

EDUCATION IN LEBANON: CONSIDERATIONS AND EVOLUTION

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Abstract

The present study aims to investigate the perception regarding the education system in Lebanon and its impact on the communities' development. The research methodology consists of a survey conducted among alumni from different types of schools. The study uses quantitative research methods to investigate the role of education for the development of society. The research instrument used was a questionnaire designed by the author based on previous studies that investigated the perception of education's role in the development of society. The main findings of the study suggest that in Lebanese society, education has a significant impact as well as a strong need for education facilities and an increase in the budget spent by the government on the education field.

Keywords: Lebanon, education system, education infrastructure, education management

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Global Information Technology, Lebanon is ranked 13th out of 148 countries regarding the quality of its education system showing that the country has high standards of education. This position provided Lebanon with the title of "school of the Middle East". In a nutshell, Lebanon is famous for its good standards of education in the Middle East where the history of education dates back from the 19th century when the University of Saint Joseph was established and recognized as a leading institute around the world exhibiting cultural diversity and dialogue. The Lebanese Constitution stipulates the right to education whereas the country has committed itself to the UNESCO declaration on Universal Declaration of Human Rights to provide quality education. The Lebanese education system went through numerous changes over history. Article 8 of the 1926 Lebanese constitution acknowledged the "freedom of education to confessional communities". (Frayha, 2009). The quality of education has enabled Lebanon to reach the literacy rate of 89.6% - 93.4% amongst men and 86% amongst women.

2. THE EDUCATION MANAGEMENT EVOLUTION AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIETY

The ultimate goal of education is the pursuit of inner peace in all circumstances of life. There are many theoretic models which shed light on different parameters of education management and its impact on society (Bâlc, 2018).

One of the main theories regarding education is the classical school theory that states the role of human resources in providing education, that can organize, coordinate and control activities to achieve higher return through arrangements of managerial and organizational functions. Another theory is the school of functional management which suggests that schools use a rigorous division of tasks into a compartment that provides autonomy to individuals and minimizes the role of human resources in education. The theory of empirical school suggests that the role of a school is to provide the division of labor and assist human livelihood into an organized group based upon reality, successes, and failure as the school provides techniques and methods in comparable situations. Another theory is the school of human relations which states that school is a participatory system that replaces the authoritarian management and control system as proposed by the classical school theory. The school for social relations considers that school treats relationships in social dynamics. The theory of Quantitative School suggests that school provides students with rigorous approaches to understand managerial phenomenon and processes to assist in decision making using mathematical and statistical tools. The Decision Theory School states that school provides manifestations for investigation of contradictory economic and social

factors which are prerequisite to implementing high-performance decisions. The theory of school of Communication Systems suggests that the primary role of schools is to promote modern communication methods. The theory of systematic orientation affirms that the major role of school is to ensemble all the elements organized interdependently link for the fulfillment of objectives. Lastly, The Japanese Model suggests that the role of the education system is to create a belonging to a community, through joint activities and group methods (Bâlc, 2018).

3. THE GENERAL EDUCATION SYSTEM IN LEBANON

The mainstream government school system is the backbone of the Lebanese education system which is designed on a French model where schools are centrally controlled by the Ministry of Education and higher education. The French model implemented by the Lebanese government follows the pattern of 6-3-3, namely 6 years of primary school, 3 years of lower secondary school, and 3 years of upper secondary school. An examination is held only at the lower secondary part of the cycle, after grade 9, called Brevet or Baccalauréat. Grades 1 to 9 represent the basic education cycle with a standardized curriculum where the candidates for Brevet are taught courses such as history, civics, chemistry, physics, biology, Arabic, and a second language, which is either English or French. Science subjects along with mathematics are taught either in English or in French whereas the remaining subjects are taught in Arabic. More than one-quarter of the students are either voluntarily or non-voluntarily exit the Brevet system or fail to pass the examination. In grade 10 the curriculum is standardized being followed by an examination. Grade 11 gives students two options: either to select from science or non-science intensive curriculum. Grade 12 follows a western-style tracking system where students have four pathways: (a) general science, (b) life science, (c) sociology and economics, and (d) philosophy and literature (Vlaardingerbroek, Al-Hroub, & Saab, 2017).

Another major segment of the Lebanese education system is the private school system that includes both private schools and universities. The private system is regulated by the government to some extent leading to Lebanese official examinations. This system is divided into two sections: Francophone and Anglophone private schools with different curriculums. Francophone schools use the French curriculum whereas the Anglophone ones use the English curriculum. In addition, some elite Francophone high schools offer both English and French curriculums which are equivalent to Lebanese Baccalauréat. (Vlaardingerbroek, Al-Hroub, & Saab, 2017)

Another major segment of the Lebanese education system is the technical/vocational education system that is different from the mainstream education system. This system is fragmented into both public and private sectors which include commercial organizations, nonprofit organizations (NGO's), and government technical institutes. These institutes are administered by their own directorates, have their own curriculum and textbooks, and also organize their own examinations. The students following the courses of these schools achieve the qualification of Brevet Professionnel or Baccalauréat Technique. Vocational centers offer various programs related to the occupational demand for the Lebanese market including avionics, motor mechanic, bookkeeping, hotel management, and air-conditioning maintenance. Students have the opportunity to transition to vocational training centers from mainstream schooling after grade 9. (Vlaardingerbroek, Al-Hroub, & Saab, 2017)

Another major sector of education is the territory education system which is an essential part of the upper secondary schooling system making the transition to tertiary education. There are more than 40 universities and colleges offering territorial education to students which represents almost half of the enrollment rate in all the universities. In some universities, the students who want to enroll are required to pass the Lebanese Baccalauréat or to provide an equivalation for such qualification whereas some universities require language proficiency tests and SATs as an enrollment criterion. More than that, there is a high flow of students in territorial technical institutes after Grade 12. (Vlaardingerbroek, Al-Hroub, & Saab, 2017)

According to Vanessa, Jaoudeh, & Saleh, (2014), the Lebanese education system is currently facing two major challenges: the influence of religious sects as well as the social and qualitative disparities between the different education systems which include- mainstream government school system, Private school system, vocational education system, and territory education system (Vlaardingerbroek, Al-Hroub, & Saab, 2017) Evidence from

the HEART report, (2015) suggest that the education system's performance and quality in Lebanon decreased after the Civil War in 1975. Nowadays, two out of three students attend private schools as they offer better opportunity costs than public schools. The government has committed itself to conduct a large-scale education reform that has not been materialized yet due to the lack of political consensus. Currently, only 27% of students study in the public system which is already facing many issues related to infrastructure, teacher shortages, and religious segregation. Another major issue faced by the education system is the decreasing enrollment rate as International Commission on Civil Status (CIEC, 2020) data suggest a subsequent decrease in enrollment rate in primary schools which decreased from 93 thousand students in 2010 to 84 thousand students in 2016.

Considering the major issues in the Lebanese education system, the present study aims to investigate the perception regarding the education system in Lebanon and its impact on the communities' development.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION

The main objective of the study is to investigate the perception regarding the education system in Lebanon and its impact on the communities' development.

The main hypothesis of the study is: *The education system in Lebanon needs to be reformed as to successfully meet people's requirements.*

The present research has been conducted in the North, South, and Central Beirut region of Lebanon. The population of the study comprises alumni of government public schools, private schools, vocational schools, and territorial schools. The total sample size of n=80 respondents has been targeted using the quota-based sampling method where 20 questionnaires have been distributed amongst the sample respondents using probability sampling techniques.

The research methodology consists of a survey conducted among alumni from different types of schools. The study uses quantitative research methods to investigate the role of education for the development of society using the post-positivism research paradigm where the deductive approach is used to gather the primary data using a questionnaire. The research instrument used was a questionnaire designed by the author based on previous studies of (Yuliani & Hartanto, 2017) that investigated the perception of education's role in the development of society. The questionnaire contains 10 questions that measure respondents' perception about the role of education in the development of the Lebanese society using the Likert Scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represents that respondents strongly disagree with the presented statements and 5 represents that they strongly agree. Besides the 10 questions, the questionnaire contains four questions regarding the characteristics of the participants. The questionnaire is structured in two sections. The first section contains questions regarding respondents' age, gender, qualifications, and occupation. The second section contains questions that aim to measure the role of education in the development of Lebanese society. The questionnaire was sent using Google Forms along with an ethical consent for the participants to be signed.

The collected data were analyzed using the descriptive statistics feature of Microsoft Excel. The frequencies and distribution of responses will be presented in the next chapter of the article.

4.2. THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

Respondents from different educational backgrounds were targeted in the survey. Out of the total sample size of 80 respondents, 6.2% (5) respondents had the qualification of Brevet. 13% (11) had diplomas from technical training institutes in Lebanon, 55% (44) of the respondents had bachelor degrees or equivalent, and 25% (20) respondents had qualifications of postgraduate or above as showed in Figure 1 below.

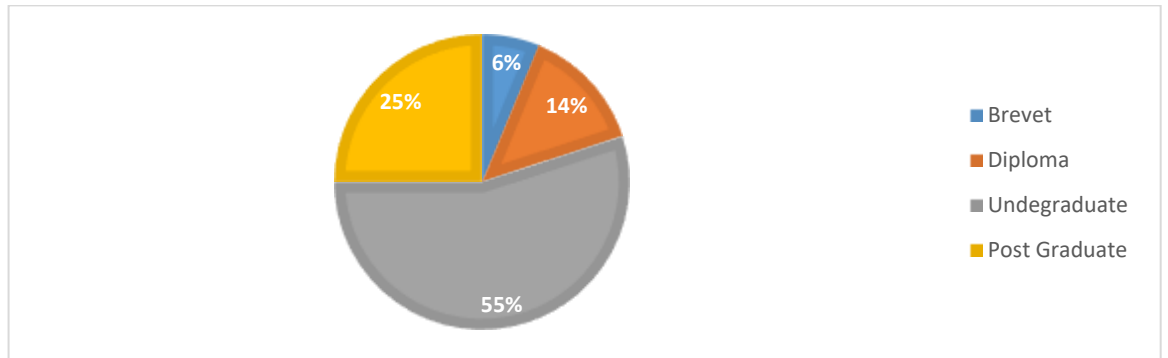


FIGURE 1: RESPONDENTS' QUALIFICATIONS
Source: Author (2021)

In order to get a holistic perspective about the education evolution and its impact on society respondents with various types of occupations have been targeted. Regarding participants' distribution by occupation, 2.5% (2) of the respondents were civil servants, 32% (26) were teachers, 15% (12) were Employees, 22% (18) were self-employed and 27.25% (22) of the respondents belonged from other professions and occupations as showed in figure 2 below.

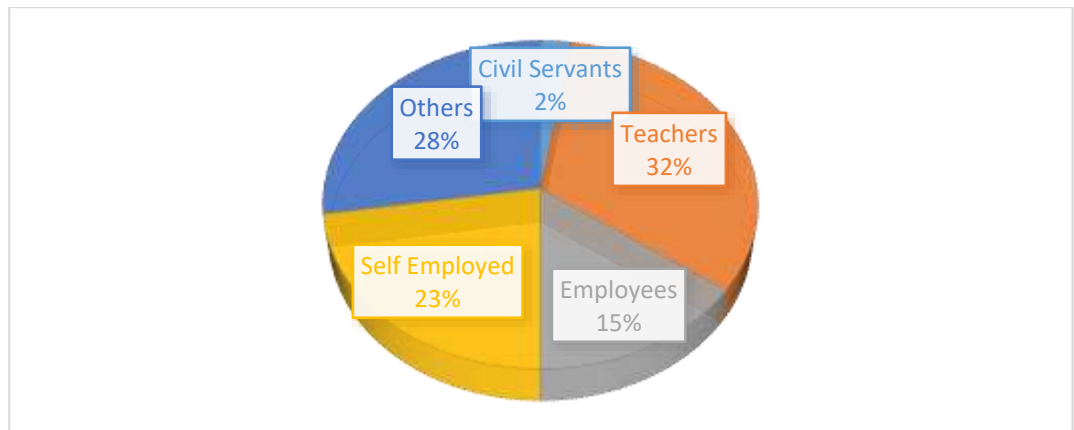


FIGURE 2: RESPONDENTS' OCCUPATIONS
Source: Author (2021)

Regarding respondents' gender, 62.5% (40) were women and 37.5% (30) of the respondents were men as showed in the figure below.

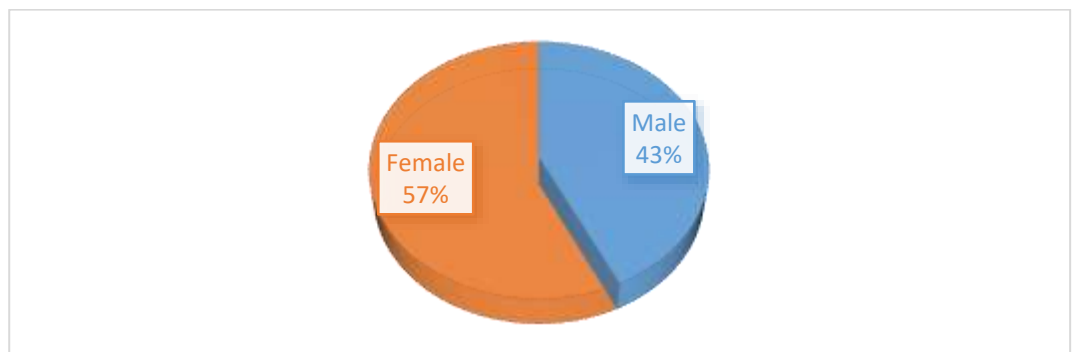


FIGURE 3: RESPONDENTS' GENDER
Source: Author (2021)

Respondents from different age groups were targeted by the author. Out of the total of 80 respondents, 13% (11) were under 20 years old. 16.2% (13) belonged to the age group of 20-25 years old, 45% (36) belonged to the age group of 26 to 30 years old, and 25% (20) of the respondents were more than 30 years old as showed in the figure below.

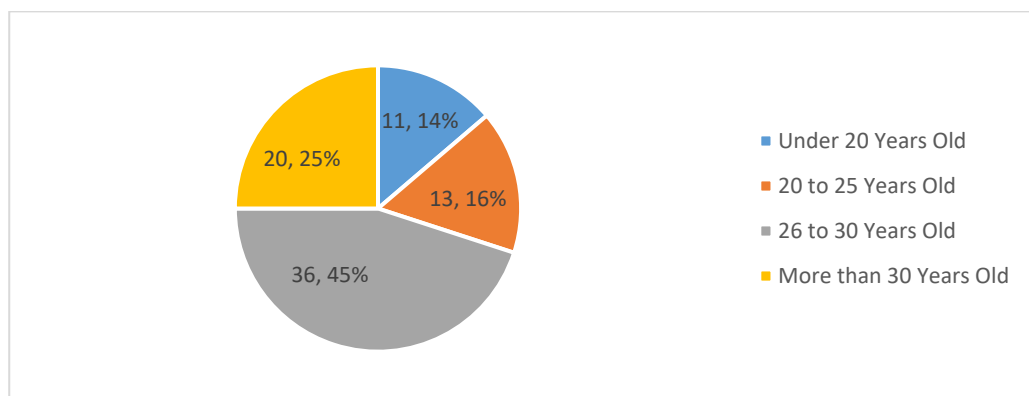


FIGURE 4: RESPONDENTS' AGE

Source: Author (2021)

5. THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

In this section, the main findings of the study regarding the perception of the education system's impact on the development of Lebanese society will be presented. Table 1 summarizes the frequency of responses gathered from all the addressed questions.

TABLE 1: THE FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES REGARDING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN LEBANON AND ITS IMPACT ON THE LEBANESE SOCIETY

No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	In my opinion, education and school are important.	0	0	0	13	67
2	In my opinion, education is already providing benefits to the community	0	7	11	18	44
3	In my opinion, the school is a good environment for educational development	0	3	7	18	52
4	In my opinion, to have a bright future, the child needs to be educated.	0	0	0	35	45
5	In my opinion, the government has completed the educational facilities in my region in Lebanon.	13	14	34	19	0
6	In my opinion, the construction of educational facilities in the area must be considered.	0	0	13	11	56
7	In my opinion, a good education level will improve the local economy	4	2	44	11	19
8	In my opinion, parents have an important role for children education.	0	0	35	31	14
9	In my opinion, entrepreneurs need to be involved in the development of education in the region	13	30	32	4	1
10	In my opinion, the education budget in the area needs to be improved	0	0	14	33	33

Source: Author (2021)

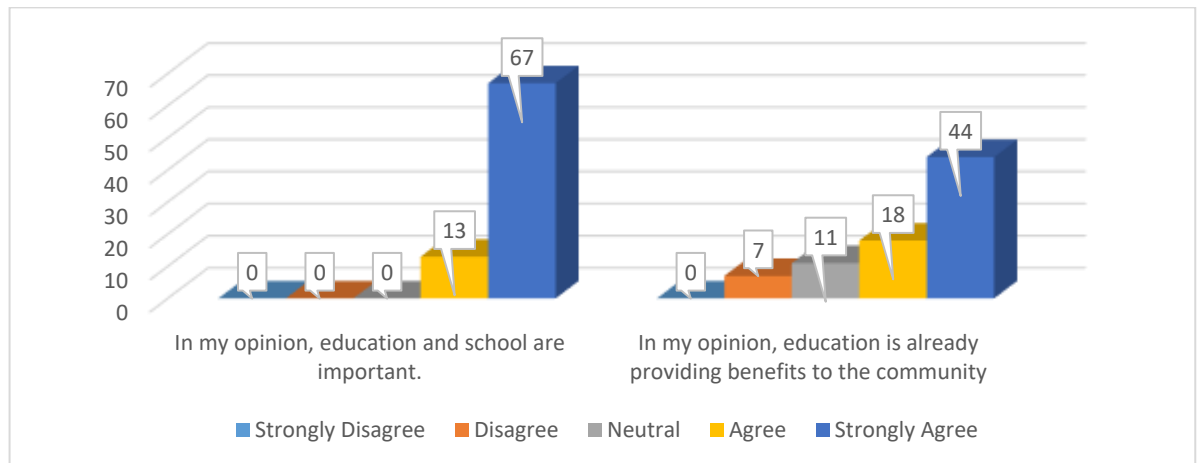


FIGURE 1: THE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES ON STATEMENT 1 AND STATEMENT 2
Source: Author (2021)

The respondents were asked about the importance of education and school for the development of Lebanese society. It can be observed that 67 respondents strongly agreed that education and school are important determinants for the development of society. 13 respondents only agreed with the presented statement. In the second statement, respondents were asked to express their opinions on whether the education system is already providing benefits to the community where 44 respondents strongly agreed, 18 respondents agreed, 11 respondents were neutral that education is providing benefits to the community and only 7 respondents disagreed with the affirmation. The analyzed data revealed that the participants consider that the Lebanese education system does not provide benefits to the community. The results also show the disparities in the respondents' perceptions regarding the Lebanese education system's impact on the benefit and well-development of the community.

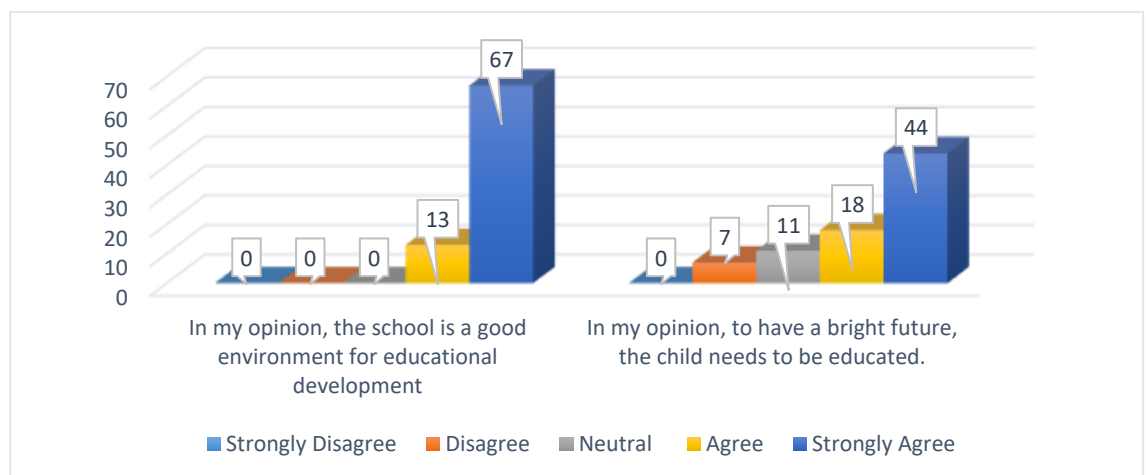


FIGURE 2: THE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES ON STATEMENT 3 AND STATEMENT 4
Source: Author (2021)

Statement 3 measured respondents' perception of the contribution of the school to educational development. 52 of the study's participants strongly agreed that school contributes to educational development, 18 respondents agreed with the statement, 7 respondents were neutral and only 3 respondents disagreed with the presented affirmation. Statement 4 was about the role of education in the children's future where 45 respondents strongly agreed that education plays an important role in the successful future of children's and 35 only agreed.

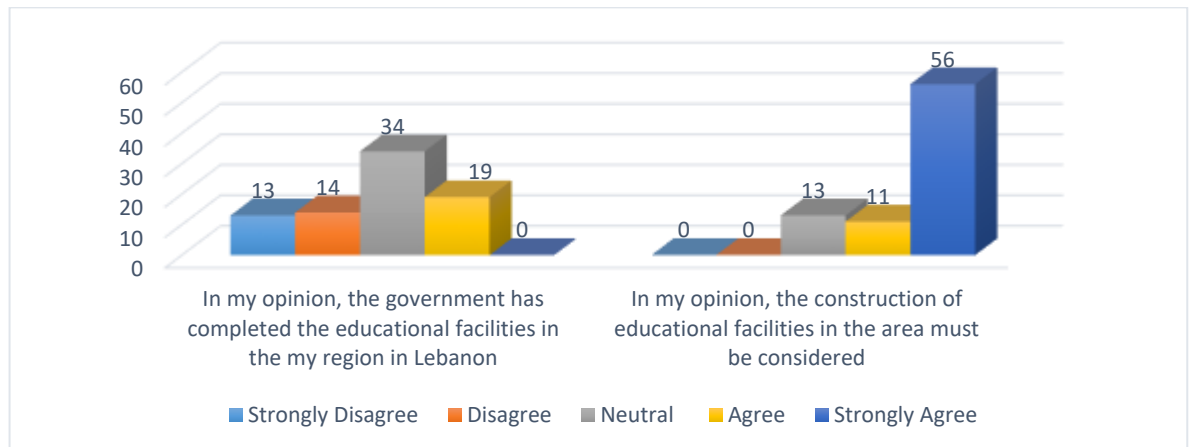


FIGURE 3: THE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES ON STATEMENT 5 AND STATEMENT 6
Source: Author (2021)

Statement 5 inquires respondents about the role of the Lebanese government in completing the educational facilities within the country. None of the respondents strongly agreed that the government has completed the education facilities, 19 respondents agreed with the statement, 34 respondents were neutral and 14 respondents disagreed. Only 13 respondents strongly disagreed with the affirmation. Statement 6 measures respondents' opinions about the need for construction of educational facilities in their area by the government where 56% strongly agreed that the government must build education facilities in their area, 11% of respondents agreed and 13% respondents were neutral. The answers reveal that respondents' perception suggests a strong need for educational facilities in Lebanon which requires immediate attention from the government.

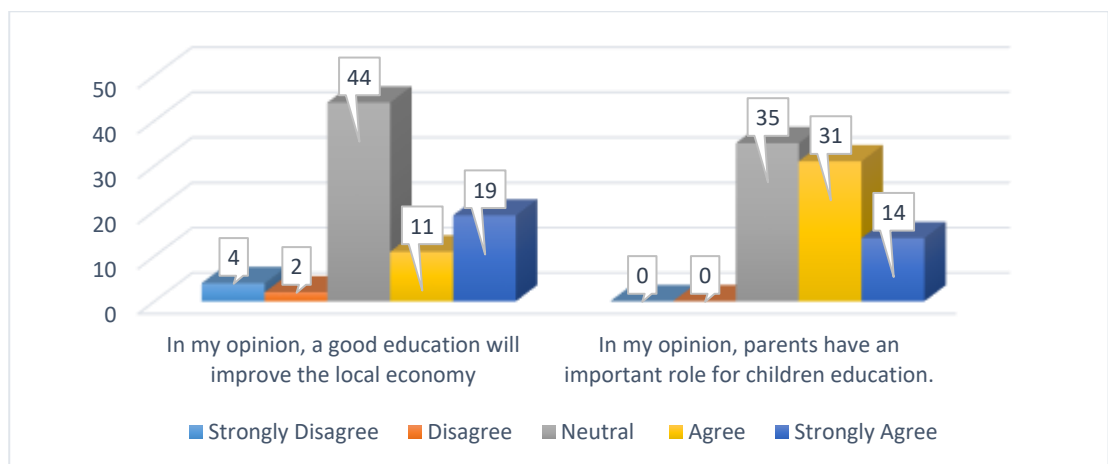


FIGURE 4: THE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES ON STATEMENT 7 AND STATEMENT 8
Source: Author (2021)

The respondents of the study were also asked about their opinion whether good education will have a positive impact on the local economic development which will also help the national economy. 19 respondents strongly agreed that education will lift the Lebanese economy, 11 respondents only agreed with the statement, 44 of respondents were neutral and 2 respondents disagreed with the opinion that education will lift the Lebanese economy. Only 4 respondents strongly disagreed. The participants were also asked about the importance of the parent's role in the education of their children where 14 respondents strongly agreed that parents play a major role in the education process of their children, 31 respondents agreed and 35 respondents were neutral. In a nutshell, it can be stated that respondents consider that parents also play an important role in children's education and that the development of the education system will have a positive impact on the Lebanese economy.

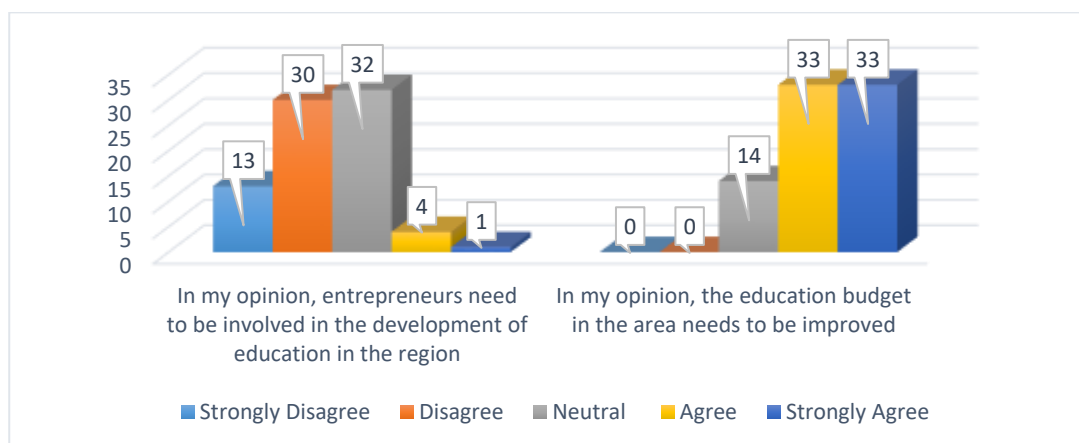


FIGURE 5: THE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES ON STATEMENT 9 AND STATEMENT 10
Source: Author (2021)

Statement 9 measured respondents' perception about the need for entrepreneurs' involvement in the development of education in Lebanon. Only 1 respondent strongly agreed that entrepreneurs should play their part in the development of education in Lebanon, 4 respondents agreed, 32 were neutral and 30 respondents disagreed with the affirmation. Only 13 respondents strongly disagreed. On average most respondents believed that entrepreneurs do not play a role in the development of the education system and considered that this is the government's competence. In statement 10, respondents were asked about the needs of raising the financial allocation for education in their region. 33 respondents strongly agreed that there is a need for significant improvement in the budget allocated to education, 33 agreed with the statement and only 14 respondents were neutral.

6. DISCUSSIONS

The main findings of the study are in accordance with previous studies conducted by DeYoung & Theobald, (1999) which revealed that education has a significant positive impact on the social and cultural dynamics of society. Furthermore, the results validated the findings from previous studies conducted by Mitra, (2015) which showed that education provides substantial benefits for individuals and society both social and economic benefits. Also, the results are similar to the studies conducted by Odit, Dookhan, & Fauzel, (2010) which revealed that education has a significant positive impact on the economic growth of a country as it subsequently increases the quality of human capital which plays an important role in the economy and raise the national productivity. Education and curriculum play an important role in the improvement of the abilities of critical thinking, which is the core objective of all International Baccalaureate (IB) programs. The diploma programs along with their core elements, give attention to the process of creative and critical thinking that allows students to make situation analyses, reexamine the challenges and come out with the best possible solution to the problem. Logical thinking skills are one of the highest-level skills which educate students in analyzing, evaluating, and creating. Critical thinking, on the contrary, is applying rationality by analyzing, synthesizing, recognizing a problem, and proposing a solution by interfering and evaluating. (Irawan, Rahardjo, & Sarwanto, 2017).

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, it can be stated that the Lebanese education system is a combination of government schools, private schools, vocational institutes and territorial institutes. The Lebanon education policies are not aligned with the education management evolution and its impact on society. The study has been conducted to investigate the impact of the education system and its evolution in Lebanon as well as the role of education in communities' development. The research revealed that education have a significant impact on Lebanese society and the strong need for education facilities and increase in budget spend on education by government.

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