وزارة التربية والتعليم العالي

LEADERSHIP AND TEACHER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

FUNCTIONAL AUDIT REPORT
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION

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Acknowledgments

The Functional Audit team is pleased to deliver this report to her Excellency Dr. Khawla Shakshir and her colleagues who lead the Ministry. We hope that our efforts will prove useful to the Ministry in leading educational reform in the state of Palestine.

The Functional Audit team extends its heartfelt thanks to all those who made the mission of audit possible, and to those who contributed their time and effort during this very critical and sensitive time. The work of the Functional Audit coincided with the timely decision by MoEHE to explore more efficient and effective ways to support and implement its Strategic Plan through policies, systems and structures intended to achieve and sustain high quality education and improved leadership throughout the national education system.

All ministry staff deserve our special thanks: To Her Excellency the Minister Dr. Khawla Shakshir for her valuable encouragement to the team; to Mr. Mohammad Abu Zaid for pushing through recommendations that led to actions that supported the functional audit's contribution to result-based management; to Dr. Basri Saleh for providing technical expertise and assistance in the design of the study; to Mr. Fawaz Mujahed for providing the team with a deep understanding of administrative issues; and to all the director generals and district directors who gave their time to meet with the team and make their staff available. Last but not least, our special thanks to all members of the team for their commitment and dedication during all phases of the audit process, from data collection and analysis to writing the final report.

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Introduction

During the first half of 2014, a functional audit was carried out to determine ways to improve the performance of the Ministry and develop alternative mechanisms for the implementation of its policies and duties. The functional audit will assist in developing strategies and effective methods in management. The functional audit does not constitute a performance audit for individuals or administrative units. Rather, it presents a candid and objective description of how work is actually conducted. The audit sheds light on missed opportunities for progress as well as areas of low effort and performance. The functional audit also provides an opportunity to exchange views within the organization and determine practical ways to increase and raise accountability, performance, efficiency, and effectiveness. Specifically, the main goals of the functional analysis of the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) are as follows.

1. Define the current status of the support and promotion of educational leadership at the school, district directorate and Ministry levels, with particular attention on determining ways to increase performance and effectiveness
2. Clarify support needed from the district directorates and the Ministry to improve school performance
3. Identify the MoEHE support needed in order to improve the performance of the district directorates
4. Develop Ministry policies needed in order to support the above mentioned needs
5. Determine new organizational structures responsible for responding to Ministry policies with the goal of increasing performance on all levels
6. Submit recommendations regarding the above items and issues

Importance of the Functional Audit

All stakeholders supported the implementation of the functional audit and recognized its benefits as noted below.

- Assists the Ministry in adopting actions that contribute to the development of workable mechanisms for improving services provided to all education stakeholders: Ministry, schools and communities
- Helps increase the effectiveness of communication at all levels: Ministry, district directorate, and individual schools
- Supports the Ministry in upgrading policy guidelines and processes that improve school effectiveness and efficiency

- Enhances the capacity of the Ministry to improve policies, structures, and administrative and financial systems aimed at developing educational leadership in the Ministry, the district directorates, and in all schools

Main Objective:

The audit's primary objective was to develop recommendations to guide and support decision-making within the Ministry related to procedures that promote educational leadership and reform while increasing the performance of schools, district directorates and general directorates.

School-Level Objectives: At the school level, the functional audit sought to identify the challenges and obstacles faced by the school in managing its affairs, and to develop suggestions for ways the district directorate can support schools in order to increase effectiveness and enhance its own leadership role. Guiding questions for the functional audit at the school level include the following.

- What are the main challenges faced by schools as they seek to improve learning and guarantee a high quality education for all students?
- What can the district directorate and Ministry of Education do to assist and support schools in these challenges?

District directorate-Level Objectives: Increase the effectiveness of the district directorates in supporting comprehensive school development. Guiding questions for the functional audit at this level included the following.

- What are the challenges that face the district directorates in carrying out their responsibilities?
- What support can the district directorates give to schools in order to achieve high quality education and learning?

From these questions, the audit also asks the following.

- To what extent do the job descriptions of the district directorate divisions correspond with their actual work in the field?
- What overlap exists among district directorate divisions that negatively impacts work with schools?
- What kind of support is needed for employees within the district directorates to improve their ability to assist schools as a core development unit?

Objectives at the Ministry level: Increase the effectiveness of the general directorates in the Ministry regarding the promotion of school leadership and support of comprehensive development of the school. Guiding questions for functional audit at the Ministry level include:

- What are the challenges that face the Ministry of Education in promoting educational leadership and supporting the comprehensive development of the school?
- Can policies be developed that allow district directorates and schools greater leadership and accountability in achieving high-quality education and learning?

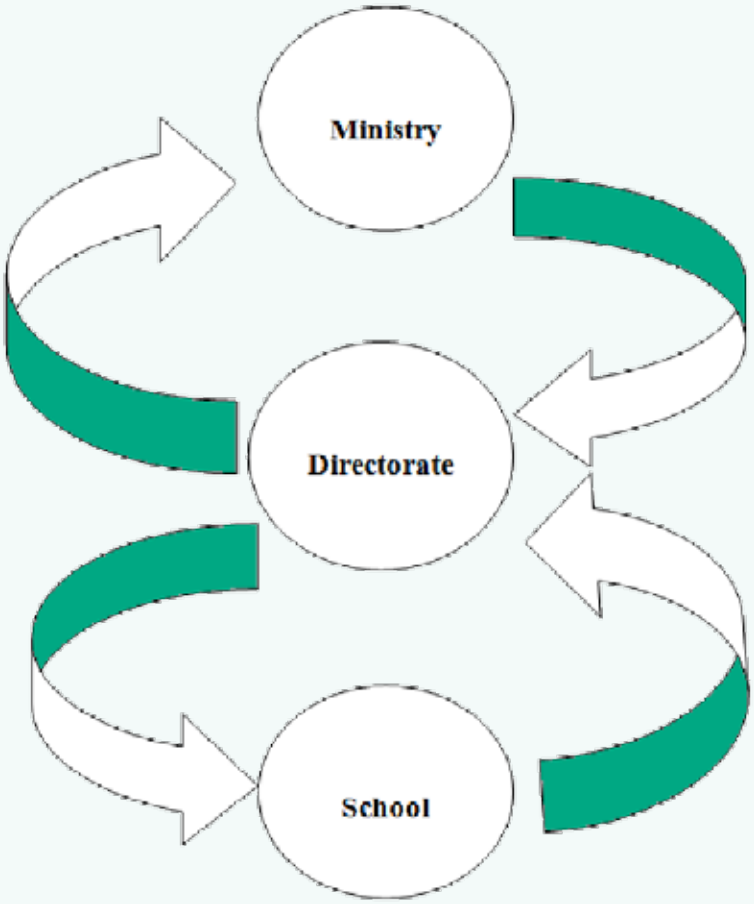
From these questions, the audit also asks the following.

- What are the challenges that face the general directorates in supporting the district directorates and schools?
- What overlap exist between the general directorates that negatively impacts work with district directorates and schools?
- What structures should the Ministry adopt to support improved performance on the three levels: school, district directorate and Ministry?
- What structures should the Ministry adopt to support and improve performance on the three levels: school, district directorate and Ministry?
- What administrative regulations exist within the Ministry that support improved performance on the three levels: school, district directorate and Ministry?

Methodology

A functional audit is a participatory process that ensures results attained will be based on a comprehensive and systematic examination of evidence related to standards. In the case of the MoEHE, this included such areas as job descriptions, official instructions, and a review of existing practices. A credible functional audit provides an objective, impartial analysis so as to provide decision-makers with factual information to assist them in implementing corrective actions. This includes policies that increase accountability among stakeholders.

The functional audit followed a bottom-to-top approach and included all levels of management: school, district directorate and Ministry, as illustrated in the following diagram.



Data Collection

A descriptive analytical method was used in the functional audit. The team carried out data collect at all three levels: school, district directorate, and Ministry. All results were reviewed to assure a high degree of validity and accuracy. The following describes the collection process at each level.

1. Data collection at the school level

Data collection targeted school principals, teachers, parents and counselors from public schools in the West Bank. The sample consisted of the following: 16 principals; 32 teachers from a range of specializations; 16 school counselors; and 16 parents. Participants were selected from eight district directorates: Bethlehem, South Hebron, Hebron, Jenin, Nablus, Qabatia, Ramallah, and Tulkarem. Data was collected from schools that participated in the first year of the Leadership and Teacher Development (LTD) training program, as well as from those that did not participate.

A set of questions were prepared for the principals, teachers, counselors and parents. The questions addressed the following areas: school communication; administrative relationships, financial issues; school performance; school professional development; curriculum enrichment; use of technology; and support for schools related to administration, technology, and finances. The set of questions was piloted in several schools and was subsequently re-drafted for the majority of schools.

2. Data collection at the district directorate level

At the district level the study targeted the district director, the two deputies and division heads. Eighty-five heads of departments were interviewed to ensure that all sections were represented. This included five heads of departments from each district directorate. Three directors of the Ministry of Education and their deputies were also interviewed.

Two types of tools were used for data collection for this level: 1) a functional audit questionnaire that allowed participants to compare job descriptions with actual practices, and 2) focus group sessions using prepared questions. Questions for these focus groups related to departmental effectiveness and support needs.

3. Data collection at the Ministry level

Collection at this level was achieved through interviews. Eight General Directors were interviewed along with a sample of staff. In addition, two Assistant Deputy Ministers discussed general policies, structural requirements, and the strategic plan. All interviews were open discussions conducted by AMIDEAST team members. Questions posed related to the results of the interviews conducted at schools and at the district directorate level. The interviews focused on decision-making mechanisms within the Ministry.

4. Functional Audit Team and Process

Working teams for data collection consisted of twelve employees from the following MoEHE departments: Supervision, National Institute for Educational Training, Field Follow-up, Planning, Assessment and Evaluation; and Administrative Affairs. The teams also included three AMIDEAST staff members from the LTD Program.

The teams built audit tools and used them to collect data from the identified sample. Following the collection, the teams analyzed the findings of the working group and compiled both findings and recommendations. Teams presented the findings and recommendations to the Policy Committee. Finally, workshops and roundtable discussions were held to discuss the report and develop practical steps in response to the findings and recommendations.

5. Validity

To ensure the validity of the audit results, the following conditions were met.

1. The audit was conducted under the auspices of an experienced team from the Ministry and led by a highly qualified individual experienced in qualitative data collection and research who fully understood every aspect of the audit.
2. The audit included all three levels of the Ministry: the school, district directorates, and the Ministry.

Results

Data from the three levels (schools, district directorates and the Ministry) were analyzed and the findings classified into twelve key topics. The findings for each topic are presented below along with recommendations and specific actions the Ministry can take to operationalize the recommendations.

Before presenting the details of these results, it must be emphasized that despite facing enormous obstacles since its establishment in 1994, the MOEHE has persevered in the development of policies and processes to create a system of education that provides high quality learning for all. Though this executive summary cannot possibly do justice to the many accomplishments of the MOEHE over the past two decades, the functional audit research team documented major achievements, and these are summarized in the following paragraphs.

Examples of Major MOEHE Achievements

Education for All: MOEHE records indicate that it was able to achieve the goal of universal enrollment under the Dakar declaration, which was set at 95% of net enrollment in basic education (grades 1–4). MOEHE is close to achieving this same goal for grades 5–10 as well. The number of governmental schools expanded from 1,080 in 1994 – of which 909 were located in the West Bank and 171 in Gaza–to 2,063 schools today, of which 1,668 are in the West Bank and 395 in Gaza. This school expansion saw a corresponding growth in the numbers of teachers in the West Bank and Gaza, more than tripling from 13,527 in 1994 to some 44,390 today. The MOEHE fully developed the national Palestinian curriculum and ensured the printing of the textbooks and their delivery to all the schools and students.

Child Service and Safety: Concurrently, MOEHE prioritizes its efforts to work with all partners and international organizations to provide safe learning environments for students in the many schools that are constantly exposed to attacks. This includes providing security for their students who must cross checkpoints and military gates and by ensuring the presence of international monitors. The ministry has implemented a number of programs to provide psychosocial support and relief for students traumatized by violence or who otherwise suffer psychological effects as a result of Israeli actions in their communities. The MOEHE also provides resources and services to improve nutrition and health care resources and services to school children.

Strategic Planning: The MOEHE has used strategic planning as a process to enhance the quality of the educational system.

1. Three strategic plans for Palestinian Education–2000–2005, 2008–2012, and 2014–2019–have shifted the ministry's policymaking strategy from one based on inputs to one focused on results.
2. The ministry has launched a number of strategies targeting educational standards that aim to develop Palestinian education, such as the following.
    a. Teacher Education and Rehabilitation Strategy (2008)
    b. Early Childhood Strategy (2013)
    c. Adult Education National Strategy
    d. Technical and Vocational Training and Education National Strategy
    e. Education for All National Education Report (2000–2015), and Palestinian Education Horizons (2015–2030)
    f. Professional Standards for the Palestinian Teacher
    g. Effective School Standards, and Palestinian Standards for the Child-Friendly School
3. The MOEHE has achieved a number of the Palestinian education goals and international commitments, some of which include the following.
    a. An increase in the overall enrollment rate in kindergarten from 29.9% in 2004 to 50.7% in 2014
    b. Meeting its universal literacy goal of 95% in 2012
    c. Meeting its universal goal of 95–105 in the equality and equivalency indicators for basic education, grades 1–10.

Quality Management: In administrative affairs, the MOEHE since its establishment has continued to develop systems and regulations and computerize them, particularly in the area of human resources and financial management. While still a work in progress, these systems hold the promise of expanding and increasing efficiency in the field of administrative and financial operations, and the ministry is committed to making this happen.

Teaching and Learning: The MOEHE has no bigger policy priority than improving all areas impacting educational practices, processes, and outcomes. Currently, the ministry is implementing a total of 170 educational projects, not counting infrastructural and construction projects. Most of these projects provide pre-service and in-service teacher training programs designed to improve classroom practices, make instructional supervision more developmental than

evaluative, and shifting school leadership from command-and-control to shared and distributed. A strong example of the ministry's effort to improve its cadre of teachers and administrators was the establishment of the National Institute for Educational Training (NIET) as a mechanism for the sustainable capacity-building of its human resources. NIET's development of the Leadership Diploma Program illustrates this commitment.

School-Community Relationships: The MOEHE values and supports the important role the Palestinian community can play in supporting teaching and learning. Some of the district directorates of education have established community education councils. These councils are helping to increase the effectiveness of the school and build its capacity to achieve its educational goals. This involvement stems from the ministry's belief that local organizations and businesses are eager to contribute human and material resources in supporting the education of children in their communities. Likewise, the ministry understands that a community-supported school is better able to leverage its community partnerships to strengthen the role that families can play in supplementing school learning at home.

In sum, the past two decades have witnessed an unprecedented national effort to establish a quality educational system supported by a ministry whose policymaking and management functions perform effectively. The many accomplishments of the ministry have been accompanied by a rapid and increasingly complex expansion in administrative work, requiring the formation of new centralized departments and new units in the field, such as the district directorates of education and training centers. This growth, however, has also created many new challenges and unintended consequences that have hindered rather than improved the ministry's operations and constrained its capacity to achieve strategic policy objectives.

Recognizing these problems, the MOEHE welcomed the opportunity to authorize AMIDEAST/LTD to carry out an audit of its functions. This executive summary presents the key findings and recommendations of this effort.

Functional Audit Findings

1. Job Description and Workload

1) Job descriptions are an assemblage of individual tasks that have no framework or general vision to unite them. Job descriptions lack integration and specificity. The mechanism for execution for the job is unspecified.

2) There is no clear connection between job descriptions and the strategic plan.

3) Job descriptions were prepared by the general directorates and employees who held those posts in 2005. There have been no updates to job descriptions for several years.

4) The structure of departments and divisions does not correspond to that outlined in existing job descriptions. Actual practices and daily routines generally ignore job descriptions.

5) Many newly created posts have no formal job description.

6) Related to workload, extensive clerical work beyond what is specified in official job descriptions is required from the schools. This clerical work is not recognized by schools as important. Furthermore, schools receive no feedback on the clerical work they do.

7) District directorate departments receive additional and unplanned responsibilities and requests throughout the year. This additional burden further complicates workloads.

8) The workload of Ministry staff has increased dramatically as a result of the decision to cease or limit new hiring.

Recommendations

1) Conduct a thorough review of job descriptions beginning with the Ministry's strategic plan. Include job descriptions for all posts newly created as a result of this plan.

2) Review all job descriptions in a comprehensive manner. This review should take into account workload. Hiring to fill long-standing vacancies should occur.

Proposed Ministry Actions

1) Assign a team to work with an expert in organizational structure in order to review and modify job descriptions at all levels in the Ministry and align these with the new Ministry structure and with the strategic plan through a results-based approach.

2) Submit the newly developed job descriptions to PNA officials in the Bureau of Civil Servants for approve and use.

3) Lead an awareness campaign for Ministry staff about all changes to their job descriptions. This might include printing an employee guide or uploading the job description on the Ministry website.

4) Undertake a periodic review of the job descriptions for all staff and the workload associated with each.

5) Create a policy enabling the Ministry to revise job descriptions whenever needed or once every five years.

2. Communication

1) Horizontal communication among professionals in the general directorates, departments and divisions is limited and irregular. Communication is characterized as weak and personal. Communication lacks a specific strategy followed at all levels.

2) Vertical communication between the three levels of the system (school, district directorates, and Ministry) is hierarchical and top down. As communication moves down each level, managerial orders and demands increase. Vertical communication is not perceived to be supportive.

3) There is little adherence to the managerial hierarchy. This is particularly the case among general directorates and the district directorate departments where communications take place with little input from the District director who supervises district departments.

4) No mechanism exists for the circulation of correspondence among various departments, which results in frequent duplication. Correspondence lacks coordination and clarity.

5) Schools rely on the local media to learn about Ministry issues, news and initiatives. Schools are often unaware of the Ministry's publications and plans.

6) Communication with the local communities is often centered on building social relations rather than building a system of accountability. Better communication with communities could result in shared responsibility for improving teaching and learning processes.

7) The initiative of community councils receives wide acceptance in schools and district directorates. However, achievement standards and frameworks need clarification. For example, the relationship between the community councils and the parent councils in schools is not clearly understood by stakeholders.

8) Communication with international organizations exists. However, in relation to projects, the roles and responsibilities of the International Relations and the Projects general directorates with the donor community is unclear and needs guidelines.

Recommendations

1) Organize and rationalize communication systems and processes.
2) Promote shared leadership among all administrative levels in the Ministry, replacing the command-and-control style with a more participatory and supportive approach.
3) Through the public relation department raise awareness of Ministry policies by using news and media resources to reach schools and their communities.
4) Set goals and standards for community councils in order to clarify responsibilities. Use goals and standards to recognize achievement as community councils contribute to developing and improving schools.

Proposed Ministry Actions

1) Instruct all general directors to share their monthly agenda among one other and with the deputy minister and his assistants who lead a regular meeting where directors general present the plans and get feedback and support from colleagues.
2) Implement an effective communication policy with districts and with schools.
3) Publish periodic information for the whole Palestinian community about education issues; encourage districts, schools, and special interest groups to publish their own journals.
4) Promote greater involvement of community councils and encourage all communities without a council to create one.

3. Overlap and redundancy

1) The audit documented considerable overlap and redundancy in practices at the three levels. This overlap complicates field work and wastes resources
2) Requests received by the schools from the different district directorates divisions lack coordination. Requests unduly burden the school with overlapping demands for information.
3) District directorate divisions suffer from lack of coordination and clear areas of authority.
4) There is lack of accountability among general directorates. Furthermore, the limits of authority are not clearly defined for the general directorates. Heads of divisions at the district level often perform functions requested by a director general that are not stipulated in their job descriptions.
5) The general directorates at the Ministry work vertically. There is a lack of coordination among them and this creates confusion among heads of departments at the district level.

Recommendations

1) Reconsider the manner by which programs led by the general directorates are implemented at the school and district directorate level. When they must respond to many requests to participate in activities at the district or the central level, teachers and principals leave schools and hence disrupt the normal school day.
2) Issue procedures that require all general directorates to coordinate among themselves. This coordination will reduce redundancy and help achieve specific goals and raise accountability for general directorates.
3) Identify policies and employ all means to achieve integration among general directorates in the Ministry and among the divisions within the district directorates.

Proposed Ministry Actions

1) Assign a team to identify points of overlap at the school, district and central ministry levels and determine ways to eliminate them.
2) Build a registry system (electronic) in each district that can follow all meeting agendas and invitations to schools and spot duplications or heavy demand.
3) Develop policy that limits the number of school staff who may leave a school on a certain day to participate in outside activities. Priority should be given to in-school activities.
4) Limit the direct managerial line between the directors general and the district heads of department. District staff should have greater autonomy in performing their duties.
5) Empower district offices with more autonomy to develop their own programs and decide, with minimal interference from the directors general in the Ministry, which department will carry them out.

4. Administrative Affairs

1) The administrative work at the Ministry is centralized and has not been updated to make way for decentralization.
2) Having all transactions linked to both the Ministry of Finance and the Bureau of Civil Service hinders administrative procedures. This situation results in excessive paperwork and duplication on multiple levels.
3) Written paper-based correspondence remains the Ministry's official method of communication.
4) Lack of flexible authority and unclear instructions result in staff interpreting the laws or blindly carrying out the law literally
5) Although available, technology is not used effectively at the three administrative levels.

6) Systems of promotion and hiring on all levels are not in line with Ministry strategies (for example, teacher strategy calls for ranking teachers from beginners to expert, and none of that has happened).

7) Long-standing vacancies are common and result from the complex bureaucracy practiced at the Ministry.

8) The temporary filling of posts with "acting" personnel rather than permanent personnel is not the best way to run sensitive and important departments. The audit identified at least thirteen top level positions held by staff in an "acting" capacity, some of them for more than five years. There is no regulation of assignments for "acting" personnel.

9) Performance evaluations are not executed according to standards that take into account the specificity of different job descriptions within the Ministry, but rather according to a unified system developed by the Bureau of Civil Service.

10) There is lack of rotation or promotion among staff within the same department or among departments. Employees hold the same posts for long periods of time, with no change. This is particularly true in the case of principals, district directors and general directors within the Ministry of Education,

Recommendations

1) Restrict and classify all administrative work according to the level of execution. Avoid duplication of transactions by specifying the requirements for tasks at each level.

2) Utilize email and other technology at all levels to assist in the execution of tasks. Email should be an accepted form of official correspondence.

3) Evaluate and adjust the administrative instructions pertaining to promotion, hiring, and filling of vacancies.

4) Adopt performance audit models that reflect the nature of work within each position.

5) Issue instructions to allow district directorates and general directorates more authority to hire, promote, and rotate employees in accordance with a consistent set of standards.

Proposed Ministry Actions

1) Assign a consultant supported by a ministerial team to determine a level of decentralization that the Ministry could realistically initiate. The Ministry could then pilot decentralization efforts and based, on evaluation results, take further steps to decentralize.

2) Shift from paper-based communications to the use of e-mail as an official communication vehicle.

3) Pilot the use of technology for administration purposes in some schools that have Internet

access, and based on evaluation results, the Administrative Affairs Department could then ramp up to include all schools that have Internet access.

4) Request the PNA Prime Minister's Office to issue decrees giving promotion and hiring procedures in the Ministry a special status and not keep using the same promotion or hiring procedures applied in other ministries.

5) Determine which jobs can be decided at the school or district level and give this authority to schools and districts, respectively.

6) Link staff promotions to performance evaluations.

5. Financial Affairs

1) School principals are required to budget according to formulas that force them to use a set of fixed ratios that do not take into account the school size and level of actual expenditures.

2) Student donations are applied to all students regardless of family financial status. The school principal has little authority to act on special cases.

3) Deducting the same percentage from all schools for the benefit of the district directorate and the Ministry harms many schools that have fewer students or exist within a poor community.

4) Collecting fees from the local community and investing them in new resources to benefit the school is restricted by current finance laws.

5) There are no budgets for development within the directorate. No district directorate has a budget divided among its divisions; budgets are for operational needs only.

6) The financial powers granted to general directors are few and restricted to what is available from project donors.

7) The General Directors of the MoEHE have no authority to grant incentives to employees whose service merits recognition.

8) The MoEHE's tender ceiling is low and restricts its work in tenders that conform to its needs.

9) Absence of a governmental development budget for MoEHE forces it to rely on international donors. Important development projects are often postponed for lack of funding.

Recommendations

1) Reconsider current rules and regulations pertaining to school fees. The school principal should be given the flexibility to determine and collect fees. This includes specifying the upper and lower ceilings for fees according to the financial circumstances of students.
2) Grant the school principal the authority to determine budget items and assign ratios to each item in accordance with the school plans.
3) Authorize schools to work within their budgets, with no deductions.
4) Allow the school principal authority to grant financial incentives to employees whose work performance merits distinction.
5) Specify a development budget for the district directorate and the general directorates from the state budget.

Proposed Ministry Actions

1) Empower the Planning Department and the Finance Department, assisted by a finance specialist, to proceed as follows.
    a. Study the student donation policy and the ways it has been allocated to school budgeting.
    b. Study possible ways to increase the allocation and what impact that will have on school improvement.
    c. Propose a procedure to reform student donations.
    d. Study approaches or mechanisms that the Ministry should take in order to help poor schools.
2) Modify the current financial regulations and give school principals more authority over the school budget.
3) Work with the Ministry of Finance (MoF) to allocate a budget for the Ministry and districts and stop deducting from school budgets.

6. Governance and Responsibilities

1) The decentralization discussion has not been translated into actual practice. Centralization still characterizes performance of most technical and managerial fields. Centralization restricts authority on all levels.
2) Weak powers of authority result in an ineffective system of accountability within schools and district directorates.

a. School principals are restricted in relation to administrative issues within their schools.

b. Technical restrictions pertaining to instruction, learning, student affairs, and performance evaluation are imposed on schools.

c. The role of the district directorate in many technical and administrative aspects is restricted.

d. Despite their extensive responsibilities, general directorates have weak authority in regard to promotions, hiring and budgets.

e. There are no specific standards by which to evaluate the performance of schools and district directorates. The main assessment is still applied at the individual level and does not exist for general management.

f. Too much power and responsibility are vested in some positions, which delays necessary functions in schools. For example, the district director does not have the power to appoint a new school principal, although s/he supervises school principals.

g. Director Generals interfere with the job of the district director, (in some department heads job descriptions you may find statements like any other duties assigned by the district director and approved by the DG).

h. Few technical powers are granted to the field. There is a wealth of accumulated technical expertise in school teachers and district directorate department heads, yet technical instructions are limited to general directorates.

3) Weak accountability in schools, district directorates and general directorates results in actions that contradict rules and regulations.

4) Absence of team leadership enhances the centralization of power among a few individuals. This centralization ignores the existing expertise and technical leadership within the schools, district directorates and general directorates within the Ministry.

Recommendations

1) Review the responsibilities and authority granted to schools, district directorates and the general directorates. Delineate the tasks that can be executed in a decentralized manner and assign them to the appropriate positions.

2) Raise the technical accountability ceiling of the district directorate and its deputies based on results achieved. Raise the accountability ceiling for the general directorate. Determine the accountable party for the national and international examination results.

3) Mobilize and support school and directorate employees with technical expertise to lead professional development programs.

4) Determine technical leaders within schools and within the district directorates. Encourage these individuals to sponsor school development activities, as well participate as team leaders within the directorates.

Proposed Ministry Actions

1) Issue regulations that expand the level of authority given to schools and districts.
2) Redefine the role of the district directorate, so that it can be turned into a real ally of education reform and go beyond overseeing administrative matters to become a service center for better teaching and learning.
3) Create a system that allows the transfer of district directorate staff, director generals and other staff and the promotion of directors of large districts to a higher rank.
4) Adopt a strategy to expand the role of districts in project development, planning and implementation, and to hold the district responsible for the results.
5) Assign a District Leadership Team responsible for all improvements at the district level,
6) Develop evaluation standards for the district directorate office. These standards should include school performance and student achievement.

7. Professional development and educational projects

1) The professional development programs in the Ministry do not include all jobs.
2) Schools do not have the authority or the financial capability to implement staff professional development. The role of the district directorates is limited to nominating participants for training courses according to standards established and communicated by the district or the general directorate.
3) The need for specific training courses and workshops is not determined through comprehensive study. Funding availability determines what training is provided.
4) Follow up on professional training is weak. Even a listing of all those who have participated in training programs is difficult, if not impossible, to find, because each department keeps its own records and does not have a ready mechanism for sharing this information.
5) In the absence of a central data base for all professional training programs, there is no way to find *all* professional programs courses taken by an individual staff member. This also applies to participation in international professional workshops or conferences.
6) The role and responsibilities of the National Institute of Educational Training (NIET) is not clear, and many training programs take place outside NIET and with very little coordination.
7) There is an absence of incentives related to staff professional development. Reimbursement

to staff for transportation costs incurred in attending workshops usually takes a long time.

8) Teachers and principals testify that the training they receive is useful; however there is often little follow-up regarding the impact of training on classroom instruction.

9) Achievements or knowledge gained by individuals participating in workshops, training courses, and international conferences are not shared with others. No evidence is required to confirm that the performance of Ministry staff or the units where they work is improved by attendance at these events.

10) There is an absence of a specific system for participation in professional development programs abroad.

11) Schools and other units do not have the freedom to select the projects in which they want to participate.

12) The district directorate has little accountability for the execution of the projects and their outcomes.

13) There is no clear policy on the adoption of educational projects. No system currently exists through which the divisions of the district directorates and the general directorates of the Ministry might jointly allocate educational projects properly.

14) There is weak coordination and management between the general directorates in issues pertaining to project execution. Competition for projects exists between general directorates, leading to isolated work.

Recommendations

1) Adopt a clear policy to attract, select, approve and implement suitable educational projects.

2) Circulate project notifications among all district directorates and schools. Allow district directorates and schools the freedom to select projects and present bids for participation. District directorates should demonstrate how they will be held accountable for both the implementation and outcomes of the project.

3) Develop a mechanism for allocating projects among district directorates. This process should include a provision that district directorates articulate their implementation capability and ability to sustain results.

4) Develop instructions regarding the participation in training courses, conferences and workshops abroad. These instructions should guarantee fairness in selection of participants. The benefits of participation in such events and activities should be made public.

5) Institutionalize the cycle of continuing education and staff capacity-building as part of the Ministry's strategy for professional development.

6) Delegate authority and provide options for schools and district directorates to execute

professional development programs based on their individual needs.

7) Participation in professional development should not remain as an individual choice if one's department or school is participating in a particular program. That said, participation should not affect or harm the normal working day for the department or the school.
8) Create a system for job induction when staff moves from one job or level to another.
9) Define the scope of work of NIET in relation to professional development at all levels,
10) Create a system to measure the impact of professional development and project outcomes.

Proposed Ministry Actions

1) Hire a consultant to create an operational guide that defines the criteria for accepting new projects, both national and international. The criteria should also apply to projects implemented at the school or district level.
2) Announce a policy for nominating individuals to participate in local, regional and international workshops, scholarships and conferences.
3) Adopt a policy for continuing education for all staff, including induction programs.
4) Assign a department / unit responsible for evaluating the impact of every and each initiative or project implemented at any of the three levels.
5) Mandate that the directors general and district directors agree on their role in professional development initiatives, and clarify the connection between these initiatives and NIET.

8. Performance Assessment

A. Student Performance Assessment

1) A national strategy for assessment does not exist.
2) The student performance assessment focuses on tests for the upper elementary and secondary classes. Tests reflect memorized knowledge. The testing schedule for upper and secondary classes is exhausting, as testing days exceed 50% of the total days within the school year.
3) There are no clear instructions for assessing students with special needs.
4) There is weak investment in make-up exams for students who must repeat due to failure. No opportunities are given to remedy weaknesses. These students sit and "pass" the repeated exam with no serious or adequate preparation.
5) There is no real benefit stemming from the results of large-scale assessments such as the unified, national and international tests in terms of improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools.

6) There is an absence of supervision and monitoring of student assessment by the exam divisions in the district directorate. Assessment research and evaluation is disconnected from school and teacher performance.
7) The Ministry fails to take practical steps to develop the General Secondary (Tawjeehi) examination as a measurement of student performance in general.

Recommendations

1) Build a strategy for educational assessment and evaluation that reconsiders students' performance assessments. Performance assessments should include various types of assessment to stimulate higher-level thinking and integrate school subjects. There must be a concerted effort to move away from memorization and the measurement of content knowledge only.
2) Develop assessment strategy to assess the achievement of students with special needs.
3) Maximize the benefit from the results of local and international exams. Teachers should participate in the analysis of results and reach conclusions that explain these results. Resulting conclusions should determine modifications of teaching methods.
4) Take practical steps in the development of the Tawjeehi examination in coordination and integration with universities, within the more comprehensive system of performance assessment in general and at all stages.
5) Review the instructions and criteria for success, failure, and opportunity for make-up tests. Failure on tests should present an opportunity to strengthen academic weakness rather than to penalize lack of knowledge.

Proposed Ministry Actions

1) Develop a national strategy for assessing student performance and achievement. An approach in which tests are the primary form of assessment should be modified. Implement other means for assessing student progress in schools; these approaches to include projects, creative initiatives, and other activities.
2) Give schools more autonomy in choosing assessment approaches for different subjects and different grades; for example, a teacher can allocate up to 30% of the final grade to forms of assessment other than testing.
3) Reduce the number and frequency of tests in each semester.
4) Train teachers to use more authentic assessment tools, improve their assessment skills, and ability to produce high quality tests.
5) Produce booklets that guide teachers and districts to make use of test results for better teaching and learning.

6) Mandate and fund remedial programs during summer break to help students pass the make-up exams; if remedial programs during the summer are not possible, then schools should be allowed to use the first week of the school year to offer remediation to help low performing students.

7) Develop guidelines for assessing students with special needs.

8) Resume efforts to develop the National Certificate Exam (Tawjihi)

B. Employee Performance Assessment

1) The school employee performance assessment is based on individual performance.

   a. A teacher's performance assessment is based on the report of the educational supervisor and the principal.

   b. A school counselor performance assessment is based on the report of the district directorate's counseling department.

   c. School principal performance assessments are completed by directorate heads of department and approved by the district director of education.

2) The individual performance assessment concludes with a report placed in the employee's file. There are no incentives for distinguished or outstanding performance. It is rare that employees face consequences as a result of poor performance.

3) Instructions exist for the performance assessment by directors, however, applying these instructions is not consistent, however. For example, some employees at the district office are evaluated by the district director only while others are evaluated in partnership with the general director.

4) An employee performance assessment generally is judgmental and takes the form of a checklist. It does not include any reference to the extent of change in performance between the previous and the current assessment. The assessment does not provide guidance or recommendations for improving performance.

5) Administrative aspects are emphasized over technical aspects in the evaluation process.

6) Standardized evaluation models of the Bureau of Civil Service do not take into account the specificity of jobs within the Ministry of Education.

7) To date, the Ministry has failed to translate into action the recommendations of the Council for Development of the Teaching Profession.

Recommendations

1) Performance assessments should examine the comprehensive nature of performance as it relates to individuals and their units (i.e. school or district directorate). The individual contribution to the unit's achievement of goals and results should be part of the assessment.
2) Performance assessment should be associated with support and should include guidance for improvement. The performance assessment is not solely a judgment about performance, but rather a tool for improvement.
3) Top management positions require performance assessment systems that reflect high expectations. This includes positions such as the Director of Education and Director General.
4) Performance assessment models for the staff of the Ministry of Education should be distinguished from other PNA employees in other ministries. Models used by the Bureau of Civil Service should be adjusted to reflect job descriptions.
5) Work with the Prime Minister office and the Bureau of Civil Service in the PNA to accept the CDTP recommendations for teacher classification and start the implementation of all legal and financial consequences.

Proposed Ministry Actions

1) Review all assessment forms and improve them by ranking technical performance as highly as administrative performance.
2) Unify the responsibility for assessing staff, such that only the direct supervisor assesses an employee.
3) Through training and guidance, enable all supervisors to shift from judging their staff to supporting staff improvement.
4) Work with the Bureau of Civil Service to issue special evaluation forms for MoEHE staff.

C. Unite Performance Assessment (Schools, district directorates, departments and general directorates)

1) There is no general framework for assessing the performance of schools as an integrated entity. Individual assessments of the principal, teacher, and the school counselor, without any formal assessment for the school as a whole.
2) There is no general framework for assessing the performance of the Directorate as an integrated entity; district directorate employees are evaluated as individuals.
3) There are no criteria for evaluating the technical aspects in the performance of the district directorate.

Recommendations

1) Update the performance assessment systems for the units (school, district directorate departments and general directorates). Assessments should be adjusted to take into account the overall performance of the unit and the achievement of the objectives of annual plans.
2) Increase accountability for the technical performance of the school, district directorate, general directorate, and other units.

Proposed Ministry Action

1) Develop and issue a guide for performance expectations from individuals and units.
2) Mandate that the guide be the basis for assessing the performance of units as well as individuals.

9. Planning

A. Strategic Planning

1) Many schools and some directorate departments lack sufficient knowledge about the Ministry's strategic plan. Schools and directorates need knowledge of the goals and mechanisms of the strategic plan as well as its projected impact on school plans. There is no clearly defined method for aligning the school plan with the centralized Ministry's strategic plan.
2) There is no unified reference or formal standard for the development of school plans. School plans should be based on the concept that the school is the reform unit.
3) Planning is not associated with proper accountability procedures.
    a. There is an absence of accountability between the district directorate and the school regarding the implementation of annual school plans and the results achieved.
    b. District directorates do not follow up with schools in a comprehensive manner regarding the implementation of their annual plans. Each directorate division is held accountable only for its own achievements, which are usually communicated from that division directly to the relevant general directorate .
    c. No accountability structure existed for general directorates in the Ministry for the achievements of the previous strategic plan (2008–2012).
4) The district directorate plan consists of a compilation of plans from different sections and divisions. The individual division plans are what the general directorates approve.
5) The Ministry's strategic plan is based on the analysis of real challenges faced by the schools and district directorates; a set of objectives were defined to respond to these challenges, however activities in the plan do not adhere enough to these objectives. Greater adherence

to these objectives is needed in the new strategic plan. In its current state, the plan is a collection of activities with very little integration among them.

6) The strategic plan for 2014–2019 consists of six programs/tracks. Each General Directorate independently prepared its own work without sufficient coordination with the general directorates in other programs/tracks.

7) There was limited participation by the district directorate in preparing the strategic plan activities.

9) The plan includes unfunded activities and ignores several current programs.

Recommendations

1) Design capacity-building programs for all three levels to aid their planning in coordination with the strategic plans of the Ministry.

2) Request schools, district directorates and the general directorate to prepare self-development plans aligned with the Ministry's strategic plan. Track the results that contribute to achieving the strategic goals of the Ministry. If this approach is applied, it will promote integration and increase commitment to achieving comprehensive results.

3) Prepare an annex including all activities that achieve the Ministry's strategic plan objectives. This annex should be added to the strategic plan even if funding is not currently available.

Proposed Ministry Actions

1) Assign a unit in the Directorate of Planning responsible for monitoring the implementation of the strategic plan over the coming five years.

2) Instruct the Directorate of Planning to develop an annual report on the progress of plan implementation.

3) Create a training program in educational micro planning at the three levels

4) Direct the Policy Committee to conduct frequent meetings with all directorates general to assess progress in implementing the strategic plan.

5) Mandate that the Educational Committee conduct frequent meetings with all district directorates to assess progress in implementing the strategic plan.

6) Secure sources of funding to implement necessary activities that have no current allocated budget.

B. Data and Documentation

1) Currently, there are multiple data sources and data storage locations, and several units in the Ministry are involved in data collection.
2) There is no unified database available to relevant personnel at the school, directorate, or Ministry levels.
3) Data are gathered in isolation and with no coordination among the General Directorates. This lack of coordination results in redundancy and lack of uniformity in the information.
4) Updating data is a slow process. Simple actions such as updating teacher data do not take place at the school level. Currently, updates for schools must wait for an official request from the central Department of Administrative Affairs.

Recommendations

1) Develop a computerized system for the various databases.
2) Unify the database and avoid repetition of the same data from more than one source within the directorate or the Ministry.
3) Provide database access to all relevant departments at multiple levels of authority.
4) Empower school and district staff and give them some authority to enter their data into the main database.

Proposed Ministry Actions

1) Create a unified database for all data and train a cadre to run this database.
2) Assign one unit in the Planning Department to be responsible for managing the database and updating it continuously.
3) Make the database accessible to all staff who need it.

10. Policies and decision-making

A. Policy Committee

1) The advisory role of the General Directorate in the decisions made by the Policy Committee is undefined.
2) There is no secretary for the Policy Committee. This weakens both the process of setting policies as well as the follow-up necessary after policies are implemented.
3) A specific scope of work for the Policy Committee does not currently exist.
4) The absence of Policy Committee bylaws governing the decision-making process leads to

decisions that are made arbitrarily.

5) The Policy Committee's decisions are rarely based on research. Data available at the General Directorates or Directorate of Education or other educational institutions are not utilized by the Policy Committee.
6) Public awareness of Policy Committee decisions is weak.

Recommendations

1) Develop bylaws for the Policy Committee that codify its functions.
2) Ensure a mechanism for decision-making based on research and reliable data.
3) Increase the advisory role of the General Directorates in the decisions made by the Policy Committee.
4) Appoint secretaries for the Policy Committee who prepare and follow-up on decisions and to systematically activate media regarding the committee's decisions and achievements in order to increase official and public awareness.
5) Involve all district directorates and general directorates in taking technical decisions that have impact on the field, make sure that the field is ready to implement such decisions, and accompany the decision with whatever policy change is needed to ensure implementation in the intended way.

Proposed Ministry Actions

1) Hire a secretary for the Policy Committee.
2) Develop bylaws for the committee that includes clear decision-making procedures.
3) Direct the Policy Committee to publish an annual report of all its decisions and achievements.

B. Education Committee

1) The Education Committee includes senior management such as the Deputy Minister, Assistant Deputy Ministers, Directors General, district directors, and heads of other units; however, it is not considered influential in the decision-making of the Ministry.
2) Education Committee meetings are irregular. When held, meetings are long and span a broad range of topics. The large agenda reduces efficiency and weaken results of meetings.
3) The absence of secretaries for the Education Committee hinders documentation, preparation and the implementation of decisions.
4) A specific scope of work for the Education Committee does not exist.

5) There are no bylaws governing the Education Committee.
6) The Committee rarely relies on research and data available from the general directorates or the Directorate of Education.
7) Schools and the general public are uninformed about Education Committee decisions. Media sources are not utilized to assist in disseminating information regarding Education Committee actions.

Recommendations

1) Set bylaws for the Education Committee describing its functions and its decision-making mechanism. All decisions should be based on research and followed by plans that ensure implementation.
2) Appoint secretaries for the Education Committee who prepare and follow-up on decisions. These secretaries would be responsible for spreading public awareness of decisions via news and other media outlets.

Proposed Ministry Actions

1) Hire a secretary for the Education Committee.
2) Develop bylaws for the committee.
3) Instruct the committee to publish an annual report of its decisions and achievements (this could be part of the policy committee booklet).

11. Organizational Structure of the Ministry

1) The Ministry structure has not been updated since 2005.
2) Job titles in many cases do not match job descriptions or duties; for example, a department head may be listed in the Bureau of Civil Servant as a teacher.
3) There are new jobs that are not included in the existing structure.
4) The boundaries of authority between the Assistant Deputy Minister and the directors are unclear in the existing structure.
5) Job descriptions make fragmentation between the general directorates at the central level possible, and similar fragmentation among departments is also found at the district level. These divisions discourage cooperation and result in repetition, which weakens accountability and impact.
6) The work of several departments is episodic, resulting in periods of inactivity and low productivity.

7) The existing structure is incompatible with the Ministry's strategic plan. The strategic plan includes developmental proposals that are unlikely to be achieved within the existing structure.

8) The organizational structure of the district directorates replicates that of the Ministry. These overlapping structures result in isolated performance and redundancy.

9) The existing structure does not include the third level: the school.

10) The preschool administration that runs all preschool and kindergarten programs is a small division in the central Ministry; as such, it does not reflect the level of interest that the Ministry shows in this level,

11) There is no national strategy to improve curriculum. The desire to do so exists, but there is no consensus from the political, educational and private sector. The curriculum center needs further support.

Recommendations

1) Update the organizational structure of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in order to align new positions and integrate the General Directorates into the national strategic plan.

2) Update the organizational structure of the district directorates of education.

3) Consolidate departments with episodic work schedules from geographically neighboring district directorates.

Proposed Ministry Actions

1) Agree in advance with the prime minister and the Bureau of Civil Service that a new organizational structure is to be implemented and work together to coordinate and harmonize structural changes, including new jobs and titles.

2) Hire a team of consultants who are experts in organizational restructuring and who will design a structure that aligns with the results-based approach of the national strategic plan that the Ministry is adopting.

3) Assign a team to reorganize and redefine the role of the district offices.

12. Technology

1) There is an absence of a national strategic plan to apply technology in teaching and learning despite many donor-driven initiatives in this field.
2) The Ministry has sufficient hardware resources available at the three levels.
3) The Ministry does not invest sufficient resources toward utilizing technology for administrative work, which would otherwise reduce workloads, duplication of work, and increase efficiency.
4) All levels of the system have failed to adopt email and other information technology in their official correspondence, and this reduces the efficiency of the Ministry and increases the workload unnecessarily.

Recommendations

1) Develop a national strategy to promote the use of technology in teaching, learning and management at all three levels: schools, district directorates, and the Ministry. The training of required technical staff should be included in this strategy.
2) Prioritize the development of a unified management information system through the procurement of hardware and storage systems and the development of a host with the capacity to accept all administrative and technical work.
3) Consolidate computer servers in several departments.
4) Identify technical staff to work on maintenance, and provide for equipment updates in technology plans.

Proposed Ministry Actions

1) Hire a consultant to help develop a strategic plan for the use of IT at all levels, including schools.
2) Assign a technical team that will survey and assess all available technology including specifications, current usage, and potential uses. The team should also survey all initiatives in this regard, evaluate best practices, and identify lessons learned.
3) Initiate pilot projects to use IT in administrative affairs with the aim of reducing paperwork.
4) Acquire a dedicated electronic portal and hire a team to maintain and update the server.