps that will lead to the bigger picture. *Small building blocks but long-term planning is what we need*," explained an educator. Acknowledging that the financial aspect is the root cause of many difficulties, he also rightfully argued that there are other factors to consider. He attributed the prevalent lack of vision to an after-effect of the Lebanese civil war. "In the past 10-15 years we are just in survival mode, we still live in the nightmare of war. Amongst the [community] leadership, there is this belief

"Start with small but firm steps that will lead to the bigger picture"

that if we maintain what we have, that is enough. Maybe from their point of view it is right, because in some aspects abrupt changes didn't work out well. But 20 years have passed, we could have done something. The war was not a problem only for us. We're staying in the same place, while other communities around us are building serious infrastructure. *First and foremost we need bold steps. They don't need to be abrupt steps. They should just be bold steps.* So far we've seen the opposite of that."

Any step forward also naturally contains the probability of risks, mistakes, and possible failure, all probably precipitating a fear of losing what is "barely there." Change is imperative at this stage however and risk-taking is part of that process of change. Well-studied evidence-based flexible approaches can help navigate and alleviate the effect of possible risks in the long run, especially if multi-vectored solutions are sought. This is the time to think proactively about "creation" and "construction" of knowledge as conceptual frameworks for both the education system and Western Armenian revitalization, instead of the existing "maintenance" paradigm, which has lived its time.

It is also important that any initiative adopted be inclusive in approach and collaborative in nature, encompassing efforts of existing organizations and institutions across the board, with a notion of best practices and knowledge transfer in mind. At the same time, it should model the core values of dialogue and collaborative teamwork in leadership, in a realistic and practical manner.

Two overarching primary recommendations preface the rest:

A. Conditionality clause in grants – ACD-CGF must make all assistance and grants conditional on participation in adopted initiatives and/or implementation of recommendations by stakeholders. A sense of ownership is fundamental in educational endeavours. Conditionality can contribute to that by helping create a new culture of practice, since it fosters a deeper level of accountability through ownership. Thus, by meeting the conditions of funding, the stakeholders become partners in contributing tangibly to and delivering the long-term impact sought. As one informant mentioned, "An organization that is pan-Armenian, has the authority and can impose its will, is objective and egalitarian towards all, can create the culture of accountability. CGF is that organization and has the necessary clout to do it."

Recommendations in the subsequent list noted with **[c]** should be regarded as prime foci for conditionality clauses (e.g. in-service teacher education, educational leadership and administration courses for principals, web and tech "acculturation" for educators, meeting financial sustainability targets, etc.). Also, scholarships can have a "service to community" component incorporated in the funding conditions, to assist in creating a generational transfer model and to simultaneously reinforce the importance of the concept of service.

"Conditionality can [...] create a new culture of practice"

B. ACD-CGF education programme officer – many stakeholders repeatedly mentioned the necessity of follow up directly by the Armenian Communities Department of CGF on any programmes or initiatives implemented, since that will promote accountability in a more realistic and timely manner. While having a permanent representative in the country may be difficult on a practical level, there are other alternatives. An ACD-CGF visiting regional education programme officer on the other hand, can monitor progress, assist in setting up programmes, liaise with a local task force and educational institutions in a regular and systematic manner. At the same time, the presence of such an officer is vital to create a viable and ongoing relationship with the stakeholders.

Five core areas are targeted in the recommendations, with various subcategories: Creation of a task force, financial sustainability, pedagogical sustainability, exchange and dialogue, research and development. (See also Appendix 1 for a detailed chart of all recommendations.)

1. CREATION OF A TASK FORCE

Creation of a special task force in situ will ensure a smooth transition and implementation of ACD-CGF sponsored initiatives. It will also reinforce the concept of ownership in a tangible manner, since solutions will be sought and implemented locally, instead of a hierarchical vertical model imposing them. The task force will work closely and in collaboration with ACD-CGF, liaising through the ACD-CGF education programme officer. It will be an intergenerational representative pan-community body, with its members comprising of teachers/educators, scholars, intellectuals, other pertinent professionals. The task force can be a small nucleus with no more than 5-7 persons identified by CGF. It can however, create temporary advisory councils to consult experts in various spheres as the need arises (e.g. educators, social workers, educational psychologists, education council or parent committee representatives, financial or marketing advisors, etc.). The immediate undertaking of the task force would be to devise a transition plan for a proposed centre/programme and to spearhead a number of mini-studies. This will be crucial to create a sound database and have an accurate picture of the Armenian community and schools (highlighting various trends from demographic to enrolment to specific needs as they arise), so that subsequent initiatives can be explicitly targeted.

Solutions will be sought and implemented locally, instead of a hierarchical vertical model imposing them

2. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY [C]

"Is financial sustainability possible in the long term?" asked one educator rhetorically, citing that historically anecdotal evidence has shown that no school has been able to overcome a deficit without assistance in some form of donation, whether through church or other organizations. Talking about the predicament of the smaller neighbourhood schools the same informant pointed out, "this is where western-based organizations come in and tell us to consolidate and merge schools, which may make sense financially from a banking perspective, but an Armenian school is not just a financial enterprise." Instead, he argued, what is urgently needed is the development of long-term needs-based solutions, such as income-generating projects or endowment funds. Currently, the salary raise issue looming on the horizon with sometimes conflicting guesswork as to the actual percentage it could entail, already spells a potential disaster in the making that the schools are totally unprepared for. The financial crises the schools face clearly point this is the area that needs serious professional and expert assistance to assess the best way forward based on realistic forecasts. Considering the differences between neighbourhood and bigger integrated schools, it is also clear that different solutions need to be sought for different schools. The financial picture may be bleak at the moment, however serious strategizing may lead towards eventual solutions. As an informant affirmed, "I strive to make this school self-sufficient based on realistic economic and financial plans, but I refuse to despair." CGF should certainly remain engaged with the Armenian schools in Lebanon. However, in order to encourage financial sustainability it will be important to emphasize that continued support will depend on the successful fulfillment of conditions and milestones, set collectively by CGF and the Financial Task Force (described below). In addition, CGF should consider a more strategic disbursement of funds in its support initiatives, moving away from smaller amounts to all schools, to possibly targeted larger project-based rotating funding. The latter will give opportunities to all schools, education councils and governing bodies to strive for deeper institutional change and structural solutions, while at the same time encouraging ownership and leadership among them.

What is urgently needed is the development of long-term needs-based solutions

FINANCIAL TASK FORCE

In order to tackle the complicated layers of the financial situation, a dedicated financial task force should be put in place. Its mission will be to devise a 10-year strategic plan to help educational institutions set realistic goals and become financially sustainable. While independent of the special task force described above, this team will liaise with the former regularly. As part of its mandate it should look into and monitor a few key areas:

- *Capacity building for schools and educational councils* – This should be a primary effort target, since it will furnish the necessary toolkit underlying the basis of all future ventures by the schools and councils. These should include: grant writing expertise to assist school governing bodies to seek out and write proposals to external funding agencies or to generate matching funds; fundraising expertise, to look at a range from creative fundraising avenues such as crowd funding to other established traditional ones; PR expertise to make the schools more visible and target wider audiences in fundraising efforts.
- *Assistance to schools in drawing up realistic forecasts and budget plans* – Given the existing climate of two thirds of parents unable and in some instances unwilling to pay tuition, the first step would be preparing evidence-based financial forecasts and analyses for the schools, highlighting the target areas that need immediate attention with practical short-term and long-term goals as well as various scenarios of what could be expected in given timeframes. One aspect that should also be looked into

is how to work with parents in different schools and in different situations; to look more closely at actual cases of tuition payment attrition and find ways to amend it (e.g. these may range from assistance to certain schools in organizing various educational seminars for parents on family budgeting advice, to identifying situations when it is possible to have parents contribute to tuition installment payments in various degrees, developing a culture of responsibility effectively, etc.).

• **[c]** *Setting up financial sustainability targets* – Within the 10-year plan, realistic targets need to be set that should be evaluated periodically (annually or biannually) and adjustments be made accordingly. In the case of individual educational institutions, these should also coincide with annual reports that clearly state the process and progress towards the sustainability targets.

• *Cutting expenditures* – In tandem with setting realistic targets, expenditures should be critically examined and adjusted with an eye on possible cuts where necessary. While the ideal scenario remains raising revenues to meet budgetary shortfalls, nevertheless, there likely are possible areas where cuts could be made without compromising the quality of education.

• *Rethinking the role of alumni associations and parent committees* – A more prominent role could be given to alumni associations and parent committees, including them in a range of PR and fundraising schemes, beyond the traditional avenues of individual donation targets from them. A new comprehensive approach based on a "school-parents-community" unity could also put a better emphasis on ideas of engagement, accountability, trust and ownership, while at the same time harnessing the potential some parents and/or alumni can have in school governance and management. As one informant rightfully stressed, "parents are the owners of the school."

• *Assistance in setting up trust and endowment funds* – This type of initiative can also help develop a culture of giving intelligently within the community and outside its bounds, reaching out to both alumni and an audience at large globally with targeted PR campaigns. As with other ventures, small but firm steps would be in order, with initial amounts not necessarily having to be very large ones. In time the funds will grow. A concerted effort should be put in place to eventually have all schools establish such funds.

• *Exploring matching funds* – Alongside the establishment of trust and endowment funds, it will be important to examine various possibilities of matching fund scenarios, since the example of reciprocity would also encourage external donors, creating an atmosphere of trust and accountability.

• *Assistance in setting up realistic income-generating projects* – This could operate in tandem with fundraising and trust fund establishment efforts and again vary from one school to another, based on needs assessment analyses.

• *Greater efforts to convince parents to pay tuition fees* – It is important that Armenian schools remain accessible to all children whose parents wish to send them there. However, efforts must be made by school administrators to reinforce the financial responsibility of parents to pay the tuition fees for their children.

• *Possibility of other creative avenues* – Together with the small steps, bigger and bolder ideas could also open new avenues. One such idea proposed by an educator is the establishment of an All-Diaspora Fund as a creative initiative modeled on the All-Armenia Fund to specifically and systematically assist schools in various diasporic communities, again based on urgent needs whether these have to do with repairs, much needed maintenance issues, or emergency situations arising in conflict zones, etc. Such an undertaking entails serious study and planning that the financial task force could spearhead.

"We need to change our attitude towards educational institutions. These are places that need a new way of thinking and working, new methodologies, new people, to keep up with the times. An educator should know what's happening in his/her discipline, in the education sphere in other parts of the world and be able to measure up to them"

3. PEDAGOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY [C]

"Having and keeping schools requires a professional approach," explained an informant referring to the need for a structural change in the existing system. As crucial as financial sustainability is, an important part of the equation in the building blocks of change has to do with pedagogical sustainability which with a systematic investment in human resources, will ensure the strengthening of cadres and a smooth generational transition. Teachers' voices must be intrinsic to any conversation on pedagogical sustainability. They must have a say in the changes advocated. After all, "beyond the numbers, there is the person. It is the teacher who is facing the students every day, living in the classroom, using those blackboards and whiteboards and smart boards and textbooks and all other resources."

Here again however, a contradictory tension exists in views about teachers and the teaching profession. While by all standards there does not seem to be sufficient acknowledgement of teaching as a serious profession especially in Armenian-related subjects, nor an adequate financial remuneration oftentimes, yet those same teachers are regarded as "torchbearers" responsible for the transmission of language, identity and heritage to the new generations. This "burden" of responsibility has its own complex internal layers, where sometimes a status quo seems to be perpetuated by teachers, who become suspicious of change and reluctant in shedding away traditional modes of teaching. As a result, what is lost is a conception of *teaching as a learning experience* for both teachers and students alike. Teaching and learning are intrinsic parts of one whole. This means that teachers need a healthy environment of professional growth within the schools in order to be able to create in their turn student-centred learning environments.

Expenditures should be critically examined

"There is a whole culture of thinking and doing things that needs to be changed," argued an educator. Fostering a new culture of practice is the imperative today. This translates to striving for innovation in educational practices, creating a climate for regeneration and revitalization of Western Armenian, engendering change and embracing it. However, a new culture in teaching and learning will need time to take root and must be done incrementally. Considering that the average age of teachers of Armenian-related subjects in schools today is around 40-45, it is unrealistic to expect change in teaching philosophies and methodologies overnight. Any forceful, top-down vertical imposition of changes by governing bodies will backfire and meet strong resistance. Therefore, it will be best to work in two parallel streams: Investing seriously in long-term pre-service education, with a considerable effort concentrated on encouraging graduate work in education. These two strands will help create a critical mass of educators in the next 10-15 years. At the same time, boosting this effort with a well placed in-service teacher education component will generate a new alternative to "tip the balance" towards the desired change in the culture of practice. Such an approach will safeguard the inclusion of teachers' perspectives, which in turn will empower them by creating a sense of ownership of the process of change.

NECESSITY OF ESTABLISHING A CENTRE/PROGRAMME FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

It is evident that the task at hand cannot be achieved in a vacuum. For any serious strategic planning of pedagogical sustainability to take hold, a centre or a programme for teacher education (for Armenian-related subjects) must be established. The Centre/Programme can be hosted in an appropriate diasporan institution with linkages throughout the Armenian education system in various communities. It should play a lead role in pre-service and in-service education, and be a hub of research in various aspects of pedagogy and Armenian education. Additionally it should be a neutral space of dialogue and exchange among all stakeholders in education across the community.

Situating the Centre/Programme within an institution of higher education has three important advantages. First, it creates the opportunity for future graduate work in education. This is very important to encourage if we want to genuinely invest in Armenian education by strengthening its intellectual base. Second, recognizing and

strengthening academic scholarship in education, will address the serious lack of pedagogical thought in the diaspora. This is certainly an issue of transnational importance, not only confined to the Lebanese-Armenian community. How can we expect generational transmission of cadres to take place, when there is an absence of a critical mass of education scholars, leading to a dearth in mentorship and role models? Third, with an accredited university degree, teaching elsewhere in diasporan communities becomes easier. In such cases, potential candidates can simply complete local teaching license requirements which vary but are usually of shorter duration.[18]

Finally, this Centre/Programme must be envisioned as a space that brings theory and practice together. It should be a hub that offers a comprehensive programme in teacher education while at the same time is an innovative laboratory of ideas. It will bring together teachers, principals, educators, scholars, be a focal point open to public discourse, and encourage knowledge production. The Centre/Programme will also have an active connection with a number of higher education institutions, Armenian Studies departments globally, and premier progressive educational institutions in the diaspora and Armenia. In short, the Centre/Programme will model the new culture of practice CGF hopes to foster.

TEACHER EDUCATION

In general terms, the specialized teacher education programme should not only answer the needs of local Armenian schools and prepare the next generation of teachers, but should be flexible enough to be tailored to various diasporic communities' needs as well. A 10—year plan should be put in place, with a goal of preparing a minimum of 5-10 new teachers who would also have guaranteed job tracks in key schools. As the main issues of teacher education are addressed long-term, it will become a catalyst in both empowering educators and raising their status in the public eye. This in turn will have its positive contribution to overall pedagogical sustainability, with hopefully a noticeable interest and increase in potential education students for Armenological subjects.

A new culture in teaching and learning will need time to take root

The following are a number of interlinked key initiatives to raise the profile of teacher education and to create a pool of education scholars transnationally:

- *Identifying "master teachers" from different schools across the community* who can become instrumental in knowledge transfer. They can be part of an advisory council for the special task force, as well as lead workshops, seminars and "master classes" through the Centre.
- *Establishing "teacher of the year" awards in various categories* that will cover not only specific teaching subjects but also areas such as curricular innovation, application of digital/media platforms in teaching, creative student-centred projects, etc. A clear set of criteria should be established for the awards.
- *Creating special "in-house" fellowships or scholarships* for Armenian educators for pre-service teacher education, in-service teacher education, graduate degrees (MA/MEd and PhD/EdD) in education.
- *Establishing visiting professorships* with various Armenian education scholars and/or education innovators globally who would be invited for short or long-term residencies ranging from 2-day workshop and public talk settings to one or two-term teaching ones.
- *Establishing competition-based internship/teaching practicum awards*. These are specifically designed for the pre-service teacher education programme, which should regularly have a teaching practicum component in local Armenian schools. The internship award would grant the opportunity to prospective candidates to do a (supplementary or complementary) short-term practicum either in a progressive

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18. Whereas BT (Baccalauréat technique) and TS (Technicien supérieur)-based education diplomas seem to be encouraged by the Lebanese Ministry of Education, these diplomas seem to be targeted mostly towards early childhood and in some cases primary education. There also seem to be successful models within the Armenian community in this stream, with graduates of the Khatcher Kalousdian Pedagogical Centre employed mostly within the Armenian National Schools system and Mesrobian Technical School graduates employed within Mesrobian School's own nursery and kindergarten. So while this stream can continue successfully, it is important to think beyond it and to think both of the secondary school sector and of who will teach the teachers eventually.

Armenian school or educational environment globally. The grant would cover travel and accommodation expenses, in addition to a modest stipend.

• **[c]** *Institutionalizing in-service teacher education and making it mandatory* with a specific timeframe stipulated (for example every four years). There should also be clear incentives for in-service education in the form of financial awards, a bonus or an increment in the salary, a reduced teaching load (without a cut in pay), etc. Once a certificate or diploma program is completed by a teacher, regular workshops can become part of a mandatory professional development policy.

• *Increasing the number of pedagogical days* in schools and ensuring that the majority of those days are engaged in professional development, coordinated with the centre for teacher education. This can go hand in hand with the in-service and on-site professional development initiatives.

• **[c]** *Establishing an educational leadership and management track for principals within the in-service programme* – Whereas we always talk about the need to have qualified teachers everywhere in the Armenian education system, locally and globally, an important factor that is always forgotten is the major role principals play in this scenario. All acting principals must complete the educational leadership programme within a specified but realistic timeframe (e.g. within three years), while new hires must already possess a degree in the discipline. After a degree completion, regular workshops can become part of a mandatory professional development policy.

• Finally, fostering a new culture of practice also necessitates *closely examining gender bias and gender-based stereotypes* in both the teaching profession and in textual and curricular resources. There is strong anecdotal evidence that many gender-based stereotypes continue to be directly or indirectly reinforced within the school and classroom cultures. Sensitizing on this issue and encouraging critical approaches should be an ongoing effort throughout all the teacher education levels. Similarly, any new efforts in textbook reform should pay close attention to this issue. The teaching profession, particularly the primary cycle, continues to be perceived as the domain of women. Special attention needs to be focused on this with serious steps taken to address this gender divide, from recruitment, to reform to creative strategies across the board.

CURRICULAR REFORM, EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION, AND CREATIVE TECHNOLOGIES

No educational reform can be complete without a thorough examination and implementation of curricular reform. Talking about the need to re-examine existing curricula one educator suggested, "let us all come together, teachers, education councils, national leadership [governing bodies], and let us decide what should an average student graduating from an Armenian school know in various subjects: Literature, language and grammar, orthography, geography, history. Let's start from that end target of what we want to achieve, and build up our curriculum based on that, from grade 12 down to grade 1, setting up targets on what [competencies] each grade level should achieve, always keeping in mind the final objective, the final outcome we want to get. The lesson distribution issue will not be resolved, since that is a fundamental issue of philosophy. One school may choose to give 2 classes in Armenian in the graduating class, and another would have 5. That is a fundamental difference in approach and it will not change. But an average can be sought and the target objectives can be defined based on that average."[19]

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19. Various informants spoke about language accreditation efforts concerning Western Armenian that had taken place in Lebanon several years ago. This was at the time of reforms in the Lebanese education system and a proposal was tabled to have a third elective language option (besides Arabic and French or English) as part of the official Baccalauréat examination programme (e.g. Italian, German, Armenian, etc.). However it stayed only as a plan and has not been developed further by the government. According to the informants there is not much hope that this option could be revived by the government at this stage, because doing so would entail serious overhaul within the public education sector with heavy investments in professional development of educators. If to be pursued, the issue has a lot to do with political leverages apparently. In theory, a language accreditation for Western Armenian in Lebanon would be ideal, because it will: 1. change attitudes towards the language, 2. have serious influence on the status of Armenian teachers, 3. raise the bar on teaching and learning Armenian. Given the potential impact of such an avenue, the issue should be reexamined thinking of alternatives, including the possibility of a unified assessment programme at the end of primary (grade 6) and secondary (grade 12) cycles across all Armenian schools.

Concept for an Intergenerational Storytelling Project (reflecting core principles of pedagogical sustainability) – Based on a linguistic and cultural regeneration model and utilizing oral history and digital storytelling, a themed general project can be created (e.g. documenting the history of the community) with a multi-year plan (2-5 years). The main component of the project is geared towards the schools as a "living history" programme and is grounded in a student-centred project-based collaborative learning model. Its various components can be carried out at different levels from primary to secondary cycles. In addition the project can have post-secondary and general community modules.

Throughout the duration of the project an ongoing series of workshops provides support to educators on curricular applications and various digital platforms. The project can also be adapted to pre-service and in-service teacher education modules.

A vital emphasis of the project is to connect together youth, educators, researchers, artists, community members. The end of the project can culminate through a series of activities such as memoryscapes, soundscapes, audiowalks, multimedia exhibitions, documentaries, performances, roundtables, and an international conference.

Curricular reform is also ultimately tied to textbook reform; the first leading into the latter however, and not the other way round. Various informants mentioned the necessity of both processes and talked about pan-community discussions along the dual tracks that had started to take place. The CGF-sponsored Centre/Programme for Teacher Education can therefore harness this momentum and easily take the lead in contributing to curricular reform, considering also that any such reform effort should address revitalization processes of Western Armenian and incorporate educational innovation. The following key areas should be an integral part of the process and content of curricular reform:

- Curricular reform should be carefully designed in order not to be textbook-oriented and/or anchored. Textbooks are auxiliary resources. This is an important philosophical foundation that must be considered seriously. Beyond content area, the main anchor of curricular reform should emphasize student-centred approaches with special emphasis on innovative teaching methodologies, including arts-based approaches as well as the introduction of digital and creative technologies.

- **[c]** Any introduction of technology in education necessitates the existence of well-honed support mechanisms. All educators need to have continuous support and training on new developments, usage, and inclusion of technologies in education. This refers to both training in the usage of various digital platforms (ranging from email, to web searches and mining, to social media, to computer skills, to using web tools in the classroom) and most importantly to a deeper discussion on the curricular applications of such platforms. Basically, it is important to go beyond the external veneer and use digital platforms intelligently, as tools and resources that can facilitate learning within a context that is relevant to students' lived realities.

  Basically, it is important to go beyond the external veneer and use digital platforms intelligently

- Armenian-related subjects across the board in both primary and secondary cycles must become attractive and have a contemporary feel. Historically, Armenian as a language has demonstrated flexibility in its evolution. For Western Armenian to be revitalized now, traditional modes of transmission have to give way to appealing and importantly, relevant methods for today's generation. This in turn implies making sure both the form and content of the curriculum fuse organically, always bridging the material to the present.

- Identifying and including cross-curricular competencies both within Armenian-related subjects as well as between the former and the rest of the school curriculum will go a long way in ensuring Armenian language, literature and history instruction do not become isolated units, but resonate with the actual contexts of students. One particular competency that should be encouraged is the integration of media literacy within Armenian-related subjects, because of the seamless way it can fuse a deeper understanding of various digital platforms into the classroom material and their usage, while also emphasizing the importance of critical thinking. In fact, since media literacy is as important a competency for students as it is for teachers, it should be included in all pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes.

- Universal access is another crucial aspect in this framework, implying the need for a gradual implementation, so that within a realistic timeframe classrooms become connected. Reflecting on the prevailing traditional modes and lack of resources in teaching, one teacher pointed out, "It feels like I am a soldier who is ready to fight, but my only weapons are an arrow and a bow, while others are using laser weapons!" Investing in the inclusion of technology in education will ultimately raise the bar in terms of the pedagogical infrastructure of the schools, making them more attractive for parents naturally. Equally, it has become increasingly important to not only build a databank of existing online resources on various teaching subjects related to the Armenian curriculum, but to actually contribute to the creation of digital resources. As such a web presence is vital. A specific web portal that would have various links ranging from resources to guidelines on different aspects of the curriculum should be explored for its possibilities.

- **[c]** In seeking alternative and creative avenues to promote Armenian literacy, emphasis should be laid on melding language and digital literacies together. This becomes especially central, considering the widespread concern over the "latinization" of the alphabet due to frequent social media usage among the youth. As worrisome as swapping the Armenian alphabet for the Latin one or the appearance of "crossover lettering" are, they are clear symptoms that the youth today do not perceive Western Armenian as a functional language. A viable alternative can be shaped only when creativity, functionality and relevance are given their due and nurturing place in the learning process in literacy practices. Only when the Internet, web tools, digital plat-forms, creative technologies become part and parcel of the curriculum and teaching methodologies, would change be perceptible and the trend be reversed. A reformed Armenological curriculum would envision video games, animation, video and music clips, soundscapes, memoryscapes, virtual tours, websites prepared and constructed by students working in unison in collaborative teams, where teachers become facili-tators, co-researching with their students all throughout the primary and secondary cycles. Interestingly, the advantage of introducing technology in the classroom is that it can equalize power relations, contributing to a more egalitarian and horizontal re-lationship between students and teachers, where if need be, tech-savvy students can take the lead and teachers can step back from "teaching" and participate in the learning process themselves. Peer-learning and mentorship become important learning concepts in such a context and should be encouraged.

  Emphasis should be laid on melding language and digital literacies together [...] video games, animation, video and music clips, soundscapes, memoryscapes, virtual tours, websites

- Successful global models of education programmes and curricula must be examined and experts in-vited to contribute to the curricular reform. Additionally, it will also be vital to connect with progressive educational platforms and institutions in the diaspora and in Armenia, for an exchange and dialogue on best practices in curriculum preparation and in setting up creative tech-based educational pro-grammes.

- It is highly desirable that the textbook reform initiative eventually follow a similar path as outlined above. Tech platforms for textbooks should also be explored, if not at the onset, then within a realistic timeframe. Interactive textbooks, audiobooks, iOS or other platform apps, must become part of the new culture of reform, so that the textbooks do not become obsolete in a short span of time. A re-formed curriculum will go a long way in informing the path textbook reform will need to take.

4. EXCHANGE AND DIALOGUE

Currently, a shift in public discourse within the Lebanese-Armenian community is noticeable towards the need for more pan-community decision-making around education issues. Modeling a collaborative cul-ture of practice, the Centre/Programme for Teacher Education can take a leadership role in these efforts. A core strategy of the Centre/Programme should be an emphasis on exchange and dialogue as the basis of knowledge transfer, reflection on process, and discussion on best practices both locally and globally – i.e. among the various sectors of the community and between the local Armenian community and other dias-pora centres. Successful practices of different schools, progressive pedagogical models, various approach-es, exchange of information, in formal and informal settings should be shared among scholars, educators, teachers, pedagogues across boundaries, through face to face encounters, informal retreats, pedagogical dialogue, virtual portals, video conferences, chatrooms, experimenting with various synchronous and asyn-chronous modes.

Several initiatives can advance the process of dialogue:
- *Creating a transnational network of Armenian education scholars* – this is a vital task since it will provide

a working basis for a number of different initiatives such as organizing conferences, visiting professorships, international workshops, various forms of publications (proceedings, a print or e-journal, working papers) while also providing opportunities for peer and intergenerational mentoring among junior and senior scholars, as well as support for graduate students in education. In short, the network can act as a base of intellectual support for a transnational education revitalization movement and create active discourse around it.

- *Creating a network of principals, teachers, educators* – this will be similar in nature to the scholars' network. While the two networks are different, they are also naturally interlinked and connections between the two should be encouraged through active dialogue in the form of working retreats, targeted workshops, public talks, joint publications and/or projects, etc. Along the formal channels of exchange and dialogue, informal connections within this particular network should be encouraged constantly. Regular in-situ gatherings in informal settings can sometimes lead to unexpected and productive dialogue, which can eventually lead to deeper levels of a reflective process on best practices. In addition, familiarity with one another through regular meetings can bring down invisible isolating walls, create opportunities of collaboration, and provide a necessary support mechanism within the profession of teaching and educational leadership. Such a network can also tangibly contribute to creating an intergenerational dialogue among junior and senior teachers.

Teachers become facilitators, co-researching with their students

- *Encouraging exchange among various local education councils* – While apparently small informal steps have taken place through personal initiatives of members of different councils, it will be important to create formal dialogue channels among the local education councils. The Centre/Programme can in this case function as the neutral space to initiate dialogue and discussion on various education issues that are common concerns for all sectors in the community, from curricular reform to joint initiatives and problem solving on specific issues.

- *Establishing a biannual pan-diaspora conference on education* – This should be designed in an accessible format, bridging theory and practice, so that teachers also have an opportunity to participate. The general idea is to encourage intellectual input and reflective thinking in teachers on the art, craft and practice of teaching. The conferences can also lead to publications in print and/or on-line formats, of proceedings and articles in scholarly journals.

- *Establish visiting professorships* with various Armenian education scholars globally. (See under **Teacher Education**.)

- *Dissemination issues* – Teaching is intellectual work. As such dissemination of ideas and establishing public discourse resources are also a necessary part of the discipline of teaching. The cumulative sum of the initiatives mentioned above can eventually become a foundational basis for a centralized web portal which can include various open and restricted access areas, featuring education-related links, events, resources, an online educators' forum, members only informal chatrooms, etc. In addition, the web portal would support multitrack (online and offline) publications:

1. A teachers' blog or e-zine featuring classroom oriented material from resources to lesson plans to multimedia tools to new developments in the field of education.

2. A more scholarly oriented but accessible transnational multilingual journal on pedagogy that will focus on various aspects of the field of education alongside discussion of challenges of Armenian schools in different communities worldwide. Various possibilities of publication, such as open or restricted access, should be explored.

3. Education-themed book series that will look at the history and historiography of the Armenian school and the life stories of prominent Armenian educators, from ancient to modern times.

5. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Whereas the Special Task Force will initiate the first series of studies to build an accurate portrait of specific aspects of the schools, research and development should be an important mandate of the Centre/Programme for Teacher Education. Almost all the informants referred to the lack of evidence-based studies not only in education, but across the board. Nor is this sore issue confined only to the Lebanese-Armenian community. This significant lack in research must be addressed in earnest, in order to make informed decisions and plan strategically for the long-term based on actual data. The following can be initial steps towards the establishment of a research and development agenda:

- *Identifying and commissioning a series of studies* – spearheaded by the Special Task Force, a set of mini-studies can focus on providing clear statistical data of community demographics with its various social, economic, educational aspects. (For example, establishing a portrait of the Armenian diasporan teacher: age, education level, diploma, specialization, qualification, salary, etc.) However, it is imperative to go beyond the establishment of statistical databases and create/commission in-depth qualitative studies in various aspects and formats. In general, it will be important to have both a short-term and long-term R&D plan.

- *Encouraging research in various topics on Armenian schools* through an indirect recruitment of both pre-service and graduate Armenian students in education in various local higher education institutions. This can be a two-way flow: addressing the need for research while preparing the ground for future specialists and professionals in education, thus creating a sustainable model with community service at its core.

- *Establishing a "working papers" series* on diverse themes in education (curricular and textbook reform, educational leadership and management, teaching methodologies, educational research, various forms of inquiry, educational psychology and counseling, interdisciplinary approaches, etc.) which will be open access and can be multilingual, to be featured through an online bank of resources on the web portal.

"We need to change our attitude towards educational institutions. These are places that need a new way of thinking and working, new methodologies, new people, to keep up with the times. An educator should know what's happening in his/her discipline, in the education sphere in other parts of the world and be able to measure up to them"

CONCLUSION

As one educator argued eloquently, "if we can create a system with the inherent belief that a school is a centre of pedagogy, then this should be the main springboard of everything else to come. Yes we need teachers who know their subject fields well, but they *also* need to be educators and pedagogues. Once we

It is still possible to reverse the tide as long as we embrace change, take risks, invest in human resources, back creative and multi-vectored solutions

work in a student-centred approach, once this vision is implemented, once we make *this* the centre of our endeavours in how we envision our schools to be, then all the other issues can also be resolved gradually. The human resources and investment in them are what is paramount. The impetus of change should be around this axis, and the financial issues will follow in finding a resolution."

Despite the many challenges the Armenian education system in Lebanon faces, it is still possible to reverse the tide as long as we embrace change, take risks, invest in human resources, back creative and multi-vectored solutions, grounded in evidence-based research and sound strategizing. The building blocks of a systematic structural overhaul will be a reality once incremental change is adopted towards actualizing an education system that is student-centred with a solid pedagogical base.

The Armenian Communities Department of CGF with its long-standing reputation of supporting key educational endeavours in the diaspora is well-positioned to take a leadership role in fostering a new culture of practice – a culture of teaching and learning where the core concepts of collaboration, dialogue, ownership, accountability converge to nurture the potential of a youthful generation and contribute to the revitalization of Western Armenian.

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APPENDICES

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – Chart of recommendations and responsibilities

ACD-CGF = Armenian Communities Department of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

Centre for TE = Centre/Programme for Teacher Education

[c] = conditionality clause to be considered by CGF for further support

Recommendation	ACD-CGF	Centre for TE	Special Task Force	Financial Task Force	Education Councils	Schools	Principals	Teachers
Conditionality clause in grants	x							
ACD-CGF education pro-gramme officer	x							
Creation of a Special (Educa-tion) Task Force in Lebanon	x							
Financial Sustainability	[c]				x	x		
Continued engagement with Armenian schools in Lebanon	x							
Set milestones and conditions	x			x				
Successful fulfillment of condi-tions and milestones	[c]				x	x		
Strategic disbursement of funds (towards larger project-based rotating funding)	x							
Financial task force in Lebanon	x							
Capacity building for schools and educational councils				x	x	x		
Assistance to schools in draw-ing up realistic forecasts and budget plans				x				
Set up financial sustainability targets	[c]			x	x	x		
Cut expenditures				x	x	x		
Rethink the role of alumni associations and parent com-mittees				x	x	x		
Assistance in setting up trust and Endowment funds				x	x	x		
Explore matching funds				x	x	x		
Assistance in setting up realis-tic income-generating projects				x	x	x		
Convince parents to pay tui-tion fees				x	x	x		
Possibility of other creative avenues				x	x	x		
Pedagogical Sustainability	[c]							

Recommendation	ACD-CGF	Centre for TE	Special Task Force	Financial Task Force	Education Councils	Schools	Principals	Teachers
Centre for Teacher Education	x		x					
Teacher education		x	x		x	x	x	x
Identify "master teachers"		x	x					
Establish "teacher of the year" awards		x	x		x	x		
Create special "in-house" fellowships or scholarships for Armenian educators		x	x		x	x		
Establish visiting professorships		x	x					
Establish competition-based internship/ teaching practicum awards		x	x					
Institutionalize mandatory in-service teacher education	[c]	x	x		x	x		x
Increase the number of peda-gogical days in schools					x	x		
Establish an educational leadership and management track for principals within the in-service programme	[c]	x	x				x	
Examine gender bias and gender-based stereotypes in teaching, textual and curricular resources		x	x	x	x	x		
Curricular reform, educational innovation, and creative technologies		x	x		x	x		
Curricular reform not to be textbook-oriented		x	x		x	x	x	x
Establish support mechanisms for introduction of technology in education	[c]	x	x		x	x	x	
Make Armenian-related sub-jects attractive and contem-porary		x	x		x	x	x	x
Identify and include cross-curricular competencies		x	x		x	x	x	x
Universal access	x	x			x	x		
Meld language and digital literacies together	[c]	x	x		x		x	x
Examine successful global models of education pro-grammes and curricula		x	x		x			
Textbook reform initiative to follow similar path		x	x		x	x		
Exchange and Dialogue		x	x		x	x	x	x
Create a transnational network of Armenian education scholars	x	x	x					

Recommendation	ACD-CGF	Centre for TE	Special Task Force	Financial Task Force	Education Councils	Schools	Principals	Teachers
Create a network of principals, teachers, educators		x	x		x	x	x	x
Encourage exchange among various local education councils		x	x		x			
Establish biannual conferences on education		x	x					
Establish visiting professor-ships with various Armenian education scholars globally (see under Teacher education)		x	x					
Dissemination issues		x	x					
1. A teachers' blog or e-zine		x						x
2. A more scholarly oriented but accessible transnational multilingual journal on pedagogy		x	x					
3. Education-themed book series		x	x					
Research and Development		x	x					
Identify and commission a series of studies	x	x	x					
Encourage research in various topics on Armenian schools		x	x					
Establish a "working papers" series on diverse themes in education		x	x					

APPENDIX 2 - Individuals visited/interviewed

	Name
1	Anahid Donabedian
2	Ani Toranian
3	Anita Lebiar
4	Antranig Granian, Father
5	Ara Vasilian
6	Araxie Chahinian
7	Armen Urneshlian
8	Asdghig Zakarian-Jerahian
9	Dikran Jinbashian
10	Dzovik Torikian
11	Garo Aprahamian
12	Garo Arakelian
13	Gregoire Kaloust
14	Hagop Havatian
15	Hagop Yacoubian
16	Hovig Bertizlian
17	Jirayr Tanielian
18	Kegham Kacherian, Archbishop
19	Keghani Etiemezian
20	Madlen Vartanian
21	Maral Antoyan
22	Maral Aslanian-Baliozian
23	Maral Boyadjian
24	Norayr Najarian
25	Paul Haidostian, Rev.
26	Raffi Hovsepian
27	Sahag Dedeyan
28	Seta Karageozian
29	Sevan Tanielian
30	Srpouhi Jenanian
31	Vartoug Balekjian
32	Vergine Cherchian
33	Viken Avakian
34	Viken Cherchian
35	Yervant Kassouny
36	Zaven Messerlian
37	Zohrab Ghazarian
38	Education Council of the National Prelacy
39	Hamazkayin Central Committee

APPENDIX 3 – School enrolment figures

School	2001-2002 academic year	2011-2012 academic year	10-year comparison (2001/02-2011/12)	2012-2013 academic year	1-year comparison (2011/12-2012/13)	No. of Syrian-Arm. students in 2012-2013
National Schools:						
Levon & Sophia Hagopian College	295	195	-100	249	54	50
Yeghishe Manougian	566	515	-51	604	89	82
Harach K. Gulbenkian	219	219	0	241	22	14
Souren Khanamirian College	314	146	-168	162	16	17
Srpots Karasoun Mangants	260	177	-83	185	8	46
Aksor Kasarjian	236	126	-110	158	32	35
Apkarian	152	99	-53	106	7	13
Roupinian	183	75	-108	111	36	10
Noubarian-Khrimian	62	105	43	123	18	1
Tchatalbashian	56	0	-56	0	0	0
Total	**2343**	**1657**	**-686**	**1939**	**282**	**268**
Birds' Nest	160	43	-117			
Evangelical Schools:						
Shamlian-Tatigian	265	322	57	334	12	20
Evangelical School - Ainjar	311	247	-64	253	6	8
Armenian Evangelical College	106	133	27	152	19	4
Central High School	281	295	14	316	21	10
Trad Evangelical	102	0	-102	0	0	0
Torosian	213	212	-1	188	-24	7
Gertmenian	212	98	-114	113	15	15
Total	**1490**	**1307**	**-183**	**1356**	**49**	**64**

School	2001-2002 academic year	2011-2012 academic year	10-year comparison (2001/02-2011/12)	2012-2013 academic year	1-year comparison (2011/12-2012/13)	No. of Syrian-Arm. students in 2012-2013
Catholic Schools:						
Mesrobian	791	823	32	821	-2	6
St. Hripsimiants	677	486	-191	478	-8	4
Mkhitarian	309	222	-87	222	0	0
St. Agnes	393	315	-78	305	-10	12
Harboyan-Holy Cross	278	415	137	440	25	28
Catholic Sisters	95	70	-25	73	3	7
Total	**2543**	**2331**	**-212**	**2339**	**8**	**57**
AGBU Schools:						
Tarouhi-Hovagimian	251	168	-83	194	26	
Garmirian	271	105	-166	162	57	
Nazarian	260	145	-115	166	21	
Total	**782**	**418**	**-364**	**522**	**104**	**111**
Other:						
M&H Aslanian Jemaran	785	670	-115	672	2	
Tekeyan	188	140	-48	123	-17	6
Sahagian-Mgrditchian	36	52	16			
Total of all schools	**8327**	**6618**	**-1709**	**6951**	**428**	**500**

APPENDIX 4 - Distribution of Syrian-Armenian Students in 2012-13

All Schools

School Affiliations	No. of Schools	No. of S-A students
Catholic	6	57
AGBU	3	111
Evangelical	6	64
National	9	268
Other	1	6
Total	25	506

AGBU Schools

School	No. of S-A students
Tarouhi-Hovagimian	
Garmirian	
Nazarian	
Total	111

Evangelical Schools

School	No. of S-A students
Shamlian-Tatigian	20
Ainjar	8
AEC	4
CHS	10
Torosian	7
Gertmenian	15
Total	64

Catholic Schools

School	No. of S-A students
Mesrobian	6
St. Hripsimiants	4
Mkhitarian	0
St. Agnes	12
H-Holy Cross	28
Catholic Sisters	7
Total	57

National Schools

School	No. of S-A students
L.&S. Hagopian	50
Y. Manougian	82
H-Gulbenkian	14
Khanamirian	17
S.K. Mangants	46
A. Kasarjian	35
Apkarian	13
Roupinian	10
N. Khrimian	1
Total	268

Other

School	No. of S-A students
Tekeyan	6

APPENDIX 5 - Distribution of Armenological subjects in school syllabi (classes/week out of 40 periods)

AGBU Garmirian Intermediate School

Grades	Language/Literature	History	Religion
Grade 1	7	2	1
Grade 2	6	2	1
Grade 3	6	2	1
Grade 4	6	2	1
Grade 5	6	2	1
Grade 6	5	1	1
Grade 7	5	1	1

AGBU Tarouhi-Hovagimian Secondary School

Grades	Language/Literature	History
Grade 7	5	2
Grade 8	5	2
Grade 9	4	2
Grade 10	4	1
Grade 11	4	1
Grade 12	0	0

Tekeyan Intermediate School

Grades	Language	Literature	History	Religion
Grade 1	6		1	1
Grade 2	6		1	1
Grade 3	5		1	1
Grade 4	7		1	1
Grade 5	5		2	
Grade 6	5		2	
Grade 7	5		2	
Grade 8	3		1	
Grade 9	1	1	1	

Mesrobian Catholic School

Grades	Combined (Language, History, Religion)
Grade 1	7
Grade 2	6
Grade 3	7
Grade 4	7
Grade 5	5
Grade 6	5
Grade 7	5
Grade 8	4
Grade 9	2
Grade 10	3
Grade 11	3
Grade 12	1

Evangelical AEC School

Grades	Language/Literature	History	Religion	Geography
Grade 1	6	2	2	
Grade 2	6	2	2	
Grade 3	6	2	2	1
Grade 4	6	2	2	
Grade 5	5	2	2	
Grade 6	5	2	2	
Grade 7	5	2	1	
Grade 8	5	2	1	
Grade 9	5		1	
Grade 10	4		1	
Grade 11	4	1	1	
Grade 12	1			

National Schools

Grades	Language/Literature	History	Religion/Arm. Church History	Geography	Classics
Grade 1	8	2	1		
Grade 2	8	2	1		
Grade 3	8	2	2	1	
Grade 4	7	2	1		1
Grade 5	7	2	1		1
Grade 6	7	2	1		1
Grade 7	6	2	1		
Grade 8	6	2	1		
Grade 9	6	2	1		
Grade 10	4	2		1	
Grade 11	4	2		1	
Grade 12	3	2			1

Jemaran

S = science stream

L = literature stream

Grades	Language/Literature	History	Church History	Classical Arm.	Classics	Arm. Civics
Grade 1	9	2				
Grade 2	7	2				
Grade 3	7	2				
Grade 4	7	2				
Grade 5	7	2				
Grade 6	6	2				
Grade 7	6	2				
Grade 8	6	2				
Grade 9	5	2				
Grade 10	4	2				
Grade 11/S	3	2				1
Grade 11/L	3	2	1	1	2	1
Grade 12/S	1					
Grade 12/L	1					

Comparative view of Armenological classes in various schools

Grades	Jemaran	National Schools	AGBU Schools	Evangelical (AEC)	Catholic (Mesrobian)	Tekeyan
Grade 1	11	11	10	10	7	8
Grade 2	9	11	9	10	6	8
Grade 3	9	13	9	11	7	7
Grade 4	9	11	9	10	7	9
Grade 5	9	11	9	9	5	7
Grade 6	8	11	7	9	5	7
Grade 7	8	9	7	8	5	7
Grade 8	8	9	7	8	4	4
Grade 9	7	9	6	6	2	3
Grade 10	6	7	5	5	3	
Grade 11	6-10	7	5	6	3	
Grade 12	2	6	0	1	1	

APPENDIX 6 - Tuition scales in various schools

Jemaran (in USD)

	Registration	Tuition		Expenses
		2012-2013	**2013-2014**	
Preschool	200	1650	1900	500
Kindergarten	200	2100	2400	500
Elementary	200	2200	2500	500
Intermediate	200	2500	2900	500
Secondary	200	3000	3450	500

Yeghishe Manougian (in USD)

	Registration	Tuition	Misc.	Stationary
Preschool	250	1350	250	
Kindergarten	250	1200	250	150
Elementary (1,2,3)	250	1450	250	
Elementary (4,5,6)	250	1550	250	150
Intermediate	250	1900	250	150
Secondary (10,11)	250	2100	250	150
Secondary (12)	250	2400	250	150

Sophia Hagopian (in USD)

	Registration	Tuition	Misc.
Intermediate (7)	175	1400	325
Intermediate (8,9)	175	1450	325
Secondary (10, 11)	175	1700	325
Secondary (12)	175	1800	325
BT	175	1200	325

Noubarian-Khrimian (exchange rate: 1USD=1500LL)

	Registration		Tuition		Misc.	
	LL	USD	LL	USD	LL	USD
Kindergarten	150,000	100	1,500,000	1000	250,000	167
Elementary	150,000	100	1,710,000	1140	250,000	167
Intermediate	150,000	100	2,010,000	1340	250,000	167

Khanamirian

	Registration	Tuition	Misc.
Kindergarten	225	600	175
Elementary (1,2,3)	225	900	175
Elementary (4,5,6)	225	1100	175
Intermediate	275	1200	175

Roupinian (exchange rate: 1USD=1500LL)

	Registration		Tuition		Misc.	
	LL	USD	LL	USD	LL	USD
Kindergarten	225,000	150	750,000	500	150,000	100
Elementary	225,000	150	1,000,000	667	150,000	100

Apkarian (in USD)

	Registration	Tuition	Misc.
Kindergarten	100	500	100
Elementary	100	600	100

Aksor Kasarjian (exchange rate: 1USD=1500LL)

	Registration		Tuition		Misc.	
	LL	USD	LL	USD	LL	USD
Kindergarten	150,000	100	600,000	400	50,000	34
Elementary	150,000	100	700,000	467	50,000	34

40 Mangants (exchange rate: 1USD=1500LL)

	Registration		Tuition		Misc.	
	LL	USD	LL	USD	LL	USD
Kindergarten	150,000	100	500,000	334	150,000	100
Elementary	150,000	100	700,000	467	150,000	100

Harach-Gulbenkian (exchange rate: 1USD=1500LL)

	Registration		Tuition		Misc.	
	LL	USD	LL	USD	LL	USD
Kindergarten	200,000	134	800,000	534	250,000	167
Elementary	250,000	167	1,000,000	667	250,000	167
Intermediate	250,000	167	1,250,000	834	250,000	167
Secondary	250,000	167	1,500,000	1000	250,000	167

Evangelical Schools (exchange rate: 1 USD=1500LL)

| | AEC | | | | CHS | | | | | |
| | Registration | | Tuition | | Registration | | Tuition | | Misc. | |
	LL	USD	LL	USD	LL	USD	LL	USD	LL	USD
Kindergarten	500,000	334	1,885,000	1256	350,000	233			300,000	200
Prekindergarten							1,775,000	1183	300,000	200
Kindergarten I							2,475,000	1650	300,000	200
Kindergarten II							2,475,000	1650	300,000	200
Grade 1	500,000	334	2,400,000	1600	350,000	233	3,075,000	2050	300,000	200
Grade 2	500,000	334	2,400,000	1600	350,000	233	3,075,000	2050	300,000	200
Grade 3	500,000	334	2,650,000	1766	350,000	233	3,075,000	2050	300,000	200
Grade 4	500,000	334	2,650,000	1766	350,000	233	3,375,000	2250	300,000	200
Grade 5	500,000	334	2,650,000	1766	350,000	233	3,375,000	2250	300,000	200
Grade 6	500,000	334	2,750,000	1833	350,000	233	3,375,000	2250	300,000	200
Grade 7	500,000	334	2,800,000	1866	350,000	233	3,625,000	2416	300,000	200
Grade 8	500,000	334	3,000,000	2000	350,000	233	3,625,000	2416	300,000	200
Grade 9	500,000	334	3,050,000	2033	350,000	233	3,625,000	2416	300,000	200
Grade 10	500,000	334	3,400,000	2266	350,000	233	4,325,000	2883	300,000	200
Grade 11	500,000	334	3,800,000	2533	350,000	233	4,325,000	2883	300,000	200
Grade 12	500,000	334	4,000,000	2666	350,000	233	4,325,000	2883	300,000	200

Evangelical Schools (exchange rate: 1 USD=1500LL)

| | Gertmenian | | | | Ainjar | | | | | |
| | Registration | | Tuition | | Registration | | Tuition | | Misc. | |
	LL	USD	LL	USD	LL	USD	LL	USD	LL	USD
Kindergarten			300,000	200	300,000	200	800,000	533	300,000	200
Prekindergarten									300,000	200
Kindergarten I									300,000	200
Kindergarten II									300,000	200
Grade 1			300,000	200	300,000	200	1,200,000	800	300,000	200
Grade 2			300,000	200	300,000	200	1,200,000	800	300,000	200
Grade 3			300,000	200	300,000	200	1,200,000	800	300,000	200
Grade 4			300,000	200	300,000	200	1,200,000	800	300,000	200
Grade 5			300,000	200	300,000	200	1,200,000	800	300,000	200
Grade 6			300,000	200	350,000	233	1,350,000	900	300,000	200
Grade 7					350,000	233	1,350,000	900	300,000	200
Grade 8					350,000	233	1,350,000	900	300,000	200
Grade 9					350,000	233	1,350,000	900	300,000	200
Grade 10					400,000	266	1,500,000	1000	300,000	200
Grade 11					400,000	266	1,500,000	1000	300,000	200
Grade 12					400,000	266	1,500,000	1000	300,000	200

Evangelical Schools (exchange rate: 1USD=1500LL)

| | Torosian | | | | Shamlian-Tatigian | | | | | |
| | Registration | | Tuition | | Registration | | Tuition | | Misc. | |
	LL	USD	LL	USD	LL	USD	LL	USD	LL	USD
Kindergarten	300,000	200	1,800,000	1200	200,000	133			300,000	200
Prekindergarten	300,000	200					1,050,000	700	300,000	200
Kindergarten I							1,150,000	766	300,000	200
Kindergarten II							1,250,000	833	300,000	200
Grade 1	300,000	200	2,050,000	1366	200,000	133	1,500,000	1000	300,000	200
Grade 2	300,000	200	2,050,000	1366	200,000	133	1,650,000	1100	300,000	200
Grade 3	300,000	200	2,050,000	1366	200,000	133	1,750,000	1166	300,000	200
Grade 4	300,000	200	2,050,000	1366	200,000	133	1,900,000	1266	300,000	200
Grade 5	300,000	200	2,050,000	1366	200,000	133	2,150,000	1433	300,000	200
Grade 6	300,000	200	2,050,000	1366	200,000	133	2,400,000	1600	300,000	200
Grade 7	300,000	200	2,300,000	1533	200,000	133	2,500,000	1666	300,000	200
Grade 8	300,000	200	2,300,000	1533	200,000	133	2,650,000	1766	300,000	200
Grade 9	300,000	200	2,300,000	1533	200,000	133	2,750,000	1833	300,000	200
Grade 10					200,000	133	2,900,000	1933	300,000	200
Grade 11					200,000	133	3,050,000	2033	300,000	200
Grade 12					200,000	133	3,250,000	2166	300,000	200

APPENDIX 7 - Sample questionnaire

The following is only a baseline questionnaire I used as a guide. Each interview/discussion naturally took its own path ranging between 1-3 hours.

Info and stats on:

1. Graduates – where do they end up? What percentage follows Armenian studies as a profession?
    a. Graduate degrees and an academic career
    b. Editors in other communities
    c. Journalists in other communities
    d. Teachers, educators in other communities.

2. Textual and non-textual resources – what age groups?
    a. What kind of resources are produced locally?
        i. Textbooks – for local and/or global diasporic market
        ii. Children's literature
        iii. Extracurricular – children's magazines, different resources
        iv. Audio books.
    b. Are these resources "exported" to other communities? Made to order for or commissioned by other communities?

Educators:

1. Average age of teachers of Armenian subjects.
2. Pedagogical background.
3. What degrees and specializations do they have?
4. What innovative approaches do they use?
    a. Creative pedagogical strategies
    b. Cross-curricular approaches
    c. Art-based methodologies in teaching
    d. Creative technologies
    e. Amalgamation of all.
5. Description of a typical lesson.
6. What type of textbook and curricular (material, non-material) resources do they use?
7. What are particular challenges they face?
8. Class sizes – big or small – what is advantage/disadvantage in that?
9. What kind of collaborative work if any is there among teachers (local: within school and among schools, regional: other Middle Eastern countries, transnational: with other diasporic communities and/or Armenia contexts)?
10. How student-centred is their teaching?
11. What is their teaching philosophy?
    a. How do they work with students? Group work, collaborative work? Project-based work? Reading and writing workshops?
12. What kind of support network do they have among teaching staff and with educational leadership? Idea of Armenian teachers' association, global and local.
13. What do they see the role of the school leadership to be?

14. What kind of a support network do they have (within and outside community, professional organization membership, any other resources)?
15. What are the challenges they face (teaching, school) and how do they think they can resolve them? What is their vision?
16. What impact do they think their school has locally, regionally, transnationally?
17. What would an ideal class, school, collaboration, professional development opportunity look like (wish list)?

Principals:

1. Do the schools have web presence?
2. Are web tools used in any significant way to communicate with teachers, students, parents?
3. What are the concerns of the schools in terms of enrolment?
a. How do they see trend of parents' decisions to send children to non-Armenian schools?
4. Graduation: concerns, rates, etc.
5. Financial issues:
   a. What long-term planning is in place?
   b. How do they strive for sustainability? Any PR, fundraising, marketing, branding strategies they use?
   c. What is role of alumni and/or parents if any?
6. What is tuition charged and how does it compare to non-Armenian schools?
7. Professional development:
   a. Does the school organize pedagogical days and/or any professional development around them?
8. How do they envision a sustainable educational system that involves the parents, teachers, students and community at large at a grassroots level? PTA – alumni.
9. What kind of support network do they have (local, inter-community and/or global)?
10. What professional educational organizations if any do they/school admin belong to? Local (Armenian and/or non-Armenian), regional, international.
11. What impact has their school had locally, regionally, transnationally?
12. What are the challenges the school faces and how do they think they can resolve them? What is their vision?
13. What would an ideal school, professional development opportunity, be for them (wish list)?

APPENDIX 8 - Terms of Reference of "A Study of Armenian Schools and Education in Lebanon"

Commissioned by Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Armenian Communities Department
Study conducted by Dr. Hourig Attarian
July 2013

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to provide an overview of the main challenges facing the Armenian schools in Lebanon and to provide policy recommendations. It is not a secret that enrolment in Armenian schools has declined considerably and Armenian schools face significant financial constraints. The study should analyse the causes of such trends and provide suggestions for innovative but realistic policy and programming solutions that could be implemented by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the key stakeholders in Lebanon for the benefit of the Armenian public.

Scope

The geographic scope of the study is Lebanon and will cover all sectors of Armenian community education: primary and secondary schools administered by "Azgayin" patriarchate, the AGBU, Hamazkayin, the Evangelical and Catholic school systems. It will also incorporate the role of Haigazian University.

Key questions and Methodology

The core guiding question of the study is "what is the role of the Armenian school system in Lebanon in the preservation of Western Armenian, and how could it be enhanced?" It is often said that these schools are indispensible for the preservation of Western Armenian culture globally. On what evidence can we base this argument? More specifically, the study must analyse the specific challenges Lebanese-Armenian schools face, and what can be done to improve their capacities?

These are very big questions, and no quick study focussing only on one country can address them comprehensively. However, some factual and analytical bases are needed for better policy decisions in the specific context of Lebanon.

While the specific methodology of the study will be determined by the expert undertaking the study, it should ideally include:

- Open ended interviews with certain key individuals (community leaders, principals, intellectuals, some upper level students, etc.), and school visits.
- Examination of relevant documents, including past studies (if any).
- Analysis of trends, e.g. enrolment numbers, graduation rates, etc.
- An overview of the financial issues faced by the schools and the Armenian education system, the focus being on structural issues and not the budgets of specific schools.
- Exploration of linkages between schools and school systems, e.g. transfer of knowledge, lessons learned and best practices within Lebanon.
- Suggestions for possible links between schools in Lebanon and schools/institutions of formal and informal education abroad.
- Suggestions pertaining to curriculum and textbook modernisation, if need be.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hourig Attarian has obtained her PhD from the Faculty of Education, McGill University. She is currently Visiting Oral Historian at the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling, Concordia University. Nested in identity studies in education, her award-winning research explores autobiographical narratives of inherited exile, trauma, survival and healing. Her teaching experience spans from elementary to high school, to online educational platforms, to post-secondary settings. Within Armenian education contexts, she has developed innovative curricula integrating cross-curricular approaches, media literacy and web-based projects, in addition to leading teacher education workshops on project-based collaborative learning. She has also conducted extensive research on Armenian heritage language learners and their literacy practices in home and school settings. Her work with both students and educators has thrived in collaborative contexts, encouraging co-researching in the learning experience.

Attarian has numerous publications and international conference presentations on the topic of memory and identity, multilingualism and heritage language contexts in education. Among these are *Life/defying fiction: Unearthing traces of fractured memories in the archives; Narrating displacement: The pedagogy of exile; Following the trail of oral history: A story of literacy with Armenian children; The dictée in multilingual contexts: Exploring literacy memories across cultures* (co-authored with A. Beer et al.)*; The chameleon character of multilingual literacy portraits: Re-searching in "heritage" language places and spaces* (co-authored with M. Maguire et al.)*; Translating mother/tongue: A narrative of memory, displacement and identity; Language ideologies and education: An ethnography of textual resources in heritage language contexts*; *Texts and lives: An autobiographical account of learning and teaching with Armenian textbooks* and her recent book portraying a community oral history project within the Canadian-Armenian community of Montreal, *Blossoming Roots: Youth collecting life stories*.