

Think Tank Newsletter

March 27, 2025

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The Structure of the Think Tank

The "Think Tank": a Laboratory of Ideas Promoting Educational Research

Research is a collective common good, and advancements in research constitute valuable assets that significantly contribute to society. These advancements help challenge dominant narratives and foster innovative practices. Educational research, in particular, is essential for informing national education policies, supporting ongoing curriculum reforms, and improving teachers' professional practices. Recognizing this importance, the Think Tank was established as a collaborative laboratory of ideas committed to promoting high-quality educational research. Former Minister of Education and Higher Education, Dr. Abbas Halabi, aimed to restore the role of CERD to one of its fundamental

responsibilities as outlined in Article 4 of Decree No. 2356: conducting educational research. Building upon previous collaboration with the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF) under the "Apprendre" program, funded by the French Development Agency (AFD), the National Think Tank for Research and Innovation in Education was established at CERD. Its primary objectives are to identify contemporary educational challenges in Lebanon through research, propose innovative solutions, and provide evidence-based recommendations to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). These recommendations will guide CERD in redefining and enhancing Lebanon's educational policies.

Working in a Network: Working Together is Like Living Together; It is Not Innate but Acquired

Working together is a co-construction; it is not innate but acquired. Effective collaboration, akin to harmonious living, necessitates interdependence—a key principle embraced by the Think Tank. Through a structure comprising multiple collaborative bodies, stakeholders from academia, government institutions, and research organizations collectively pursue distinct yet interconnected goals.

These include:

- A **Scientific Council** composed of representatives from seven Lebanese universities.
- A **Steering Committee** led by the Think Tank coordinator, which includes two representatives from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (**MEHE**), one representative from the National Council for Scientific Research (**CNRS**), the

Head of **the Research Office at the CRDP**, **three expert** researchers in education, in addition to a project assistant

- An **Executive Committee**
- A **Network of expert** researchers in education, comprising both local and international experts from universities and research institutions in Lebanon and abroad.

This structure ensures that each participant recognizes their interdependence, agrees on common goals, and pursues objectives collaboratively while maintaining sufficient autonomy. Such interdependence fosters new knowledge and innovative practices, especially when participants recognize the legitimacy of diverse perspectives, build trust and respect among themselves, and ensure sufficient autonomy for each participant.

Evolution of the Think Tank Over One Year: January 2024 to March 2025



The Think Tank members meet weekly, enabling continuous monitoring of activities. These activities vary: they may focus on evaluating research projects according to

selection criteria or involve discussions on the relevance and timing of research topics based on the needs of MEHE and CERD.

Research projects underway

A Systematic Literature Review in Education: A Real Scientific Challenge

To enable the Think Tank to identify and prioritize educational research themes, the steering committee launched a call for proposals titled "Designing a systematic literature review on education from kindergarten to high school in Lebanon for the period 2014–2024." This call for proposals was funded by the S2R2 program (World Bank), and the results were submitted in February 2025. The preliminary systematic literature review provided an objective synthesis of scientific knowledge and presented easily interpretable research findings in education,

highlighting the defining characteristics of educational research at the national level. Three experienced researchers conducted this systematic review. The steering committee of the Think Tank ensured that the researchers adhered closely to the established methodological steps, including the formulation of the research question, definition of inclusion criteria, identification of studies, data extraction, and data synthesis (Sacré, M., Lafontaine, D. & Toczec, M.-C, 2021). A presentation of the results is scheduled for May/June 2025.

Two research projects: "effective school leadership" and "citizenship education."

The Think Tank organized meetings with funders such as the Natafa3al consortium (Amel, Ana Aqra, International Alert, and NRC) and the French Development Agency (AFD). These funders expressed keen interest in the research approach presented during these meetings. Following mutual presentations outlining both needs and capacities, the funders agreed to support the Think Tank's research initiatives. Consequently, CERD entered into agreements with Natafa3al and the AFD to finance two research projects: "effective school leadership" and "citizenship education". Both project proposals were validated by the Think Tank's scientific council and conducted

between September and December 2024 amidst a challenging Lebanese context. The findings from these research projects will be disseminated through two events. First, the CERD/Think Tank will host a "Workshop" in April 2025, engaging stakeholders involved in curriculum reform to discuss and consider integrating the findings into the current curriculum writing and finalizing recommendations for educational policies. Second, a scientific event will be organized by CERD/Think Tank to formally present the research outcomes and explore the implications and effects of integrating these results into school curricula.

Chair of the Think Tank



Prof. Hyam Ishak

President of the Center for Educational Research and Development CERD

Coordinator of the Think Tank



Prof. Iman Khalil

Head of the Educational Research and Studies Center at the Faculty of Education, Lebanese University

Members of the Think Tank Steering Committee



Mrs. Ramza Jaber

Representative of the Office of the Minister of Education and Higher Education (until march 2025)



Dr Georgia El-Hachem

Representative of the General Directorate of Education in the Ministry of Education and Higher Education



Prof. Souma Boujaoude

Advisor to the President of the American University of Beirut



Prof. Fadi El-Hage

Delegate of the Rector of Saint Joseph University for Professional Development and Continuing Education



Prof. Antoine Kattar

Advisor to the CERD President



Dr. Iman Abbas

Representative of the National Council for Scientific Research (Until september 2024)



Dr. Guitta Hanna

Director of the Research Office at CERD



Mr. Jihad Saliba

General Coordinator of the developpement of the new curriculum at CERD



Mrs. Marlene Badr

Secretary of the Think Tank

Scientific Council members

Lebanese University



Prof. Nadim Mansouri

Lebanese University

Private Universities



Prof. Kamal Abouchedid

Notre Dame University- Louaize



Prof. Ali Fakih

Lebanese American University



Dr. Anies Al-Hroub

American University of Beirut (AUB)



Dr. Ghania Zgheib

University of Balamand



Dr. Sonia Constantine

Saint Joseph University USJ



Dr. Youssef El Rayess

Holy Spirit University - Kaslik

Professional Development of CERD Staff

Training in Educational Research Engineering: Enhancing CERD Staff Expertise

To strengthen the professional capacity of its research and training staff, CERD successfully responded to the call for applications issued by the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF), which organized a training on educational research engineering in October 2024 for 20 CERD staff members. The training consisted of three modules combining theoretical instruction with practical workshops. Participants developed essential competencies such as conducting scientific monitoring in education (tracking

current calls for research projects, setting up alerts, and effectively navigating academic databases), successfully responding to research project calls, and preparing comprehensive research project reports that incorporate rigorous evaluation processes. The final module particularly supported the Think Tank's internal operations by defining critical reporting components and standardizing evaluation criteria for assessing research projects and their outcomes.