

Leading English teachers in Palestine

Exploring the impact of school leadership
on the development and effectiveness of
English teachers in Palestine

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Contents

Executive summary	4	Findings and analysis	18
Introduction	4	Commitment of leadership and challenging circumstances	18
Methodology	4	Supervision	19
Findings	5	Resident supervision (by principals)	20
Recommendations	6	Supervisor-principal collaboration	27
Introduction	7	English teacher development	31
Palestinian education system	7	Professional development of principals	32
English in Palestine	7	Gender	35
System of supervision	8	Principal recruitment	36
The role of a school principal	8	Motivating English teachers	36
Principal as ‘resident supervisor’	10	Recommendations	39
School leadership and English	12	References	42
The importance of school leaders ...	13		
Education under occupation	14		
Methodology	15		
Surveys	15		
Roundtable discussion	15		
Three school comparison (LMH)	16		
Research questions	17		

Executive summary

Introduction

This report explores the impact of school leadership on the development and effectiveness of English teachers in Palestine. Both MoEHE and UNRWA have a supervisory system in place. Supervisors within governorates provide subject-specialist professional development of teachers. However, the large number of teachers under each supervisor makes it challenging to provide adequate support. School principals are expected to serve as 'resident supervisor', collaborate with supervisors and are ultimately responsible for the evaluation and performance management of teachers.

While school effectiveness is a multifaceted concept and there is no single measure of effective leadership, teacher performance is crucial. However, research indicates that Palestinian principals often focus on administrative tasks rather than pedagogical leadership, and the extent to which principals are fulfilling the role of resident supervisor varies greatly. There is limited research on school leadership and its specific impact on

English teacher development and this current research aims to provide insight and recommendations.

Methodology

This research took a mixed-methods approach over three distinct phases:

- Phase 1 - Desk research: literature review, policy and systems review with evaluation against English subject-specific needs, and analysis of available outcomes data
- Phase 2 - National research: online surveys and a roundtable discussion with representatives from MoEHE and UNRWA
- Phase 3 - Close comparison of three schools: low-, middle- and high-performing, in terms of English outcomes, including: observation of lessons, teacher feedback sessions and in-depth, semi-structured interviews.



Findings

Principals in Palestine are exceptionally dedicated, working in extremely challenging circumstances. They are the ‘beating heart’ of schools, involved in everything that happens at school, respected by staff, students and communities. However, they are stretched, and their multifaceted role creates issues for effective teacher development.

While collaboration between supervisors and principals is generally viewed positively, there’s a need for clearer definitions of roles and responsibilities. When guidance has been received, it is said to be helpful and leads to higher reports of effective principals.

The role of the principal as ‘resident supervisor’ – intended to ensure continuing teacher development – is interpreted and implemented with considerable variability. Almost half of principals could not define this well. Also, half of principals did not give priority to providing feedback, training and advice to their teachers. Principals are visiting English lessons regularly, but often approach this administratively. Only half of teachers report that principals help them improve. It was also found that training efforts may not be directed to areas that would be of most benefit to students. It would be prudent to provide principals with training and tools to enable them to conduct a needs assessment of their English teaching staff, and prioritise training, feedback and targets accurately.

The research indicates disparities in confidence and pedagogical knowledge between male and female principals, with females showing greater confidence and knowledge. This is reflected in student outcomes, as schools led by female principals show higher average student achievement in English (CERD, 2022). Furthermore, a substantial number of English teachers feel their principals lack enough subject knowledge to support them. This was echoed by principals, a group of whom reported it harder to develop English teachers. Subject specialism is not essential to lead. There is a need for more training in how to transfer skills and apply principles of pedagogy to developing teachers in English.

Principals have been given greater autonomy to lead, but it has not necessarily been supported with enough continuing professional development (CPD) to empower principals to lead most effectively. When training and guidance are given, this is felt to be helpful, but principals report that training is not often made available to them. CPD of principals is key. They are best positioned to effect immediate, consequential and long-lasting change and improvement in the English classroom (and across all subjects).

The findings also suggest current principal recruitment processes may not adequately emphasise pedagogical expertise and the ability to develop teachers, and that principals would benefit from tools and strategies to motivate their English teachers.

Recommendations

1. Provide a clear outline of what can be reasonably and practically achieved by supervisors. Document the remaining developmental needs that fall to in-school resident supervision and 'other' training options.
2. Appoint deputy principals or a 'Teaching and learning specialist' staff member in every school. Alternatively, or additionally, a small group of 'Expert English teachers' could be appointed within each governorate.
3. Provide a clearer distinction of roles between subject and pedagogy supervision.
4. Provide mandatory training for principals, specific to developing teachers' pedagogical skills, at a minimum of once annually. This should include 'subject-specific support', providing concrete examples of how wider principles apply to all subjects, including English.
5. Provide more tools to assist principals in reviewing the classroom practices of English teachers, conducting needs assessment, making recommendations to improve teaching and learning processes and, ultimately, student outcomes.
6. Establish formalised partnerships between boys' and girls' schools in the same governorate, with close collaboration between male and female principals and peer-learning between English teachers.
7. Review principal workload and consider where efficiency solutions can be found. For example, could time efficiencies be made by better utilisation of an online portal or alternative means of principal-staff-parent communications?
8. Equip principals with motivational tools for teachers.
9. Encourage and incentivise principals without post-graduate qualifications in education/ teaching methods to undertake them.



1

Introduction

Palestinian education system

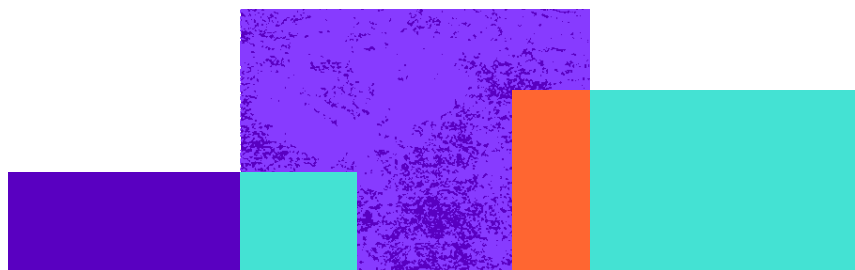
The first Palestinian Ministry of Education (MoE), now the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) was only established in 1994, following centuries of foreign curriculum and administration. Still, education in Palestine exists under Israeli occupation. Given the historical context, the ongoing achievements of the Palestinian education system are remarkable.

In the West Bank, there are approximately 761,000 students. Of these, 79.2 per cent are educated in public schools, 14 per cent attend private schools, 6 per cent attend UNRWA schools and a very small number attend Israeli municipality schools. A small number of Palestinian students attend Israeli-run schools. In Palestine, all children must complete ten years of mandatory education, commonly referred to as compulsory or basic education, encompassing Grades 1–10, from ages 6–16. This is divided into two phases: lower basic level or preparatory stage, including Grades 1–4, and basic level or empowerment stage, including grades 5–10. Following the completion of basic education, students have the option to pursue secondary education, which consists of Grades 11 and 12. The Palestinian *Tawjihi* exam, which includes English, takes place at the end of Grade 12.

UNRWA schools consist of only Grades 1–10, so Palestinian students wishing to complete Grades 11 and 12 must move to MoEHE schools. According to UNICEF (2022), 86 per cent of Palestinians complete basic education. Completion rates decline considerably for secondary education, with only 62 per cent attending secondary school.

English in Palestine

Learning English is compulsory for Palestinian students throughout their entire basic education, from Grade 1 to Grade 10. For students who continue to Grades 11 and 12, English is core to the literary stream curriculum and included (to a lesser extent) within the other academic and vocational streams. The ‘English for Palestine’ curriculum content was developed by Macmillan, for the MoEHE, and is used in all English classrooms in MoEHE and UNRWA schools. It was introduced in 2001 and updated in 2015. There are two national assessments: The National Assessment Test (NAT) in Grade 6, and the *Tawjihi* in Grade 12. In many countries around the world, there is a trend for girls outperforming boys in language-based subjects, and this is true in Palestine. In English in particular, Palestinian girls have been consistently outperforming



their male counterparts for at least the last decade (Ruane, 2026). By local international standards, Palestine does well, given the incredibly challenging circumstances. The 2022 PISA reading scores saw Palestine (349) outperform Jordan (342) and Morocco (339). (OECD, 2023)

System of supervision

Both MoEHE and UNRWA operate a local supervisory system. The Directorate of Education (or UNRWA office) within each governorate houses a group of subject supervisors (MoEHE) or specialists (UNRWA) who are responsible for the continuing professional development of their subject teachers. 'Educational supervision in Palestine went through a number of stages in which the term "inspection" was used at first, then "guidance", until the term educational "supervision" became the common term' (Gharib, 2007, p. 1). Since 2010, the 'Reference Guide for Educational Supervision' issued by the Palestinian MoEHE has outlined the current practices for 'general supervision' across all subjects. Subject supervisors visit schools to conduct lesson observations, provide feedback and deliver training and developmental sessions.

There are 614,971 students in MoEHE schools in the West Bank, 5,887 English teachers and 68 English supervisors. On average, each supervisor would be responsible for 87 teachers and, by extension, 9,000 students. (Actual figures vary by governorate, see [Appendix B](#).) These numbers are untenable. It is recognised that teacher development cannot solely be the responsibility of the subject supervisors. Principals and supervisors (of all subjects) are expected to collaborate regarding the training needs of

teachers, though ultimately, evaluation and performance management of teachers is the responsibility of school principals. This report will investigate what can feasibly be achieved and how the role of supervision can best be divided between supervisor and principal.

The role of a school principal

As is pointed out in the literature, different stakeholders often have different ideas about what is meant by 'school effectiveness', each focusing on what they perceive to be most directly relevant to them. Teachers tend to focus on classroom practices, while students, parents and the local community focus on student attainment (OECD, 2016). Finally – and interestingly – principals tend to focus on bureaucracy:



maintaining order and adhering to instructions and laws, engaging teachers to build a school culture for continuous improvement, and controlling different school activities to maintain focus on educational tasks and to ensure that teachers work and fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with the school's educational goals

(Gray, 2016 as cited in Abd-Rabo & Hashaikeh, 2020).

There is no single measure for school effectiveness or effective leadership, and a purely outcomes-based measure is commonly viewed as unfair, particularly in a volatile context such as Palestine. However, it is clear that the performance of the teacher is at the heart of effective ‘teaching and learning’ and should be a priority consideration for effective leadership.

Duties related to professional development of teachers are listed under the general job description for Palestinian school principals, including:



Develop an executive plan to develop the capabilities of employees in coordination with the authorities; Evaluation of the performance of school staff; and Conduct regular classroom visits and provide feedback to teachers.

(MoEHE, 2021).

This research will explore to what extent principals are fulfilling this and how effective the current process is, considering the limited capacity of supervisors with whom they collaborate. Ghanem & Awwad’s (2019) investigation into UNRWA principals’ leadership skills was illuminating in regard to its methodology. This study considered leadership in two domains: 1) administrative and technical and 2) personal and social skills. The former does include ‘technical supervisory fields’; however, the only allusion to teacher development, in terms of

classroom practice, is ‘evaluation’ and none of the 32 listed measures include the development of a teacher’s pedagogical practice. Across most of the domains, leadership was found to be ‘average’. Conversely, a study by Zaiter & Hassan (2009) found the level of leadership of high school principals to be high, though again the specifics of the determiners may not have included what this research views as vital to fulfil the pedagogical development of English teachers. In a review of ‘Policy of selecting school headmasters in Palestine’, Shaqour et al. (2019) found that interviews focus on administrative responsibilities, rather than those of pedagogical leader.

Klasik (2010) examined the relationship between the time principals spent on different types of activities and school outcomes, including student achievement, finding that the lowest-performing schools have principals who spent more time on administration tasks. Furthermore, teacher development was found to be positively associated with perceptions of the educational environment and teachers’ satisfaction. However, visits by principals were felt to be intrusive, promoting a negative rather than positive learning environment, which emphasises the need for these to be done well, supported by tools to make visits constructive and developmental, rather than a routine administrative approach as described by Hilo (2007) below.

One interesting case study is the MSN programme – an intensive 340-hour professional development programme for school principals, which was reported as very successful in developing principals’ leadership. The

MSN programme encouraged principals to move from a model of 'solo command' to one where the principal acted as a 'lead facilitator'. Interestingly and importantly, Cristillo et al. (2016) evaluated the programme some time after its delivery and found long-lasting benefits. They report that principals were 'still applying to a high degree the leadership skills obtained' (p. 40). This example shows that, where programmes happen, developing principals can be highly effective.

In Cristillo et al.'s (2016) report, we will consider the following questions: Is regular continuing professional development offered to principals? Does it meet their needs, regarding effectively developing their English teachers? One interesting finding from this evaluation is that 'instructional supervision' has only a 'modest level of priority' (p. 41). Findings from interviews exploring this area of leadership (resident supervision) describe how principals 'engage teachers in conversations to develop clear and achievable learning goals. These conversations help them to ensure that teachers have the skills, tools and resources they need to help students succeed' (p. 41). This section of the evaluation is brief and lacking detail. The quality of 'conversations' can be highly variable and are not an adequate replacement for more formal continuing school-based professional development guided by principals.

Additional note: In this MSN programme, and subsequent evaluation, a heavy emphasis was placed on ICT skills. While these are essential in moving schools towards 21st-century education, there are many more fundamental pedagogical issues which must be

addressed to support student learning. During the Covid-19 pandemic – and in the past year of increased conflict – schools across the West Bank moved online, but without strong core teaching skills such as questioning, assessment for learning, checking for understanding, gradual challenge, teacher modelling, etc., the use of technology falls flat.

Principal as 'resident supervisor'

While the role of principal as 'resident supervisor' in Palestine has been established for some time, how well this is embedded into practice is unclear, and most reports agree that the principals' role remains largely consumed with administration and other leadership elements, while the supervisory role 'is often reduced to routine classroom visits and the objectives of those visits differ among teachers and the evaluations they end with' (Hilo, 2007, p. 3). Matar (in Hilo, 2007) reported that, according to teachers, principals perform 'to a high degree' in only two areas: human relations and educational evaluation. It is interesting to note here the perception that the principal effectively makes judgements in terms of summative assessment, but what is omitted is teacher development. In a very similar system, also serving a



largely Palestinian population, a study in Jordan found that principals themselves viewed their role as resident supervisor as minimal (Abu-Tineh et al., 2007).

This research will explore if that same self-reporting will be found among Palestinian principals. Shehadeh (2015) includes improving the process of educational supervision – and therefore, teacher development – in recommendations to enhance the role of the school principal as a resident supervisor. This research will explore to what extent this has happened in the intervening years and what remains required.

Collaboration between supervisors and principals

As previously stated, collaboration between supervisors and principals is expected in order to meet the needs of teachers; however, the exact nature of this collaboration seems variable. Lahlbit (2010) explores the relationship between supervisors and principals in many regards. He notes that they are concerned with preparing teachers, developing their competencies and improving student achievement, which involves the school principal following up on supervisor's observations by checking whether the teacher has acted on them. Again, this is evaluative only. There does not seem to be an expectation that the principal is involved in developing the teacher, through training/mentoring/coaching/modelling, etc. in order to help them meet any goals or targets.

This research will also begin to explore how effective the relationship between principals and supervisors is. Personal

relationships between principal, supervisor and teacher has been cited on more than a few occasions as a problem hindering the supervisory process, including by Al-Taani (2017). However, in a close study, Rabee (2023) reports that school principals in the northern governorates highly rate the educational supervisors (not just English). They report the degree of outstanding performance of supervisors as high.

Some writings seem to point to the relationship being largely one-directional, in that the supervisor contributes to the role of the principal and even develops skills of the principal (Bhais, 2023). Lahlbit (2010) seems to suggest that one of the supervisor's roles is developing the new principal's competence to contribute to the implementation of supervisory programmes – this research will consider if this is a consistent expectation and, if so, how effectively and comprehensively the training needs of school leaders are identified. Hilo (2007, p. 3) reports that the 'guidance and supervision departments affiliated with these directorates work to develop the [supervision] competencies of principals'. This research will explore if principals feel they receive sufficient professional development in terms of their ability to fulfil the role of resident supervisor, and particularly for English teachers. Furthermore, this research will explore the extent to which principals rely solely on supervisors, or if they rely more so on English supervisors, and the impact this might have on English teacher development, given the available time of supervisors.

School leadership and English

To this point, literature on the processes and effectiveness of school leadership and supervision have been discussed on only a general, non-subject-specific level. There has not been extensive study into school leadership and the impact on the development of English teachers and/or student outcomes in English particularly.

A recently published policy paper by CERD (2023) explored the question: *Does the gender of the school principal explain the variation in student achievement?* Its findings, based on the National Assessment Study (CERD, 2022), indicate that schools led by female principals had higher average student achievement (in English) compared with those led by male principals. In the recommendations, the paper includes: carrying out case studies of high-achieving schools led by female principals to gain deeper insights (to some extent this will be possible in this research).

Findings from the National Assessment Study (CERD, 2022) indicate that schools led by female principals had higher average student achievement (in English) compared to those led by male principals. However, in most cases the gender of the principal is inextricably linked to the gender of the students because Palestine is a gender-conservative context and most schools are single-sex. Though there is still a significant difference based purely on the gender of the principal, analysis of these results shows that differences between outcomes are slightly less based on the principal’s gender than the students’ gender (see Tables 1 and 2).

Interestingly, no statistically significant differences between average achievement in English were attributed to the variable of years of experience of the principal.

However, there were statistically significant differences in favour of schools whose principals’ hold a Master’s in Education, compared with

Table 1 Student gender: figures taken from National Assessment Study (CERD, 2022)

Grade	Indicator	Female students	Male students	Difference
Sixth	Average achievement in English	43.4	33.8	9.6

Table 2 Principal gender: figures taken from National Assessment Study (CERD, 2022)

Grade	Indicator	Female principal	Male principal	Difference
Sixth	Average achievement in English	43.01	34.09	8.92

those who do not have an educational qualification, hold a Diploma in Education or a Bachelor's in Teaching Methods, as well as statistically significant differences in favour of those who hold a Diploma or a Bachelor's degree compared to those who do not hold an educational qualification at all. (Students' average achievement in English based on principal's level of education: no educational qualification 34.57, Diploma in Education or Bachelor's in Teaching Methods 42.55, Master's in Education 47.30).

Further to the above, which evidences tangibly higher outcomes in English for students of female principals, a previously mentioned study, which reviewed principals from the perspective of teachers – found female principals to be reported as executing more effective leadership skills than their male counterparts, and recommended focusing on male schools and their principals' leadership skills (Ghanem & Awwad, 2019).

The importance of school leaders

It is widely agreed that principals are central to the task of transforming their schools into learning communities that promote powerful teaching and learning for all students, rather than merely maintaining the status quo as managers (e.g. Cristillo et al., 2016). As cited in UNESCO's most recent global education monitoring report 2024/5: *Leadership in Education* (2024, p. 10): 'One of the most quoted findings in literature on education leadership is that "there are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader"' (Leithwood et al., 2004). An inspired principal can revitalise a struggling school's mission and foster a

culture of learning and growth (Green, 2018; Setlhodi, 2022).

The education system in Palestine has undergone significant transformation over the past two decades. Prior to reform, school principals were simply teachers with no distinct leadership designation. Their role was not officially recognised in a structured way. Later, the reform introduced a clear distinction between teachers and school principals, giving the latter a defined leadership role within schools, with no teaching responsibility and clear focus on leadership and management responsibilities. The MoEHE's *Education Sector Strategic Plan 2017-2022* (2017a) referred to changes in both the roles of principal and supervisor that have happened over recent years. Both of these changes are linked to strategic goal 2: 'developing student-centred teaching and learning pedagogy and environment'. Specifically, the role of principal shifted 'from pure administrative tasks to dealing with educational quality matters as a Resident Supervisor' (p. 59). No doubt, a huge amount of progress has been made and this is still an ongoing development. We will explore current perceptions of roles, specifically regarding perceptions of priorities and the nature of resident supervision impacting development of teachers as per goal 2.

Finally, UNESCO (2024, p. 18) also notes that: 'Education leaders contribute to education improvement in all circumstances and contexts, but their influence is greater the more they are trusted to use their skills'. This is something that the MoEHE in Palestine has made significant changes to move towards – decentralising some decisions to give principals greater control and flexibility. This has taken place and is

recognised as a significant step forward. Now, we should also consider if principals are sufficiently empowered with the continual training they need to be effective.

Education under occupation

The Israeli occupation has extreme and detrimental effects on the provision and experience of education for all Palestinian children. In the West Bank, constant land seizure, settlements and checkpoints mean that communities can be separated from their local schools, forcing movement or long and difficult journeys to reach them. Staff and students are exposed to, and at risk of being victim to, harassment or violence from soldiers and settlers on their journeys to and from school and, sometimes, when at school. For more information, see [Appendix B](#) - further reading.

There has been war in Gaza since October 2023, which has devastated the education system. As of August 2024, 10,627 children and 411 teachers have been killed and a further 15,394 students and 2,411 teachers have been injured (UNOCHA, 2024). Education in

the West Bank has also been severely disrupted; for a year schools were online 2–3 days per week, and public (MoEHE) schools are at the date of writing still implementing ‘distance learning’ one day per week. Some areas of the West Bank have been under siege for months at a time. The Israeli government has moved to expel UNRWA operations in the West Bank and has announced the forced closure of UNRWA schools in occupied East Jerusalem (UNRWA, 2025).

The negative impacts of occupation on education, student well-being and achievement are incredibly far-reaching and beyond the scope of this report. One very specific and relevant example is given by Hilo (2007), who found Nablus and Jenin to perform the poorest in terms of supervision (both by principal and supervisor), explaining that these locations experience difficult security conditions such as absence of law and order and oppression. This current research will also consider if location leads to a high variability in the reported effectiveness of the supervisory process.



2

Methodology

This research took a mixed-methods approach over three distinct phases:

- Phase 1 - Desk research: national and international literature review, policy and systems review with evaluation against English subject-specific needs, and analysis of available outcomes data
- Phase 2 - National research: three online surveys of principals, supervisors and teachers across all governorates in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and a roundtable discussion with representatives from MoEHE and UNRWA
- Phase 3 - Close comparison of three schools: low-, middle- and high- (LMH) performing, in terms of English outcomes.

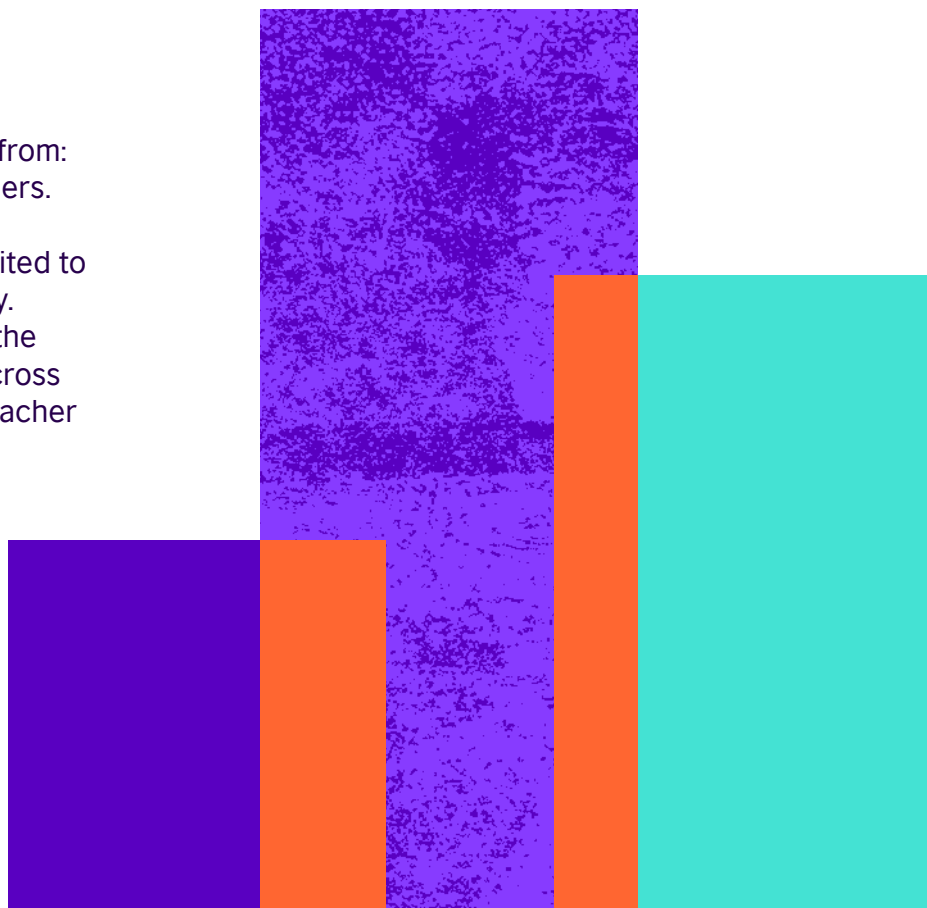
Surveys

There were three online surveys conducted, to record responses from: principals, supervisors and teachers. Supervisors and teachers were contacted via the MoEHE and invited to voluntarily take part in the survey. Respondents were from all over the West Bank with a good spread across governorates. There were 336 teacher

respondents: 283 females and 53 males. There were 15 supervisor respondents (which is 22 per cent of the total number). Principals were recruited to take part in the survey by supervisors, who each invited three principals from their governorate. In total 33 principals responded to the survey – 26 female and six male.

Roundtable discussion

A roundtable discussion was organised, with key experts and policymakers from MoEHE, UNRWA and the British Council. Attendees included policy-level decision makers from MoEHE and UNRWA, heads of subject and curriculum units,



representatives from administration and training departments, and a school leader (principal). A selection of early survey results was shared for discussion, and responses and a shortlist of research questions regarding policy and systems was discussed.

Three school comparison (LMH)

A close study of three schools that were determined to be 'low-', 'middle-' and 'high-performing' in terms of English outcomes, as reported by the supervisor, was undertaken, henceforth referred to as LMH comparison. It was decided to select schools from the same governorate, Ramallah, in order to minimise the impact of differences in geography, effects of conflict and occupation, and also to reduce the variability of supervisor performance and principal-supervisor-teacher relations. By selecting schools with the same supervisor, the focus was solely on different styles of leadership with regards to English teacher development by the school principal.

Unscheduled visits – following the usual approach taken by the attending supervisor – were conducted to each school. This approach had the benefit of reducing over-preparation of lessons,

pre-selection of high-performing teachers or in-advance additional principal involvement, leading to a 'truer' overall picture. All parties involved were very welcoming and unperturbed by the unscheduled visit. During each school visit, the researcher accompanied the English supervisor on lesson observations of two English teachers and observed the supervisor-teacher feedback sessions that followed, all of which took place in the principal's office but were not officially attended by the principals.

During each school visit, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with the school principals. Live translation was provided by the English supervisor. Interviews were also recorded, translated and transcribed. There was also continual informal interviews of the English supervisor before, during and after school visits.

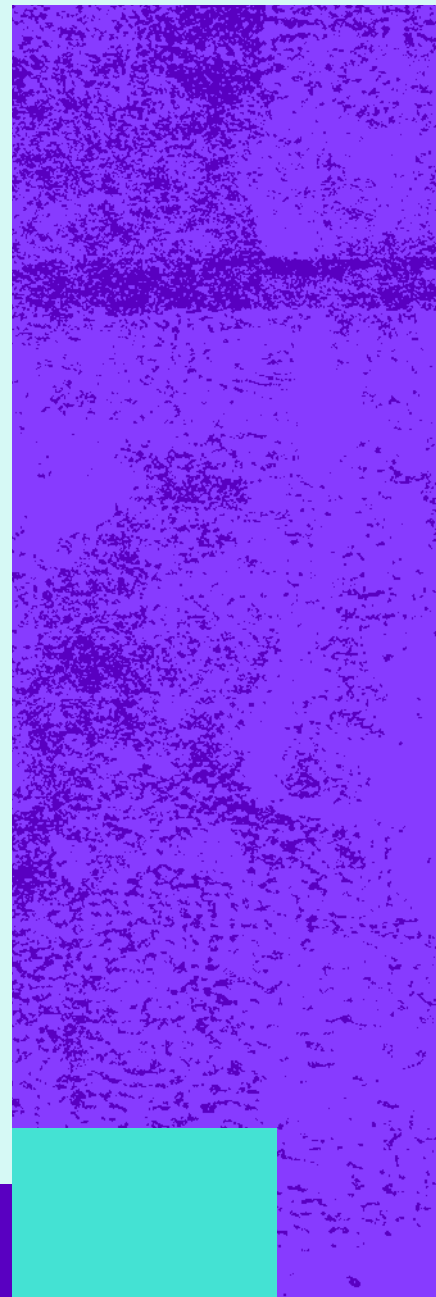
It was intended that an analysis would be conducted of supervisor and principal observations/feedback/evaluations/plans/performance management; however, this documentation was not made available.

This research has also drawn on school visits conducted as part of other research projects between 2022 and 2025, involving long discussions and semi-structured interviews with supervisors and principals, as well as shadowing the lesson observation and feedback process.



Research questions

1. How was the new role of 'resident supervisor' communicated to principals? Is communication sufficient?
2. Are principals sufficiently prepared for the new role of 'resident supervisor'?
3. Is training given to principals by MoEHE or other organisations sufficient and effective?
4. How effective is the relationship between English supervisors and school principals in developing English teachers?
5. To what extent can supervisors positively influence the development of English teachers?
6. How effective is the principal-led teacher evaluation process? How are English teachers motivated?
7. Do principals regularly deliver in-school training and development as 'resident supervisor'? What form does this take? Do teachers find this effective?
8. What English subject-specific issues exist for principals and teachers involved in resident supervision?
9. Is there sufficient training available for principals in effective development of English teachers? How many have taken part? Is it effective?
10. What role does the MoEHE Head of Supervision/ School Leadership/Director of Education take in the collaboration between principals and supervisors to develop teachers?



3

Findings and analysis

In this section, findings will be presented topically, incorporating evidence from various research tools and sources under each area of exploration.

Commitment of leadership and challenging circumstances

First, it should be noted that the dedication and commitment of both principals and supervisors was evident from the outset. Principals in Palestine lead schools, staff and students in exceptionally challenging circumstances (see ‘Introduction’). Of principals surveyed, 30 per cent reported that their schools were subject to assaults and attacks by settlers or soldiers (15.2 per cent sometimes, 24 per cent rarely, and one principal reported that this happens ‘a lot’). A quarter reported that their school is sometimes forced to close or at risk of closure. No significant differences were noted between principals in different geographical areas (e.g. in Area C¹ or not, close to the separation wall or not), which is testament to their commitment to fulfil

¹ Area C is defined as the contiguous 61 per cent of the West Bank containing the majority of the territory’s fertile land, water resources, and space for urban expansion, which remains under Israeli military occupation and restrictive planning regimes. (World Bank, 2013)

their leadership duties despite their increased challenges. Many principals are motivated by patriotism and a deep desire to improve the lives of young people in their communities:



I served at the beginning of my service at this school, and when I first came to the school, there was a political situation in the country that made this school in chaos, so my previous principal and I started building it step by step until it stabilised. When he retired, it became possible that someone might come and destroy what we worked on for 14 years, so I decided to become a principal at this moment.



Likewise, supervisors are deeply committed to their teachers and the students in the schools they visit, regularly making difficult journeys to fulfil their role.

All principals (and teachers) who were engaged in unscheduled visits, observations and interviews were very welcoming, willing to be involved in the research and open to discussion. The general impression of school leaders in Palestine is that they are the 'beating heart' of their schools. They are very busy; constantly engaged in communication with all stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, etc.) throughout the day; involved in and aware of everything that takes place. Their offices are often a hub of activity and their doors are always open. They lead with poise and calm and are well-respected.

Supervision

This research was primarily investigating the impact of school leadership (principals) on English teacher development and this includes collaboration with English supervisors. It is not a deep dive into the supervision process or quality of English supervision. However, some points specific to English supervisors, as they are pertinent to the research questions

and overall process, are shared below.

As was already known, supervisors are stretched. (See a case study example of supervisor workload in [Appendix B](#), Table 3.6.) There is limited scope for the impact supervisors can be expected to have based on the number of teachers they are responsible for, which in this case study, including novice and substitute teachers, was 95. Very little can be achieved in one visit per academic year, especially if the visit falls in the final quarter of the year. Regarding UNRWA schools, during the roundtable discussion, it was shared that in the West Bank, only 18 education specialists oversee 1,700 teachers and school principals, *making direct supervision difficult*. Supervision is, of course, not limited to time spent during school visits but can also include other forms of mentoring and communication with teachers. This still needs to happen within the very limited available time.

It is found that there is a need to make concrete *what*, in terms of the full remit and content of English teacher development, there is scope for within the current supervisor loading (presuming there is no room within the system to employ more supervisors). The supervisors' job description includes: Provide feedback to teachers and principal after each visit and write



supervisory reports; Follow up on the implementation of his recommendations by the teachers with school principals; Support teachers and school principals technically; and *Participate* in building teachers' capabilities according to their needs (MoEHE, 2017b). There is room for more specificity in order to maximise effectiveness here.

Consideration should also be given – and then formalised and communicated to all – to *who* supervisors should focus on. This appears to be done informally by skilled supervisors but is not part of a formal needs-assessment process. For example, will 'groups' of teachers, such as newly qualified and earlier career phase teachers, be prioritised or should a 'needs-based' model be adopted, whereby those who are experienced but consistently underperforming are prioritised?

It is also worth reviewing where there are imbalances in deployment or loading of English supervisors between governorates, as far as this might be possible. For example, there is just one supervisor in Jericho for 120 teachers, compared with four supervisors in Yatta for just 200 teachers and four in Salfeet for 160 teachers.

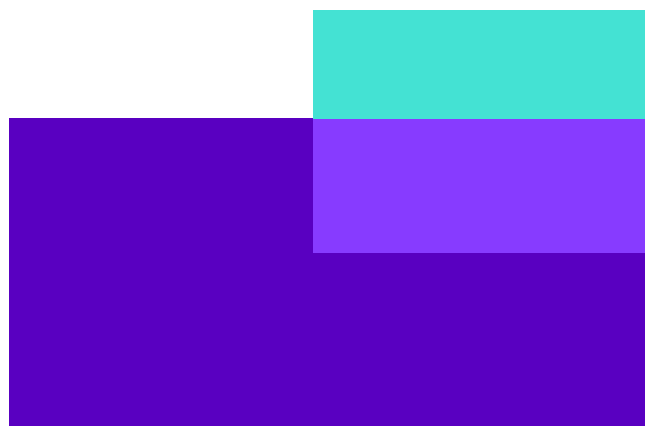
During the course of this research and other projects over the last three years, it has been shared, anecdotally, that many teachers dislike visits from supervisors (not only in English, but all subjects). This is not surprising or specific to Palestine – it is natural that teachers may not have entirely positive feelings about evaluation. Though many feedback meetings were very positive and seemingly appreciated by teachers, in some observed feedback meetings – particularly when more significant points for improvement had to be delivered – there were feelings of hostility and dismissiveness. These teachers likely need input from supervisors the most, however, the infrequency of visits

(possibly just one per year) means it is difficult for supervisors to build trust, and too easy for teachers to dismiss negative feedback. If they do not already, supervisors would benefit from a formalised process whereby they conduct an end-of-year needs assessment to prioritise the number and order of visits for the following year.

Resident supervision (by principals)

The supervisor–teacher ratio is too high for effective teacher development. Therefore, school principals need to be effectively fulfilling the role of 'resident supervisor' in order for teachers to continually and consistently improve their practice and the quality of teaching and learning for students in their classes – ultimately, to improve student outcomes, too. However, the extent to which principals are fulfilling the role of resident supervisor, so far as it is understood to involve training and development of pedagogical skills of English teachers, is hugely variable.

All principals surveyed were aware of the term 'resident supervisor', but open-ended responses revealed very different interpretations of what the role involved. Only half of principals accurately described the role, indicating that clearer or more regular communication and reminders from MoEHE are needed. Almost half described administrative and bureaucratic tasks and the remaining small group simply described the 'overall' role of a principal.



16 - It's about teacher development

- Supervises performance and provides feedback.
- Professional development of teachers.
- Develop teachers' performance and capabilities.
- Feedback and guidance, especially new teachers, in developing their performance in class.
- Supervisor in school. Advice and guidance to teachers.
- Supervisor who is permanently present in the school.
- Principal who provides advice and guidance to teachers; development and professional growth.
- Providing guidance, direction and development of teachers and curriculum matters.
- Continuously following up on teachers, guiding them. Being supervisor and manager.
- Principal who follows up on teachers' performance and works to develop them.
- Supervises teachers' performance.
- Monitor and support teachers.
- Follow up on teaching, administrative and technical matters related to the teaching and learning process.
- A supervisor who constantly follows up on the teacher, gives him feedback, reinforces, supports, and offers advice and guidance at all times.
- Comprehensive follow-up of the teacher, providing feedback, attending classes, and following up on treatment plans.
- The principal acts as a constant supervisor for the teachers in the school and provides ongoing feedback, review and training.

14 - It's about administration

- Follow-up of the teacher from a technical and administrative standpoint.
- Daily and direct contact with the teacher.
- To ensure that tasks are carried out properly.
- Preparing plans, exams, tools, records, managing classes, results, tests, relationships.
- Attending to teachers, following up on their written work.
- Attending classes, following up on classes, plans, students' achievement and database.
- Supervising classroom and extracurricular activities.
- Follow up on students' affairs, teachers and students' academic level.
- Continuous monitoring of teachers, students and the environment.
- Follow up on technical and administrative matters.
- Human resources and deployment.
- A permanent educational consultant in different fields.
- Manages educational affairs related to teachers and students.
- Monitoring attendance.

4 - Being the Principal

- Usually the principal, leadership.
- Headteacher.
- Everything that happens in the school.
- The Supervisor of all.

1 - It's the Supervisor

- Cooperative role with the school principal.

In the LMH school comparison, the principal of the low-performing school did not express a good understanding of the 'resident supervisor' element of his role when interviewed. He described it as a responsibility for monitoring the parent, child and teacher and gave an example:

“

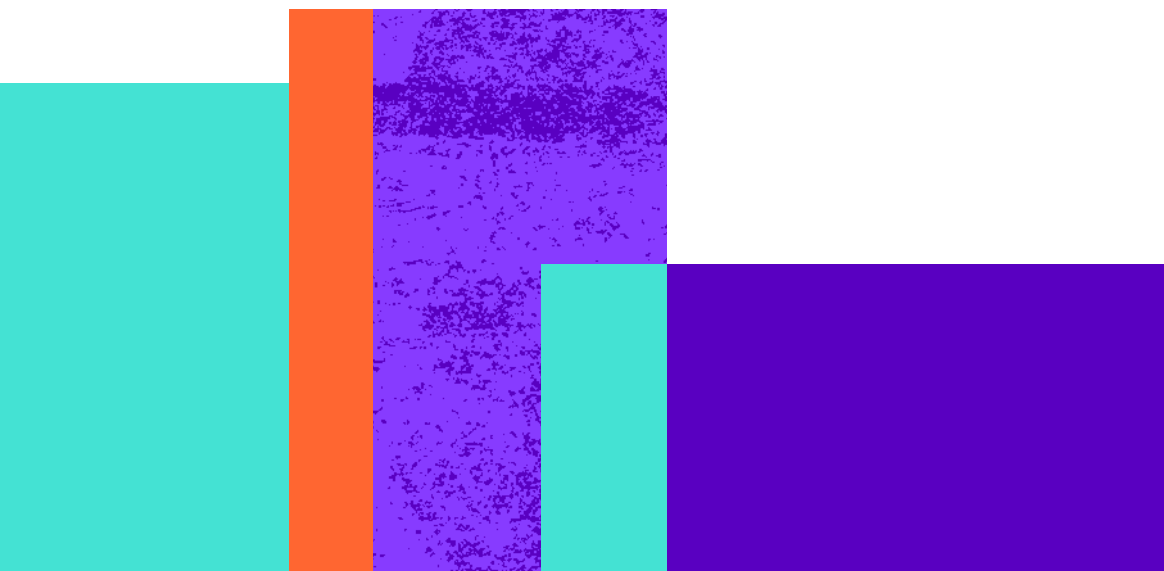
if there is an outstanding teacher and a student who does not study enough, it is a problem. If there is a parent who does not provide his son enough time to study, this is a problem that we cannot solve. We have given ourselves three important aspects.

This is compared to the principal of the high-performing school who stated:

“

The principal, as a resident supervisor, follows up on the teachers' work from inside the classrooms. We observe teaching methods, we observe the classroom management for this teacher, we observe how the evaluation works for the students, we also give the teacher feedback and at the same time we observe strengths and weaknesses and change for the better.

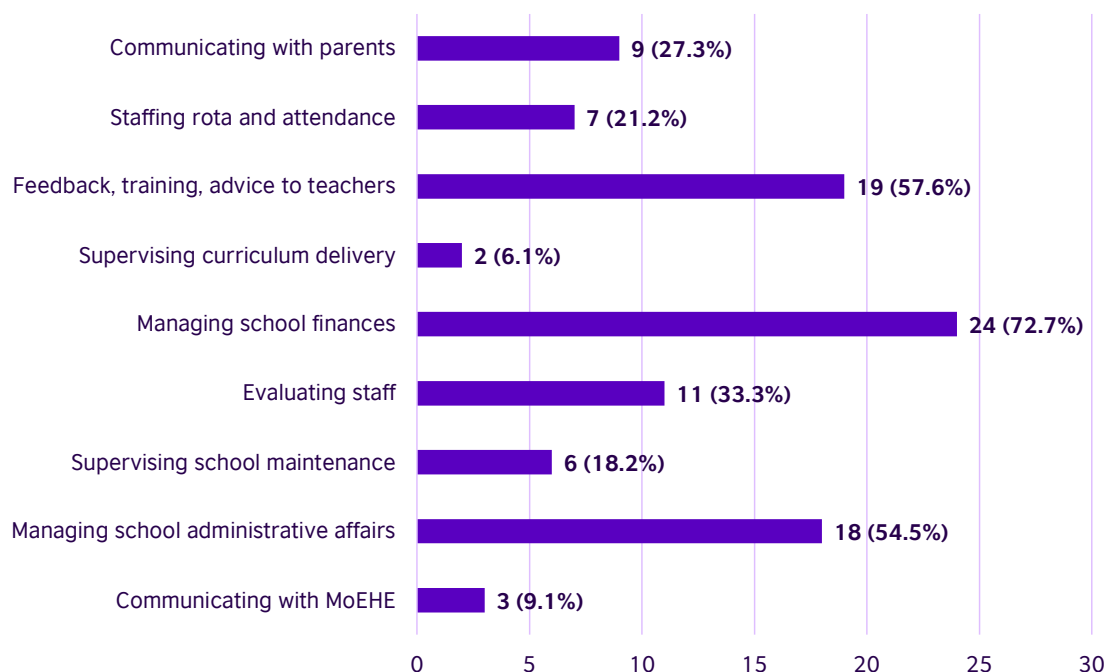
The principal of the mid-performing school also gave a clear and correct answer. Though a small sample, **this could suggest a link between clarity on the specifics of the role of the principal as resident supervisor and student outcomes in English.**



Of principals surveyed, 30 per cent report not having received any training in how to fulfil the role of resident supervisor. Most of these had 0–5 years of experience, so it is not the case that they were appointed after the creation of the title and training opportunities. As far as has been ascertained, there is only one course given to potential principals on the role of a resident supervisor. After this, for the duration of their tenure, it seems principals are not developed in this area.

When asked: ‘Which of these are important parts of your role? Choose the three most important’, over half of principals surveyed chose ‘providing feedback training and advice’ as one of the top three responsibilities of a principal. However, this means that almost half of principals do *not* see ‘providing feedback training and advice’ as a top priority, opting instead for administrative and financial responsibilities.

Figure 2 Principal survey results in response to question ‘Which of these are important parts of your role? Choose the three most important.’



When teachers were asked simply what the role of the principal *included*, the top five most commonly selected items were, in order: communication with parents, conducting classroom visits, providing feedback to teachers, managing the school staff schedule/rota, and employee evaluation. However,

when asked what their *most important* tasks were, teachers' answers differed – ‘administrative tasks’ was added to the list and was the most commonly selected by a long margin, followed by: communicating with parents, managing the timetable/rota, and then, providing feedback training and advice to

teachers, managing the school's financial affairs. This suggests that teachers think the role of the principal should lean heavily towards the development of teachers, but it is not their 'most pressing' responsibility.

This analysis is supported by data from principals about what they actually spend most of their time doing. When asked how long they spend on tasks other than developing their teachers, one third of principals said 60-80 per cent of their time is spent on tasks other than developing their teachers, a further third said 40-60 per cent. For two-thirds of principals, the significant majority of their time is not spent developing teachers. This might indeed be a universal issue with ratios similar to other countries; however, in different contexts there are other people within a school or local authority who are designated to fulfil this role (with much more capacity than supervisors). In this case, there is often not. With teaching and learning being the primary function of a school, it could well be argued that quality of teaching and learning deserves a more primary focus from principals – which requires policy-level guidance and support to be achieved.

Teachers reported that principals do visit their English lessons reasonably often: 25 per cent visit every few weeks, 45 per cent every semester and a further 25 per cent 2-3 times per year. Only 19 (out of 336) teachers reported that their principal 'never' or 'rarely' visits their classroom – notably, they were all male teachers in boys' or co-educational schools. This is a healthy amount, given the workload demands of principals. An area for consideration, given other findings in this report, is how

to maximise the positive impact of the time principals are spending in class (and with teachers afterwards).

Though the task of carrying out classroom visits seems to be carried out regularly, what is done with that information to benefit teachers and students is more questionable: 69.7 per cent of principals report that they 'always' give teachers feedback about teaching skills (other than behaviour management) and the other 30 per cent say 'sometimes'. No one reported that they 'rarely' or 'never' do this. A very high percentage (90 per cent) said they 'always' continue to work with teachers on feedback and goals set by the English supervisor between the supervisor's visits. The remaining nine per cent said 'sometimes'.

However, **40 per cent of teachers reported that their principal only sometimes gives them feedback about their lessons**, suggesting that simply conducting the visit in an administrative fashion is given more priority than developing the teacher. In reality, if one or the other had to be chosen due to time pressures, it would be more valuable to spend the time working with the teachers than simply watching the lesson. **Perhaps principals need further training in delivering feedback on classroom practices to boost confidence, effectiveness and likelihood as well as more tools to aid the process.**

The most common type of ‘training and development’ given by principals, as reported by teachers, is at staff meetings – suggesting it is general-purpose information or information applicable to all. Teachers shared that topics covered in these sessions are: classroom management, i.e. management/control/guidance, student behaviour/behaviour modification; evaluation; use of technology in education; and teaching methods. Teachers also report receiving personal guidance/counselling and feedback on lessons. Teachers surveyed were asked who or what helped them to improve their skills as an English teacher. They were able to select as many of the options from the list as they wished. More teachers chose ‘supervisors’ (251/336) than any other option. Only 188/336 (approximately half) selected ‘principal’. Furthermore, when principals were involved in feedback, two-thirds of supervisors believed that principals’ contributions were effective in terms of teacher development; sadly, one third did not.

This is all further evidence that there is a need for mandatory continuing professional development of principals in how to develop their English teachers.

When comparing the LMH schools, there were clear differences. All principals were asked during an in-depth interview about English lesson observations and any feedback or teacher development that follows. The principal of the low-performing school gave an example about looking ‘during a walkthrough’ at how ‘organised the board was’ and giving the teacher feedback about this if the board was ‘not clear or too distracting’ for students. Interestingly, during lesson observations of two of his English teachers (one was strong and the other was very weak), the strong teacher, by the end of the lesson, had a very busy, even messy board, while the weak teacher did not use the board much and it looked, on the surface, ‘tidier’. The principal also mentioned seeing if students ‘weren’t very interactive’ but only in a most vague sense. The principal of the high-performing school, however, spoke at length about the many impressive actions the teacher took to encourage needs-focused English teacher development: referring to MoEHE, other organisations like the British Council, online courses, exchange visits with each other, using expert English teachers to create demonstrative model lessons, involvement in a teachers’ committee and more.

During the roundtable, it was shared that UNRWA's education reform (since 2014) has redefined the principal's role, emphasising continuing professional development for teachers, school principals and education specialists. Principals are expected to lead and support teacher training rather than conduct it themselves. The question remains: Who should be conducting it then? Regarding UNRWA: *A dedicated professional development and curriculum unit within UNRWA designs teacher training programs, which include short courses and year-long courses. Teachers engage in self-learning approaches, with principals providing mentorship, supervision, and evaluation.* Centralised courses and self-study may be excellent but it is questionable whether they are a sufficient replacement for mentorship and personalised development. Regarding the MoEHE, this does not appear to happen as systematically.

Subject specialism

Almost half (43.6 per cent) of English teachers feel that their principal does not know enough about their subject specialism to develop them effectively. Of supervisors surveyed, 40 per cent reported that principals engage with English teachers less than with teachers of other subjects.

While only 22.7 per cent of teachers say this, the general finding is supported by principals themselves, **36.4 per cent of whom report that it is harder to develop their English teachers than other subject teachers.**

Also, 39.4 per cent report that they rely on English supervisors more than supervisors of other subjects to develop their teachers. It is neither essential nor possible to be a subject expert in every subject area. Leaders do not need to be subject experts to effectively develop pedagogical skills within teachers. There is a clear need for more guidance, training and support in this area to build principals' confidence and transferable skills.

Indeed, **97 per cent of principals report that they have not been offered any specific training on how to develop English teachers.**

When given an open option to share 'anything else', a number of principals requested specific courses or materials on how to develop English language teachers or on 'modern' strategies to teach English that they can follow up on.



The job specification for a school principal (MoEHE, 2021) includes ‘knowledge of the English language’, and 91 per cent of principals report their English as ‘fluent’, ‘very good’ or ‘good’. However, 18 per cent report that their own level of English is an obstacle to them developing their English language teachers. This should be taken into consideration when developing content for principal professional development materials – these could be in Arabic, and it would be wise for any existing subject-specific training materials (that have been given to English supervisors and teachers from any source) to be translated into Arabic and shared with principals.

Workload challenges

Undeniably, principals are stretched, with a large workload and differing tasks competing for their time. During the roundtable discussion, it was acknowledged by those present that the role of a resident supervisor is very challenging because the principal already has so much work to keep up with. It is advisable to review, at regular intervals, the varied demands on principals’ time and for the MoEHE to consider where some demands can be alleviated or efficiencies found. For example, one principal shared:



The ministry also does not give importance to the educational counsellor in primary schools from 1-4, and this increases the burden on the principal in solving the problems of students and parents at the expense of the educational process and supervising it.

Are there ways to reduce other burdens on principals, making more time available for them to focus on their role as resident supervisor?

Supervisor-principal collaboration

There is a degree of clarity in the differing responsibilities. The principal’s job specification states: ‘evaluating staff performance’ (MoEHE, 2021), while the supervisor’s job specification states: ‘participate in evaluating teachers’ performance’ (MoEHE, 2017b). During the roundtable discussion, a senior official from the MoEHE summarised that *their [principal and supervisor] co-operation is intended to ensure continuous oversight of teaching practices*. The problematic part of the assumed collaboration here is ‘continuous’, given that supervisors may visit just once per year. Of course, they can communicate with principals and teachers via other means, but realistically, the overwhelming portion of teacher support and development needs to be carried out by principals.



Reports on the nature of this collaboration were good. The majority of supervisors (87 per cent) feel that the collaboration between themselves and school principals is either effective or very effective. Similarly, and even more impressively, 90 per cent of English teachers surveyed say that principals and English supervisors work well together – 85 per cent say that their feedback and skills complement each other. Most teachers reported that supervisors and principals give them feedback together, either always (49 per cent) or sometimes (43 per cent). There is also a clear process whereby supervisors document lesson observation findings and feedback and share these with principals. This suggests that there is good collaboration at this stage.

Almost half (47 per cent) of supervisors surveyed say that they have not received any guidance on how best to collaborate with principals. Of those that had received the guidance, they all reported that it was indeed helpful. Further to the previous section, supervisors who believed that contributions from principals were not

effective also responded that they had not had guidance in how best to collaborate with principals. When teachers were asked, 'Who is ultimately responsible for your development?', 81.5 per cent said 'both'; and 18.5 per cent chose either the principal or the supervisor. This points to a simple solution of ensuring that everyone receives guidance in how best to collaborate. Furthermore, 72 per cent of supervisors shared that they had helped prepare newly appointed principals for their role as resident supervisor, while 27 per cent said they had not. Again, this could reveal a lack of consistency in how the collaboration is managed.

As stated previously, principals are stretched, with a large workload and differing tasks competing for their time. There also seem to be some differing views on principals' priorities. When supervisors were asked to select the five most important elements of a principal's role, they chose: administrative affairs, communication with parents, employee evaluation, and timetabling/staff rota. 'Providing



feedback, training and advice to teachers' did not feature in their perceived top five priorities for principals, perhaps assuming that supervisors feel they bear this load themselves. Most supervisors included: 'Conduct visits to classrooms' and 'Providing feedback to teachers' as the responsibility of a principal. However, only half of supervisors included 'Prepare plans to ensure improved employee performance' as the responsibility of a principal, though officials at the roundtable discussion state that this is within their domain of responsibility. Clarity around role division and responsibilities is needed here.

For most of the listed tasks related to teacher development in the Principal survey questions (see [Appendix A](#)), principals generally believed they were equally responsible, reflecting a surface harmony of collaboration. However, in other places where these questions were explored – more directly in terms of who is actually doing these things – less harmony was revealed. As stated, supervisors did not expect that principals should be finding training courses and materials for teachers based on their needs, and 15 per cent of principals reported that they themselves delivered no 'training' for their teachers; half said 1-2 sessions per year.

Two areas where there was divergence in assumed responsibility was for

'Putting consequences in place for persistent underperformance' and 'Reward or praise teachers for good performance' – some principals believed that they were more responsible than supervisors, which makes sense in a principal-led evaluation and staff management system. However, interestingly, most principals still believed that supervisors held equal responsibility for these two areas. Again, clarity and communication are needed here.

In terms of action by principals between supervisors' visits: 'Give teachers feedback on areas of underperformance' was the primary thing that supervisors believed principals should be doing between their visits. Followed by 'Conduct lesson observations to see if teachers are making progress' and 'review teachers' lesson plans'. When exploring if this happens, while 91% of principals reported that they 'always' followed up on targets set by supervisors, but only 47% of supervisors agreed with this. Supervisors did not appear to simply be overly stingy in their feedback – a larger group of principals reported an outright 'no/never', but they appear to have been more realistic responding in the greyer areas that half of principals 'did not always' follow up on the results of the lesson observation. This is supported by teachers, 40% of whom say principals only sometimes follow up on feedback (comparisons shown below). It could be inferred that, while there is general 'happiness' in terms of working relationships, this is not necessarily linked to an effective collaboration.



During the LMH school comparison, the supervisor's feedback was found to be of consistently high quality and well differentiated according to the teacher/level of teaching observed. When comparing the feedback conversations observed with interview responses and discussion with the corresponding principals, it was evident that the supervisor and principals from the medium- and high-performing schools were much more in line with each other. One could assume that teachers at the medium- and high-performing schools have a greater level of consistency in terms of feedback, guidance and development (from supervisor and principals), whereas there was inconsistency in the content and quality of feedback, guidance and development (from supervisor and principal) in the low-performing school. While on the surface, the paperwork and processes for principal-supervisor collaboration and teacher feedback are clear, there is room for too much variability in delivery, and some of the principals need upskilling.

Finally, a third of principals surveyed do not think that the principal-led evaluation process for English teachers is the best approach. Similarly, 27 per cent of supervisors believe that the principal-led evaluation process is not effective for English teachers. Perhaps this can be understood in terms of principal confidence developing and assessing English teachers from a subject-knowledge perspective, which could, again, be improved with training.

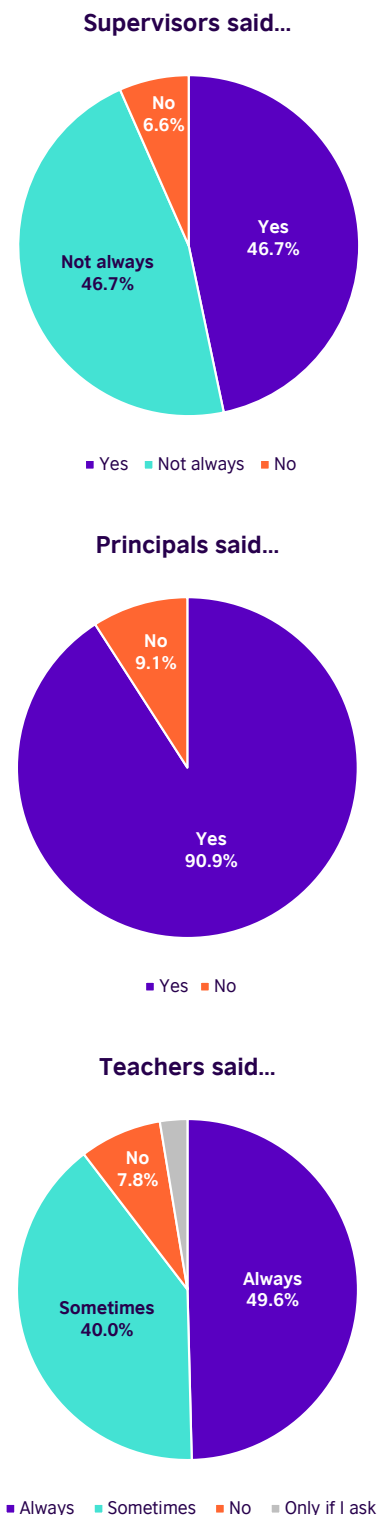


Figure 3 Comparison of supervisor, principal and teacher responses to the question 'How often do principals follow up on targets and give feedback?'

English teacher development

Participants at the roundtable discussion felt that a structured performance management system was in place, wherein principals are expected to evaluate teachers and assess their needs for further development. At the beginning of each school year, school principals are expected to consult with staff to identify areas where additional support or training may be required. This information is then incorporated into strategic planning for the academic year. Generalising all findings, it seems there are many examples of excellent practice with strong principals capable of carrying this out, particularly female principals in girls' schools. However, there are principals who do not feel confident doing this; English supervisors who do not think this is part of the principals' role; and English teachers who report not receiving this management from their principals.

As shared, the most popular response from English teachers to 'Who or what helps you improve your skills as an English teacher?' was 'supervisors' (251/336). Only 188/336 – approximately half – selected 'principal'. Principals were selected as often as 'other teachers', 'other colleagues' or 'MoEHE courses'. 'Courses from other organisations' was the least popular choice, but still beneficial to a large group, selected by 41 per cent of teachers. It is advised that MoEHE lean into this by formalising roles of 'other staff and colleagues' with this skill and capability.

Of principals surveyed, 72.2 per cent said that there is no other person in their school who provides training or development to teachers.

Officials reported that a formal deputy school principal role exists in about 60 per cent of West Bank schools, assisting with performance management and teacher supervision, while other schools rely on informal teacher support. In interviews with principals, though, it was found that the role of deputy/assistant principals can vary greatly and does not always include teacher development. In one case study school, there was a deputy principal, but their role was focused purely on administrative tasks such as timetabling and they have no involvement in teacher development or classroom practices.

In terms of the content of training that English teachers receive, English supervisors have recently been tasked to deliver training to teachers on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in English lessons. There is, of course, some merit to this – it is easy to argue that teachers should be given the opportunity to make the most of cutting-edge developments. However, this author would pose the less fashionable view that this is not the most effective use of supervisors' time, and not the most vital piece of training that a huge majority of English teachers in Palestine need. In many schools – particularly boys' schools, where there is most underperformance, and the low-performing school visited as part of this study – there is not sufficient basic hardware in classrooms to make use of presentation and audio, let alone AI. Many teachers (and their students) are still in need of more fundamental pedagogical training to maximise their impact in the classrooms as they exist (see Ruane, 2026).

Professional development of principals

Despite global acknowledgment of the pivotal role a school principal plays, in the MoEHE's most recent *Education Sector Strategic Plan 2017-2022* (2017a), there is no reference to principals or school leadership.

This report finds a need to reposition the development of school leaders as a central focus of MoEHE action plans to raise standards of teaching and learning in English in Palestine.

Of principals surveyed, 36.4 per cent did not participate in the course for new principals (MoEHE, 2023). Notably, those that participated in the course reported that it *did* help prepare them for the role of resident supervisor. Similarly, 33 per cent say they have not received any training on how to develop teachers (in any subject), but most of those who had participated in at least one training session reported that it *did* help them develop their English teachers. It is clear that more training and development needs to be offered, and also that it is effective when it is provided.

Areas where there is a particular gap appear to be in classroom practices (approaches to pedagogy rather than behaviour management, etc.) and English subject-specific matters. Almost half of principals have only been on 1-2 training courses focused on developing teachers' classroom practices. In interviews, principals shared that they would welcome more training. The principal of the high-performing school said the MoEHE was lacking in terms of offering professional development to principals:



I have 20 years' experience, and I barely remember having 2 or 3 courses during the last 20 years. If I want to develop myself or learn new things I do it on my own.

This is despite official policy such as the 'Principal Evaluation Form', compulsory documentation used to evaluate teachers at the end of each academic year. Section 3 of 5 states as a requirement of principals: 'Professional Growth. He participates in specialized and educational qualification programs'.

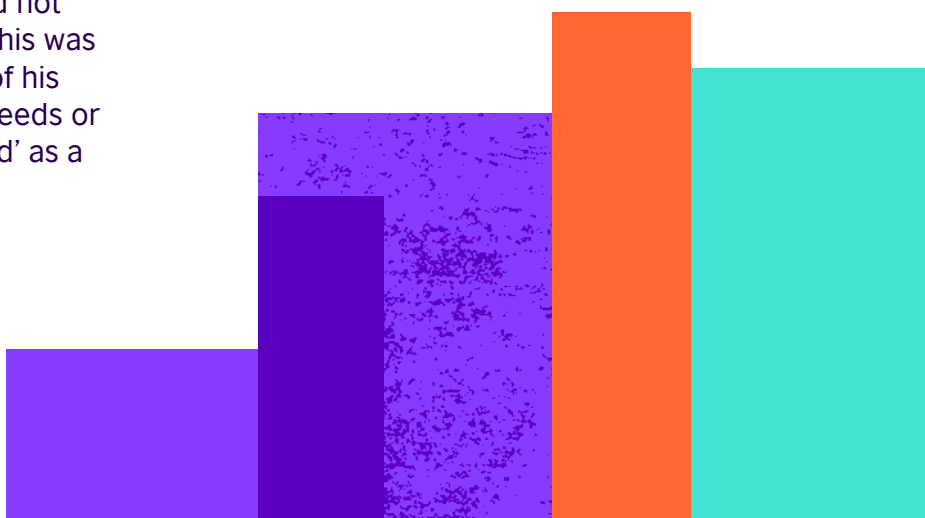
Mirroring what is discussed in the 'Introduction', during the roundtable discussion, senior officials from the MoEHE explained that the education system aims to empower schools by

shifting decision-making authority from central administration to individual schools, allowing principals greater autonomy in management and educational leadership. There is clear evidence of this having taken place. However, it is found that there is a need to invest time and energy into the continual upskilling of principals if they are to be truly empowered. UNRWA has an example of a specific training programme designed to enhance the supervisory skills of principals, including a two-week course on subject supervision (and it was described as ‘particularly in English’) (see www.unrwa.org/lftf). More of this is needed and evidence shows that more qualified and ‘trained’ principals lead schools with better English outcomes.

On the question of how principals’ training needs are assessed and addressed, MoEHE officials share that: *the principal himself can identify his own needs*. It is understood that a form is sent from the General Administration Office to principals highlighting the courses that they can take, and *if the principal asks for a certain thing, the office will look into it*. However, when the principal of the low-performing school was asked in an interview what he would like more of to help him train his English teachers, he said artificial intelligence (with regard to encouraging teachers to use it). However, as mentioned, none of the English classrooms visited had screens, projectors or speakers in them and teachers shared that they did not have laptops. It did not feel that this was a good or accurate assessment of his English teachers’ and students’ needs or how he could himself be ‘upskilled’ as a leader. There is a ‘supervisor for

principals’. Visits are conducted by the Head of School Performance Control Department or the School Administration Supervisor, who can recommend certain courses for the principal, but ultimately the aim is for the principal to choose the course himself. Approximately half of supervisors believe that ‘assessing the training needs of principals’ is part of their role; approximately half believe that it is not. Clarity is needed here. Overall, it is found that a more rigorous and extensive programme is required. Experts and officials acknowledged that many principals lack confidence in training teachers on pedagogy, though they feel more assured in leadership and classroom management. This is supported by the findings of this research and should be a content priority for any forthcoming training.

Principal evaluation is not currently connected with student performance. While it would not be advisable to conduct a purely numerical evaluation of principals (or teachers) as this can be unfair, particularly in a context such as Palestine, it would be wise to include student achievement/progress as one of the measures considered in evaluation of principals and assessment of their training needs.



Currently, there are five ‘fields’ of training for a new principal. The third is: ‘The school principal is a resident supervisor’ and the outline of content course is:

- knowledge of the process of preparing the weekly lessons/classes programs
- knowledge of the procedure of classroom visits to the teacher by the school principal
- knowing the process of dealing with the new/underperforming/outstanding teacher
- knowing the process of the principal’s evaluation of teachers.

As is clear, these are heavily process-driven and suggestively administrative. In light of this, it makes sense that principals largely focus on carrying out visits rather than how to use the information to assess needs and develop teachers. The full content was not available for review, and thus it is suggested that this course content is evaluated with the findings of this report in mind to see if it fully meets the needs of principals and their teachers.

Only one supervisor surveyed reported that ‘all principals are well versed in the principles of education and teacher development’; 40 per cent felt that the ‘majority’ were, but the largest group – almost half at 47 per cent – said that only ‘some’ were. Though there was some disagreement with this given during the roundtable, principals themselves agreed.

One of the most significant findings of this report is that **30 per cent of principals surveyed said they only feel confident ‘to some extent’ regarding assessing teachers in terms of pedagogical skills and teaching and learning processes.**

The principals of the mid- and high-performing schools gave very specific opinions and actions regarding the development of English teachers and improvement plans for student outcomes in English. Their knowledge was clear. They made a myriad of subject-specific comments such as:



There should be a trend towards choosing English books [in the Library]; I asked [teachers] to reduce the use of the Arabic language during the lessons; I encourage them to consider using visual aids.

However, the principal of the low-performing school made almost no subject-specific comment. There is a clear difference in knowledge and ability to apply transferable skills across subjects – this gap can be closed with training and also partnership with peers.

Gender

When comparing leadership in low-, medium- and high-performing schools (in English), we cannot remove gender from the equation. It is known that girls are consistently outperforming boys in English in Palestine, and that Palestine operates a largely gender-segregated education system with mostly same-sex leadership. An attempt was made to remove gender as a variable in the comparison of the three selected schools; however, this was not possible as we could not find a ‘high-performing’ boys’ school. This speaks for itself and is a complex issue.

Survey responses from male and female principals in relation to questions about the process of developing English teachers were quite similar. One difference was that male principals were generally more satisfied with principal-led evaluation; only 16 per cent are not satisfied. In contrast, 62 per cent of female principals surveyed are not satisfied with this form of evaluation. One additional difference was noted when analysing the responses of teachers with either female or male principals – female principals conduct slightly more classroom visits.

However, differences in the quality and content of English teacher development were more significant. In the previous section it was noted that 30 per cent of principals surveyed said they only feel confident ‘to some extent’ regarding assessing teachers in terms of pedagogical skills and teaching and learning processes. Male principals were less confident than females (males: yes = 57 per cent, somewhat = 43 per cent; females: yes = 73 per cent, somewhat = 27 per cent). This was supported by the LMH school comparison and principal interviews, in which it was evident that female principals managing the mid- and high-performing schools had technicalities of pedagogy, classroom

practice and teaching skill much more front of mind. They were able to confidently discuss these topics and automatically referred to specific points of pedagogy in response to relevant questions. (See also section: ‘Professional development of principals’ for examples.) The male principal managing the low-performing school did not. His primary concerns were school culture and the well-being of the boys. He gave just one example of developing his English teachers’ skills, which was to move them to teach higher grades. Although some variety of experience might contribute to a teacher’s skill, this should not be viewed as a standalone measure of training and development, and certainly not as a ‘reward’, as was also implied. It is impossible to disentangle whether his increased challenges, running a low-performing boys’ school, led this to be the case or vice versa. Probably both are true. Certainly, his students would benefit from a greater focus from leadership on teaching practices where at all possible. Another example, as noted, is that only 19 (out of 336) teachers reported that their principal ‘never’ or ‘rarely’ visits their classroom, but more problematic was that all of those responses were from male teachers in boys’ or co-educational schools.

Gender was not a key variable in the scope of this research; however, in correspondence with findings from concurrent research (Ruane, 2026), the need to focus efforts on raising standards of teaching and learning and leadership for boys is evident. In the roundtable discussion, it was noted that there are no gender-specific training courses for principals of boys’ schools, but different needs exist and the achievement gap remains.



Principal recruitment

There was general consensus on most matters during the roundtable discussion, but one significant point of debate was whether current recruitment processes sufficiently evaluate a candidate’s ability to develop teachers. While some argue that the existing criteria are adequate, others suggest that additional considerations may be necessary to ensure school principals have the right skills for teacher empowerment and leadership.

The selection of school principals follows a set of established criteria to ensure that individuals appointed to the role possess the necessary skills and experience. The main criteria include: strong leadership abilities and the capacity to manage a school effectively; the ability to work collaboratively within a team and foster teamwork among school staff; a certain level of experience within the education sector, particularly experience in teaching and school administration. These are sound and a heavy emphasis on ‘experience’ and ‘leadership qualities’ is valid. However, there is little consideration of profound pedagogical knowledge or skills and abilities to train and develop

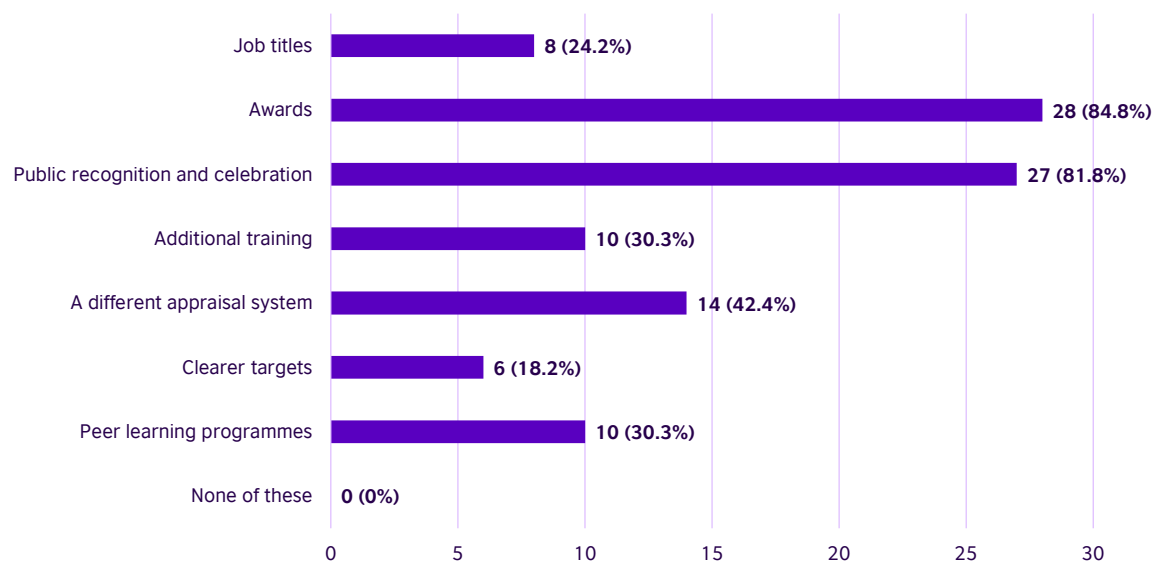
others. There is no specific mention of the term ‘resident supervisor’ in the current job description of a school principal (MoEHE, 2021), which raises the question of how much significance is given to this element of the role during the recruitment process.

Motivating English teachers

Motivating English teachers, or more specifically, the difficulty that supervisors and principals have in motivating male English teachers, has been repeatedly reported as an issue (Ruane, 2026; British Council, 2025), and so this was briefly explored in the course of this research and is the final topic of the findings.

Teachers gave a positive report of their leaders’ capability to motivate them: 84.2 per cent report that their principals *do* motivate them to become a great teacher, and 84.8 per cent report that their supervisor does. The external issues, such as pay, are so extreme for Palestinian teachers, including English teachers, that leaders would certainly benefit from additional tools. Principals were therefore asked: *What* would motivate your English teachers?

Figure 4 Principal survey results in response to question ‘What would motivate your English teachers?’

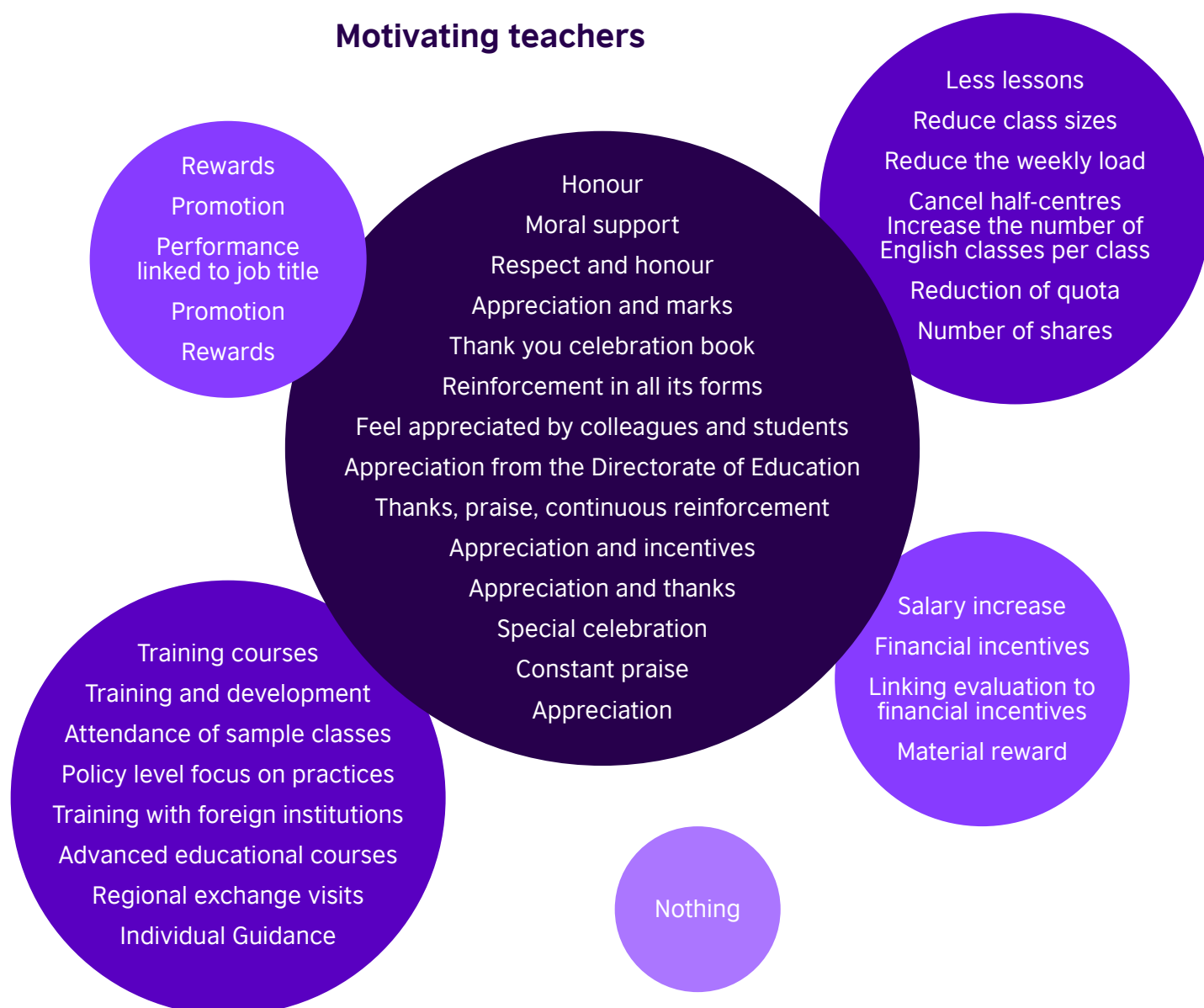


A thematic analysis of responses to this question was conducted. There were very clearly defined areas of suggestion for motivating English teachers. A large majority of suggestions given were linked to the theme of 'appreciation'. The second largest group of suggestions were linked to the theme of 'training and development'. Two smaller themes arose around 'timetable and classes' and 'promotion and reward'. Only one principal reported that 'nothing' would

motivate their English teachers. This was supported by teachers themselves, who were also asked. The most popular choice, with 58 per cent of teachers selecting it, was 'public appreciation and celebration'. (Remuneration and altered workload were not included as options in the teacher survey.)

All principal responses, paraphrased, are included in Figure 5.

Figure 5 Principal survey results in response to the question 'What would motivate your English teachers?' organised thematically



Finally, it was noticeable during the LMH school comparison that the English teachers in the high-performing school were incredibly motivated, while some of the English teachers in the low-performing school were not (even stating: *I learned English because I was talented. They [the students] are not; they are hopeless cases ... I will retire soon.*). Perhaps there is a correlation between the confidence and approach of the principal towards investing and engaging in teacher development and the motivation of their English teachers. The principal of the high-performing school, who was very knowledgeable about effective development of English teachers, described a reinforcing cycle between her input and the enthusiasm of her English teachers. She shared:

“

What encourages me is the people in front of me; it's in their nature to love to learn and improve, and that is what encourages me to support them. The English teachers love this, they encourage each other. and they benefit from each other ... They don't refuse any development or improvement, but on the contrary. They are competitive.

As before, it is impossible to untangle the link between motivation and gender of school and teacher, and it is noted that the context within male English teachers' work is challenging and complicated (Ruane, 2026).



4

Recommendations

Below are a set of recommendations to improve the capabilities of leaders to develop English teachers in Palestine and, therefore, improve learning experiences and outcomes for students of English in Palestine.

1. Provide a clear outline of what can be reasonably and practically achieved by supervisors. This is essential to avoid teachers ‘falling through the gaps’ in a system where ‘everything’ is currently expected but not all is possible. This is vital to document the remaining developmental needs that fall to in-school resident supervision and ‘other’ training options.
2. Appoint deputy principals or a ‘teaching and learning specialist’ staff member in every school. Create a role (with reasonable remuneration and/or timetable loading relief) for a highly skilled member of staff to take on additional, formal responsibilities to develop staff. This would be effective for the whole school and all subjects if it were an in-school role to provide support across all subjects, not just English. Subject specialist support would remain in the hands of English supervisors. Alternatively, or additionally, a small group of ‘expert English teachers’ could be formally appointed within each governorate to supplement supervisor visits, support and development (this might be a career pathway to a future role as an English supervisor). This already happens informally in some governorates or small local areas, but a systematic national approach is required.
3. Provide a clearer distinction of roles between subject and pedagogy supervision. Consideration could be given to a model used by Teach First UK, where the development of

teaching practices is divided between subject specialists and more general teaching and learning leadership. In this context, the English supervisor would be responsible for very subject-specific skills only, without covering the whole remit of 'teaching' skills (pedagogy), allowing the supervisor to be more targeted and impactful in their subject-specific development. The principal (or other assigned member of staff) would be responsible for helping teachers develop broader 'teaching and learning' skills such as questioning, assessment for learning, classroom management, use of technology (the latter two examples being highly linked to in-school resources, for example). This recommendation comes with a note that any changes need to be communicated in a well-considered and highly effective way.

4. Provide mandatory training for principals, specific to developing teachers' pedagogical skills. At a minimum of once annually, principals should attend continuing professional development on the topic of 'teaching teaching'. This could happen during the summer break. This would be most efficient for the whole school and wider system if it were inclusive of all subjects, but it is recommended that there is time allocated for 'subject-specific support', providing concrete examples of how wider principles apply to all subjects, including English.
5. Provide more tools to assist principals in reviewing the classroom practices of English teachers, conducting needs assessment and making recommendations to improve teaching and learning processes and, ultimately, student outcomes. Develop and provide principals with a wider range of tools for low-stakes, developmental assessment of teachers, conducting observations and giving formative, constructive feedback.
6. Introduce formalised partnerships between boys' and girls' schools in the same governorate, with close collaboration between male and female principals and peer-learning between English teachers. (This is in line with recommendations to counter the underperformance of boys in English (Ruane, 2026)). This will be especially

useful for smaller schools, where there are fewer English teachers internally to collaborate and learn from each other.

7. Review principal workload and consider where efficiency solutions can be found. For example, could time efficiencies be made by better utilisation of an online portal or alternative means of principal-staff-parent communications?
8. Equip principals with motivational tools for teachers. These might be standardised across Palestine or specific to governorates. For example: English teacher of the month, effort- and progress-based certificates, pins/badges/ties to recognise excellent teachers, public celebration on radio/newsletter. This might be accompanied by training for principals in how to ensure teachers find the evaluation process useful and developmental, rather than like an inspection.
9. Encourage and incentivise principals without post-graduate qualifications in education/teaching methods to undertake them. (See CERD, 2022.)



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