Improving the Teacher Preparation System in the West Bank

The Challenge:

Future teachers have limited practical experience and are not prepared to use research-proven methods for improving student learning.

Despite attracting 40,000 teacher applicants a year, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) in the West Bank reports that few of those candidates are competent in the delivery of student-centered teaching and learning approaches. This suggests that the Palestinian pre-service teacher education system is not yet structured to prepare young people with the skills and knowledge to be effective teachers.

The National Institute for Educator Training (NIET) and Palestinian universities – charged with the important task of managing teacher education diplomas and training qualified teachers – face the same struggles as universities around the world in providing meaningful practical learning experiences and in keeping faculty credentials and training up to date on the latest teaching methods.

Our Response & Design:

The Pre-Service Teacher Education Activity provided intensive support to MOEHE and universities in the West Bank for an 18-month period. Designed to improve the quality and relevance of pre-service teacher education, it addressed incentive structures in the accreditation system, supported universities and government actors to measure and improve performance, and supported curriculum reform aligned with established teacher performance standards.

Continued Perfomance Evaluation

Develop Perfomance Improvement Solutions

Analyze and Assess Perfomance Gaps

Define Mission and Desired Outcomes

Quality Assurance

- Support to the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission (AQAC) to develop a Common Framework for Quality Assurance in Palestinian Higher Education and a "Benchmark Statement" with discipline specific criteria for pre-service teacher preparation

- Facilitation of participatory university roundtables to engage sector in development of the framework

- Development and testing of a Higher Education Institutional Quality Assessment Tool (HEIQAT) with 6 universities.

Organizational Performance Improvement

- Intensive organizational performance improvement process with NIET to assess their readiness to expand services to include a novice teacher induction program and to identify performance improvement solutions

- Capacity Snapshots with 6 Palestinian universities to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement and create a baseline to drive data-informed decision making, continuous enhancement and strategic planning.

Curriculum Development

- Development of partnership between Arizona State University and Palestinian universities to share curriculum design expertise between faculty

- Collaborative co-design workshops on Special and Inclusive Education courses and Practicum design to identify shared learning outcomes and course objectives

- Development of course resources on Special and Inclusive Education and Practicum aligned to the teacher performance standards for use across all participating universities.

How have we influenced the teacher preparation system?

186
unique participants

female
36%
64%
male

from non-governmental HEIs
38%
62%
from governmental institutions
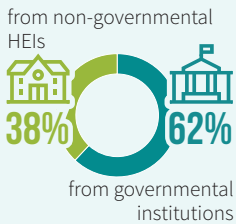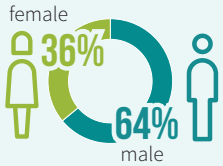
6
universities

Over
70%
of teacher education universities in West Bank

A Common Framework for Quality Assurance in Palestinian Higher Education

PTEA worked with AQAC and university staff, ensuring sector-wide buy-in, to co-develop a new Common Framework for Quality Assurance in Palestinian Higher Education and supporting resources, including a Higher Education Institutional Quality Assessment Tool (HEIQAT) and a Benchmark Statement for Teacher Education Diplomas which set out minimum practicum duration and expectations for what pre-service teachers are expected to know and do, aligned to the Professional Standards for New Teachers for Palestine. The approach will be piloted on teacher education programs across the West Bank.

NIET Organizational Performance Improvement Recommendations

A cross section of NIET staff and current teachers and principals participated in objective setting roundtables and data collection activities to identify performance strengths and weaknesses at the procedural, organizational and systems level. The resulting performance improvement solutions, co-developed with NIET, include more rigorously assessing student learning outcomes, institutionalizing data-informed program enhancement procedures, and building infrastructure and staff capacity to support blended learning.

HEI Capacity Snapshots

In partnership with university faculty and staff and current pre-service students, representing over 70% of teacher colleges in the West Bank[1], IREX produced 6 Higher Education Institution Capacity Snapshot Reports that highlight institutional strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to quality assurance and the enhancement of education programs. The process and reports enabled participants to identify priority areas for development and will inform strategic planning and efforts to improve quality assurance and enhancement.

Special and Inclusive Education Course

IREX engaged – with implementing partner Arizona State University – faculty from 6 universities in co-design workshops to inform the development of a new course syllabus and resources for a Special and Inclusive Education course. Designed with flexibility in mind, the resulting resources can form a standalone course or be integrated into existing curriculum.

Practicum Guide

IREX engaged – with implementing partner Arizona State University – faculty from 6 universities in co-design workshops to inform the development of a Practicum Handbook. All pre-service teachers complete a practicum and the resulting handbook provides practical strategies, tools and templates for improving practicum management and using the Palestinian Teacher Professional Development Index to assess learning outcomes.

What have we learned?

- **Importance of a whole-of-system approach and strong communication and in-person engagement between the Ministry, accreditation body, and universities.** The AQAC – HEI Roundtables and HEI consultation on the draft Quality Assurance Framework were important in building trust, in turn demonstrating HEIs' significant competence in quality assurance to AQAC, and underlining AQAC's commitment to a mutually supportive process to HEIs.

- **Value of participatory approach to organizational performance improvement.** PTEA's participatory approach – which engages staff in all departments and at all levels of the organization – helped to promote cross-organization ownership of desired outcomes, opportunities for improvement and proposed performance improvement solutions. This approach was valuable in creating trust and sustainable partnerships with AQAC, NIET and universities and provided a stable platform through multiple leadership changes in partner institutions.

- **Value of adaptable assessment matrices and data "dashboards".** A structured assessment matrix can be adapted to local regulatory and accreditation environments to facilitate systematic, in depth reflection on performance aligned to locally identified criteria. The matrix provides structure to qualitative data collection and a mechanism to supplement this with visual quantitative dashboards to highlight key performance information and inform decision making.

- **Willingness of HEIs to collaborate.** Despite early warnings of a reluctance to collaborate, PTEA brought universities together on multiple occasions and the opportunity to engage with other universities was consistently welcomed and encouraged, particularly when relating to shared challenges. Future initiatives should build on this goodwill and provide platforms for shared learning and development.

---

1   From Arab American University, Polytechnic University, Al-Quds University, Hebron University, and Palestine Technical University – Kadoorie. Al-Quds Open University, Palestine