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Exploring the Changing Role of Education Under the Influence of Global Neoliberal Reforms In Lebanon

By

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research aims to explore if and how neoliberal ideals- such as skills regarded necessary for the increase in market productivity and pertinent for prospective jobs, are influencing the education sector. This occurs by eliciting students and academic personnel's view on the skills and traits perceived as essential for their students to possess, and the factors that influence first year students' choice in major. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews and analysis of certain national curriculum documents. The study findings indicate that neoliberalism is in fact swaying various facets within the realm of education towards its ideal. This is seen through students gravitating towards majors that would secure job opportunities, academic personnel attaching value to traits such as kindness and discipline, and skills that are part of the 21st century umbrella, and how points in the national curriculum relate to economic and social development.

Keywords:

Neoliberalism, Ideology, 21st century skills, Human Capital Theory, Market,
Lebanese

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Table 1: Results of Questionnaires

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List of Abbreviations

1. Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD)
2. Ideological State Apparatus (ISA)
3. Institutional Review Board (IRB)
4. No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

It is almost undeniable that the world is passing through a phase, which orbits around economics and the market. The prevalence of the market place and its accompanying ideology is so powerful that its ideals have become the dominating principles of our presence. With that in mind, we can picture the neoliberal ideology as the bedrock from which everything else is derived. One such thing is education. Although there are a plethora of definitions describing the role of education, a somewhat general consensus that one dimension of education is preparing students to become active members in society. For instance, Trilling and Fadel (2009) state that education is meant to prepare students for both work and civic life. Furthermore, education is also influenced and shaped by the leading ideology. Soulè and Warrick (2015) state that there is a big discrepancy between the skills that are offered in education systems and that, which the work place demands, particularly after changes in the economy. As a result, a non-profit organization named Partnership for 21st century Learning aimed at instilling those missing skills and competencies for both work and community purposes (Soulè & Warrick, 2015).

As can be deduced, a vantage point the institution of education holds is its immense influence on participants in its institution. Education has the power to disseminate information and knowledge to its students; it has the power to pass on the norm. Education's role is not a light one; therefore, it is essential to monitor education to better understand its shaping influence, and it gives us a little peephole about its much larger counterpart- society. Educational institutions are the

institutions that are responsible for disseminating knowledge, teaching ‘right’ from ‘wrong’ and perhaps shifting the light on the grey areas. To speak in more grounded terms, this study is inspired by the prevailing authority of the neoliberal ideology on education and how and if it is manifested in Lebanon.

1.2 Problem Statement

There is an overarching influence rooted in the neoliberal ideology, where market place ideals are taking center stage. Moreover, this study is premised on the omnipresence of neoliberalism, and it strives to investigate its impact on certain aspects in the realm of education. It narrows its focus on students’ perceptions on their prospective major. For instance, a study conducted by Astin (1998) tracked the change of priorities of freshman students, as these priorities lean towards more monetary values, which alters the perception of education. In addition, the study focuses on how academic personnel describe salient traits they would like their students to possess, and if there are any hints of the growing impact of neoliberalism in the national curriculum.

1.3 The Purpose of the Study

This study sets to explore how the business world is shaping and changing our ideals, by promoting certain skills, such as 21st century skills, that would favor and benefit the market place. More frequently than not, these skills are coated as necessary skills for students to be equipped with to face the world and its challenges. The perception of education is aligning to fit into that is determined by the market place. Education, and higher education in specific, is further associated with job opportunities and salaries- courtesy of the neoliberalism ideology. It comes as no surprise that education’s reputation is

held on its ability to prepare students for the world; however, it would be healthy to take a step back and observe the profound impact of neoliberalism on education. Many ontological questions are put forth, such as: Is the role of education just to train students to become competent and successful workers in the workplace? Is our moral compass set by the market place? Where do we derive our definition of success? In addition, questions about the role education is adopting raises a few questions, such as if it is taking a functionalist and utilitarian role, what are the implications for inhabiting that role? I also intend to explore students' perceptions and how they are effected by the market's ideology.

Due to the magnitude of this topic and its subsequent spectrum of subtopics, this study focuses on two main aspects that act as reflections of neoliberalism: student skills and traits, and student perception of education in terms of prospective major and employability.

1.4 Research Context

Although one of the driving forces of neoliberalism is globalization, which renders neoliberalism immune to boundaries, the research context of this study takes place in Lebanon. Market values do have a place in Lebanon, especially in cities that have some sort of relationship with international institutions. Joseph (2005) names Lebanon as one of the Arab countries that is most exposed to global foreign influences. She states that Lebanon has a past relationship and still is a participant in the global market. Moreover, Lebanon is a member of this burgeoning globalized world. In this study, attention is given to academic personnel from various areas of Lebanon, such as Sidon and the Chouf. Students that participated in this study attend an American university located in Lebanon. These students share a common factor,

which is that of their first year in university, and the stages of deciding on a major. Jabbour (2014) states that the Lebanese government is well aware of the role and influence education has on its students, especially in terms of nurturing them. This is wise to point out as it proves how impactful and instrumental education can be, particularly when fostering citizens.

1.5 Research Questions

This study pays particular attention to skills and traits academic personnel view as essential, and how it is implemented. It looks at students' perspective on their prospective major. In addition, it examines the national curriculum in search for neoliberal underpinnings. The above is materialized into the following research questions:

1. How do students decide on their prospective major/s?
2. What are the skills and knowledge that high schools are stressing on?
3. Does the national curriculum include any neoliberal underpinnings?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it underscores the paramount role that education plays in society. The type of education an individual or a population is exposed to can have a great impact on their society. This study also shows that reverse in roles is applied. Society, especially the ones that are in tune with globalization, will undeniably have a strong influence on the education sector. Furthermore, this study sheds light on education and its function through questioning its role in society. The study also provides us with a deeper understanding behind the adoption of a certain curriculum or ideal, as it reflects on reasons behind its espousal. Most importantly, it assists us with actively reflecting on the current state of our

educational system, which allows us to make more of a conscious decision about education with regards to the trajectory it is taking. This can help with either reinforcing or strengthening its current system or reorganizing it to a system that is deemed better.

1.7 Definition of Terms

One term that is recurrent through out this study is neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is characterized as marginalizing the role of the government to that which protects the individual and the free market. In addition, it endorses a more entrepreneurial environment (Thorsen & Lie, 2006). Moreover, neoliberalism promotes the growth of the free market, and encourages activities that help in achieving that. Harvey (2005) asserts that neoliberalism is a political economic theory which is accompanied by a set of practices, that puts forth that human well-being is promoted when entrepreneurial liberties and skills are left unconstrained, in an institutional framework defined by free markets and trade, and an increase in privatization. In addition, Harvey (2005) states that neoliberalism does intend to pull human behavior under the global market sphere.

Neoliberalism in action occurs with the help of ideology. According to Jo, ideology is “considered as a belief system upon which a group of individuals depends” (Jo, 2005, p. 38).

1.8 Thesis Division

The following thesis is composed of six focal chapters. Chapter one gives an overview of the background of the study, statement of study, its purpose and context, which is followed by the research questions and the study’s

significance. To put this in perspective, chapter two is dedicated to providing a review of the literature surrounding the subject matter at hand. Chapter three shows details about the type of research selected, the instruments used, and how the data was collected and analyzed is found there. Chapter four is about the end product of chapter three, which are the results. Chapter five, the discussion, is aimed at making more sense of the reported results. Chapter six concludes this study, but includes the limitations faced, and a few suggested recommendations.

On that note, chapter one just accomplished everything it planned to, making way for chapter two, which as mentioned, intends to put things in context by skating over and reviewing literature around this research topic.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The chapter below is a review of the literature that surrounds the topic under study. It offers a background on the matters this study covers, which oscillates from different areas that put the study in context, such as providing information about neoliberalism and its relationship with education on various levels, the Lebanese context, and theories that help in the analysis of this study.

2.1 Neoliberalism and Society

It is important to briefly discuss the neoliberal ideology as various facets of its culture are reverberated in the different spheres of society, including that of education. One of the most pronounced features of neoliberalism's effect on society is the increase of inequalities at both a global and national level. However, at a rudimentary level, neoliberalism is a political ideology that is revived from the liberalist ideology. Its primary focus is on liberalism of the economy that promotes the self-regulation of the market. Its roots can be traced back to the principles propagated by the economist Adam Smith. In addition, neoliberalism is considered to be the fuel behind the growth of capitalist society. It holds a minimal view on the role of the state as it views its main function as a facilitator of the free market and individual, and promotes and fosters the entrepreneurial spirit (Thorsen & Lie, 2006). Based on the aforementioned, neoliberalism's main locus is the economy, and this has impacted the view on the role of humans and society.

Hill (2010) states that global neoliberalism reduces the value of human life as it focuses on its capitalization. Hill goes on to state that these corporations influence

the education sector as education is reduced to two main functions: spread of ideology and labor training. Students are taught skills and attitudes that are aligned with the needs of a capitalist society. Hill also brings to the forefront the differentiation in education at both the national and the global level, and how international agents at the global level are dictating the type and level of education being offered to developing countries (Hill, 2010). In a similar vein, Smyth (2010) postulates how teachers are being affected by neoliberal policies, as their profession is also shaped to serve the capitalist culture. This is seen in several aspects such as a high reliance on students' performance rank and results, and the type of material selected to be taught in classrooms (Smyth, 2010). Leistyna (2010) makes a clear link between neoliberal ideals impregnated in education policy with the examination of the "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) Policy. Leistyna asserts that NCLB policy comes with profit making motives that stem from the costs of various tests and pre-tests that ought to be taken. In addition to the scores that are set to be achieved by schools, a risk of redistribution of federal funds will be directed to private companies if the scores are not met, hence, reinforcing one aspect of the corporatization of education (Leistyna, 2010).

When examining how the operation of official knowledge works, Apple (1993) postulated that groups within power such as the people in government and power holders that have a say on the economy are capable of dictating how education policies are composed, and these policies are leaning towards ones that support the growth of the free market (Apple, 1993). Van Heertun (2010) is best able to capture the 'cynicism' that is found in neoliberal ideals influencing education, and outlines four main trends that are rooted in it. The first trend is attaching a false sense of neutrality to knowledge. The second has a high dependency on tests rather than

critical thinking. Third is an emphasis on positivist research. Finally, there is a segregation that is occurring in relation to class and race (Van Heertun, 2010).

2.2 Corporatization of Education

With the advent of globalization and neoliberalism, one of the most overt consequences of these phenomena is the strengthening and infectiousness of corporatization, which is present and in full effect in the education sphere. This can be felt in the shift and the increase of privatization of education. Blum and Ullman (2012), claim that neoliberal policies have played a huge role in the divergence from public education -conceived as a public good for all- to an orientation towards private education (Blum & Ullman, 2012). They best describe the corporate transformation the education realm is undergoing with this statement: “Education must be rebranded into a marketable product to be consumed by individuals” (Blum & Ullman, 2012, p. 369). Mills (2012) echoes similar thoughts by claiming that universities are treating and perceiving their students as customers and there is a high dependence on top-down administration (Mills, 2012). The three authors Blum, Ullman and Mills all agree that education is being packed with market values, and this is manifested in the ways educational institutions are functioning.

Following this line of argument, Metcalfe (2006) concedes with the aforementioned research, that higher education and the market place have become closely intertwined and more ties are being developed between education institutes and corporations. Metcalfe states that “market-like behaviors are becoming more noticeable” on educational sites (Metcalfe, 2006, p. 460). Metcalfe also brings to the fore the relationship between universities and corporations, by stating that the decrease in government funding has led education institutes to associate with corporations that sponsor certain services, hence increasing the market-like behavior

(Metcalf, 2006). Mills and Metcalfe both demonstrate how private services are being employed at universities. Aronowitz and Giroux (2000) share similar beliefs to Metcalfe, as they claim that lines between corporate culture and higher education have become blurry, and they bluntly state “Universities become increasingly strapped for money, corporations are more than willing to provide the needed the resources, but the costs are troubling and come with strings attached. Corporations increasingly dictate the very research they sponsor” (Aronowitz & Giroux, 2000, p. 332). They go on to demonstrate the effect of such an association by asserting that research produced by the university will become biased towards the corporate values, and how selected research ought to be of commercial value (Aronowitz & Giroux, 2000). Mills strongly agrees with Aronowitz and Giroux, as they all bring to light the restructuring of universities that mirror corporations. Reisch (2013) provides a clear instance of this, as he argues that social work education is feeling the implications of restructuring, as the department is being forced to submit to accreditation and market pressures, and even change the way knowledge is being transmitted to fit in (Reisch, 2013).

Baltodano (2012) gives us a glimpse to what is actually at stake, as she appropriates Foucault’s take on neoliberalism, which he asserts is a “form of governmentality”, and that neoliberal values strongly cultivate our very existence in correspondence to its own (Baltodano, 2012, p. 492). She sums it up beautifully by citing Brown, “The individual citizen becomes a *homo oeconomicus* and every single area of social, cultural and political life is reduced to the simple economic principles of cost-benefit, production, and efficiency” (Baltodano, 2012, p. 493).

2.3 A Change in the Role of Education

It is imperative to note the impact of marketization in the field of education,

but first it would also be wise to state its ripple effect on virtually all spheres. Olssen (2006) describes the influence of market relations in his analysis of Foucault's work by stating how the social and political circles are no longer independent of market rules but rather now assimilating under the territory of economics (Olssen, 2006). The aforementioned statement verifies the extent to which the market like ideology has shaped and reconfigured our understanding of the world, and in effect how education is changing not only to accommodate market rules, but also to train students to be contributors in the workforce, thus perpetuating the market system. Furlong (2013) quotes Tony Blair's introduction in the "The Learning Age" stating "Education is the best economic policy we have" (Furlong, 2013, p. 32). Education is becoming instrumental and is now perceived as a means to carry out the demands required by the ever so pervasive market economy.

One aspect of this can be seen in the study conducted by Brown (2015), on Pre-K school that works under government policies. Brown claims that teaching was conducted in a manner that conformed to neoliberal policies and standards, which in turn, affected pedagogy (Brown, 2015). Brown's study indicates how content material was also influenced by a neoliberal structured policy, and uses an instance from social studies where consumers and producers roles were highlighted in a lesson on the concept of community (Brown, 2015). In addition, Brown states that the educational systems that are publicly funded are preparing students as early as Pre-K on the fundamentals of the market place and introducing them to value the significance of consumers and producers. Hence, the principles of the neoliberal system are being initiated among the students (Brown, 2015). Brown's study provides but a glimpse of how the education policies are being fashioned to suit the needs of market economics, and is subsequently shaping the type of knowledge

transmission vis-à-vis educational institutions.

Sweden's education system is no exception to the rule, and schools from preschool to secondary level are in line with the dynamics of the market (Lundahl, 2012). Lundahl states that research that is quantitative in nature is more valued and accepted than one that is qualitative, and both education and educational research are considered of substance only when it is perceived as scientific knowledge. Lundahl asserts that the aforementioned occurred at a time when accountability and the effectiveness of a school were in effect (Lundahl, 2012). On a classroom level, neoliberal sways can be felt as Wilkins highlights in his study. Wilkins (2012), demonstrates in his paper that competition, which is encouraged in classrooms in the UK, is a trait attributed to economic factors related to neoliberalism and is perceived as an "entrepreneurially relevant skill development and entrepreneurial literacies that seek to close the gap between requisite learning skills and the demands of the labour market" (Wilkins, 2012, p. 201). Saunders echoes a similar statement in reference to students seeking higher education, by asserting that education is not thought of for its inherent value but is perceived as something extrinsic that is to be purchased to better a person's status in market place (Saunders, 2007). Education and its relationship with market place economics create a cycle, where one influences the other and vice versa. Education perpetuates the ethos of the market place by inheriting its values and normalizing its presence. Mccafferty's (2010) research states that skills such as competitiveness and flexibility have become inculcated into schools curricula, and the line between work and personal achievement are fused together. These skills and attitudes are taught in schools that have adopted the education enterprise (Mccafferty, 2010). This goes to show how, on the one hand, education is affected by the values of the market place, and on the other, how education is perpetuating these

values.

2.4 Human Capital and Education

The relationship between education and the economy is a fascinating one, particularly because they both help flesh the other one out. The human capital theory provides an economic filter to education, which facilitates our understanding of their dynamics, especially when set in a neoliberal climate. At the rudimentary level, it is wise to state that the economy and education are joining hands in perpetuating and solidifying a neoliberal harbor. Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008) state that human capital via education encourages the nurturing of skills essential for the production process of an economy, and in turn, plays a big role in the growth of an economy. Adhikary (2014) puts forth a similar view when discussing the relation between economy development and education. He explains in his analysis of World Bank reports that the World Bank maintains a specific outlook on education and central to that outlook is economic development. The author claims that the World Bank's concern on the quality of education is slimly defined in its ability to increase both income return and a country's economic growth, in addition to its utilitarian dimension (Adhikary, 2014).

Following the trend of studies about economic development and education, Chabott and Ramirez (2000) give an overview on the subject of human capital. They go over the theory that individuals vest more on the enhancement of their cognitive skills and abilities at school in the hopes of better return at both the individual and the societal level. In addition, they state that education has also caught the attention of international organizations and also explicate that there exists some sort of link between development and education (Chabott & Ramirez, 2000). Brown and Lauder (1996) bring more thought to the topic of human capital by providing literature about

the ‘left modernizers’ who came about as a reaction to the advent of the New Right in the United States. In essence, the authors state that the left modernizers underscore the importance of human capital and the vital skills and knowledge needed for a growing economy, and this occurs vis-à-vis education, in addition to the utilization of technology and corporate improvement. Furthermore, they put out the idea that a nation’s growth, particularly at global level, is dependent on their populaces’ skills, which is learnt (Brown & Lauder, 1996). Although the authors do not completely subscribe to the modernizer’s view, they open the door of discussion concerning the bridge between education and economic prosperity. One point that is of great relevance is the investment in human capital, which frequently takes place through skill creation and development.

On the same note, a proliferating number of researchers are raising their voice concerning the relationship between education and the market; Olssen and Peter rightly describe this phenomenon as a “new coalition between education and industry” (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p.331). Holborow (2012), raises to the surface the explicit relationship between education and the economy in Ireland, and what is being proclaimed in policies geared towards education. Holborow gives a sobering perspective on education taken from a neoliberal point of view. She states that education is being used as a means to train students for the labor force (Holborow, 2012). A report under the name of “Hunt Report” on educational policy claimed that educational institutions ought to provide their students with the set of necessary skills that are needed in the workplace. The report asserted that by doing so, this in turn would help alleviate the economy and raise the standard of living (Holborow, 2012). What resonated with the author is the stress on skills and competencies that must be taught at educational settings for the labor market and how this is translated to

human capital which further solidifies the link between education and the economy (Holborow, 2012). Holborow asserts that human capital is a fusion between “knowledge and expertise and their function and value in the economy” (Holborow, 2012, p. 101). Humans are now thought of as investment for greater profit, which gives off the red light on the legitimacy and the purpose of education. These skills and dispositions are mined from the market and transferred into the realm of education. It is alarming to learn that humans are becoming valued based on the set of skills the market perceives as profitable and essential to productivity.

Holborow does not stand alone with her thoughts on human capital, Connell (2013), uses the same line of logic in expressing her opinion on human capital. According to Connell (2013), skills and competencies that are needed in the market are being trained in educational institutions for the purpose of generating more profit in the market. She underscores the economical dimension that is now being attributed to education (Connell, 2013). The World Development Report referenced by Olssen and Peters (2005) testify to the paramount link between knowledge and development as they contend that knowledge is used in a utilitarian dimension for economic development.

Thus, human capital is related to the economic context where education is used as a facilitator of the required skills needed in the market. One such skill is creativity. Hay and Kapitzke (2009) draw out how creativity is being revised from its formal definition, one that relates to talent and distinctiveness, towards a skill and resource needed in the form of human capital. The authors argue that given the culture of competition, innovation, research and creativity are valued traits because they help administer both risk and potential ambiguities. Education is key in such circumstances as it takes up the role of trainer in preparing and fostering the

aforementioned skills (Hay & Kapitzke, 2009). It is becoming strikingly clear how instrumental education is in disseminating and nurturing a specific typology of traits tailored for the market. Morley (2001) brings up that tie between corporations and education, where the latter influences the function of the former. Morley (2001) positions that the state of being employable reverberates back to pedagogy and higher education. In such an economic light, education is perceived as training workers for the workforce by equipping them with the tools that the workforce demands. Following the same path as Hay and Kapitzke, Morley underscores the importance of flexibility, which teaches employees to be open and responsive to changes, which aids in risk management. This disposition of course is best taught in higher education institutions (Morley, 2001). Later through the paper, Morley casts light on the lack of visibility surrounding the issue of the role that leading ideologies play in determining what the necessary skills are demanded at a certain point in time. She also questions the role of higher education and its function; whether higher education should serve the requirements of market production or allow people the opportunity to acquire an education that gives them a well rounded understanding of a certain discipline (Morley, 2001). The questions that Morley addresses is imperative in helping us understand the ontological role of education; whether it is best used as a rite of passage to the workforce, or to provide an extensive comprehension about a certain subject. Furthermore, it gives us an idea about the direction education is heading towards.

Miller (2010) echoes the above sentiments when he provides an overview of the second model used in explaining the commodification in higher education. One of Miller's theories is called "skills model", which explicates that a specific bundle of skills are taught and trained to individuals that ultimately enhance their ability to

work in the economy. Miller (2010) makes space in the paper for citing the connection between education and businesses in a neoliberal context, as he mentions the shift of charge in higher education being handed to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in the UK (Miller, 2010). This link makes the connection between business skills and education more and more apparent. The generation and sharpening of skills is determined by the economy and these skills play a utilitarian role, which is to serve the economy. This raises a red flag and begs the question as to whether the skills derived from the economy are enough to provide a holistic education and raises more ontological concerns about the role of education.

2.5 Ideology, Governmentality and Neoliberalism

Louis Althusser's Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) is better able to capture the utilization of education as an apparatus that engenders the governing ideology, which in this case is neoliberalism. Ferretter(2006) explains what Althusser defines as an ISA, as several bodies/institutions, such the education, family, legal ISAs, that is put in place by the ruling class to transmit their ideology, and hence remain in control due to the transmission of their ideological discourse. Furthermore, Althusser states that in a capitalist society, the most prominent ideological apparatus is that of education. He positions that in educational institutions, students are educated about the domineering discourse and the practices that accompany it for hours during the day. In addition, Ferretter explicates what Althusser emphasizes in the relationship between ideas and action, as the former triggers the latter, in other words, the ideological institution is accountable for the attitudes and actions of members of that institution. Ideology is also responsible for individuals or in Althusser's term, subjects, perceiving themselves as liberated and self-directed individuals, however, in truth individuals are part and parcel of a more complicated set of social practices,

where ideology takes the lead in shaping the beliefs of individuals (Ferretter, 2006).

Similarly, pertinent to Foucault is his notion of governmentality. Collier states the governmentality, according to studies, is a “as a political rationality that shapes the ‘conditions of possibility’ for thinking and acting in a certain way” (Collier, 2009, p. 96). Lemke (2002) presents as part of the notion of governmentality, that it is as a means through which power holders cultivate the way subjects govern themselves. In other words, it is how individuals conduct themselves in relation to the economic and political law. The economic and political powers are able to induce a sense of self-governing through the process of governmentality, wherein individuals actions are conducted freely, however, under their society’s economic and political rationality.

2.6 Policy Reformations

One of the most telling impacts of neoliberalism on education as an institution are the reformations in its structure and policy. Connell (2013) studies the case of Australia, and chronicles the types of changes education underwent under neoliberalism on a structural level. Like many other authors, Connell makes reference to the shift from education as an institution to one of an industry. Educational policy is increasingly pushing for behavior that resembles that of a profit oriented market firm (Connell, 2013). Connell cites the reinstatement of tuition fees in higher education as a turning point in the commodification of education as opposed to rights given to its citizens, and this is also linked to an increase in competition in the realm of higher education (Connell, 2013). Another important mark of market logic’s education take over is the change in management. Under the justification of greater efficiency, staff members are constantly being watched for

better performances, in addition to flexible labor instead of fixed contracts (Connell, 2013). In terms of curriculum, one of the more noticeable changes is rooted in rigorous test assessments, which not only causes teachers to teach concepts that are related to tests, but teacher's performances are also evaluated based on their students' results (Connell, 2013). Olssen and Peters (2005) bring up the topic of accountability with the advent of the new managerial system change. Accountability and performance evaluations become the order of the day at university settings, a touch transmitted from the corporate world. The authors proclaim that a sort of numeric and countable system is put to practice, one that can also provide outputs that are measured more easily (Olssen & Peters, 2005).

Taking on a different angle, Casey, Lozenski and McManimon (2013) bring to light the historical trajectory of scientific management and how it has trickled its way through educational institutions. The advent of social efficiency as a practice in management, which is integrated into curriculum, meant that time was to be maximally utilized, and students to be trained to situate themselves in the labor market (Casey et al., 2013). For effective learning, instruction and classroom management were paired together, where management was sought to help facilitate instruction by adopting a scientific managing style that generated adequate student behavior. In addition, scientific management was encouraged by specialists in pedagogy, particularly the use of empirical data for measuring outcome achievements (Casey et al., 2013). Schools were and are transitioning in manner akin to that of the workplace. Moreover, management practices implemented in these institutions were previously used in corporate arenas, but are now extended to an educational setting which has had an impact on basically everything, from school administration to teacher student relationship.

2.7 The Influence of the Market on the Individual

Taking a magnified look at neoliberalism and its effect at the individual level, Sugarman (2015) asserts in his article “Neoliberalism and psychological ethics” that the ideology has gone so far to influence one’s identity and selfhood. Sugarman borrows from Foucault to further exemplify his point about the individual in a neoliberal framework. Through the use of the words ‘enterprising self’, the author explains that enterprise is not just limited to the economic sense of the word, but also to the identity of the individual, as individual traits and characteristics that are derived from the market place are instilled into the individual (Sugarman, 2015). In addition, Sugarman goes deeper by illustrating how a person’s self evaluation of success is built by the bricks that are used to build success in a business. The person is reared to think of him/herself as an enterprise, perceiving the self as autonomous and self-reliant (Sugarman, 2015). Sugarman also provided an educational psychology dimension to the student learner, whereby the students are trained to utilize the bag of skills he/she have, by correctly navigating through the choices offered, and accepting responsibility for the choices and decisions made (Sugarman, 2015).

An ethnographic study lead by Demerath, Lynch and Davidson (2008) exemplifies the individual traits that Sugarman was alluding to due to an increase in the need for market appeal in current neoliberal time. The trope ‘enterprising self’ is similarly brought to attention in their study, and they pay particular attention to high achievers’ presentations of their selves, which inflate their marketability (Demerath et al., 2008). The study indicated that high achieving students inventory of traits includes being conscious of the level of competition among themselves, the idea that they are the main authors and decision makers in their life; specifically when talking

about opportunities, and how success and achievement at school is directly translated to personal success and self value. Another trait was a devotion to work ethic for attaining higher grades and being constantly productive with time. Students were also able to figure out the importance of creating a network of people that was particularly useful for the market world. Higher levels of stress was correlated to students that are conscious of the level of competition encountered by students, and the new notion of being fit in the face of stress was introduced (Demerath et al., 2008). The authors conclude that these identity constructs were fueled from the competitive culture that was brought by neoliberalism (Demerath et al., 2008). The pressure of being the best is echoed by Ceplak's paper called "The individualization of responsibility and school achievement" (Ceplak, 2012). In a similar vein to Demerath et al. (2008) reviews the academic pressures and competition students in Slovenia are confronting, and how self-evaluation is linked to school grades. The good individual is synonymously used with students that work hard in school (Ceplak, 2012).

The aforementioned studies show us how profound neoliberalism actually is, as its ideals are used as the blue print for what a successful individual is supposed to look like. Students are taking the driver's seat when it comes to creating their own identity, one that has strong alliances towards market models, and therefore, it is important to note the magnitude of neoliberal ideals especially when it seeps into understanding and construction of the self.

Following a similar line of theory is McMahon's conception of behavioral economics. McMahon (2015) asserts that behavioral economics is one crucial facet employed for the expansion of Foucault's neoliberal governmentality. Behavioral economics, according to McMahon, works in favor of neoliberalism by promoting

and validating neoliberal practices. It serves to influence economic players to alter their behavior in an implicit manner, into that, that is better suited for the market (McMahon, 2015). McMahon article demonstrates the potency of the market in neoliberalism, and more importantly, its ability to shape and influence individual behavior to work in line with its logic. This is better captured in McMahon's words "One of the power effects of behavioral economics is the shaping of individual instincts, values, desires and so forth to more closely conform to the market logics of neoliberalism" (McMahon, 2015, p.148).

If one takes a step back to view the larger picture, one can conclude that neoliberalism's logic is now mushed into culture, among other things. In "neoliberalism", Bockman (2013) cites Foucault by stating that states are embracing these neoliberal ideals, thereof by arranging and organizing their governing policies in tandem with market reason such as "efficiency, competitiveness and profitability" (Bockman, 2013, p. 15). Furthermore, Bockman remarks on the entrepreneurial citizen that stems from the neoliberal culture, which requires the individual to, similarly, take control of their life (Bockman, 2013). It is therefore paramount that we give more life to how neoliberalism is swaying the different ways of life, specifically in terms of identity, culture and education.

2.8 21st Century Learning

Twenty first century skills a buzzing phrase welcomed in the education arena is now taking place in many educational settings. Deducing from the title, 21st century skills is related to the 21st century and all that comes with it. Soule and Warrick (2015) postulate that there exists a great discrepancy between the skills that are offered in education systems and that, which is required in the work place,

especially after dramatic changes in the economy. They proceed to state that a non-profit organization under the name of Partnership for 21st Century Learning, who joined hands with individuals responsible in the realms of education, business and policies to equip students with all the necessary skills and competencies that they consider important for success at both work and the community level (Soulè & Warrick, 2015). It is more than worthy to point out that the authors have blatantly indicated that even success in learning is infused with a new meaning that has a 21st century dimension to it (Soulè & Warrick, 2015). The logic behind its creation is abundant and is linked to economic success according to a poll conducted in 2007 under the auspices of Partnership for 21st century skills (Regan, 2008). Borrowing from the Partnership for 21st century skills, Regan (2008) enlists these skills as follows:

1. Information, media literacy, and communication skills
2. Thinking and problem solving
3. Interpersonal, collaborative, and self-directive skills
4. Global awareness
5. Economic and business literacy, including entrepreneurial skills
6. Civic literacy. (p. 11)

Ananiadou and Claro (2009) speak about the need for 21st century skills that stem out of the evolution of the economy and society, and subsequently, the need for students to possess the corresponding skills that the knowledge economy demands. Saavedra and Opfer (2012) similarly assert that the state of globalization, the economy, and the lack of involvement civically, gave way to importance of the creation and use of 21st century skills. Bassett (2005) brings up the dissonance in skills that are needed for achievement at both higher-level education and the market.

Trilling and Fadel (2009) devote a section in their book about the 21st challenge, specifically in terms of education. According to the authors, education's fundamental purpose is to help encourage students to be more involved in both work and civic life, and these two points are highly stressed on.

2.9 Factors at Play with Career Selection

It comes as no surprise that there are certain factors that influence one's decisions; this section focuses on the determinants or factors that sway and navigate students' selection of major. Saunders (2007) brings forth the notion that neoliberalism has some sort of impact on college students' motivation as a socioeconomic influencer. Furthermore, Saunders expounds how in line with logic of neoliberalism, education is perceived as a product to be bought for raising the students' worth in terms of human capital, and this in return, will assist in assuring a job with better pay. Making reference to motivation at the university level is pivotal as it leaks into the motivation brain sphere of students, which will eventually act as his/her drive throughout university and career years.

A study conducted by Cebula and Lopes (1982) explains the essentialness of factoring in monetary incentives in the decision process of selecting a major. The results of their study demonstrate, among other things, the weight attached to both "earning differentials" and "the change in earnings differential" when considering a major (Cebula & Lopes, 1982, p.309). Pecuniary incentives may not be the sole reason for selecting an area of study but it is a potent factor in tipping the scale in favor of a particular major. Echoing the same line of thinking, West, Newell, and Titus (2001) assert in their study, which probes into the difference in reasons for selecting a major between marketing and non- business majors, that both groups

attach significance to both career and employment prospects. One aspect where both groups deviated is their source of information, wherein marketing students relied more on popular media as opposed to non-business students that cited faculty influence (West et al., 2001). Similar to Cebula and Lopes's study, this research article helps elucidate the importance of the economy in decisional processes, as potential monetary value attached to major plays a key component in its final stages. Astin's (1998) research further verifies the monetary priorities in the decision process of choosing a major through his study of Cooperative Institutional Research program (CIRP), a survey provided to freshman students in the United States at an annual basis. The study of CIRP surveys span for 30 years between the years 1966-1996; one area in his research indicated a change in values of freshman students, wherein "being financially well off" took first place replacing the value "developing a meaningful philosophy in life" which is positioned at a fifth/sixth ranking (Astin, 1998, p.124). These changes occurred at the beginning of 1970's and Austin attributes these shifts in values to ascendancy in materialistic ideals that he claims is associated with an increase in television hours (Astin, 1998). Astin's research serves as another vindicator of the importance of returns in influencing an individual's decision on his/her major. All in all, it is worth noting how the economy and its accompanying ideals do have some force in the decision process of selecting a major.

2.10 The Lebanese Context

Before its conception Lebanon had already inherited a somewhat troublesome past that unfortunately became part of the daily struggle for the country. Frayha (2003) states that in 1943 one of the Lebanese government's top priorities was to foster unity and create a more cohesive Lebanese identity. The Lebanese government viewed education in high esteem and thought it to be a strong channel for nurturing

that sense of nationhood. Frayha (2003) walks us through the second phase in curriculum reform which magnified the role of information instead of facing the social friction the country was undergoing. The last touches in the Lebanese curriculum took place post civil war, and Frayha tells us that under this reform the curriculum pays particular attention to social cohesion, disseminating essential skills with a special focus on values Lebanon holds as essential. In addition, religious and humanistic principles are infused into students learning targets (Frayha, 2003). To take a more post-war angle and a sociological point in perspective, Khalaf (2002) enlists three main quandaries that may come in the way of peace in Lebanon: the first is about reconstruction and rehabilitation after the civil war. The second highlights the need for security and sustainable development. The third brings to light the influences of globalism and post-modernity accompanied with its effects-where Lebanon does not have much of a say on whether it chooses to participate in it or not (Khalaf, 2002). It is clear that Lebanon remains till this day, in a rather shaky state, which has also come to characterize it. In tandem, Lebanon is submerged in and is a member of the global and postmodern world, and therefore must encounter and accommodate the sways that come its way.

For the purpose of this study, documents that relate to the general targets of the Lebanese curriculum were analyzed. The documents that were selected state a number of factors that the curriculum aims to achieve. Three main areas of focus were statements that pertain to “nurturing the civilian”, “on the humanitarian and intellectual level”, and “at the social level” (CERD, 2016). Some of the statements found include topics that relate to a sense of belonging to Lebanon, acquiring a foreign language to interact with global cultures, and deciding on a job and on what is right based on students’ educational activities and guidance (CERD, 2016).

In sum, there are a plethora of factors that influence education, and the above literature focused on the economy's impact. It scanned through the varied effects and results neoliberalism has on education. It also gave a brief overview of the Lebanese situation and factors that influence career choice. The upcoming chapter is intended to outline how this study was carried out and explicate the choice of instruments.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The methodology chapter presents the research approach and the various instruments that were used for data collection, the rationale behind the choice of instruments, and how the data was analyzed. In addition, it clarifies credibility and trustworthiness of the instruments, and any ethical issues connected to this study.

3.1 Research Design

This study follows an exploratory design and is qualitative in nature. Due to its aims, it follows the interpretive philosophical perspective as it seeks to uncover whether or not school systems and knowledge are shaped by market logic. According to Merriam (2009), the interpretive research intentions are to understand and interpret people's experiences and to construct the reality they are living in. Interpretive research is appropriate for this research, because it too, strives to interpret and understand the current ideals behind school systems and the types of skills it disseminates in classrooms. This is accomplished via interviews and questionnaires conducted and distributed to both academic personnel and students respectively. Purposive sampling was used as the selected population provided specific data that was required for this research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010). This research intended to interview academic personnel, such as principals in specific, and gather insight on first year students' perspective on factors that influence their decision in major.

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1 Questionnaires

The first instrument that was used was questionnaires that were distributed to 66 first year students in an American university located in Lebanon. The rationale behind distributing questionnaires to first year students is to get a sense of how they perceive higher education, as it is a strategic time in their lives; a bridge between high school and university. Furthermore, being fresh graduates out of high school, students at one level, are able to portray via the answers of the questionnaires, their perception on higher education that is most likely shaped by their years in high school. On another level, it provides us with their perception on how the market may influence their choice in major, and how deciding on a major holds certain baggage, such as job opportunities and salaries related to the job.

This goes to show how education in itself is not isolated, specifically higher education, as there are a plethora of factors that sway a student's choice in major. In addition, the choice of using questionnaires with first year students seemed to be the appropriate due to the lack of time students have between their classes. The questionnaires are also more appealing and familiar to first year students, as there is a fear that students may be more reluctant to participate in interviews. Furthermore, questionnaires are quite blatant and concise, in both comprehension of questions and in data collection (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyan, 2012).

3.2.2 Semi-Structured Interview

Merriam (2009) postulates that semi-structured interviews' words and questions are less structured and there is more flexibility with both questions and responses. This study aimed to maintain some space for change in correspondence to

the principal's responses. Semi-structured interviews hold both structure and liberty, which is needed in this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 5 school principals around Lebanon in areas that range from Metn, Shouf and Sidon. Schools in Beirut were not particularly receptive to the idea of being interviewed or perhaps I encountered a major time conflict (of months) between the principal and me. The idea of interviewing school principals from around Lebanon helps this study, as it gives it a broader reflection on the perspective of education from various geographical locations in Lebanon. Aligned to one of the descriptors of semi-structured interviews, I was able to bend my questions on the basis of the interviewees' responses. The direction the interview was orchestrated was centered on questions about skills and traits a high school attributes as significant. The questions aimed at acquiring academic personnel's perspectives on skills, characteristics and traits they identify as important for their students to behold, in addition, to how they plan to achieve these skills and traits via school pedagogy and curriculum.

3.2.3 Content Analysis

Documents related to general goals for the Lebanese curriculum that are located in The Center for Educational Research and Development's (CERD) website were selected for document analysis. The documents were translated from Arabic to English for analysis purposes. The basis for analyzing documents linked to the Lebanese curriculum is to obtain a better understanding of what the curriculum strives to do, and if there are any inclinations towards neoliberal policies. Bowen (2009) claims that documents can serve multifarious functions such as providing context and confirming findings. The documents that were chosen are related to the general targets of the curricula. The documents that were studied give an overview of

targets that focus on nurturing the civilian, the humanitarian and intellectual level, and talks about the social level. The reason behind selecting these documents is to acquire an overview these documents have stored in them, as opposed to focusing on the details found in subject content curriculum.

3.3. Constructing of Instruments

3.3.1 Questionnaire

The construction of the questionnaire aimed at capturing three main things. The first is a time frame of when and if students decided on their major during their high school years. The second is the extent of their high school's influence on their decision and finally, how much of an impact the market and a job's salary has on the perception of a major and the job. The literature review and the first research question helped in the construction of the questionnaires. (See Appendix A to check the questionnaire used for this study). In addition, the questionnaire was piloted with a group similar to the target population of first year students. The students were asked to respond to the questionnaire to ensure its clarity and content. The students were able to respond to the questionnaire without any trouble.

3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interview

The design of the semi-structured interview was engineered around the idea of gathering insight about the skills and traits academic personnel deem important and essential for their students to have (see Appendix B to read the semi-structured interview questions).

3.4. Data analysis and Procedure

3.4.1 Questionnaires

For the analysis of questionnaires the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to generate the results of the questionnaires. It specifically focused on the number and percentages that students agreed, disagreed or were indecisive about. After inputting the respondents' answers the aggregate was used for analysis. In addition, since a Likert scale was adopted similar ratings were locked together: strongly agree and agree with were clumped together, as were strongly disagree and disagree with, which resulted in 3 options, namely, agree, disagree and undecided. This is thought to give better clarity when analyzing the results. Next, the results were interpreted in relation to the questions that were asked. The analysis took a comparative approach, and this occurred by examining two questions that differ in a nuanced manner. Finally an interpretation of the results was produced based on how the students responded to the questions.

3.4.2 Semi-Structured interviews

The first step that took place was transcribing all 5 of the interviews. After skimming through the transcripts a table was created with outlined commonalities and differences among the 5 interviews. Coding was inked out again and again through out the process. At the onset, coding was used to search for common aspects in all the interviews and then for differences. In addition, an undefined category was created to include features of the interview that did not pertain to any one specific theme. Open coding in specific was used, as sentence-by-sentence coding was implemented, and the categories were deduced from the content and decided on by the researcher. The choice to code the semi-structured interviews worked well for

this analysis. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), coding is likened to tagging as it attaches a specific theme to a chunk of information prior to any sort of analysis. In addition, the authors state that codes have multifarious levels of depth to them, which is chosen in accordance to their content. Although the organization of the interview initially started by enlisting common themes in accordance to question, it was soon realized that not all interviews abided by the template of the questions. Given that the semi-structured interviews were centered on skills and traits, there was a particular focus on this. Another focus was on the description of an ideal graduate, which too, encompasses characteristics perceived as fundamental by academic personnel.

3.4.3 Content Analysis

Similar to the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, analyzing the documents on CERD's website included coding. A brief statement about the document is listed. The document was then coded into different parts, however, selected statements that pertained to this specific research was pondered into further. The chosen statements were then analyzed. The basis of the analysis is premised on aspects of the statements that allude to neoliberal ideals. For instance, in one of statements analyzed, a link between education and economic and social development was drawn. Another statement analyzed the education sector's influence on students' ideals about their prospective career.

3.5. Credibility and Trustworthiness

Three essential instruments were appropriated to gather strong and solid data about the study at hand. Piloting ensured credibility of the two instruments. The analysis of questionnaires, interviews, and documents provide insight from three

different perspectives. Triangulation was achieved when the three instruments yielded results that highlight the potency of neoliberal ideals and the influence of the market.

Due to the nature of this study, reliability per definition is difficult to achieve. Cohen, et al. (2011) provide a number of arguments around the difficulty of acquiring reliability in a qualitative study as opposed to a quantitative one. They suggest a look at other factors such as dependability and trustworthiness. I believe that this study is in line with the above two.

3.6 Ethics

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this research, and therefore, this study is consistent with its policies. The study also ensures confidentiality and anonymity to those that participated in this research. Participants in this study occurred at a voluntary basis, and were given the consent form before their involvement.

The methodology section aims at giving the reader an overview on how the study was executed, and the reasoning behind the choice of instruments. It illustrates how data was collected and analyzed, and brushes upon issues like reliability, validity and ethics. The upcoming chapter is the result of the fruits of this chapter, which makes it quite right to call it results.

Chapter Four

Findings

This chapter is compartmentalized into three different sections. The first gives focus to the results of the questionnaires that were distributed to first year university students. This is followed by reports of the findings from the semi-structured interviews that were conducted with academic personnel. The final section is dedicated to the analysis of documents that stem out of the Lebanese curriculum, under the title of general targets of the curriculum.

4.1. Results of Questionnaires

Table 1: Results of Questionnaires				
	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	Blank
1. I decided on my major during my high school years.	50 (75.8%)	9 (13.7%)	7 (10.6%)	-
2. I will choose my major based on the highest chance of getting a job.	35 (53%)	21 (31.8%)	10 (15.2%)	-
3. Salary plays an important factor on the selection of my major.	43 (65.1%)	15 (22.7%)	8 (12.1%)	-
4. I will choose my major based on my passion towards it.	51 (77.2%)	7 (10.6%)	6 (9.1%)	2
5. My school system encouraged me to decide on my major.	24 (36.3%)	34 (51.5%)	8 (12.1%)	-
6. My job title will define how successful I am.	20 (30.3%)	32 (48.5%)	14 (21.2%)	-
7. I believe that some majors are more valuable than others.	26 (39.4%)	32 (48.5%)	8 (12.1%)	-
8. The current trend in the job market will influence my choice in major.	32 (48.5%)	22 (33.4%)	12 (18.2%)	-
9. I believe that my years in school will help me decide on my major.	44 (66.6%)	16 (24.3%)	6 (9.1%)	-
10. My idea of a valuable major is related to its prospective job offers.	35 (53%)	16 (24.2%)	15 (22.7%)	-

The results of the questionnaires reflect a number of factors. One salient factor this questionnaire focused on was how and if the prospect, the economy and the job market have a say, and how loud of a say in influencing the decision process of first year students. On the statement of the current trend in the job market having an influence on their choice in major: 48.5 % of the students agreed to the notion that the current trend in the job market will influence their decision on selecting a major, while 33.4 % disagreed and 18.2% were undecided about whether it has an impact on their decision. On a similar note, when the students were asked about deciding on their major based on the highest chance of getting a job, more than half of the students, 53%, agreed to that statement, while 31.8% disagreed leaving 15.2% indecisive about it. The 2 above mentioned statements are focused on capturing how the job market influences a student's choice in major, but the results show that students preferred the idea of picking a major that is most likely to secure them a job in the future. Remaining in the tune of market influence, the prospective salary to be received also helped in swaying a student's decision on their major: 65.1% agreed that salary is an important factor to consider while deciding on a major, 22.7% disagreed, and 12.1% were indecisive about its impact. After adding the influence of salary in the mix of deciding on a major, students clearly favored the prospect of acquiring a higher salary, with 65.1% agreeing to salary playing a role in the decision process.

Taking a different angle on the perspective of major and job opportunities, students were asked to respond to whether they believe that some majors are more valuable than others: 30.3% of the responders agreed to that, 48.5% disagreed, and 12.1% were undecided. This aforementioned statement was absent from anything related to job opportunities, which brings us to the next statement that infused the

idea of job opportunities being linked to the value of a major. “My idea of a valuable major is related to its prospective job offers” is what was stated, and 53% of the respondents agreed to that idea, while 24.2 % disagreed and 22.7% were indecisive. Although the 2 statements are similar in terms of capturing whether students perceive one major to be more valuable than others, there seemed to be a sort of discrepancy when the thought of job opportunities became attached to the value of a major. When it was blatantly stated that job opportunities were linked to the value of a major, more than half the students concurred to that statement as opposed to 39.4% that agreed to the notion that some majors are more valuable than others. Again, the prospect of job opportunities being associated with a major is observed. On a different level, students were asked to respond to whether they believed their job title defines how successful they are, and 30.3% believed it to be true, while 48.5% disagreed and 21.2% were undecided. Students took more of a detached impression here, disassociating their job title with how they perceive self-success.

With all that talk surrounding job chances, the market and majors, a good proportion of the respondents agreed to choosing their major based on their passion towards it, with 77.2% agreeing to that statement, 10.6% disagreeing and 9.1% of the respondents were indecisive about it. In other words, many of the students will base their decision on their liking and passion towards their major. However, there was no question to counter that, such as if they would choose a major that would guarantee a job over a major that they are passionate about yet may not secure a job in the future.

Students started thinking about their majors during their high school years, which meant that whatever curriculum or pedagogy was used during those years, it had an impact on their decision process. 75.8% agreed that they decided on their

major during their high school years, 13.7% disagreed and 10.6% were undecided on that matter. When pondering a little deeper on if students believed that their years in school helped them in deciding on a major: 66.6% believed it did, 24.3% disagreed and 10.6% were undecided. This gives more depth to the high school's role in affecting students' choice of major. Taking it a step further, students were explicitly asked if their school system encouraged them to decide on their major: 36.3% agreed that it did, 51.5% disagreed and 12.1% were indecisive. Although 75.8% of the students agreed that they decided on their major during their high school years, only 36.3% reported that their school system encouraged them to make a decision. This may suggest a number of things, one being that schools would either encourage or discourage certain types majors, or there was no or perhaps not enough guidance related to deciding on a major. In addition, schools may have not supported or promoted a type of major students were interested in.

In sum, students' responses did generally gravitate towards securing job opportunities and they valued majors that they perceived would achieve that. In addition, students factored in the prospect of income when deciding on a major. Students did have an idea of the major they would select back from their high school years, however, more than half of the students believed that their school system did not encourage them to pursue their choice in major.

4.2 Results from the Interviews

The 5 interviews shared a lot of common ground in terms of what academic personnel perceive as valuable skills that they would like their students to possess. The skills and competencies that academic personnel highlighted can be divided into two categories, although both categories are interrelated and often merge with each

other. The first category has to do with performance, while the second is related to 21st century skills and what it encompasses.

One area where all of the 5 interviews shared commonality is their perception of essential qualities academic personnel would like their student to hold, namely, kindness/politeness/respect, listening skills, discipline and a strive for research/learning and knowledge. All 5 interviews that were conducted included some inclination towards a type of performance. Kindness, politeness, respect were almost always mentioned by all 5 of the interviews. In one interview, kindness was especially important because of the Lebanese context we are living in. Another interview claimed that respect was important especially in terms of sharing ideas and working in groups.

Next in line was underscoring the use of listening skills during class, which also spills into respect, as some of the interviewees stated that part of listening was respecting other students' opinions. 3 out of the 5 interviews explicitly stated that listening was one skill that their school was focusing on- to have their students practice their listening skills and cooperate with each other respectfully. 4 out of 5 of the interviews brought up activities that would typically involve teamwork and cooperation as a means through which listening skills and cooperation were exercised as part of their pedagogy. One principal stated that she's encountering a lack of listening skills, and also promotes group activities that nurture listening skills. She also dedicates time to help strengthen listening skills. Working in teams and groups was another popular quality that schools were motivating and actively organizing, as many other salient traits academic personnel perceive as essential are imbued in teamwork. In addition, listening skill was such a favorable trait that it was featured in the description of an ideal student. Discipline was also highly stressed on

in 3 out of 5 interviews, which similarly falls under a sort of performance category. Working on discipline was on top of the list in one of the schools, and it was the main priority for the year to have their students act in a more disciplined manner. In addition, another interviewee stated that it is in the presence of discipline that learning can take place. Respecting rules and regulations also comes with the discipline package, and similarly, the Lebanese context is why it especially stressed on.

Another area that was underlined is the adaptive quality, albeit stated differently during the interviews. One interviewee described it as “quick thinker” and “thinking on your feet” or resilient, and getting out of one’s comfort zone. In more academic terms, critical and logical thinking were emphasized in 3 out of the 5 interviews. It was treated as a significant matter in their school, as quite a lot of pedagogical assignments were catered to fostering that type of thinking. Also, problem based and research projects were a couple of activities specified during the interviews as methods for promoting critical thinking. In addition, all of the interviewees put forth the imperativeness of students having a sort of innate drive for reading and research, and having some sort of knowledge level. This was also raised in the description of an ideal student, as someone that craves for more knowledge. Most of the academic personnel spoke of counseling, constant advising or monitoring as means to ensure that preferable qualities are comprehended by their students. Teachers played an important role for the school’s vision of their students, and they were cited as models and facilitators of specific qualities, such as ensuring that listening and cooperation is taking place appropriately in the classroom. Students were also encouraged to participate in organizations and NGOs that are outside the school. 4 out of 5 academic personnel voiced it as something they would like to see

in their ideal graduate, and it is also perceived as a character builder. Furthermore, it is highly recommended by 4 out of the 5 interviewees that their students partake in societal projects that contribute to the Lebanese society. 2 out of the 5 interviews named participation in model congresses as a method in which students are given the opportunity to hone skills that their school assesses as important, such as communication and leadership skills, in addition, it gave their students a sort of bridge to university, and students were given an idea of why these skills are useful.

To sum, many of the learning activities that the interviewees revealed involves group and teamwork, cooperation among peers, problem based activities and research projects. In addition, students were encouraged to participate in organizations and NGOs. Kindness, politeness, listening skills and discipline were also highlighted as important by the academic personnel.

The aforementioned covers most of the common ground shared between all 5 interviewees, but there were certain aspects that a school prioritized as important over others. One such as aspect is the incorporation of technology and its familiar use in research based projects. Although this may have been implied in one other interview, the application and the utilization of technology is seen as imperative in this particular school. The same school also listed 21st century skills as essential for their students to acquire. In addition, the school attaches high value to effective communication among students and is worked on in more academic settings such as model congresses and other activities. Another school added significance to leadership skills, which is part of the 21st century skills family, and called on problem based and project based learning, as methods to cultivate those skills. Congress model, extra curricular activities, and student council were also methods used for building leadership qualities.

4.3 Document Analysis

The following documents can be accessed on CERD's website under the title of general goals for the curriculum that I have translated from Arabic to English.

The first document outlines points about nurturing the civilian "تكوين المواطن" (CERD, 2016). The document underlines several points some being: the importance of identity, belonging to Lebanon, and having a strong affiliation with the Arab identity. This can also be seen in a point that states the use of the Arabic language in a proficient manner and in all fields. In addition, students are encouraged to protect and develop Lebanon's natural environment (CERD, 2016).

The document takes more of a macro and global perspective when it lists "المتقن لغة أجنبية واحدة على الأقل تفعيلاً للانفتاح على الثقافات العالمية واغنائها والاغتناء بها" which is roughly translates to "speaking at least one foreign language for the purpose of being open to global cultures, and enriching them and being enriched by them" (CERD, 2016). This statement alludes to the idea of globalization, being interconnected and open with other cultures, promoting a kind of exchange between different cultures. Furthermore there is a sense of preparedness for students, as they need to acquire a foreign language for the prospect of dealing with foreign and international cultures.

A point stated in the document that hints on prospective jobs and the role education plays in orienting and preparing the student is found. It reads "القادر، من خلال العملية التربوية، والارشاد والتوجيه، على الاختيار الحر لمهنة المستقبل والارتقاء بها عن طريق التعلم الذاتي"

roughly translated to "is capable through his/her educational activities, guidance and direction towards what is righteous or best for his/her interest, is able to freely pick a

future job and being promoted in it through the path of self- education”(CERD, 2016). A lot can be deduced from that statement, first, it suggests that the education sector does influence and shape student ideals about jobs and the job market, this specifically can be viewed when students are “guided” and advised on doing what is right. Students are given the liberty to select their major freely, however it is expected of them to do so under the guidance of their school’s curriculum. This is essential to bring up because the statement verifies the understanding that a school’s system and pedagogy used does in fact shape students’ outlook about the world, and it is the school’s system that instills this outlook. Also, the last part of the statement touches upon the idea of lifelong learning and growth. It is interesting to note that this goes under nurturing the civilian document, and one can conclude from this point that part of becoming a good citizen is being guided to find the right job.

Another statement, which is interesting to be part of this document, is:

” المدرك أهمية التكنولوجيا والقادر على استخدامها وتطويرها والتفاعل معها بشكل واع ومتمكن“

which translates to “is capable of understanding the importance of technology, and is capable of using it and developing it, and is capable of interacting with it in a careful and precise manner”(CERD, 2016). Similar to the aforementioned statement it does not adhere to the general theme of the document. In addition, it is not clear how the student is supposed to “interact with it in a careful and precise manner”, as questions about the function of technology is brought up. Is technology used for the purpose of research and information acquisition or is it more about being familiar with using technology. There can be several interpretations of this statement due to its lack of clarity.

Moving on to the next document that is called “على المستوى الفكري والانساني”, or “On the humanitarian and intellectual level” (CERD, 2016). This document shares some common themes with the nurturing of the civilian document in that it tries to highlight the loyalty to Lebanon, however, the humanitarian and intellectual level document stresses more on principles, humanitarian conventions, and laws that are specified in the Lebanese constitution.

"الالتزام بالثقافة الوطنية وبوجوب الانفتاح على الثقافات العالمية والقيم الانسانية وعلى مستجدات العصر، علماً بأن هذا الالتزام يشكل مشاركة ايجابية في تطوير هذه الثقافات واغنائها والاغتناء بها"

that translates to “being committed to national culture, being open to worldwide cultures and humanitarian principles pertaining to new or modern developments, knowing that this commitment contributes to a positive contribution to developing these cultures, enriching them and being enriched by them”(CERD, 2016). This statement is similar to the point referenced from the first document that states the acquisition of a foreign language for an easier exchange with global cultures, however, in this case being committed, and in a sense grounded in the Lebanese national culture will be helpful in a potential cultural exchange. The idea of globalization and interconnectedness to other cultures is also brought up here, as is the idea of change when using the words modern development in the above statement. It is also interesting to note that the statement does suggest a sort of influence from other cultures (and the Lebanese culture), as the student will be “enriched by them”.

The third document talks about the social level and is titled "على المستوى الاجتماعي". Listing several points, a few being about the commitment to the law for achieving equality and respecting individual/societal freedoms that is part of the

human rights convention, and education being a right for every individual (CERD, 2016). There is a point that is dedicated to the education and its role in social and economic development. It reads:

"التربية من أولويات الأعمال الوطنية، فهي ضرورة اجتماعية، وهي عمل جماعي شامل، متنوع ومتطور تخطط له الدولة وتحمل مسؤوليته في إطار التخطيط العام للتنمية الاجتماعية والاقتصادية، وتعتمد فيه إلزامية التعليم تدريجيا حتى بلوغ التلميذ سن الخامسة عشرة"

and this translates as "Education is one of the priorities of national activities, it is a social necessity, and is a group activity that encompasses a lot of diversity, development and the state plans for it and is responsible for it in the context of general planning for the social and economic development, and it depends on making education mandatory on different levels, till the student is 15" (CERD, 2016). This point underscores the link between education and social/economic development. It gives education a utilitarian role in that it is used to serve certain purposes, especially in terms of social and economic development. With that in mind, it may also cater the content of education for the purpose of economic and social development. The perception of education can be altered by the understanding that it is supposed to hold a utilitarian role for the purpose of growth and development.

To close, the findings pointed out several factors, and due to the purpose of this study, particular attention was paid to economic influencers. Questionnaires gave us a look into factors that influence student's choice in major, whilst the results of the semi-structured interviews present skills and traits regarded as fundamental for students to embody. Content analysis of the general targets of the Lebanese curriculum is also analyzed in search for neoliberal tendencies. A common point seen in all three sections of the results is the presence and influence of ideals that pertain to the market. Chapter

five, which comes next, works to make better sense of all of the above, and align the literature and findings into a more complementary perspective.

Chapter Five

Discussion

This chapter aims at shedding more light on the results by comparing some of the literature and showing either a concurrence with the results or a deviation from them. It is divided into three sections, wherein each section intends to answer a research question.

5.1 How do students decide on their prospective major/s?

The results of the above posed question show that the market does have an influence on the decision process of students. More students agreed to the statement of the current trend in the job market influencing students' choice in major. Olssen (2006) states, through the use of Foucault, that market rules do spill into different the circles of social and political. The aforementioned statement and the research question is testament to that, as this discussion will come to show how the market is influencing the decision process, and therefore the cognition of students to align to its preferences. According to the results more than half the respondents agreed to the notion that their decision on their major is attached to the highest chance of acquiring a job. This line of thinking follows West et al. (2001), as their study illuminate that both groups perceived both career and employment prospects as fundamental when deciding between marketing and non-business majors. It is apparent that the selection of a major and prospects of a career are interrelated, as students are weighing in the opportunities of work that accompany their choice in major. In addition, this conforms to Saunders sentiments on education not being valued for its intrinsic qualities, but rather seen as something extrinsic, as something that can be acquired to up an individual's position in the market place (Saunders, 2007).

This resonates further with two statements related to the value of a major. The first statement enquired into whether respondents believed that certain majors were more valuable than others; only 39.4% believed some majors were of higher value. However, when job opportunities were then affiliated with the value of a major, the percentage rose to 53% of students conceding to that notion. This reverberates back to Saunders and his thoughts on education as an extrinsic value. In addition, the above sentiments agree with Baltodano (2012) as she claims that neoliberal values via Foucault's governmentality are shaping our lives in accordance to these principles. The case of students injecting or inculcating thoughts about the market and infusing it with values verifies this hypothesis. More so, education is influenced by market like ideals, as students hold various perspectives on the worth of a major, which according to this study is determined by its career prospects.

Another focal statement that generated one of the highest percentages is the point on the influence of salary in choice of major. 65.1% of the respondents perceived salary to be an important factor in the selection of a major. This falls in line with Cebula and Lopes (1982) study on how pecuniary motives may not be the single reason behind students selecting a discipline, but a salient factor that students factor in whilst making their decision. A high percentage of agreement was also received with respondents claiming to have decided on their major during their high school years, albeit a higher percentage of students disagreeing that their school system encouraged or guided their decision in major. However, what these statements highlight is the significance of high school years on students' mental schemata. Brown (2015) asserts in his study how material taught in school, and as early as Pre-K is not only influenced by neoliberal policies, but by content related

material passed down in classrooms. This study goes to show how formative school years are in cultivating thoughts about the market, and perceptions on education.

A deviation from my presupposed assumption is the statement on job title defining the success of the individual, which yielded 30.3% of students conceding to that statement. Students did not agree to the idea of their job title meshing with their perception of success. In addition, 77.2% made claim that their decision on their major is based off of their passion towards it.

All in all, the second question does follow in the footsteps of the first question, where education can also be perceived as holding a functionalist property, when the decision on a major is influenced by the market and its job prospects. Furthermore, education, and specifically higher education, can also be perceived as the mediator between high school and the job market.

5.2 What are the skills and knowledge that high schools are stressing on?

According to the results, for the demand on kindness, respect, politeness and discipline, I think it essential to understand this in a Lebanese context. More frequently than not, these traits were overtly stated with affiliation to the Lebanese environment. This could be analyzed in a number of ways. First of all, it is a reflection of the context we are living in, where discipline is highly stressed on because of the turbulent state of the nation. From Lebanon's early days, according to Frayha (2003), education was accorded an instrumental role in creating social cohesion and unity. Education in present day, and in a similar light as the above mentioned, can be perceived as instrumental in fostering these traits that allow for more harmony and peace in a rather fractious nation. Academic personnel find it is

paramount to instill these traits in their students because they see the need for creating a more harmonious class environment - as cited by one of the interviewees - discipline is needed for learning to take place.

On a different level, listening and respect are important skills that contribute to the enactment of 21st century skills. Listening and respect are vital skills needed for the successful exercise of collaboration and teamwork in a classroom. Academic personnel spoke of quick thinkers, critical and logical thinking that are also promoted through problem based and research projects, as significant qualities for their students to possess. A drive for reading and research was cited by academic personnel, as was participating in communal projects. Albeit not as prevalent among academic personnel, but communication and leadership skills were also brought up.

The above qualities correspond to some of the 21st century skills that according to Regan (2008) encompasses collaboration, thinking and problem solving, leadership, communication and taking charge of one's self. Academic personnel do attach importance to both skills that fall under the umbrella of 21st century skills, and traits that are perceived to help foster a more harmonious Lebanese environment.

Twenty first century skills were first conceived according to Soulè and Warrick (2015) due to a gap between the skills that are needed in the workplace and those that are found in educational institutions. The emergence of these skills was made to form the bridge between educational institutions and the market. What can be deduced is that the skills that are currently in vogue, such as collaboration and logical thinking, are perceived as essential and are injected into educational institutions, because the market place deems them as imperative for success in their arena. Ananiadou and Claro (2009) also adhere to the central principle of 21st century skills, as skills that are needed for the knowledge economy. This falls in line with

Hills (2010) wherein he states that the education sector does disseminate skills and attitudes that work in parallel to a capitalist society. Twenty first century skills are put in place because the market sees a lack of skills that are needed for its successful functioning, and subsequently, these skills are then circulated to the education apparatus for its generation.

By maintaining the same tone, the human capital theory can also participate in this discussion. Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008) do address the notion that human capital is generated through education as the latter perpetuates skills that are pivotal for the expansion of the economy. Parallels can be drawn between 21st century skills and the idea of human capital as they both propose the distribution of skills that are required by the market place. A clear relationship emerges between twenty first century skills and human capital, as the two work for the market place and essentially for growth of the economy. Furthermore, they both utilize and depend on educational institutions for the spreading of market-needed skills. In this view, education does adopt a functionalist dimension, as it serves to disseminate the aforementioned skills.

5.3 Does the national curriculum include any neoliberal underpinnings?

The results of this study show an orientation towards market like skills when they, similar to question number one, conform to some of the 21st century skills listed. The documents analyzed are the general targets for the Lebanese curriculum that are posted on CERD's website. The clause that was analyzed "speaking at least one foreign language for the purpose of being open to global cultures, and enriching them and being enriched by them" (CERD, 2016), gives credit to notion of globalization and interaction with other cultures. This beckons back to global

awareness, one of the 21st century skills that were listed by Regan (2008). Already gathered from the first question, 21st century skills are potent for working in the market place, hence, the business world places importance on being exposed to the global culture. On the same note, the importance of the use and the interaction with technology is raised in the document, which is also a 21st century skill.

Another indicator of curriculum shifting to encompass market like skills is this statement “is capable through his/her educational activities, guidance and direction towards what is righteous or best for his/her interest, is able to freely pick a future job and being promoted in it through the path of self- education” (CERD, 2016). The results give an overview of the role of the education’s sector in cultivating students’ ideals about the job market. It is also suggested that students select a major under the guidance of their school curriculum, and that students continue to pursue life-long learning. This goes in line with the work of Apple (2003) who asserts that policies are drawn by people in power such as the government, wherein these policies are drafted to support the growth of the free market. The national curriculum does encourage such growth by advising their students to not only pursue jobs, but to be promoted through self-education. Education, in this circumstance, is intended to nurture students that are able to navigate there way though the market place and to grow in accordance their needs.

The human capital theory is brought back in reference to the passage below: “Education is one of the priorities of national activities, it is a social necessity, and is a group activity that encompasses a lot of diversity, development and the state plans for it and is responsible for it in the context of general planning for the social and economic development, and it depends on making education mandatory on different levels, till the student is 15” (CERD, 2016). A link between education and the

economy is reinstated in the mentioned passage; Holborow's (2012) study on policies in Ireland give a similar outlook to this. Education is aimed at providing students with skills vital for the workplace to help improve the economy and the standard of living (Holborow, 2012). Education in this context, similarly aims to aid in both social and economic development of Lebanon. The fact that the Lebanese State is planning for education with the intention of increasing economic and social development makes that link crystal clear. A common thread that is seen in all three posited questions is the functionalist role education is playing, especially in terms of increasing economic development through the utilization of skills disseminated in classrooms, and those that are found in pedagogy.

5.4 Theoretical Dimension

To add a more theoretical dimension to the above three sections, the study will draw on two main authors; Althusser and Foucault. An understanding of Althusser's ideological state apparatus provides a more refined view on the role of education: as one that adopts a utilitarian function to serve a particular purpose. Ferretter (2006) draws out Althusser's explanation of Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) as various bodies that serves society's leading ideology by propagating discourse on that specific ideology via its institutions. Using ideological discourse as a tool, it cultivates individuals' thoughts into assuming that their actions are a result of their own self-evaluation and drive; when in fact, their thoughts are shaped by the ideology (Ferretter, 2006). In this context, neoliberalism can be thought of as the dominating ideology that spills into and structures other ISA's to keep its ideology intact. Ferretter cites Althusser in claiming that education is the most central ISA in a capitalist society, as students get instructed about the leading ideological discourse (Ferretter, 2006). Taking neoliberalism as the central ideology and following the

theoretical map sketched out by Althusser, the neoliberal ideology shapes and structures various ISAs to service its beliefs and ideals. Moreover, education plays a paramount role in participating in dispersing neoliberal ideals. Students are then exposed to and influenced by these ideals, and subsequently, the exposure to and being part of the neoliberal structure fosters certain types of actions that are market oriented. What is intended to show is that education and individuals are part of a larger world, a neoliberal one. Althusser informs us that education and other ISAs services this leading ideology, and therefore, ideology is shaping their thoughts and actions by virtue of them being part of this structure, and their interaction with the various ISAs.

Foucault also presents his notion of governmentality where individual actions are shaped in accordance to the political and economic rationality of a particular society (Lemke, 2002). Again, in this context, it is the neoliberal ideology that is in the position of power, and hence, is capable via its rationality to disseminate its ideals and mask it as the norm. The notion of governmentality is appropriate here due to its significance in underscoring how individuals are freely deciding on their actions, but under the influence of neoliberal ideals. The logic behind neoliberalism is passed down to individuals, which in turn, causes individuals to act in a fashion that suits that specific logic. Furthermore, governmentality is in play when individual behavior is being shaped by that logic. The results of this study conform to Foucault's theory of governmentality in all three sections of the results. 21st century skills does shape student perceptions, priorities and actions towards their surrounding, and these skills as aforementioned, are aligned with the market, and by extension, the economic rationality of this context. Similarly, this occurs with the general targets of the Lebanese curriculum, as some of these targets indicated an

orientation towards the market, therefore conforming to the dominating economic rationality. The results from first year students highlight the behavioral aspect of governmentality, wherein students are factoring in career prospects and salary outcome, whilst forming their decision on their major. All in all, a clear association to neoliberalism can be witnessed in the above-mentioned cases.

The final section of this study includes concluding remarks about this research, its challenges and its limitations

Chapter Six

Conclusion

6.1 General Conclusion

The study brings attention to a bouquet of factors that relate to education in specific and society at large. One potent factor is the power education has on society, which is why Althusser bestowed it as the paramount apparatus (Ferretter, 2006). It is the apparatus that disseminates skills and traits to future generations and exposes students to certain types of performances. With that in mind, this study provides a roadmap to how education is being influenced by the neoliberal ideology, and how in turn, educational institutions participate in spreading those ideals. This study intends to underscore the role and power of educational institutions and to shed light on the ontological role of education. The question about the role of education and what its intentions are is brought back to the table. Overall, this study aims at illuminating the power of education and of being conscious and critical about what education intends to do.

6.2 Recommendations

The above helps in transitioning to recommendations, as the one main recommendation I put forth is that of being more critical. I find it salient, specifically in education to be critical about everything. This may begin from educational policies at the national level to content being passed down in classrooms. I also think it essential to take a step back and reflect on what is occurring in educational institutions, and attempt to draw a parallel with the happenings in its corresponding context. In short, I find it imperative to know the rationality behind a certain curriculum, policy and book, and to assess the messages being passed on. It is also important to decide on whether

a change in policy or content material is warranted, and subsequently, outline provisional educational policies or curricula.

6.3 Limitations of the Study

The study is exploratory and qualitative in nature; although the study did its best to achieve trustworthiness and dependability, reliability per se, is difficult to obtain. In addition, there is a sense of accountability on the researcher, as she was responsible for creating the various coding categories.

The sample size for both academic personnel and first year students that participated in this study was sufficient for acquiring a basic understanding and analysis of what is occurring. The study would definitely attain more substance if it had a larger sample from both participants. Furthermore, questionnaires were collected from one university; therefore this study's focus is based on the responses from that one university. Contacting academic personnel proved to be a tedious task, as not everyone was responsive or at times chose not to participate. During the interviews, there was a sense of sensitivity towards time allocated by the interviewee. A couple of interviewees appeared to be at haste or preoccupied with other issues.

The documents were translated from Arabic to English for the purpose of this study. There lies a risk that accompanies translated texts, namely, some sentences or meaning may have been misread or misinterpreted.

6.4 Reflexivity

This research has opened my eyes to several things. I discovered the importance of gaining IRB approval and sensitivity surrounding the participants in this study. The amount of people skills needed whilst interviewing was something else I developed. Embarking on this research has also expanded my inventory of knowledge,

especially when reading for my literature review. I found the phase of writing my literature review and collecting data to be quite challenging. It led to dissolution of some of my preconceived ideas behind this study, and the direction this study was taking. In retrospect, if I had to change anything in this study, it would be increasing the sample size of the participants and analyzing the various subjects found in the national curriculum.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

Questionnaires

1. What is your intended major?

2. Which program did you graduate from?

Please rate the following statements according to the following criteria from 1-5.

- 1 = Strongly agree
2 = Agree
3 = Undecided
4 = Disagree
5 = Strongly disagree

	1	2	3	4	5
1. I decided on my major during my high school years.					
2. I will choose my major based on the highest chance of getting a job.					
3. Salary plays an important factor on the selection of my major.					
4. I will choose my major based on my passion towards it.					
5. My school system encouraged me to decide on my major.					
6. My job title will define how successful I am.					
7. I believe that some majors are more valuable than others.					
8. The current trend in the job market will influence my choice in major.					
9. I believe that my years in school will help me decide on my major.					
10. My idea of a valuable major is related to its prospective job offers.					

Informal Interview Guide:

1. What made you decide on your major?
2. Did the job market influence your decision?
3. Why did you select this major?
4. Do you think some majors are better than others and why?

Appendix B

Semi- Structured Interview

Semi-Structured interview with school principals:

1. What skills would you perceive as valuable?
2. How is this embedded in your school's pedagogy?
3. What personal traits or characteristics does your school system stress on?
4. How do you shape you students to be “ successful leaders”? (Quote will be taken from their school curriculum)
5. Can you describe the ideal graduate from your school?
6. How does your school strive to achieve this?