Shaping Public Service Delivery: A Hybrid Governance Approach in The Lebanese Public Education Sector

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List of Abbreviations

CERD - Centre for Educational Research and Development
CI - Central Inspection Unit
CRDP **-** Centre de Recherche et de Developpement Pedagogiques
DGE – Directorate for General Education
DOPS - Department of Orientation and Guidance
ePPP – Education Public Private Partnerships
KPI - Key Performance Indicators
LBP - Lebanese Pounds
LU - Lebanese University
MEHE - Ministry of Education and Higher Education
NGO - non-governmental organization
NSSF – National Social Security Fund
NPM – New Public Management
PPP – Public Private Partnerships
REO - Regional Educational Offices
UN – United Nations
UNDP United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund
US - United States
USD – United States Dollars
WB – World Bank

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Abstract

There is a difference in the public perception of the quality of education between private and public schools in Lebanon. Moreover, there is inequity in education outcomes between public and private schools. These differences pose a serious question regarding the quality-of-service delivery within the public education sector in Lebanon that needs to be investigated especially in the light of the recent Lebanese economic crises that has left many below the poverty lines and is creating shifts in the citizens' behaviour and demands towards public services. Contemporary models of governance have been advocating towards New Public Management, more partnerships, decentralization and cooperation. Moreover, more recent literature is calling for new modes of governance that are results based, cooperative and multi-levelled. Given the current Lebanese scenario there is a need for an improved public education service delivery as a responsive measure towards meeting the changing demands of citizens. Lebanon can apply a multi-levelled governance approach which is decentralized and participatory across several levels. This study proposes a model that advocates the: (1) utilization of current enablers existing in the sector such as delegating certain decision making powers to the Regional Education Offices beyond what they currently have and; (2) the creation of community based committees that form regional school-boards springing from a local level - all whilst ensuring proper system oversight through a regulatory framework and an autonomous regulatory body on a central level. There is room for a multi-levelled board within the Ministry of Education and higher Education which can help bridge the relationship between the central and non-central levels.

Keywords: Governance | Lebanese Public Education Sector | Service Delivery | Decentralization, Private Public Partnerships | Regulation

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1. Introduction

Lebanon is governed by a consociational power-sharing agreement since 1989 and its environment is characterized with and rent seeking behavior that stems to almost all public sectors and administrations – including the education sector. The status of the primary public education sector points to a learning disaster in Lebanon especially with the inconsistency in education outcomes between public and private schools (Abdul-Hamid and Yassine, 2020). Moreover, despite the positive nature of the education perception, Lebanese students' performance in terms of learning outcomes is benchmarked significantly lower than the international average (Altinok, Angrist, and Patrinos 2018). Moreover, the private sector has been increasingly dominating education service delivery in the past 15 years in Lebanon, leaving the enrolment rate of Lebanese students at 71% in private schools (CERD, 2017-2018). According to the World Bank, while there is a generally positive perception of the education quality in Lebanon, significant satisfaction discrepancies exist between private and public schools (Abdul-Hamid and Yassine, 2020).

Starting 2019, one can recognize that the state of Lebanon has been disrupted. The 2019 revolution, the compound of its contemporary crises: economic, financial, pandemic and the Beirut Port Explosion - have put the country within the top three severe global crises episodes since the mid-nineteenth century (World Bank, 2021). This fragile state triggered calls to revisit institutional reform (The Economist Unit, 2020). However, the continuous political deadlocks and absence of an executive authority have stifled policy making. The Lebanese national currency (LBP) has been continuously devaluing and sits at a current 15% of its value since 2019 (Reuters, 2022), with a 131.9% inflation rate (Foreign Policy, 2021), and a multi-dimensional poverty scale (which includes education, health, public utilities, housing, assets, employment and income) at approximately 82% (UN ESCWA, 2021). Furthermore, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contraction the country is witnessing is similar to a country at war or conflict (World Bank, 2021).

The rapidly evolving challenges have changed socio-economic conditions in families, which caused more parents to be more receptive or forced to consider public schooling contrary to the norm. Apart from the likelihood that this will strain public schools due to the capacity shortage, one might ask what the Lebanese government's response to this issue would be.

There have been reform proposals in the past with the most recent Sleiman-Baroud draft law which presents a decentralization model; however, the bill is not yet agreed upon or discussed in the parliament. A decentralization approach is constantly debated amongst scholars and politicians those in favor and others against due to its associated risks.

There is a breadth of knowledge on governance and governance models in the arena of public service delivery and its reform towards a more equitable, efficient and effective model. With the global move towards effective service delivery, scholars are considering a new kind of leadership that utilizes partnerships, is client-focused and has "embedded service systems"

especially in the face of emerging systemic challenges (Virtanen & Kaivo-oja, 2015; Miles, 2012, 2013). This global move can also be seen in the education sector which has arguably witnessed failed attempts of ePPPs (UNESCO, 2016) and calls for rethinking decentralization modes.

2. The Problem Statement

The Lebanese education sector is governed by infrastructural issues and pre-existing challenges such as funding, governance, financial allocation, budgeting and lack of planning (Abdul-Hamid and Yassine, 2020). Moreover, the covid-19 pandemic has put access to education of more than 1.2 million students at risk (Save the Children, 2021) due to lockdowns or socioeconomic factors as a result of the financial crisis not allowing families to purchase equipment for distance learning. Moreover, educators' salaries were also affected either due to the economic crises, salary cuts or unpaid extra work (CLS, 2021). The refugee students in Lebanese public schools have also faced similar to graver challenges where more than 45% of the Syrian refugees were out of learning (Save the Children, 2021).

While scholars argue that a structural reform is highly unlikely (Salloukh, 2020) the contemporary challenges aforementioned represent a call for shift in public administration or management. On the other hand, calling for a full strategy to restore governance and restructure public services (World Bank, 2020) and the international community's applied pressure, can be considered the first steps in "change".

3. Research Scope and Objectives

This research takes a governance angle to rethinking primary public education service delivery whilst appraising governance models as means of improvement. Decentralization is one of the building blocks of the study – specifically administrative decentralization and not political decentralization. This study taps on political decentralization from a contextual understanding. Moreover, it is without doubt that the compound of crises aforementioned played a role in impacting service provision in all public sectors including the education sector. Nevertheless, the contemporary challenges and recent educational crisis present new perspectives and evidence based responsiveness measures to a deeply rooted issue – and in turn should be examined in this research.

This research aims to explore and evaluate the adoption of a hybrid governance model in the Lebanese public education sector as a means to improve service delivery. According to Abdul-Hamid and Yassine (2020), there is a need to operationalize the research outcomes that help in improving the educational landscape understanding.

This research aims to contribute to the existing stock of knowledge and emerging evidence, and influence the institutionalization of research outcomes in the domain of primary public education service provision in Lebanon from a 'governance' perspective. Finally, it is important to emphasize that this research examines service delivery from a central and school-based level and not a pedagogical perspective as this is not the scope of this research.

The study seeks to answer the following two research questions:

1. What governance model can be adopted in the Lebanese education sector in order to improve service delivery?

2. What are the structural arrangements that need to be done in order to improve service delivery in the Lebanese education sector?

This dissertation consists of Five total Chapters. Chapter 1 was able to provide the backdrop of the current challenges inflicting Lebanon and the education sector, which was able to create a raison d'etre for the purpose of this study on how to enhance service delivery within the primary public education sector in Lebanon. Chapter 2 a synthesis of numerous literature reviews under the general domain of governance and the specific domain of governance in the education sector. Decentralization and PPP concepts on both domains were carefully appraised with their merits and deficiencies in addition to their associated risk. The critical literature review concluded with observed relationships between the various concepts examined and created a point of departure for the conceptual framework and thus, the analysis. Chapter 3 – Methodology chapter will discuss the research design and analytical approach. Chapter 4 – Findings, Discussion and Analysis will discuss the revised conceptual framework in light of the research findings and provide mind-maps for the themes and conclude with an overarching relationship representation between all themes and sub-themes. Chapter 5 – Conclusion and Recommendations will provide concise and direct answers to the research questions and provide policy consideration. This chapter will conclude with recommendations for further researches.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

1. Introduction

The literature review aims to gain an understanding of the historical evolution of governance models in rethinking service delivery in the public sector and appraise relevant theories for the purpose of this research. A funnel approach will be used in this section starting with examining the general definitions of governance then longitudinally exploring the evolution of governance models to their 'contemporary' nature such as New Public Management (NPM), Public Private Partnerships (PPP) and decentralization and their efficacy in strengthening service delivery in the public sector in general and the education sector in particular. This section consults literature that appraises these models in its merits and deficiencies in order to build a strong foundation for the conceptual framework that aims to rethink governance models in the Lebanese primary public education service provision.

This chapter is organized as follows. First, it examines Lebanon's current context from multiple angles such as its political and administrative environment, governance reform attempts and the political economy of its public education sector. Then it proceeds with proposing a conceptual framework for understanding that will inform the ensuing analysis.

2. The Context of Lebanon

a. The Political Environment of Lebanon

What profoundly contributes to the current political system of Lebanon is marked with the Ta'if Agreement signed in 1989 that attempted to end the Lebanese Civil War (Khazen, 1997). What can best describe Lebanon's political environment is "consociational power-sharing" (Salloukh, et al., 2015; Al-Ahmad and Barghoth, 2016; Halawi, 2020) which is seen as a democratic solution that ended sectarian conflict, mainly because all the sects are represented in the post-war political system; which has played a role from saving the further collapse of Lebanon (McGarry & O'Leary, 2007). Britannica defines ***consociationalism*** *as "a stable democratic system in deeply divided societies that is based on power sharing between elites from different social groups."*

Halawi (2020) have debated that this representative democracy and literature that supports it are actually a "stifle" and a "tunnel-vision" that doesn't only prevent arriving at long-term possibilities but also normalizes class inequalities, and promotes sectarian elites. Moreover, this consociational power-sharing arrangement has created cartel-like politics where the small groups of sectarian elites partner with business elites who monopolize the state and fulfil economic privileges (Halawi, 2020). This produces a clientelist practice that reproduces sectarian identities in order to preserve class interests (Salloukh et al. 2015) which ultimately leads to state stagnation as described by Nagle (2020 in Halawi, 2020).

In public administration, administrative posts are usually filled either based on political/sectarian representation or appointed based on loyalty and political affiliation (Al-Ahmad and Barghouth, 2016). Randa Antoun (1989 in El-Zein, 2014) describes this behavior in the Lebanese Public Administration as post-war "disruption of norms" and "alternative administrations" where the latter explains the shift of authority from the rule of law to the political strength of who the officials are represented and the former explains the replacement of new values or transfer of loyalties.

Some of the main problems governing Lebanese public administrations are outdated organizational structures, old regulations and customs that govern work-procedures in public institutions and ministries, absence of modern management and technology such as ICT infrastructure system (OMSAR, 2016). OMSAR (Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform) was founded in 1993 with a role to operationalize international aid for the short-term rehabilitation of post-war Lebanon & long-term institutional development (El Zein & Sims 2004). However, its role as a restructuring strategy for institutional development (El-Khalil, 1996) has become a governmental agency limited to building a prototype (Al-Ahmad & Barghouth, 2016). Moreover, sectarianism is also manifested in public spending where distribution of budget happens over sects in sectors primarily such as health, education and infrastructure (Salti & Shaaban, 2010). Literature concerning post-war Lebanon has a tendency to take a comparative approach with Iraq (El Zein and Sims, 2004) a country which suffered sectarian conflict similar to Lebanon's. According to El Zein and Sims (2004), Iraq had a "complicated" experience in nation-building due to the Western-Like approaches (p. 279).

b. Political Economy of the Lebanese Education Sector

According to the R4R study concluded in 2020, there is a generally positive perception of the education quality in Lebanon but a significant discrepancy in satisfaction between private and public schools (Abdul-hamid and Yassine, 2020). Starting with the public vs. private service delivery, the domination of the private sector in education service delivery has been steadily increasing in the past 15 years, leaving the enrolment rate of Lebanese students at 71% in private schools (CERD, 2017-2018). While this private sector domination exists in Lebanon, the concept of "free private schools" exists in Lebanon. These schools receive governmental direct subsidies in the form of "transfer per student enrolled" and their schools are mainly affiliated with religious institutions (CERD 2018 in Abdul-hamid and Yassine, 2020).

Despite the positive nature of the education perception, Lebanese students' learning outcomes and performance are placed at the 35th percentile world-wide, significantly lower than the international average (Altinok et al. 2018). According to Abdul-hamid and Yassine, these figures point to a learning disaster in Lebanon and that the perception does not reflect reality.

The discrepancy in learning achievement in Lebanon is attributed to several factors such as the Economic, Social, and Cultural Status (WB, 2018) and the region the school is in (EGRA 2016; PISA 2015; CERD 2018a). Relevant to the R4R research are two equity concerns that have

emerged: (1) an inconsistency in education outcomes between public and private schools, (2) the different perceptions people hold between private and public school education quality of specific streams (such as Arabic Languages, Science, Mathematics etc.). The general level of public spending on education in Lebanon is low when compared to international standards but this is largely attributed to the domination of private education provision, hence household spending having a larger share of the overall expenditure (Annex 4).

c. Governance Reforms

There has been a set of five notable administrative decentralization proposals put forward in Lebanon after the civil war but most recently the 2014 Sleiman-Baroud Draft law made its way to being seriously considered among parliamentary committees in 2016 (Akl, 2017). The National Administrative Rehabilitation Programme (NARP) was commissioned by the OMSAR and was mostly concerned with rehabilitating public institutions (El-khalil, 1995) funded by and partnered with the UNDP (El Zein & Sims, 2004) and later the WB (WB, 1995). The strategy put forward by the OMSAR for the administrative reform at that time was under the 'new public management' that sought to re-engineer the sectors, create learning organizations, and perform benchmarks and quality management (El Zein and Sims, 2004), however this has never reached the council of ministers and remained as an internal strategy document. An interesting insight by El Zein and Sims on some of the shortcomings of the OMSAR strategies over the years are: (1) focus on managerial doctrines; (2) influence from foreign experts; and (3) wrong assumptions that politics and administration can be separated which lead to formulation of unachievable targets such as merit-based recruitment (p. 285).

Nevertheless, Lebanon did achieve administrative development initiatives in a "decentralized" manner. For instance, both the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Interior and Municipal Affairs conducted institutional changes on a ministerial level with the help of international donors and governmental aids such as the UNDP, USAID, France, Canada, IMF, WB (El Zein and Sims 2004, ECORYS, 2012). However, Lebanon's reconstruction activities were associated with an increase in public debt by 2002 which pushed the Lebanese government to issue fiscal policy reforms that pursues privatization in an attempt to reconstruct the public debt (ECORYS, 2012).

Andre Sleiman and Ziad Baroud consider their 2014 decentralization proposed law a game changer since it did not have a political agenda, it contrasted with the previous de-concentration proposals, and it established a third level between the governorate and the municipalities (Carrascal, 2020). Moreover, despite the shifting priorities in recent years that have prevented its implementation and despite the prevalence of fear of undermining the central government with this draft law, it has become more necessary to consider reforms (Carrascal, 2020).

Al-Ahmad and Barghouth (2016) found that even though the ruling political parties have advocated for administrative reforms such as decentralization, privatization, e-governance, every party worked on a different action plan and there was an absence of a concrete implementation strategy. They have also found out that the political representation is also

manifested in the public sector through sectarian quotas in administration or quasi-governmental institutions. In addition, there have been reform attempts mostly led by the civil society in Lebanon calling for decentralization but the political disagreements have been withholding any progress (Haase, 2018).

Haase stated that the Lebanese public institutions are restrained due to issues such as the centralization of power, corruption, old bureaucratic structures and lack of administrative knowledge. Notably, he argued that what can make any reform effort work depends on whether the Lebanese government can defeat the troubles caused by regional political tensions, the refugee crisis and the state of the apathetic Lebanese public. Whereas in Al-Ahmad and Barghouth's (2016) study, political parties have stated that the lack of political consensus is the barrier to reform and aiming for merit-based employment in public services is difficult to achieve due to the sectarian-based system' nevertheless it is an area that needs reform.

3. Governance Definitions

The concept of governance is as old as human history despite its increasing popularity in the last couple of decades (Farazmand, 2013), although its broad application has rendered it an increasingly debatable concept (Scheider, 2014). Virtanen & Stenvall (2014) have categorized governance definitions into two: (i) European academia; and (ii) international agencies. In the realm of academia, the term government is concerned with the executive power of legal authority whereas governance is the process of formulating, executing and implementing activities based on common goals of citizens and the state (Rosenau, 1992a, 1992b). Governance can be considered as a policy instrument (Richards and Smith, 2002) which implements cooperation by state and non-actors working together (Jordan et al. 2003). The idea of collaboration or relationship within the state was emphasized by Halfani et al. (1994) who stated that the relationship that exists between the state and the civil society is very important in the arena of governance. Moreover, governance is the way public and private sectors interact in order to solve an issue synchronously with other society actors (Kooiman, 1993).

In the realm of international agencies, the OECD (1995) tapped on the role public administration and institutions play in governance and stated that the way "governing" happens is through a relationship between the government and the people. On the other hand, the WB looks at governance as a method of exercising power during the management process of a nation's economy and resources to reach development (World Bank, 1994). Much of the World Bank's governance related work sheds light on the administrative dimensions of governance such as public sector and its downsizing, reforms in civils service, service delivery, contracting public sector and notably the capacity building of institutions in the process (Asaduzzaman, 2016). According to Virtanen & Stenvall (2014), the European academic definitions played a role in reshaping the role of the state as well as create a distinction between traditional public administration and contemporary approaches in governance - all of which played a role in establishing new concepts in public management and governance such as the new public governance or management. Hence, we can notice the common notion of multiple entities other

than the state "working together" which, by classic definition refers to some sort of collaboration and or/partnership. This in fact stated by Halfani et al. (1994) who linked effective and efficient credibility of government with "decentralization", participation of the citizens, sharing, being accountable and responsive.

Rhodes (1997) argues that good governance has grown as a prerequisite for aid recipients especially in the past 30 years. The importance of looking into international aid agencies' definitions of good governance in the context of Lebanon emanates from it being a recipient from these specific agencies (e.g., Lebanon Reform, Recovery & Reconstruction Framework, a project by the EU, UN & World Bank launched in 2020).

> *Governance Characteristics by the World Bank (1994)*
>
> *Accountability, freedom of association and participation, rule of law, judiciary independence, bureaucratic accountability, freedom of information, a strong administrative system, partnership between the government and the Civil Society Organizations.*
>
> *Principles of Governance by the UNDP Working Paper (1997)*
>
> *Decentralization, Participatory, Transparent, Accountable, Effective, Wholistic, Developmental, People-centered, sustainable development, gender sensitive, promotes rule of law, culturally sensitive, equitable.*

So, what truly represents a good governance system? Jreisat (2004) argued that the process of internal learning is extremely crucial in decision making, growing, meeting citizens' demands whilst aiming to adapt to international standards and practices and for that there are many governance models. Some models take the shape of a typology such as Mintzberg (1996) and Peters (2001) and others of a phenomena such as Heady (2001). Nevertheless, despite the plethora of governance models in literature, there is not one that guarantees eradicating corruption, abolishment of poverty or decentralization (Asaduzzaman, 2016)

This study explores the various governance models that encompass decentralization, participation, and effective and efficient service delivery. These characteristics can be linked to theories under NPM, Decentralization and PPP.

4. Governance Models

This section will be consulting literature to review various governance models such as New Public Management (NPM), Public, Private Partnerships (PPP) and Decentralization.

a. New Public Management

Governance is a better managed form of government (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992) and as associated by literature, Christopher Hood (1991) refers to a better managed government as the New Public Management (NPM). While it is reported that the term NPM was coined in the

1980s, the doctrines and elements of NPM have been there since the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and associated with 'voluminous philosophy' (e.g., transparent management, pay for performance, public service provision by private organizations, and individual responsibility) (Smelser & Baltes, 2001). This was also reported by Hood in the initial NPM publication in 1991. NPM can be explained as a fusion between two opposite streams of ideas: New Institutional Economics & International Scientific Management Movement (Hood, 1991). NPM emphasizes on the impact management brings on the quality and efficiency of public services which oppose traditional and egalitarian views in public administration (Smelser & Baltes, 2001).

According to Hood (1991), there were four administrative megatrends that are linked to the NPM's rise (p.3) :

(1) Decrease government's public spending and public staffing;

(2) Inclination towards "privatization" and "quasi-privatization" through the exploration of 'subsidiarity' in public service provision;

(3) The evolution of automation, specifically in information technology in the process of production and distribution of public services; and

(4) The development of an international agenda focused on advancing public management practices and styles.

Moreover, Hood found that the most favourable explanation on the emergence of NPM is by looking at it as a reaction to changing social conditions and economic growth in developed countries post World War Two (p.7). For example, (i) a switch to a society less complacent o static and uniform public policy outlooks, (ii) an inclination towards 'new machine politics' in campaigning that involves evidence-based and stakeholder inclusion in policy making, (iii) technological advancements post-industrialism and post-Fordism that aim to abolish the habitual fences between public and private sector work; (iv) in addition to the changing income levels, and finally (v) setting the foundations for new tax-conscious winning electoral coalitions - are some of the changes attributed to this explanation. Some of the implications of this model are the assertions of its cost-cutting and improved quality management and different structural design (Hood, 1991). Due to the different elements that contribute to the notion of NPM as a model, what can facilitate this understanding is laying out its seven principles, summarized by Hood (1991) based on NPM discussions and overlapping perceptions by its commentators and advocates (See Table 1)

Table 1 - Doctrines of New Public Management

No.	Doctrine	Meaning	Typical Justification
1	*'Hands-on professional management'* in the public sector	Active, visible, control of organizations from named persons at the top, free to manage	Greater accountability requires clear responsibility assignment and not diffusion of power
2	*Explicit standards and measures of performance*	Definition of goals, targets, success indicators. Preferable use of quantitative terms, specifically in the case of professional services	For better efficiency, objectives need to be precise For better accountability, goals should be clear
3	Greater emphasis on *output* controls	Resource & reward allocation associated with performance measures Breaking centralized and bureaucratic people management	Emphasize on results and not procedures
4	Shift to *disaggregation* of units in the public sector	'arms-length' modus operandi among units Shift from the 'monolithic' units Transform u-form management systems into corporatized units around products Decentralized 'one-line' budget	Separate provision rom production Create units that can be managed Win on efficiency due to use of internal and external contracting
5	Shift to greater *competition* in public sector	Shift to public tendering and term contracts	*Promotes better costs and quality due to increased rivalry*
6	*Stress on private- sector styles* of *management practice*	Such as PR techniques Flexibility in talent recruitment and rewards Disengage from 'military-style' public service ethic	Transfer best practice approaches from private sector to public sector
7	Stress on greater *discipline* and *parsimony* in resource use	Raise discipline among labour, cut direct costs, limit 'compliance' costs to businesses.	Do more with less Check-in with public resource demand

Source: Adapted. Hood (1991)

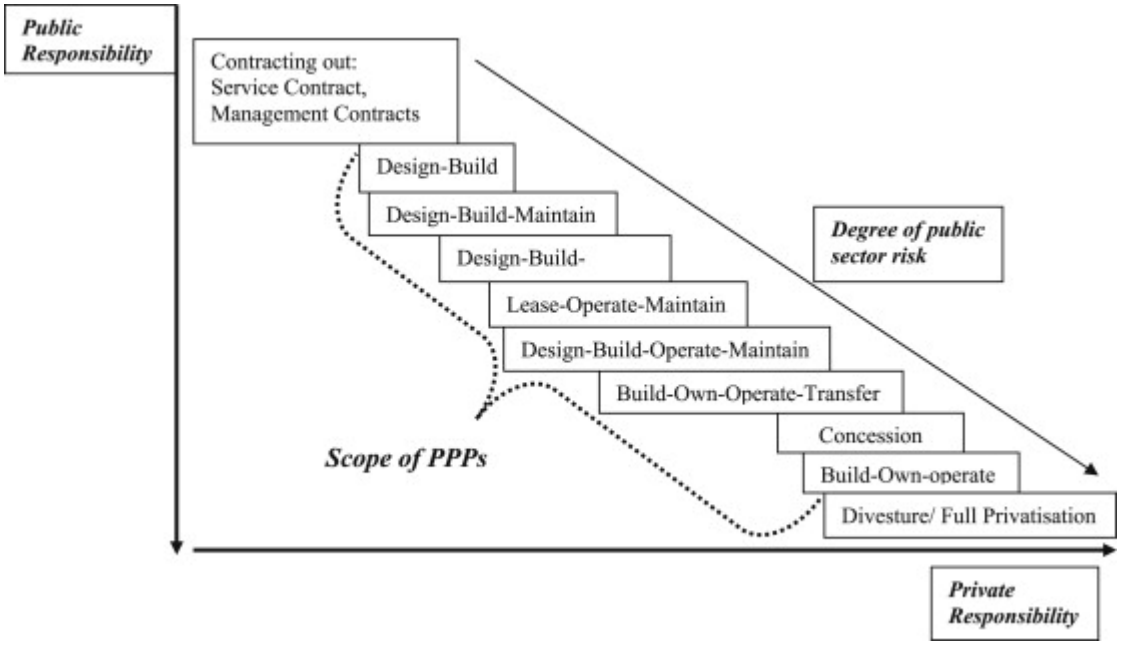
Here one can draw the huge overlap between NPM and private sector doctrines and practices which can be explained by Martin's (1983) under the international scientific management movement, who considered that professional management expertise can be transferable. From that point, Hood's (1991) compelling observation was how public management consultants might disperse the NPM into a clone effect in places with an inconsiderable public service culture - such as Third World countries.

b. Public Private Partnerships

As discussed, NPM promotes competition among the public sector and applies it through public tendering or term contracts, also known as Public Private Partnerships (PPP). Many definitions of (PPP) exist (Hodge and Greve, 2016) with Garvin and Bosso (2008) defining it as a long-term contract between the private and public sector where the private sector is responsible for the management and operations of the public services which yields mutual benefits to both parties but might put private finance at jeopardy.

It is important to look at what causes the private sector to be involved in the first place and Roehrich et al. (2014) linked it to two main reasons. Firstly, the increased need for government spending on rehabilitation, maintenance and operations of public assets met with the rise in restrictions on government budgets, called for governments to search for innovations through employing private sector capabilities (since they have better risk management). The World Bank's (2012) definition on PPP also highlighted the element of risk and attributed it to the private party. What can be appreciated from Hodge and Greve (2016) is the common concepts they derived from the different PPP definitions such as: the element of risk (whether in an idea or an existing arrangement), innovation in collaboration and the longevity of the relationship that transcends beyond the traditional contracting tenure. Actually, in practice the degree of risk in the public sector fluctuates based on the scope of PPP model where contracting out is associated with relatively lesser risk compared to full privatization to the private sector (Roehrich et al., 2014) (see Fig 1).

Figure 1. Scope of PPPs and Degree of public risk representation



Source: Roehrich et al. (2014)

According to Barlow et al . (2013), efficiency varies according to the PPP model deployed and the sector it is implemented. Moreover, Hodge and Grave (2016) attributed the likely increase of PPP popularity to the political and governance forces.

It is important to note that PPPs have long been linked with Europe (Barlow et al. (2013), Roehrich et al., 2014); and utilized as an approach in many sectors such as infrastructure, water supply, transportation (Wettenhall, 2003) and in the health sector (Roehrich et al., 2013) but most recently associated with education provision (Verger & Moschetti, 2016). Hence, one can draw that measuring PPPs success or failure is linked with its efficacy, especially since public resources are an important capital and raison d'être in the PPP formation. Value for Money (VfM) is a performance measure linked with the assessment of PPP which many scholars have studied (Fitzgerald 2004, Dixon et al. 2005, Lonsdale 2005, Pollit 2005 as cited in Hodge & Greve 2016).

c. Decentralization

The view that governments as a large block are slow to change, prone to corruption and operate with a rent-seeking behaviour has created a disappointment in highly centralized operations of government and advocated the rise in the decentralization preference (Bardhan et al., 2005). Bourgon (2011) argues that the combination of governance and decentralization of political power increases the accountability of politicians and the public administration. However, Bardhan et al. (2005) have emphasized that the effects of decentralization are highly dependent on the context of where they're employed.

Definitions and typologies of decentralization have been flourishing for the past decades (Dubois & Fattore, 2009) and due to their vastness, have been prone to disorder (Scheinder 2003; Dubois and Fattore, 2009). Some scholars consider decentralization as a transfer of the locus of decision making from central government to regional or municipal or local governments (Sayer et al, 2004). Others define it as a participatory means of people and local governments (Morell, 2004).

Dubois and Fattore (2009) gave a historical synopsis of the flourishing of decentralization and attributed the scientific interest back to the Second World War, characterized by high power concentration (Jun & Wright 1996 in Dubois and Fattore 2009) which led to an increase of decentralization as a counter reaction. Moreover, decolonization and the fall of the Soviet Union have played a role in the increasing debate over decentralization. In modern times, the growth of this model is also attributed to NPM (Pollit, 2005 in Hodge & Greve 2016).

Nowadays, more share of the government work is done on a subnational level; but while there are common characteristics of decentralization among these countries, there are distinct differences in the type and degree of decentralization (Schenider, 2003). Schneider (2003) conceptualized decentralization into three dimensions: (1) Administrative, (2) Fiscal and (3) Political. He defined administrative decentralization as the degree of autonomy non-central entities have compared to the central control. As for Fiscal decentralization, it is when the government confers fiscal impacts to non-central governmental entities. Whereas Political decentralization is the degree of authorization non-central governmental entities have in undertaking political functions of governance. It is important to note that Schneider believed that convergence among these dimensions might happen and hence it will lead to a confusion in its conceptualization because decentralization among one dimension might influence the other dimension positively or negatively (i.e., increase in one dimension might cause a decrease or increase in the other dimension).

As per Dubois & Fattore (2009), decentralization spans over functionality, form, degree, objective and scope. So, they suggested three dimensional categories of autonomy: (1) Resource autonomy, (2) Administration autonomy and (3) delivery of services autonomy - all which can explain the extent of decentralization that might occur.

According to Daniel Treisman (2007) there are multiple tiers of government and five different types of decentralization. *Administrative* decentralisation is when policy is determined centrally but managed by local agents. *Political* decentralisation is when lower levels of government have a degree of policy making authority. *Appointment* decentralization, also known as local election and can be included in political decentralization or considered as separate. *Constitutional* decentralization where these local bodies are constitutionally granted a higher level of policy making. *Fiscal* decentralisation occurs where subnational tiers of government have some responsibility for tax and expenditure decisions and/or constitute a significant proportion of total government revenues and spending.

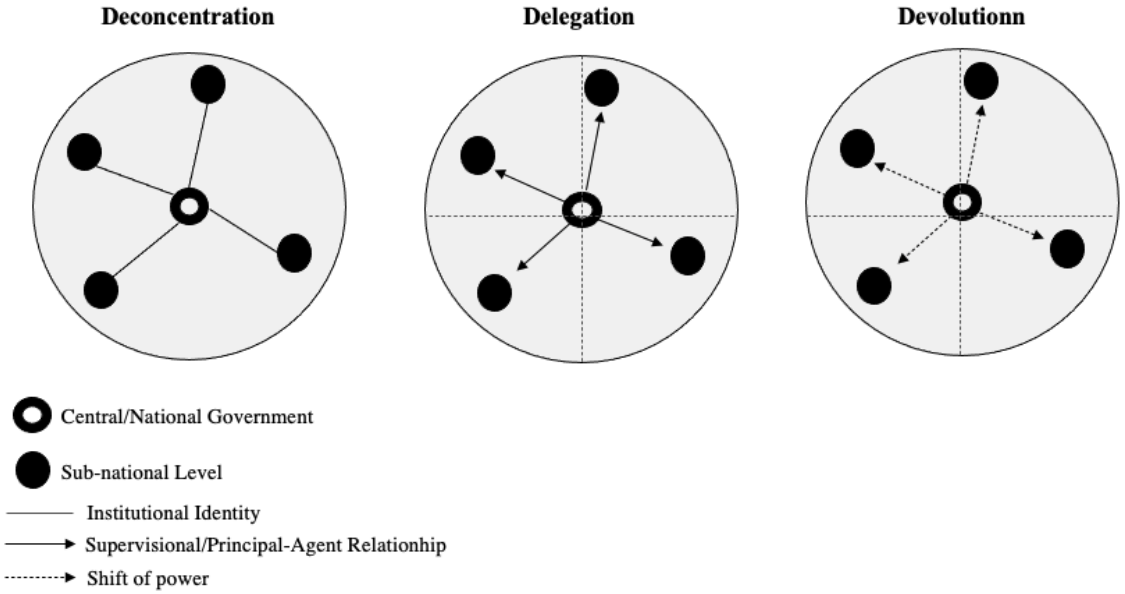
The World Bank (1999) introduced another form of decentralization called "Market Decentralization" which is the most complete form of decentralization and includes privatization and deregulation. In this category, there is a shift of responsibility from public to private sector and usually occurs in economic liberalization and market development policies. As one can draw here, this is a convergence between the concept of decentralization and the PPPs from what was aforementioned.

In academia and literature, three themes are linked with decentralization: deconcentration, delegation and devolution - but there isn't any consensus on where these themes fit. Some believe that they are all forms of administrative decentralization, others believe that some of them can be a distinct category in addition to administrative, political and fiscal decentralization (Pinto, 2004).

According to the World Bank (1999) de-concentration happens when certain central government responsibilities including decision making, management and finance are granted to officials working in respective cities, provinces or districts as per the context of the country. It also can take the form of "field administration" or "local administration" that acts under the supervision of the central government. Sayer et al. (2004) attributed the term "Geographical dispersion" of central government to the term deconcentration. Hence, this is the least form of decentralization.

However, delegation is when central governments transfer decision-making responsibility to semi-autonomous organizations that are not controlled by the central government but possess accountability towards it (such as housing, water, health, transportation authorities) (WHO, World Bank 1999). Devolution is when the central government devolves or transfers decision-making authority, finance, and management to quasi-autonomous units of local government that hold a corporate status. It usually happens at the municipality level who have their own elections and raise their own revenues and make their independent financing decisions. It is important to mention that in a devolved system, local authorities have legally specified geographical boundaries that they have legitimacy on performing their public functions. This form converges with political decentralization as well.

Figure 2. The Distinction between Deconcentration, Delegation & Devolution



Source: Adapted. Böckenförde (2010)

d. Decentralization in the Education Sector

Lewis and Petterson (2009) frame good governance as an entry point that can improve institutional performance education service delivery, consolidating a framework that considers "local government" in the overall governance process, which normally reflects a decentralized approach in governing. In education, decentralization might take the *deconcentration, delegation, devolution* forms (See Table 2). According to UNESCO (2007), devolution in education might enjoy market-decentralization also known as privatization.

Table 2. Decentralization Typology by the UNESCO

Form	Level	Functions
Deconcentration	Central government -> provincial state, regional or district offices	The central government for fiscal allocations and appointments. Subnational (Regional or district) offices responsible for personnel and financial management.
Delegation and/or Devolution	Central government -> municipal, county or district governments	Central government controls transfer from national treasuries and retains accountability.

		Subnational offices responsible for management decisions, staff appointments and allocation of local education budgets.
Devolution	Central government and regional/district offices or local governments -> schools and communities	Central authority transferred. School or community-based structures might emerge and hold power over school and educational decisions. Schools are responsible for routine administrative decisions and/or more substantial powers. This includes maintenance, staffing, school policy, development plans, curriculum choices, fundraising and financial management.

Source: UNESCO (2007), Policy Paper and Evaluation Guideline

Decentralization as a choice in education depends on current realities. According to the UNESCO (2007) report, the first factor is financial motivation where some countries would like to explore additional revenue sources and shift the financial burden to subnational offices. Another reason is to seek an increase in efficiency under the administrative reforms that reduces bureaucracy and promotes faster decision making.

However, while a solid theoretical reasoning that promotes decentralizing education systems exists, in practice it requires strong and committed leadership (World Bank, 1999 p.52). In the realm of education, decentralization reforms need to consider several factors such as teacher requirements, parent-teacher relationship, curriculum design in all levels of education such as pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary education in its process of harmonization (World Bank 1991). Key findings from a UNESCO's (2016) policy document have suggested that for an improved governance in education, decentralization needs to be complemented with a clear strategy, finance and capacity building especially in areas where the decentralization is new.

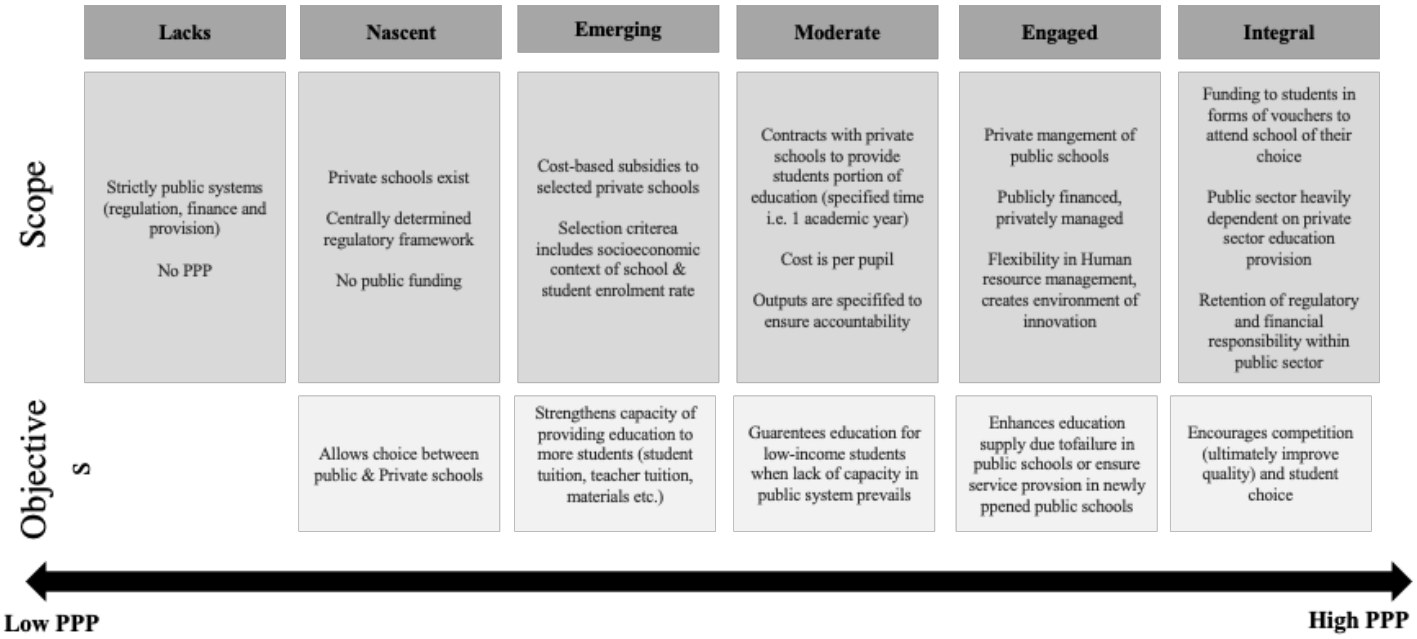
e. PPPs in the Education Sector

The first reference to PPP in education or also known as ePPP has been made by the World Bank back in the year 2000 (Verger and Moschetti 2016; OXFAM, 2019). OXFAM (2019) noted PPP in education and defined it as "any collaboration between the private sector and the state, whether to produce textbooks, build school infrastructure, or design learning software." But specifically, in policy circles, the term (ePPP) usually means a collaboration with the private sector to provide schooling (Oxfam, 2019). OXFAM (2019) noted PPP in education and defined it as "any collaboration between the private sector and the state, whether to produce textbooks, build school infrastructure, or design learning software." But specifically, in policy

circles, the term (ePPP) usually means a collaboration with the private sector to provide schooling (Oxfam, 2019). If countries partner with the private sector in education provision, the efficiency, efficacy and flexibility of education systems will increase (Robertson *et al*., 2012).

Patrinos et al. (2009) produced a continuum of ePPP forms that starts with environments with no PPP in education sector to completely privatized service provision under a voucher scheme called the Integral PPP form (See Fig 3). In some instances, such as the "engaged" continuum, ePPP models can relieve public schools from bureaucratic constraints and allows contractors flexibility in resource management (Gill et al., 2007; Patrinos et al. 2009).

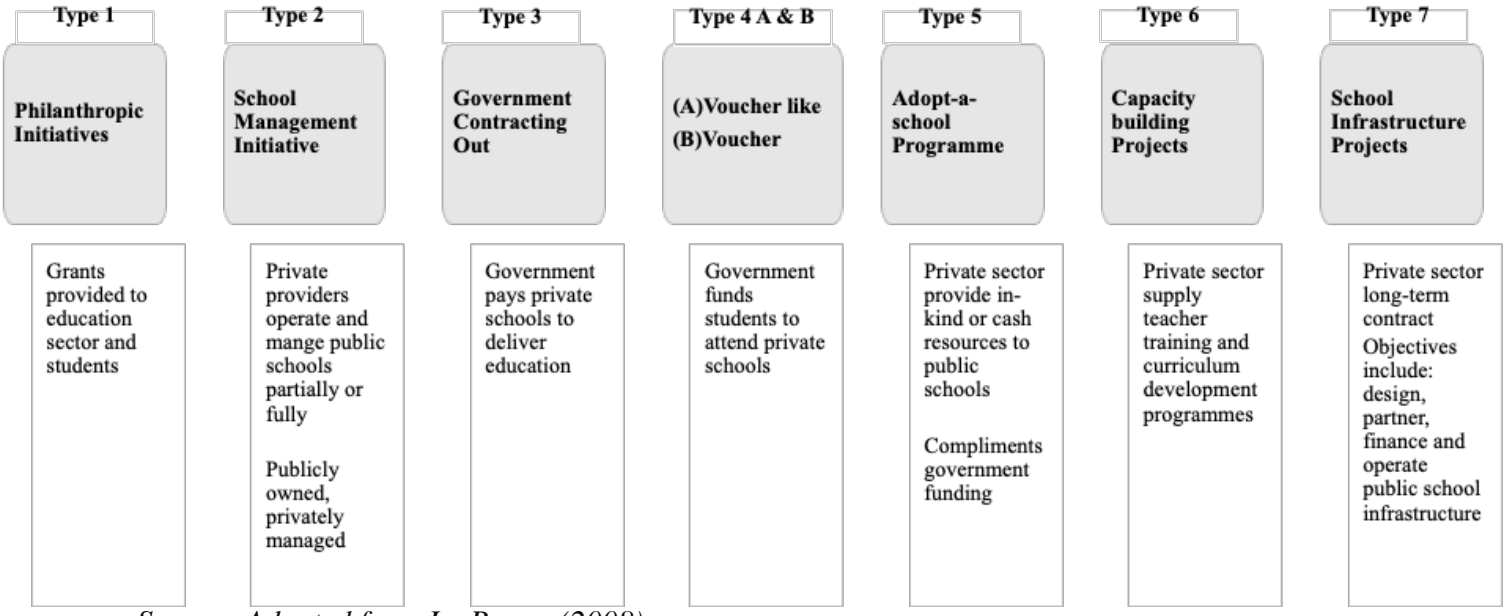
Figure 3. The ePPP Continuum



Source: Adapted. Patrinos et al. (2009)

Some of the practical applications of ePPP are donation initiatives (corporate and private), government subsidies and/or vouchers, adopt-a-school programmes, and capacity building and infrastructure development projects which are introduced in a typology by LaRocque (2008) (See Fig 4).

Figure 4. La Roque's Typology of ePPPs



Source: Adapted from La Roque (2008)

5. Appraisal of NPM, PPP & Decentralization

a. NPM

More than a decade after its publication, Hood himself and Peters (2004) criticized the "one-size-fits-all" approaches the NPM reformers have taken in practice. He suggested that aspects that can explain the NPM paradoxes are (1) ignoring historical evidence, (2) being selective in choosing evidence, (3) superficial selection of weak models and (4) unwillingness to learn from experience.

b. PPP

Recent academic literature states that different sciences perceive PPP performance differently (Hodge & Greve, 2016). For example, economics links performance with money, political scientists and public policy assess performance based on the status of mandate being fulfilled, finance experts study risk transfer and sociologists study impact on a societal level (p.61).

While one can conclude that there are opposing views to how PPPs can be measured, one can appreciate the many ways its success can be measured. (Hodge & Greve, 2016) argued that in measuring PPP success, one should go back to the PPP objectives put in the first place which provided a framework (Annex1).

The UNDP (1997) has cautioned against private sector dominance, drawing from Eastern European experiences, and recommended a strong regulatory mechanism whilst implementing privatization.

c. Decentralization

The study of how decentralization and corruption is linked has always gained the attention of researchers. A study by Fan et al. (2009), concluded that it is unlikely to deduce a simple general relationship between corruption and decentralization. However, the study reported bribery increases in countries with more administrative or governmental tiers mostly within government contracts, connection to public utilities, and customs (p.32). It is worth mentioning that Fan et al (2009, p.33), recognized that in more corrupt countries, central and subnational revenues can be lower due to the effort of redirection from tax collection to bribe extraction. Moreover, in settings where officials are "less accountable", they might be prone to creating more complex structures of the government in order to increase the number of tiers so that more benefits can be granted to allies. Here it is good to mention that these decentralization types might be caused by corruption, and not the other way around.

A good question to ask is how might decentralization perform in developing countries?

Asaduzzaman et al. (2016) have claimed that decentralization in these countries is subject to deflection and failure in achieving targets. They have explained that countries with colonial histories combined with a highly centralized administrative system will create difficulty in implementing a decentralization reform. Moreover, many local governments in developing or transition countries face problems of lack of accountability (Bardhan and Mookherjee, 2005). As a donor body, the UNDP (1997) stated that fast-track decentralization is met with donor reservations (p.19), this is why in the process it is important to look into the "devolution" of responsibilities by the government.

d. In the context of the Education sector

Decentralization in the Education sector comes with risks. According to the UNESCO (2016), there might be a discrepancy in outputs of technical functions in poor communities compared to other communities. Moreover, decentralization is associated with high costs in the short-term and it requires a complete restructuring within the Ministry of Education which might be faced with resistance to change. Finally, it is important to be aware of the notion that decentralization does not curb the phenomenon of marginalization, actually it might reproduce inequalities since traditions shape local governing structures (Khan, 2005).

In the education sector, the ePPP model by the WB has received criticism by Verger and Moschetti (2016) and various independent researches (Faridi, 2018 & OXFAM, 2019). Starting with Verger's and Moschetti's (2016) arguments (p. 6-9):

(1) The World Bank's ePPP theory is tricky since the integral part of their model (the voucher scheme) supports market solutions in the education sector in contrast to the norm of PPP by definition which does not necessarily need to follow an NPM rational or a market model.

(2) The subsidies, contracting out or charter schools resemble the quasi-markets and privatization approaches which prevailed in the 1980s (Chubb & Moe, 1988; Le Grand, 1991 as cited in Verger and Moschetti, 2016).

(3) There are accountability and innovation concerns. Regarding accountability, they suggested that in order to move into a PPP approach, governments must strengthen their regulatory framework (also in LaRocque, 2008) in order to ensure adequate performance in areas such as curriculum, school facility quality, teacher-student ratio, school governance and democracy. Regarding innovation, they were concerned with educational innovation being limited under the extreme ePPP continuum so they suggested that low-income countries considering privatization of school provision could consider a substitute arrangement such as multi- stakeholder partnerships that supports building capacity and supporting services rather than a privatization approach, which is difficult to undo (Bellei, 2016).

On the other hand, Afridi (2018) and Oxfam (2019) respectively conducted a review of the ePPP applicability in the province of Punjab and Uganda. The similar results have questioned the validity of the ePPP claims especially related to cost-efficiency and improved quality education in the realm of a regulative framework by the public sector. There was a reference to unintended consequences such as deepening the social divide and gender inequality due to the performance incentivization scheme (in the case of Punjab) (Afridi, 2018) & that the PPP model was not effective in decreasing inequalities or making education more inclusive (Oxfam, 2019). In an explicit statement, Oxfam (2019) has stated "deep concerns" on allowing market oriented ePPP as an education policy reform especially those that depend on low-fee and commercial schools.

In developing countries, relying on the administrative capacity of the state has been problematic (Ricciuti et al. 2019). Also, what can be derived from the above modern definitions of governance is the relationship it has with PPP. However, not many governments were and are able to partner with the private sector in the education sector (UNESCO, 2016). This might be due to the fact that partnership-based local governance depends on the institutional frameworks, political struggles and the context of the society it will operate in (Sorensen and Torfing, 2009).

Asaduzzaman et al. (2016) argue that developing countries should call for rethinking non-traditional models of governance in order to achieve results and meet citizens' expectations. These models can take the form of partnering between the state, private and civil society that will not only improve the capacity of the local government to reach sustainability and protect good governance as well; but also relieve product and service delivery. It is evident that the reputation of non-governmental sectors such as the non-profits, civil society and the private sector in impact creation across several fronts is highly positive and can be more efficient and effective than the government itself (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). Hence the active role these parties have played in holding governments accountable, fighting corruption, decreasing poverty, enforcing decentralization policies is evident.

What makes partnership important in local governance is also what partnerships bring in terms of building capacity, creating agile capabilities between partners (Helfat and Peteraf 2009); which is clearly a goal to be achieved in the case of Lebanon and its public education sector.

Modern society is highly reform-oriented (Brunsson, 2009). Abdul-Hamid & Yassine (2020) report that researchers are promoting a more decentralized approach in the decision-making processes at the Lebanese Ministry of Education. According to Korany (2011), educational reform cannot be compared to other reforms, and needs to address the cause and not the symptoms. Moreover, governance in education is political and technical (Sayed, 2010). It is political because one should examine the responsiveness of education as a service delivery and whether the institutions that are delivering it are participatory. Whereas it is technical because one should look at the ways education is being delivered.

In the study of education policies, there is an opportunity to study new modes of governance that shift from the classical hierarchical mode into various "loci" (UNESCO, 2016) especially that the rising analytical perspectives are accounting to new actors, advocating for institutional reforms and suggesting multi-level processes. By reviewing literature, there are elements that play a role in ensuring a victorious decentralization policy such as providing background support, building technical capacity, tackling the cultural-institutional issues that might arise and setting an appropriate operational design and implementation.

And because decentralization implementation is synchronous with the embedded social and political structure of a state (Khan, 2005), scholars have thought about of a partnership based local governance as a model for the developing world that ensures the participation of the NGOs, civil society and the private sector (Asaduzzaman et al, 2016). However, similar to decentralization, the outcome of partnership-based local governance depends on the institutional frameworks, political struggles and the context of the society it will operate in (Sorensen & Torfing 2009).

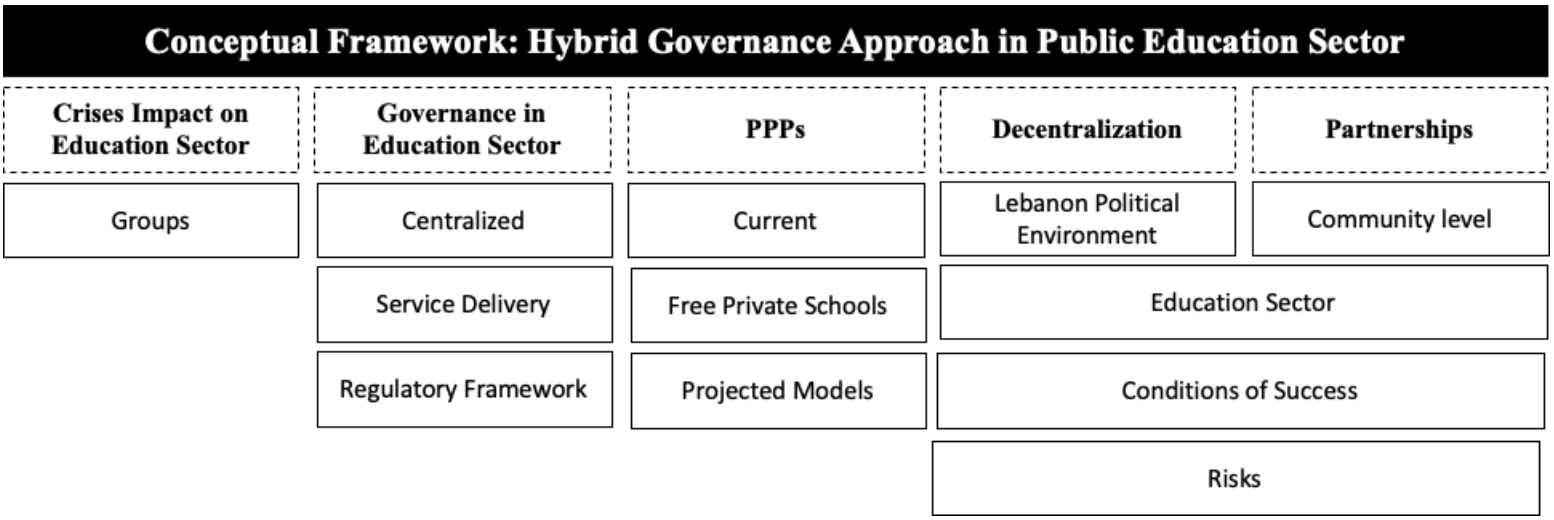
"Administrative practices have to adjust to political realities" (El Zein & Sims, 2004). An environment with an equipping management, input from government actors and means to seek external partners are considered essential for creating a culture with collaborative development that will further be accentuated if intra-organizational systems were developed (Tuurnas et al., 2019) and a new kind of leadership is required that utilizes partnerships, client-focused service delivery and "embedded service systems" especially in the face of emerging systemic challenges (Virtanen & Kaivo-oja, 2015) is what will overcome systemic governance challenges.

6. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework consists of clusters, themes and sub-themes. The cluster is the generalized grouping of the themes and the sub-themes are the main ideas under each of the themes. Whilst in general the prominent concepts can be argued to be decentralization and private public partnerships, the literature review was able to show how different approaches and frameworks are under the overarching concepts.

Figure 5. is an illustration of the conceptual framework which shows the important concepts and themes that will be investigated in the research design.

Figure 5. Preliminary conceptual framework consolidated by El-Assaad (2022)



Chapter 3 - Research Methodology, Design & Analysis

1. Philosophical Assumption

This dissertation follows Pragmatic & Interpretive philosophical assumptions. Answering the question "what works" and attempting to test solutions to an existing problem is the driver to a pragmatic approach (Patton, 1990). Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019) have asserted that a pragmatic approach considers theories and concepts that have played an instrumental role in action. Moreover, an interpretive philosophy is when researchers *"make sense of the subjective and socially constructed meanings expressed about the phenomenon being studied"(*Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). These angles will be evident throughout the researches.

2. Approach to Theory

Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019) mentioned that evaluative research helps in finding out how well something can work; and the primary purpose of this research is evaluative which appraises the selected conceptual framework. However, the study takes an exploratory approach since it is discovering what is happening on ground to service delivery in public schools.

The research adopts a qualitative multi-method by collecting data in semi-structured interviews and document analysis (desk research). Based on the research's aims and approach to theory, "triangulation" will help explore and corroborate the findings from different sources. Moreover, the nature of the study makes drawing relationships between elements very important.

Suddaby (2006) explained that an abductive approach is what combines or moves back and forth between induction and deduction, and this study has taken an 'abductive' approach towards theory development. The research objective is to explore and evaluate the applicability of a hybrid reform approach between PPP & decentralization in order to improve service delivery in the Lebanese public education sector. In order to fulfil the purpose, the researcher followed an abductive approach. The research's starting point was observing a certain phenomenon regarding service delivery in the education sector and wanted to explore it from a governance angle. The critical literature review explained themes and patterns on governance and education governance that can enhance service delivery. These arguments from literature unravelled what is and is not known about the research questions (Wallace and Wray, 2016) and resulted in the conceptual framework of what elements of a hybrid governance approach might be applicable in Lebanon. This framework was then appraised using empirical evidence in existing secondary data from documents and new data from interviews. In the process of analysis, predetermined themes were verified, new themes emerged and relationships were drawn between the collective themes in the framework. As Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019) explain, the study took a richer theoretical perspective of what already exists in literature.

As the researcher was familiarizing herself with the literature review, a third research question emerged: ***What are the implications of the economic crises on the governance in the Lebanese public education sector?*** Adding this research question was very important for the study because it is pivotal to examine the evolution of governance and service delivery in the sector in light of the compound crises Lebanon has been facing since 2019. This became research Question 1.

Table 3. Updated Research Questions of A Hybrid Governance Approach in The Lebanese Public Education Sector (El-Assaad, 2022)

1. *What are the implications of the economic crises on the governance in the Lebanese public education sector?*
2. *What is the hybrid governance model that can be adopted in the Lebanese education sector in order to improve service delivery?*
3. *What are the structural arrangements that need to be done in order to improve service delivery in the Lebanese education sector?*

The research aims to tackle question 1 through empirical findings from the semi-structured interviews and what exists in available statistics and documents in Lebanon. Answering research question 1 was approached by firstly establishing understanding of the overall governance of the Lebanese public education sector pre-crisis and secondly discovering how the crisis impacted the education inductively.

3. Thematic Analysis

The study followed a systematic thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis was used because it fits the research approach which explores a real-world setting. Moreover, it was a flexible approach for going back and forth between data and theory especially that a computer software (e.g., en vivo) was not used for coding.

Braun & Clarke (2006) explained thematic analysis as the method that identifies, analyzes, organizes, describes and reports themes found within a data analysis including the different perspectives within the participants (King, 2004 in Nowell 2017). The researcher followed Nowell's six step thematic analysis approach, explained below:

(1) Step 1 - **Getting familiar with the data,** the researcher Listened to interview recordings, transcribed the audios, initiated the 'triangulation' approach by noting main ideas from audios and selected documents and reflected on potential codes and themes.
(2) Step 2 - **Preliminary coding** of the initial units of data (texts and transcripts) that were relevant to the research questions or pre-determined themes and emerging themes happened. This is when the coding framework was established.
(3) Step 3 - **Searching for themes** commenced and all initial codes of emerging or pre-determined themes were aggregated in a diagram. This produced themes and sub-themes.
(4) Step 4 - **Themes were reviewed** by producing diagrams that well explained

relationships and connections amongst the units of data. The step of drawing relationships was important as the researcher wanted to examine factors.

(5) Step 5 - **Defining and naming themes** where all frameworks were continuously amended and reviewed in an iterative fashion to capture the right clustering. Final theme names have been agreed on and relationships have been drawn among all themes, sub-themes and nodes.

(6) Step 6 - **Producing the report**, which included the final write-up and appraisals.

4. Data collection

Typical to a thematic analysis approach (Creswell, 2007; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019) the study relied on multiple sources of information: semi-structured interviews and desk research.

a. Primary Data – Qualitative

The primary data was collected through Semi-structured interviews. Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019) procedure was followed in this data collection tool. First, the predetermined list of themes was used to develop some key questions related to the themes and conceptual framework. A list of questions was developed to act as a guide to make sure that the themes are covered during the interview process; however, the researcher remained flexible in asking the questions in terms of their order and format to make sure the interview is unique to each participant and conversation flow. There were instances of common questions which were mostly for contextual understanding as this is an evolving topic. The list of predetermined themes helped in the deductive approach of data collection but the flow of interview aided in new themes to emerge and some of these themes were repetitive between participants - which gave the research its 'inductive' angle. The inductive nature of this research was also prevalent in how data was collected. For instance, according to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019), abductive approaches apply theoretically deduced themes in a consistent way in the semi-structured interviews and do not use emerging data in subsequent interviews. Instead, by keeping the consistency of questions, the researcher will be able to test the applicability of this emerging theory in the context of interview settings. In practical application, and as it will be explained in the following chapter, "*History*" & "*Existing Facilitators*" were both emerging nodes and sub-themes respectively not part of the initial conceptual framework.

It was important for the interview participants to have a clear understanding of the issue being studied due to the research topic. The sample was selected based on their professional background and their potential contribution to the study. The final sample included academics, active members in independent political parties, people who have participated in preparing draft laws in the past, public administration consultants and/or policy researchers in think tanks. The researcher either knew the research participants beforehand or was referred to them throughout connections.

Due to the pandemic and the researcher's remote location away from Lebanon, the interviews happened through video conferencing (Zoom) between September & October 2021, were

recorded and stored; all following University of Malta's research ethics (e.g., anonymous naming). The length of the interviews ranged between 45 minutes to 1 hour and a half, were conducted both Lebanese Arabic and English languages.

Following the participants' preferences on their identification in research and research records, the researcher gave them 'colour based' pseudonyms when referring to them in the Discussion chapter or in Table 4, which explains their professional background.

Table 4. Interview Participants (El-Assaad 2022)

Person	Background
Grey	Associate Professor Fields of specialization include Comparative Politics, Political Theory and International Relations.
Isabel Henzler	Public Policy Researcher Founder of Lebanese oriented initiative for youth empowerment through education
Red	Founder/Board Member of an independent political party, lawyer by profession
Gilbert Doumit	Managing partner at a Public Policy & Management, Organizational Learning & Development consulting firm University Lecturer and published academic in areas of social cohesion, social protection, social entrepreneurship, social movements, and political transition. A former candidate for the parliamentary elections in Beirut.
Blue	Associate Professor Applied Research in Education, Citizenship
Indigo	Senior Public Servant in Ministry of Education
Black	Policy researcher in Education committee of a Lebanese independent party
Dr. Fares Zein	University Lecturer (Public Policy/Administration, Public Sector), Consultant to iNGOs in Public Management, Capacity Building, Decentralization etc.
Green	Senior Public Servant in Ministry of Education
Dr. Rima Karami	Associate Professor in Educational Administration, Policy and Leadership in the Department of Education. Co-principal investigator in the TAMAM project that tackles school based reform

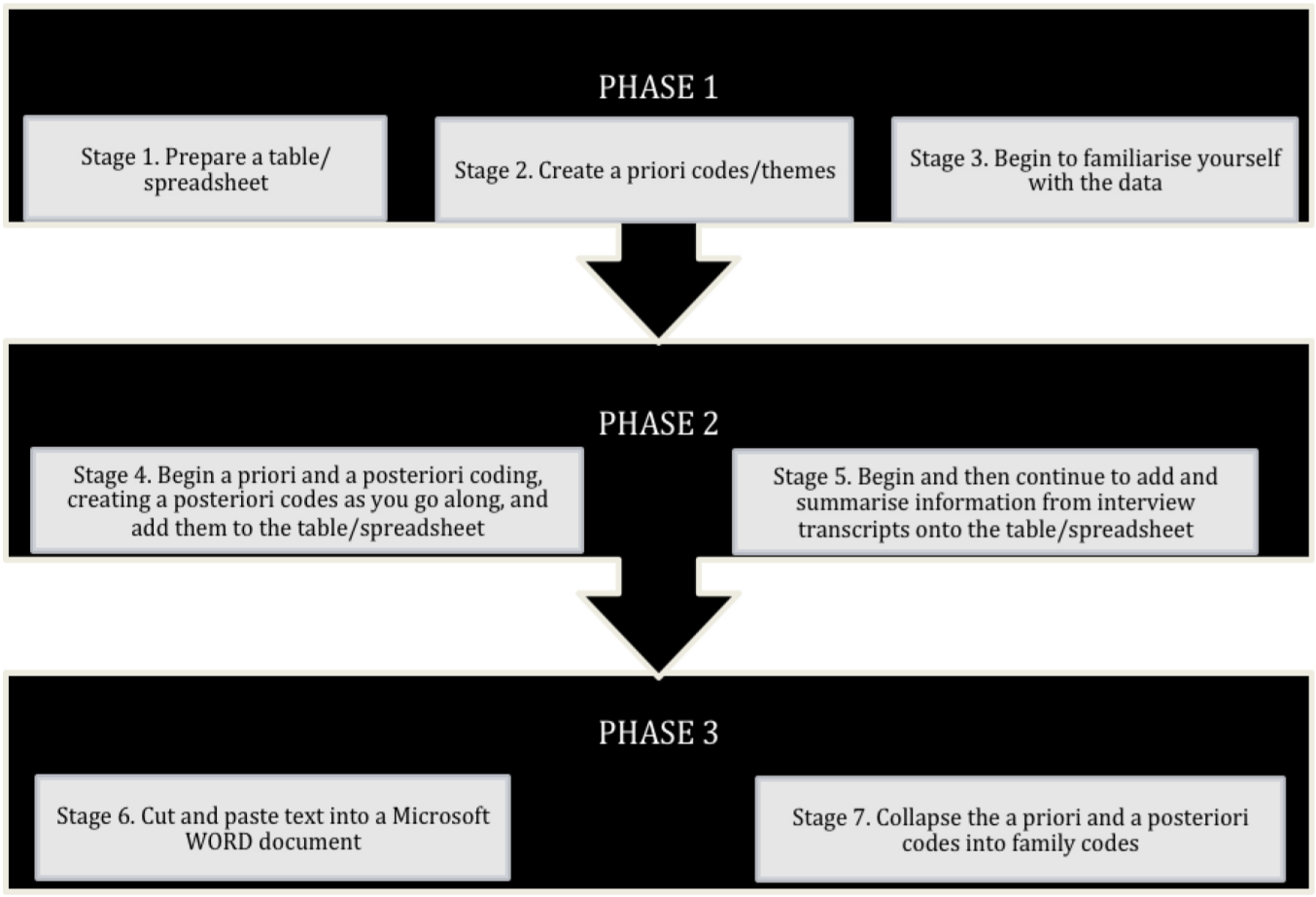
b. Secondary Data – Qualitative

Document sampling was carried out from publicly available resources and included big research studies, statistical publications, Lebanese laws and regulations and journal articles. The document analysis aided in providing contextual information on the phenomena being studied and drawing relationships between empirical findings and published studies. Moreover, the fact that the World bank report was published a few months before the crisis emerged, the timing between its publication and the outbreak of crises helped highlight the initial foundational considerations that exist within the realm of public education in Lebanon. The fact that this is an evolving topic, news articles were essential to take into account. Annex 8 describes the documents selected during Analysis.

5. Interpretation & Analysis

The analysis was completed without the assistance of computer software, so the study followed the practical approach of Swain (2018) during the analytical process. Figure 6 explains the steps the researcher engaged in.

Figure 6. 7 step Process of a practical thematic analysis



Source: Swain (2018) "Hybrid Approach to Thematic Analysis in Qualitative Research: Using a Practical Example

Table 5. Coding Extract from Interview

Extract from the Interview	**Coding** ***In italic are posteriori codes***
not all middle class schools are hit the same due to sectarian history & faith based schools lack of infrastructure, lack of funding and covid made service delivery in public schools challenging teachers can no longer deliver a service since salaries are low, no or expensive fuel price and no electricity for remote learning General Risk of illiteracy and class disparities in education attainment	Schools *Historical influences* Teachers *Long-term impact*

6. Time, Reliability & Validity Considerations

Data collected is cross-sectional. In terms of reliability, interview participants' due diligence was performed especially in the case of government consultants and public sector stakeholders in order to reduce political bias that might impact the quality of data. Moreover, the documents chosen for the document analysis were created by political-agenda free researchers.

In terms of validity, considering the volatile current situation of Lebanon, the Lebanese economic crises and the covid-19 pandemic were taken into consideration. The researcher examined the governance within the education sector in general pre-pandemic and crises and during pandemic and crises to make sure that events happening have little impact on the participants' pre-dominant views. Moreover, informing participants who work in the public sector and in the MEHE that GDPR regulations apply and their identity can be concealed has helped navigate the threat that respondents give inaccurate statements because they might be concerned of future consequences for them. Finally, the triangulation process helped in corroborating the findings from different sources and clarifying causality relationships.

7. Limitations

One limitation of this study was the difficulty of arranging in person interviews since the researcher was based outside of Lebanon and the study took place during the pandemic. Also, the busy schedules of the interviewees either difficult to arrange interviews with the confirmed ones before September 2021 or get a response from other interviewees who were approached but not selected. If there was more time available, it would have been possible to interview more than 10 people and test the relationships emerging.

8. Access, Consent and Participants' Protection

The access to data was Internet-mediated since the interviews were conducted through video calls due to the safety regulations of the covid-19 pandemic and documents were available online. The researcher had direct existing access to almost all the participants and in minimal occasions developed new contacts through the use of common acquaintances which eventually led to direct consent of participation.

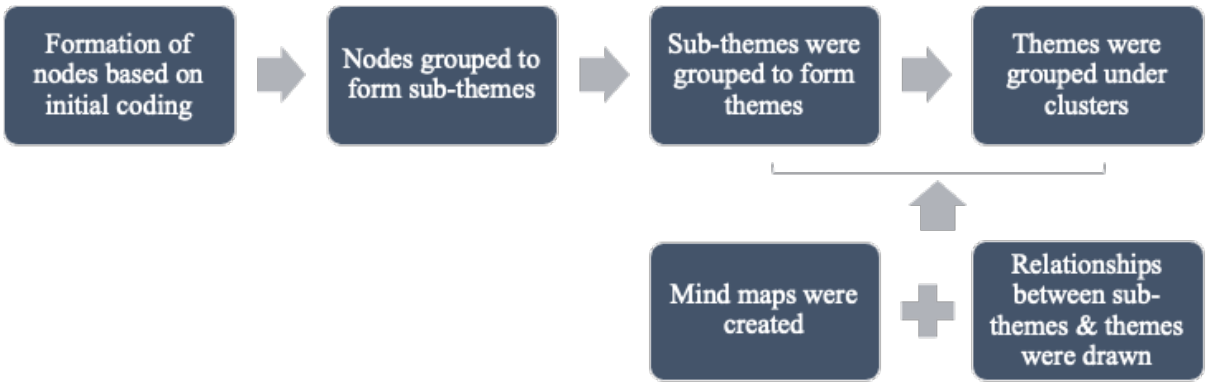
Given the nature of the research and the participants' backgrounds and occupation, confidentiality was a priority in order to protect the participants throughout and after the research. This research was not political at all, but due to the political context and set-up of Lebanon the researcher took extra measures to make sure privacy of participants is maintained. The process of participants' approvals, data collection and analysis were under the University of Malta's Code of Ethics which included ethical review and approval, sending a research project overview, securing a written consent for participation & recording, and choosing the preferred method of identification or anonymity. The data storage was also compliant to the Code of Ethics. Due to the fact that this research follows GDPR regulations (which is not familiar in Lebanon) and protects anonymity, public sector servant access and consent was facilitated.

Chapter 4 - Findings, Analysis & Discussion

1. Introduction - Conceptual Framework

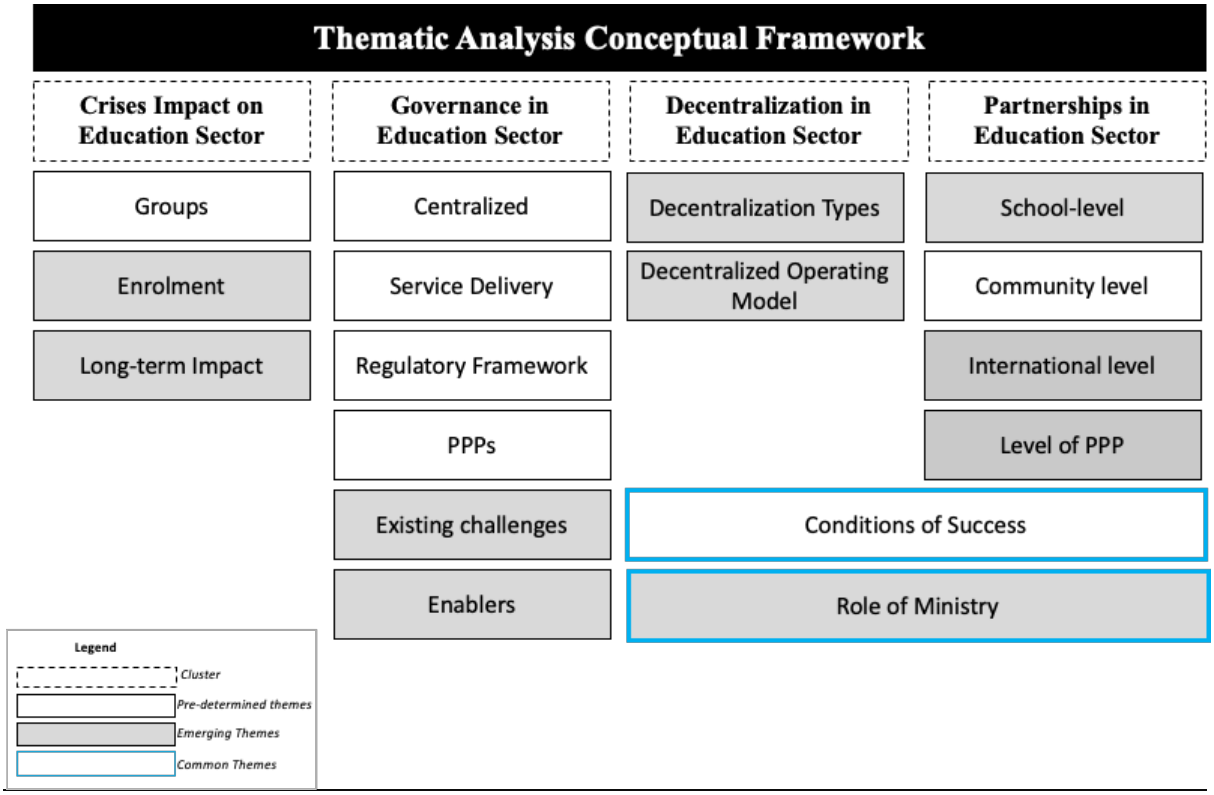
During the thematic analysis, the conceptual framework was carefully appraised through the collection of primary and secondary data. The findings were coded into 'nodes', the nodes were grouped to form a sub-theme and the sub-themes formed a theme, and the themes were grouped into clusters. This systematic process helped reach a conceptual framework that was a compilation of predetermined themes and emerging themes. Predetermined sub-themes and themes and groupings were deductively reached based on the outcome of the literature review which helped form the questions and the sub-themes and hence the preliminary conceptual framework; whereas the emerging themes and groupings were inductively reached based on inductive sub-themes formed due to inductive and nodes. Throughout the process, mind-map diagrams were drawn in order to facilitate the analysis process and forge the way for relationships to be drawn among the different elements of the conceptual framework. Figure 7 is a graphical representation of the process followed during the data analysis stage.

Figure 7. High-level step by step process of how clustering was established (El-Assaad, 2022)



The refined conceptual framework based on the thematic analysis is presented in Figure 8 and the mind-maps for each of the clusters can be found in their respective sections and finally, the relationship diagram is concluded at the end of this chapter. Compared to the preliminary conceptual framework, the final conceptual framework encompasses 'new themes' and also re-ordered predetermined themes under new refined clusters.

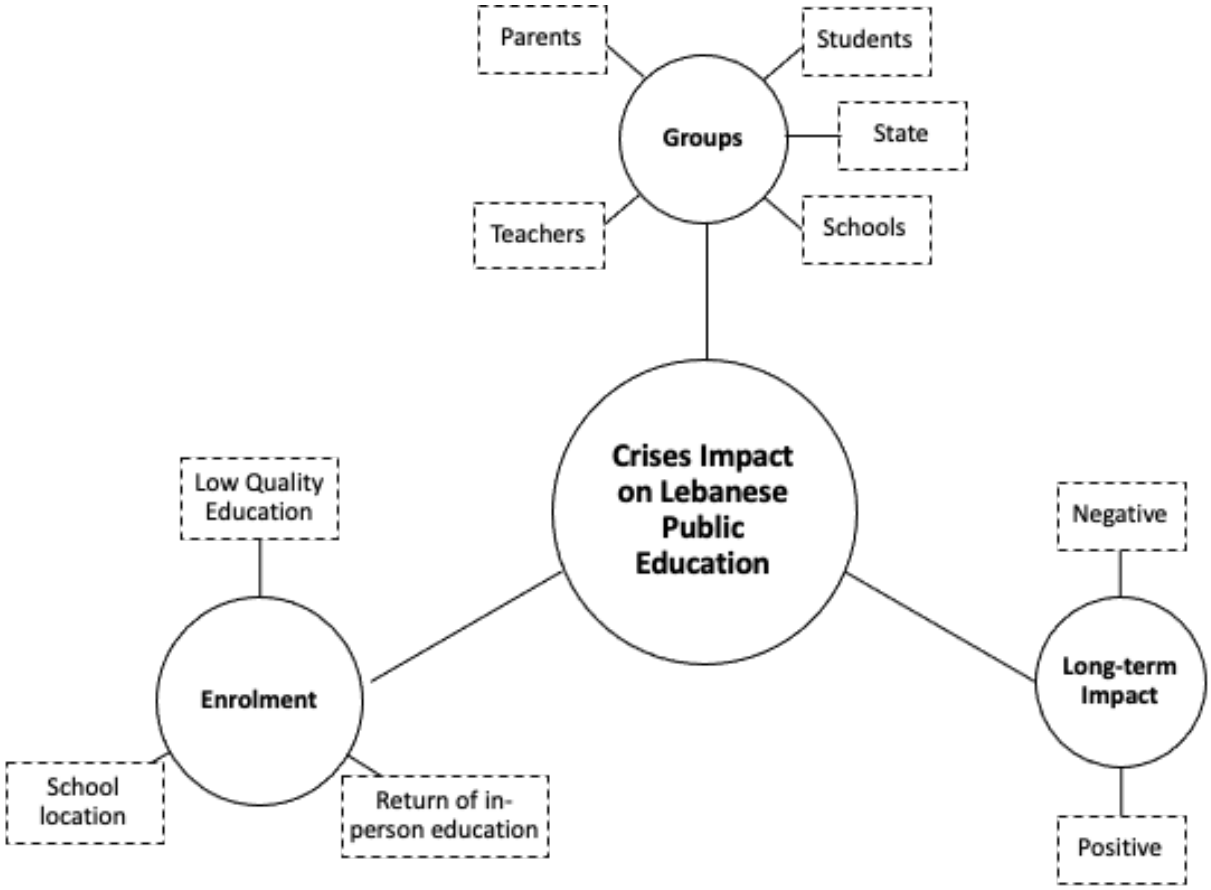
Figure 8. Hybrid Governance Approach Conceptual Framework El-Assaad (2022)



2. Crisis Impact

The compound of crises that started hitting Lebanon since 2019 have left multidimensional implications on the education sector in Lebanon, whether public or private. It can be determined that not only did covid-19 & the crises unveil the lack of infrastructure in the Lebanese public education, but it has impacted different stakeholders in different ways (Infrastructural issues: access to water and sanitized toilets, transportation sector, fuel crises, access to internet, budget deficit to solve the problem, bankrupt state, refugee crises and the overload it has posed on the public education sector). Three main findings of the impact of the crises on the Lebanese education sector are categorized into three different themes and presented below.

Figure 9. Crises Impact Mind Map (El-Assaad, 2022)



2.1 Groups

2.1.1 The State

There was consensus that Lebanon's education system is in a huge threat due to the decreasing quality of education. On a macro-level, the state's GDP is decreasing which is leading to a contraction in the overall public expenditure including investment in the education sector. This has created the reality of the huge dependency on international community aid. On an

infrastructural level, the electricity cuts and the fuel crises have for example, left it impossible for education to happen both online and offline; despite the MEHE's distance learning project whose objective was to support public schools in e-learning during the pandemic.

2.1.2 Students

Firstly, the deteriorating financial conditions and inflation rates have led to a state of 'domestic' migration amongst students within the education sector where students have either migrated from private to public schools, or from private schools to other "better" private schools.

Secondly, there is an increasing threat of students dropping out from the education system due to the tough economic conditions and the rising need for them to work in order to support their families.

While intangible, the 'psychological' impact of the crises on students has been highlighted in the interviews - stress is affecting students' ability to study or parents to teach, especially those who are under threat of unemployment.

The notion of gender disparity has been brought up during the interview where in some communities' girls are being deferred to public schools whereas boys are given preferential treatment to stay in private schools.

Moreover, an interesting term has emerged amongst the participants which is the 'exodus'of both students and teachers from Lebanon. The 'exodus'of students is a natural effect of employed parents leaving to work in other countries post economic crises.

2.1.3 Teachers

Teachers in both private and public schools have been leaving the country for better opportunities and those who stay are quitting because they are incapable of delivering the service due to the extremely low salaries impacted by the inflation. Teachers either can't go to schools due to the expensive fuel prices or are facing difficulties in remote teaching due to electricity cuts or going on strike due to not being paid their salaries. This has led to a lack in primary human resources and educators, in the education system.

2.1.4 Parents

In addition to being the directly impacted stakeholder from the decreasing purchasing power which has caused the students' migration within schools in Lebanon, parents were not equipped to teach children in distance learning.

2.1.5 Schools

From a public school perspective, the schools were overwhelmed by the influx from private schools & due to the lack of funding and other infrastructure conditions aforementioned combined with covid, this has made school-level service delivery challenging.

Due to the history of sectarianism in Lebanon, which will be discussed in upcoming sections, the participants have highlighted that not all schools were hit the same. Whilst some schools suffered closures, others flourished. Key contributors to the growth of some of the private schools are (1) the absence of regulations on the currency exchange which has caused some private schools to set their own USD to LBP exchange rates, (2) the migration of students from private schools which were weak or that closed, to other 'better' private schools and (3) access to diaspora funds (including free private schools).

2.2 Enrolment

Participants who are public servants and have access to numbers have highlighted that the migration from private to public was not as high as 2019/2020 and actually there was a decrease in registrations in public schools which have resulted in a state of Semi-return to normal. This can be attributed to (1) the fact that parents don't want their kids to be impacted by the decreasing quality education due to teacher strikes, (2) return to normal in person education and (3) preferring to enrol kids in schools based on location due to the increasing fuel prices.

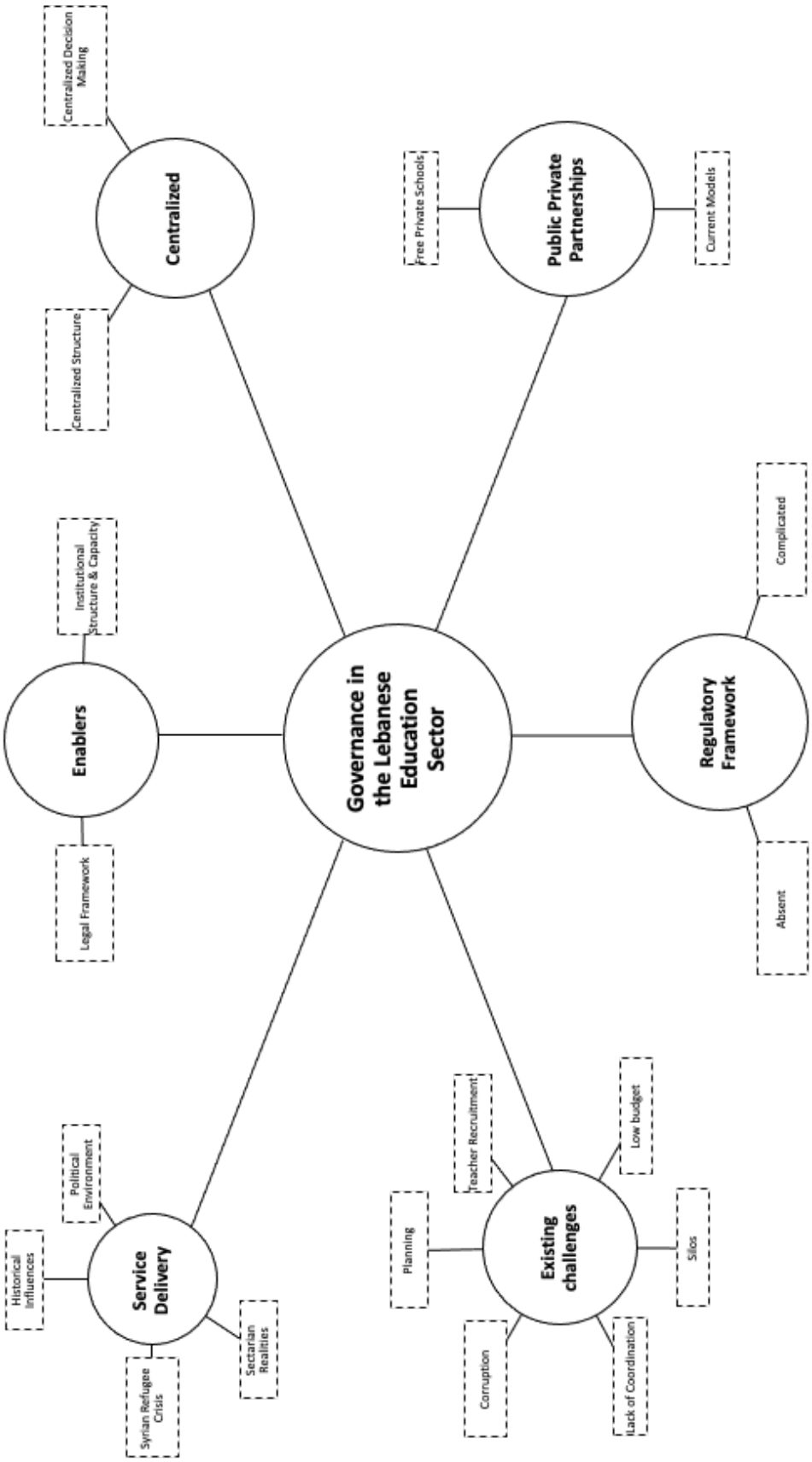
2.3 Long-term Impact

While there was convergence in how the participants viewed the impact of the economic crises, it is worth highlighting that one participant sees a good out of the crises: With more 'previously private' students in public schools, we might start seeing more socio-economic diversity in what was previously dominated by students from the same backgrounds. In addition, we might see more sectarian diversity in cities, which was not the case before; both of which can be considered healthy and not necessarily negative. However, on the other end of the spectrum, one participant highlighted that we might see deeper class disparities in education attainment between private and public schools.

3 Governance in the Lebanese education Sector

The following section highlights findings related to the current governance in the Lebanese public education sector, which in turn sheds light on what is impacting the central and school-level service delivery. This grouping is expanded into 6 themes as explained in the mind map. Whilst some of the themes were 'pre-determined' as pivotal to be explored during the primary research after the literature review, other themes laid down below have emerged from the research and thus are grounded - as explained in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, Section 1.

Figure 10. Governance in Education Sector Mind Map (El-Assaad, 2022)



3.1 Service Delivery

During literature review, the researcher has tapped on the (1) dominating political environment and (2) sectarianism in Lebanon & (3) the political economy in the MEHE within the context of service delivery in the public education sector. However, a recurring finding has emerged in most, if not all, of the respondents as a key factor impacting the current service delivery within the Lebanese public education sector - and it is (4) 'Historical Influences'.

3.1.1 Historical Influences

History was repetitive during the interview when participants were probed on the implication of the crises. Participants have repeatedly referenced that what we're witnessing is a compound effect of foundational realities & infrastructural issues.

- For instance, several participants said that the education system is 'by design' private due to the influx of 'missionary' and 'congregation' schools in the past *"which participated in the inflation of the sectarian private sector in education"*.
- By law, according to the Lebanese Constitution (Chapter 2, Article 10), every religious community has the right to establish their own schools or universities.
- Moreover, the sectarian civil war in the 70s has impacted all public sectors, including the education sector; and as a result, we started witnessing a commercialization of the right to education due to the incremental privatization of the market and this was when the private sector started dominating the education sector, specifically sectarian private schools.
- Findings from two participants shed light on how 'powerful families' and/or 'political elites' have benefited, continue to benefit and influence the private schools.

3.1.2 Sectarian Realities

While not entirely detached from 'historical influences,' sectarian realities play a role in the current political economy of the education sector. One participant highlighted that you see fewer public schools in "Christian" geographic areas and many private schools who self-governs and provide assistance to needy people from various sects. On the other hand, in South of Lebanon which is largely contributed to as a "Muslim" geographical area, there is more public schools which compete with 'Muslim faith' based private schools that have been founded and now competing with public schools.

3.1.3 The Syrian refugee crisis

The Syrian refugee crisis did not only pose political challenges in Lebanon, but also has caused system overload on the Lebanese Education sector from service delivery, administrative and budgetary perspectives. The influx of refugees into public schools caused the government to further depend on international aid and introduce a second shift schedule for the refugees. In turn, the second shift schedule required recruiting additional public school teachers (Annex 2).

3.1.4 Dominating Political Environment

In short, a major problem is the political environment governing Lebanon. Lebanon is currently conflict-affected , corruption-riddled, institutionalized and normalized across all sectors, including the education sector. Below are the findings that encompass the current sub-theme discussed and in turn will draw on several relationships with other themes and/or sub themes.

- *Ineffective & Absent Government:* Participants argued that the Lebanese government is not equipped with strategy formulation on a government level, including the ministry of education which has no vision and no plan. Main contributors to the lack of planning are that (A) Lebanese ministries don't have planning remit or planning personnel (by

design) in the first place (B) Ministry of planning is still absent. This has created a dependency on consultations or international organizations for technical assistance.

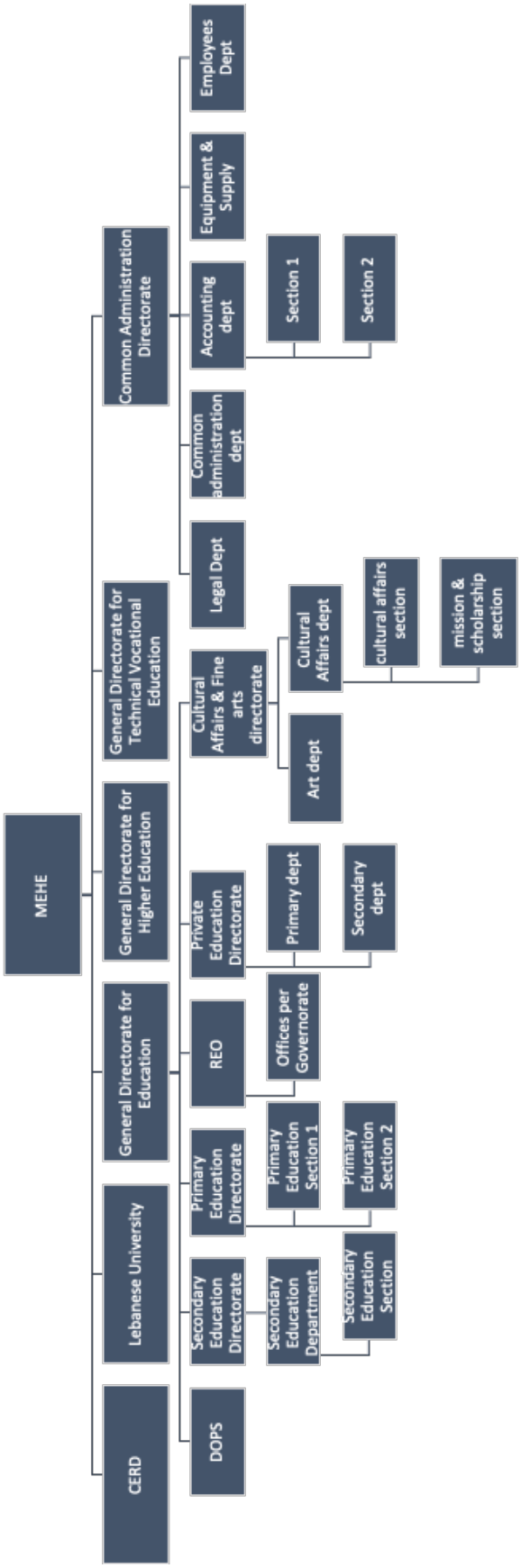
- *Consociationalism & rent-seeking behavior:* Which dominate the public institutions & public administrations and has made corruption deeply rooted in ministries. One can argue that the Ministry of education is part of the overarching clientelist system that governs Lebanon's political environment, also mentioned in the literature review and highlighted during the interviews.
- *No political will power:* Some argued that political consensus is absent and this is viewed in the education sector specifically in the issue of the national curriculum update which is stifled due the political disagreements on what to include about the Lebanese civil war. Moreover, to date, there is no serious attempt to build a truly effective public education since there is a priority to protect the private interest (e.g., maintain affiliations between political parties and private schools)
- *No adherence to rule of law:* As seen in other sectors and within the political environment in Lebanon, the lack of respect to the laws is also manifested in the Ministry of Education to an extent that it has become institutionalized and a 'normal modus operandi'. As it will be expanded on later there is currently a form of granted autonomy in decision making that exists within the stakeholders in the education system; nevertheless, it is not being implemented. For example, as explained by participants, according to due process, head-masters can be elected on a school-level by parental councils in the public sector. However, in application, head-masters of all public schools have been appointed centrally. This 'norm' of ongoing centralized appointments of headmasters has indirectly removed the need or raison d'etre for delegations, such as parental councils.

3.2 Centralized

3.2.1 Centralized Structure

The public education sector in Lebanon is heavily centralized starting from a public administration perspective to appointment of personnel. The below diagram shows the current organizational structure of the ministry of education which depicts its centralized nature. This structure has been in place since 1959 and has not evolved with time or expanding needs.

Figure 11. MEHE Organizational Chart



Source: UNESCO (2016)

From an 'inspection' perspective, the MEHE falls under the 'Central Inspection Unit' and the CERD & the LU (in the MEHE) fall under the mandate of the Central Inspection on the financial level exclusively and in line with the terms and conditions of their own regulations (Article 1 Decree No. 115/1959). Figure 12 shows how centralized the current structure is. From both figures it can be seen that the MEHE does not have its own inspection unit. Analysis of the decisions taken by the CI against certain public schools or public school teachers show how granular CI's remit in the education sector is (e.g. decisions on probations and indefinite leaves); which in turn question the efficacy and efficiency of their remit that spans over more than 60 public administrations in Lebanon despite having a dedicated department for the education sector.

3.2.2 Centralized Decision Making

From an administrative perspective, the current modus operandi within the MEHE is heavily centralized and some decisions can reach the minister level. Some of the centralized decision making powers include public appointments and approval of minimal budget requirements/extensions. The lack of policy improvements and absence of power delegation frameworks is burdening senior stakeholders within the ministry with unnecessary approvals and processes that can be further expedited if we have the necessary formal set-up in place.

An example given by one of the participants who hold a senior position in the MEHE is that the Director Generals must sign-off 9,000,000 LBP or 360 USD (in the black market exchange rate) for the purchase of items in schools. This was previously the equivalent of 6,000 USD before the crisis and currency devaluation.*

* At the time of the study, the most recent black market exchange rate was an average of 1 USD = 28,000 LBP

3.3 Regulatory Framework

3.3.1 Absent

What can be identified from the current structure is the absence of a regulatory body within the ministry of education; and within a 'highly privatized' system, lack of regulations is problematic. Moreover, empirical findings from the myriad of data sources have identified that there is a need for a stronger regulatory framework with the MEHE that ensures accountability in quality service delivery, apart from the external Central Education Inspectorate whose sole focus is to ensure compliance within rules and regulations in both public & private schools. In addition to the framework, there is a strong urge to strengthen internal oversight.

3.3.2 Complicated

However, in essence there are regulations for the general education provision in Lebanon. Nevertheless, they are either outdated, going back to decrees in 1959, and/or found in various legislative texts for various public entities and administrations such as: the legal framework of the CI (as mentioned above) or municipalities (as it will be discussed later on).

In addition, 'in principle' the remit and role of the Division of Private Education is to regulate private education in Lebanon. Based on secondary research, it has been identified that 'in practice', a true regulatory function has been absent.

Finally, the DOPS, under the DGE, acts as an internal regulatory body that is solely focused on providing assistance for school-level service delivery improvement and does not hold any compliance enforcement remit.

3.4 Existing Challenges

A theme emerges from both secondary and primary data collected related to existing challenges in the current operating model of the public education sector. The sub-themes are below:

3.4.1 ***Planning -*** Evidence has shown that there was a challenge in either geographical distribution of public schools or over-supplying schools in certain areas which has eventually led to eventually closing them off.

3.4.2 ***Teacher recruitment*** in primary schools since the MEHE stopped recruiting and has been dependent on contractual or part-time teachers which has paved the way for weaker entry requirements; hence weaker service delivery.

3.4.3 **Low-budget** - Low level of investment in public education (Annex 2, 3)

3.4.4 ***Operating in Silos -*** There are 3 different entities that are working towards the same thing, such as the in-service professional teacher training which is in the remit of the CERD & DOPS.

3.4.5 ***Lack of coordination -*** which happens on so many layers such as teacher allocation to schools. For example, the MEHE & CERD do not coordinate with the Council of Public Service on teacher selection.

3.4.6 ***Corruption -*** The state of affairs of corruption has been established so far; however, one participant brought forward a classification (presented in Table 6) of how corruption takes place in the public sector in general, which can also apply to the MEHE in specific. The individual level typology brought a fresh perspective to this study.

Table 6. Typology of Corruption within Public Servants (El-Assaad, 2022)

Individual level			**Institutional level**
Resisting	**Habituated**	**Engaged**	**Governmental**
New blood into the public sector, first experience	Becomes helpless since "that's how things are"	Part of the corrupted elite, sees corruption as righteous	Governmental entities blocking work for rent seeking behavior or loyalty to the power elite.

3.5 Public Private Partnerships

Based on the researcher's initial knowledge of the existence of 'free private schools' in Lebanon, this was an area worth exploring as it sits on a PPP continuum as discussed in the literature. The findings of the theme and the 3 sub-themes are discussed below.

3.5.1 Free Private Schools

i. Ties to Sectarianism

The participants' views converged: free private schools preserve sectarian identities in Lebanon due to its close ties to political elites and are another tool to protect their clientelist ambitions. From a political economy perspective, it is a way for the public education sector to fund sectarian communities.

ii. Inefficient use of public resource

Some highlighted that free private schools are a misuse of taxpayer money, especially for the reasons stated above. Moreover, they are depleting monetary resources from the ministry of education that can be accounted towards enhancing service delivery in public schools. 7% of the overall expenditure goes toward the "free private schools" (Annex 2). How effective are these forms of subsidization? Based on the analysis of Abdul-hamid & Yassine (2020), the school allowance program hasn't been effective in guaranteeing equitable access to the poorest Lebanese in private schools.

It is worth mentioning that one participant highlighted that the aforementioned issue stems from moral issues and not technical issues from how the government is set-up.

On the other end of the spectrum, one participant mentioned a positive facet of free private schools which is that the government has monitoring and control over the budget.

3.5.2 Current Public Private Partnerships Models

i. ePPP

Based on secondary research, PPP can exist in the education sector. Two scholarly ePPP models (La Rocque, 2007; Patrinos et al., 2009) have provided different types and continuum of the ePPP as shown in the literature review.

However, participants were not aware of the ePPP model and did not associate free private schools as a form of PPP, including participants who work in the ministry of education. When participants were asked if PPP in education exists in Lebanon most of them said no. Only one participant identified the similarity between Lebanon's free private schools and charter schools and used the definition of *"taxpayer money which helps in running the school and almost runs a public school"*. Moreover, another participant stated that in principle PPP might exist in vocational education but not primary schools.

This is contradictory to the generic & notable ePPP models that prove, by definition, that PPP

in the Lebanese education sector does exist and it comes in the form of 'Free Private Schools' also known as 'Subsidized Schools'.

Hence, this shows that participants were not aware of the ePPP models and definitions and their applicability within the education sector. However, whether or not they're aware of the definitions does not overrule the overall consensus on their perception towards the Lebanese free private schools and their contribution to, and depletion of, the Lebanese education sector.

ii. Traditional

Examining the current PPP was an important sub-theme for the researcher to explore in order to see what is currently happening, if it was happening, and how can the system benefit from it in case some form of "change" can be applicable.

According to primary data collection and in contrast to the findings listed above relating to 'free private schools as ePPP', some of the participants confirmed that lately this is informally happening but needs officiating via a formal infrastructure or ground rules. This is needed due to lack of planning which is causing a discrepancy between schools in different locations. One example of how this is "informally" happening is that public schools are the current need to rent school building properties from private owners.

The fact that some participants mentioned there is no 'ePPP' but there seems to be some sort of informal collaboration between the private and public sectors, shows there is more awareness of the traditional models of PPP which were pointed out.

However, based on the World Bank's study, it recognizes multiple ways where the Lebanese government invests in private education: (1) direct Subsidy - also labeled as Free private schools, (2) school allowances to public servants and (3) school allowance for private sector employees through the NSSF. This can also be observed when referring back to Garvin and Bosso's (2008) definition.

Garvin & Bosso's Definition

"A long-term contract between the private and public sector where the private sector is responsible for the management and operations of the public services which yields mutual benefits to both parties."

Source: Garvin & Bosso (2008)

This shows that ePPP, PPP & informal modes of PPP exist in Lebanon's public education sector.

3.6 Enablers

When current governance in the Lebanese education system was examined, it has emerged that there are current facilitators in place that can form a starting point for a change in the current operation within the Lebanese ministry of education and the public education system in general. Actually, several participants have tied these facilitators as 'first steps towards a decentralized mode of governance'.

3.6.1 Legal framework

i. Municipality

According to the Lebanese municipalities' law the municipalities have various mandates

relating to the education sector (Articles 49-51) which include responsibilities such as: Monitoring and reporting of education service delivery in public & private schools, ability to contribute to public schools' tuition fees, setting up public schools and cultural activities, ability to approve or close public schools and regulate transportation from/to schools within the municipality. According to desk research, some recommendations include increasing involvement of the municipalities via exercising their local and legal authorities granted in the sector. However, according to primary research, participants have argued that while the role of municipalities should be strengthened, their role in school management or service delivery should be limited; this will be elaborated on in the following sections.

ii. Councils

- *Parents' committee:* Under the Lebanese law, parents have influence via parent committees (private schools) and parent councils (public schools). The role of the parent council spans from securing funding to budget allocation. However, parents' councils either have low participation rates or are not happening at all.
- *Council of Public Service:* which once was a vehicle supporting the MEHE & CERD in recruiting and deploying teachers is no longer fulfilling this mandate and since then there has been huge dependency on contractual teachers and not full-time teachers.

3.6.2 Institutional Structure & Capacity

CERD

The CERD is an autonomous body under the ministry of education mostly known for its active role in the curriculum reform in 1997. In principle, the CERD is tasked with several responsibilities which in recent times are not being executed due to the political economy of the education sector; and in practice their role has been diluted over the years to text-book printing, research projects and intermittent educator training sessions (as identified on their website). The tasks and their current status are tabulated below based on the desk research conducted and the primary data collected.

Table 7. Description of CERD's Tasks El-Assaad (2022)

Tasks	Current Status
Pre-university academic /vocational curricula revising and update	1997 was the most recent national curriculum update
Education research	Ad Hoc research outputs, partnerships with international organizations, no strategically planned research output and no institutionalization (e.g.multi-stakeholder research on what to include about the history of civil war in Lebanon was not adopted due to political deadlock)

Pre-university teacher training: preparation for deployment	No longer being implemented and shift to contractual teachers instead
Staff & teacher in staff training	Part of a fragmented set-up (Annex 5-6) and low compliance to training attendance but training packages are still being deployed
Reviewing and designing national textbooks for public schools	Sustained, still work in progress
Drafting the content of annual exams and assessments	Responsibility still sustained, however with a non-changing curriculum, little is being changed in official exams
Designing teacher performance standards monitoring protocols	Not effectively being implemented due to lack of coordination, feedback loops and absence of data or digitization that can facilitate this process

i. Regional Education Offices

These are supervisory offices in the Lebanese districts that represent and report directly to the MEHE and their remit is the primary public schools in their respective districts. They (1) either don't exercise any decision making power or (2) if granted it will be a bare minimum and (3) have a consultative role that is at times, not utilized to its full potential. For example, and as explained by Green the REOs can suggest the transfer of some teachers from one school to the other, or suggest penalizing teachers, and can approve the enrolment of students. On the other hand, REOs have the ability or remit to approve the raising of expensing ceiling for primary and elementary schools (if requested from schools). On the other hand, public secondary schools have to get approval from the director of secondary schools in the MEHE.

4 Decentralization

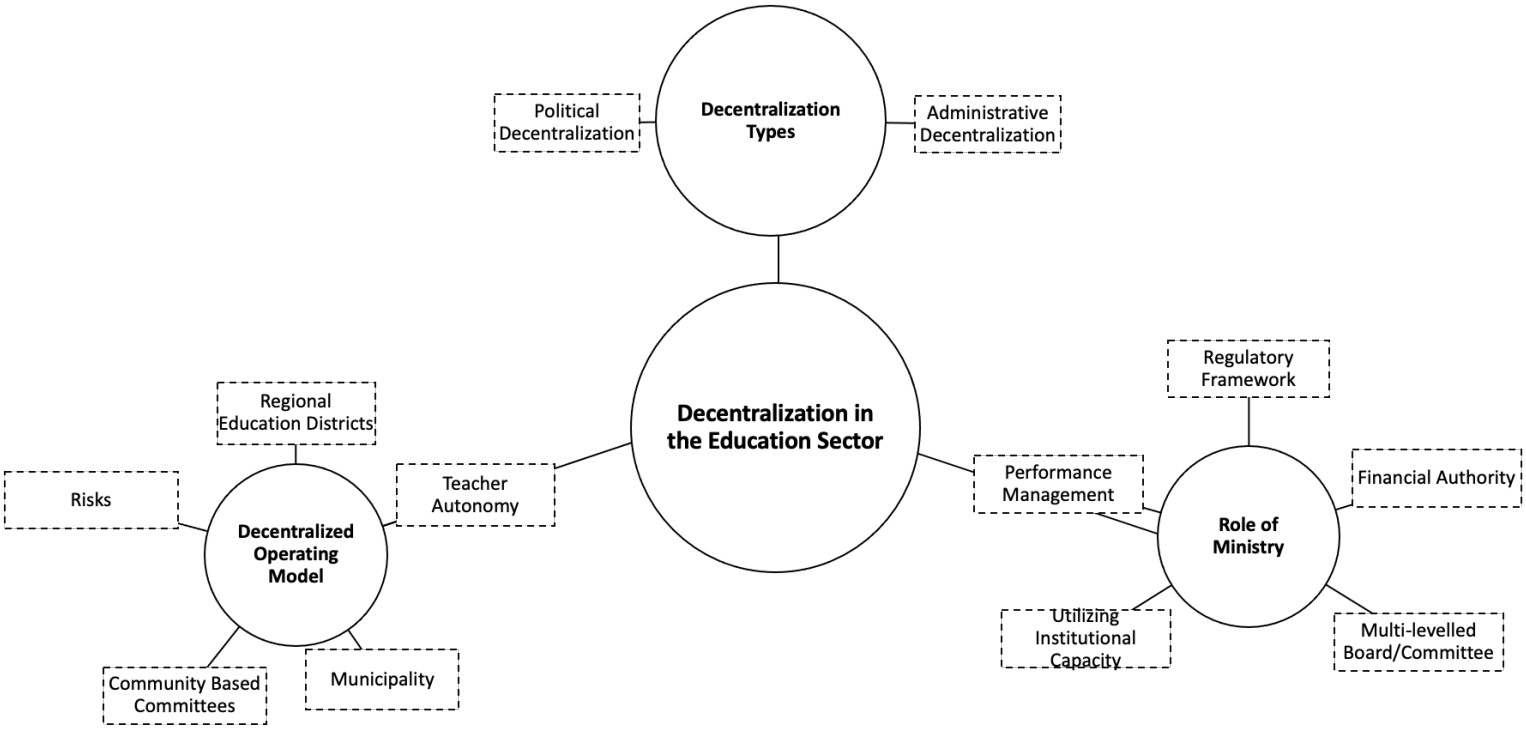
It is extremely important to accurately define decentralization and its scope for the purpose of this section. From a 'political authority' perspective, Lebanon is currently a centralized state with only one level of decentralization (elected entities) in the form of municipalities who enjoy a 'certain level' of autonomy.

One governance forms this study explores is decentralization which made it a significant pre-determined grouping and theme explored during the data collection and analysis process.
In the literature review, a clear distinction was made between the 2 types of decentralizations and in data collection, political decentralization was tapped on lightly for a contextual understanding and administrative decentralization has been the primary focus. Moreover, a common denominator amongst the participants was to clarify which form of decentralization is in question: Political or Administrative as both have different considerations and implications on Lebanon and the education sector.

Lebanon currently applies ‘deconcentration’ in sectors, where ‘local offices’ of the centralized ministries are found in districts e.g., office of social security, office of water & energy etc. However, where the central government confers authority, i.e., ‘Devolves’ or ‘Delegates’ - this is something that we don’t see in Lebanon in general and in the ministry of education in specific despite the deconcentrated loci, in principle.

This grouping is divided into 3 themes which discuss findings from data collection and propositions put forward by the research participants on how a ‘decentralized’ education sector looks like.

Figure 12. Decentralization in the Education Sector Mind Map (El-Assaad, 2022)



4.1 Decentralization Types

4.1.1 Political Decentralization

Political decentralization is a threat to Lebanon and right now, is not a solution. Firstly, from a geographical perspective Lebanon is so small and an extreme form of decentralization - 'the ultimate decentralization' is not recommended as it (1) might bring conflict to a country like Lebanon where corruption is institutionalised, (2) poses a risk of disintegration due to the weak centralized system Lebanon has and (3) might increase sectarian and communitarian belonging and give each sectarian entity a prerogative in their communities.

The 'Baroud Decentralization Bill' that has been put forward is a framework for political reform that brings forward a modus operandi of the 'ultimate political and administrative decentralization.' For example, the bill removes current layers and proposes the formation of municipal units who will be responsible for tax collection, decision and expenditure. A converging sentiment regarding the Baroud bill emerged from primary data collection which is that (1) this bill is the first step to federalism and (2) federalism is the end of Lebanon. Both points have been highlighted by different participants. Moreover, to further accentuate the risks a political decentralization brings, participants have highlighted that in the context of Lebanon, bad decentralization is when there is political, financial and administrative decision making power at a municipality level or small scale as it will further decentralize corruption. While the notion of bringing the voter and the politician closer to each other is encouraged across the

world, Lebanon brings forward 'sectarian' and 'institutionalized corruption' dimensions to take into consideration when deciding the level of decentralization to grant (e.g., Political, Financial or Administrative).

An important point is shedding light on the political motivation behind any form of political decentralization. A convergent 'theses has been made by participants which is that political decentralization can be used as a consociolist tool instead of a development tool and this is fuelled by the notion that the current districting is not based on socioeconomic factors - actually it creates 'homogenous' districts instead of ensuring diversity.

From an applicability perspective, decentralization has been a low priority on the parliamentary agenda despite the existing bill that has been put forward.

Finally, an interesting statement was made by one of the participants who described Lebanon as an "authoritarian state" even though Lebanon does not fall under the technical definition of an authoritarian state. One can argue that the perception of this participant is as such due to the broad definition literature provides such as "*countries in which the government and the opposition do not alternate in power at least once following free elections and where fraudulent and non-competitive elections take place*" (Przeworski et al. 2000; Levitsky & Way 2002; Cheibib et al. 2010).

4.1.2 Administrative Decentralization

As debated in the previous section, political decentralization comes with important considerations and possesses clear implications to be aware of. On the other hand, administrative decentralization and/or devolving certain decision making in certain sectors will help in enhancing overall service delivery. And in turn, as identified in primary data, decentralizing service provision increases service quality and accountability between the voter and the politician. It is worth noting that participants pointed out that in Lebanon, the level of decentralization is key for two reasons: Firstly, an adequate level of decentralization varies with sectors. An example given during the interview is that of the energy sector, which can have a full level of privatization however education is a sector that cannot be fully privatized. What can further corroborate this point is what was discussed in the literature review section with regards to the status of ePPP models & the criticisms they have faced. Secondly, what has emerged from primary data is statements such as *"Lebanon is currently 'informally' divided, and this informal decentralization needs to be factored in."* The informal decentralization refers to the 'decentralized' corruption that takes place in 'deconcentrated' governmental entities which have emerged due to rent seeking behavior politicians use in formal appointments of individuals in the public sector, also seen in the education sector in the case of contractual teachers. This is exactly what was also referred to in the literature review (Section 2.8) on "alternative administration" in the post-war Lebanese Public Administration where a shift of authority from the rule of law to the political strength of who the officials are represented and the former explains the replacement of new values or transfer of loyalties (Antoun, 1989 in El-Zein 2004).

So, what works? Empirical findings have reiterated the importance of accountability and developing an accountability mechanism. Several propositions have been put forward on how to achieve this:

1. **Bringing the voter and official closer together** as it helps in mitigating sectarian differences and increasing transparency because local elected officials will be empowered - This can be in the form of allowing municipality or union of municipalities to take ownership of development issues in their local areas.
    - This can include administrative autonomy and a certain level of financial autonomy for the 'local governments' that will exist.
2. **Delegate certain decision making powers in sectors** - which will take the form of an administrative reform

However, despite the various propositions put forward on the administrative model that can be applied in a general picture, there was a convergence that any form of administrative decentralization should ensure that more developed parts of Lebanon help the less developed parts of the country; which is in turn the exact opposite of the current districting put in place.

4.2 Decentralized Operating Model in the MEHE

There is a strong advocacy towards a more decentralized decision-making in the MEHE where the ministry possesses a centralized role and the CERD plays a bigger role from an institutional perspective.

As discussed in previous sections, there are current 'enablers' in place that can facilitate a transition from the current centralized structure. The current structure gives us the instruments and acts as a catalyst for reform. Starting with the REOs that exist in Lebanon, these can be considered as sub-catalysts which can help in establishing a decentralized model but would need additional laws that can help optimise a power delegation model within the public education sector.

Below is a compilation of decentralization propositions falling on a power delegation continuum, identified in data collection, discussed and analyzed.

4.2.1 Regional Education Offices

Empower the current Education Offices that are in place for primary and elementary schools by granting them decision making powers beyond what is already granted. Participants have argued that this is a current decentralization structure to a certain extent without a decision making power, that if utilized effectively and pertaining to a certain autonomy or administrative power, it can speed up and automate existing processes such as budget approvals and spending caps in the public education sector. The remit they have in raising the expense ceiling is a good starting point to achieve this but more of this needs to be reviewed, while striking the right balance considering the associated risks in the context of Lebanon.

4.2.2 Teacher Autonomy

On a pedagogical level there should be a level of teacher autonomy that is not currently granted in the current system. However, as per literature review and the current challenges that we have in place in the public education sector whether from a teacher recruitment perspective or level of qualification, in order for teacher autonomy to happen - there should be a strong regulatory oversight and mechanism in place to ensure the right balance.

4.2.3 Municipality

From a general perspective, a participant has argued that municipalities can't be disengaged from centralized power since it might increase the current divide and in turn pose a risk of conflict. In the education sector specifically, there was a consensus that Municipalities (or their current union or potential union in a proposed political decentralization scenario) should have limited authority over schools or the public education sector in general.

Whilst this might not be the case in some sectors, this has been a general recurring finding amongst participants. Nevertheless, findings of how municipalities can be involved are:

- Similar to the remit identified in the municipality law (e.g., school development, logistics, sanitation, building management). Moreover, on participant has brought an additional insight on how municipalities can play a role in job creating within the communities by being more active in their schools (e.g., assigning people to tasks)
- Create a better management process by assigning someone with relevant background to overlook the education sector committee within the locality.

4.2.4 Community Based Committees

Paving the way for a school governance structure by approaching it from a community based system that possesses an accountability mechanism and better school management. Community based systems is not a novice concept; it is adopted across several geographical locations such as the US. In Lebanon, this notion exists in the private sector but not in the public sector. Primary findings on how to achieve this on a local context have yielded several ideations laid down below:

- A regional school board: elected by parents where the board bridge's opinion from multiple stakeholders such as parents, teachers, municipality etc.
    - A parent committee: currently in place but not empowered and not consistent across all public schools. Lebanon has a successful experience in parent committees that has been in some occasions discontinued due to reality after the Syrian refugee crisis
        - According to one participant who is a senior official in the MEHE, they are currently considering to re-introduce the parents committee and funds to be able to cater to school expenses due to the economic crises that is causing shortages in liquidity in some schools.
    - Formal empowerment of headmasters in school management decisions
    - Empowerment of the municipalities and the role they play in enhancing service provision of the education sector in their respective geographical area.

- Multi-levelled governance by establishing a common fund between neighboring municipalities where developed areas can help in supporting less developed areas.
- A stronger role for teachers' union to play in various regions/educational districts

4.2.5 Risks

As discussed in the literature review from the general perspective of developing nations and as identified in the desk research on a localized perspective, one should be wary of potential implications a delegated power from the central government to regional offices brings. Particularly in Lebanon, the concept of 'prevailing power elite & influence' has been discussed throughout the study. Moreover, one can draw similarities that apply to Lebanon from learnings from Mexico & Indonesia when decentralized modus operandi has been introduced in the education sector (See Table 8). Academically, this risk has been discussed and highlighted in literature review by Khan (2005) when they mentioned that the notion that decentralization does not curb the phenomenon of marginalization, actually it might reproduce inequalities since traditions shape local governing structures (Khan, 2005).

Table 8. Excerpt from World Bank (2020)

"A particular concern is elite capture, where local elites close all space for wider community representation and participation in school affairs. There are several global examples where decentralization had negative or no impact on the education sector, such as in Mexico and Indonesia. An international review by Mulkeen reveals some of the politics that could be at play—for instance, in Lesotho, community pressure resulted in schools employing local persons in preference to better-qualified outsiders; in Gambia and Uganda, school principals had difficulty applying disciplinary actions against teachers living in the same community; and in Uganda, teachers working in their district of origin were more likely to be absent (Mulkeen 2010)."

However, one can appraise that elite capture already exists in Lebanon; *so, will a decentralized authority to regions bring further divide or corruption?* The participants shared their perspectives when asked about the transferability of corruption & sectarianism in a decentralized model. Table 9 sums up the findings

Table 9. Participants perspective on transferability of corruption & sectarianism

Participant	Perspective
Red	● *"Sectarianism can be transferable but will be of a different nature because it will bring accountability closer."*
Gilbert Doumit	● *"Currently sectarianism is decentralized but official decentralization will formalize what's already informal"*
Indigo, Blue, Dr Rima, Grey	● *"Corruption & sectarianism will always be there."* ● *"It comes from the way the state was formed and how power sharing was instrumentalized by the political elite."* ● *"There is no increased risk of sectarianism, it is already there."* ● It is already there based on occupations that are based on political affiliations.

Source: El-Assaad (2022)

Hence, one can argue that we should not expect decentralized models to decrease the risk of sectarianism or corruption in Lebanon; but we should expect a decentralized model with the right authority at the right level with the right system of checks and balances to improve accountability due to closer proximity.

4.3 Role of Ministry

Decentralization propositions falling on a continuum of power delegation have been previously discussed, but the MEHE has a pivotal role to play especially when it has been argued that there should still be a system of centralized management in place.

There is still room for education policy reform in the Lebanese education sector considering the contemporary challenges and the state of service delivery, which one can argue is one of the reasons why power delegation instead of full decentralization has been recommended and voiced in primary data collection.

A recurrent theme and concept that was evident in primary & secondary data was 'regulations' within the public education sector. Moreover, some participants have suggested the formation of a 'board' or 'committee' consisting of multiple stakeholders from the education sector which has a role to play in human resource recruitment, financial allocation and curriculum development.

4.3.1 Regulatory Framework

Empirical evidence from 3 participants suggested a formation of a regulatory body that can monitor, organize and increase system oversight. This should be powered by a legal framework that is focused on the student and service delivery and acts as a "policy making unit." Moreover, having a regulatory framework and entity in place can play a role in (1) actioning curricula

reform and deployment, (2) abolishing certain system inefficiencies like high ratio of teacher-to-student, school distribution across geographical areas and teacher management and (3) extinguishing political interference

4.3.2 Financial Authority

In a decentralized continuum and due to the threats, that can be associated with devolving and/or delegating powers (as previously discussed) to lower-levels of administration in the context of Lebanon, both primary and secondary data has advocated for the financial resource allocation to be centralized, at least in the initial stages of the transition. This proposition does not necessarily require a shift in the direction of what is currently in place but requires revisiting the model (i.e., Policy) of how the allocation takes place that would ensure an unbiased and high-quality education to all students.

4.3.3 Multi-levelled Board/Committee

There is currently a lack of participation and fragmentation in decision making, planning, and execution which is manifested in duplication of efforts by different entities. This shows the lack of coordination that prevails in the public education system.

Secondary data has advocated towards more stakeholder management in the education sector, especially that from an institutional set-up perspective, there are current entities and enablers in place that can serve the purpose of a more laser focused strategizing, planning and execution. Primary data has yielded propositions that can be employed which are participatory and bottom-up, listed below:

Human resource allocation: at both MEHE & CERD including Formal appointments in senior roles

i. Indirect financial Efficiency: What can be inferred from the above is the indirect spill over establishing a board/committee can bring on the process of financial dissemination and resource allocation. The increased transparency a multi-levelled board can bring in general, considering the regional and individual level stakeholders, will make the process of financial resource allocation more equitable.
ii. Curriculum planning and reform: the curriculum is still centralized with the involvement of schools and individuals such as teachers. This process can still remain centralized but well managed and participatory if there was a board/committee and the curriculum is contributed to, discussed, reformed by a board/committee whilst maintaining involvement from different parties such as school-level actors. The curriculum development project (since 1994) has become dominated by private interests and by making it participatory, private interests can decrease the risk of 'political interference' as it will create a system of accountability.

Finally, one can recognize a link that can be established between the board at the ministerial level and the 'public school board' proposed on an 'education district' level.

4.3.4 Utilizing Institutional capacity

i. CERD

There is room for the CERD to not only fully execute what is lawfully within its remit, but the way the CERD is situated from an institutional perspective, it has a stronger role to play in education research, policy recommendations and school level staff training to name a few.

4.3.5 Performance Management

i. School level Nationwide KPIs

There is a need to establish nationwide KPIs that assess public and private school performance based on standards of education. As identified in secondary data, there has been numerous education research published in Lebanon that can be used to develop the KPIs.

Moreover, there are no dedicated units within the MEHE that are tasked with performance management.

As per one of the participants, having a performance management system (1) can utilize best performing schools for transparent funding and (2) incentivize other schools. This can diminish the politically affiliated support some schools get which currently prevails. Moreover, there is a relationship between establishing a school level KPIs and the theme of partnerships, which will be discussed later.

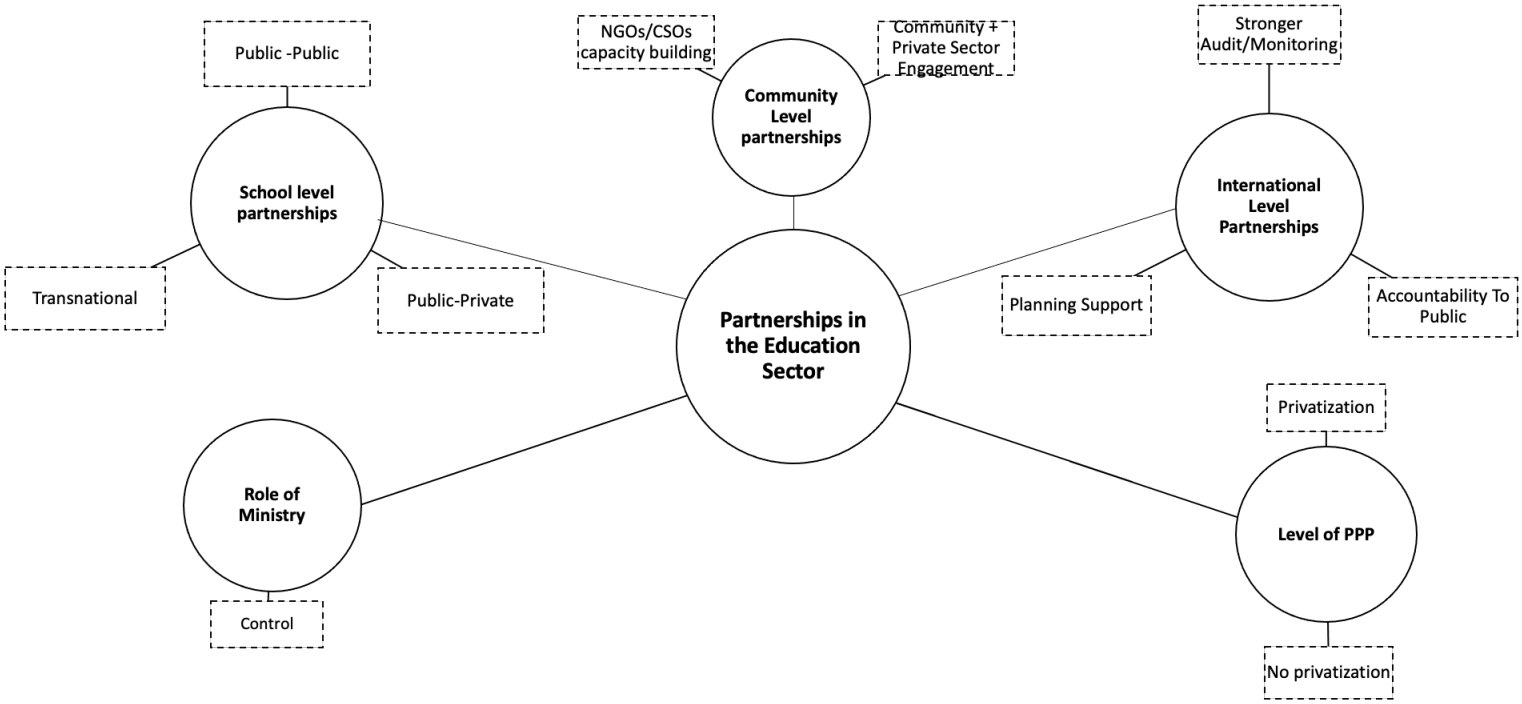
ii. Public sector servant level

Output measurement does not exist in the sector, and promotions to individuals are not based on performance but are either based on tenure or political affiliations. Having a system in place that can apply performance based management practices can help in promoting service delivery on an individual level.

5 Partnerships

One participant argued that we need something that removes sectarianism out of the equation. A question begs itself on what sort of partnerships in the public education sector can be forged that can help mitigate deeply rooted sectarianism and who should the actors be for an effective service delivery? The below discussion in this grouping helps present a collection of propositions that were identified throughout the thematic analysis. As it will be identified, relationships can be drawn between several themes from these grouping and previous groupings.

Figure 13. Partnership in the Education Sector Mind Map (El-Assaad, 2022)



5.1 School level partnerships

5.1.1 Public-Public

Several participants have argued that there is a need to merge or consolidate public schools. While this is not a new process for the MEHE as previously discussed, in this context the consolidation comes from an economic efficiency need due to the contemporary challenges the sector is facing.

Away from the downsizing of the sector, a relationship has been established with the Performance management sub-theme. Dr. Karami has suggested that the nation-wide KPIs can be used to (1) identify best performing schools or "positive deviant schools" and (2) these schools can become model schools for apprenticeships for educators or knowledge sharing.

5.1.2 Public – Private

i. Local

The public schools can benefit from knowledge-sharing from private schools given the fact that the private education sector has proved to present better educational outcomes in certain subjects and enjoys a generally better public perception.

Nevertheless, the outcome of the WB study has argued that while the private sector is generally perceived as of a higher quality, in reality and based on benchmarks carried out in their study this does not match reality. Moreover, several opinions from the participants converged on the notion that not all public schools are bad, and not all private schools are good. Hence, one can

argue that there should be considerations to be taken in the opportunity of knowledge shared between public and private.

Based on both desk research and a repetitive example presented during interviews is that of a private school (SABIS) being tasked with the management of a public school in Lebanon which has 'arguably' enhanced the school-level service delivery. However, on the other hand another participant disagreed with the predominant belief that this was a positive experience and presented the case of this particular private school not being successful in managing a school outside of Lebanon, in the gulf region, since according to their view, they applied more of 'traditional' pedagogical practices.

In addition, based on the WB diagnostics (Annex 6), school management seeds are already there but needs further strengthening, which was also a point corroborated in the primary research carried out where several participants have argued that there is less of a school management issue but more of a governance issue.

Therefore, one can argue that while there is an opportunity for a local public-private collaboration between schools under the umbrella of shared knowledge etc, there should be management from above - which is exactly why the notion of regulations is needed even under the partnership umbrella.

ii. Transnational

Grey presented the idea of 'coupling schools' in Lebanon with schools outside of Lebanon.

5.2 Community Level Partnerships

This theme is closely linked with the previous sub-theme 'community based committees. A converging point of view from participants suggested bringing the school closer to the market by fundraising via the private sector (e.g., Businesses) under a "partnership based community approach." The participants have suggested this as it will help schools in securing funding and will engage the community and the private sector. In addition, the same applies in the context of local CSOs and NGOs who can play a role in capacity building apart from financial support. Nevertheless, despite that these propositions present financial benefits to schools in their respective regions, one can argue that they hold the same risk of elite capture from a governance perspective - especially that many of the private businesses (or NGOs) that can help public schools in this scenario can be politically affiliated one way or another.

Two things can be inferred from this proposition:
1- The community based committees can act as prerequisites to community level partnerships that can be forged.
2- In order to be 'political agenda' free, community level partnerships need to have a system of checks and balances.

5.3 International level partnerships

International donor agencies have been identified as main stakeholders in the public education sector in the context of Lebanon majorly due to the role they have historically and currently play from a financing perspective post-war and during the two refugee waves Lebanon has experienced: Iraqi refugees and Syrian refugees (the latter holding the heavier weight). So, when exploring what role, they can play more than what has been provided to date, primary research has suggested:

- Education researchers & donor agencies have a responsibility to the public especially after corruption scandals have been exposed in the MEHE (Annex 7). Predominantly, participants called out that there is a need for a stronger audit and monitoring system for grants given to the public sector.
- Secondly, it was proposed that donor agencies support ministries by cutting funding and focus on developmental aid from a planning perspective as this is an existing weakness as argued in primary research and presented in secondary research.
- Thirdly, Blue suggested that the donors can make audit reports publicly and follow a dissemination strategy about the state of affairs.

5.4 Role of Ministry

A repetitive theme under this grouping suggests that the MEHE plays a huge role in partnerships. For instance, one participant mentioned that any applied PPP holds a threat of monopoly, which requires a central authority to regulate.

It can be identified that the notion of 'control' was presented several times in several themes and sub-themes which validates that there are current gaps in the central authority and an opportunity in the case of any restructuring.

5.5 Level of PPP

5.5.1 Full Privatization

While it can be inferred from the themes above that this theme takes a 'partnership based local approach' of a PPP, one participant presented a rather *extreme* model of PPP: Market liberalization. Dr. Fares Zein argued that this can be a solution since the public sector has proved it is incapable of providing service delivery and is best to have a regulatory role. This can be achieved by completely subsidizing private schools due to the better education quality. Moreover, they suggested that this might present more job opportunities. This is a highly interesting divergent view that was put forward worth debating and studying further. For instance, a point can be put forward which is the mixed 'perception of better education quality' the private education sector provides - and which was put forward by the participant. Secondly, it is worth noting the historical influences (Chapter 4, Section 2) that have shaped our current education sector and its impact on a liberalized market.

5.5.2 No Privatization

Actually, one of the participants, Gilbert argued that the majority of Lebanese private schools are faith based and any implemented PPP has a risk of not being nationalistic. Moreover, he made a point that usually PPP is implemented in countries that lack resource whereas Lebanon does not have a lack of resource (e.g., high ratio of teacher to student, over supply in public schools) and we have qualified people and local capacity in the right place and in some instances the issue we face in public schools are those of school management. While this contradicts a point made above on the fact that our school management seeds are there, it does present a perspective on the role of human resource and individual capacity in a PPP model.
Supporting this point is what was noted in the literature review (Section 2.7.2), it was noted that low-income countries that consider privatization of school provision could consider a substitute arrangement such as multi- stakeholder partnerships that supports building capacity and supporting services rather than a privatization approach, which is difficult to undo.

6 Common Themes

There were common themes that spanned across several clusters and the emerging theme "Role of Ministry" is one of them. This theme has been expanded on under each of the "Decentralization" and "Partnerships" clusters for ease of explanation. There was another predetermined theme: "Conditions of Success" that overarched on the Decentralization and Partnerships clusters.

6.1 Conditions of Success

In order for a transition to occur from the current state of affairs to a new one, several conditions were identified. Firstly, (1) Trust by the public towards the sector and its public servants has to be reinstated since we are at a complete systematic failure across all public sectors. This can be achieved by more transparency on a centralized level. Secondly, (2) political consensus amongst the existing political parties towards a needed change in the sector has to prevail. Thirdly, (3) we need digitization to happen especially if there is a proposal or inclination towards moving to a more decentralized set-up such as paperless admin. At the moment, many schools and public institutions in the sector have low adoption rates of basic digitization, such as data entry software that connects schools to the ministry and eases information management. Fourthly, (4) and related to the point before, there are basic infrastructure advancements that are required to happen to digitize - and the continuous electricity cuts and internet issues are making digitization difficult. Fifthly, (5) in the scenario of multiple layers it is essential to have a clear scope of work for each of the layers in addition to separation of power. Sixthly, (6) in the context of governance, bureaucracy needs to be introduced as a step towards establishing due processes. Finally, (7) there needs to be an attitude change across all stakeholders from the context of prioritizing the education sector on the political agenda and making any change in real-time.

3. Summary & Relationships

a. Summary of Themes & Sub-Themes

This section is an aggregation of the summary of findings of all the clusters and their respective themes, seen in Table 10.

Table 10. Summary of Findings (El-Assaad, 2022)

Cluster 1: Crises Impact			
Themes	**Groups**	**Enrolment**	**Long-term impact**
Sub-themes	Students	Low-quality Education	Negative
	Parents	School Location	Positive
	Teachers	Return of in-person Education	
	Schools		
	State		

Cluster 2: Governance In The Lebanese Public Education Sector						
Themes	**Centralized**	**Service Delivery**	**Regulatory Framework**	**PPPs**	**Existing Challenges**	**Enablers**
Sub-themes	Structure	Historical Influences	Absent	Current Models	Teacher Recruitement	Legal Framework
	Decision Making	Political Environment	Complicated	Free Private Schools	Planning	Institutional Structure & Capacity
		Syrian Refugee Crises			Corruption	
		Sectarian Realities			Low-budget	
					Silos	
					Lack of Coordination	

Cluster 3: Decentralization In The Lebanese Public Education Sector		
Themes	**Decentralization Types**	**Decentralized Operating Model**
Sub-themes	Political	Regional Education Offices
	Administrative	Municipality
		Community Based committees
		Risks

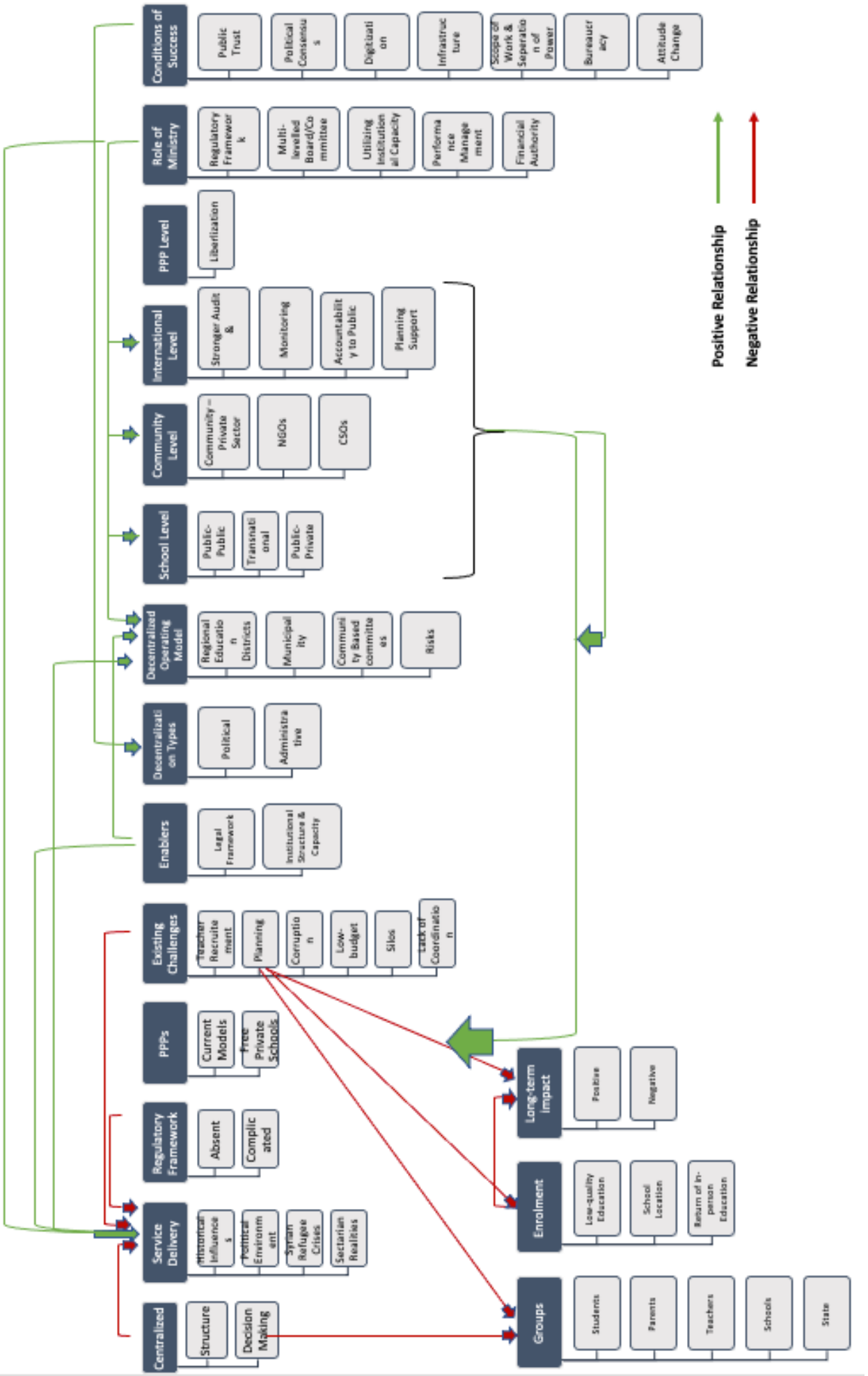
Cluster 4: Partnership In The Lebanese Public Education Sector			
School Level	**Community Level**	**International Level**	**PPP Level**
Public-Public	Community – Private Sector	Stronger Audit & Monitoring	Privatization
Transnational	NGOs CSOs	Accountability to Public	No Privatization
Public-Private		Planning Support	

Common themes (Cluster 3 & 4)	
Role of Ministry	**Conditions of Success**
Regulatory Framework	Public Trust
Multi-levelled Board/Committee	Political Consensus
Utilizing Institutional Capacity	Digitization
Performance Management	Infrastructure
Financial Authority	Scope of Work & Seperation of Power
	Bureaucracy
	Attitude Change

b. High-level Relationships

This section is a relationship diagram between all of the themes discussed so far. The diagram shows how themes have shaped up to form relationships and connections.

Figure 14. Relationship Diagram between Themes El-Assaad (2022)



Chapter 5 – Conclusion

1. Introduction

This research has commenced with a clear problem statement: The status of the public education sector and its declining service delivery post-compound crises. The dissertation's literature review involved reviewing governance concepts and frameworks from a general perspective to sectoral perspective with a focus on decentralization & PPP models in order to fulfil the research's main objective of exploring and evaluating a hybrid governance approach in the primary public education sector. A conceptual framework was the baseline for an extensive thematic analysis which yielded a refined conceptual framework based on a grounded understanding from empirical evidence using a deductive method. However, there were inductive elements to the research as discussed in Chapter 3 which in turns yielded new themes. During the analysis and discussion stage, several relationships were drawn. This chapter's purpose is to (1) distil the outcome of the research into evidence-based conclusions, (2) directly answer the research questions, (3) explain the relationships formed and (4) produce a multi-levelled framework that best fulfils the research objectives and answers. This chapter concludes with future research recommendations.

2. Evidence based conclusions

There is a need for strengthening the public education service delivery on a central and local level and the existing centralized set-up is not helping the indemnity of the sector. Moreover, what's being implemented on a sectoral level is endemic across all sectors due to the clientelist networks and consocialistic democratic structure we live in. The compound of crises combined with underfunded service deliverers combined with an increasingly contracting individual purchasing power requires service deliverers and the centralized authorities to react to changing customer needs.

3. Answers to Research Questions

Research Question 1 - What are the implications of the economic crises on the governance in the Lebanese public education sector?

The economic and other crises have not yet impacted the governance in any sector in Lebanon, let alone the public education sector. Governance in the public education sector is still unchanged pre-crises: Heavily centralized with no clear regulatory framework, ineffective (Free Private Schools) to formally inexistent to informal PPPs taking place. The sector's service delivery is bounded by historical influences and the dominating political environment. Pre-crisis, the sector suffered several challenges such as teacher recruitment, lack of planning, corruption, siloed operating model and absence of coordination. Finally, the centralized authorities have ignored existing enablers such as a legal framework and institutional structures that allow a dencentralized modus operandi.

The crises left several groups in the education sector negatively impacted by the crises including the MEHE which have in turn affected the enrolment rates across public and private schools. The mass exodus on an individual level has put the sector at the center of a brain-drain from an educating body perspective which risks the education and service quality. The implications of the crises and the concerned groups have left long-term impacts on the education sector such as increasing drop-out rates on one hand but a light towards a socio-economically diversified student population in public schools on the other hand. The responsiveness of the public education sector towards the covid-19 crises included engaging institutions (e.g., CERD) in quick fixes, which showed that strengthening non-state institutions through partnerships and engagement is doable and can be in turn effective.

Research Question 2 - What is the hybrid governance model that can be adopted in the Lebanese education sector in order to improve service delivery?

Lebanon can apply a multi-levelled governance approach which is decentralized and participatory across several levels. The model is free from any political decentralization dogmas and focused on the administrative level of central service delivery which in turn can positively impact the school-level service delivery. Westernized and generic decentralization and PPP models cannot be applied in Lebanon as they hold a risk due to the sectarian realities and corruption riddled institutions. Instead, the model advocates towards utilizing current enablers existing in the sector such as delegating certain decision making powers to the Regional Education Offices beyond what they currently have and strengthening the role of municipalities in their localities within the remit of what they currently lawfully possess. However, most importantly create community based committees that form regional school-boards whose members are several stakeholders of the region who are able to forge partnership on a community level. The MEHE will have a role in formulating an autonomous regulatory body with a regulatory framework that can help (1) regulate the community level decentralization partnerships in addition to (2) strengthen the system oversight on a central level by holding an inspection role and a clear system of checks and balances. There is room for a multi-levelled board within the MEHE composed of key stakeholders in the education sector such as the CERD, the Directorates of Education and representatives from the REOs which can help bridge the relationship between the central and non-central levels. When discussing decentralization, financial authority cannot be ignored. Naturally, the current financial model within the MEHE will change in a scenario where the governance model changes. However, taking into consideration the need for a centralized role and the risks associated with more decentralized structures, there is still a need to allocate the right level of financial power to the empowered and newly delegated REOs. While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss the appropriate financial model and authorities, for future considerations, this should be highlighted. Referring to Table 2, in practice the model this study suggests lies between the Deconcentration & Delegation. Hence, more powers to the currently existing REOs.

The outcome of both decentralization and partnership-based local governance depends on the institutional frameworks, political struggles and the context of the society it will operate in

(Sorensen & Torfing 2009). This is why many generic models cannot be applied elsewhere, and which was also the subject of Christopher Hood's point to how NPM can't be cloned in third world countries.

Research Question 3- What are the structural arrangements that need to be done in order to improve service delivery in the Lebanese education sector?

Table 11 summarizes the policy recommendations and highlights the arrangements/considerations that need to be taken into account.

Table 11. Policy Recommendations & Considerations El-Assaad (2022)

Policy Recommendation	Status	Advantage	Considerations
Authority to Existing Education Offices /MEHE Offices (Local Education Authority)	Structure already exists, right level of authority and power delegation to be established	- Aids in efficient resource allocation (funding distribution/human), increase efficiency in admin work or bureaucratic processes - Better system oversight bottom up - Better Monitoring	- Change in law required - Size of educational district to be considered - Districting rationale to be factored in
Increase Teacher autonomy	Exists to a certain extent, needs development	- Autonomy in delivering education and pedagogy in general - More teacher involvement that can aid in curriculum development (strategic spill over)	- Existing issue in deployment of teachers and the dependency on consultants (part-timers) - Clearly define the continuum of autonomy
Revive role of Council of Public Service in Teacher recruitment	The Council of Public Service has reportedly had a stronger role to play at the time of 'Dar al Mu'allimin' in terms of entry requirements and capacity building which need to be reconsidered	This can decrease dependency on contractual or supplemental teachers and re-introduce the basic requirement of accreditation from higher education institutions in order to practice the teaching profession -Paves the way for more collaboration with the CERD	- Teacher recruitment reforms that consider existing institutions and engagement possibilities with other education sector institutions such as the CERD. - Review the current teacher requirements and strengthen it to meet prerequisites of a strong service delivery body. - might be able to happen without reform, the council already exists
Empower Municipalities to fill	Laws clearly define authority, needs	- Ability to create jobs within the regions	- Clearly establish role of education committee within

Policy Recommendation	Status	Advantage	Considerations
their current roles	empowerment and infrastructural support (e.g., adequate budget in order to fulfil role)	- The right involvement forges a way for local based partnerships	municipality if it does not exist - Needs to be governed by a regulatory body for system oversight - Clear budget reporting - can happen without reform but with clear power segregation
Create Regional School boards	Does not exist in Public Sector	- Increases stakeholder engagement - Generates a multi-levelled governance approach (individual, committees, schools, district offices) - Enforces participatory decision making - Acts as a connection point in the network of stakeholder -creates a direct relationship with the newly empowered REOs	- Deploy evidence based learning from the private sector school boards - Needs to be governed by a regulatory framework - Ensures equitable participation by diverse members of the society including the refugees - Reform required that allows the formation of a regional school board
Revive & Strengthen Parental councils	- Exists, somehow inconsistent and needs empowerment from central authority - this is currently lawful but not utilized due to the refugee crises which made all public schools free	- Empowers transparent decision making - Increases accountability by bringing parents & headmasters closer - Will bring school closer to private sector by securing external funding - Represents parents in school in the regional school board	- Navigate current systematic pre-existing challenges (e.g., role in headmaster recruitment) - can happen without reform
Create a Regulatory Body	Does not exist	- Strengthening general system oversight - Improves monitoring - Generates coordination - More transparency in role appointment - Action oriented and participatory curriculum development -Abolish system inefficiencies	- Requires legal framework and regulatory framework - Review current fragmented legal frameworks in various legal texts which tackle the public education sector.

Policy Recommendation	Status	Advantage	Considerations
Introduce a Multi-levelled Board (MEHE level)	Does not exist	- Action oriented and participatory curriculum development	- reform required - representations from key stakeholders such as DGs, CERD, Council of Public Servants
Foster School-level partnerships	- somehow informally exists in various models - granted autonomy, a model school and apprenticeship does not exist - transnational school coupling does not exist	Knowledge share	- Requires a regulatory framework for both local and transnational level - Requires nationwide KPIs - can happen without a formal decentralization model but will be informal in practice - can be strengthened if accompanied by reform
Foster Community level partnerships	Informally exists in public schools through personal initiatives from headmasters or local-based connections Local NGOs partnership or capacity building requires approval from MEHE	- brings parental councils and regional school boards closer to community on a public and private level - vehicle for autonomy that allows international communities to directly deal with schools in a specific region	- requires regulatory framework and oversight - can happen without a formal decentralization model but will be informal in practice - can be strengthened if accompanied by reform
Facilitate International partnerships	Happen at a centralized level, sometimes on a school-level in regions with pre-approval from centralized authority	Creates more direct relationship with the community, hence transparency	- Increased accountability to public by making audit reports accessible

When these propositions are put against the Diagnostic results of the World Bank's Political Economy study (Annex 6), one can draw connections on how more stakeholder engagement, system oversight, school/teacher deployment, monitoring and evidence making decision making can be improved. Moreover, this compliments the other studies' findings that suggest a need for change in direction in governance in Lebanon and in governance within the educational sector (e.g., World Bank's). Moreover, this can help decrease the discrepancies

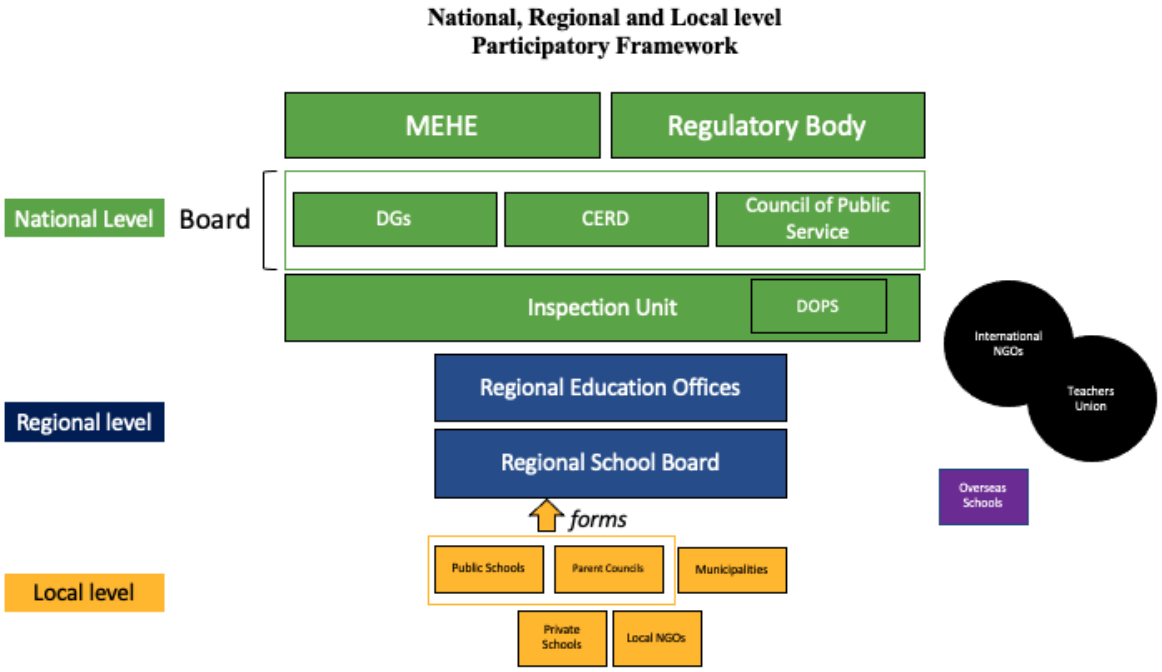
between schools in various geographical locations in Lebanon.

In short, empower and refine the current system that we have in place in Lebanon which we are not using. Not only will this help during the transitional period of how to advance the service provision within the primary education sector, but will also create a foundation to future decentralization models that might emerge.

4. Towards a hybrid multi-levelled governance framework in the Lebanese Public Education Sector

To coherently answer the research questions and aggregate the propositions put forward, below is a descriptive diagram which explains the multi-levelled and hybrid governance approach this research concludes which is both decentralized and participatory.

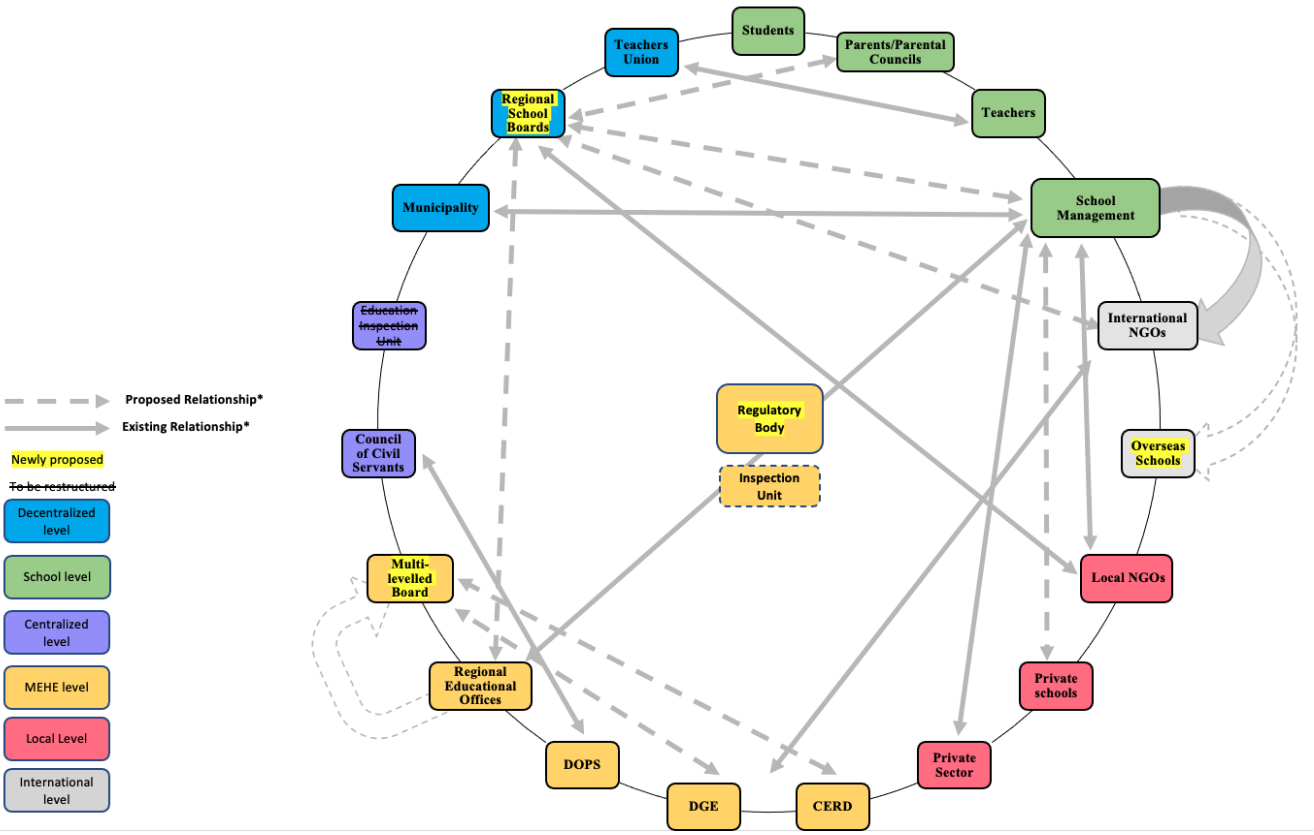
Figure 15. Towards a hybrid multi-levelled governance framework in the Lebanese Public Education Sector El-Assaad(2022*)*



El-Assaad (2022)

What can better describe the relationship between the various stakeholders is Figure 16 . It is clear that we have indirectly identified several stakeholders and main players throughout this study, and identified institutions whose role can be strengthened and coalitions that can be formed in decentralized and participatory propositions. Because of the complex environment they operate in, it is important to visualize the relationships based on the analysis so far. Below is a diagram that summarizes the stakeholders (existing and proposed) within the public education system and the relationships between them.

Figure 16. Relationship Diagram between Stakeholders El-Assaad (2022)



The relationships are weighted towards the Regional School Boards which in turn has a direct line with the REOs who in turn have a direct line with the proposed multi-levelled board. In addition to the regional inclination, there is condensation of lines directly with the School Management, which shows the proposed strengthened role School administrations can have with private, public and international sectors. Most importantly, this figure highlights the pivotal role a hypothetical regulatory body can play which has its own inspection unit attached to it.

5. Recommendations for future research

Based on several findings from this research, the real-time challenges Lebanon and the education sector and its stakeholders are facing - there is a desperate need to delve into further research that can help in better understanding the outcome of the crises in the education sector. There is immense knowledge on an individual level from a politico-administrative perspective in Lebanon and the participants in this research were only a sample of the grounded intelligence. Moreover, the contextual factors surrounding Lebanon's education sector such as the refugee crises waves, have paved the way for international agencies and independent research to be conducted in the Lebanese education sector. However, these researches need to be operationalized especially due to the convergence of most of the recommendations:

Lebanon's education sector needs decentralized and partnership-based considerations.

Some of the recommendations for further research based on the findings of these research can be around exploring if partnership approaches could help in removing sectarian equations as this was a repetitive theme (and threat) in this research. Moreover, there is an existing school-management case in Lebanon where a private school managed a public school, which according to this research had conflicting viewpoints on the effectiveness of the experience. This paves a way for a case study on this specific example in order to provide informed viewpoints and conclusions. A fresh perspective was brought forward by one of the participants which is a transnational partnership between schools in Lebanon and outside of Lebanon - a hypothetical proposition that can be explored.

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World Bank (2021), Lebanon Sinking into One of the Most Severe Global Crises Episodes, amidst Deliberate Inaction, Available at: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/05/01/lebanon-sinking-into-one-of-the-most-severe-global-crises-episodes [Accessed on July 8 2021]

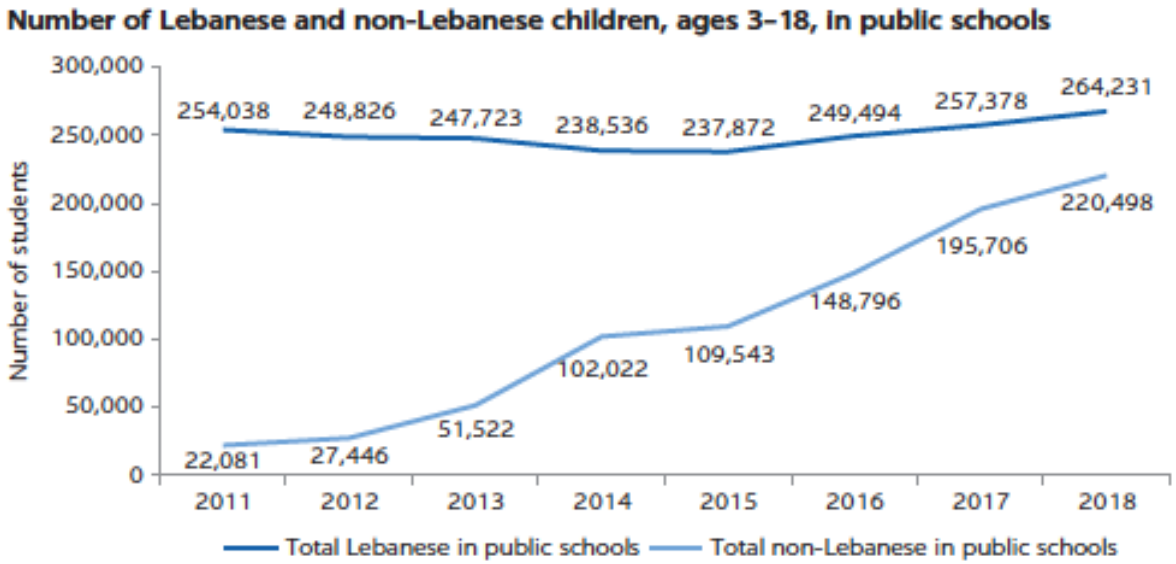
6. Appendix

Annex 1. Objectives of PPP Formation

Objective	Number	Objective/promise made by government
Financial	1	Provides better value-for-money for taxpayers
	2	Reduces pressure on public sector budgets
Project Delivery	3	Provides better on-time delivery
	4	Allows better on-budget delivery (reduce optimism bias, reduce strategic misrepresentation)
Cultural change	5	Allows greater infrastructure (project) innovation
	6	Encourages a more innovative public sector
Policy	7	Enables provision of infrastructure without appearing to increase public sector borrowing
	8	Supports businesses in difficult global market conditions (business assistance/subsidy)
	9	Improves political feasibility to impose user fees
	10	Infrastructure project risks managed away from government
	11	Enables a crash-through approach to delivering public infrastructure projects through the use of private contract law
Governance	12	Be a symbol differentiating a progressive government, and one which optimizes the use of markets and private sector capacity
	13	Helps put infrastructure issues onto the public policy agenda
	14	Improves business and financial market confidence
	15	Improves government financial credentials
	16	Improves accountability
	17	Enables a less litigious approach to public infrastructure provision
	18	Emphasizes project delivery over planning concerns
	19	Eases the business of governing and helps control the public agenda
	20	Enhances electoral prospects
Economic	21	Strengthens broad, societal economic development
	22	Encourages the development of a P3 construction and finance sector
	23	Boosts export sales of professional P3 services abroad
	24	Enables the full life-cycle costs of infrastructure to be provided

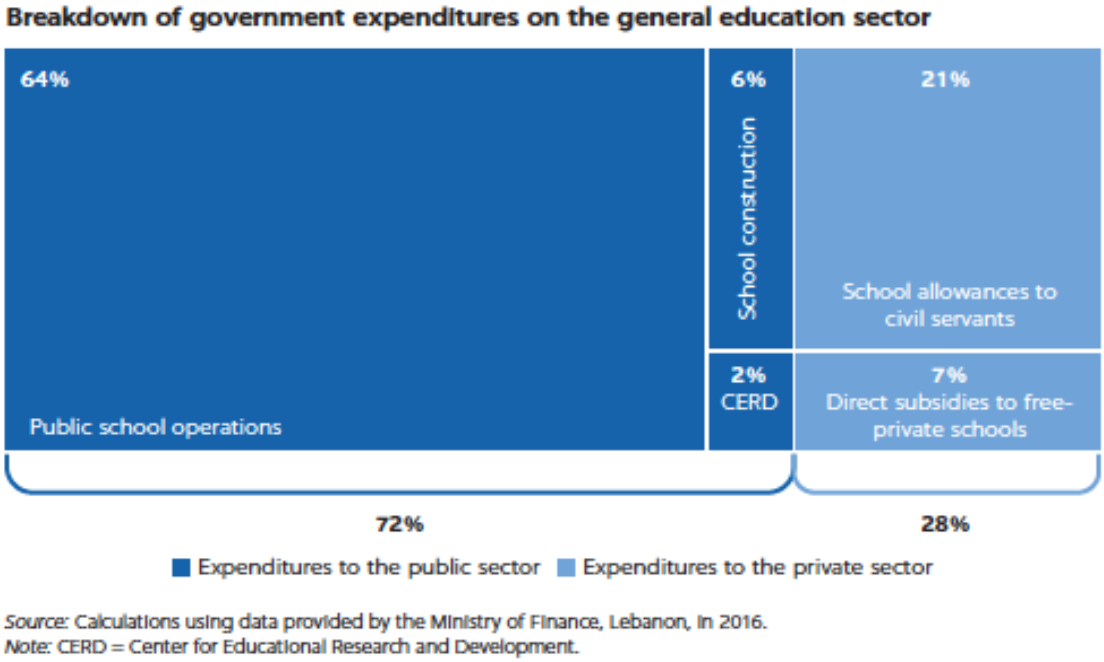
Source: Hodge & Greve (2013) in Hodge & Greve (2016)

Annex 2: Lebanese vs. non-Lebanese in public schools (3-18 y.o)



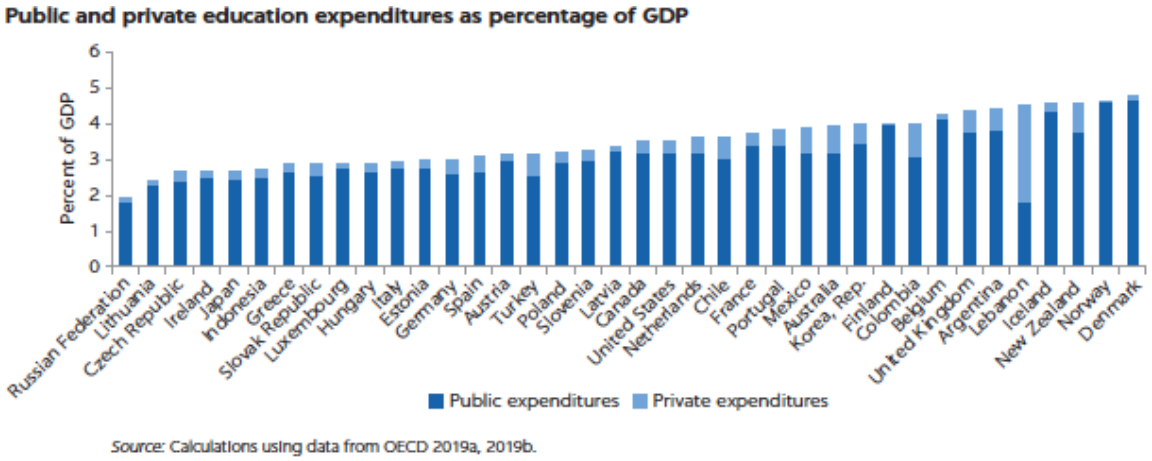
Source: CERD (2018) in Abdul-hamid & Yassine (2020)

Annex 3: The Distribution of the Lebanese government expenditure on the general Education Sector



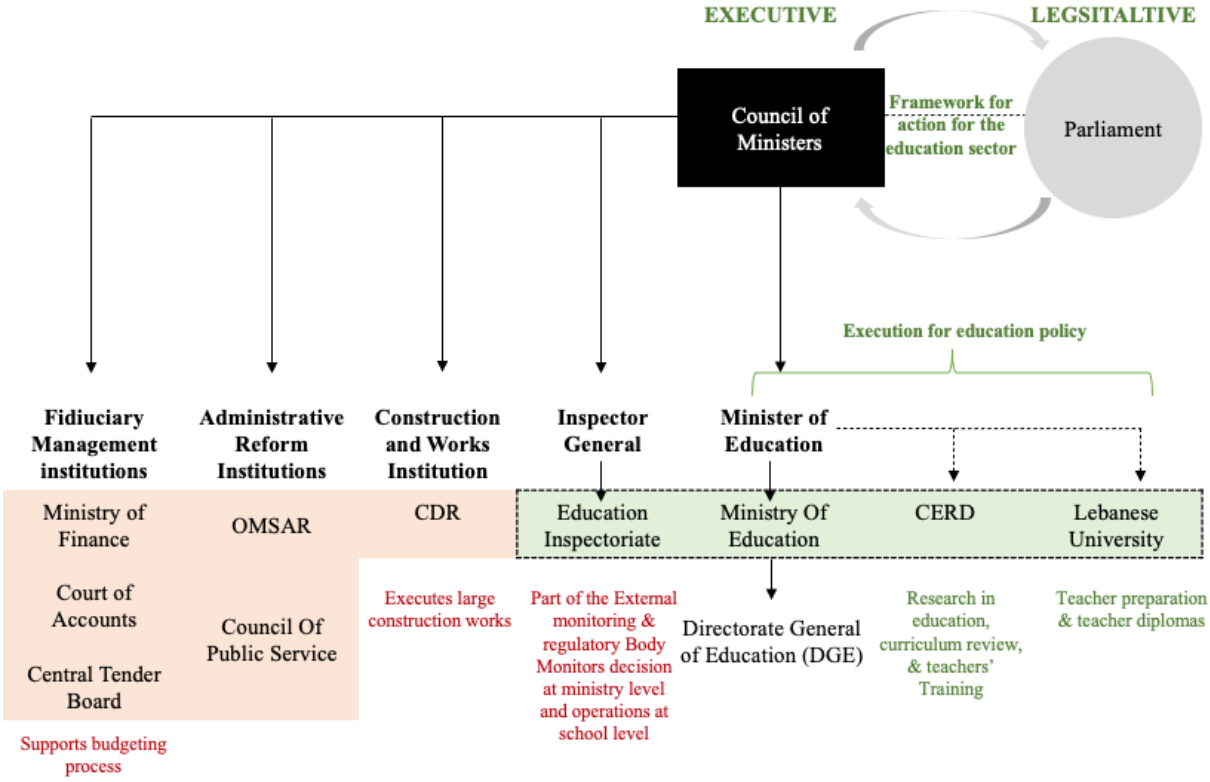
Source: Abdul-hamid & Yassine, World Bank's R4R (2020)

Annex 4: Comparative of the % of GDP between public and private education expenditure



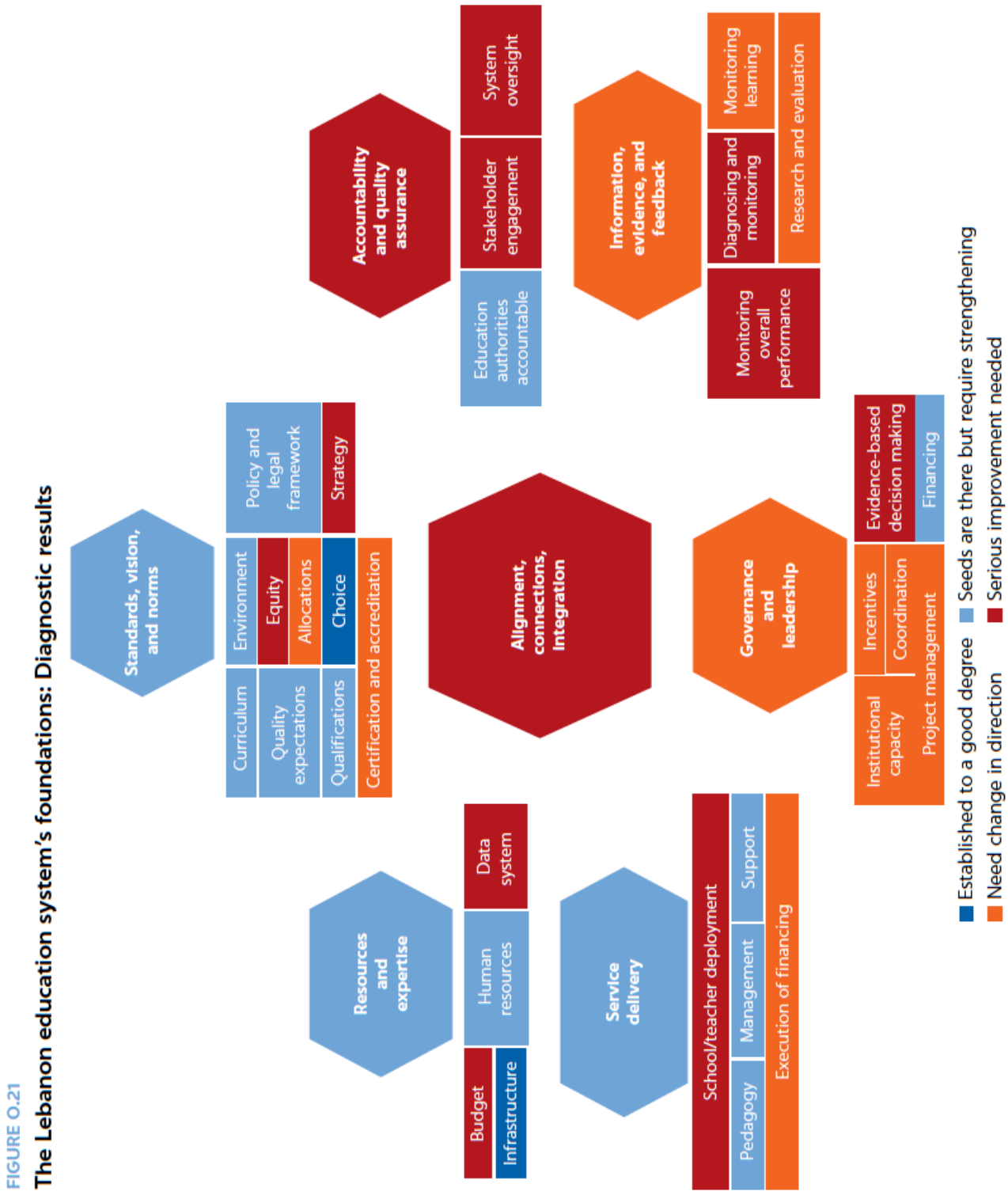
Source: Abdul-hamid & Yassine, World Bank's R4R (2020)

Annex 5 : Public Sector Stakeholders in Education Sector Reform



Source: Adapted from Abdul-hamid & Yassine (2020)

Annex 6 - Diagnostic Results from World Bank's R4R Study



Source: Abdul-hamid & Yassine (2020)

Annex 7 - Riad Koubeissi Investigative report

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bEZusgS4PM

Annex 8 – Constituents of the Desk Research

Document/ Element	Type	Source
World bank's 2021 R4R Study	Study	World Bank Group, Ministry of Education and Higher Education (2021) "*Schools, Students, and Teachers in Lebanon : Research for Results Program 2021*" [online] at https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/36794 [Accessed on December 18 2021]
CRDP legal framework (CRDP is the French Acronym of CERD)	CRDP Deep dive on official site	CRDP Bodies [online] available at https://www.crdp.org/en/aboutus/crdp-bodies [Accessed on November 12 2021] Teacher Training Centers [online] available at https://www.crdp.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/listdours_1.pdf [Accessed on October 1 2021] School Geographic distribution Interactive Map [online] available at http://carte-scolaire.crdp.org [Accessed on October 2 2021] CRDP (2018) "Schools in Lebanon: Numbers and Indicators' [online] available at https://www.crdp.org/sites/default/files/crdpcontent/files/201802260850083.pdf [Accessed on October 3 2021]
MEHE Org. Structure	Structure	MEHE's Organizational Structure [online] available at https://www.mehe.gov.lb/en/about-the-ministry/structure [Accessed on July 3 2021]
MEHE Legislation/Regulation	Legal Text/Framework	List of memos by the MEHE [online] available at https://www.mehe.gov.lb/en/LegislationsRegulations/All/GeneralDirectorateEducation [Accessed on November 3 2021]
Constitution of Lebanon	Legal Text	The Lebanese Constitution (1926) [online] Available at https://www.presidency.gov.lb/English/LebaneseSystem/Documents/Lebanese%20Constitution.pdf [Accessed on September 9 2021]
History of Missionary Schools in Lebanon	Academic Journal	Tannous, A. (1943) "Missionary Education in Lebanon: A Study in Acculturation" Social Forces, 21 (3) pp. 338 – 343 [online] available at https://www.jstor.org/stable/2570673 [Accessed on November 5 2021]
Law of Municipalities	Legal Text	NAHNOO (2018) "Translation of law of Municipalities" [online] available at http://nahnoo.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/final-brochure-DALEEL-english-low-res.pdf [Accessed on September 21, 2021]
General inspection preliminary report by the Central inspection Unit, prepared by IMPACT Lebanon	Official Report	Central Inspection Unit (2021) "General Inspection Preliminary Report" [online] available at https://www.cib.gov.lb/sites/default/files/General%20Inspection%20Preliminary%20Report_English_0.pdf [Accessed on November 28 2021]

Annex 9 - Interview Questions

Below is a sample of the interview questions that were prepared in case the participants did not tap onto certain topics during the semi-structured interviews.

1. What are the implications of the Lebanese financial/economic crisis on the private/public sector ?
2. How is the current governance system in the public education sector?
3. How much does Lebanon currently apply PPP approaches in its public education sector?
4. What do you think of the subsidized schools (free private schools) in Lebanon?
5. Who do you think are key actors in the public education sector other than the governmental actors?
6. Out of these actors, who do you think are essential to consider in including them in the case of restructuring or reform of the provision of public education?
7. There have been previous decentralization bills put forward in Lebanon, and most recently the 2016 Sleiman-Baroud Bill. Do you think decentralization is an effective approach in Lebanon, and why?
    - If yes, what form of decentralization works best in the public education system?
8. What do you believe are the advantages and disadvantages of rethinking the governance model of the public sector?
9. What are the conditions needed in order to improve service delivery in the Lebanese education sector?
10. What form of institutional change do you see in order to enhance service delivery within the Lebanese education sector?
11. What are the current challenges that might form a blockage against any restructuring in the public education sector?
12. What are some of the challenges that might be faced if a restructuring project such as a decentralization or PPP was to be implemented in Lebanon?
13. What role do you think that the CSOs or NGOs play if a partnership-based local governance approach was implemented?
14. *(If not tapped on, can be asked) Do you think that the phenomena of 'corruption' and/or 'consocialism and/ or 'sectarianism' can be transferable to the Public education system in the case of decentralization?*