



# D-RASATI

## Developing Rehabilitation Assistance to Schools and Teacher Improvement

### Outcomes Report: Coordination Among Teacher Professional Development Providers

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## Introduction

Monitoring of quantitative project outputs is an essential element of implementation, but it does not in and of itself provide a full picture of what a program has achieved in terms of changes in target populations and systems. Nor does it allow for exploration of lessons learned that can improve follow-on or longer-term programming. D-RASATI's performance monitoring plan (PMP) also therefore included the collection and analysis of more detailed and nuanced information on the project's outcomes, in addition to an overall examination of the effect of the project interventions on education system reform in line with MEHE's Strategic Plan. Overall, the interest was in assessing whether project activities had truly contributed to an improved public education system, as envisioned in MEHE's 2010-2015 Strategic Plan.

This report addresses indicator 3.1.1 within the D-RASATI results framework. Phrased as "Coordination between teacher PD providers improved," this outcome indicator addresses the questions:

*Have D-RASATI interventions contributed to greater alignment across the teacher professional development continuum? If so, how? If not, why not?*

The report provides a narrative description of the extent to which D-RASATI interventions have contributed to greater alignment across the teacher professional development continuum. It explores the extent to which the four previously-independent and non-aligned entities responsible for preparing, training, supporting, and evaluating teachers have moved towards more integrated and harmonious practices with D-RASATI support, including through the development of teacher and teacher trainer standards; development of and training on the Progress Scale observational instrument; collection of baseline data on teacher English proficiency and classroom practices; and joint, common training of trainers for training and support staff in best practice methodology and school-based professional development for teachers.

Output data from D-RASATI's indicators 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.2.1, 1.3.1, 1.4.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.4, and 4.2 are reviewed to determine the extent of the project's overall provision of support to alignment and coordination among the units responsible for teacher preparation, training, support, and evaluation. These data have been supplemented with analysis of relevant qualitative data, including meeting minutes and feedback records of stakeholder engagement in policy and practice development; official MEHE and other agency circulars related to the adoption of new or revised strategies, policies and procedures; and documentation (through registry requests, official circulars, and procurement documentation for other programs) of the use of D-RASATI data for planning purposes beyond the project, to provide an analysis of the extent to which the project met its goals in the area of teacher professional development support.

## Output Data Summary

### Assessment Data

Teacher training needs assessment was a significant component of the project's assessment activity. A literature review of best practices in teacher professional development, a scan of existing Lebanese teacher PD systems and offerings, and an analysis of best practices in the use of information and communications technology for teaching and learning were complemented by three targeted direct data collection activities: collection of data on teacher participation in in-service professional development activities as part of the 2011 D-RASATI field survey of all public schools; testing of teachers' English proficiency using the internationally-normed BULATS test; and classroom observations of a sample of teachers using the Progress Scale tool (developed for Lebanon by D-RASATI). Each of these activities resulted in a report to MEHE and recommendations for next steps that were agreed to with the D-RASATI Coordination Committee.

#### Indicator 1.2.1 Number of Schools with Needs Assessed

Although teacher training data was a relatively minor element of the Field Survey of Schools, 1280 schools (out of 1281) provided data on the participation of their teaching staff in professional development activities. These data (see Report on the D-RASATI Field Survey of Schools, 2012) indicated that most teachers had received some recent professional development, usually through the courses offered by the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD), but also indicated that there was no consistent or systemic exposure to teacher professional development activities across the teaching force.

#### Indicator 1.1.1 Number of Teachers Tested in English Proficiency

D-RASATI was tasked with testing the English proficiency of all public school teachers who use English as an instructional language. 4175 teachers were identified as Anglophone for the purposes of the test, and 4061 teachers were tested in the period November 2011-March 2012. Although the Ministry of Education mandated the activity and multiple testing opportunities were offered to teachers, a small number of teachers did not agree to participate, apparently for political reasons or because they believed that their English was either too good or too poor to make the test useful to them.

The results of the test (see Report on the D-RASATI Test of Teacher English Proficiency, 2012) demonstrated that while there is a wide range of English ability in the Lebanese public school teaching corps, including some very highly-qualified English teachers, there is a concentration of poor English skills in the lower grades and among teachers who are teaching math and science. These data parallel and may partly explain trends in poor performance on the Lebanese middle school and secondary exams and with Lebanon's performance on the TIMSS – teachers with poor English skills themselves are not able to prepare students to understand and perform in English within the curriculum. Improvements in teacher English capacity are needed if students are to meet expectations in subjects that are to be taught in English.

Based on the D-RASATI data, standards for English competency in the subject areas were agreed to with MEHE, and a training plan was proposed to increase the proficiency levels of all staff and certify those who met expectations as a result of the course. These training activities will fall within the mandate of USAID's D-RASATI II program.

#### **Indicator 1.1.2 Number of Teachers Observed During Progress Scale Study**

The Progress Scale classroom observations were conducted in a representative sample of Lebanese public school classrooms, focusing on MEHE's core interest areas of languages, mathematics, and science. Observers from CERD and DOPS were trained to carry out the observations, although more DOPS than CERD personnel were ultimately used, per MEHE request. 760 teachers were selected for observation in the original national sample; 68% of those selected (516 teachers) were actually observed, with observation rates lowest in the insecure North and Beqaa regions. 56 kindergarten observations were removed from the sample due to DOPS not providing KG specialists for training. 112 observations were in high-risk areas and not conducted because of the negative security context. Repeated and protracted teachers strikes during the period when observations were planned delayed implementation and limited the number of classrooms that could be visited. Limited DOPS capacity to integrate the observations within their regular uncompensated work load also limited the ability to make up observations that were missed within the strike period.

In general, however, the Progress Scale exercise provided a unique opportunity to integrate the main players in Lebanese teacher professional development and foster a conversation around actual observed classroom practices that will inform and sustain change. While in some areas of the Progress Scale teachers were scoring at the median level on average, their performance was observed to be particularly low on the performance scale in areas related to the linking of learning activities to students' contexts and real-life experiences and those measuring the promotion of problem-solving and critical thinking skills, which are core emphases of the new curriculum and priority areas of growth for MEHE (see Report on the Field Test of the D-RASATI Progress Scale Classroom Observation Tool, 2013). These areas can now be directly addressed through training and school-based support. The institutionalization of the Progress Scale tool within the DOPS mandate, as authorized by MEHE beginning in the 2013-14 school year, will also support better and more integrated professional development by making a regular source of objective data available to teacher training planners and school support personnel.

### **Standards Development**

#### **Indicator 1.3 Standards Developed**

Within D-RASATI's standards development activities, two categories of standards were produced to support and inform the integration of teacher professional development: 1) national teacher performance standards (see Professional Standards for Pre-College Teachers in Lebanon, 2013) and 2) standards for trainers within the teacher professional development system (see Standards for Teacher Trainers in Lebanon, 2013). A subset of goals within the national strategy

for ICT in education, also developed by the project, also provided important support for discussions around expectations for teacher and student skills in the use of ICTs. With project support, Lebanon now and for the first time has a foundation for a teacher training and support system that is concrete, measurable, realistic for the local context, and reflective of international understandings of what works in education.

## **Master Planning**

### **Indicator 1.4 Program Master Plan Developed**

The collaborative development of the D-RASATI Master Plan (April, 2012), in consultation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Center for Educational Research and Development, operationalized the Ministry's national strategy goals for teacher professional development within the project's integrated framework for supporting teacher in-service professional development across the system. By integrating assessment, standards-setting, teacher training, and training of trainers, the Master Plan knitted together the disparate strands of planning and implementation within the MEHE strategy, and provided measurable steps towards improvements in the PD system.

## **Capacity Development of In-Service Training and Support Providers**

### **Indicator 3.1.2 Number of Trainers Trained**

One key element of the D-RASATI professional development strategy was to focus the project's capacity building investments on the existing personnel and structures of the Lebanese public education system. Training of personnel (including the implementation of a set of school-based activities) from the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD) and MEHE's Department of Guidance and Counseling (DOPS) was intended to improve the ability of those bodies to provide high-quality continuous teacher professional development. CERD trainers and DOPS school support staff are key elements of the education hierarchy, and their training through D-RASATI will link the project's technical contributions to the teachers in public schools. Once trained, CERD and DOPS staff will be mandated and expected to use their new skills and knowledge to support public school teachers, thus contributing to strengthening the public education sector.

D-RASATI's training efforts included training on the use of the Progress Scale classroom observation tool; training on best instructional practices in languages, math and science; training on the development and facilitation of teacher learning circles (TLCs) in schools; and training on the development of subject-matter learning hubs in schools. The training targeted a group of 209 participants from CERD and DOPS, to maximize the skills of and ensure buy-in from this core set of system personnel. 273 staff participated in training over the life of the project, with overwhelmingly positive feedback (see Report on the Field Test of the Progress Scale Classroom Observation Tool, 2013; Report on Subject-Matter Methods Training, 2012; Report on Subject-Matter Learning Hubs Training, 2013; and Report on Teacher Learning Circles Trainings, 2013).

D-RASATI also implemented a pilot of the teacher learning circles in a representative sample of public schools in fall 2013. Originally intended to cover the full school year of 2013-14 and extend into 2014-15, this activity was reduced in scale from 60 schools to 13 schools when the project was modified in April 2013. The activity was deemed to be successful by both participants and facilitators, and a set of recommendations for steps to ensure the institutionalization of the model was submitted to MEHE (see Report on Teacher Learning Circles Pilot Implementation, 2013).

#### **Indicator 3.1.4 Number of Teachers Trained (on Science Laboratory Equipment)**

Although the main focus of the project's direct teacher training was on science teachers, through the provision of workshops on the best use of laboratory equipment provided by D-RASATI in alignment with the Lebanese curriculum, DOPS subject specialists and CERD science trainers were also trained during these workshops, in order to ensure that they would be able to support and facilitate the effective use of the lab equipment long-term. 13 CERD and 61 DOPS personnel participated in the science training during summer and fall 2013, and provided overwhelmingly positive feedback on its relevance to their work and the importance of the participation of all entities in the workshops (see Report on Science Lab Equipment Training, 2013).

### **Use of Data for Decision-Making**

#### **INDICATOR 4.2 Number of CERD/MEHE Staff Trained to Support Monitoring and Evaluation Activities**

D-RASATI's training activities to support the institutionalization of data as a basis of decision making at MEHE included the training of MEHE and CERD personnel on the use of the Progress Scale data system. 15 personnel were targeted for this training, but the content and skills were deemed by MEHE and CERD to be so essential that it was expanded to serve 65 core staff in DOPS and CERD. This training of the larger group on the entry, manipulation, analysis and use of the data will support the institutionalization of the Progress Scale within the teacher professional development system (see Report on the Field Test of the Progress Scale Classroom Observation Tool, 2013).

### **Outcomes**

D-RASATI has made significant strides towards supporting MEHE's strategic vision of an integrated and professionalized teacher workforce and professional development system. Actors who previously interacted rarely (and often not positively) have built strong working relationships and agreed on common definitions and practices; the best resources of the private training sector have been engaged and mobilized to support public education; and new instruments and practices to support quality teaching and learning have been tested and institutionalized.

## Stakeholder Communication and Collaboration

Perhaps the most significant result of D-RASATI's support to MEHE has been the increase in communication and collaboration among the various players in teacher professional development. The Ministry of Education's Department of Guidance and Counseling, the Center for Educational Research and Development, the Faculty of Education and Lebanese University, and the Education Inspectorate have distinct mandates under Lebanese law and have previously operated largely in isolation, if not in conflict. D-RASATI's standards development and training activities provided unique opportunities for representatives of all of these bodies to come together, discuss, and agree on common principles and practices for teacher support and development. In addition, the project's activities allowed those who typically do not enter a range of public school classrooms (CERD and LU staff, and private university faculty) to observe actual instruction, reflect on that data, and discuss its implications with colleagues from across the teacher support system.

The development of standards for pre-college teachers and trainers and the development and testing of the corresponding Progress Scale classroom observation instrument were first-ever opportunities for the many actors in teacher preparation, training, support and evaluation to engage collaboratively around expectations and goals for the public education sector. The standards development effort involved all stakeholders in teacher development: CERD, DOPS, the Faculty of Education at LU, the Education Inspectorate, experts from the Education Sector Development Secretariat (ESDS) and from D-RASATI, representatives from private universities that offer teacher training programs, and representatives of the teachers' unions. The work was consultative and responsive to the input of those who work with teachers every day, through regular task force meetings, open meetings with individual stakeholder groups, the circulation of drafts for peer review and feedback, and adjustments to respond to the input of the various stakeholders. As a consultative, participatory product, the standards reflect a system-wide consensus on expectations for teacher values, attitudes, knowledge, and behavior that will support excellent instruction in Lebanese classrooms and improved outcomes for all Lebanese students.

The Progress Scale trainings and field test provided participants from the key teacher development agencies with an opportunity to consider together actual classroom practices, discuss their relative quality, and agree on transparent and rigorous processes to document and address instructional conditions in the future. DOPS staff, tasked with school-based support to teachers, reported that this exercise provided them with a new and preferable set of tools for accounting for and supporting teacher practice in classrooms, and the representative sample for the field test encouraged them to visit remoter schools where teachers have previously rarely received DOPS services. CERD personnel who, by mandate, do not visit classrooms, and LU personnel who typically see only a small range of classrooms as they prepare student teachers, reported that they found the opportunity to directly witness instruction and consider its implications for their own work invaluable.

On June 25, 2012, His Excellency Minister of Education and Higher Education Dr. Hassan Diab announced that the teacher performance standards would be officially endorsed by the Ministry and mandated for use by all parties involved in teacher development, training, and support in Lebanon. The official endorsement by MEHE of the standards and the Progress Scale tool as the basis for system accountability is a significant step towards alignment and integration of the teacher professional development system. The standards include domains that apply to pre-service preparation, in-service training, and school-based professional development, and provide a unified, cross-cutting understanding of quality instruction that can support accountability and promote more effective teaching.

### **Public and Private Institutions Collaborating to Improve Public Education**

One key element of D-RASATI's standards development process and training of trainers was the engagement of high-quality private teacher training institutions in the support of public education goals and initiatives. For example, American University of Beirut and Université du Saint Joseph faculty were involved in the Progress Scale training and field test, and reported that for them, as for CERD staff, the activity provided a unique opportunity to observe conditions and practices in public school classrooms and to become more conscious of the challenges faced by public school teachers. AUB and USJ faculty also noted that the Progress Scale tool was of great value to them as a professional development instrument, and that they would be incorporating it into their in-service work and using it as a basis for considering ways to better support the public schools.

American University of Beirut and Lebanese American University staff also participated in the training of trainers in methods, hubs, and TLCs, and found the opportunity to consult with and accompany public school trainers and teachers both informative and challenging. Close collaboration with CERD and DOPS through the field implementation of the TLCs, in particular, built strong connections between the private institutions and the public sector employees who participated in the pilot, with both sides committing to greater communication and coordination in the future. For DOPS and CERD, the D-RASATI PD program was an opportunity to experience for free the training and coaching resources that the private teacher training institutions had to offer (an opportunity that most public-sector employees could not afford at their own expense). For the university faculty involved, it was a chance to reconsider previously-held notions about public school teachers, celebrate and honor the effort expended by those teachers, and commit to supporting them thereafter.

During the teacher standards development process, 16 private universities were consulted for feedback on the standards drafts. The inclusion of a pre-service knowledge domain in the teacher standards raises the stakes for private institutions and encourages them to align with Ministry expectations, and most of the invited institutions rose to that challenge. Many indicated that they would work to incorporate the new standards as references in their pre- and in-service teacher training programming. If this in fact occurs, some of the inequity in teacher preparation and

support that results from the inaccessibility of the elite institutions to public sector employees for financial reasons can be addressed.

### **Objective, High-Quality Tools and Systems Institutionalized**

The Progress Scale tool and data system, as a standards-based, criterion-referenced teacher performance assessment system, provides the first unified reference point for all teacher training and support entities in Lebanon. While a core set of principles could be inferred from the work of all four agencies involved in supporting teachers prior to the D-RASATI intervention, those principles had not been codified and each entity had been using a different system to articulate them and capture them in teacher practice. Low-inference checklists in use by most agencies did not capture the richness of the instructional contexts in the public schools, nor were they helpful to teachers in terms of articulating specific details of instructional practice that have been demonstrated to improve student outcomes and can be improved with attention and support. Without a common frame of reference, agencies supporting teachers were challenged to provide professional development that would truly meet teachers' needs, and teachers were unclear on what they must be able to do to help students make the best use of the educational opportunities available to them. The collaborative design, thorough and inclusive training, and extensive testing of the Progress Scale tool under D-RASATI has provided the Ministry of Education and its partner agencies with a new basis for policy making and planning. Incorporating the use of the tool into the daily scopes of work of DOPS staff, and ensuring that training personnel at CERD are cognizant of the resulting data, will support the Ministry in creating a more seamless preparation, training, and support system for teachers, consistent with its strategic goals of greater professionalization of the teaching profession and improved management of the public education sector.

### **Conclusion**

Although D-RASATI's planned in-service teacher training interventions were cut short by the project's reprogramming in 2013, they remain among the most successful of the project's activities. Much was achieved under the D-RASATI mandate and great strides were made towards greater alignment of institutions operating along the teacher professional development continuum. The project's goal of improving coordination among teacher professional development providers was achieved through standards development, common training, and collection and reflection on data. Institutionalization of project-supported products such as the teacher and trainer standards and the Progress Scale has made a significant contribution to the development of Lebanon's teacher professional development system.