

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY AND THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION IN LEBANON

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Abstract – A key element of Lebanon's constitution and national identity is religious diversity. This article sets out to examine the state of such diversity, and the relationship between that and education. Education has always had a high priority in Lebanon, yet the education system itself has lent itself to sectarian biases and rivalry. In order to understand the dynamics of educational development in Lebanon, therefore, it is important to consider the forces that constitute the Lebanese mosaic, and to be aware of its confessional political system. The implications of seventeen years of intermittent violence on sectarianism and education will be analysed with an investigation of what may lie ahead for education in Lebanon.

*'You are my brother and I love you;
I love you at prayers in your mosque,
at worship in your temple, at your devotions in your church;
for you and I are the son of the one religion – the spirit.'*

(Khalil Gibran, 1934)

Introduction

The ancient country called Lebanon, situated on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, had its borders carved at the 1920 Peace Conference. It is a country with 3 million people where 17 different ethnic and religious communities reside. Lebanon's very diversity endows it with a unique, intangible destiny, dedicated to liberty, progress and creativity. Yet in its diversity has emerged the very essence of its destruction.

In this paper the focus will be on religious diversity in Lebanon: it is this diversity which is the foundation of the country's constitution and national identity. Questions will be posed to try and analyse the role of education in the creation of a strong Lebanese national identity. What does education in Lebanon promote? Has the education system tried to weaken the sectarian biases? Are the well educated more tolerant and accepting of the diverse religious groups? Has the war added to or reduced sectarian rivalry? Have the youth in Lebanon evolved into a united homogenous people because of the national system of education?

These questions will require years of study in Lebanon and the creation of conceptual frameworks as bases for research. In this exploratory paper I will attempt to analyse the facts that are available in the literature on Lebanon, by focusing on the country's sectarian composition and on the impact this has on the national system of education. I will also focus on Lebanon's political system and its confessional characteristics, analysing how these have affected education and further divided the country. In conclusion I will look at scenarios for the future, and more specifically at the role of education in the future of Lebanon.

Sectarian composition and education

A mosaic society which has been a haven for the persecuted, Lebanon's religious composition is perhaps unique in its diversity, especially when considering that with a surface area of 10,452 square kilometres, we are talking about a small country. None of the communities in Lebanon can claim to constitute a majority. The diverse nature of the society is clearly reflected in its educational structures. There are as many systems and philosophies of education as there are religious communities (Barakat 1977). Each sect has its own schools, and over and above that, there are also foreign, public and private schools. The curriculum generally draws its inspiration from French or American traditions and systems of education.

Who constitutes this mosaic? It would be correct to say that Lebanese society is made up of Muslims and Christians, but within this twofold division lie several distinct social and traditional subcommunities. Among the Christians, for instance, one finds Maronites, Antiochian Orthodox, Greek Catholic (Melkite), Armenian (Orthodox and Catholic), and other minority Christian denominations. The Muslims include the Sunnis, Shia and Druze. Then there are the Palestinians who are mainly Sunni and Melkites. There are other subcommunities, but these are the ones that are most often referred to in the literature about Lebanon.

The largest of the Christian communities are the Maronites. Owing to their strong ties with France since the Crusades, their education has been mainly influenced by the French tradition. Indeed, many members from this community travel to France to receive further education or to find work, or attend the University of St Joseph, established in Lebanon by French Jesuits. The ties with France are further reinforced by the presence of a large active political and socio-cultural Lebanese community in the metropole (Ferkh 1991). Maronites are often considered by other sects to be élitist. They have an intense attachment to their country, yet are also open to western culture and means of education through their connection with France.

The Antiochian Orthodox communities identify themselves strongly with Arab nationalism and are less open to the influence of the west. They generally attend Maronite schools, but have their own schools as well. Another Christian group is made up of Melkites; these are Catholic, and their allegiance is to the Pope of Rome. The Melkites attend Christian schools, and per capita, they are the most prosperous community in the country. Many of the Palestinian Melkites who were highly educated received Lebanese citizenship and have integrated into the community (Cobban 1985).

The Armenians were welcomed into Lebanon after the Ottoman persecution of their community. The Christians in the host country considered the arrival of such a large number of refugees as an effective way of boosting their own numbers in the delicate balance of power in Lebanon. The Armenians are made up of Catholics and Orthodox groups, and they have formed a closely knit community, establishing their own schools thereby sustaining their language and identity. There will be further discussion of this community in the sections below.

Among the different Muslim communities are the Shias and the Sunnis. The former community has a fair number of adherents who declare an allegiance to the Khomeini of Iran. Shias generally live in the countryside and tend to be less economically 'advanced' and less formally educated, despite the fact that Moussa Al Sadr, their great leader, united and lifted some out of their deprived state in the 1970s. Sunnis are members of what could be referred to as mainstream Islam, and are generally more highly educated than the Shias. Indeed, Sunnis living in urban areas are part of the country's élite. Finally, it is important to mention the Druze, who were originally Muslim but who developed their own identity in the eleventh century. The details of their faith are kept secret by those who are the initiated learned. They have a strong communal pride and cohesion.

The plethora of sectarian identities, while constituting Lebanon's cultural wealth, also acts as a barrier to unity. The country is often perceived to be fragmented and volatile, and as having failed to attain genuine pluralism or a national identity. The reason for this situation is that most Lebanese identify themselves with the confession first, and only then with their nation. Their loyalties have often been to Pan-Arab nationalism, to the creation of a Greater Syria, or to Europe, which has led to antagonism by the opposing groups.

Historically, the Lebanese have tended to unite when there is a common vested interest, such as shared hostility towards Ottoman rule, or participation in the booming economy of the 50s and 60s. Such times tend to be characterised by tolerance and cooperation. However, during periods of internal hostility, sectarian divisions and communal identification become more pronounced and explicit.

Schools in Lebanon have been as diverse as its religious communities and their diversity has contributed to further social fragmentation, national disunity and

cultural disintegration. The education system reflects as well as maintains the establishment of a confessional system. However, it should be noted that neither Christianity nor Islam as religious convictions and faiths are in any way responsible for the hostilities that marked the country for seventeen years (Kadir 1984).

The attainment of high levels of education follow closely developments in industrialisation and urbanisation. According to Christiano (1987), the consciousness of the members of a society is simultaneously detached from tradition and broadened in scope. Consequently, the mind is opened and freed to discover, and people gain access to vast amounts of information. Christiano's historical research on North American cities at the turn of the century illustrates that through education there is a broadening of popular commitment and religious affiliation. Generally people tend to detach themselves from tradition and are introduced to new worlds of thought and experience, and thus open themselves up to intellectual change. Literacy therefore promotes – and illiteracy hampers – religious diversity. While Christiano's model provides us with an attractive framework for analysis, it fails to connect too readily with the situation in Lebanon, where religion seems to be far too deeply rooted. Indeed, one could claim that the more ignorant the masses were, the more control sectarian clan leaders had over them.

The confessional political system

The political system in Lebanon was designed to regulate the various subcommunities within the framework of one political community. After over half a century, Lebanon's political system remains a composition of sectarian groups with diverse and conflicting interests. Instead of creating a united nation state, the system has aggravated political controversy (Koury 1976).

The National Pact, 1943

The National Pact of 1943 played a significant role in freeing Lebanon to become a sovereign and independent state. It marked the start of a new phase of inter-sect political relationships which had evolved over the centuries. The Pact stipulated that the Lebanese president always be a Maronite and the parliament would have a 6:5 ratio of Christians to Muslims – to ensure Christian dominance and also to reflect the national demographic profile. The Prime Minister would be a Sunni and the Speaker of the House always a Shia. The rapid demographic growth among Muslim Lebanese - Christians tended to migrate more and have less

children – turned the population ratio around. From the 1950s, the Muslim Shia believed that they outnumbered the Christians and therefore wanted more power in government. The Muslim demand for political reform and for a greater role in government was however resisted by the Maronites. This in itself did not lead to the war, but one can consider it to be a prelude to the conflict, and one of the reasons that made it last for so long. The Pact, therefore, symbolised a resistance to sociological change in the content of the intersect coalition in Lebanon from 1943 to the 1970s.

Although the political system is still based on confessions, there was an assumption that the younger generation would be less heterogeneous and more tolerant due to a unified system of education, and due to higher educational attainment and exposure to different ways of life. Education, it was thought, would have a significant and positive impact on the course of nationalism and political socialisation. This perhaps might have been true twenty years ago before Lebanon's war became so horrific and violent. However, there is still evidence of sectarian biases and elitist attitudes and intolerance amongst youth and the well educated. Although one could claim that education has alleviated some aspects of conflict, and many private sectarian schools in certain areas accept any religious denomination, the underlying sectarian attitudes still prevail (Van der Gaag 1994).

It is common for Muslims to send their children to Christian schools of any denomination, despite the fact that there are well financed Islamic or Koranic schools in Lebanon. It is however extremely uncommon for Christians, especially Maronites, to attend Islamic private schools. For example, St. Anthony's College, which is a large Maronite school in South Mount Lebanon, has a very large Druze enrollment because of the area it is in. Scripture classes are not compulsory for the Druze students, and there existed a 'forced harmony' in the school environment. However, it is reported that during the war, the principal was threatened by the Druze militia because he refused to accept a civic text book which would have led to antagonism among the Maronite and Druze school community (Kassi 1994).

Writing in 1976, Koury pointed out that although education of the masses takes place in sectarian schools and that some of the media is also subject to sectarian biases, the fact that Lebanon is a small country leads one to expect its people to interact readily with each other, since they are 'neighbours'. Distances too are short, facilitating contact between different groups and communities. Koury therefore argued that the old social, economic, religious, political commitments might very well be eroded and new patterns of socialisation and behaviour emerge. It should be noted that Koury wrote this analysis twenty years ago: since then Lebanon – and particularly Beirut – have moved in the direction of conflict and division rather more than unity. Koury's conviction that the creation of

a national secular government would 'desocialise' and 'resocialise' the communities in order to foster a homogenous political culture has failed to be confirmed by history.

Civics education and the promotion of unity

Civics education is widely considered to be a vehicle for the promotion of national unity. It is a compulsory part of the national curriculum and its aim is to induce the citizen into the concept of a nation state, emphasising the individual's responsibilities to the state and society. There is an emphasis on the reciprocal responsibility in the giving and taking of one's rights. Karame (cited in Chidiac et al. 1992) points out that in civic education in Lebanon, patriotism and nationalism tend to be confused. Patriotism tends to refer to a defence of one's homeland at any price. Nationalism, on the other hand, means that the privileged need to let go of their privileges, as all constituents have the same rights and interests and mutual respect needs to prevail.

Karame continues to argue that there is a relationship between civic education and cultural heritage. In order to overcome the constraints of the past, one needs to search for knowledge. In each community there is a certain intrinsic culture which must be studied in order to recognise who is a Lebanese. Such a search for identity and the process of reaching out to understand different communities can help resocialise the young generation as members of a united nation. The Lebanese, like many other members of ethnic minorities, feel secure in their own communities or groups. But the nation state can only come about when community members feel capable of integrating and accepting other citizens in a spirit of tolerance.

Education can, of course, play a part in this process. However, as Barakat (1977) noted two decades ago, the Lebanese education system corresponds to the existing religious and ethnic communities. This is more or less still true today. Schools and universities attract their students from specific religious and socio-economic backgrounds, reproducing social distinction. In this sense, therefore, education in Lebanon promotes individual passivity, social and economic continuity, conservatism and tradition, rather than social change, progress and justice. Bakarat concluded that *'such patterns of socialisation prevail throughout Lebanon's institutions – home, school, church, government and university. These are complementary rather than conflicting agencies of socialisation. They reinforce each other, maintain the status quo and preserve the culture of silence'* (Barakat 1977: 50). The war has added to the maintenance of tradition by certain groups, mainly the Maronites, and radicalised other groups who have risen from their deprived state and subscribe to nationalistic, revolutionary ideologies.

The implications of seventeen years of conflict on sectarianism and education

The war in Lebanon began in 1975, and peace was not reinstated before 1991. In 1967, the Cairo Accord gave Palestinians permission to bear arms, and this, according to some views, was the catalyst that led to seventeen years of violence. In order to defend the *status quo* and protect Maronite civilians from the Palestinians, Christian militias were set up. In response, Muslim militias were organised in support of the Palestinians and to oppose the current political system (Gordon 1983). During the 70s and 80s there were approximately 75 militias active in Lebanon, with some wanting to preserve the *status quo* and others wanting to change it. Most were ready to go to any lengths to achieve their purpose. A weak central government was not able to crush the militias. The government became increasingly powerless, and its own army was riven with divisions. Basic services such as electricity and water were only available through an alliance with the militias, as the government could not provide these necessities. The war aggravated confessionalism by rallying the masses closer to their confessional leaders both for physical aid and for spiritual sustenance. It was impossible to sit on the fence, and forced migration to the cantons intensified polarisation. Each subcommunity also produced their own war literature, propaganda and newspapers, possibly leading to the indoctrination of sectarian groups into religious fanaticism.

Clearly, an analysis of the war is beyond the scope of this paper: it is far too complex to even attempt to describe, as it is a combination of international politics (Arab/Israeli, USA international relations), civil unrest, and religious and ethnic divisions. It has also been a result of the conflict of interest between the privileged and the deprived, the west and the east, the educated and the non-educated. But this brief overview gives a sense of the tensions and conflicts that are at the heart of Lebanon, and helps develop an understanding of how the war both added to ill feelings and divisions between the different confessions as well as diffused much of the hatred that was already intrinsic to the community. Although schools tried to teach a national curriculum, introducing students to a narrative that stressed a national history as well as civic education, this did not help nationalise all of society. The students' link with their religion (not necessarily faith) became stronger, and further education was not a remedy for the division and intolerance which still exists today.

The war was a culmination of sectarianism and political divisions which have not ceased to be issues for concern amongst the underprivileged. Although the education system tried to nationalise the country, the war created more divisions – as well as sectarian and isolationist groups – than there were previously. Why

have some students remained conservative, and unable to accept others? The answer perhaps lies in the atrocities committed by the different sides as well as the concept of family ties and confessional links.

The war saw the emergence of the pro-Palestinian cause and many students' anti-Jewish sentiments were highlighted. The majority of Palestinian supporters were the struggling Islamic communities. For this reason, Muslim militias showed solidarity towards the Palestinian, illustrating that religious ties were stronger than the project of national identity.

The country during this time was divided. The green line literally ran across east and west Beirut. Since St. Joseph University – a French Jesuit institution founded in 1882 – was in the east where the majority of Christians lived, the university remained secluded, sectarian and French. The American University of Beirut was in the west, the area controlled by Muslim militias. Many of the Christians enrolled there had to discontinue their studies, with some going overseas to continue their education, while others waited for peace or attended courses in a campus set up in east Beirut. This, however, did not remain open for long. The intense conflict in a relatively circumscribed area in Beirut is an ironic and dramatic comment about Koury's (1976) theory that Lebanon could unite as a country because of 'short distances'!

The war was the ultimate manifestation of competition for power and resources in a polyethnic society and was bound to intensify sectarianism and identification with the ethnic group. Civil upheavals and social turmoil raised group consciousness and ingroup solidarity. Strong identifications that emerged served to support as well as reinforce ethnocentrism and sectarianism. Furthermore, those who participated in the war demonstrated stronger sectarianism than those who did not. Many unemployed youth found themselves members in the militias, and education no longer remained a priority. Instead of attending formal education, which might have reduced intolerance and divisions, young people turned to the militias for education on how to defend their towns and families. This, naturally, further fuelled sectarianism and division in Lebanon (Freidman 1990). Research by Der-Karabetian (1984) showed, for instance, that the war had sensitised the Armenian community about its differentiation from other groups. In response to a situation of national conflict, the Armenian community redefined its ethnic boundaries and increased ingroup allegiance. The same research also showed that ethnic identity changes over time, and is influenced by socio-political and economic transformation. Civil strife raises sectarian solidarity, although the strengthening of ethnic identity is not necessarily associated with a weakening of national identity.

Peace was reinstated in 1989 through the Taif agreement, signed by members of the Lebanese multi-confessional Parliament. The election of a billionaire (Rafic

Hariri) as Prime Minister in 1992 was greeted by many with relief and optimism. The dismantling of the Green Line which had divided Beirut saw curious visitors from both sides. For some of the youth it was the first time they had seen the other side (Van der Gaag 1994).

The seventeen years of violence has had a profound effect on the education system as well as on individuals. Every teenager in Lebanon had known nothing but war, and depending on the extent and duration of the exposure to conflict and violence, tends to display some kind of psychiatric disorder (Rutter 1994). Many had lived in bomb shelters for long periods of time. Some students had never attended schools and others had done so only sporadically. Even then, the quality of the educational service was low, since schools suffered from a drastic lack of material and human resources. Qualified teachers were a rarity. Those who had the means or the opportunity had taken on private tutors, while others had received their education from their parents.

The distribution of educational services was again differentiated along ethnic and religious lines. The Muslim Shia, for instance, generally attended public schools which were inferior in quality to private schools. Christians mainly attended private, Church-run or foreign schools. Not all areas were affected by conflict in the same manner and to the same extent. As a consequence, some were more deprived than others, and a few communities were even able to use the war to their advantage. A number of businessmen prospered during the war years, and their families endured less suffering and deprivation because they lived in such areas as Byblos and Jounieh. The war therefore intensified the divide between the rich and the poor (van der Gaag 1994), and this is reflected presently in the differentiated access to health and education services. The wealthy go to private clinics and schools, while the poor have no option but to turn to a dismally under-resourced public service.

In a sense, the end of the war has only made matters worse, with many foreign relief and aid agencies stopping their support, believing that the problems have been solved since open conflict has subsided. A look at the Lebanese education sector quickly shows how wrong such perceptions are. 86% of schools are still dysfunctional, for instance, and UNESCO is presently concerned with improving the quality of the public sector schools, with upgrading teaching and administrative standards, and with improving the curriculum of technical and vocational education. One of the major problems stemming from the war is the task of reintegrating the former members of the militias into society, through a properly organised programme of vocational training and civic education. Those individuals who joined the militias at a very young age have been subjected to indoctrination and have been socialised into an ethos of extreme violence; they probably cannot help but still feel hostility towards rival sects.

In this sense, the hope of shaping a new ideology and building a genuinely secular state marked by respect for one another's cultural and religious affiliations lies in the a new generation of young people who have not been raised up in a context of war and violence.

Education for the future of Lebanon

As mentioned earlier, the most important issue for the future of Lebanon is the improvement of the quality of education, particularly that provided in the national schools. This is currently under way as finance and aid is arriving from overseas investment, and the prominent and wealthy Prime Minister, Mr Hariri, together with his ministers, have initiated scholarship programmes for university students. At the tertiary level, there is a need to reassess the role of the Lebanese University – the state-financed national university – in the reconstruction of the country. There also needs to be a reconceptualisation of the role of education and training, a process that is currently part of a national project.

Other initiatives have been set up in order to facilitate educational development in post-war Lebanon. One of the more prominent of these is located in Byblos, where the *Bureau Pédagogique des Saints-Coeurs* organises annual seminars on the future of Lebanese education. The *Bureau* is a Papal organisation (The French Cultural Mission), concerned mainly with programmes that offer pastoral and humanitarian support. Its goal is to promote social and individual development, and the seminars emphasise the need for a common education policy based on harmony and acceptance of religious diversities. The *Bureau's* seminars promote the study of history, civics and religion as key components of the curriculum, constituting a vital contribution to a country which is home to seventeen ethnic and religious communities (Chidiac et al. 1989, 1992). Because of the experience of war, where loyalty was given to groups rather to the country, the concept of nation has become weakened, and has even disappeared in the minds of many. The *Bureau* reaches out to young people, and helps them identify with the national project rather than with individuals and groups, such as militias, political leaders, and so on.

The government therefore has a major challenge in front of it. It has to embark on reforms so that it can guarantee all young people access to education. This education has, as one of its key tasks, the building of a unified community. To do this, it has to address students' psychological needs, and to promote, in each and every school, an ethos which socialises young people into a culture of harmony, and away from sectarianism and intolerance. A number of important

challenges have to be dealt with in achieving these aims. In this context, I would like to consider the issue of teaching history and religion in Lebanese schools.

History and civic education

The question of history as a subject and contributor to civic education has been at the forefront of the latest research on education in Lebanon. Is there a means of unifying the study of history in the curriculum and reconciling subcultural diversities? The two main confessional sides are until now still unable to agree on a national history curriculum. The temptation is to represent and construct a national society absent of the pluralism of the population. On the other hand, even if one were to present a common historical narrative, it would not necessarily lead to the desired overall effect, for one must not overestimate the role of schools in shaping attitudes and in socialising the new generation. The family, the media, the environment and the lingering influence of the militias play a large role in socialising young people.

But does Lebanon need to arrive at a common education policy in order to gain political stability? Is there a way of arriving at an agreement on cultural diversity and national unity? The role of the school, of educators, and of the government is of prime importance in the task of organising and developing a level of coexistence and respect for each other. There is a level of popular support for this goal. A survey of economically-active people during the 80s found, for instance, that 86% believed that coexistence between communities was still possible. However, as Van Der Gaag (1994) pointed out with regard to the findings of this survey, *'the Taif agreement [1989] which ended the war set the blue print again for a multi-confessional state. For this to be a reality, the Government has to have an agenda for reconciliation as well as reconstruction. It must have a commitment to invest in education and health as well as roads and airports. Reconstructing a city and a country is... about building a democratic consensus which allows people to live in peace'* (p.5).

If the war brought out some of the worse aspects of human nature, it also revealed and promoted a number of admirable qualities and values, such as patriotism and altruism. Various youth movements – such as Green Line, and the Lebanese National Museum Society – have emerged, and are a living proof of the commitment of young people to socially valid goals, compensating for the lack of unity that has marked Lebanon thus far. Even in distant Australia, the Lebanese student movement (The National Union of Lebanese Australian Students Inc.) stipulated in its mission statement the importance of uniting in their adopted country to make up for the divisions in Lebanon.

However, despite such good intentions on the part of young people, there are nevertheless several difficult challenges to be faced before Lebanon finds unity as a nation. Young people, for instance, have to strive for unity in the face of pessimism, and with hostility and sectarian rivalry still smouldering in the adult community. The issues of religion, ethnic identity, and language – three of the cornerstones of national identity – are still sensitive matters that can flare up at any time and lead to fresh antagonism. There is always the temptation for Lebanese Muslims to think of themselves as first and foremost members of the Arab-Islamic community, rather than Lebanese. Christians, on their part, might still find it difficult to integrate themselves in a Pan-Arab community, fearing the loss of what identifies them as unique from other people in the Middle East. They fear losing western identity, particularly the association with French civilisation.

In the face of such anxieties, it is not possible for civic education to gloss over differences, and to promote homogeneity without confronting genuine understanding and acceptance of different cultures, customs, traditions, and religions.

Religion

Youmna Salhab (Chidiac et al. 1992) states that in a pluralistic community like Lebanon, religious instruction is essential in order to uproot that community from its past and to enable it to comprehend its present. Is it possible to create education programmes that neglect the religious beliefs that make up the social and political character of a nation? Salhab attempted to answer this question through a survey conducted with 75 Lebanese students, asking them about their beliefs as well as about their relationships with other young people having a different religious confession. Students seemed ready to accept each other regardless of religious beliefs, believing they have a common faith and that they fell under the protection of the same God.

However, Salhab's research also shows the extent to which students were ignorant of each others' religions. Multisectarian schools have tended to avoid discussion about religious matters, fearing that this would lead to hostilities among students. At one level, this reluctance is understandable, as during the war people fought and laid down their lives in the name of their religious community or subcommunity, failing to distinguish between spiritual and political leaders.

However, Salhab concludes that in a country such as Lebanon, religion cannot be ignored in history and civic education as it is a study of the nation's civilisation. She states that modern education must recognise that religion has its role in defining individual and collective identities. Religion in Lebanon is part of a culture, a history, a tradition and text books in schools need to represent a

pluralistic society which is able to coexist through tolerance and acceptance of differences. Salhab indeed concludes her study by arguing that ignorance about the different religions in Lebanon is dangerous; and that the school can play an important part, mediating between the family and national policy in order to facilitate the development of mutual understanding among young people.

Conclusion

The complexity and intricacy of the Lebanese situation is difficult to deal with in a limited space, and there are many factors concerning religious diversity and the implications for education reform in Lebanon. The country is an intricate fusion of sectarian loyalties rather than a crucible of religious diversity.

Although by 1995 most of the militias had been disarmed, there is still a sense of fear and distrust among citizens, and sectarian divisions in the country are still present. Deep and open dialogue between the religious communities is slowly emerging, but has as yet failed to make any significant difference. What could very well bring about a qualitative shift in the prevailing situation is the development of a unified and accessible national education system which provides a quality service to all citizens, and which strives to remove traditional, sectarian socialisation and intense religious segregation.

In a report by van der Gaag, the author writes about an encounter with a student in a school in a suburb of Beirut. The student states, *'Families who have lost someone in the war – and there are many of us – will take more than one generation to forget. The war has created hatred between people'* (van der Gaag 1994: 7). Clearly, some wounds can only be healed by the passage of time. However, education can facilitate the removal of disparities that mark sectarian affiliations, and can help reduce antagonistic religious differences and the polarisation between Muslims and Christians. But the challenge and the responsibility for unity cannot be laid only at education's door. This fragmented country with a mosaic society must come to terms with its conflicting loyalties and external forces, which are interfering in its internal affairs and undermining its sovereignty.

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