Country case study prepared for the 2017/8 Global Education Monitoring Report

Accountability in education: Meeting our commitments

The State of Accountability in Palestine "Educational Planning with Uncertainty: A State under Military Occupation"

COUNTRY CASE STUDY

D r   M o h a m m e d   M a t a r

2 0 1 7

1. Accountability in local language[1]

The word 'accountability Mossa'la مساءلة in Palestine means "asking and receiving answers "many times" about someone's or some institutions' duties". It means also the "readiness for someone to be asked and to give answers". When used for the official purposes, accountability in general refers to the "responsibility and commitment of officials "either elected or nominated" and their belonging respective organizations for assigned duties to provide reports and full information on a regular basis towards achieving a target.[2]

Social accountability, as a type of the general accountability, refers to the ways and means through which citizens, civil society organizations, and other non-state actors can hold public institutions, programs and services providers accountable for their performance, using an array of mechanisms.[3]

The "national guide for social accountability"[4] assigns two main functions for social accountability, the first is the function of "give limitations for authorities" to ensure the ability to predict and stop any misuse of authority, and the second function is to facilitate "performance evaluation" for the sake of increasing effectiveness and efficiency of "public service providing".

In the Palestinian case, many terms used to refer to "accountability" in partial or full meaning; terms like "better governance الحكم الرشيد", "trust الثقة", "access to information حق الوصول للمعلومة ", "transparency الشفافية", "integrity النزاهة " ", "answerability التجاوب " [5] are other terms that may complement or replace the term accountability.

2. Introduction/Country Profile

Occupation:

As a result of the 1993 Oslo Accords, the Palestinian Authority (PA) was created, The Oslo II Accord divided the West Bank into three administrative divisions: Areas A, B and C. Area A is exclusively administered by the PA, Area B are administered by both the PA and Israel, and Area C, is administered by Israel. Area A comprises approximately 18% of the West Bank and Area B about 22%, with 60% in Area C.

Area A and area B together home to some 2.8 million Palestinians. Area C is home to 150,000 Palestinians in 532 residential areas. It also is home to 389,250 Israelis in 135 settlements, as well as 100 outposts unrecognized by the Israeli government.[6]

---

[1] Written by Dr. Mohammed Matar, Independent Consultant in Education Evaluation

[2] http://masader.ps/sites/default/files/Masader_Files-elibrary/Social-Accountability.pdf
(**المساءلة وفق تعريف مركز تطوير المؤسسات الأهلية الفلسطينية NDC**: هي التزام من قبل أصحاب السلطة أو الذين يحملون شكلا من أشكال السلطة السياسية، المالية، التنفيذية أو غيرها ضمن نفوذهم في القطاع العام، للمحاسبة وتحمل مسؤولياتهم وتبعيات أفعالهم أمام المسؤولين في الحكومة، الشركات الخاصة، والمؤسسات الأهلية، والمواطنين).

[3] http://www.ansa-aw.net/Home/about-us/Arab%20World#.WA7-ifl9600
[4] https://www.aman-palestine.org/data/itemfiles/a8224697fb77a7ed98765dad6e2c34c2.pdf
[5] AMMAN, 2015 (the training guide for social accountability), in Arabic, AMMAN publication)
[6] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Bank_Areas_in_the_Oslo_II_Accord

PA was envisioned as an interim organization to administer a limited form of Palestinian self-governance in the Areas A and B in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for a period of five years, during which final-status negotiations would take place.

The administrative responsibilities accorded to the PA were limited to civil matters and internal security.

Internal political division and organizational fragmentation

General elections were held for its first legislative body, the Palestinian Legislative Council, January 1996. The expiration of the body's term was 4 May 1999, but elections were not held because of the "prevailing coercive situation".

Although the five-year interim period expired in 1999, the final status agreement has yet to be concluded despite attempts.

The second Palestinian legislative elections took place January 2006. Hamas[7] was victorious, which resulted in the Quartet suspension of its foreign assistance program and Israel imposed economic sanctions.
After the takeover in Gaza by Hamas, June 2007, PA Chairman dismissed the government and appointed a Prime Minister to form a new government, as Hamas hasn't recognized the move.

On 23 April 2014 the prime minister of Hamas, and a delegation dispatched by Palestinian President signed an agreement in an attempt to create reconciliation in the Fatah[8]–Hamas conflict.
December 2012, UN decided that "the designation of "State of Palestine" shall be used by the Secretariat in all official United Nations documents.[9]

Education system structure and responsibilities: Centralized/decentralized

PA assumed responsibility for Education in Palestine since 1994 after Oslo Peace Accord; it immediately formed The Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

MoEHE holds responsibility for managing public schools (including regulatory overview of schools run by the private sector), overseeing 67.08% of the total number of Palestinian students. United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) oversees 24.07%, while the private sector oversees 8.85% of the total general education student population.[10]

The educational system in Palestine is a centralized one, in terms of using the same textbooks for all grades and subjects in all schools in the country, and also having the same in-service teacher training programs, and a unified regulations (for public schools) in terms of teacher evaluation forms, teacher recruitment and upgrading procedures, and matriculation examinations.

UNRWA schools, and despite that they are using the "centralized" national curriculum, they have their own system administration procedures: schools in west bank are controlled by UNRWA education office in Jerusalem,

---

[7] **Hamas: "**Islamic Resistance Movement" is a Palestinian Sunni-Islamic fundamentalist organization, was founded in 1987. Since 2007, has been the governing authority of the Gaza Strip.
[8] Fataḥ, formerly the Palestinian National Liberation Movement, is a secular Palestinian political party and the largest faction of the confederated multi-party Palestine Liberation Organization.
[9] http://www.passia.org/images/meetings/2014/oct/28/PA-PLO2.pdf
[10] http://www.MoEHE.gov.ps/en/About-the-Ministry/Brief-History

while schools in Gaza are controlled by UNRWA education office in Gaza, both west bank and Gaza offices are controlled by the UNRWA regional office in Amman, Jordan.[11]

East Jerusalem schools suffer from hard conditions due to the Israeli strict procedures and recurrent violations; 32 schools, in Jerusalem forming 17% of schools located in Area C, are subject to complete closure, cut off from surrounding land with barriers, and where expanding, repairing, and building classrooms are forbidden. Teachers are not given permits to get to the schools. The violations against Jerusalem schools also include Israeli interference in the content and use of the Palestinian curriculum.[12]

The Palestinian general education system is comprises the following sub-sectors:

A. Pre-school education: refers to services for children from 4-6 years for two years. Pre-school services are provided by local and international institutions, with the local private sector services increasing rapidly. Currently, (MoEHE) only indirectly oversees this type of education. However, (MoEHE) is directing its policies towards establishing pre-school education in public schools as part of this education strategy.
B. Primary Education (PE): PE includes grades 1-10. Basic education ranges from Grade 1-10 and is compulsory.
C. Secondary Education (SE): SE consists of academic and vocational education for grades 11-12.
D. Non-formal Education (NFE): (MoEHE) grants licenses for NFE centres according to specific conditions. (MoEHE) provides two non-formal education programs: parallel education program provided to dropouts who had completed 5-6 years of basic education, and literacy program and adult education, provided for those over the age of 15 who are not proficient in reading and writing.

The main education service providers in Palestine are:

➢ Government: The (MoEHE) oversees the majority of schools in the West Bank and Gaza, except for the City of Jerusalem, which is still under Israeli occupation. In East Jerusalem, there are two types of public schools: public schools supervised by the "Islamic Waqf" and administered by the Palestinian (MoEHE), and public schools supervised by the Israeli Ministry of Education.
➢ UNRWA: The UN agency with the longest running assistance program is responsible for schools for Palestinian refugees. Apart from Palestine, it also operates in Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria.
➢ Private Sector: The growing education service provider is supervised and funded by charities, religious groups, private enterprises and individuals.

How has accountability emerged as an issue in education?

One of the high priorities reform tracks of the third strategic plan (2014-2019)[13] which the ministry regards as linked and impact many other areas of the education system, is adopting an "Accountability, Results-Based Management and Direct Service-Delivery Programs".

The new program structure enables the shift in mind-set and practice from the old-fashioned administration style depending on "engineering the outputs" toward "engineering for the outputs" which implies shifting from "input-driven system" to a "result based management system".
This shift/reform was a result of the external evaluation of the 2nd education development plan (EDSP), which indicated that the Performance Assessment Framework, which elaborated extensively on Life Skills behaviours of teachers and students in classrooms, has failed to realise a solid impact on quality aspects of EDSP implementation; mainly the improvement in student achievement in Arabic, math, science and technology, and

---

[11] http://www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/education
[12] MoEHE (2014). "Reality of Education in Area C In accordance with Fragile Indicators and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of Quality Goal".
[13] file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/FINAL%20Education%20Strategy%202014-2019%20(2).pdf

acquisition of life skills,[14]. National and international large-scale assessments for the years 2011, 2012, and 2014 show no positive trends in student's achievement in core subjects (Arabic, Math and Science) in pivotal classes (4th, 8th and 10th). Such indicators raise a "blame game" and enhance social accountability "actors" to ask about the quality of services/products that MoEHE offer.

This shift/reform also came to enhance internal accountability at all educational levels and to create more focus on linking outputs with policy goals and objectives.

The reform highlighted some priorities to be tackled, like curriculum reform, (Tawjihee) reform[15], and adopting the digitizing approach in education, with others, these priorities have a financial prioritization either from donors (through the Joint Financing Arrangement) or from the ministry of finance fund.

Public become more involved in the interventions the ministry plans and commits to, the MoEHE establishes new mechanisms to enable partners to know about the ministry activities; the Palestinian Educational Portal[16] as an Interactive site, designed to attract students' attentions and encourage them to exchange views and experiences. Also to enhance networking between teachers and provide them with educational materials. The ministry establish the "E-communication environment at schools"[17] to enhance teachers, students, parent, and schools networking and communication.

In each school, a Parent council is established to be aware of school activities and to advance public participation. With these new mechanisms and new program structure, schools become more 'visible',, and decentralization processes between the ministry and the districts and school–based development become politically and organizationally more feasible.

A key advantage of the new program structure is the separation between the policy-making and reform level and the day-to-day management of program implementation, avoiding any conflict of interest between policy makers and the execution of the programs. Other advantages of adopting the new direct service-delivery program structure is the ability to see the different types of education (also referred to as subsectors) offered by the ministry more clearly. The education system by this new structure is divided into 6 subsectors; the basic education, the secondary education, the pre-school, and the vocational education, the non-formal education, and the governance and management subsector, each sub-sector has its own coordinator and thematic group to facilitate planning, reviewing and following the implementation of the subsector plan and help report findings, The main reference for execution of education interventions is the Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWPB), which is fully aligned with the strategic framework and program policy goals and objectives. Since the AWPB is built as a resource-based plan containing the annual cash flow needs the Procurement Plan offers essential information on the tendering process and time-line over a period of 2-3 years to indicate the cash flow needs until full project completion, that allowing the ministry to buy in bulk and therefore significantly reduce costs operating a more efficient system than used before.

Also, the move to a direct-service delivery structure has the potential to act as a catalyst for significant management reforms ranging from decentralization between the ministry and educational districts[18] to gradually transfer more financial and management autonomy to the school-level. Moreover, for a proper functioning of the new program structure, the traditional vertical mode of operations will be incentivized to become more horizontally integrated across subjects and departments.

---

[14] Pettigrew, May (2013). Evaluation of the Education Development Strategic Plan (EDSP 2008-2012) of the Palestinian Ministry Of Education

[15] In the 2017 scholastic year the ministry renamed the Tawjihee reform to the Al-Injaz reform

[16] http://www.elearn.edu.ps/

[17] https://www.eschool.edu.ps/

[18] In Palestine the system has 17 educational districts in west bank and 6 districts in Garza strip.

The main novelty in terms of management is the new role of program managers for the 6 subsectors, as members of the "Management Team". The role of this team is to follow up the day-to-day management and implementation of interventions under their respective program, this team defines and applies the Prioritization Framework that determines the resource allocation in terms of volume and decides on adjustments within and across programs to produce a resource-based Annual Work Plan and Budget.

Another team who helps the management team is "The Core Team" consists of essential operational staff including Planning, Budgeting, Finance, M&E, Procurement, and International Relations, used to act as the catalyst for institutional and procedural reform making recommendations for improvements to the senior level of the ministry. Since the Core Team members are at the heart of operations, their knowledge of and insight into operational and technical challenges constitute a key ingredient in any reform initiative.

To ensure timely and efficient implementation of the AWPB, every Director General develops an Execution Plan for the interventions they are involved in. This Execution Plan is linked to the AWPB and contains relevant procurement and project management information. To further institutionalize related procedures and operations, a three Operations Manuals has been developed, one for Planning and Budgeting, one for Financial Management and one for Evaluation, all three manuals provide step-by-step instructions on how to implement and sequence essential internal operation. The manuals are updated annually in case of new guidelines or additional lessons learnt. Apart from further institutionalizing essential ministry procedures and therefore strengthening ministry management, the manuals further deepen the process of building a more robust implementation and accountability system to deliver better educational results across all sub-sectors.

Education challenges

Building and operating an education system under military occupation, without full political, territorial, and physical freedom is a major challenge for success.[19] Additional challenges that the system is still facing are:
  ➢ Finalize the Palestinian education law and review the related regulations.
  ➢ Full implementation of a decentralized approach to educational management by delegating additional powers to field-level and school-based administrations.
  ➢ Promote community partnership in education development and management.
  ➢ Preserve the unity of the educational system in West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza.
  ➢ Link "accountability" with "M&E" procedures" in all aspects and levels of work.
  ➢ Protect and maintain the delivery of education services during emergency.

3. Actors and accountability

At the national level, more than one actor tackle issues related to "better governance" and "accountability". Part of these actors are governmental, others are international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

At the legislative level, the legislative council (parliament) nominates the "education committee" since established, but because of the political partition between west bank and Gaza since 2007, the parliament in general and all other specialized committees in specific are not functioning as planed, for that the parliament role in advancing accountability in the education sector still not visible.

---

[19] Ramahi, H. (2015). Education in Palestine: Current Challenges and Emancipatory Alternatives. Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung publications.

The "State Audit Administrative Control Bureau" (SAACB)[20] is a governmental body that has deputized as the supreme audit institution of Palestine since 2005. SAACB used to guarantee soundness of financial/administrative actions and stability of Palestine's three authorities (Executive, Judiciary, Legislative), including misuse of public post, and ensure that public performance in Palestine is in agreement with provisions of effective laws, regulations, bylaws and instructions. Representatives from SAACB used to be part of specialized committees in the MoEHE to nominate new "high level employees". Also SAACB auditing teams arrange regular visits to the MoEHE departments and district offices to audit the work of these bodies according to "national administration and financial standards", results of these visits used to be included in the "Annul Audit Report" released by SAACB.[21]

Another governmental body that deals with corruption and accountability is the "Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission", established 2010 to eliminate and prevent corruption, enhance accountability at the national level, and to arrange national campaigns for culture dissemination of anti-corruption. The commission used to work with other bodies in the system to fulfill the aforementioned tasks.

In relation to the ministry of education, the commission organized national training sessions for MoEHE and district officers to explain the "call of conduct document" that had been developed by the commission and adopted as a transparency mean at the state level. The commission also supports -in cooperation with the MoEHE- school initiatives that enhance students engagement in the public issues through conducting "school based social auditing initiatives", the best 10 initiatives at the national level are documented and published in final report, with incentive to the schools and students who perform such initiatives.

The third governmental body dealing with accountability and human rights is "The Independent Commission for Human Rights" (ICHR)[22]. ICHR was established in 1993 upon a Presidential Decree "*to follow-up and ensure that different Palestinian laws, by-laws and regulations, and the work of various departments, agencies and institutions of the State of Palestine and the Palestine Liberation Organization meet the requirements for safeguarding human rights*". ICHR has strived to achieve its mandate, firmly committing itself to the values of democracy, good governance, transparency, accountability and respect for human rights.

ICHR offer a space for direct complaints from MoEHE staff, and the public (Parents, community activist, educators, researchers,,,) regarding bad MoEHE decisions and services, such complains are discussed from the commission with the Ministry officials, which keeps the ministry aware of all decisions and activities that enhance accountability and better governance.

The fact that Palestine is a state under occupation, and the difficult economic and social conditions that prevail, has encouraged an increase in (INGOs) especially those working in relief, human rights, and equity.

One of the active (INGOs) actors in promoting accountability is the "Coalition for Accountability and Integrity" (AMAN)[23]. AMAN was established in the year 2000 upon an initiative by a number of Palestinian civil society organizations working in the fields of democracy, human rights, and good governance. AMAN mission is to "promote transparency, accountability and values of integrity in Palestinian institutions within a framework of a national integrity system and the UN and Arab Conventions against Corruption". The coalition adopts a comprehensive and sustainable approach bases on partnership and cooperation with all related groups in order

---

[20] http://www.saacb.ps/en/SAACBinBrief.aspx

[21] http://www.saacb.ps/en/RPT-Saacb.aspx

[22] http://www.ichr.ps/en/2/2/251/About-Us-About-Us.htm

[23] https://www.aman-palestine.org/en/about-aman/about-organization

to enhance transparency in the Palestinian institutions at its diverse types, and to validate the law and ensure the participation of the public in ruling and in administrating the resources of the Palestinian State.

AMAN in cooperation with the MoEHE through some national universities finalizing and agreement to add courses about integrity, accountability and transparency against corruption to the university programs, as a result, future teachers will benefit from such courses[24]. AMAN with other partners support local authorities to organize advocacy campaigns tackling educational issues, such champagnes enhance the role of citizens and bridging gaps between citizens and MoEHE decision makers.[25]. "Toward better education without violence" is a well known campaign supported by AMAN in Area C .[26]

To advance accountability, promote better use of resources and integrate efforts of all actors, Ministry of Local Government formulated the "national committee for social accountability". The committee consists of representatives from the aforementioned actors, working in coordination with the "**The Affiliated Networks for Social Accountability in the Arab World** (ANSA-AW).[27] The first national product of the committee was the "**National Toolkit on Social Accountability in Palestine**"[28]. This "toolkit/ manual" serves as guidelines for all national activities tackling accountability and its culture dissemination.

All actors used to share reports and policy memos to the public via their websites, also via conducting conference on accountability; where researchers and stakeholders can present their studies researches.

What enabling environment is necessary for actors to fulfil their responsibility?
How does the larger context influence the success of actors?
The funding sources of the strategic plan (2014-2019) are the Ministry of Finance (MoF) with 16.6%, local contributions with 2.2%, the Joint Financing Partners through the JFA with 30,4%, as well as external donors. With regards to external donors, some work 'off budget' (meaning outside the local financial system in terms of procurement and accounting and sometimes planning etc.) with 23.8%, while others work 'on budget' with 27%. (the percentages are for the year 2016).
The costs for the education system is of two types; the operating/running costs, and the 'development budget', which is largely dependent on external finance.
The total financial envelope for the 6-year strategy (2014-2019) in terms of development budget amounts to 786.3 million USD, together with the operating costs (the major part being teacher salaries) and considering the growth in student numbers, the total 6-year budget amounts to 4,639,911.5 million US
The guiding criteria for managing the education sector and coordinating aid are intimately linked with the principles of the Program-Based and Sector-Wide Approach (SWAP).
MoEHE encourages all actors and Partners (National Ministries, NGOs, INGOs, and international agencies) to make use of these system-wide tools and reports to inform the design and implementation of all education interventions, part of these tools and mechanisms are[29]:

➢ **Annual Sector Review (ASR)**: During the first half every year (usually in May) MOEHE invites all partners and actors to participate in a review of the performance of the previous year. This review is an important opportunity to discuss the most difficult challenges the education sector faces and jointly

---

[24] https://www.aman-palestine.org/ar/activities/6094.html

[25] http://www.tajaawob.ps/indexinner.php?page=section&pid=24&section_parent=0&catid=5

[26] http://www.tajaawob.ps/indexinner.php?page=section&pid=215&catid=6&section_parent=0

[27] http://www.ansa-aw.net/Home/about-us/Arab%20World#.WA7-ifl9600

[28] http://www.baladiyat.ps/CMS/Upload/Admin/Documents/Social%20Accountability%20tool%20box.pdf

[29] http://www.MoEHE.gov.ps/en/Plans-Strategies/Monitoring-Evaluaition

agree on interventions on how to address them. The content of the ASR is documented in the form of an Aide Memoire and available on the ministry's website.[30]

> **Monitoring and evaluation system**: The MOEHE's M&E system covers the entire strategy organized according to indicators for each program outcomes, goals, and objectives. The Monitoring system is in action since 2012, while the Evaluation System is in action since 2014.   As an example, one of the quality indicators for the basic cycle is the "degree of active involvement of student in teaching/ learning process (active participation), the M&E report reports about this indicators in different aspects: the procedural definition of the indicator, the different facts measured by the indicator, the indicator assessment and evaluation methodology, the findings of the baseline year (2014) and the (2019) target, the identification of the main cause for the indicator findings, and the recommended action for improvement.[31]

> **Narrative Implementation Progress Reporting**: MOEHE provides a semi-annual narrative report about the implementation of all outputs of the AWPB identifying progress and challenges.

> **Quarterly Financial Reports:** Every three months the Ministry of Finance provides quarterly financial expenditure reports for the entire AWPB.

> **Procurement Reports:** Every 6 moths MoEHE provides procurement progress reports on the basis of the Procurement Plan.

All reports are management tools for both the ministry as well as the actors and can be accessed through the ministry's website. MOEHE is keen on advancing aid effectiveness by ensuring that in its sector coordination efforts:

> MOEHE and selective partners, in particular UNESCO, France, JFPs, and LACS ('Core Group') have begun to design a reform proposal for the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG). The proposal suggests establishing Technical Thematic Groups (TTG) based on key challenges and priorities on the new programs adopted as of 2014.

TTGs are more focused and 'equipped' with technical know-how, and report back to the ESWG forum. As an example, (TTG) for basic cycle tackling educational evaluation issues, the group meet frequently, and report recommendation to the program manager, the group consists of MoEHE employees, district officers, NGOs worker. One of the main recommendations was to reform "classroom based assessment" toward "assessment for learning" instead of "assessment of learning".

Recently, and responding to these recommendations, MoEHE issued new regulations regarding classroom based assessment to all schools followed by training and advocacy campaigns on how to operationalize such regulations.

> MOEHE embarked upon a significant management reform to fully align with the requirements of the new direct service-delivery program structure. This High Priority Reform Track will enhance accountability and management practice with the objective to deliver better educational results for each subsector.

---

[30] http://www.moehe.gov.ps/en/Plans-Strategies/Education-Dev-Strategic-Plan-EDSP/2014

[31] MoEHE (2015). Result-based monitoring and evaluation system for the third education development strategic plan (EDSP 2014-2019). Baseline M&E report 2014. (pp. 46-49)

The guiding criteria for managing the education sector and coordinating aid are intimately linked with the principles of the Program-Based and Sector-Wide Approach (SWAP) as outlined below:
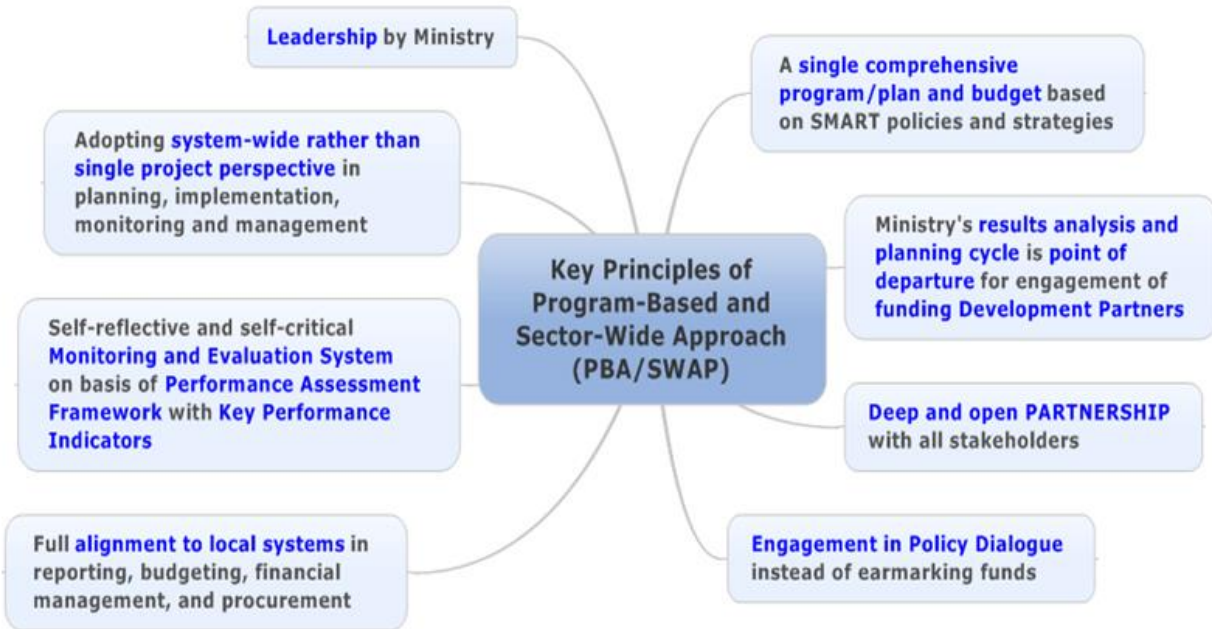
Source: *Education development strategic plan, EDSP 2014-2019 , 2014. p 154*

4. Case study: An in-depth look at test-phobia in Palestine

The anticipated systemic transformation from a memorization and test driven education model to a student-centered dynamic pedagogy exhibited across all classrooms depend on deep structural reforms ranging from the Palestinian curriculum to the further improvement of teacher education to the enhancement of accountability and results-based management[32].

In Palestine, the major student assessments are[33]:

1) The National Assessment, a sample-based assessment organized and administered by the MoEHE. This assessment conducted in a two-year basis, started formally 2008; the most recent assessment of this type was conducted May 2016. The purpose of this assessment is to provide contextual and achievement indicators to inform policies and to guide educational reform activities. The target of this assessment are fourth and tenth

---

[32] Mulkeen, A (2013). Consultancy to the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education, to support the development of a plan for curriculum reform. MoEHE publication.

[33] http://wbgfiles.worldbank.org/documents/hdn/ed/saber/supporting_doc/CountryReports/SAS/SABER_SA_Country_Report_West_Bank_and_Gaza_Final_2013.pdf

graders (10 years and 16 years) aged students, in Arabic language, mathematics and science. Tests used in this assessment considered as "low-stake" test, for that "test-phobia" is not a major issue there.

2) The Tawjihee, the compulsory certification test for high school graduation exclusively organized and administered by a special unit in the MoEHE; recently, the MoEHE started a national campaign to implement a new Tawjihee system for the sake of reducing "test-phobia". Tests use in this assessment considered a "high-stake" test, for that "test-phobia" is a major issue there.

3) Classroom based Assessment, ongoing assessment that are carried out by teachers throughout school year but informed by guidelines from the MoEHE. Tests used in this assessment considered to be a "high-stake" test while talking about it in its summative purposes (marks to be reported in the student transcripts), for that the issue of "test-phobia" is a major issue there especially at the students' and parents'(family) levels.

Results of such assessment start raising social dialogue but negative one, due to between students' comparisons, and labelling of students based on their final scores.

Also, such results start playing a key role in ranking schools and teachers based on their students' scores, which enhance –in some cases- test cheating and biased reporting of such scores.

4) International large-scale assessments, Palestine has been participating in three cycles of TIMSS[34] (2003, 2007, and 2011), and EGRA[35] (2014). Tests used in these assessments are considered as "low-stake" tests, for that "test-phobia" is not a major issue there.

Test-phobia is positively associated with the level of "stakes" of student assessments. Research shows that parental pressure, test irrelevant thoughts, and stronger bodily symptoms relating to greater test-phobia[36]. Other causes of "test –phobia" include fear of failure, procrastination, and previous poor test performance, as well, characteristics of the test environment such as: nature of the task, difficulty, atmosphere, time constraints, examiner characteristics, mode of administration and physical setting can affect the level of "test-phobia" felt by the student[37]. In Palestine, Tawjihee has the highest "test-phobia" factor for students, teachers, families (Parents) and schools, since it includes between schools and between students' comparisons, also it has a high social impact; students who are "not passing" the Tawjihee test are labeled as "failures", which is a social "black label".

Classifying/ranking schools based on their performance on those "high-stake" tests is another cause for raising the "test-phobia" in the system. Another indirect cause for "test-phobia" in the system is using test scores for teacher evaluation and promotion.

Who does it affect?
Test-phobia is a psychological phenomenon that affects directly students who sit for the test; also, it affects school staff (teachers and administrators), families and ministry officials.

---

[34] TIMSS: Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
[35] EGRA: Early Grade Reading Assessment, file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/West%20Bank%20EGRA%20Grade%202%20BaselineReport_RedactedJan2015.pdf
[36] Putwain, D.W., Woods, K.A., Symes, W. (2010). Personal and situational predictors of test anxiety of students in post-compulsory education. British Journal of Educational Psychology, 80, 137-160
[37] Salend, S. J. (2012). "Teaching students not to sweat the test". Phi Delta Kappan. 93 (6): 20–25.

In traditional educational systems, test-phobia affects also policy makers; in some cases, and because of test results they may decide not to participate in international large-scale assessments ore even national ones; since comparable indicators may cause social and public accountability and blame game.

In the case of Tawjihee, student score is a key factor of placing the student in the higher education institutions, also offering them a scholarship at the national level, in some cases, the (0.1) different in the mean score between student and the other block one of them of having such advantage (full scholarship).

The top 10 scorers in Tawjihee receive full scholarship from the president office, while the student with the rank 11 doesn't receive such advantage, this may considered as another source of test phobia.

In addition to that, student score in Tawjihee start shaping the image of the school at the district and the Ministry levels; "high achieving schools based on Tawjihee results used to receive incentives and rewards for the district office and the ministry levels, from other side, the high performance in Tawjihee start attracting students to enroll in these schools which start elaborate as a "business issue" rather than educational issue.

In relation to teacher evaluation, students' scores play a vital role in this evaluation; either if the evaluator is the academic supervisor or the school headmaster, this dilemma start enhancing the "teaching to the test" phenomena in many schools and encouraging the slogan of "teaching to the score rather than skill".

Another "side effect" of the "Tawjihee test phobia" is the reallocation of good teachers to teach Tawjihee grades, or transferring them for schools with no Tawjihee grades to other schools with Tawjihee grades; which evacuates other grades or schools from those proficient teachers,

What has been done to reduce test-phobia: Including how test scores are aggregated and distributed, and what have the results of these efforts been?

To gain an accurate assessment of student comprehension, instructors should be concerned with minimizing the effects of test-phobia (anxiety).[38] Instructors might offer "second chances" post-test, familiarize students with test format and grading scheme, and lower the impact of any one test. If students have greater confidence in their test-taking skills, they are more likely to be comfortable and relaxed when the testing does occur. For some students, poor academic performance is due to skill deficits, which could include problems in encoding (learning), rehearsal (study skills) or retrieval during a test (test-taking strategies)[39].

Therefore, the most effective interventions to minimize the "test-phobia" effect are those that combine skill-focused strategies (i.e. study skills training, test-taking skills) with cognitive (i.e. cognitive restructuring) or behavioural approaches (i.e. relaxation training, systematic desensitization)[40].

In general, census-based or compulsory test tend to have high stakes for students and teachers, which raise the level of "test-phobia", while sample-based or optional test have low stakes and low level of test-phobia[41].
MoEHE through the Assessment and Evaluation Department (AED) used to deal with the level of "stakes" to reduce "test-phobia" of the different kinds of student assessments through adopting the following strategies and plans:

---

[38] Wilbert J. Mckeachie and Marilla Svinicki's "Teaching Tips" 12th edition, pg. 110;

[39] Damer, D.E., Melendres, L.T (2011). Tackling Test Anxiety: A groups for college students. The Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 36(3):163-177

[40] Ergene, T. (2003). Effective interventions on test anxiety reduction. School Psychology International, 24, 313–328

[41] USAID (2014). Mapping of student assessment in Jordan. "monitoring and evaluation partnership" (MEP) project.

1. Changing believes about the purpose of assessment from "prove" purposes to the "improve" ones by conducting "culture dissemination campaigns" using the MoEHE newsletter[42], and disseminating leaflets tackling learning assessments' issues, these leaflets disseminated to all schools and district officers.
2. Using assessment findings to take an action plan for improving schools not single school performance, by highlighting main learning challenges and weakness in the system not in a single school.
3. Advocate the culture of "assessment for learning" while preparing for national and international large-scale assessments, this notion was clear in all AED products and presentations.
4. Mitigate the threats of external exams (including gaming the system) by informing the sampled schools about the assessments one month before the assessment administration.
5. Effective integration of internal (teacher made test) and external (districts and ministry based evaluation) in schools to avoid teaching to the test,
6. Developing the "**national strategy for educational evaluation**" to harmonize and institutionalize all learning assessments activities at the ministry and educational district levels, the work on developing this strategy started with full support from donors and national university experts.
7. Adopting a Professional design of assessments' frameworks and scoring (including equating, alignment to standards), and developing a well-designed data entry software; to insure high standards of validity, reliability, objectivity and keeping the level of personal errors to the minimum.
8. Empowerment of teachers, principals, supervisors and districts' officials through continues professional development programs[43] in issues, like:
   - How to use new assessment strategies, in alignment with school conditions.
   - How to deal with students with learning difficulties and special needs to ensure that no child left behind,
   - How to utilize assessment findings to ensure "improve not prove", and "assessment for learning" aims.

To minimize the level of "test-phobia", in general, AED adopted a reporting plan for assessment findings, the main features for this plan are:
   - Avoid between school comparisons,
   - Report schools results in comparisons with national indicators.
   - Develop national benchmarks (subject based mastery levels), to report schools' results based on these benchmarks.
   - Report on trends (with time), and avoid any school ranking.
   - Avoid any sanctions / rewards for high achieving schools, or "punishment" for low achieving ones; since the assessment is a sample based one.
   - Avoid reporting at student level, to eliminate any type of test cheating.
   - Report more indicators on performance on content and cognitive domains,

To minimize the level of "test-phobia", related to the Tawjihee exam, a simplified system for the exam has been developed after months of consultations and discussions. The new system was submitted to the cabinet and approved this year. The new system will be implemented this scholastic year (2016/2017), the main features for this plan is[44]:
   - Reduce the number of subjects that the student will sit in the final test to 4 compulsory ones and two elective from 4, total of 6 subjects.
   - Encourage national universities to institutionalize multiple criteria for admitting students in addition to the Tawjihee scores (school scores, placement test scores, scores based on interviewing students).

---

[42] Resalat Al-Tarbia, the official MoEHE newsletter, published in quarterly based. http://www.moehe.gov.ps
[43] http://www.amideast.org/ltd/about-ltd/leadership-and-teacher-development-ltd-program and http://www.projects.worldbank.org/P152914?lang=en
[44] http://www.moehe.gov.ps/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A9

- Increase the opportunity of students to sit to Tawjihee for three sessions per year, to give more space for students to develop their scores.
- Include "student portfolio" as part of students' assessment, in addition to the paper and pencil tests' scores.
- Report students' scores in the media by student registration code not by student name (as used to be in the past), to keep student privacy.
- The final grade will be an average of exam results over the two years. In the old system, students would sit an exam at the end of their twelfth year which would determine their grade[45].
- Students will have two years to achieve the "accomplishment portfolios." These portfolios cover a variety of topics, and teachers choose them based on the student's character and abilities.
- When the student reaches the 12th grade, he decides which portfolio he wants to be tested on, and this portfolio will include mandatory and basic subjects. So if the student is studying a science, math or engineering stream, he will have to take some scientific subjects.
- MoEHE will stop making the test results public, as local newspapers annually compete on publishing the names and grades of passing students. Every student will have a number and can personally check his results on the ministry's website.
- To ensure test validity, MoEHE starts creating an item bank. This is a new approach where the tests are totally computerized, and each student will get a different set of questions.
- The computerized system should also automate the correction of the exams.
- Calculating the results will also need to be digitized, and we need to provide all schools with the necessary technical facilities, which should all be centrally networked.[46]

To minimize the level of "test-phobia", related to the "classroom based assessment", new regulations for implementing and reporting assessment results is under final discussion with stakeholders, the main features for this plan is[47]:

- Reduce the number of "school-based teacher made tests" in assessing student performance.
- Adopt "alternative/authentic assessment strategies" like portfolio, project based, and performance assessments, that can evaluate students' opportunities to learn and can leverage continuous change and improvement.
- Adopt a new form of the "student certificate/script" that report on student behavior and activities in addition to achievement scores.
- Adopt "self-evaluation" and "peer-evaluation" techniques to help achieving "assessment as learning", to enhance "learner-centered approach" and to give active role for learners to assess their learning.

5. Policy recommendations for improving the effectiveness of accountability in the country

1. Accountability should provide support for an ongoing process.
2. Accountability is not only about measuring student learning, but actually improving it.
3. Consequently, genuine accountability involves supporting changes in teaching and schooling that can increase the probability that students meet standards.
4. Accountability systems work to the degree that they engage the knowledge, skill, and commitment of people who work in schools.

---

[45] http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=489269
[46] http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/02/palestinian-minister-reform-education-sector.html
[47] MoEHE (2016). Instructions and regulations for classroom based assessment (final draft). not published yet.

5. The success of accountability policy depends on the development of practices of improvement explicit strategies for deploying knowledge and skill in classrooms and schools.
6. The politics of accountability tend to lead to an underinvestment in knowledge and skill, and an overinvestment in testing and regulatory control, correcting this distortion requires changing the relationship between policy and practice, particularly around the definition and development of leadership[48].
7. Educators must treat a test-based accountability system as dynamic and flexible by changing test items regularly so that individual items do not become too familiar to teachers and test-takers
8. The system should monitor and improve technical quality by conducting ongoing evaluation, to ensure that the systems continue to meet the needs of students, educators, policymakers, and the public.
9. Incorporate multiple measures and multiple formats to reduce the risk of making incorrect decisions, using stable statistical indicators that reflect real differences in student achievement and minimize measurement and sampling errors
10. Design systems that have positive effects on practice by aligning teacher professional development and curriculum with standards and assessments.
11. Clarify the desired balance between accountability purposes and instructional purposes as a basis for making decisions among competing demands.
12. Consider the political context by facilitating integration of political and professional perspectives and Incorporate parents' perspectives to make sure that accountability systems provide the information needed for more-effective parental involvement and decision-making

6. Bibliography (presented as footnotes)

7. Appendix

PA: historical calendar (Time line):
- 1974, Oct. 14: The UNGA recognizes the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and invites it to participate in the deliberations of the General Assembly on the question of Palestine in plenary meetings (Resolution 3210).
- 1974, Nov. 22: The UNGA recognizes the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, legitimizes UN contacts with the PLO, and added the Question of Palestine to the UN Agenda (UNGA Resolution 3236).
- 1994, May 4: The Gaza-Jericho Agreement (Oslo I) initiates a partial Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho and establishes the Palestinian Authority in these areas.
- 1995, Sept. 28: The Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Oslo II) expands the Palestinian Authority to Area A and B of the remaining West Bank.
- 1998, July 7: UNGA Resolution 52/250 extends Palestine's UN status to allow participation in UNGA debates, although not in voting.
- 1998, Dec.: The PNC meets in Gaza, with the attendance of President Clinton, to formally revoke the parts of the Palestine National Charter that are offensive to Israel.
- 2012, Nov. 29: The UNGA votes to admit Palestine to 'nonmember observer State' status.

---

[48] Elmore, R.F (2006). Leadership as the practice of improvement. International Conference International perspectives on School Leadership for Systemic Improvement. OECD activity on improving school leadership

- 2014, June 3: Declaring that a "black page in history has been turned forever," President Abbas swears in a new PA unity government after seven years of harsh political and social division.