

Sept 2010



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Education Department

NEWSLETTER

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Welcome and update on the Reform

Hello and welcome to the first edition of this Newsletter for the Department of Education. This edition is produced by UNRWA Education Department Headquarters and as such provides a general overview and update on the Department, particularly with regard to the Reform. The next edition will endeavor to include more contributions and feedback from Field Offices. We hope you find the newsletter useful!

At the heart of the UNRWA education reform is the changing of classroom and school practices in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The substance, systems and structures of the Education Programme will need to facilitate and support these new practices.

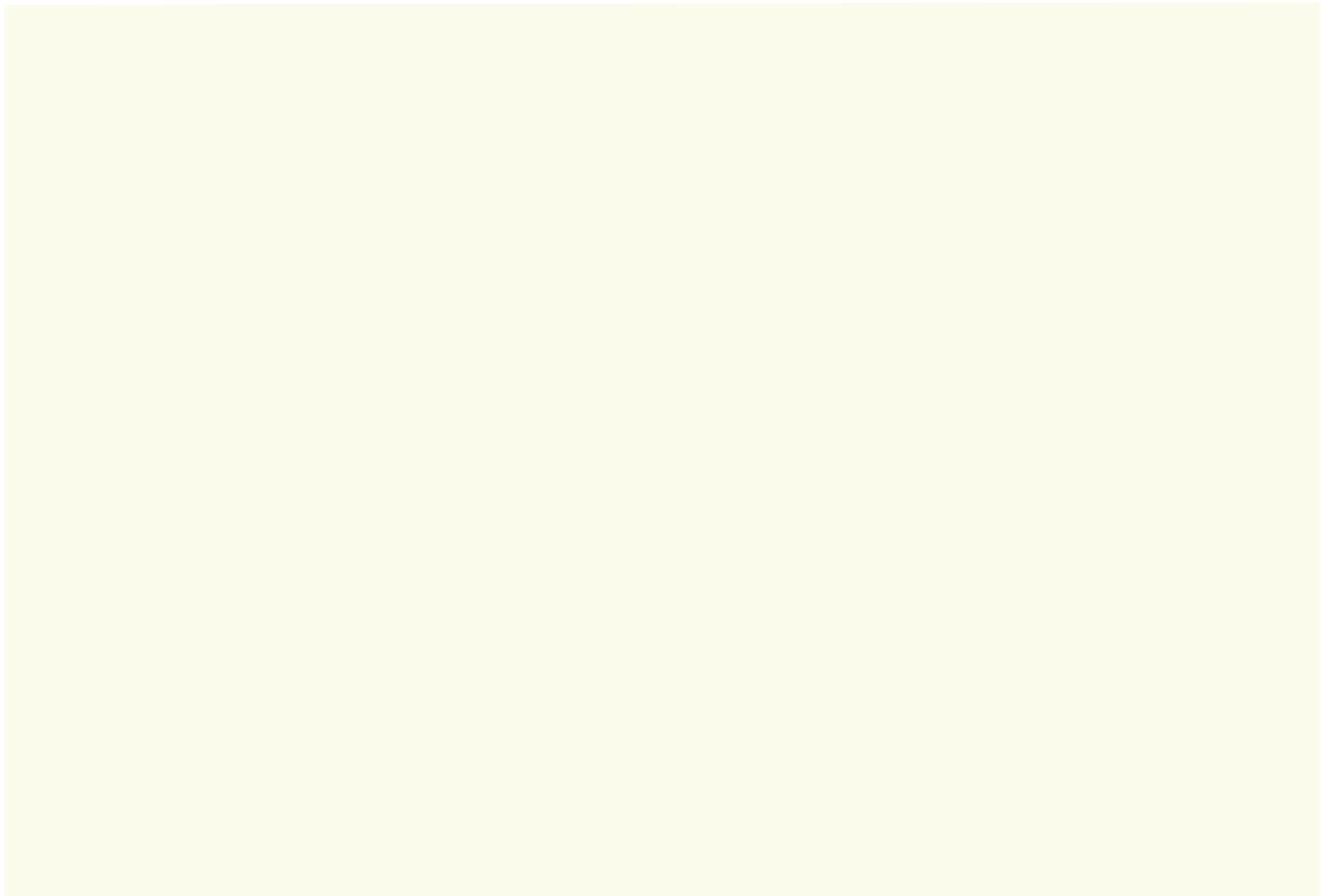
The last few months have served as a transitional stage in this process, whereby we have sought to lay the foundation for the Department working more strategically and responsively to the needs of the Fields. The restructuring of the HQ Education Department is therefore one dimension of the UNRWA response to this challenge. We are now working on the Education Reform Strategy. This will set the reform in context and will include detailed descriptions of each of the reform areas. The Reform areas are:

- Teacher Development & School Empowerment
- Curriculum & Quality Learning
- Partnership, Advocacy and Communications
- Inclusive Schools
- Research and Development
- Governance
- Strategic Planning and Management
- TVET, Youth and Placement

The reform Strategy will be a substantive document central to the discussion of the Retreat at the end of September 2010, and the basis for ongoing dialogue with a range of stakeholders.

This upcoming retreat will be held at the Holiday Inn at the Dead Sea from 28-30 September, 2010, and participants from across UNRWA's five Fields of operation will contribute to supporting the finalization of the reform strategy for the Department. It is envisioned that this retreat will culminate in a consensus on how to achieve the vision of providing quality education for Palestine refugees to achieve their full potential, individually and as member of local and global community towards active and productive participation in social, political, economic, technical and cultural fields. More about the education reform process on the back page.

Caroline Pontefract



Testing times!

In May 2009 the Department of Education undertook the largest cross-Field student achievement survey of UNRWA's 60 year history, the Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA). The MLA provides a measure of how well the UNRWA education system is functioning. Information on the performance of 60,000 Grade 4 and 8 students in Mathematics and Arabic across UNRWA's five Fields was generated. In addition to this, 7,000 students and 2,000 teachers completed questionnaires on teaching and learning practices and students' attitudes to school and learning.



- The draft report on the MLA findings was released in April 2010, providing detailed information on student performance in each Field. Some of the key findings of the MLA include:
- Performance was similar across fields; though, in each field, there are significant differences between the performance of individual schools;
 - The overall performance of boys was noticeably lower than that of girls;
- In both Arabic and Mathematics results suggested that some percentage of students had not fully mastered foundational concepts needed to progress;

The findings of the 2009 MLA survey will serve as a baseline against which future progress can be tracked. However, more importantly it is an indication of the quality of teaching and learning practices across UNRWA. In this way it reflects the findings of the Universalia Review of the Education Programme, which highlights the need to fundamentally change what goes on in the classroom.

The success of the MLA was due to the combined efforts of all Education staff and this reflects their ongoing commitment to supporting UNRWA students.



TVET more responsive than ever

Since its establishment in 1953, the aim of UNRWA Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has been to prepare qualified graduates for employment opportunities in the local and regional labour markets. Currently, the vocational and technical training centers in UNRWA's five Fields of operation offer courses at secondary and post-secondary levels, with more than 6600 trainees enrolled in the last academic year of 2009/2010.

In response to changing markets and technologies, UNRWA TVET programme is working with partners to increase relevance and accessibility of TVET courses. For example, the Competency-Based Training (CBT) approach provides greater opportunities for Palestine Refugee youth from vulnerable groups to gain employment opportunities. The CBT is a new



method that addresses the specific competencies required in the labour market.

With the support of InWEnt Capacity Building International, an organization based in Germany, a number of UNRWA staff has undergone intensive trainings to enable their staff to drive the new vision for TVET. For example, staff participated in courses on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Sustainability, in order to help TVET ensure its viability in promoting income generating activities and optimizing resources. Another focus of interest was Quality Management for TVET. In the last 6 months, 24 staff from TVET at HQ(A) and from the Field Offices have benefitted from the training workshops organized by InWEnt.

Generating income and increasing students possibilities



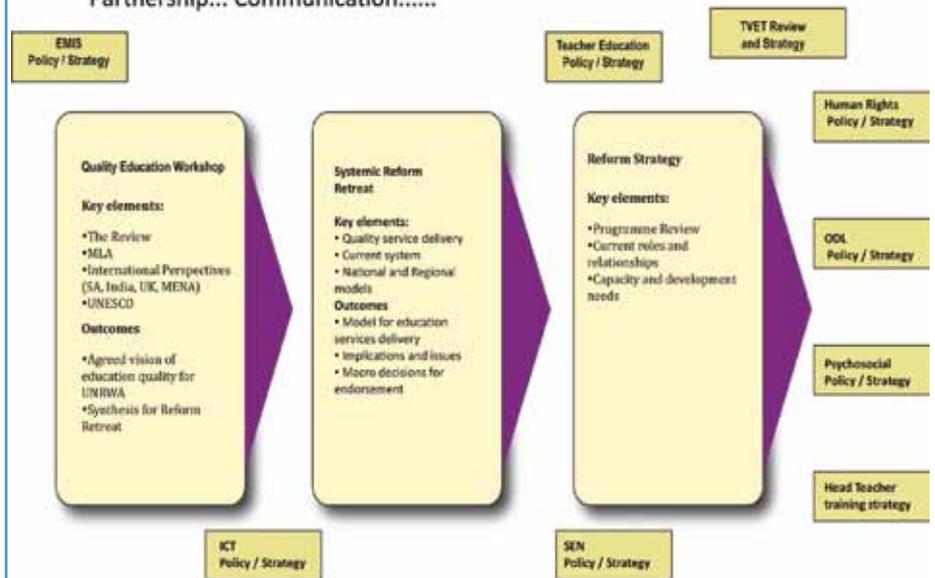
Thousands of Palestinian students have participated in UNRWA's free "Regular Training Program" since the establishment of UNRWA in 1949. The programme is open to Palestine refugee students who have finished the last year of High School and the focus is on technical and trade courses which are aligned with the current needs of the labour market. These courses are offered at UNRWA training centers - namely pre-service teacher training- in partnership with the Faculties of Educational Sciences.

The success of this program, and the increasing demand for places, encouraged the UNRWA Education Programme in Jordan Field introduce a Parallel Education System. This is a fee-based programme which offers the same courses to any student at a small fee in order to facilitate greater access.

An Educational Technical Instruction (ETI) is in its final stage of development before being circulated to the Fields for discussion. The ETI will further facilitate this innovative approach to extend access through income generation while ensuring fees are accounted for and effectively utilized.

Towards the Reform: A Work in Progress

Strategic coherence... Contextual realities... Building on success... Partnership... Communication.....



Cont'd letter from the DE

The upcoming retreat is the third held in focusing on UNRWA education reforms, and will build upon the significant work of the previous two retreats.

On 10 and 11 May 2010 a two-day workshop was hosted by the Department of Education to discuss and develop a common understanding of quality education in relation to UNRWA. This was a crucial initial stage in order to agree on a common vision to guide and direct all future activities. The workshop was attended by participants drawn from Field Education Programmes and HQ-Amman in addition to representatives from UNESCO (regional and Ramallah office) and international consultants.

The second workshop of the 1-3 June 2010 used the definition and vision of quality education articulated in the first retreat, as a springboard for 3 days of discussion on priorities, systems and structures of the UNRWA Education Programme. The workshop was attended by participants from all the five UNRWA Field offices and by Education Department and PCSU representatives.

The reports for both workshops have been distributed amongst participants and relevant Agency stakeholders and should serve as useful documents in their own right and as context and background for the third retreat.



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