



Reflections on Contextualizing the INEE Guidance Note on Teacher Wellbeing in Emergency Settings

Context: Palestine
Domain: 2, Access and Learning Environments
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Executive summary

This consultation aimed to examine the appropriateness and effectiveness Domain 2 (Access and learning opportunities) of the INEE Teacher wellbeing Guidance Note (TW GN) to the context of Palestine through applying a context-based overview and review of the “INEE Teacher Wellbeing Guidance Note” to ensure that the materials of this package is accessible, meaningful, achievable, relevant and applicable to the teachers in the context and culture of Palestine / West Bank (WB).

The consultation was carried out in full collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Education Cluster (EC) as well as national and international NGOs working with teachers with focus on teachers’ wellbeing.

The findings of this consultation are broadly in line with the global TW GN in terms and the relation with the INEE Minimum Standards as well as other references the GN is built on. The contextualized version compiles the feedback, the recommendations and the suggestions collected through the workshops and other data collection tools. A set of activities was piloted and proved its effectiveness on ground.

One major remarkable note is that teacher wellbeing became part of the discussions in different levels and the TW GN was sorted into a niche that is worth more investment to put into practice. Great interest was shown for more engagement in similar discussions and processes. More about the successes and challenges, you can check the section *Evidence, including participant voices and analysis of the process’s strengths and opportunities*.

In general, the process was smooth and the consultant received a lot of collaboration and cooperation from all the participants. The main limitation for the process is that it is limited to the West Bank which leads to a recommendation to expand it to include Jerusalem and Gaza because there are few limitations to each of these areas. A couple of challenges were encountered but were resolved by the consultant and you can check in the section of *Evidence of outcomes, participant voice and challenges and limitations*.

Principles for successful contextualization specific to context

1. Coordination

This type of work needs to invest huge efforts in coordination specifically in this case of working in an emergency context in order to ensure these efforts are carried over to next steps of planning, designing, implementation and above all funding. The coordination with the MoE started in mid-level and was scaled to senior level to ensure the MoE is fully engaged and involved on both field and decision maker levels and most of all to ensure authorization. The coordination with the cluster is also highly important as well to ensure this is taken into consideration in their future plans to support teachers' wellbeing. In general, coordination consumed more effort and time than expected.

1.1 Coordination with the MoE

In order to ensure full authorization, that can facilitate adopting the results of this consultation and adopting the contextualized material and support putting it into action, the consultant took a detailed and a full participatory approach in coordinating with the relevant departments in the MoE. A committee was established to participate in all activities under this consultancy and it included:

- The Deputy Minister and the Assistant Deputy Minister,
- The Field Follow up Departments in charge of the Education in Emergency file;
- The supervision Department in charge of teachers' supervision and support;
- The Comprehensive Health Department in charge of the school health and students' wellbeing
- The Building Department;
- The BLP master trainers as participants in the pilot phase;
- School principles, counselors and teachers

1.2 Coordination with the Education Cluster

To ensure wide scale participation, the consultant had detailed and thorough coordination with the Education Cluster Coordinator on the whole process. The Education Cluster Coordinator facilitated the discussion with the cluster and facilitated conducting the orientation workshop and the presentation of the TW GN to the structure. He provided technical recommendations on the best scenarios and the minimum of participation to ensure a high level of collaboration and understanding.

1.3 Coordination with the Learning for Wellbeing Organization

At the time of the contextualization process, the MoE was working on establishing the Comprehensive Health Department in partnership with the Learning for Wellbeing organization. This organization assisted the MoE to develop a Guide for the comprehensive health in schools- "A practical guide for the school staff". To ensure integration between teacher and student wellbeing, the consultant conducted a meeting with Dr. Asaad Ramlawi, the Director for the Learning for Wellbeing organization. The executive director also participated in the orientation workshop and a KII was conducted with him to capture his view on the teacher wellbeing concept and understanding. This consultant suggested

starting the discussion to unify these efforts between the different departments in the MoE and the partner.

2. Definition of emergency context in Palestine

The context in Palestine is separated into emergency and development context while on ground, the conflict in Palestine impacts all areas with minimum differences. The Guidance Note is applicable to the whole context of Palestine in spite of its significant relevance to emergency areas. If we consider a school is located in an emergency area, we cannot neglect the fact that teachers who work in this school might be living in another area which might not be identified as an emergency area but are affected by the emergency. On the contrary, some teachers and students attend schools in a “non emergency context”, while they might be living in an emergency context.

3. Understanding of contextualization

Although the term contextualization is known to many stakeholders, however, on the grassroots level, it is completely new. Nevertheless, the deep understanding and the commitment and the authorization on policy levels is still achieved. The issue is linked to other factors, specifically the financial aspect. The MoE is not in the best place and capacity to put these results in action which might leave things as is unless efforts from donors including GFA, put this into their focus.

4. Understanding of teacher wellbeing

Teacher wellbeing was received as a secondary need by some stakeholders. In one KII with a supervisor, she was saying “teachers still lack basic needs such as professional development, sufficient salaries, working conditions, and we are not caring about wellbeing (psychosocial)”. This is also partially true on a senior level in the MoE. The discussion on bringing teacher wellbeing as a basic need not a luxury need in addition to bringing it as a standalone and end result was not that smooth.

5. Experience and knowledge of the contexts teachers work in and experience in working closely with teachers

Involving grassroots stakeholders on the school level is very essential because teachers are the best to identify their needs and strategies they practice and those they suggest to improve their wellbeing. However, the lack of awareness on the holistic meaning of well being restricted their thoughts. This needed multiple levels of interactions and multiple tools to ensure the data collected is neutral and real and to provide holistic understanding of what teacher wellbeing is and why.

6. Applying a multi sector- multi level approach

Engagement of stakeholders and NGOs including MoE, UNRWA, donors, and implementing organization. This approach puts the teachers’ wellbeing in the center and helps in creating a live discussion and focused efforts on this need.

Evidence, including participant voices and analysis of the process's strengths and opportunities

1. Institutionalization

Several activities can be implemented continuously locally by the school but external and out of school activities are also needed and this can be done by the supporting organizations. Taking the financial restriction on the MoE level, this consultancy advises the MoE to institutionalize a no or minimum cost wellbeing plan within the MoE different levels taking advantage from the Guidance Note. There are several activities that can be carried out in house and that can have a positive impact on the teachers' wellbeing.

2. Expanding the target of the GN to include all school staff

The participation of both the teaching and nonteaching staff in the school is important and not restricting it to teachers only. This was a success in bringing everyone together and strengthening their relationship and communication.

3. Raising awareness toward teacher wellbeing

The teacher's wellbeing was put on the table in MoE senior offices including the Deputy Minister, the deputy Assistant Minister, and other General Departments. Moreover, it was also put on the table of the teachers themselves. One of the teachers provided a testimony "I know this is a survey and only for data collection, but still I was very happy to fill it as it shows someone, somewhere is caring! And I started to think about my wellbeing for the first time in my life!"

4. Raising awareness and intention to the INEE Guidance Note

The process was a great opportunity to disseminate the GN and share thoughts for the different parties including MoE, INGOs, local NGOs, schools... etc.

5. Data aligned with the three principle of teacher wellbeing

The data collected from the different tools including but not limited to the teacher survey, FGD, KIIs, workshops and meetings is aligned with the GN and more with the three principles for teachers' wellbeing.

6. Linkages with and reflecting on the current interventions

On both senior and grassroots levels, the Better Learning Programme- NRC's Flagship PSS programme (BLP) was highlighted by the MoE at different levels as a significant type of programming to support both students' and teachers' wellbeing. It was referred to in relation to the fact that the BLP techniques and mechanisms are useful for teachers on both professional and personal levels. Moreover, the "Support the Supporters" component was also highlighted as a niche in terms of structural, consistent and holistic approach.

7. Universities and researches

This consultancy recommends endorsement into more research from universities and other researchers that focus on teacher wellbeing which might come up with realistic data on teacher wellbeing and can influence decision and policy making.

8. Focus on implementation of policies rather than issuing policies

Based on the consultant observation and data collected in a separate study, there are several policies on inclusion of disabilities, gender and social justice but further effort is needed to put this into implementation which needs further financial resources and senior and official endorsement.

Evidence of outcomes, participant voice and challenges and limitations

1. The limitation of the contextualization of one domain (in this case, domain 2)

This was reflected in raising several concerns and questions about other sides of teacher wellbeing. A lot of voices were high asking on the payment side. Others had concerns about the curricula and how funds are restricted because it is linked with the curricula which is a human right. They requested high advocacy on the importance of breaking the correlation between funds and these human standards. The consultant clarified the fact that there are other domains which focus on these issues.

2. Teacher strike

The teachers in Palestine started a strike on 10th March 2022, same time the consultancy started. The strike continued for until 20 May in different mechanisms. Until the end of April, it was in most of the schools and most of the teachers participated in it. Starting May 2022, there were three groups of schools/ teachers: 1) a group of schools/ teachers continued in full strike; 2) a group of schools/ teachers continued in partial strike; and 3) a group of schools/ teachers stopped the strike and came back to full operation. The strike affected the contextualization process on different level:

- The dialogue with the MoE was highly affected because the top priority for the MoE was negotiation with the teachers and ending the strike as well as intensive daily follow up to have mitigation plans to make up the learning loss. And this engaged all the departments on both central and directorate levels. The strike also affected the attitude of the MoE and caused some hesitation and delay in discussing the subject of teachers' wellbeing.
- This also has affected the piloting of the activities. Due to restricted access to schools which are running the strike and the teachers unwillingness to break the strike and participate in any sort of activity as a means to push the implementing organizations to influence the MoE and the government dialogue with the teachers, the consultant had to stop the piloting from one of the two schools and focus on the other school.

- Moreover, the strike also affected the modality of the implementation of the activities and the data collection process. The consultant had to conduct most of the activities remotely via Zoom. To ensure continuity and impact of the activities, the consultant established two more channels which are Facebook group and WhatsApp group. These two channels were utilized to disseminate and share material, tips and messages to ensure continued support is provided during this challenging period.
- The Mental health support channel was also affected due to the fact that it was planned to be in-home support to maintain free sustainable services through a counseling supervisor but again this was not feasible during the strike.
- The strike created a big gap and a challenge during the discussions with the MoE and affected their attitudes toward this topic.

3. MoE restructure

The MoE was going through a restructure process during the period of the contextualization. This restructure affected all the general departments in the MoE. New Deputy Minister, a new deputy assistant and new general directors were appointed which also affected the process and caused delays.

4. Military escalation

The escalation of incidents between Palestinian and Israeli Military Forces specifically during Ramadan has great negative effects on teachers and caused more stress and reduced the impact of the activities on the teachers although they provided a lot of positive reflections during the FGD and the stories they have shared.

5. Funding gap

Restricted funds on education and specifically on teacher wellbeing was highlighted as a big restriction and gap.