Education Reform Support Program (ERSP)

Funded by USAID

Jordan Schools Program (JSP)

Aqaba Field Directorate

Case Study

2011

Forward:

This case study offers a short description for Jordan Schools Project (JSP) as well as a description of the training that was provided since it was one of the 2 main components in the project. The form and content of the training are presented in addition to an explanation of the implementation method of the onsite support. The study also highlights the outcomes and outputs of the various training stages that are carried out in the three JSP schools in Aqaba. The successes across the three schools will be addressed in terms of the best use of school resources, plans devised to achieve their visions and classes that integrate modern pedagogies with ICT in the classroom. The study will start by depicting the implementation challenges before presentation the results of the surveys and interviews conducted with a sample of students, parents, teachers, school principals and supervisors in order to examine what has been achieved, the successes and challenges that sprung out from the samples' perspective and finally coming out with recommendations and proposals based on the results of the survey.

This case study covers the first three schools from the JSP project from Aqaba Field Directorate and they are as follows: Eighth Secondary School for Boys, Tenth Secondary School for Girls and Al-Karamah Basic Co-ed School. The study aims at identifying the successes achieved by the three schools so that they can be built on with the new JSP schools. Additionally, the study also seeks to highlight the challenges the schools came across upon implementation, so that they can be avoided in the future and used to develop solutions to overcome such obstacles.

In order to achieve the objective of this study, trainers collected daily and weekly data from these schools. Data was also retrieved through field visits by

ChangeAgent for Arab Development and Education Reform's (CADER) team of trainers and management who also collected data on the methodology of work (modus operandi) applied at the schools. The last phase of data collection involved conducting interviews with smaller groups of stakeholders who influence and are impacted by these schools as follows: a group of students from the three schools and a sample of their parents, a group of teachers in those schools, a group of school principals Field Directorate supervisors. Total sample population was 78 individuals divided as follows: 21 teachers, 41 students, 10 parents across the three schools, 3 school principals and 6 administrative supervisors. Specific questions that align with the expectations from each school were prepared for the target group. Annex 1 illustrates the questions that were discussed with each sample group.

Jordan Schools Project (JSP):

The Jordan Schools Project (JSP) is a USAID-funded project that aims at building fully equipped schools to provide quality education through the provision of state of the art infrastructure; to this effect, the schools would be set to provide the best service for all stakeholders - students, teachers, principals, parents and local community. This project is the first of its kind in the region; it is made of two key components:

I. School Buildings: it includes constructing 31 new public schools, rehabilitating and expanding a hundred other existing schools in Jordan in light of the latest international school construction codes; these schools follow rotation classroom principle and have subject-specific classrooms.

II. Training: "The Schools of Tomorrow" training is comprised of a multi-component professional development program for all stakeholders in the new schools; this component aims at the following:

- Help the participants develop a comprehensive picture about the characteristics of the new school design as well as the rationale behind it and means and methods of the best utilization of the available resources;
- work as a school-based team to maintain and achieve the optimal use of school resources;
- work as a school-based team to create a rich and effective learning environment as well as to offer rich learning opportunities for the students; *and*
- activate the role of the local community and parents in the school.

In this study, we will address the second component of the project: Training.

Training Program Phases:

The program falls into two phases: the needs assessment that has been used to design the content of the training, and the actual training which was introduced in three stages:

Stage I: this stage falls into two parts. Part 1 addresses the new school model in three training workshops that help develop an overview about the concept and details of the new model; part 2 addresses the new school community in four workshops that contribute to the creation of a consolidated school-based vision and culture to render active the new school model.

Stage II: this stage includes the third part which addresses the formation of expert school teams; five teams are formed to develop a group of procedural plans to achieve the school's vision. The fourth part focuses on "meeting the experts" to activate school work or action, coordinate the work of school teams and develop a strategic plan that targets the achievement of the school's vision and mission.

Stage III: Creativity at School – this stage coincides with the implementation of stage II "formation of expert school teams"; this stage is used to implement the teams' projects on the ground.

During the different training stages **workshop** training rather than lecturing was used. The largest portion of the training depended on the trainees rather than the trainers; trainees would receive some brief theoretical material followed by a reflective process on the school status or the situation the trainees were asked to imagine themselves in before suggesting ideas and finally applying these idas. The assigned workshops are associated with **the continuous onsite support** done by the trainers in order to ensure that what has been planned for during the workshop is actually being implemented in the field. It also aims at providing support for principals and teachers in implementation where they receive immediate feedback to ensure that the plan has been implemented effectively. There were two resident trainers who spent the first two months into the semester – five days/ week for the entire school day. They were available at schools to help and support the school teachers and staff. Gradually, the onsite support days were cut down to two days/ week during months 3 and 4 of the first semester. As for the second semester, the onsite support takes place one day/week over the course of 12 weeks; the next school year, onsite support is to be provided on a one-day basis every two weeks – or 5 days for the entire first semester.

The training program was applied during the 2010-2011 school year in three schools in Aqaba: Eighth Secondary School for Boys, Tenth Secondary School for Girls and Al-Karamah Basic Co-ed School. 74 teachers, 3 counselors, 4 supervisors, 21 students, 6 administrative staff and 11 parents took part in the training. The training had many successes during the previous school year, but also had some challenges since this is a new experience taking into consideration that these three schools operate under a new design and philosophy – as community schools that should open up their doors to the local community since they are equipped with the infrastructure and advanced ICT tools to be used to

improve the teaching and learning process at school in order to serve the student.

Program Successes:

The training program aimed at achieving a group outcomes which are associated with a set of successes:

I. To develop a comprehensive picture among the participants with reference to the characteristics of the new school design, the underlying philosophy and means and methods to make use of all available resources;

The schools' successes in reflecting their understanding of the model and ways to utilize the available resources was reflected through the following:

- Applying the **class rotation system**: the three schools succeeded in applying the rotation of the class despite being newly introduced; the application thereof has had many benefits for the students and teachers alike as follows:
  - Students: the application of this system contributed to a more disciplined student conduct during the breaks between classes on the one hand; on the other hand, it helped enhance student's cognitive aptitude and readiness for the next class as they moved inside the cluster and headed to the classroom with a lesser degree of boredom brought by having to sit in the same room all day.
  - Teachers: the application of this approach has made teachers feel a sense of ownership in the classrooms; consequently, teachers emphasized their identities and the nature of the materials they teach – something that can be easily detected by the school visitors when they enter the cluster. The rotation of classes helped teachers prepare their tools and materials as well as the way students are arranged in their class as per the educational methods pre-planned before the beginning of classes.

- **Using available school facilities in improving teaching and learning at school**: such use was manifested as follows:
  - Teachers of various subjects, including IT, effectively use the computer labs available at schools;
  - using science and chemistry labs by organizing a timetable for time slots spread across all weekdays;
  - using the school theatre to show purposeful acting sketches;
  - using the school playgrounds for physical education classes, other activities and the morning assembly; *and*
  - using some school facilities to serve the local community during their social occasions in addition to allowing them access to the labs and library.
- **Develop visions for the three schools**: each of the three schools managed to successfully develop, write down, post and share with the school community and local community their vision that emanates from their own respective understanding of the new school model and work on achieving that vision.

II. Work as a school-based team to maintain and optimally use the school resources as follows:

- **Forming student teams at the three schools**: each team was assigned to a certain area as follows: school hygiene, school resources, activating school culture, discipline and order and school activities. All teacher-led teams developed plans to achieve their respective goals before performing the actual implementation on the ground.
- **Planning and Implementing School projects**: during the training, five school teams were formed at each of the three selected schools with their own goals. The teams planned for and developed a minimum of two projects each; over 30 projects were implemented. Examples of such projects include one implemented by the educational methods teams across the three schools; it involved holding training workshops for teachers on integrating ICT with modern pedagogies. The project also included applying the content

of training and developing schedule for teachers to visit each other to provide and share feedback among teachers of the same subject areas. Other examples include the pioneer day activity conducted by the School Leadership teams of students from Al-Karamah Basic Co-ed School and Eight Secondary School for Boys under the supervision of the administrations at both schools. Under that activity, the students had, for one day, the chance of running both schools and leading the teaching/learning process. The school resources team at the Eighth Secondary School implemented a project that is based on making optimal use of the various available spaces to cultivate medicinal herbs. A third example is a project conducted by the team on activating the role of parents and local community at Al-Karamah Basic Co-ed; they held a charity bazaar that displayed simple handicraft and household food and sweets items. A date was set for the event to be held at school where items were sold and proceeds used to help poor students enrolled in that school. There were many other projects that were conducted across the three schools during the first school year.

III. Working as school-based teams to create a rich and effective learning environment and offer enhanced learning opportunities for students as follows:

- **Improving teaching/learning methods at school**: such improvement was manifested through the classes teachers offer at these schools that involve applying modern pedagogies; such as collaborative learning in addition to integrating ICT such as computers and the Interactive White Boards which led to activating the role of the student in the classroom.

- **Student excellence at these schools**: such excellence can be detected through the fact that many of the students won many awards in cultural, sports or scientific contests – indicating thus that the objectives have been achieved at curricular and extracurricular levels.

- **Lab timetables:** such schedules were developed to offer student learning opportunities through using available school facilities as teachers used the labs to enable students to conduct science experiments; in order to regulate

lab uses by all school teachers, schedules were developed at the three schools for optimal use of labs to achieve the objectives of the curricula.

IV. Engaging the parents and local community: the three schools succeeded in engaging parents and local community through the following activities:

- **Engaging students' parents**: as of day 1 of the new school year, it was noted that many parents have accompanied their children to school – a phenomenon that is considered a rarity in Aqaba public schools. Throughout the school year, it was also noted that there was remarkable parent presence at schools to indicate that there is ongoing communication between the parents and schools. When interviewed, parents indicated that their presence at school has become convenient with no obstacles involved as they get to move around the facility at ease. They have also indicated that they take part with the teachers and administration in teaching their own children and monitoring their conduct during school hours. A parent indicated that along with group of parents they received computer training course by the IT teacher at school after school hours using the computer lab available on location.

- **Engaging the local community**: this activity was achieved as follows:

  Al-Karamah Basic Co-ed: a book fair was organized at the theatre at school, using books donated by the local community; proceeds from selling the books were used for school purposes. The Aqaba MoH Health Directorate conducted a preventive screening for students of 4th through 7th grades; likewise, PSD and Tourist Police personnel organized a workshop to raise the awareness of female students at Al-Karamah.

  Eighth Secondary: ASEZA organized a training workshop on food and nutritional issues, and physicians from Aqaba Health Care Center participated in a regular health screening of students at the school.

Challenges:

Despite the successes mentioned above, there were many challenges the schools faced as follows:

- When training was launched during the summer holiday, a group of teachers, students, parents and education supervisors were trained ahead of the beginning of the school year. The training resulted in training groups from the three schools as follows: 22 from Al-Karamah Basic Co-e and Tenth Secondary in one group, another group of 19 persons from the same two schools, and 22 others from the Eighth Secondary who formed the third group. When the school year started, many new recruits (teachers) joined the schools and did not receive the first training. As a result, a supplementary training session was organized for two new groups – one at Eighth Secondary where 21 teachers were trained and another group of female teachers from Al-Karamah and Tenth. The fact that the schools had many part-time teachers who left after two months has created an additional burden to the training at all three schools.

- Upon the implementation of the training workshops of the students at the three schools, it was noted that the language of the training material or content was inappropriate for their various levels; for example, what worked for the 7th graders did not work for 1st and 2nd graders. As a result, the training material content was adjusted to address this need after the training was launched.

- The biggest challenge the three schools came across in general and the Eighth Secondary in particular was understaffing; school principals had to ask for part-time teachers to be employed – who are also replaced year round approximately.

- The teacher class load was 27 classes/ week; teachers were also busy in the training after regular school hours cut short the time available for planning to apply what they learn in the workshops.

- There was a shortage in the number of trainers available to provide teacher field support; after realizing that dedicating one trainer per school for onsite support was insufficient, a second trainer was added since it turned out after the beginning of the school year that it was impossible for one single trainer to attend classes of more than 40 teachers or give them timely feedback.

- The onsite support offered to principals faced some challenges as indicated in the field reports developed by the trainers; for example, the feedback requests trainers ask principals to give overlaps with similar requests made by the Field Directorate supervisor. Likewise, principals and trainers found difficulty in setting the coaching times since the former were preoccupied with administrative tasks at school, having to receive parents – which interrupted many of the coaching sessions – and the fact that the principals and coaches alike emphasized the coaching allocated hours are insufficient despite being difficult to allocate.

- The training dedicated for the integration of modern pedagogies with ICT tools was insufficient; since mostly training was dependent on acquiring skills that need to be applied so that teachers can competently master.

- At the outset, some teachers rejected their new roles assigned to them – especially the part-time ones under the pretext that they were overloaded with training, in-class activities and other work after regular school hours let alone the fact that they have been accustomed to a specific way of teaching/ instruction they considered to be successful and that it needed not be changed.

- There were many parents who keep dropping by to complain about the fact that their children are residents of the area but they have not been allowed to be enrolled in this school whereas others from farther locations were enrolled.

- School furniture arrived late into the beginning of the school year.

- Textbooks arrived late as well, and they were not therefore handed out to students as of day one despite the fact that enrollment was already concluded by then – and hence the exact number of students was already settled and known.

- There was a clear shortage in availability of textbooks across the three schools throughout the school year.

- There was a shortage as well in the Lab equipment and material.

- Inadequate number of users of the wider spaces and clusters in each school; on average, spaces were used by one or two individuals at each school – which is insufficient.

- Lack of tools needed for maintenance of facilities and equipment; when available, they were rather expensive compared to the three schools' budgets let alone that there was no maintenance technician available on location who has the knowledge on how to deal with the available tools and equipment, particularly once the contract with the engineering firm was over.

Smaller Groups Meeting Outcomes:

Three sessions with students and parents were conducted; many questions were raised about their impression with reference to the new schools in general and the success and/or challenges they faced at the beginning of and throughout the school year. They were also consulted about their proposals and suggestions for the coming year and the new schools. These sessions had the following objectives in particular:

- Summarize students and parents' views and impressions about the new schools;

- Identify the pros and cons (advantages and disadvantages) of the experience the students and parents acquired at these schools; *and*

- Infer students and parents' recommendations and suggestions to improve the teaching practices in these schools.

The meeting resulted in the following outcomes or findings:

- Some students indicated that their roles in the new schools had changed; when asked about the nature of such change, one responded that "students were divided into groups, and that he personally became the proctor or hygiene controller within the cluster and the playground during recess." Another student said that "each student had a larger role to play during class; teachers assigned us research tasks and we had the chance to present what we arrived at. We were also able to use the school labs more frequently." Many other students indicated that they became more involved in extracurricular activities, sports and cultural events as well.

- Larger student and parent involvement in school life has been achieved; the (female) school teachers started to apply new methods that allow the students a larger role in the learning process.

- High teacher turn-over as substitute teachers keep coming and going which negatively impacted the teaching/learning process at school and the way parents could communicate with the teaching staff; a parent said that "we barely get to know the Math teacher; he is gone before we know him!" He also indicated that all teachers are appointed from faraway locations and on part-time basis. While commenting on the parent's remark, one of the students emphasized that such an arrangement had its toll on student learning and delays in covering the entire required material.

- A number of the students indicated that "many students who live in the school area – some are even the next-door neighbors of the school, did not have the chance to enroll in that particular school for they did not hear about it save after it was too late to enroll." This complaint shows that there was no specific mechanism the administration or field directorate had in place in

order to announce enrollment at these schools. It also indicates that there were no clear criteria for admission which caused numerous parent complaints to this effect.

- The parents and students stressed that the delay in receiving the school furniture hindered the work and delayed standard activities; the same applies to the lab supplies and library books that are at their minimum levels; the problem is still going on to date.

- When asked about their overall impression about the new schools, students responded in a way that indicated some positive attitude towards the school and the philosophy behind it in terms of the circulation patterns and new roles they had apart from the available facilities.

The session conducted with the teachers from the three schools, it had the following objectives:

- Learn about the teachers' views and impressions with reference to the experience they acquired during the school year;

- Identify the advantages and disadvantages of the experience they acquired at school; *and*

- Take stock of the teachers' recommendations and suggestions to improve the teaching practices.

in order to achieve the above listed objectives, a group of questions were raised to focus on teacher selection mechanism, their promising practices in these schools, identification of the difficulties they faced prior to and during the school year and solicit their feedback with regards to suggestions for improvement and development for a better future.

Following the discussion that took place during the dialogue session, the following outcomes surfaced:

- The teachers emphasized that there was no specific clear criteria or standards for the selection of teachers to work at those schools; they indicated that the process was done through assignments by the field directorate and willingness or desire of the teachers was never incorporated as one of the selection criteria. There was also no clarification of the new roles teachers are expected to deliver within these new schools.

- Teachers emphasized the fact that the relocation and transfer of teachers were a result of bringing teachers who were not residents of the area as most of them were appointed on part-time basis.

- Many teachers, particularly those who teach science, physics and Chemistry, noted the good quality design of labs but indicated that they needed the material to conduct the scientific experiments; since the majority of such materials were not available, teachers stressed the need to have the material ready prior to the launch of the school year.

- Teachers who attended the JSP courses applauded the benefits of such courses in understanding the policy behind such schools to develop a universal school vision; they also indicated the fact that these courses educated them on the optimal use of available resources and spaces at schools by involving an applied part on this issue so as to serve the student learning methods.

- Teacher impressions about these schools varied; some expressed their admiration for the class rotation system or clustering that helped them identify the nature of their classes clearly, whereas others (only a few) saw in these new schools an additional burden and load to be added to their already overburdened workload.

As for the session with the three principals and administrative supervisors of the three schools, it aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- Suggest teacher and principal selection and appointment criteria;

- Identify the new practices being applied in these schools;

- Identify the challenges or difficulties of doing work at these schools; *and*

- Develop suggestions and recommendations to improve the teaching/ learning process.

In order to achieve these objectives, questions were raised for group discussion; the following outcomes have been reached:

- Lack of a definite student admission mechanism or policy rendered the principals and supervisors over-occupied with solving relevant problems for quite sometime.

- An education supervisor at the field directorate indicated that supervisors lack clarity in understanding the vision and philosophy behind these schools, which caused them incapable of monitoring the administrative supervisor work in the three schools.

- The three principals emphasized that there was a maintenance problem at schools, particularly after the contract with the engineering company was over, lack of spare parts and high prices. They indicated the need to have the field directorate at Aqaba reconsider the teachers' class load, staff and number of recruits.

- The participants in the meeting indicated that there were no special criteria in place to govern principal selection process since the principals themselves said that running these schools needs a lot more effort and management than other field directorate schools.

Recommendations and suggestions of the study:

In light of the study findings, the following recommendations can be made:

- The time allocated for teacher filed support needs to be extended, or the number of trainers could be increased so as to provide onsite support to the teachers while in their classrooms as they go about applying modern pedagogies and using the ICT tools effectively.

- The nature of the onsite support offered to the principals needs to be reconsidered by increasing the number of hours allocated to this purpose; trainers and supervision department need to coordinate more so as to attain a unified or consolidated understanding of the onsite support to be offered, and distribute the tasks among trainers and FD supervisors.

- Dedicate training workshops for the educational supervisors in order to clarify the vision and philosophy of this type of schools and define the overall framework of training at school.

- The training content for student workshops needs to be revisited so as to correspond to the students' various age groups.

- Teaching and administrative staff at school should be appointed based on specific criteria prior to the beginning of the school year.

- Clear and definite mechanisms for teacher selection need to be developed provided that they include the following:

  - The teacher's desire to work in such type of schools;

  - Teacher's domicile or place of residence (governorate);

  - Teacher's former reports;

  - Educating or raising the awareness of teachers on the philosophy behind such schools; and

  - Conduct interviews with teachers to discern their impressions and attitudes vis-à-vis such schools and work therein.

- Dedicate a full-time maintenance officer at each school –s after being trained on the special furniture, equipment, tools, air-conditioning and surveillance systems and other issues.

- Develop clear mechanisms with definite criteria for student admission to these schools.

- Develop a definite mechanism to announce and inform the local community about the opening of these schools so as to introduce their philosophy in an open way of communicating with the community, and highlight the potentials and infrastructure therein for quality learning for their children.

- Increase the share these schools get when it comes to recruiting staff.

- Prepare the infrastructure, school supplies, tools, furniture and textbooks prior to the first day of the school year.

- Provide these schools with the needed spare part – to be stored in a specially designated room at each school.

Annex 1

Questions of the smaller groups of principals, field directorate and education supervisors

- Who is the right principal for the JSP schools?

- How were the principals selected?

  - Was the selection process based on the principal's desire or by official appointment (from the field directorate)?

  - Was there an interview involved? Were there any other criteria consulted when the principals were interviewed?

  - What was the nature of questions addressed to the principal during the interview?

- How was the administrative staff selected?

- Was it based on desire or official appointment?

    - Was there an interview involved? Were there any other criteria consulted when the principals were interviewed?

    - What was the nature of the questions used during the interview?

    - Who is the right teacher for the JSP schools?

    - How were teachers selected?

- Was the selection process based on the teacher's desire, official appointment or upon nomination from the Civil Service Bureau?

- If there was an interview involved, were there any criteria observed during the teacher interviews?

- What was the nature of questions used during the interview?

    - How is the substitute teacher selected?

- Was the selection process based on the teacher's desire, official appointment or upon nomination from the Civil Service Bureau?

- If an interview was used, were there any criteria used when the substitute teacher was interviewed?

- What was the nature of questions addressed to the substitute teacher?

    - With reference to training, how did the training go?

- What do you think of the procedures involved in terms of timing before, during and after training (field follow up), duration of workshops and venue?

    - What is different about this school? And how did that influence your performance?

    - Is the school's vision inspired by the philosophy behind this type of schools? How was it planned to translate the vision into a reality?

    - What were the obstacles you faced with reference to the philosophy of these schools? How were able to handle them?

    - Do these schools help improve the teaching/ learning process in your opinion? How?

    - To what extent do you consider your school a "community-based" one?

- What about the school teams that were formed; are they effective? How?

- Do you think that this type of schools gave a larger role for the parents and local community? How?

- Does the school offer something to the local community?

- Does the local community offer something to the school?

- With reference to school furniture and supplies, had the process to deliver them to school been initiated in ample time prior to the start of the school year?

- Had the supervisors at the Aqaba field directorate been informed about the philosophy behind this kind of schools?

- Do supervisors of these schools need to have special competencies (special training or coaching)?

Teacher smaller group questions:

- Who is the right teacher for the JSP schools?

- How were the teachers selected?

  - Was the selection process based on the teacher's desire or by official appointment (from the field directorate) or upon nomination from the Civil Service Bureau?

  - Was there an interview involved? Were there any other criteria consulted when the teachers were interviewed?

  - What was the nature of questions addressed to the teacher during the interview?

- How is the substitute teacher selected?

- Was the selection process based on the teacher's desire, official appointment or upon nomination from the Civil Service Bureau?

- If an interview was used, were there any criteria used when the substitute teacher was interviewed?

- What was the nature of questions addressed to the substitute teacher?

- With reference to training, how did the training go?

- What do you think of the procedures involved in terms of timing before, during and after training (field follow up), duration of workshops and venue?

  - What is different about this school? And how did that influence your performance?

  - Is the school's vision inspired by the philosophy behind this type of schools? How was it planned to translate the vision into a reality?

  - What were the obstacles you faced with reference to the philosophy of these schools? How were able to handle them?

  - Do these schools help improve the teaching/ learning process in your opinion? How?

  - To what extent do you consider your school a "community-based" one?

  - What about the school teams that were formed; are they effective? How?

  - Do you think that this type of schools gave a larger role for the parents and local community? How?

- Does the school offer anything to the local community?

- Does the local community offer anything to the school?

Parent, local community and student smaller group questions:

- Do you think that this type of schools has assigned the parents and local community a larger role? How? What are these new roles?

  - Has the new school building design influenced the role of the parents and local community?

  - Does the school offer anything to the local community?

  - Does the local community offer anything to the school?

- Do you think that this type of schools has assigned a larger role to the students? How? What are these new roles?

- Has the new school building design influenced the student roles?

- What are the new and different opportunities students have in these schools?