TECHNICAL BRIEF:

ERICC Application of the RISE Diagnostic for Teacher Management in Jordan

The Education Research in Conflict and Protracted Crisis (ERICC) Research Programme Consortium is a global research and learning partnership that strives to transform education policy and practice in conflict and protracted crisis around the world — ultimately to help improve holistic outcomes for children — through building a global hub for a rigorous, context-relevant and actionable evidence base.

ERICC seeks to identify the most effective approaches for improving access, quality, and continuity of education to support sustainable and coherent education systems and holistic learning and development of children in conflict and crisis. ERICC aims to bridge research, practice, and policy with accessible and actionable knowledge — at local, national, regional and global levels — through co- construction of research and collaborative partnerships.

ERICC is led by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) with Academic Lead IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society, and expert partners include Centre for Lebanese Studies, Common Heritage Foundation, Forcier Consulting, ODI, Osman Consulting, Oxford Policy Management and Queen Rania Foundation. During ERICC's inception period, NYU-TIES provided research leadership, developed the original ERICC Conceptual Framework and contributed to early research agenda development. ERICC is supported by UK Aid.

Countries in focus include Bangladesh (Cox's Bazar), Jordan, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nigeria, South Sudan and Syria.

A. Purpose of study

The present study applied systems thinking to the context of Jordan to assess the wider factors and potential misalignments affecting teacher management in the country. The study was conducted by a team of researchers from New York University-TIES and the Queen Rania Foundation (QRF) in Jordan as part of the Education Research in Conflict and Protracted Crisis (ERICC) Research Programme Consortium (referred to in this brief as the ERICC team). Funded by the UK'S Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), ERICC is a multi-year, multi-country research programme that aims to contribute to the research evidence base on the most effective approaches to education in contexts affected by conflict and/or protracted crisis. The ERICC team set out to utilise the RISE Diagnostic Framework in the case of Jordan's education sector, ultimately applying and adapting the tool to identify and prioritise misalignments within the country's teacher management system. In doing so, the RISE Diagnostic Framework helped the ERICC team to map the varying purposes for which different parts of the teacher management system in Jordan are aligned. Overall, the primary purpose of the study was to pinpoint incoherences within the teacher management system, which serves significant refugee populations as well as Jordanian nationals, and to highlight possible solutions and ways forward to address misalignments that can compromise the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the education system. A secondary purpose of the study was to consider how systems thinking can be applied to protracted crisis contexts and inform improvements between the humanitarian-development nexus.

B. The RISE Diagnostic Framework

The Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE) programme was a multi-country research endeavour running from 2015-2023, conducting research to better understand how countries can address and overcome the global learning crisis. The RISE research agenda is based on applying a systems approach to education research, which postulates that many education systems do not produce better learning outcomes due to a lack of coherence and alignment within and between components of the system itself. The RISE Framework and implementation guidance aim to support researchers in diagnosing, prioritising, and building consensus around points of misalignment within the education system. The RISE Framework proposes that education systems consist of four key relationships of accountability between different principals and agents, only the first two of which were the focus of this study:

a. **Compact**: Relationship between the highest authorities of the state and education authorities (including the Ministry of Education, or MoE).
b. **Management**: Relationship between the education authorities and frontline providers of education (i.e., schools, principals, teachers).
c. **Voice and Choice**: Relationship between recipients of services (i.e., parents, children, and communities – the 'principal') and frontline providers of services (i.e., school leaders and teachers – the 'agent').
d. **Politics:** Relationship between citizens (the principal) and the highest executive, legislative, and fiduciary authorities of the state (the agent)

The latter two (Voice and Choice, Politics) were not explored in this study due the fact that the school system in Jordan is highly centralised, with citizens having limited involvement and impact in feeding

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back to schools or higher government authorities. In addition, the relationship between citizens and the government is a sensitive topic that was beyond the scope and resources of the study to explore. As a result, the study focused exclusively on the Compact and Management relationships within the education sector.

Each of these accountability relationships has five components, or design elements, that help describe and define it in more detail: delegation, finance, information, support, and motivation. Combining accountability relationships and design elements creates a matrix, which serves as the analytic framework to identify system misalignments within or between the elements and relationships.

C. Methodology

While adapting the approach to applying the RISE Diagnostic to Jordan suggested by its creators, the ERICC team took a number of steps prior to field data collection. First, between August and October 2022, the ERICC team carried out the following:

- **A preliminary desk review** of secondary sources, primarily policy documents, and research reports, to understand the existing policy landscape within Jordan. Within this investigation, special attention was paid to areas of incoherence within or between documents as possible topics/themes for further exploration.
- **A preliminary analysis (the pre-diagnostic)** in which the RISE Framework Annexes were used to help the team identify areas of consensus and areas of uncertainty where additional information was going to be needed.
- **A workshop with Ministry of Education officials** to further investigate and probe deeper on certain issues, questions, and enquiries within the priority areas short-listed for investigation.
- **A presentation of a selected list of topics** to ERICC's Research Directorate Leadership team that summarised the outcomes of the desk review, pre-diagnostic, and workshop, after which it was determined that Teacher Management was the most relevant and potentially fruitful topic to apply the RISE Diagnostic.

The ERICC team then proceeded to conduct field data collection throughout November 2022, which included:

- **Ten key informant interviews** with government officials (n=7) and relevant NGOs/international organisations (n=3) working in teacher management areas.
- **Eight focus groups** of personnel who work in schools, including:
  - Full-time MoE teachers (n=14) who work in first shift schools mainly serving Jordanians.
  - Temporary contract teachers (n=15) who have been hired by the field directorates and primarily work in second shift schools that serve Syrian refugees.
  - Supervisors (n=16) who observe and support subject teachers (of both types) across a geographical area.
  - Principals (n=15) working in shift schools.

All data from the key informant interviews and focus groups was transcribed and analysed, applying coding derived from the design elements of each accountability relationship.

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D. Findings: Diagnosis of Misalignments in Teacher Management for Jordan

Based on the RISE Diagnostic performed by the ERICC team, Jordan's educational system appears to be primarily aligned for access and process compliance, with pockets of stakeholders attempting to bring greater focus on, and alignment for, learning outcomes. Still, there were key areas identified that represent possible misalignments between design elements and/or accountability relationships that are affecting system outcomes. These include misalignments within the two accountability relationships (Management and Compact) explored in the study, which focused on Jordan's teacher management system. Among design elements of the Management accountability relationship, the following misalignments were identified:

1. **a)** Between the objective to create and maintain the integrity and relevance of the Education Management Information System (EMIS) database (a task delegated and required by the MoE of its frontline workers) and the lack of support given to those agents in terms of providing access and training in utilising the database.
    b) Between the stated purpose of EMIS to inform system improvement and use of the EMIS data system, particularly at lower levels of the system.
    c) Between the policies promoting higher quality that are communicated by the Ministry and the type of data collected to measure quality. More specifically, despite quality teaching and learning being (de jure) communicated priorities of the system, data collection does not focus on quality but on inputs and 'thin' descriptors (e.g., the number of teachers having completed a training). 'Thick' descriptors (e.g., the ways in which these trainings were helpful to improve teaching practices and pedagogy) are not collected for quality assurance.
2. Between the curriculum frameworks, learning materials, and exams on one hand and the learning levels of children on the other.
3. Amongst key stakeholders that espouse different views of their delegated objectives, needed information, and support functions. In particular, the goals and measures of school inspections do not align with the work of supervisors and other stakeholders.
4. Between the way in which teachers' performance is evaluated for possible promotion in the new ranking system and the reality of teachers' access to, motivation for, and use of training as well as the motivation of supervisors who provide training.
5. Between the MoE's stated goals in regard to the improvement of the teacher workforce and the persistent use of temporary contract teachers, who are the least experienced and least trained.
6. Between the stated goals of the Financial Affairs Administration (FAA) and its technical capacities and resources (essentially support) to carry out its duties in a timely fashion.

Among the design elements of the Compact accountability relationship, the following misalignment was identified:

7. The articulated and delegated aims of the political leaders and the fiscal resources provided to the MoE.

E. Recommendations for Greater Alignment of Teacher Management in Jordan

Based upon the misalignments identified, the following recommendations are offered to support greater alignment within the system for improved quality of teaching and learning:

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Recommendation 1

a) The Ministry of Education's Queen Rania Center (QRC) could review and update EMIS access policies and their implementation to ensure temporary contract teachers and other frontline workers have unrestricted access and appropriate training to carry out their EMIS-related duties. Regular periodic audits of teachers' understanding and skills may be considered for the long term to ensure that teachers and other school staff are able to use EMIS effectively as the platform continues to evolve and improve.

b) EMIS data documenting student performance and attendance has the untapped potential to help teachers, school leaders, and field directorates identify ways to improve on student learning engagement. Currently, students' assessment results are snapshots of students' outcomes that are not proactively monitored to adjust lesson plans and teaching strategies in order to increase learning. The MoE could consider how to train and incentivise teachers and principals to utilise EMIS data on student learning outcomes to collectively plan and implement ways to raise the levels of student learning across grade levels. More specifically, the MoE might consider developing professional training to be provided on its online platform to guide and illustrate to teachers and principals how data from EMIS can inform classroom instruction and school planning, including school-wide improvement plans. In addition, at the field directorate level, the MoE could consider ways to promote the use of EMIS for more accurate and timely monitoring of students' attendance and academic achievement for more effective educational planning and targeted school support.

Recommendation 2

The National Center for Curriculum Development (NCCD), in partnership with the Ministry, could consider ways to better coordinate across the different authorship committees tasked with developing the curriculum across all levels and subjects, ensuring the needed experts (subject matter experts, gender specialists, special education experts, assessment experts) are included in order to incorporate differentiation strategies into curriculum frameworks and guidance. This can assist teachers in understanding how to adapt the curriculum and their teaching methods to meet the diverse needs and levels of students. The RISE data indicated that in Jordan, there are often gaps in students' knowledge and abilities, in part due to the closure of schools during the Covid pandemic. Thus, although there have been no studies of the impact of curricula, teachers report they often struggle with helping students access the curriculum.

Note that to address gaps in students' knowledge and skills that hinder their academic progress, schools or the wider system might also consider prioritising the mastery of foundational skills across all grade levels. Students need to have mastered basic literacy and numeracy in order to advance to higher-order content in the curriculum (not only in maths and languages, but also in all other subjects). This also necessitates that education authorities (the NCCD and MoE) define learning as a cumulative experience. Improving learning outcomes (especially in higher grades) starts with improving learning in the early grades as this unlocks all future learning.

Recommendation 3

The MoE might consider assessing the design and mandate of the school inspection authority, the Education Quality and Accountability Unit (EQAU), to better align the unit with the work of other

ERICC

departments, including the Supervision and Training Department (STD). The STD, local teacher training organisations, and programmes such as RAMP work towards the MoE's new perspective on teacher accountability that is linked with greater training and support. Their efforts at improving teachers' practice can potentially be undermined if their guidance is set aside in favour of the concerns and recommendations for improvement issued by the EQAU, whose powers to discipline ensure compliance. To avoid this scenario in which the judgement and guidance of EQAU assessors and others contradict each other, the MoE could consider how to better align the goals, assessment practices, and data collected amongst EQAU and other stakeholders. The MoE could require the EQUA's assessors to collaborate with the STD in sharing data and tools, consider and reflect on schools' context and constraints when making judgements, and make recommendations that prioritise student learning over process compliance.

At the same time, the EQAU might consider ways in which its work complements and can inform the STD, its partners, and learning-focused initiatives such as RAMP. The MoE should consider if and how the EQAU's work might benefit from linking to supervision E-tools introduced by RAMP and the EMIS database (which it currently does not access). With regards to delegation, the MoE might also reconsider their efforts towards decentralisation, which do not seem to align with the EQAU's work and its interpretation of its own mandate, thus making a transition to a more starfish-structured governance system less feasible.

Recommendation 4

The STD might consider reviewing their schedule of training and strive to add more training sessions in locations and at times that are accessible to temporary contract teachers and those in rural schools. In addition, the STD might consider regularly seeking feedback (e.g., confidential surveys) from teachers who attend training courses to assess the relevance and applicability of course content as well as the effectiveness of the trainer in teaching it. The STD might also consider having supervisors, principals, or other teacher trainers follow up with teachers after they attend a training to assess the degree to which the teachers were able to implement what they learned and improve their practice after the training courses. Through implementing such strategies to obtain teachers' feedback on courses and follow up teachers' practices, the STD could revise and improve their courses and better support teachers in implementing what they learned to improve teaching and learning.

Recommendation 5

There needs to be greater accountability for supporting and integrating temporary contract teachers (TCTs) in the profession. The unequal and parallel system in which temporary teachers work demotivates them and impacts the quality of teaching and learning. While aiming to reduce the portion of the teaching workforce that is currently on temporary contracts (approximately 20%), the ETC and field directorates (tasked with hiring and managing TCTs) might consider how such teachers could earn and accumulate points for their rankings if they go on to be hired as permanent teachers. Doing so could provide motivation for TCTs to improve their practice and encourage supervisors and principals to better support promising contract teachers. Field directorates might consider ways to ensure principals are not overworking TCTs, who are more vulnerable based on their precarious employment and the position of power the principals have over temporary teachers' evaluation and school placement. This might include feedback loops (e.g., a hotline for concerns or complaints) available for TCTs.

Recommendation 6

The MoE and the international donor community might consider an audit of the technical needs of the MoE's Financial Affairs Administration and staff in related departments. The audit could also assess the potential use and cost savings of introducing greater automation and digital services within financial departments to promote greater efficiency and effectiveness in executing its core function of dispersing funds on a timely basis.

Recommendation 7

Political leaders might consider ways in which the MoE budget allocation may be increased or optimised in coming years to support a focus on improving students' learning outcomes. Leaders might also consider prioritising a much more limited number of goals (including improving learning outcomes) from the comprehensive list that makes up the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) and channel available funding there. Having a long list of priorities dilutes the impact that already limited funding will have. In addition, the Donor Coordination Unit (DCU) might consider how to improve communication between the MoE and donors to ensure donors do not exacerbate this problem of an excessive number of goals diluting the impact of limited resources available. Instead, the DCU could work with donors, the Education Minister, and the MoE to help set a manageable number of common priorities in order to better leverage donors' resources and avoid the duplication of efforts. The Minister in particular could play a key role in advocating amongst donors for priorities that match and bolster the MoE's current goals and strategies.

F. Revisions to RISE: For Use in Contexts of Conflict and Protracted Crisis

The ERICC team made and suggested several revisions to the RISE Diagnostic tool and implementation process, which are discussed in the report. However, it is important to note that overall, the RISE Diagnostic proved quite relevant for a lower/middle-income, relatively stable country such as Jordan.

1. Revisions to the RISE Diagnostic Tool

Researchers may consider adding, or accounting for, the following actors and relationships that are not explicitly included in the RISE Framework to date, which will ultimately help in understanding and identifying alignments and misalignments between the humanitarian and development sectors for conflict-affected settings.

a) **Addition of global actors:** The RISE Framework focuses primarily on national contexts and the major actors, relationships, and policies that govern that context. However, in areas of crisis and conflict, there are often global actors – such as international and/or multilateral donors, UN agencies, and INGOs – that operate within and influence the education landscape. The team noted that there are rarely effective and efficient mechanisms for coordinating among these actors, either across global actors or between global and national actors. This is a source of incoherence within the education system landscape that requires further consideration.

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b) Addition of NGO/donor relationship with MoE: The RISE Framework investigates several important relationships, including the relationship between the executive branch(es), the MoE, and teachers and schools (defined as "Compact" and "Management"). However, donors and NGOs are not mentioned as significant actors within the RISE system diagnostic, nor are their relationships with other actors in the education system named or explored. Given (a) the influence that donors can/often strive to have with ministries of education in low and middle-income countries, and (b) the movement to integrate previously parallel refugee education systems, largely run by NGOs, into formal schooling, the ERICC team believes that these relationships should be further considered in areas of conflict and crisis.

c) Addition of education actors and local policies 'outside' the formal system: Given the RISE Framework's focus on national systems, the implementation guide, coding annexes, and publications are primarily interested in those who influence and are managed by formal policy. However, in areas of conflict and crisis, several important actors operate outside of these boundaries. For example, in Jordan, the majority of second shift students are taught by temporary contract teachers, who are largely not governed by national MoE policy but rather by a patchwork of opaque policies at the regional level. Similarly, those who work in NGO programming are likely not MoE-sanctioned teachers, but rather trained facilitators. They often interact with refugee students in camps and non-formal programming. In addition to including these actors, where possible, we have observed that in these cases, the *absence of centrally mandated policies* is contextually notable rather than the *presence of incoherent policies*. As a result, refugees and who teaches them are not an explicit focus of teacher management policies.

2. Revisions to the RISE Methodology

A number of revisions were made to the methodology of the RISE Diagnostic in order to apply it to the Jordanian context. These revisions were:

a) Not forming an initial steering committee, as in countries that are both relatively small and have a highly centralised education system, potential members of such a steering committee are also likely to be part of the pool of research participants (e.g., interviewees).

b) Adaptation of the RISE Annexes from Excel into Word templates to be more practically useful for the pre-diagnosis analysis and/or engagement with stakeholders.

c) Engaging stakeholders through questions derived from the framework (rather than the framework itself).

d) Utilising focus groups in conjunction with interviews.

Some of these may be helpful and relevant to other countries considering using the RISE Diagnostic in their country context, while other revisions may not apply.

3. Recommendations and Comments for Use in Contexts of Conflict and Protracted Crisis

a) Accessibility and interpretation challenges of MoE policies: The ERICC team recommends the country policies be sourced primarily by in-country teams, who will be more familiar with whether certain policies are written, where they are housed, and how to interpret the documents. The ERICC team also cautions that the desk review may ultimately provide less information than is hoped under the circumstances, and that more emphasis should be placed on interviews and focus groups in order to understand how the system functions.

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b) The RISE tool likely requires additional piloting in order to operationalise best practices: Given the RISE tool's stage of development and the ERICC Consortium's intent to use it in new contexts (low-income and conflict/crisis-affected), the team cautions that these applications should be viewed as pilots. This is not to say that valuable data will not result from the pilot research, only that future research teams should prepare to iterate on both the framework itself and likely the methodologies as they learn more about how best to implement them.

c) System-wide diagnostic has a tension between inclusivity of minorities and overall influence within the system: A system diagnostic is, by its nature, investigative of the functioning of the inter-related components of a topic or theme. This requires capturing many components, perspectives, and actors in order to understand the system as a whole. However, time and resources are limited in any project, which restricts the number of people that can be interviewed, the types of actors accessed, and the perspectives brought to bear on a topic. As such, the team prioritised those who are most prominent, which necessarily omits actors who are important but minoritised. In a project such as ERICC that aims to impact policy and practice at scale while also focusing on marginalised populations such as refugees and internally displaced persons, and operating with limited time and budget, researchers must think carefully about the tension between the system they are looking to diagnose and how they define influence and importance within that system.

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