

Leadership and Teacher Development Program

Annual Performance Report

October 2013 to September 2014



*Quality
Education*

*Better
Future*

*Educational
Leadership*

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For additional information, please contact:

Dr. Said Assaf
Chief of Party
34 El Bireh Municipality Street
El Bireh, West Bank
+972.2.240.8023
sassaf@amideast.org

Mr. Bassam Kort
Education Development Office
Hayarkon Street
+972.3.511.4887
bkort@usaid.gov

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List of Acronyms

Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission	AQAC
America-Mideast Educational and Training Services	AMIDEAST
Assessment and Evaluation Department	AED
Chief of Party	COP
Directorate of Planning	DP
Directorate of Supervision and Qualification of Teachers	DSQT
District Leadership Team	DLT
Geospatial Management Information System	Geo-MIS
Leadership and Teacher Development	LTD
LTD/NIET Joint Working Group	JWG
Leadership Diploma Program	LDP
Middle East and North Africa	MENA
Ministry of Education and Higher Education	MoEHE
Monitoring and Evaluation	M&E
Monitoring and Evaluation Task Force	METF
National Institute for Educational Training	NIET
National Teacher Education Strategy	TES
Professional Certificate in English Language Teaching	PCELT
Quality Assurance Unit	QAU
School Improvement Team	SIT
Teacher Educator Enhancement Program	TEEP
United States Agency for International Development	USAID
University of Massachusetts, Amherst	UMass

Executive Summary

The importance of what the Leadership and Teacher Development Program (LTD) aims to achieve is greater than the sum of its parts. LTD is more than a conventional development project characterized by a series of one-off workshops and a checklist of “deliverables.” The scope and complexity of its strategic objective is formidable: to improve the quality of school education in Palestine through an effective approach to leadership and teacher development. We define “effective” to mean creating systemic and sustainable change in policies, structures, processes and practices that align the function of schools, district offices and the central Ministry toward ensuring high levels of learning for all students in Palestine. We are pleased therefore to present this report to highlight LTD’s progress toward its strategic objective during fiscal year 2014.

Overview

The Palestinian Authority has demonstrated a strong commitment to education since its creation in 1994. Having achieved near universal access for girls and boys in basic and secondary education, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) in 2008 set the strategic focus of its Five-Year Education Development Strategic Plan on improving the quality of teacher training and school/district management. To support this goal, LTD initiated in May 2012 a comprehensive four-year strategy of top-down and bottom-up capacity building to foster a sustainable model of school-based professional development predicated on forging a system of school-district cooperation that aligns policies, structures, processes and practices to support high levels of learning for all students.

A central tenet of the LTD approach is the importance of building relationships of interdependence and mutual accountability with key stakeholders and units in the MoEHE. This same principle guides LTD’s interventions with Al-Azhar University, Gaza, which aim to improve the quality of pre-service teacher education in the Faculty of Education. The LTD approach is thus firmly grounded in a broad-based consultative process among all stakeholders to identify needs and plan strategic capacity building in support of professional development of in-service and pre-service teachers, principals, and district management as well as for the provision of school improvement initiatives.

Ultimately, the main beneficiaries of LTD are Palestine’s school children, the foundation of future economic growth and democratic citizenship. LTD’s goals are driven by a theory of change that sees student learning outcomes improving if principals and teachers enact the learner-centered instructional and leadership strategies learned in LTD trainings which, in turn, are supported and monitored by School Improvement Teams (SITs) whose members, likewise, are assisted by LTD-created District Leadership Teams (DLTs) charged with supporting the implementation and effective management of school improvement plans.

To achieve its strategic goal of enhancing the quality of education in Palestine, LTD's interventions are framed by four core objectives (i.e. the *Intermediate Results* in LTD's Performance Management Plan):

1. Enhancing policies, structures and systems within the MoEHE to support leadership and teacher development.
2. Improving the capacity of school principals, supervisors and teachers to work together to improve classroom instruction.
3. Establishing a national cadre of teacher and leadership educators that meet MoEHE standards for instruction and supervision.
4. Improving pre-service teacher education in Gaza.

Major Accomplishments to Date

During the reporting period, LTD continued to make substantive progress toward achieving its strategic objectives. Some of these accomplishments were achieved in the face of challenges, and these will be discussed in the body of the report.

1. Towards enhancing policies, structures and systems within the MoEHE to support leadership and teacher development, LTD:

- a) Completed the Functional Audit analysis of the MOEHE and initiated high-level discussions with senior officials to discuss implications of findings and recommendations.
- b) Secured the Minister's approval to form District Leadership Teams (DLT) in all West Bank districts and to have DLTs recognized as permanent structures in the educational system in order to mobilize middle management at the district level to better support school-based reform.
- c) Supported the Ministry's formal adoption of LTD's core concepts and practices of learner-centered professional development for principals and teachers by training of heads of all district departments of Field Follow-up (DFF) and producing training materials for the Department of Supervision and Qualification of Teachers (DSQT).
- d) Introduced four top officials in the MOEHE to best practices and policies relating to education reform and professional development during a week-long study tour to the United States.
- e) Increased the public profile of LTD as a key partner with the MOEHE in promoting school reform by intensifying its use of social media (e.g., Facebook and Twitter), newsletters, radio and TV news, and newspapers to disseminate success stories and notable accomplishments.

2. Towards improving the capacity of school principals to work with teachers and supervisors to improve classroom instruction, LTD:

- a) Completed the training of 88 school principals of Cohort I to meet their graduation requirements of the Leadership Diploma Program (LDP), and initiated LDP training for 143 school principals in cohort II.
- b) Monitored and supported the work of school improvement teams of the 88 schools of Cohort I to complete comprehensive school self-assessments that produced school improvement plans (SIP) delivered to LTD for procurement.

- c) Empowered 410 teachers (Cohort I) and 233 principals (Cohorts I and II) with laptop computers and supplied 88 public schools (Cohort I) with Internet/ intranet connectivity and 176 LCD projectors in support of school improvement plans; this technology support contributed to a 21% increase among LTD-trained teachers' use of technology in teaching and learning and for continuous professional development.
- d) Contributed to improved student learning for some 17,000 students in grades 5-10 as a result of principals' support for LTD teachers working in learning circles to exchange data and best practices and to conduct action research to assess student learning and improve their problems of practice: Based on standardized tests of achievement administered by the Ministry's Assessment and Evaluation Department (AED), scores improved 9.4% in Arabic; 12.6% in English; 33.4% in mathematics; and, 26.3% in science.
- e) Contributed to a 21% increase in student engagement in learner-centered practices, and a 27% improvement in teachers' capacity to help students develop 21st century learning skills.
- f) Supported professional networking and the exchange of best practices among school and district leadership and teachers by holding four district-level conferences.

3. Towards establishing a national cadre of teacher and leadership educators that meet MoEHE standards for instruction and supervision, LTD:

- a) Contributed to NIET's formation and qualifying of its 12-member team of leadership trainers, whose expertise and continuing professional development have solidified the Leadership Diploma Program's reputation for quality training among principals in Palestine.
- b) Supported NIET's formation of the 44-member National Cadre of Teacher Educators and the institutionalization of LTD's model of inquiry-based professional learning communities, the "Teacher Educator Enhancement Program" (TEEP).
- c) Acted as the catalyst for university faculty members of the National Cadre of Teacher Educators to transfer their mastery of the TEEP action research inquiry-cycle from the "in-service" context of NIET trainings to the pre-service teacher education classrooms at their respective universities.
- d) Enhanced the capacity of NIET's training staff to integrate technology in their training practices and professional development by supplying NIET with 30 laptops and 10 desktops, and by equipping two training centers in Jenin and South Hebron with Internet connectivity and LCD projectors, along with rehabilitating their spaces with furniture.

4. Towards Improving pre-service teacher education at Al-Azhar University in Gaza, LTD:

- a) Supported the drafting of a 3-year strategic plan for Al-Azhar University's Faculty of Education, a major achievement for having introduced a collaborative, participatory process of SWOT and gap analysis that engaged key stakeholders in all major units of the Faculty of Education. (The President and Board of Directors of the university are expected to approve the document for implementation by the first week of November 2014.)
- b) Trained 20 faculty members from the Faculty of Education who completed the 160-hour capacity-building program "TEEP" comprised of action research, reflective practice, learning circles, portfolios of professional practice, and workshops.
- c) Built the capacity of TEEP faculty to use technology by providing 25 laptops to the Faculty of Education for use in online learning circles and for research to support their continuing

professional development, and for use by members of the Dean's Strategic Plan Steering Committee to support the development of the Strategic Plan and related tasks.

- d) Convened the first-ever educational conference based entirely on the results of faculty action research designed to improve teaching practices and student learning; the conference, titled "Professional Development based on Inquiry," also celebrated the participants' completion of the TEEP program, and helped educate other faculties of the university about the benefits of action research to improving teaching practices and student learning.
- e) Empowered 36 undergraduate students to earn certificates of completion from World Learning/SIT for completing the 120-hour, internationally accredited PCELT training course.
- f) Enabled one faculty member to complete a rigorous PCELT training-of-trainer program and earn her license as a certified PCELT trainer, an accomplishment that will help guarantee the sustainability of PCELT in Gaza.



Progress toward the Project Goal

In the four sections that follow, each one describes major accomplishments of LTD’s departments in light of the program’s four strategic objectives outlined above. LTD's departments are organized into two broad divisions, program implementation and program management. As a useful reference while reading the report, Figures 1 and 2 provide a schematic overview of LTD’s organizational units and their key activities.

Figure 1: Program Implementation

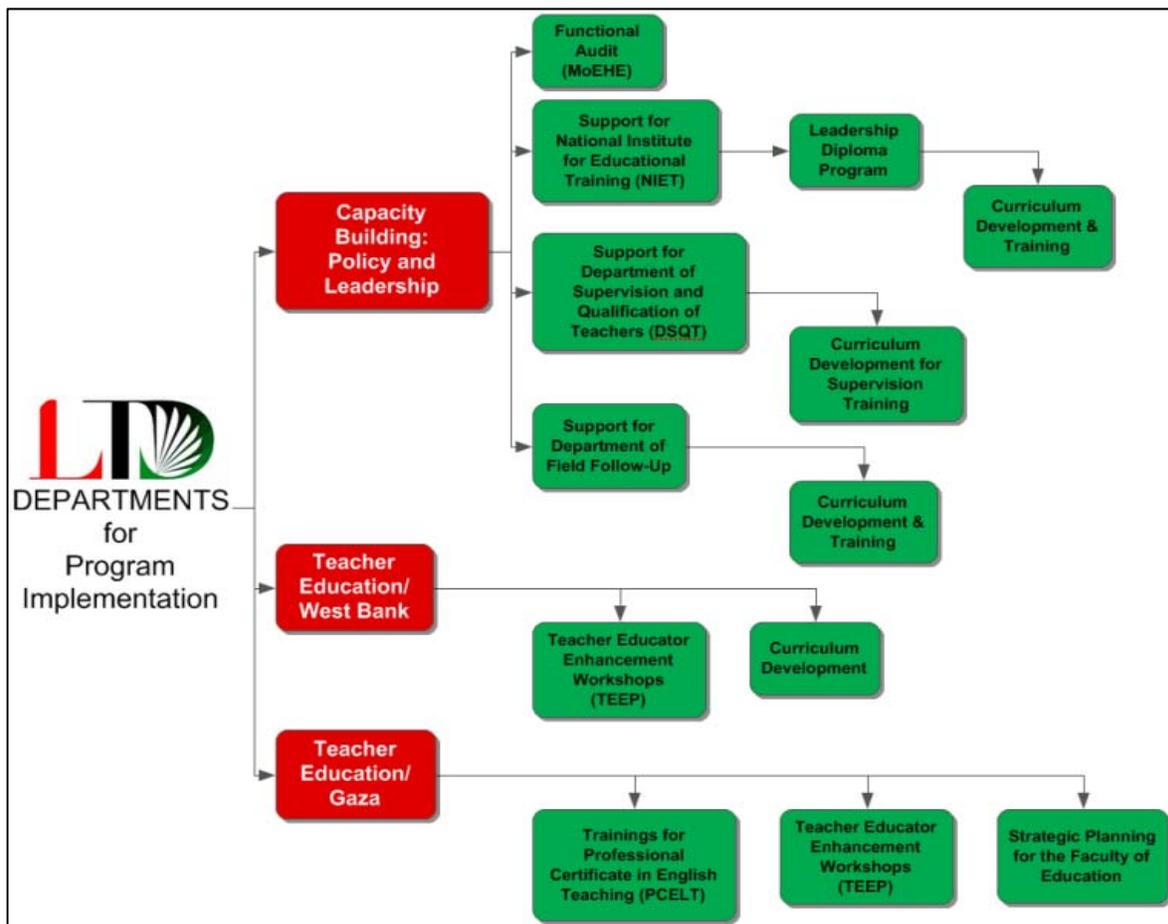
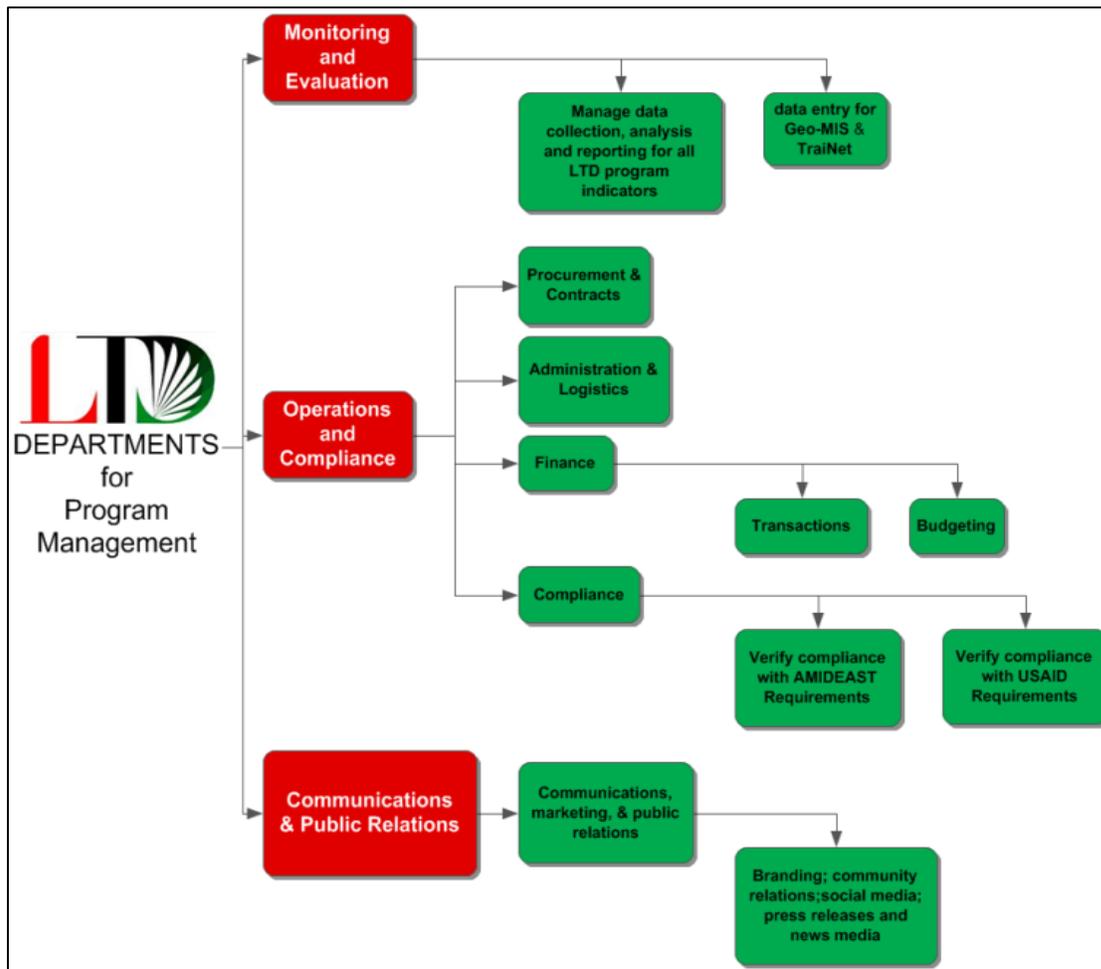


Figure 2: Program Management



Enhancing policies, structures and systems within the MoEHE to support leadership and teacher development

The enhancement of policies and structures in the MoEHE system is a central component of LTD, one that aims for a sustainable, systemic approach for transforming schools into learner-centered communities in the Palestinian context. The following three sections summarize LTD's major accomplishments during its first year toward enhancing policies and structures.

Policies

Mobilization of Middle Management to Align Policies, Structures, and Processes at the School and District Levels: A key finding from the results of functional audit (below) is the need to empower middle management with greater autonomy to work more flexibly and creatively in supporting innovative learning environments in schools, especially through the LTD-created District Leadership Teams (DLT). The new Minister of Education and Higher Education, Dr. Khawla Shakhshair, welcomed this finding and officially approved in July 2014 the creation of a DLT in all West Bank District Directorates as a permanent structure to support schools locally. LTD is currently waiting for the MOEHE to set a date to formally announce the decision and to appoint members of DLTs in each directorate. The membership of each team includes the District Director, his/her Technical Deputy, Administrative Deputy, the Head of Supervision section, the Head of Field Follow-up section, the Head of IT section, and may include other heads of sections chosen by the Director.

Technology for Learning and School Administration: Although the MoEHE has yet to produce a formal and cohesive statement articulating its policies regarding technology, it has initiated a number of important donor-supported projects, of which LTD is a major one, aimed at the effective integration of technology in classroom teaching and learning and its use in enhancing both school management and



ongoing professional development. LTD has supported the setup of networks in schools as part of a cooperative plan between the MOEHE and PalTel, where the latter provided ADSL lines and routers while LTD provided technical support and in-school networking and connectivity for each of the 88 schools in the first cohort. To guarantee the sustainability of the technology, all hardware provided by LTD, except for the

UPSs, are under lifetime warranty; moreover, schools in the coming fiscal year will be invited for a one-day orientation on how to use and secure the network and how to troubleshoot those common issues.

LTD also held meetings with the Belgian Development Agency (BTC) to explore avenues of future cooperation between our two projects since both involve IT in education, teacher training, and connectivity. BTC provided LTD access to its e-Portal developed for MoEHE that contains online materials developed for and by teachers of grades 5-10. They also shared training materials so that the two projects could work to support their mutual efforts and avoid duplication.

LTD's work this year in promoting the use of technology in schools has borne fruit. Results of evaluation research indicate dramatic increases in the principals' use of technology for school management, professional development, and better communication with teachers and parents, and between their schools and the central Ministry.

Furthermore, principals show greater confidence in supporting teachers' efforts to integrate technology in their classrooms. Teachers reported increases across the board in their use of technology for enhancing teaching and learning, in researching subjects they teach, and in their professional development. LTD teachers are using technology in the classroom and for professional development 21% more often than they were before the start of LTD.

Study Tour for Senior Policymakers: In late October and early November 2013, four high-level officials from the MOEHE participated in a 7-day study tour in the United States hosted by LTD sub-awardee, the University of Massachusetts, Amherst (UMass), which included a two-day visit to Washington, D.C. The officials included the Assistant Deputy Minister for Planning, the Director General of Supervision and Qualification of Teachers (DSQT), the Director General of the National Institute for Education and Training (NIET), and, and the interim Director of the Commission for Developing the Teaching Profession (CDTP).

Figure 3: Press coverage of laptop distribution



The study tour provided the participants with opportunities to learn about and contrast policies and processes in the American context of teacher professional development, instructional supervision, formative and summative assessments, teacher certification, and innovative programs for learner-centered pedagogy. The visit also afforded the group opportunities for professional networking and to explore possibilities for collaborative partnerships. The study tour was complemented by visits several schools in both Amherst and Washington, D.C., where participants met with staff and see how teaching, professional development, and supervision are done in actual practice. The officials also visited institutes that deliver teacher professional development and assessment.

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Study Tours for Middle Management and NIET Trainers: Later in the year, LTD initiated formal discussions with the Assistant Deputy Minister for Planning and the Director General of NIET to finalize goals and objectives for two additional study tours to the USA involving technical staff from NIET and middle management personnel from district directorates. These are intended to build on the first study tour by providing opportunities to compare and contrast how schools and districts implement policies, processes and practices aimed at aligning recent initiatives in education like the Common Core State Standards with educational leadership, teaching practices, and using results of student assessments for data-driven decisions to guide teacher professional development.

The timing of these tours, however, had to be postponed as a resulted funding delays and uncertainty whether USAID would be able to obligate continued funds by June 2014. The issuance of a temporary stop work order to LTD's sub-awardee UMass forced a temporary halt in preparations. Fortunately, at the end of summer USAID did finally secure funding for LTD, though a shortfall exists that will require belt tightening of across LTD's work plan for fiscal year 2015. As of this writing, LTD is exploring options and alternative scenarios for the study tours with UMass and with other institutions regionally.

Structures

District Leadership Teams: During the first quarter of the reporting period, DLTs were formed in each of the four directorates of Cohort 1 of LTD. Each DLT developed a scope of work detailing all tasks and responsibilities for providing technical and administrative support to School Improvement Teams (SIT) at LTD schools under their jurisdiction. The newly formed DLTs attended a Leadership Diploma workshop to network with principals and learn more about School Improvement Plans (SIP). During November 2013 the leadership teams from NIET and LTD visited the DLTs in the four districts and it was agreed that the

Technical Deputy of each Directorate would act as team leader and liaison with LTD. These meetings resulted in each DLT drafting a scope of work detailing not only their responsibilities and authority, but also clarifying their commitments to ensure they work collaboratively in supporting the goals and objectives of school improvement teams in their district.

A major accomplishment for these newly formed DLTs in spring 2014 was to support the participation of schools in district-wide conferences in sponsored by LTD and hosted by the four districts of Cohort I. The DLTs visited schools and training sessions to encourage teachers and principals to present at the conference; reviewed, selected, and notified successful applicants; contributed input for the design of banners, invitation cards, presentation summary booklet, and logistics of each of the conferences. This was first time ever the district offices contributed to the organization of national conferences in their districts. The presentations provided valuable lessons-learned by the participants of a training program and this provided a special opportunity for the DLTs to be seen by all the principals, teachers, and MOEHE officials carrying out their role in supporting the professional development principals and teachers and linking these efforts to policies and processes to enhance teaching and learning. To demonstrate the importance of these events, the Minister of Education himself and a number of senior



One teacher explained: "My definition of School Improvement Team (SIT) is all about the spirit of working together as one team to improve teaching and learning that our principal, teachers and students are engaged in for the first time. The teachers and students love how technology has added to the learning experience."



officials attended two of the conferences.

School Improvement Teams and Shared Leadership: LTD

principals improved their capacity to effectively marshal strategic human and financial resources of the school community in ways that help build the kind of learner-centered and child-friendly environment that all stakeholders desire. This change is taking place through the mechanism and process of the school improvement team (SIT), in which the principalship is being transformed from one characterized by total control over decision making to one exemplified by the principal as "lead facilitator" of results-based management and shared leadership.



In a focus group with principals about the accomplishments of their SITs, one of the principals remarked, "I wanted to develop unused space in the back of the school, so we did a very simple opinion poll to elicit students' views about what they saw missing from school. They all agreed that the school's physical environment needed improving and we took their ideas into consideration."



Evidence from multiple sources of data collection indicates that the SIT is creating a space that empowers the principalship to work more effectively and democratically. Limited financial resources notwithstanding, the many stories of success of strategies for easing challenges faced in the development and implementation of school improvement plans paint a picture of the SIT as an emergent structure of shared leadership. In the role of chief facilitator, the principal is still the lead decision-maker, but making of decisions in LTD schools is now a collaborative process that

involves coordinated actions to identify needs, collect and analyze data, prioritize goals and objectives against available resources, and implement and monitor activities.

Student-Centered Decision-Making: Testimonials from members of SITs paint a picture of growing and meaningful shared leadership. Principals recounted how teamwork among the SIT members resulted in bringing the needs of students into sharper focus by adding students' voices in the collection of data for the school self-assessment, data the SIT used in decision-making for goals to improve the learning environment. Two areas of improvement mentioned by principals included the addition of extracurricular activities and greater use of technology to enhance the educational process, and more attention to learner-centered teaching methods in the classroom.

Making Schools More Child Friendly: Teachers noted that the SITs improved the child-friendly environment at their respective schools. These included: reducing arguments and violence among students; increasing the use of educational technology in classrooms; adding to the inclusiveness student presenters during morning assemblies; improving water quality with the installation of purification unit; adding a library and laboratory; and enhancing student engagement through more active learning strategies in the classroom.

Stronger School-Community Relations: Parents commented that their participation on the SIT contributed to improving their schools in a number of ways. These included enhancing communication between parents, teachers, and students; assisting in the physical restoration of the school environment; leveraging their connections to the larger community to boost fundraising and build bridges with local and international organizations to secure resources to improve student learning; contributing to the development of objectives to address the learning needs of students; and by championing ways to recognize and reward students' accomplishments and increase their motivation to learn.

Department of Field Follow-Up (DFF) and Department of Supervision and Qualification of Teachers (DSQT): LTD continued its capacity building of these two Ministry directorates whose respective missions are to supervise the performance of principals and teachers. LTD conducted workshops and curriculum development for trainings that helped these two units better align their operations with the Ministry's policies, processes and practices for learner-centered instruction and more formative, developmental forms of continuing professional development. LTD continued to train the fourteen DFF section heads on strategies for improving the existing practices and move from the current command-and-control approach to a more support-focused role for school leadership.

For the DSQT, LTD provided technical assistance to the unit's curriculum team responsible for continuing professional development of its supervisors. Given the paucity of literature in Arabic on current trends and best practices in instructional supervision, LTD has supplemented DSQT's training curriculum with



Parents remarked how the SIT helped improve communication among members of the school community, resulting in fewer instances of student misbehavior, more effective extracurricular activities, and the local community's greater willingness to contribute human or financial resources: "Students started to feel that the connections between the school and the local community were much better."



translations of articles by leading experts and international school systems in the areas of educational leadership and instructional supervision. Themes of these articles focus on practices and processes that the principals can engage in to create learning communities to foster reflective and collaborative professional development of teachers and thus improve student learning.

Assessment and Evaluation Department (AED): Given the important support that AED has provided to LTD in the use of student achievement testing as a tool for measuring the impact of LTD on student learning, LTD reciprocated by providing preliminary technical assistance and consultation, including a SWOT and gap analysis, for the development of training materials and intended learning outcomes and assessments aimed at building the capacity of psychometricians in the Ministry of Education. LTD convened meetings in spring 2014 to outline terms of reference. The discussions resulted in identifying two primary goals for future cooperation:

- To provide technical support to the Ministry's initiative to establish a national test-item bank that is based on modern testing theory known as item-test theory (IRT)
- To provide technical assistance AED's capacity to design and conduct educational research using advanced theories and methods in both quantitative and qualitative research design

Once the MoEHE gives final approval for these two initiatives to move forward, LTD is prepared to provide further technical assistance in fiscal year 2015 to help AED accomplish its goals.

Systems

Functional Audit in the service of aligning policies, structures and processes throughout the system of the MoEHE: LTD marked a major achievement with the completion of the Functional Audit, whose primary purpose is to assist the Ministry's policymaking establishment to make data-driven discussions toward aligning its policies, structures and processes up and down the system from the level of the school, to the district directorate, to the central ministry. The goal is to ensure that educational leadership at all levels will more effectively support the role of schools as the locus of educational improvement and reform.



The Functional Audit employed a comprehensive year-long data collection method using questionnaires, group and individual interviews, and content analysis of job descriptions and scopes of work. Key stakeholders at all three levels of the system were interviewed: at the school level with principals, teachers, parents and counselors; at the district level with heads of Directorates and their deputies and heads of departments; and at the central ministry level with nine Directors General and key support staff,

as well as with two assistant deputy ministers. Findings were analyzed and discussed with the Functional Audit committee made up of the heads of the major departments at the MOEHE. This effort resulted in clarifying twelve major categories of needed policy reform and development:

1. Job description and work load
2. Communications
3. Overlapping in practice
4. Administrative relations
5. Financial Powers
6. Governance and responsibilities
7. Professional development and educational projects
8. Performance Assessments and Evaluation
 - a. Student assessment
 - b. Employee performance evaluation
 - c. Unit Performance Audit (School, Directorate of Education, departments and general directorates)
9. Planning
 - a. Building plans
 - b. Data and Documentation
10. Policies and decision making
 - a. Policy Committee
 - b. Education Committee
11. Organizational Structure of the Ministry
12. Employing technology

At the start of fiscal year 2015 (October 2014) LTD will convene a series of wide-ranging meetings and workshops with the MOEHE so that policy makers, directors of education, and heads of departments can begin prioritizing short- and long-term goals for aligning its policies, structures and processes up and down the system in support of the vital role that schools and district leadership play together in ensuring high levels of learning for all students.



Building Systemic Connections through Professional Networking Conferences

During the latter part of April and early May, 2014, LTD sponsored four professional networking conferences, one in each of the four school districts of Cohort I: South Hebron, Jenin, Ramallah, and Qabatiah. Almost 1200 people attended these special events, including principals, teachers, district leadership, and officials from the Ministry of Education. Organized locally by the District Leadership Teams and with funding and technical support from LTD, the conferences served as a professional networking forum for school leadership and teachers to share success stories and best practices. Principals and teachers presented nearly 200 projects and action research plans completed during their year-long participation in the

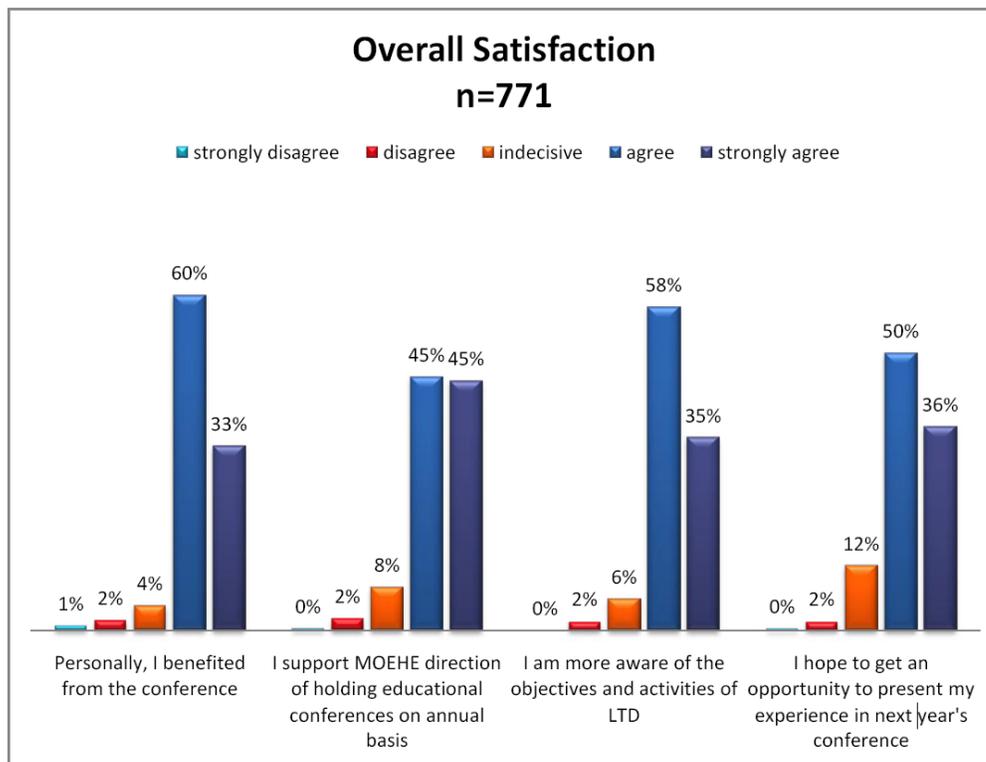


Leadership Diploma Program and the Teacher Qualification Training. The conferences were unprecedented not only because of the lively discussions and best practices that were shared, but also because they represented the first time ever that local school Directorates—through the work of the DLTs—had organized a national conference in their districts. What’s more, the conferences succeeded in advancing progress toward LTD’s goal of creating a sustainable system of school and district leadership structures focused on student learning.



What’s more, the conferences succeeded in advancing progress toward LTD’s goal of creating a sustainable system of school and district leadership structures focused on student learning.

Figure 4: Results of district conference satisfaction survey



Improving the capacity of school principals to work with teachers and supervisors to improve classroom instruction

LTD is working to strengthen policies, structures and processes that forge school and district leadership into a critical axis that will sustain a system of continuous improvement of teaching and ensure higher levels of student learning. LTD's second year of interventions focused intensively on building cooperative relationships between the principalship, school improvement teams (SIT), and district leadership teams (DLT). The common language that binds these three structures is the Ministry's national standards for effective schools. The standards create the framework for processes and practices that principals are expected to use for strategic planning, community relations, resource allocation, teaching and learning, school environment, learning assessments, and technology. Principals cannot accomplish these by working in isolation, nor can SITs and DLTs working by in silos. Learning for all students improves only when the three structures work interdependently to achieve the standards for which their members are held mutually accountable. LTD's efforts this year focused on achieving this strategic objective.

The LTD Principalship and Shared Leadership: Learning by Doing

LTD's flagship program for leadership development, the Leadership Diploma Program, is delivered in partnership with the National Institute for Educational Leadership (NIET). Action research and reflection on problems of leadership practice in professional learning circles with fellow principals form the backbone of LTD's larger goal of school-district cooperation.

Action research assignments afforded principals multiple opportunities to question their assumptions about the normative model of the "command-and-control" leadership by experimenting with and documenting the benefits of engaging teachers, parents, and the district leadership in building and sustaining effective, learner-centered classrooms. Instead of evaluating a teacher's performance, principals shifted their supervision practices to a more supportive posture aimed at developing teachers' practices rather than simply judging them.

Action research assignments afforded principals multiple opportunities to question their assumptions about the normative model of the "command-and-control" leadership by experimenting with and documenting the benefits of engaging teachers, parents, and the district leadership in building and sustaining effective, learner-centered classrooms.

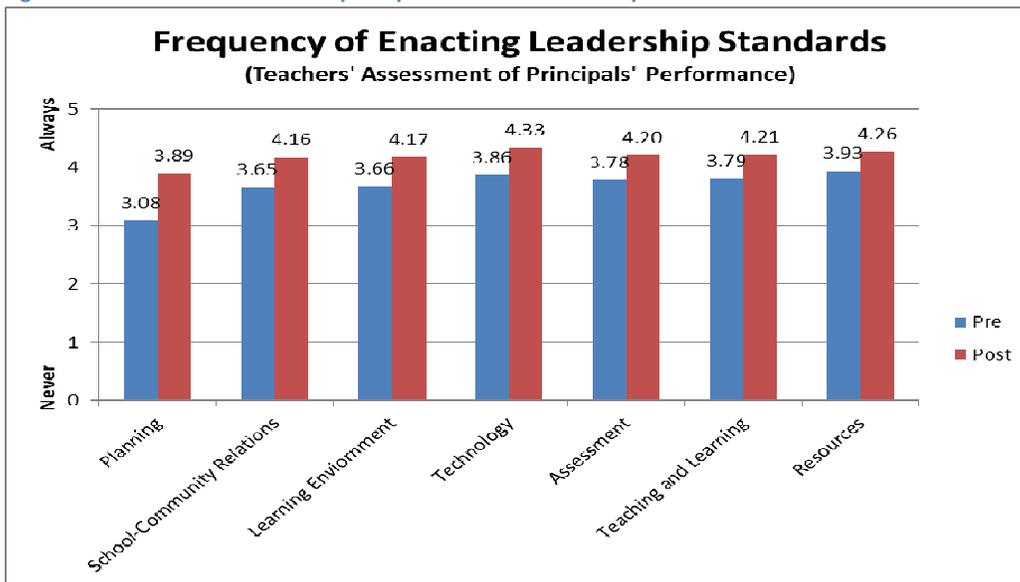
Principals completed action research projects in which they collected data on specific problems framed by the standards for effective schools. As a result, principals increased their capacity to:

- Help teachers integrate educational technology in their teaching.
- Diversify learning activities and assessments that engage all students.

- Give ongoing support of teachers' professional development.
- Help teachers use student portfolios to collect data from formative assessments of student learning as a basis for improving their teaching practices.
- Improve school-community relations that strengthen learner-centered classrooms.

These changes are well-documented in data from LTD's impact evaluation research. Results from surveys, interviews, and observations show that LTD principals improved their capacity by 35% in providing effective instructional support that empowers teachers to diversify learning activities and assessments that increase the engagement of all students; integrating educational technology in the classroom; engaging in school-community relations that strengthen learner-centered classrooms; contributing to results-based decisions about improving classroom instruction; enabling teachers and others in the school community, including school counselors, to engage students more in service learning and other extra- and co-curricular activities that allow students to transfer their classroom learning to real-world contexts.

Figure 5: Teachers' assessment of principals' effective leadership



In sum, LTD principals have come to appreciate their role as instructional leaders who foster the professional growth of teachers rather than merely evaluating their performance. They are empowering teachers to improve their own teaching through, among other things, the greater use of formative assessments to collect data about students' needs and then modify teaching practices accordingly. This is a major cultural change, for it sees teachers and principals focused more on improving student learning rather than student memorization and test taking. This change is helping to address a key finding from the Functional Audit that found that assessments of student learning focus overwhelmingly on rote memorization of facts rather than deep understanding and critical thinking.

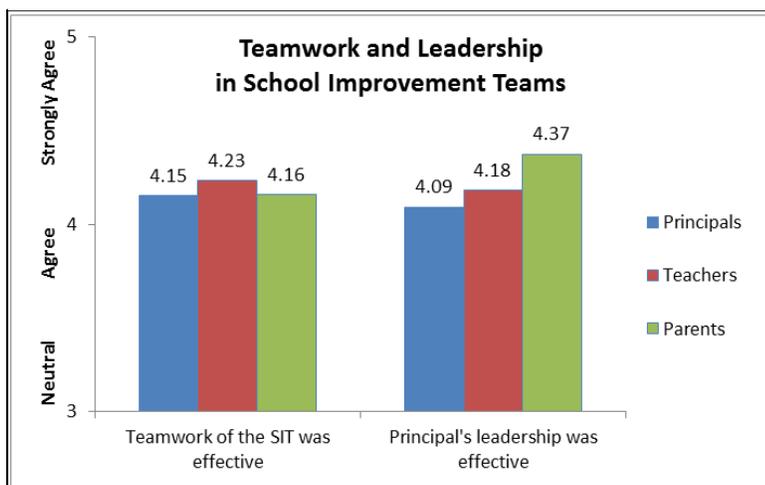
LTD principals have come to appreciate their role as instructional leaders who foster the professional growth of teachers rather than merely evaluating their performance.

The School Improvement Team as a Mechanism for Shared Leadership

As described above, LTD’s Leadership Diploma Program helped principals develop the capacity to support improved teaching and learning. This change is also attributable to their role as “lead facilitator” in the formal process of a school improvement self-study leading to the development of a results-based school improvement plan (SIP). The key structure of the process is the school improvement team (SIT), a committee comprised of a principal as the chairperson plus two to three teachers and one or two parents. Guided by their LTD training and framed by the standards for effective schools, LTD principals formed their SITs and lead them in conducting a comprehensive needs assessment to collect input from teachers, administrative staff, parents, and students. The teams analyzed the findings to identify gaps in the school’s current vision and mission and to prioritize goals and objectives for school improvement.

Evidence from data collected from teachers and parents by LTD’s monitoring and evaluation unit point to a principalship that is more empowered to marshal the available human and material resources of the school community to support improved teaching and learning. From the principals’ perspective, a good level of teamwork and cooperation characterized the interaction of the SIT members and most felt they could openly discuss and exchange ideas. Stories from members of SITs told of greater teamwork and collaboration to identify needs, collect and analyze data, prioritize goals and objectives against available resources, and implement and monitor activities. Teachers for instance were so motivated by the

Figure 6: Increasing teamwork and shared leadership in LTD schools



process of collective decision-making that many would willingly work overtime to complete the development of the school improvement plan. Others were pleased with the alignment goals in the SIPs with the learner-centered methods of teaching and learning they were implementing through their LTD-based teacher training. Examples of alignment included the integration educational technology; connecting curriculum content to the real-world contexts in the local community; methods of differentiated instruction to ensure that all students learn, especially those who are struggling to achieve proficiency; and the creative use of inexpensive teacher- and student-made learning aids

Parent members of SITs extolled the unprecedented level of teamwork they experienced with teachers and principals, a fact that increased their commitment to the process, and which many believed helped

to strengthen school-family efforts to mitigate chronic problems such as student truancy and misconduct; to increase the frequency of parental visits; to secure local community support for procurement, for example for the purchase of computer equipment and other items for classroom instruction.

In short, the LTD process for the work of a school improvement team has resulted in empowering the principalship to more effectively, and democratically, marshal strategic human and financial resources of the school community in ways that are helping build the kind of learner-centered and child-friendly classrooms and practices that ensure more opportunities for all students to achieve high levels of learning.

District Leadership Teams (DLT): Forging Support between School and District Leadership

As describe above, in July 2014 the Minister signed an official letter to recognize the DLT as an official body in all 16 district offices. Each DLT in the four districts of Cohort I schools developed a scope of work detailing all tasks and responsibilities for providing technical and administrative support to the SITs of LTD schools in their respective districts.

But, as important as the SIT is for structuring a results-based process of school improvement, no SIT can go it alone. Members of an SIT rely on the support of the newly-created leadership unit of middle management, the district leadership team (DLT). The mission of the DLT is to foster a collective leadership structure with an understanding and commitment to school improvement through support for professional development of school principals and teachers in light of a school’s annual improvement plan (SIP). For this reason, an important responsibility of a DLT is to review, offer feedback and oversee the implementation of a school’s SIP in accordance with the Ministry’s standards for effective schools.

The mission of the DLT is to foster a collective leadership structure with an understanding and commitment to school improvement through support for professional development of school principals and teachers in light of a school’s annual improvement plan (SIP).

Throughout the year, the four DLTs of Cohort I schools worked in consultation with LTD’s Operations and Compliance Department to process the procurement requests for each SIP. DLTs prepared a comprehensive worksheet summarizing the needs of each school in the district and indicated how the schools intend to allocate LTD’s contribution of \$6,000 for in-kind assistance to support the implementation of SIPs. DLT members attended several Leadership Diploma workshop to network with principals and learn more about the LTD model of school improvement planning and to explore ways to facilitate communication to keep the DLTs abreast of progress in the implementation of SIPs and how they might support the effort. By the end of January 2014, all 88 schools of Cohort I had submitted their finalized SIPs, some of which clearly benefited from constructive feedback provided by their DLT.

In sum, improved coordination and collaboration between schools and their DLT has established a mechanism for mutual accountability by which key stakeholders in the school community—leadership, teachers, and parents—work interdependently with leadership of middle management. Together, members of the SIT and DLT hold each other accountable for ensuring the implementation of a school improvement plan that is aligned with the standards for effective schools and that principals and teachers get the professional development they need to ensure high levels of learning for all students.

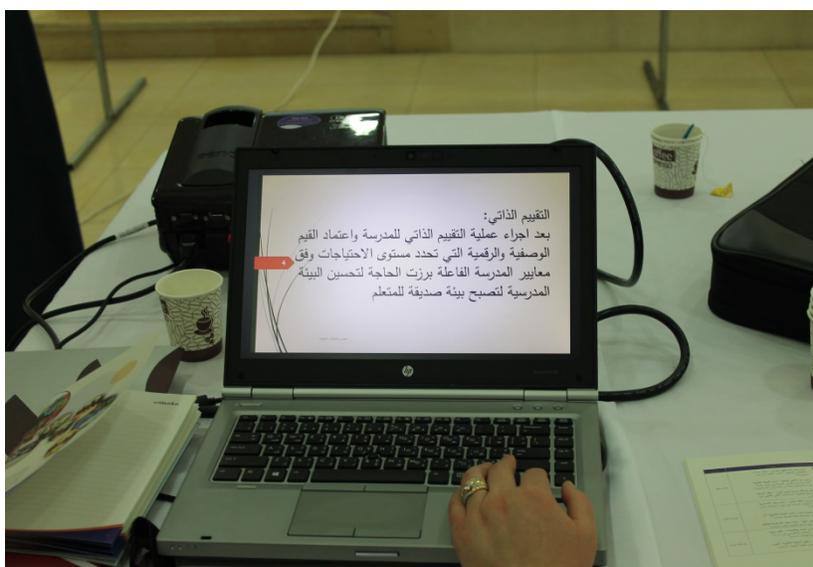
Cohort II Schools

The completion of principal and teacher trainings for Cohort I schools in four districts coincided in April 2014 with the launch of the Leadership Diploma Program among some 130 schools in the six districts of Ramallah, Jerusalem Suburbs, Hebron, Bethlehem, Qalqilia, and Salfeit. In September 2014 an additional 14 schools were added in response to last minute transfers or retirements of principals at the end of summer and the beginning the new school year. The current number is 144 schools across the six districts.

As of the writing of this Annual Report, the SITs of the original 130 schools have completed their school self-assessments and drafted their SIPs, which they will soon be sharing with the DLTs of their respective district offices. Accelerated make-up sessions for the newly added schools began in the final weeks of September 2014 and will continue apace in order for the new principals to form their school improvement teams and initiate the process to develop their school improvement plans.

Technology for Improved Educational Leadership

The importance that schools, districts, and the Ministry place in the role of technology for 21st century educational leadership is reflected powerfully in the fact that 70% of the total budget allocation for SIPs in Cohort I (\$528K) is dedicated to information technology. As a result of LTD's provision of laptops and technology training to principals, along with the installation of internet



connectivity in all 88 Cohort I schools, principals are not only supporting of teachers' integration of technology in their classrooms, but have also increased by a third their use of technology to facilitate school management and assist in the monitoring of the school improvement planning process of the SIT, and to improve communications between principals and teachers, between school and parents, and between school and Ministry of Education. At the close of fiscal year 2014, LTD continued its technology support for school leadership by distributing laptops to all 144 school principals of Cohort II schools and initiating the procurement process for school connectivity and Wi-Fi access.

Building Capacity of the Directorate of Field Follow-Up (DFF)

The DFF is an important department in the central ministry as it is responsible for supervising and evaluating the performance of school principals. For this reason, LTD recognized the importance of engaging DFF in the capacity building of school leadership at the school level, particularly in regard to aligning its standards, tools, and methods for the evaluation the performance of principals with LTD's Leadership Diploma Program. LTD met with DFF leadership to revise its scope of work at both the Ministry and district levels and to identify areas of training and capacity building to enable DFF to support school principals graduating from LTD's Leadership Diploma Program. The Directorate selected the department heads in all 14district offices to participate in the training.

By the end of September 2014, the DFF section heads had completed four in a continuing series of workshops that enabled them to:

- Assess a principal's performance against goals and objectives in a school improvement plan.
- Distinguish between a performance evaluation for an individual and for an organization.
- Understand the norms and practices of participatory leadership in the context of forming a school improvement team and developing an SIP.
- Critique existing tools for school and principal evaluation.
- Review and recommend revisions to the job description of DFF section head.

LTD also facilitated communication between DFF and NIET to strengthen their professional relationship. Because NIET trains principals but DFF supervises and evaluates them, the sustainability of the LTD model of school leadership rests on building a common language of cooperation and commitment between these two units. The LTD-brokered meetings resulted in DFF and NIET reaching a common understanding on the importance of working collaboratively to ensure the harmonization of the standards and competencies in the Leadership Diploma Program with the protocols used by DFF to evaluate principals.

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Building Capacity of the Department of Supervision and Qualification of Teaching (DSQT)

Like the DFF, the Department of Supervision and Qualification of Teaching plays a critical role in the sustainability of LTD's approach to learner-centered teaching and professional development. Because the main function of the DSQT is to supervise and monitor the quality of teaching, LTD reached an agreement with the Director General of the unit to provide technical support to a team of ten expert supervisors tasked to develop training materials. Following a needs assessment, specific areas were identified as the focus on a modular curriculum, including:

- Innovative approaches and strategies in school leadership and instructional supervision
- The latest in research and best practices about teaching and learning for the 21st century classroom
- The role of principals in fostering learning communities of collaborative teams of teachers in their schools
- The importance of work-embedded professional development of teachers in authentic classroom contexts

Challenges

The transition to a shared leadership model at school has not been without its challenges, however. Based on results from surveys and interviews with principals, teachers and parents who served on SITs, there was universal agreement that the pervasive lack of human and financial resources as one of the biggest challenges to planning, prioritizing goals, and implementing school improvement plans. While some SITs managed to appeal for assistance from the local community to shore up some of the gaps in school budgets, this strategy often was problematic as Ministry policy prevents schools from soliciting direct fund raising from local communities on a regular basis and use it as part of the school annual budget.



On the matter of expecting smooth interactions between an SIT and the district office, some principals noted that the district was less helpful than hoped for during the initial planning phase of the SIP process, particularly in regards to identifying and prioritizing goals and objectives—likely an indication that the education of some DLT members about their roles and responsibilities may have lagged behind the training schedule of principals.

Other barriers included the busy work schedules of both teachers and parents that sometimes created irregular attendance during the normal work week; the lack of material resources and the difficulty of trying to rely on the local community in places with a majority of low-income households, or a lack of experience in developing effective strategies for identifying opportunities or alternative sources of community support; managing group discussions and conflicts over differing opinions; and the unexpected transfer of LTD principals to non-LTD school—this occurred in about 17% of the original 106 schools of Cohort I, resulting in the suspension of LTD's support to SITs due to USAID regulations.

Establishing a national cadre of teacher and leadership educators that meet MoEHE standards for instruction and supervision

In addition to building ties and capacity of school and district leadership to focus school improvement more sharply on learning for all students, LTD in its second year completed its strategic goal of building NIET's capacity to form a team of highly qualified trainers of in-service teacher education. The team is comprised of 25 members of NIET's training staff and managers, plus 19 university consultants.

Known as the National Cadre of Teacher Educators, the TEEP participants engaged in a year-long inquiry-based job-embedded professional development program based on a 270-hour curriculum—the Teacher Educator Enhancement Program (TEEP)—co-designed and delivered by LTD and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Working in pairs and small groups of critical friends, the participants identified problems of practice during their delivery of teacher trainings and learning circles. Using action research, the trainers gathered data about their trainees' learning and then meet routinely in learning circles with peers to share their findings and to receive and give feedback and plan changes in their practice to improve the learning of the trainees.



To celebrate the formation of the Ministry's National Cadre of Teacher Educators, LTD and its key partner, NIET, co-hosted a graduation ceremony in June 2014 that was held on the occasion of a professional networking conference marking the culmination of the TEEP program. The event brought together over 100 guests, including school teachers, principals, and district representatives and policymakers from the MoEHE, as well as Professors Gretchen Rossman, Sharon Rallis, and Joseph Berger from the University of Massachusetts team.



Building Professional Learning Communities

The uniqueness of LTD's use of the TEEP strategy is that it was not limited to the National Cadre of Teacher Educators. By design, LTD and NIET integrated TEEP's inquiry-based and job-embedded approach to teacher professional development into the curriculum of training modules and learning circles of NIET's Teacher Qualification Training Program (co-designed by LTD). The teacher educators enacted and modeled for the in-service teachers the same learner-centered teaching and learning practices the teachers themselves were expected to enact in their classrooms. Likewise, the learning assessments of the training modules required the teachers to identify and conduct action research on problems of practice in the authentic context of their classrooms. This strategy resulted in the concurrent and parallel participation of both in-service teachers and teacher educators in the TEEP process of professional development. Trainers and trainees learning together. A key outcome of this approach was that it laid the groundwork for introducing in LTD's third year the concepts, practices and processes of professional learning communities (PLC) into the Palestinian educational system.¹

Benefits of Putting TEEP Theory into Action

The implicit theory of change in action research is that if a trainer improves her capacity to identify problems of practice and trainees' needs, then taking action in the training context will result in improved professional growth. Evidence from LTD's evaluation research found that a strong majority of TEEP participants (over 77%) agreed that the use of action research increased their ability to address their problems of practice; improved their capacity to identify the educational needs of trainees; increased their ability to make improvements in their practice; and, believed that action research helped them increase their trainees' learning.

The use of action research increased the capacity of LTD's teacher educators to address their problems of practice; improved their capacity to identify the educational needs of trainees; increased their ability to make improvements in their practice; and, believed that action research helped them increase their trainees' learning.

Furthermore, by having had the opportunity to work in collaborative learning circles and to reflect on and share feedback with peers ("critical friends"), the TEEP participants acknowledged that the process improved capacity to identify and assess the needs of the teachers prior to and during the training sessions; check for understanding throughout their delivery of content; collect feedback from participants to improve their own problems of practice and to identify opportunities for improving their

¹ A PLC is "an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve." DuFour, Richard; DuFour, Rebecca (2010). Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work. Ingram Distribution. Kindle Edition.

delivery of training; promote learner-centered, collaborative learning; and, foster positive trainer-trainee and trainee-trainee interactions through reflective listening and feedback and mutual respect.

Multiplier Impact of TEEP: It bears mentioning that the majority of university consultants who participated in TEEP applied their mastery of action research in the context of the pre-service teacher education courses they teach at their respective universities. This unintended transference of TEEP's approach to inquiry-based, job-embedded professional development is added value to the LTD program, for it demonstrates the efficacy of LTD professional development that is inquiry-based, job-embedded, and focused on learning and improving problems of practice.

Benefits of Action Research on Teaching and Learning

During the TEEP program, the 44 members of NIET's National Cadre of Teacher Educators supervised the action research of the 411 participating in-service teachers from the 88 schools of Cohort I. In all, the teachers conducted an estimated 4,500 action research projects; that's approximately 50 projects per school in grades 5-10 across the five subject areas of Arabic, English, mathematics, science, and technology education. As did the TEEP participants, the teachers used the action research inquiry cycle to identify specific learning problems facing their students and then, after exchanging feedback with peers in learning circles, to plan and implement actions to modify or improve their teaching practices.

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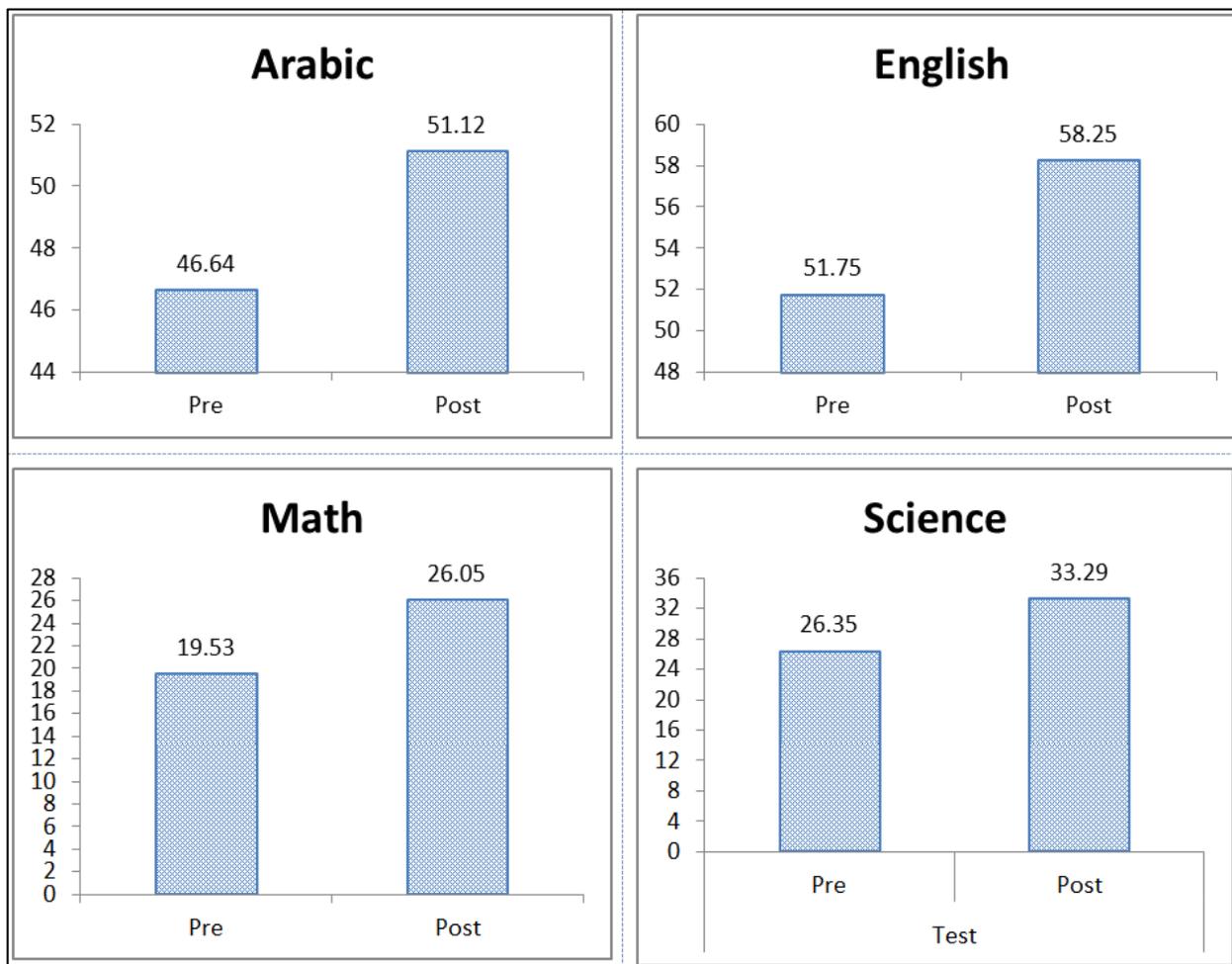
What difference did action research make? Eighty-five percent of Cohort I teachers surveyed by LTD agreed or strongly agreed that action research improved their professional practices in the classroom and directly contributed to improving their students' learning. Data collected from principals, parents and students support the teachers' claims. Most teachers saw an increase in students' classroom engagement; more frequent use of higher order thinking and reasoning skills; more opportunities to demonstrate their understanding through authentic, project-based learning assessments. Principals, too, saw changes happening. A representative sample of principals reported they saw substantive growth in all core competencies of their LTD teachers, particularly in the domains of continuous professional development, building partnerships inside and outside the school community to support students' learning, and by creating a more student-centered teaching and learning climate in their classrooms.

Most teachers saw an increase in students' classroom engagement; more frequent use of higher order thinking and reasoning skills; more opportunities to demonstrate their understanding through authentic, project-based learning assessments.

Parents agreed. In focus groups, parents said they were pleased that the need for continuous professional development of teachers' practices was a priority in LTD schools and they gave examples of how improved communication and support between school leadership, teachers, and parents had resulted in fewer instances of student misbehavior and generated more effective extracurricular activities.

With the caveat that attributing increases in student test scores to improved teaching in a short period is problematic, tests scores on standardized tests of students taught by LTD teachers showed improvement: Arabic improved 9.4%; English by 12.6%; mathematics by 33.4%; and, science by 26.3%. Big changes are seen in teachers' competencies in helping students develop 21st century learning skills: critical thinking (27% improvement) and engaging students in group learning activities (25% improvement).

Figure 7: Results of AED tests of achievement, Cohort 1 schools



Institutionalizing TEEP into NIET's Mission and Vision

To achieve LTD's overarching goal of fostering a sustainable, top-down and bottom-up system of school-based professional development focused on student learning, the formation of school improvement teams (SIT) and district leadership teams (DLT) are necessary, though not sufficient, conditions for system-wide change. These local and middle management structures also need to be harmonize systemically with policies, structures and processes inside the central ministry. This is why LTD is working to build the capacity of not only the Directorates of Field Follow-Up (DFF) and Supervision (DSQT), but also NIET.

NIET is without question LTD's primary partner and ally for championing LTD's innovative approaches for professional development of school leadership and teachers. During late spring and early fall, the Director General of NIET convened a series of meetings with LTD on the question of incorporating the principles and practices of the TEEP process into NIET's culture of continuing professional development. A common understanding was reached on two key goals for which LTD would provide technical assistance.

- The first is to create a steering committee of NIET managers who will, with technical support from LTD, review, revise and further develop NIET's existing assumptions about what an expert trainer should know and be able to do in the context of NIET's official mission and vision. By February 2015, this committee is expected to have drafted a set of standards and competencies and a framework for the formative and summative assessment of a trainer's performance.
- The second goal is for NIET's senior management, with support from LTD, to organize themselves and their training staff into professional learning communities (PLC) and continue using the action research inquiry-cycle in 2014-2015 to better serve the learning needs of the principals and teachers they train.



Improving pre-service teacher education at Al-Azhar University in Gaza

Though Gaza is physically and, in a practical sense, administratively distanced from the West Bank, LTD’s educational goals in Gaza remain committed to the strategic goal of supporting a sustainable system of a job-embedded, learner-centered and inquiry-based approach to professional development for leadership and teaching that will help all students achieve high levels of learning.

Since September 2013, LTD has worked with the Faculty of Education of Al-Azhar University, Gaza, to achieve its goal of improving the quality of pre-service education in the Faculty of Education. This work has taken a three-fold approach:

- *Strategic Planning*: to align curricular policies, structures, processes and practices through a process of strategic planning focused on learning
- *Teacher Educator Enhancement*: to harmonize faculty professional development with the strategic plan through action research in communities of practice to ensure all students learn
- *Professional Certificate in English Language Teaching*: to help future teachers of English build the professional habits of learner-centered teaching and professional development

The outbreak of the Israel-Gaza war in summer 2014 disrupted and delayed LTD programming in the final quarter of fiscal year 2014; however, cessation of hostilities at the end of August allowed LTD to resume limited activities in the first weeks of September.

In short, LTD’s interventions in the West Bank and Gaza are addressing two sides of the same coin. They share a common language and commitment toward enhancing the quality of education for all students by creating policies, structures, and processes that support professional development of educational leadership and teaching focused on ensuring high levels of learning for all.

Strategic Plan for the Faculty of Education

During the first three quarters of fiscal year 2014, the strategic planning committee fully accomplished the first two stages of the eight-stage strategic planning process—pre-planning and developing the planning process—and completed much of the third stage, producing the strategic planning document. Following the cessation of the war, the Steering Committee met in September 2014 and planned actions to finalize the full document and publicize it among the faculty, and finally to submit it for approval to the President and Board of

Figure 8: Eight stages of Al-Azhar’s strategic planning process



Directors of the university by the end of October. The final three stages of the process will be implemented during fiscal year 2014: implementing the plan; monitoring and evaluating the plan; and, institutionalizing the process of strategic planning.



The “Pre-Planning” stage of the process was led by the Dean of the Faculty of Education who, with technical support from UMass and LTD’s program manager, delegated the heads of the four departments of the Faculty to work on the terms of reference for clarifying their goals and task, and stressed the importance of collaboration and transparency.

The stage of “Developing the Planning Process” took place over much of the second and third quarters of the year. Meeting monthly, sometimes bi-monthly, the Steering Committee accomplished the tasks of: evaluating the Faculty’s pre-existing mission, vision, and goals; conducting a SWOT and gap analysis of the programs in each of the four departments—Curriculum and Instruction,

Foundations of Education, Islamic Studies, and Psychology; drafting a list of objectives organized into five larger “Strategic Objectives” as the basis for generating the final Strategic Plan document; meeting with UMass (June 2014) to share feedback on the draft strategic objectives; to collaborate on articulating a theory of change that informs the strategic planning process; and, to prioritize strategic into short- and long-term objectives in terms of importance/urgency and available resources.

The stage of “Producing the Strategic Planning Document” took place during the final part of the third quarter and focused on developing the work plan. The Steering Committee identified targets and indicators to monitor and assess progress of the goals and objectives once the Plan gets implemented.



Teacher Educator Enhancement/ GAZA

Framed by the same principles and processes of the *Action Research Cycle of Inquiry* of the TEEP program in the West Bank, the TEEP initiative at Al-Azhar University was adapted to the context of pre-service teacher education. Twenty faculty members from across the four departments of the Faculty of Education completed the year-long TEEP process in June 2014. Organized into four professional learning communities on the basis of their disciplinary specializations, the TEEP participants meet monthly in learning circles to plan action research, to share and exchange feedback

on the results, and to participate in occasional LTD-facilitated workshops tailored to problems of practice identified by the faculty as a result of reflecting on their action research. The faculty members of the TEEP pre-service program unanimously agreed that the program contributed to improving of their instructional practices in general and their capacity to increase the active learning of their students in particular.

Results of an analysis of the evidence from 81 action research projects completed and documented on Moodle point to a substantive shift in attitudes and practices towards more learner-centered teaching and assessments rather than the pre-existing habit of lecturing and infrequent summative assessments. The TEEP faculty accomplished the following major goals:

- Less reliance on lecturing and more emphasis on students' active engagement, higher order thinking skills, cooperative teamwork, problem solving, research skills, and overall academic achievement.
- Appreciation for collaborative teamwork using inquiry-based strategies for professional development in both real-time and virtual "critical friend groups".
 - The Dean and the heads of the four departments provided the leadership support to incentivize and reinforce the commitment of their faculty members in the process.
 - The participants unanimously agreed that TEEP had, for the first time in their professional experience at Al-Azhar University, allowed them to reflect individually and collectively with peers on problems of practice and to work collaboratively to improve their students' learning.
- Successfully learned how to use MOODLE as a space for sharing and exchanging feedback on action research and participate in discussion forums; to support their use of technology, LTD provided the Faculty of Education with laptops for each of the participants and this strengthened their collaboration in online learning circles and for research to support their continuing professional development.
- Enhanced their capacity to write SMART goals for planning units of instruction and to employ the principles and methods of "backward design" in order to clarify key learning outcomes and to develop authentic, formative learning assessments focused on students learning of big ideas and key concepts and skills in any unit of instruction.
- Applied SWOT analysis to analyze the results of their action research projects for the purpose of contributing data to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee for its needs assessment of the academic units comprising the Faculty of Education. In this way, action research contributed to aligning the mission and vision of the Faculty of Education with the major goals and objectives of each of the four departments.

Capstone Event: The capstone event at the conclusion of the TEEP program in June 2014 was a conference to celebrate the role action research played in the participants' professional development. The Dean confirmed that this educational conference, under the theme of "Professional Development based on Inquiry," was the first of its kind at Al-Azhar University. Unlike most conferences that focus on conventional academic research, the TEEP conference centered exclusively on the faculty members' own teaching practices and student learning as the objects of their research.



The conference was attended by more than 100 faculty members from Al-Azhar and other local universities, and it served as a teachable moment to educate others about the efficacy of action research in higher education in general and in pre-service teacher education in particular. Six single paper presentations, a workshop, an interactive poster session with 20 posters, and two panel presentations afforded the attendees a variety of informative and educational learning experiences. Topics included:

- Employing active learning strategies to model TEFL teaching skills to students and address the problem of the working with large classes
- The effect of using the flipped classroom and groups in higher education
- The effect of using animated films for increasing students' understanding of topics in molecular biology
- Critical Friends
- Professional Learning Communities
- Activating Participation in Learning
- Learning and Motivation and Psychology

Future of TEEP: With the success of the TEEP program, LTD agreed to the Dean's request to offer a second round of TEEP to 12 instructors to be selected from the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. The rationale for this expansion is that students in the pre-service teacher program attend mandatory courses in the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Arts and Humanities where instructors in these faculties do not serve as models of learner-centered, inquiry-based instruction that the TEEP program developed in the Faculty of Education.

Professional Certificate in English Language Teaching

The Professional Certificate in English Language Teaching (PCEL) is an internationally accredited 120-hour professional certification course and is designed to introduce innovative methods and international best practices into Al-Azhar's pre-service courses for teachers of English in the Faculty of Education. PCEL and TEEP share a common approach that stresses knowledge and skill development based on practice, action research, reflection on problems of practice, and sharing feedback in collaborative teams of critical friends.

PCEL is being offered to 4th year undergraduates enrolled in Al Azhar's English Teacher program and also to three eligible faculty members who are qualified and wish to become certified PCEL trainers, one of whom may later qualify to become a trainer-of-trainers. Trainers from World Learning/SIT deliver most of the PCEL trainings and the concurrent training-of-trainers modules for faculty.

PCEL at a glance	
Why	To gain confidence and a professional edge as a teacher
What	120-hour TESOL certificate program on a wide range of topics, with 6 practice teaching lessons per teacher
Who	For aspiring or current teachers, novice or experienced, with the required English level
How	Classes of 12 participants, taught by expert PCEL-licensed trainers in an interactive environment
Where	AMIDEAST offices across the MENA region
When	Intensive (4-5-week), semi-intensive (10-week), or extended courses

Since its implementation in January 2014, the PCEL program has accomplished the following:

- Three courses of 120 training hours have been completed by 36 undergraduate students who earned completion certificates from World Learning/SIT.
 - Courses 1 and 2 in January/February 2014
 - Course 3 in June/July 2014
- A major milestone toward ensuring the suitability of PCEL in Gaza happened in August 2014 when the first of potentially three faculty candidates, Dr. Sumer Abu Shaban, was awarded her license as a PCEL trainer.
 - On September 29, Dr. Sumer began her first solo experience as a PCEL trainer for students in a 10-week non-intensive course (Course 4); the course will end on December 11, 2014.
 - An SIT trainer-of-trainers will come to Gaza in the final two weeks of Course 4 to provide follow up support for Dr. Sumer and to train a second “trainer-to-be-trained” (TBT) who has already completed his online pre-TBT learning module.
- LTD procured over four dozen titles for a “PCEL library” to be used as a resource library for PCEL students in Gaza.

Formation of an Online Professional Community for PCELТ Students and Trainers: A pre-existing Palestine PCELТ Facebook page was created by AMIDEAST/West Bank. LTD’s Gaza program manager, Ms. Rana Sager, coordinated with her West Bank counterpart, Ms. Reema Awadallah to add the names and contact information of all Al-Azhar PCELТ graduates to date. The page is now being used by nearly 50 PCELТ certified teachers and future-teachers of English as a professional forum to share and exchange ideas, feedback and resources.

PCELТ success story amid the trauma of violent conflict

In the midst of the trauma facing Gaza during the eight-week war waged in summer 2014, Ms. Yasimin Shehada, a PCELТ graduate who attended the course from June/July, found the courage to write a blog, hoping to inspire future teachers who want to make a difference in the Palestinian education. The blog is on the World Learning website at: <http://blogs.worldlearning.org/teach-english/2014/08/19/alumni-reflections-a-note-of-hope-from-gaza>

Sincere Gratitude: LTD is deeply grateful to Ms. Kate Cook, the World Learning/SIT trainer who delivered the PCELТ course on the eve of the war. Despite repeated offers to be evacuated, Kate remained until all requirements for the course had been completed, thus allowing the 12 students to graduate and Dr. Sumer to complete her licensure training. Kate safely departed Gaza on July 9, 2014, precisely when Israeli airstrikes escalated to full out war.



Project Management

AMIDEAST relies on a set of management structures and processes to ensure the effective and efficient operation of all activities of the USAID-funded LTD program. These include Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), Operations and Compliance (OCD), and Communications and Public Relations. These three mechanisms work together to ensure accurate and timely results-based management, effective procurement and allocation of resources, and to call attention to and celebrate progress toward its goals and commitment to and evidence of important results of LTD's contributions to the improvement of education in Palestine.

Monitoring and Evaluation

LTD worked diligently in the second year to ensure that it continued to meet the highest international and USAID standards for M&E in the arena of educational development. Monitoring and Evaluation activities were identified and conducted in accordance with LTD's Program M&E Plan (PMP) and reported in a timely and accurate fashion in Geo-MIS and TraiNet. AMIDEAST submitted LTD's first PMP to USAID in September 2012, which was subsequently revised twice, first in October 2013 and again in June 2014, the latter of which was updated to include a gender strategy and two gender indicators.

Major accomplishments of M&E activities during LTD's second year focused on ensuring its contribution to high-quality results-based management; strengthening its procedures for data quality assurance (DQA); deepening its cooperation with and support for M&E units in the MoEHE; and, executing a comprehensive impact evaluation of LTD's interventions.

Ensuring Effective Results-Based Management

During the reporting period, the M&E Department continued to support program management through ongoing data collection and reporting in order to provide LTD management timely feedback, analysis and verification of the quality of LTD's interventions and operations. Key tasks included submitting and reporting data on activities in compliance with performance indicators in the Performance Management Plan (PMP) and Performance Indicators Reference Sheets (PIRS), and by verifying and entering performance data into Geo-MIS and TraiNet systems. Three activities this year exemplify the M&E contribution to data-driven monitoring and decision-making by senior LTD management: field visits; school profile data; and quick-access data index.

- Developed a field visit protocol and tracking sheet designed to monitor program activities and events on a regular basis and to ensure follow-up and continuous improvements to the planning, implementation, and the overall organization of activities by LTD and in cooperation with its key Ministry partners. For example, field visits were made to leadership trainings and teacher trainings in Jenin, and to schools where external consultant were collecting data for LTD's evaluation research of Cohort I programming.
- Coordinated with the Capacity-Building Department to collect and verify the quality of demographic data for Cohort II schools in the 6 districts of Bethlehem, Hebron, Jerusalem Suburbs, Qalqelia, Ramallah, and Salfeet; senior management of both LTD and NIET used these

data to identify unqualified teachers who would be eligible to participate in NIET's Teacher Qualification Training Program that runs in tandem with the Leadership Diploma Program.

- Created a quick-access database index to rationalize data storage and retrieval for the analysis and reporting for all of LTD's different components and their associated PMP indicators.

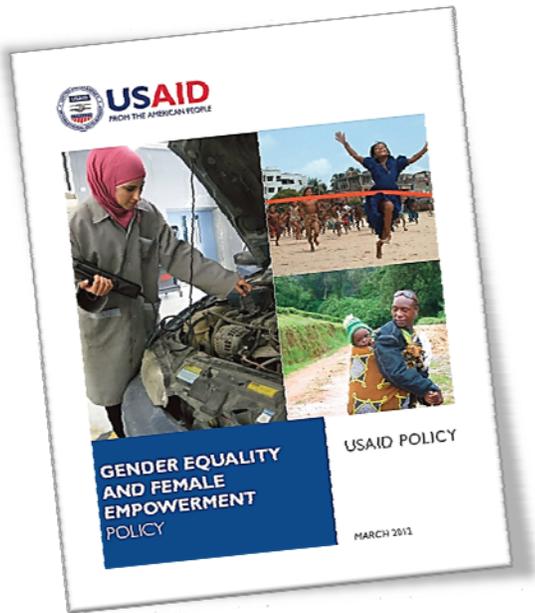
Data Quality Assurance Review by USAID

Early in the third quarter of the reporting period (April-May 2014), the M&E Department participated in a program-wide data quality assessment review (DQA) under the guidance of USAID's M&E representative. The DQA identified action points for additions and/or modifications to the PMP, including the creation of new indicators and modifications to the definitions of several existing indicators and targets to the PMP and to the Performance Indicator Reference Sheet (PIRs). Furthermore, a data verification form was created to help in standardize and routinize the Data Quality Assessment (DQA) process. This effort resulted in the creation of a protocol for the quality review and verification of data entry and validation by M&E staff. One of the most significant changes to the PMP was the inclusion of a gender strategy and indicators.

Gender Equality and Female Empowerment

LTD is committed to aligning its strategic goals with the core principals underlying the Gender Equality and Female Empowerment policy of USAID. In light of this commitment, the monitoring and evaluation of LTD's gender strategy focuses on two key pillars of gender equality: equal access and female empowerment. LTD will administer an annual "Equality of Access" survey to a representative random sample of female and male beneficiaries (teachers, principals, trainers, and MOE officials). LTD will report

on the extent to which the respondents judge whether, relative to their sex, LTD provided them equal opportunities to participate in activities or acquire resources. LTD's indicators for female empowerment will be measured by administering a USAID recommended self-efficacy scale to a random sample of female and male beneficiaries at the completion of training. Data collection using these new indicators will begin in fiscal year 2015.



Cooperation with and Support for M&E Units in the MoEHE

The M&E staff continued to collaborate closely with M&E counterparts at NIET and with key personnel of the Ministry's Assessment and Evaluation Department (AED) who are responsible for collecting data for LTD's evaluation study of the impact of teachers training on standardized tests of student achievement. Continued coordination with the Monitoring



and Evaluation Task Force (METF) focused primarily on supporting LTD's implementation and analysis of results from the Functional Audit. Overall, LTD's excellent rapport with both NIET and AED have ensured excellent two-way communications that have strengthened our ongoing joint data collection and our mutual commitments to sharing and exchanging information and technical expertise to improve the performance of our respective M&E teams.

NIET: Throughout the year, monthly—and sometimes weekly—meetings with the NIET/LTD Joint Working Group (JWG) focused on coordinating critical baseline and endline data collection for summative assessments of trainings for Cohort I principals and teachers as well as for ongoing monitoring and support of formative assessments of training activities. From March to May, 2014, meetings intensified in order to coordinate with NIET on its data collection for LTD's summative research on the impact of LTD on the performance of principals and teachers of Cohort 1 and their impact on improving the learning of students (see details, below).

Formative assessments were important as well. LTD collaborated with NIET in drafting, piloting, revising, and implementing a trainer observation protocol and tool, the Trainer Observation Guide (TOG). The TOG was used to observe, document and provide formative feedback through consultation on a trainer's performance. Each observation produced a summary report that was shared with the trainer to help support his/her ongoing professional development.

AED: Per its agreement with LTD, AED administered pre-post exams to over 400 students from a sample of 16 LTD schools in the four districts of Ramallah, South Hebron, Jenin, and Qabatiyah. The pre-test (baseline) was administered in October 2013 and the post-test (endline) in May 2014 (results are discussed below). For the purpose of triangulation, LTD initially proposed to use scores of the district-wide Unified Tests given at the end of each semester of the school year (December and May). Unfortunately, the analysis of reported scores proved wildly inconsistent and unreliable; indeed, AED cautioned LTD that unlike the National exams and TIMSS, results of Unified Tests are administered locally by the school districts and there is no systematic quality control that would otherwise prevent data from being accurately recorded or deliberately manipulated at the school level. Because of doubts about the

reliability of these data, it would be reckless for LTD to use them for the purpose of program evaluation, and for this reason we abandoned the idea of using Unified Test results.

Monitoring and Evaluation Task Force in Support of the Functional Audit: Monitoring and evaluation questions emerged from the functional audit process and thus the scope of work of the Monitoring and Evaluation Task Force (METF) was expanded to include a major role in implementing the functional audit. In addition to the original five Directorates represented on the METF, a representative from the Department of Administrative Affairs joined the team because of its key role in improving policies, systems and structures throughout the educational system. The METF met several times in summer and early fall 2014 to review data, discuss the findings, and draft recommendations in light of the findings.

Impact Evaluation of Cohort 1 Interventions

To assess the impact of LTD on improving the conditions and practices that contribute to quality teaching and learning in Palestinian schools, the M&E Department conducted a comprehensive program evaluation of its interventions in the West Bank among principal, teachers, and teacher educators to improve school leadership and classroom instruction in the 88 schools comprising the first of three cohorts of the LTD program. In Gaza, the focus was on interventions to improve the quality of pre-service teacher education; however, some of the data collection had to be postponed because of the Israel-Gaza war from June 7 to August 26, 2014.

Four major questions guided the research:

1. To what extent has the LTD program contributed to building the capacity of principals to promote effective schools characterized by learner-centered instructional practices?
2. To what extent has the LTD program contributed to building the capacity of teachers to enact learner-centered approaches and strategies?
3. To what extent has the LTD program contributed to building the capacity of teacher educators to model learner-centered approaches and practices?
4. To what extent has the LTD program contributed to building the capacity of instructors at Al-Azhar University's Faculty of Education to enact learner-centered practices in the context of pre-service teacher education?

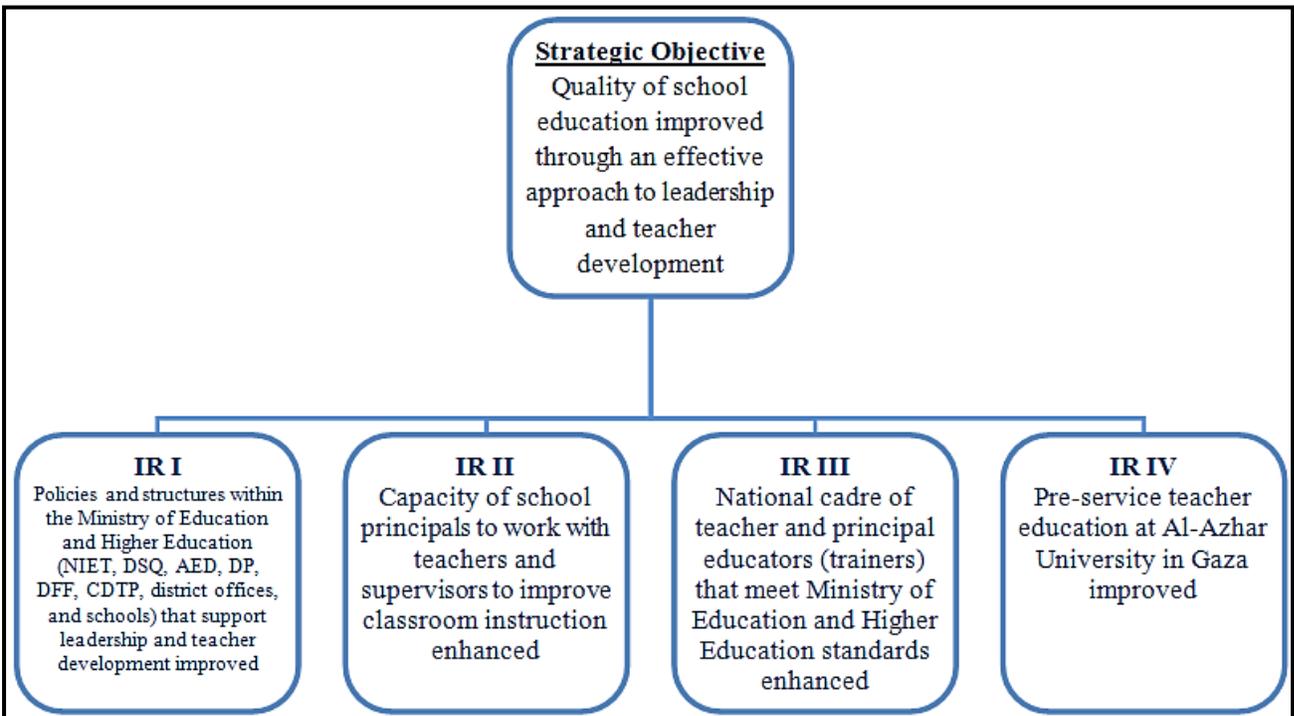
Methods of the Study

The research of the evaluation used a mixed-methods (quantitative and qualitative), quasi-experimental design that incorporated baseline and endline data from representative samples of LTD's diverse groups of beneficiaries—principals, teachers, teacher educators, and students. The use of a quasi-experimental approach helped to strengthen the reliability of data and create a more robust method for drawing inferences and conclusions.

- To explore the extent that principals demonstrated improved capacity to support the development of effective schools characterized by learner-centered instructional practices, the evaluation relied on data collection that combined the use of surveys administered by NIET staff to principals and teachers and the work of an independent team of four field researchers hired

by LTD who collected survey data from principals, teachers and students from a purposive sample of 40 LTD schools and 40 comparison schools.

- To understand the extent that LTD enabled teachers to enact standards and competencies aligned with learner-centered instruction, the evaluation relied on baseline/endline surveys of teachers, principals, and students, the systematic analysis of action research, and scores from two sources of standardized tests of achievement.
- To understand the extent that teacher educators (i.e., members of NIET's national cadre) contributed as exemplars of learner-centered approaches and practices, the study relied on baseline/endline training satisfaction surveys, and a survey that assessed the role of action on improving training delivery and its impact on improving the practices of in-service teachers.
- To examine the extent that instructors at Al-Azhar University's Faculty of Education enacted learner-centered practices, the evaluation relied on three sources of data collected before the outbreak of the war: results of an endline satisfaction survey filled out by faculty participants, a survey to evaluate the impact of doing action research, and a content analysis of action research on problems facing students.



Major Findings

A full report was produced and submitted to USAID and shared with key stakeholders in the MoEHE. The Executive Summary of the report is included in the Annex. The major findings of the study may be summarized as follows:



- 1. LTD contributed to improving the capacity of principals in supporting school-based professional development that fosters effective schools characterized by learner-centered instructional practices.**



The evaluation found evidence that LTD's flagship leadership development component, the Leadership Diploma Program, contributed to improving the capacity of principals in enacting shared leadership and in supporting school-based professional development that fosters effective schools characterized by learner-centered instructional practices. Multiple sources of evidence from both principals and teachers, and corroborated by data collected from parents who participated in school improvement planning, indicate that LTD's approach to engaging principals in authentic community-based learning activities improved their capacity to empower their teachers' use of educational technology, active learning activities, and alternative assessments that reflect real-world connections to curriculum content.



- 2. LTD contributed to building the capacity of teachers to enact standards and competencies aligned with learner-centered instruction.**



Evidence from the study shows that LTD's introduction of inquiry-based in-service professional development into teacher training modules and learning circles contributed to enhancing teachers' competencies associated with learner-centered teaching. This finding is corroborated by principals' evaluations of their LTD teachers' practices. With support from their trainers, who themselves engaged in conducting action research to improve their practices, teachers used action research as a tool for continuous and reflective professional development, enabling them to identify and diagnose discreet learning needs and challenges facing their students and then use these data to modify their teaching practices to improve student learning.

Based on standardized tests of achievement administered by the Ministry's Assessment and Evaluation Department (AED), scores improved 9.4% in Arabic; 12.6% in English; 33.4% in mathematics; and, 26.3% in science.



- 3. LTD contributed to building the capacity of teacher educators (i.e., members of NIET’s national cadre) to enact learner-centered approaches and practices.**



Results of the evaluation indicate that LTD’s Teacher Educator Enhancement Program (TEEP) successfully prepared teacher educators (i.e., university faculty consultants and NIET trainers) to enact and model learner-centered teaching and assessment methods and practices. Their use of action research enabled the teacher educators to identify and reflect on problems of practice in the specificity of authentic training contexts. Furthermore, nearly all of the 19 university consultants who completed the TEEP program used their mastery of action research to identify and address problems of practice in the pre-service teacher education courses they teach at their respective universities.



- 4. LTD contributed to building the capacity of instructors at Al-Azhar University’s Faculty of Education to enact learner-centered practices in the context of pre-service teacher education.**



Based on a partial analysis of evaluation data collected from Al-Azhar University, LTD can report that it contributed to improving the capacity of instructors to enact learner-centered teaching and assessment methods in pre-service teacher education courses. Data collected and documented by the 20 TEEP faculty participants in their portfolios of professional practice indicate that changes in the instructors’ approaches and strategies—less reliance on lecturing—has led to improvements in students’ active engagement, higher order thinking skills, cooperative teamwork, problem solving, research skills, and overall academic achievement.

Operations and Compliance

The Operations and Compliance Department (OCD) is fully responsible for ensuring that LTD meets or exceeds its targets on all matters relating to finance, administration, procurement and compliance. OCD continued this year to exercise its work to ensure precise monitoring and advance planning of LTD's complex and multilevel systems to deliver its intervention with MoEHE partners from local schools to district offices and to departments and directorates in the central Ministry.

In particular, the OCD has been committed to providing strategic support in financial management, safeguarding of program resources, identifying needs to accelerate procurement processing, following up with the implementation of contracts and deliverables, not to mention the critically important matter of documenting strict adherence to USAID's compliance regulations and procedures, including strict monitoring of Mission Order 21 as stipulated in the Cooperative Agreement.

With a total procurement component for LTD estimated at USD 4.5 million, the role of OCD has been vital to the effective achievement of all project deliverables.

Major Accomplishments

During the fiscal year 2014, OCD accomplished the following key objectives:

1. Conducted procurement and executed contract of \$160,000 to install Wi-Fi networking in 88 LTD participant schools; despite the complexity of the project, OCD staff supervised the successful installation of all deliverables and systems and verified their proper functioning. This diligent oversight of procurement and delivery succeeded in efficient use of available funds.
2. Completed the procurement and delivery of contracts totaling \$450,000 to supply 700 laptops and 200 LCD Projectors that were distributed to the 88 Cohort I schools.
3. Completed the procurement and delivery of contracts totaling \$40,000 for services and logistics for a professional networking conference held in each of the four districts; each conference saw the attendance of some 400 principals, teachers, and leadership of the district offices.
4. Verified the total costing and itemization of items requested all of the 88 Cohort I schools per their School Improvement Plans (SIPs), and completed the procurement and delivery of contracts totaling \$460K for supplies and equipment.
5. Documented the cost-sharing portion of approximately \$90,000 out of \$175,000 that was committed under the LTD Program.
6. Facilitated the Compliance Examination conducted by USAID staff through April 2014.
7. Prepared and submitted all reports required by HQ and USAID: 12 Sub-award reports, several VAT Reports, and 4 accruals reports.



Looking back on this year, OCD takes pride in having contributed to supporting LTD's major goal of enhancing the quality of teaching and learning and improved school leadership by providing laptops, LCD projectors, and Wi-Fi connectivity. On several occasions teachers and principals talked about the impact these resources made, especially the increase in both student and teacher engagement through the integration of technology in classrooms. One teacher shared her enthusiasm: "After we installed a modern IT laboratory and LTD provided us with Internet, teachers rushed to use the lab. For example you can see the Arabic teacher using YouTube for the first time. The teachers and students love how technology has added to the learning experience."

Communications and Public Relations

The third key management structure of the LTD program is the Communications and Public Relations Department (“Communications & PR”). This year Communications & PR continued to play a vital role in calling attention to and celebrating LTD’s progress toward its goals and its commitment to and evidence of important results of the program’s contributions to the improvement of education in Palestine.

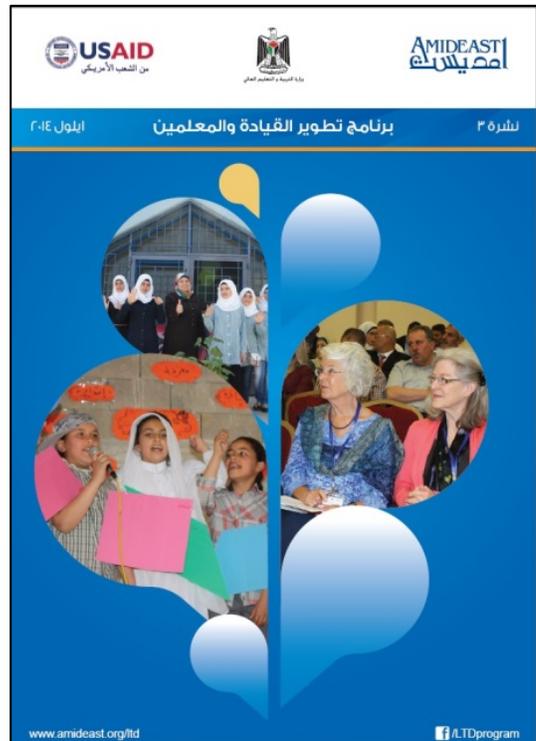
Key Activities

- Ensuring USAID and AMIDEAST branding on all LTD’s marketing products, such as pop-ups, roll-ups, posters, folders, binders and on-line materials
- Focusing outreach to its main constituents, including teachers, principals, district and ministry leadership, teacher educators, USAID, community organizations, and local and international NGOs that work in the field of Education
- Publication of a periodic Arabic/English newsletter in both online and print copy
- Updating the AMIDEAST LTD website with useful program information and upcoming events for visitors, partners, and participants about all aspects of the program
- Dissemination of press releases and news stories to local media outlets
- Posting news and media content on social networking sites Facebook and Twitter
- Working with public relations officers of school districts to ensure all parties are involved in reaching out to a large and diverse audience.

Major Accomplishments

Chief among the major accomplishments this year by Communications and PR include the following:

- Produced press releases and generated media coverage about major events, including:
 - Functional Audit (Districts level)
 - laptop distribution to principals
 - orientation meeting for district test administrators co-sponsored by LTD and the Ministry's Department for Evaluation and Assessment (AED)
 - Four professional networking conferences co-hosted with the four school districts of Cohort I schools to celebrate the completion of trainings
 - TEEP conference to mark the completion of the TEEP program for the 44 NIET and university teacher educators and to celebrate their certification as members of the National Cadre of Teacher Educators



- Updated LTD's Facebook page with photos, press releases and educational tips that continue to increase LTD's profile and popularity among stakeholders and beneficiaries.
- Upgraded the LTD Website by adding new information and details about program components; a new frame for the website in both English and Arabic was also created.
- Conducted interviews for and wrote up success stories about a TEEP faculty participant, an LTD principal, the Director General of Planning and the director of AED director.
- Published Volume 3 of the LTD newsletter which featured the abovementioned success stories and articles about the educational conferences and TEEP graduation.
- Created a Newsletter distribution list that includes all the main stakeholders, beneficiaries, and partners related to the program.
- Wrote and shot footage for a video documentary to showcase the Leadership Diploma Program; the documentary is now in post-production for editing, music, and subtitles.
- Created new promotional materials, including redesigned posters and calendar.
- Maintained LTD's Facebook page, which continues to be active and new members join the page on a daily basis; new content including photos, press releases and educational tips have stimulated excellent interaction among friends and followers.
- Documented the first of the face-to-face trainings for Cohort II of the Leadership Diploma Program.