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An Education for the Future
The Schooling Experience of Syrian Refugee
Children in Lebanon and Germany

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AN EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE: THE SCHOOLING
EXPERIENCE OF SYRIAN REFUGEE CHILDREN IN
LEBANON AND GERMANY

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ALP	Accelerated Learning Programme
CERD	The Centre for Educational Research and Development
DOPS	Orientation and Counselling Department
MEHE	The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (In Lebanon)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PSS	Psychosocial Support
RACE	Reaching All Children with Education in Lebanon
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (a software for statistical analysis)
UNHCR	The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
UNOCHAR	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study compares the education provisions and schooling experiences of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Germany and examines the future prospects of Syrian refugees who drop out of Lebanese public schools. While the latter seeks to identify opportunities for reintegration into the education system for valuable vocational and life skills, the country comparison seeks to highlight examples of best practices for reintegration of out-of-school Syrian refugees in education programmes, reduce dropout rates, and position Syrian students for success after graduation in Lebanon or around the world. The study also highlights ways for improving enrolment and retention rates in Lebanese and German schools. The study acknowledges the acute differences between the economic and political situations in Germany and Lebanon and the implications on the ability of each country to host refugees. The percentage of refugees in Lebanon to the local population is the highest in the world, as Syrian refugees make up a third of the current population now. In contrast, refugees comprise a mere 3% of the total population of Germany.

In order to meet these objectives, the study relied primarily on qualitative instruments in three different stages: desk review, in-depth interviews, and comparative school case studies in Lebanon and Germany. We also administered student surveys for quantitative analysis and comparison of student schooling experiences in both countries. Before presenting the main findings of the study, it is important to highlight the limitations best summarised as a lack of time and overlap with many holidays and end-of-year exams which limited the sample size of the study, particularly in Germany. We had less than two months to plan and complete the study. This affected several decisions, including the inability to reach areas in eastern Germany or to interview policy makers in the various federal states hosting Syrian refugees. Moreover, it was not possible to find dropouts in Germany as a point of comparison either due to the recent influx and enrolment of Syrian refugees or due to the limited time of the project which undermined our ability to locate them. Finally, families were reluctant to discuss their social and political activities. This last limitation impacted our interest in the relationship between dropping out of school and the possibility of recruitment by extremists. Research into this topic requires thorough ethnographical and anthropological research rather than individual interviews.

The study identified a number of bottlenecks as well as examples of good practice that affect the enrolment and retention of Syrian refugee children in public schools in Germany and Lebanon. These bottlenecks and good practices exist at the policy level, academic level, and at the social level. At the policy level, we included access to education, enrolment requirements, and grade placement methods. The academic level comprised of consideration for the curriculum, the teaching of foreign/second language, and the types of academic support available for Syrian refugees. The social level related to the school environment, students' integration, as well as the

degree of parent integration. Recommendations that may contribute to overcoming these challenges and increase the likelihood of enrolment and retention of Syrian refugee students are derived out of these bottlenecks and good practice. Key findings related to the future prospects of Syrian refugee dropouts in Lebanon are also presented.

1. Policy Level:

a) Access to Education

Bottlenecks:

One of the main factors that affects the enrolment rate in formal education among Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Germany is **the political status and consequently, the rights offered by the host country. Most Syrian refugees** interviewed **perceived their stay in Lebanon as temporary**, and survival as their primary priority, whereas those interviewed in Germany were more likely to perceive their presence as a new beginning. Moreover, the legal de-classification of Syrians as refugees in Lebanon sidesteps conventional legal frameworks for human rights and hinders access to basic services, such as education. In Lebanon, the majority of interviewed Syrian parents and children seemed to operate in a kind of 'survival mode' whereas in Germany, they intended to build a better future.

Additionally, **education is practically not compulsory for children in Lebanon** as the law concerning compulsory education is neither policed nor enforced. Hence Syrian refugee students have the option of dropping out of school. This policy tacitly implies that education is not mandatory for adolescents, and many Syrian students opted to drop out of school soon after enrolling. This finding reveals that Syrian refugee students' perceptions of school in Lebanon differ greatly from those in Germany. Almost all Syrian refugee children in Germany reported positive attitudes toward school compared to their peers in Lebanon. These findings suggest that de-valuing education at the policy level is likely to reinforce the idea that education is not a priority, especially among Syrian refugees. In contrast, opting out of school before the age of 18 was simply not an option for Syrian refugees in Germany.

Despite the huge efforts of UN agencies currently covering the cost of school registration, books, and stationary, the study reveals that **education is not necessarily cost free in Lebanon**. Many families struggle with the cost of transportation, school supplies and other school-related expenses. Moreover, education is also often perceived as a financial burden by many Syrian refugee families. The limited access to aid, proper housing, clean water and electricity, and the

inadequate conditions of the camps in which the majority of Syrian refugee families live often pushes them into prioritising work over education.

Good Practices:

The German National Action Plan on Integration identified language and education as the key elements to a successful integration of refugees. This plan ensures Syrian refugees are provided with both the right to access quality education and adequate language support to cope with formal education in a new language. Access to schooling in Germany is in most cases granted no later than three months after a request for asylum. Moreover, all children residing in Germany are obliged to attend school from ages 6-18. The welcome classes present a flexible and warm environment for refugee children, often out of school for years, to gradually prepare themselves to join mainstream schooling.

Recommendations:

- Develop education policies and programmes that go beyond just providing a temporarily enrolment solutions for Syrian refugees. Instead, educational routes that ensure retention of refugees and address their needs are needed.
- Measures to implement and reinforce the laws concerning compulsory education and change the law to extend up to the age of 18 in Lebanon.
- Provide wider access to school provisions, such as school supplies, and resources, such as transport, clothing, school meals, etc., to Syrian refugees.
- Provide a welcoming environment for refugee children before enrolling them in mainstream classrooms.

b) Enrolment

Bottlenecks:

Although the Lebanese government recently simplified enrolment procedures by reducing the number of documents needed for Syrian refugee enrolment, many students who arrived to Lebanon earlier faced struggles when attempting to enrol in formal education. **Students above grade 6 are still required to present their official education records**, which creates a barrier for many Syrian adolescents to enrol in formal education. This is particularly the case for those who fled Syria at the beginning of the conflict and are no longer able to go back. Other strict requirements also hinder older refugee students from independently registering for official examinations meant as a viable option for those unable to enrol.

Another factor that seems to also affect student enrolment is the **lack of choices available for the Syrian families** to choose a quality education best suited to their needs. This is hindered by the rigidity of the Lebanese education provisions. Most Syrian families live in lower socioeconomic areas in Lebanon due to the relative affordability of the areas, yet the implication is more limited access to schools due to a limited enrolment capacity.

Although the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) opened a second shift at public schools in 2012/2013 to compensate for the limited capacity of Lebanese schools, afternoon shift schooling also presented a number of challenges. In terms of enrolment, the findings reveal that many Syrian families, particularly those who had been in Lebanon prior to the war, have **misconceptions about the quality of education provided in afternoon shifts**. Many confuse afternoon shifts with non-formal education, assuming afternoon shift coursework does not offer a formal certification, and thus is of marginal value. Others exhibited negative perception of second shift as the quality of education was seen as of less quality compared to the morning shift. The findings reveal that many Syrian parents unable to enrol their children in morning shifts chose not to enrol them in the afternoon shifts due to this view.

Good Practices:

In order to facilitate the enrolment of Syrian refugee children in public schools, MEHE exempted students under grade 6 from providing documents related to prior education when enrolling in public schools. The Lebanese Government also recently announced that students at the public middle and high school levels (grades 9 and 12) of any nationality (including Lebanese returning from Syria, Syrians, Iraqis and others) are allowed to sit for the official exams for the scholastic year 2015-2016, regardless of whether they present transcripts or documentation of earlier schooling. Those who pass these exams will receive official certificates of success from the Lebanese MEHE. However, those who do not pass the exams will need to join school and repeat the last grade achieved, which presents another obstacle to student success. This decree could help refugee children who have been out of school for a few years to re-enrol, yet it should be a viable option even for students who fail it. Another significant good practice from Germany is that enrolment is facilitated by the government, which means that students are more likely to be guaranteed a place at school within a shorter timeframe. This also relieves Syrian refugee parents from the responsibility of locating a school and following up on enrolment and registration.

Recommendations:

- Initiate campaigns to raise awareness among Syrian refugees on the viability of afternoon shift schooling as means to gain access to certified formal education.
- Simplify enrolment requirements and procedures for students above grade 6.

- Facilitate access to intensive education programmes and resources, such as books, for students who wish to sit for the official exams.
- Permit children students to repeat official exams in the event they failed the first time.

c) Grade Placement

Bottlenecks:

An important factor that affects the enrolment and retention of Syrian refugee children in education is grade placement in formal education. In Lebanon, children are directly integrated into Lebanese public schools and assigned grades according to their ages or the last attended grade, depending on the decision of the school in which they enrol. In the beginning of the Syrian crisis, children were automatically demoted two to three years due to a poor command of English or French - the languages of instruction for teaching mathematics and science in Lebanon. Currently, the primary policy for student placement is age. The findings indicate **that most students assigned to grades that are higher or lower than their academic abilities are likely to face learning and social difficulties**. This, in turn, contributes to a stronger likelihood of dropping out of school. The findings also indicate a very low likelihood of students returning to school after dropping out due to assignment to a grade inappropriate to their abilities or age. The extent to which students feel unable to keep up with their classmates greatly influences their emotional state and is likely to influence their decision of whether to stay in school.

Good Practices:

In Germany, Syrian refugee students benefit from preparatory programmes facilitated through the parallel education model. Refugee students attend welcome class programmes designed to guarantee that children are assigned to the most appropriate grade level in a formal education setting. Students who exhibit advanced knowledge and skills are allowed to integrate earlier, whereas students unable to acquire the necessary skills at the conclusion of the one-year programme are granted special permission from the authorities to re-enter the programme for another year. The students are then required to repeat the grade they left when being integrated into the German educational system, thereby boosting their chances to succeed academically, and bolstering enrolment and retention rates among Syrian refugees.

Recommendations:

- Standardise placement tests and grade assignment methods based on academic skills rather than age.

- Establish a transitory and preparatory period in Lebanon for Syrian refugee children before enrolling them in mainstream education. Establish accelerated learning programmes for those whose academic levels are well below their age group before integrating them into formal education.

2. Academic Level:

a) Curriculum

Bottlenecks:

The Lebanese MEHE adopts a rather rigid approach to school curricula. The curriculum remains unchanged when taught to Syrian refugee students, but also the teachers must strictly follow the textbooks. Teachers in Lebanese public schools are expected to follow the national textbooks as the main source of all lessons. Many of the interviewed teachers remarked that the textbooks are short on activities, particularly listening and speaking activities, despite the fact these are listed as the main objectives of the national curriculum. These teachers also argued that **the Lebanese national curriculum was too long and difficult for most Syrian students, in addition to being too rigid in terms of teaching resources**. Moreover, the teachers often struggled to complete the necessary material in time for end-of-the-year examinations. Most Syrian students expressed frustration with the pace, and underscored the struggle to keep up with the lessons, and the majority of those who dropped out of school claimed that their inability to keep up with the curriculum was the primary factor contributing to their decision to leave school.

Good Practices:

In Germany, there is a great deal of flexibility given to teachers to prepare their own material based on their students' needs. All of the interviewed teachers developed their own material and choose the textbooks they found to be the best fit for their group of students.

Recommendations:

- Adopt a more flexible approach to the teaching of the national curriculum and encourage teachers to integrate material that can enrich the Lebanese national textbooks which are over twenty years old.
- Invest in programmes that gradually orient students with the Lebanese curriculum and the language of instruction, as both are very likely to contribute to student retention rates at formal schools.

- Many Syrian refugee students who failed their final exams in Lebanon would benefit from accelerated learning programmes to catch up with their peers without having to repeat a school year.
- Develop teachers' capacity to create learning resources that can be used as supplements to the national textbooks.

b) Learning a Foreign/Second Language

Bottlenecks:

The findings indicate **that the language barrier for Syrian refugees in Lebanon continues to be the primary challenge, even among high achievers**. Lebanese regulations stipulate that the official curriculum be taught to Syrians in the same conditions as those for the Lebanese, including the teaching of mathematics and science in English or French. This foreign language education poses great learning difficulties for refugee children who only know Arabic, and have not had previous instruction in English or French. Moreover, unlike in Germany, Syrian refugee students in Lebanon are integrated into schools, regardless of their language skills and without any preparatory language support.

The findings also reveal that since many Syrian refugee children have lost several years of schooling and/or have not attended formal schooling prior to their enrolment in Lebanon due to the war in Syria and/or displacement. As a result, **many Syrian students struggle with basic literacy in both Arabic and foreign language**. This often leads to academic and learning difficulties, which also contribute to a strong likelihood of dropping out of school.

A common struggle in Lebanon is **many Syrian refugee students required more individual attention than their teachers are able to give them**. This is primarily due to their inability to overcome the language barrier, and the limited use of pedagogical teaching methods relying on pictures, songs, and videos to facilitate the learning process. Syrian children in Germany described their learning experience as engaging and interactive, and reported positive attitudes towards their teachers. Moreover, while nearly all Syrian students in Germany stated that their teachers use resources outside the textbook more often than not, in Lebanon, nearly 30% claimed their teachers never use outside resources.

One important issue highlighted by the study is **teachers' own attitude to learning a second language**. Most teachers interviewed in Lebanon considered that parents' backgrounds and a poor foundations in English or French coupled with an unwillingness from students to commit to language learning served main obstacle to learning. In contrast, teachers in Germany saw the acquisition of language as one important phase achieved by students in order to proceed with

mainstream schooling. This was most apparent in the welcome classes designed for a maximum of two years. The most noticeable difference between teachers in Germany and teachers in Lebanon was that for the former the issue of learning a new language was not seen as a permanent disadvantage but rather a temporarily one where additional support to children can help them overcome it and progress academically. In contrast, for teachers in Lebanon language was seen a major factor which will impede children's learning and affect their abilities. Remarkably, parents of Syrian and Lebanese children believed that learning a second language was way too difficult for their children. Lebanese parents often blamed their children for their lack of interest and willingness to learn rather than blaming the teacher.

Good Practices:

The German National Action Plan on Integration identifies adequate language support as fundamental preparation for success in formal education in a new language. The focus of the welcome class programmes offered through the parallel education model in Germany was designed to orient with and facilitate student comprehension in German, the primary language of instruction. Moreover, children identified as illiterate are sent to beginner level courses designed to teach basic German as a second language, prior to joining the welcome class programmes that prepare students for integration into the public school system. Some beginner level classes, taught by German language teachers, also include basic math taught at a second-grade level in order to ease the transition to the language of instruction. After basic training at the beginner level, students are sent to welcome classes as a way to gain more writing and comprehension skills. Some welcome classes include math and science as well as language (different teachers for language), while others only offer language classes. Additionally, findings also highlight classrooms in Germany more frequent relied on pedagogical teaching methods that involve the use of pictures, songs, and videos to facilitate the learning process. Most of the welcome classes take place within the same mainstream school which refugee children will join once they finish the year. Moreover, most schools integrate refugee children with their German peers in physical education, art, break time, as well as extra-curricular activities.

Recommendations:

- Integrate basic literacy programmes in Arabic and English/French to orient students to the structured use of language before integrating them into formal education. This would also entail the identification of these children through the standardised placement test recommended above.
- Provide language teacher training programmes designed for teaching English/French as a foreign/second language.
- Offer language courses for parents who are keen to learn a second or foreign language.

c) Academic Support

Bottlenecks:

Very few Syrian students in Lebanon reported **receiving additional academic support or remedial classes**. Students who are left without support are more likely to face learning difficulties, which contributes to their likelihood to drop out. In the few cases students reported benefitting from remedial classes, private tutors, or additional classes taught by volunteers, these students also reported seeing an improvement in their grades and academic performance. Some of students even noted that they no longer needed additional support after they were able to catch up with the rest of their class.

Good Practices:

A good practice from Lebanon is the provision of non-formal education offered by NGOs to Syrian refugees. This provides Syrian students the opportunity to learn without the pressure to complete the curriculum in time for the final exams. Many Syrian students find the pace and lessons of non-formal education more appropriate for their learning style and interests. These students are more likely to perceive teachers in non-formal education as more invested and more patient than those in formal education. The main disadvantage, however, is non-formal education does not provide a certification upon graduation. A good practice found in Germany is that teachers are able to provide feedback to the Ministry based on their direct experience teaching refugees, and in turn, the Ministry acts responsively to their concerns. The teachers interviewed in Germany argued the provision of additional support for students after their integration into the regular system is needed. According to one of the teachers interviewed, teachers who have access to classes and also trainers have communicated this issue with the Ministry, and measures to start organising the supplemental programmes are now underway.

Recommendations:

- Integrate academic support programmes, such as homework clubs or volunteer tutoring, for students who have trouble keeping up with the curriculum or need additional language support and exercises.
- Establish feedback loops between MEHE and the teachers of Syrian refugee students, as the latter are most familiar with the types of academic support required.

3. Social Level:

Bottlenecks:

The need to adapt to a new culture and language of instruction at school leads to learning difficulties for most Syrian refugee students. It often takes several months for many Syrian refugee students to adapt and feel secure enough in their environment to be able to learn. Syrian refugee students in both Lebanon and Germany reported not feeling safe at school.

Moreover, many Syrian students arriving in Lebanon and Germany **have not attended formal schooling before**, whether due to the war or displacement. This means they will encounter greater difficulties in **adapting to structured education environments**. Most teachers, in both Lebanon and Germany, reported facing difficulties when it came to class management, discipline, and punctuality when dealing with Syrian refugee students. Some teachers even argued that most Syrian refugee students **need to learn how to adapt to the classroom setting before being educated**. The inability to adapt to the learning environment is likely to contribute to a student's decision to leave school.

Safety and security are also main concerns for many Syrian refugees, especially females. In many cases, adolescent females who drop out of school are likely to have been sexually assaulted either at or on their way to school. Many of their parents stated that they lack access to safe and affordable transportation.

Children also tend to be influenced by the social context of the school. The findings suggest that the school and learning environment, particularly the relationships between teachers and students, as well as their parents and school staff, largely influence student success rates and decisions to stay in school. Although teachers in Lebanon were also able to assist with student academic development, they were less engaged in their personal experiences and had little to almost no contact with parents. The findings reveal that **students who feel more integrated**, whether in Germany or Lebanon, **tend to perform better at school and are more likely to stay in school in the future**. In contrast, students who often feel anxious or isolated at school are more likely to struggle academically, and therefore more likely to drop out.

Moreover, children are likely to be significantly influenced by their families' decisions. In many cases, the decision to leave school was greatly influenced by the parents' perspectives on education. **Syrian refugee students with parents who were less invested in their education influenced student attitudes and outcomes**. Even in cases where children wanted to stay at school, their parents' inclinations were often more overpowering. Moreover, the findings suggest that Syrian refugee youths' perceptions towards education are more likely to be positive among those who chose Germany as their host country. This is likely to significantly influence their decision to pursue their education.

Good Practices:

Factoring in enough time for new students to be able to adapt to their environments and gain a command of the language of instruction is key to facilitate their integration, enable academic success, and increase likelihood of retention. A good practice from Germany is that the welcome class programme provides teachers with the time and opportunity to focus on teaching and learning before students are integrated into formal education. The findings also reveal that teachers in Germany are more likely to take personal initiative to resolve conflicts between refugee students. For example, one of the teachers interviewed initiated a buddy-system between German and Syrian students. Similarly, despite the language barrier, most of the teachers interviewed in Germany made great efforts to engage with parents of Syrian refugees. The findings also indicate that in most cases, Syrian refugee students in Germany were more likely to feel like their teachers were more invested in their education, particularly since these teachers were more likely to communicate with students on an individual level, whereas teachers in Lebanon were more likely to communicate with students as a group.

Recommendations:

- Offer orientation and induction programmes for students to foster learning about discipline and rules of conduct before integration into formal education.
- Teachers must better engage with the experiences of Syrian refugees and allow students the opportunity to express themselves and value their culture and identity.
- Integrate projects and extracurricular activities that allow Syrian students to work with others.
- Provide peer-to-peer mentoring for both children and parents.
- Offering language courses for parents at schools as well as training on how they can support their children.
- Establish obligatory parent/teacher meetings to follow up on their children's performance and to foster investment in their children's education.

4. Future Prospects for Syrian Refugee Dropouts in Lebanon

In addition to the above mentioned bottlenecks at the policy, academic, and social levels, many **Syrian refugee youth need to work in order to support their families**. However, most of those who drop out of school to work independently and not with a family member are more likely to remain invested in their education and development. Many of these students continue studying English and pursue apprenticeships in semi-skilled labour positions, such as mechanics. Others work as butchers or vegetable stand attendants.

Around half of the dropouts interviewed regretted the decision to leave school. In cases where the children did not face learning difficulties and did not decide to leave school independently,

the dropouts claimed they would return to school if their parents would allow it. On the other hand, in cases where children left school due to inappropriate grade assignments, the dropouts admitted that they would go back to school, provided they were offered accelerated programmes that would allow them to catch up with their peers. In addition, children who faced learning difficulties were either likely to pursue their education by other means (vocational, non-formal, or language) in cases where their parents valued education, or pursue work in cases in which their parents did not value education.

The situation in Germany is quite different. Given that education is compulsory, those below 18 do not have the choice to drop out of school. In terms of their prospects, at the end of the preparatory year, each child is assessed. The students' abilities at the end of the preparatory programme provides the criteria for placement in a programme that responds to their abilities. Some end up in Gymnasium, which is a highly academic route, while others attend forms of schools which vary from less academic to vocational programmes. In Lebanon, however, the findings suggest that Syrian students are less likely to perceive academic education as an asset, and are more likely to be able to compete in the semi-skilled job market. However, the findings also indicate that most Syrian refugee students **are willing to go back to school, if not for the bottlenecks that exist at the policy, academic, and social levels**, suggesting that their potential to join extremist groups can be easily circumvented provided that these challenges are dealt with by the main stakeholders involved.

To sum up, education for refugees in Lebanon still operates under the framework of an emergency, despite the fact that the war has now entered its sixth year. Even if a political solution is reached and the war concludes tomorrow, it will take a long time before these children return to Syria. Therefore, a shift in the approach to education is urgently needed. Currently, education is offered as a way of keeping children out of the street rather than as a pathway to student achievement in Lebanon. More supplemental academic support is needed in order to foster education success that enables a better quality of life. On the other hand, Germany positions students for success through support for children before enrolment in mainstream education, yet this support disappears once they leave the welcoming classes. The learning experiences of these children in mainstream schools in Germany is yet to be investigated.

INTRODUCTION

The 2011 protests in Syria transformed into a seemingly long-term and ongoing war, with repercussions that extend well beyond the nation's borders. An estimated 13.5 million people in Syria are in need of humanitarian assistance, of whom 4.6 million live in besieged or hard-to-reach areas (UNOCHA, 2016). Around 6.5 million people are internally displaced, and the numbers are expected to rise to 8.7 million by the end of 2016. Access to clean water and food, as well as health and education services is severely limited due to physical and security constraints. This forced an increasing number of Syrians to flee the country, making them one of the largest refugee communities in the world. According to the latest UNHCR statistics, the number of Syrians fleeing the war in Syria is nearing 5 million refugees worldwide (UNHCR, 2016). Most of these refugees have fled to neighbouring countries, including Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. In Lebanon, the number of Syrians registered as refugees are estimated around 1 million, meaning that around 1 in 5 people in Lebanon are Syrians, making it the country with the largest number of refugees relative to its population. Additionally, at least 500,000 Syrians are estimated to be residing in Lebanon without being registered as refugees, many of whom had been working in Lebanon prior to the war. According to UNHCR statistics, around 200,000 Syrian refugees have left Lebanon since mid-2015. Many of these refugees have opted to move to Turkey or Europe, both of which have seen a rapid influx of refugees in the past year, whereas the refugee population in Lebanon remained stable. Turkey currently hosts the highest number of registered Syrian refugees in the region at around 2.7 million, a number which has nearly tripled in the last year.

Although regional host countries are heavily invested in providing access to humanitarian aid and assistance to Syrian refugees, limited funding for basic assistance, such as food security, shelter, sanitation, and protection, as well as limited projects to support livelihood and social cohesion have severely limited future prospects for Syrian refugees in regional host communities. Despite the fact that most of the funding for Syrian refugees in regional host countries has been directed towards education, their integration into the labour market in these countries has been heavily contested by local communities, which already struggle with relatively high unemployment rates. According to the World Bank, poverty rates among Lebanese are expected to rise, accompanied by an estimated 10% increase in unemployment rates due to this influx of Syrian refugees. Moreover, regional countries hosted refugees under the pretext that their stay will be temporary, and therefore overlooked long-term sustainable solutions for the integration of Syrian refugee communities. Around 10% of Syrian refugees are now fleeing to Europe, which has seen a spike in numbers of asylum seekers since mid-2015, indicating that more and more Syrians are opting for more long-term solutions. According to the UNHCR, around 1 million Syrian refugees have applied for asylum in Europe. The countries receiving the largest numbers are Germany and Serbia at around 300,000 each, and these numbers are expected to rise steadily. This has

prompted several European countries to develop strategies and policies to help deal with the problems that might arise with the integration of large numbers of Syrian refugees.

Nearly a third of the Syrian population are children under the age of fourteen (UNESCO). Education in Syria is compulsory for children between the ages of 6-14, however, since the beginning of the war, enrolment rates dropped by nearly 50% in most areas, and have reached less than 10% in besieged areas. In addition, the number of out-of-school adolescents in Syria went from around 250,000 in 2005 to nearly 1 million in 2013. Moreover, Syrian refugee enrolment rates in regional host countries have not yet exceeded 50%. This means many Syrian children and adolescents remained without access to education for an extended period of time. Lebanon continues to have the lowest enrolment rates among Syrian refugees in formal education. Around 400,000 school-age Syrian refugees currently reside in Lebanon. Despite the Lebanese Government's public affirmation of a commitment to compulsory education for children under 15 by opening up Lebanese public schools to Syrian refugee children in 2012/13, the government has since placed multiple restrictions on registering Syrian refugees in Lebanese public schools. For example, in 2013/14, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) partially suspended the registration of Syrian students in the morning shifts of public schools, and requested funding from UN agencies to open for afternoon shifts for Syrian students. The Minister of Education temporarily suspended registration of Syrian refugees as part of a prioritisation policy catered to Lebanese students in the beginning of the 2014 school year. Importantly, Lebanon is not a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention and currently withholds refugee status from Syrians in Lebanon. Although the Lebanese Government has permitted the UNHCR to register refugees, the protection offered by such registration remains limited. Registration in Lebanon does not grant refugees the right to seek asylum, or have any legal stay, or refugee status (UNHCR, 2015). Lebanon's most recent Memorandum of Understanding with UNHCR (2008) declares, "Lebanon does not consider itself an asylum country" and, under its mandate, UNHCR carries out all refugee status determinations. This shift in responsibility from the state to an international agency is symptomatic of the way regional host countries have dealt with refugees. Currently, there are just under 149,000 Syrian refugee children registered in public Lebanese schools. Over 83,000 of these students attend segregated afternoon shifts where they study the Lebanese curriculum for five hours.

On the other hand, as one of the countries hosting the largest number of refugees in Europe, Germany has received an estimated 1.3 million refugees in 2014 – about 550,000 of whom were children required to attend school.¹ In 2015, this number almost doubled to about 2 million people entering the country (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2016; BAMF 2015), which has contributed

¹ In the age bracket of 6 to 18 year old children, 12,700 of the children recorded are of Syrian background (Massumi et al. 2015: 6). This study focuses on schooling experience of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Germany. However, there is no sufficient data available specifically concentrating on the country of origin of pupils in the German educational system and underage refugees (Ibid.).

to a spike in the number of children and adolescents filing applications for asylum in Germany. More than half of the refugees arriving in Germany are under the age of 25 and considered to be in need of education by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. In contrast to Lebanon, the right to education as stated in Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1990) is specified in the German constitution² and applies to both children holding German citizenship and asylum-seeking minors. This basic right is supplemented by the Reception Conditions Directive of the European Union (2013) which stipulates education should be free of charge, and calls for the implementation of a range of preparatory courses and language classes. Moreover, the National Action Plan on Integration (Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, 2011) identifies language and education as the key elements to successful integration of refugees. The national goals listed for education, vocational training, and continuing education encompass the optimisation of conditions of equal opportunities for access to education, measures to increase the permeability of the education system, the promotion of the potential of children with immigrant backgrounds, and a qualitative development of education and education research (Ibid.: 63ff.). Moreover, Germany offers different organisational models for education and integration, as well as various forms of classes to young refugees, depending on the respective educational system, structure, and size of the federal state involved.

This study compares the education provisions and schooling experiences of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Germany. We examine the future prospects of Syrian refugees who drop out of Lebanese public schools as a way to identify opportunities for reintegration into the education system for valuable vocational and life skills. The comparison seeks to highlight examples of best practices to reintegrate out-of-school Syrian refugees in education programmes, reduce dropout rates, and position Syrian students for success after graduation in Lebanon or around the world.

OBJECTIVES

This study has two main objectives. First, it aims to identify examples of viable education provisions to increase enrolment and retention rates for Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Germany. Second, it explores the future prospects for Syrian children who dropped out of Lebanese public schools, and to examine if they are prone to involvement in and recruited by extremist groups. The two main research question which the study seeks to address are the following:

- What are some examples of good practice from Germany and Lebanon for promoting the enrolment and retention of Syrian refugee children in schools?

² Art. 1, Par. 1 and 2 read in conjunction with Art. 3, Par. 1 GG.

- What are the future prospects for Syrian refugee children who drop out of school in Lebanon and Germany?

More specifically, the study addresses the following questions:

- 1- What effect has the educational policies had on promoting and hindering access and retention in education in Lebanon and Germany?
- 2- What factors contribute to the dropout of the Syrian refugee children from public schools in Lebanon and Germany?
- 3- What kind of economic and social activities are Syrian refugee dropouts involved in?
- 4- What kind of support do these children need in order to re-enrol in any form of education and prevent them joining extremist groups?

This report presents the findings of study. It is composed of five chapters. In Chapter One, we present the context of hosting Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Germany. We provide an overview of the education system in each of the two countries. We then examine the education provisions for Syrian refugees in the two countries. In Chapter Two, we present the research methodology and limitations of the study. Chapter Three discusses the research findings concerning students' attitudes toward their schooling experience in Germany and Lebanon. Chapter Four examines the causes of dropout amongst Syrian children in Lebanon. Finally, the conclusions and recommendations are presented in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER ONE: THE CONTEXT

This chapter examines the education provision for Syrian refugee children in Lebanon and Germany at a the policy level. However, before we commence the analysis of the education provisions for Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Germany it is important to offer a brief background on the two education system as this will have implications as shall be seen later on the learning and teaching conditions facing refugee children.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE LEBANESE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The education system in Lebanon comprises four general levels. They are kindergarten (pre-school), elementary, intermediate or preparatory (which are together considered basic education), and secondary. Following two years of kindergarten in the public sector (or three in the private sector), students attend six years of elementary school, three years of intermediate or preparatory school, and either one or two years of vocational training or three years of secondary school.

TABLE 1. EDUCATIONAL LEVELS IN LEBANON

PRE-SCHOOL		ELEMENTARY		INTERMEDIATE		SECONDARY	
age	grade	age	grade	age	grade	age	Grade
		Basic cycle I		Basic cycle III			
4	K1	6	G1	12	G7	15	G10
5	K2	7	G2	13	G8	16	G11
		8	G3	14	G9	17	G12
		Basic cycle II					
		9	G4				
		10	G5				
		11	G6				

Source: CERD, www.crdp.org

Students have three options after high school. Students either enrol in a two-year course of semi-professional training to become teachers, secretaries, laboratory technicians, etc., attend colleges which offer training for nursing, engineering, and other professions, or finally, attend universities offering standard academic degrees. Compulsory education in Lebanon is only up to the age of 15, i.e., generally the last year of primary school. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) retains absolute control over public academic and vocational schools, yet possesses extremely limited control over private schools, which only follow general guidelines and programmes related to the official exams, but otherwise run things their way.

There are currently 1,005,044 registered students (2013- 2014) in public and private schools in Lebanon. Thirty percent of these students attend schools in the public sector. Although public and private schools are almost equal in number (1,365 public and 1,442 private and free private), the public sector accounted for only 43.8% of the 88,413 teachers employed in 2009-2010 and for only 29.2% of students enrolled in the Lebanese education system in 2011 (CERD, 2012).

The percentage of students enrolled in public schools in Lebanon continues to drop due to the perception of poor quality teaching offered in public schools as opposed to higher quality offered by private schools. Despite the increase in the number of public schools and MEHE's attempt to improve the quality of teaching and learning, the vast majority of parents continue to choose to send their children to private schools. This reveals the vast majority of parents believe the quality of education offered in private schools remains better than that offered in public schools.

One important factor to be highlighted is the presence of around 400,000 Palestinian refugees who fled from Palestine following the creation of Israel in 1948. Following the first Arab-Israeli War and the establishment of the state of Israel, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled their homeland with the majority seeking refuge in the neighbouring countries of Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. Around 110,000 Palestinians arrived in Lebanon, and settled in refugee camps established by the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFI, 2009: 8). They were later joined by further waves of refugees, fleeing subsequent rounds of conflict, most notably in 1956 and 1967, resulting in a growth in the number and density of the refugee camps. Today there are more than 400,000 Palestine refugees officially registered in Lebanon with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Roughly half of them live in 12 officially designated refugee camps across the country, whilst the rest live in 27 communities known as 'gatherings' (UNRWA, 2012). According to a 2010 survey, 66.4% of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are poor and nearly 7% are extremely poor, with the highest incidence of poverty among Palestinian refugees in the city of Tyre, South Lebanon (Chaaban, 2010: 27). However, based on an agreement between UNRWA, UNESCO, and host countries in 1954, students in UNRWA schools have to be taught according to the curriculum of the host country. This is in order to facilitate refugee access to the host country's secondary schools and university education systems (UNRWA, 2012a). In Lebanon, severe labour restrictions served as significant impediments to work opportunities for Palestinian refugees with widespread and ongoing implications. A 2012 Situation Analysis carried out by UNICEF revealed Palestinian children had the lowest school attainment rates in Lebanon compared the various sectors in Lebanon.

The conclusion of the Lebanese civil war in 1989 ushered in a phase of rebuilding the physical and administrative infrastructure of the state. The state launched large-scale education reforms to establish a new curriculum and national textbooks for all subjects, except history and religion.

The curriculum and education sector reforms were implemented in 1997, and remain unchanged to date.

In Lebanon, schooling is compulsory until the age of 15, which corresponds to the level of the “Brevet” certification. Law No. 686 of 1998 amended Article 49 of Decree No. 134/59 provides that *“Public education is free and compulsory in the primary phase, and is a right for every Lebanese of primary education age”*, yet such specification of Lebanese-only students seems to suggest noncompliance with Lebanon’s obligation, under article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child to *“make primary education compulsory and available free to all.”* The document does not refer to the needs or the challenges that non-Lebanese students might encounter. Nor does the document address any additional support required for Lebanese students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds or who are at high risk of underperforming and dropping out of school.

If Lebanon is not a signatory to the Geneva Convention of 1951 relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 protocol, it is however required, because of international commitments elsewhere, particularly the Convention on the Rights of Children of 1989, to take appropriate measures to guarantee the right of children to education within the limits of available resources. Relief efforts deployed by the Lebanese state depend on the solidarity of the international community as a whole, and its willingness to support neighbouring countries, which are the first destinations of refugees, provide humanitarian aid (protection and assistance), and relocation solutions pending a political solution to the conflict.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE GERMAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Education System Germany

In the Federal Republic of Germany, responsibility for the education system lies with the sixteen federal states, each granted legislative powers to determine the administration of the education system (school, higher education, adult education, and continuing education). Detailed regulations are declared in the constitution of each federal country and in respective laws. However, the laws on education and the education received by children and young people in Germany are similar throughout Germany.

The education system in Germany is divided into early childhood education, primary education, secondary education, tertiary education, and continuing education. Compulsory schooling laws apply for all children who live in Germany, and generally begin in the autumn of the year a child has his or hers sixth birthday and holds for the subsequent nine years. Attendance at state schools is free of charge. Since education is the responsibility of the federal states, the regulation on compulsory schooling differ in each federal state in Germany.

This is also the case when it comes to the school system. Early childhood education is usually provided until the age of six, at which time a child starts school and enters primary school (Grundschule) for four years (only in Berlin and Brandenburg primary school lasts for six years). In the final year of primary school, a decision is made for the transition to one of the different types of secondary schools where children remain at least until the completion of their compulsory education. For certain school types, pupils are required to demonstrate a certain level of ability and the schools usually make a recommendation based on the grades in primary school and the teacher's assessment of the child. This is accompanied by meetings with parents where teachers give advice for a child's future school career.

The secondary education system in Germany (grades 5/7 to 12/13) differentiates between different types of school leading to different qualifications and graduations.

- Hauptschule (general school – usually up to grade 9)
- Realschule (intermediate school – up to year 10)
- Schools with mixed curricula (offering both Hauptschule and Realschule qualifications)
- Gymnasium (academic secondary school – up to year 12 or 13)
- Gesamtschule (comprehensive school – covering all types of school leaving options)

The different secondary schools offer different types of qualifications. A diploma from a Realschule opens up more areas of work than one from a Hauptschule which only offers a basic general education. Schools ending after grades 12 or 13 offer a certificate that qualifies for attending a university or another form of higher education.

Secondary education is divided into lower-secondary level (Sekundarstufe I) comprising grades 5/7 to 9/10 and upper-secondary level (Sekundarstufe II), which builds on the foundations of the lower-secondary level. This can include general education, vocational training, or a combination of both general education and vocational training. After passing Haupt- or Realschule adolescents can attend another secondary school at the upper-secondary level to obtain further schooling certificates (general qualification for university entrance or advanced vocational certificate) or attend vocational schools (Berufsschule).

EDUCATION PROVISIONS FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON

According to official Lebanese government estimates, the number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon numbers around 1.5 million, which is nearly one third of the total population. Around one third of these refugees are children between the ages of 3-17 (UNICEF, 2015). The majority of refugees are settled in the most vulnerable areas in Lebanon with the lowest rates of education attainment due to the limited socioeconomic means of most families, and the low quality of public schools in these areas. While Lebanon did not sign the 1951 Refugee Convention, the government has

ratified several other human rights treaties relevant to the protection and provision of basic services for refugees. Relevant treaties include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Dakar Education for All (EFA) framework, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Each recognises compulsory primary education as a universal right. However, the Lebanese government withholds refugee status from Syrian refugees in Lebanon and diverts most responsibilities toward refugees to UNHCR. Currently, Syrian refugees in Lebanon are classified as “foreigners”, “displaced”, or “migrant workers” rather than “refugees”. Such designations have significant bearing upon living conditions, basic rights, and access to services, namely to education. In fact, this legal classification sidesteps conventional legal frameworks for human rights, hinders access to basic services, such as education, and eliminates entitlement to the rights outlined in article 22 of the CRC.

However, MEHE has maintained its commitment to address the right to education for vulnerable children affected by the Syrian crisis within its territory through the development of a three-year strategy entitled ‘Reaching All Children with Education in Lebanon’ (RACE). The strategy prioritises the integration of refugee children into formal and non-formal education. RACE committed the government and its partners to provide access to education for around 200,000 Syrian children by 2016. Since the introduction, the number of Syrian refugees has increased steadily, going from around 13.5% in 2012-2013 to around 36% in 2014-2015 and approximately 40% in 2015-2016.³ As mentioned earlier, the majority of Syrian refugee children attend second-shift schools exclusively for Syrian refugees with instruction for 5 hours (50 minute sessions between 2pm to 6.30pm). Lebanese regulations stipulate the teaching of the official programme to Syrians maintain the same conditions as those prevailing for the Lebanese instruction, including the teaching of mathematics and science in English or French. This foreign language instruction presents significant learning obstacles for refugee children who are only well versed in Arabic. Syrian children learn all subjects taught in the morning shift with the exception of arts, sports, and music. Due to time limitations, Syrian students are only permitted ten minutes of recess. Recess tends to be spent inside the classroom due to the fact going to playground and back to the classroom limits the time even further. Students in these shifts are taught by either tenured Lebanese public school teachers or Lebanese contracted teachers, where the only qualification to be hired is a university degree. No teaching experiences is required from these teachers before they are employed. Moreover, Syrian teachers are not permitted to teach in public schools or any programmes run by MEHE.

In order to facilitate the enrolment of Syrian refugee children in public schools, MEHE exempts students under grade 6 from providing documentation of education experience prior to enrolment in Lebanese public schools. In the absence of a school transcript, students were

³ MEHE statistics for 2016

expected to sit for school placement tests to determine their grade level. While MEHE opened the doors to the registration of Syrian children in public Lebanese schools in 2012-2013 after UN agencies agreed to cover the registration and parents' tuition fees, the ministry applied restrictions the following year as the number of Syrian refugees rose. In 2013-2014, MEHE's policy shifted to opening a second shift and a preference to segregate Lebanese from Syrian students for fear that the latter would affect the learning of the former. In addition, students above grade 6 are still required to present their official education records, which creates an additional barrier for many Syrian adolescents to enrol in formal education. This is particularly the case for those who fled Syria at the beginning of the conflict and are no longer able to return. Other strict requirements also hinder older refugee students from independently registering for official examinations, which is meant to be a viable option for those who are unable to enrol. For instance, students must be at least 18 or older to sit for grade 9 examinations and at least twenty to sit for grade 12 examinations, yet all students must present a valid school certificate for grades 8 and 11, respectively. In addition, only those who previously failed their official examinations are eligible to register for them again independently. On March 30, 2016, the Lebanese Government announced that students at the public middle and high school levels (grades 9 and 12) of any nationality (including Lebanese returning from Syria, Syrians, Iraqis and others) are allowed to sit for the official exams for the scholastic year 2015-2016 without presenting transcripts or documentation of earlier schooling. Those who pass these exams will receive official certificates of success from the Lebanese MEHE, and those who do not pass the exams will be allowed to sit for them again. This decree could help refugee children who have been out of school for a few years to re-enrol.

The influx in the number of Syrian children requiring education placed additional strain on an already weak public education system, since many public schools are ill-equipped and under-resourced to deal with this situation. To cope with these challenges the MEHE applied a 50 percent quota of Syrian to Lebanese students in morning shifts, and facilitated provisions for afternoon shifts to compensate for the surplus number of Syrian students in need of access to education. Given that many Syrian students have lost several years of schooling as a result of the war, in 2015, the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD) developed the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) to meet these needs through a condensed basic education programme for grades 1-9 drawn from existing curricula with a specific learning methodology. Other than ALP, non-formal education (NFE) offers Syrian refugees a substitute to public education, yet is neither accredited nor regulated by Lebanese authorities. Non-formal education remains a popular choice for many parents, as it provides a more flexible and supportive learning environment (Shuayb et al., 2014). It is estimated that in December 2014, there were 109,503 Syrian and other vulnerable children enrolled in NFE programmes in Lebanon. NFE programmes included ALP, Basic Literacy and Numeracy (BLN), Psycho-social

activities, recreational programmes, Community-Based Education (CBE), Early Childhood Education (ECE), and Remedial Classes. In 2016, MEHE collaborated with UN agencies to develop a framework for NFE with the aim of controlling the quality and regulating the field.

In order to improve the quality of teaching in second shifts, MEHE increased its Guidance and Counselling team responsible for mentoring and supporting teachers, particularly those teaching afternoon shifts who are more likely to be new and therefore have less experience. In addition, important pending legislation that could affect the right of Syrian refugees to access quality education are those concerning corporal punishment. Several studies of the educational experiences of Syrian refugee children in Lebanese schools exposed the endemic violence and discrimination suffered by these students. Corporal punishment has been considered as one of the main reasons behind the withdrawal from school of Syrian children. Lebanese legislation does not provide full protection for children against physical or verbal assault from their teachers, thus placing children of all nationalities in Lebanese schools under the risk of experiencing corporal punishment.

In order to address the psychosocial needs of students, MEHE provided afternoon shifts with social worker to support students, however, statistics on the number of social workers and their qualifications is unavailable. A study of Syrian refugee children's psycho-social and the support provided in schools by the Centre for Lebanese Studies (2016) revealed students experienced four main sources of social distress, namely war-related trauma, bullying, harsh treatment by teachers, and aggressive home environments. Numbers for psycho-social indicators are 20-30 percent higher for afternoon shift students. The study also revealed that very little guidance or preventative measures for bullying or hyperactivity were taken to deal with the root causes of problems faced by students. In addition, a study conducted by Shuayb et al., (2014) on the experiences of Syrian children in Lebanese schools demonstrated schools where Syrian parents were part of the parents' council fared much better than those where parents did not have any representation. Most parents of the Syrian refugee students did not feel they were entitled to sit on the parents' council. The results called for a cooperative and participatory approach to constructing and developing interventions and programmes for psycho-social support. Such inclusive interventions should involve students, parents, teachers, and school staff as part of a participatory school approach to both contribute to the emotional wellbeing of all members of the school and also contribute positively to the students' academic performance.

Despite the major achievements of MEHE in accommodating the high influx of refugees, the enrolment rates of Syrian refugees did not reach the 50% in Lebanon. The highest non-enrolment was observed for post-grade 6 as the anagoge barrier becomes more of an issue and repetition and dropout rates remained quite high. According to a recent World Bank report, failure and

dropout rates among Syrian children are twice the national average for Lebanese children while UNHCR estimates that 20% of Syrian children drop out of school (World Bank, 2013: 78).

Children and adolescents who fail to integrate into the educational system are likely to be exposed to many vulnerabilities and risks. Researchers have found that ideology may provide adolescents with meaning and a sense of purpose that may serve a protective function, increasing their level of personal resources, which in turn protect against the outward expression of severe symptoms for significant mental health issues (Laor et al., 2006; Oren & Possick, 2010). Punamäki (1996) suggested that ideological commitment protected against anxiety, insecurity, depression, and feelings of failure. There are two broad means by which ideology may influence coping processes and outcomes. First, adolescents who are ideologically committed may be integrated into a religious-ideological group. These groups may provide support which in turn affects the psychological status of adolescents. For example, Jensen (2009) indicated that Hamas provided Gazans with social, financial, and tangible support. Charitable and social work services were extended to include tuition for education, medical services, and leisure activities. Given the significant positive relationship between economic pressure and ideology in this study, it may be the social component of ideology that positively influences adjustment. The conservation of resources theory views the gain of resources as making future gains more likely. When adolescents have greater resource reserves, they are less vulnerable to resource loss and are better able to cope effectively with stress (Hobfoll, 1998). Further research will be required to show if this finding is explained by the provision of social support provided by political-religious groups. Second, ideology may provide a belief system or perspective that enables individuals to deal differently and perhaps better with crises in general and war atrocities, in particular (Punamäki, 1996; Punamäki et al., 2008; Shamai, 2002).

EDUCATION PROVISIONS FOR REFUGEES IN GERMANY

Since 2009, the number of people immigrating or fleeing to Germany has risen steadily, reaching its first peak with 1.3 million immigrants/refugees entering the country in 2014 – about 550,000 of whom were children required to attend school.⁴ In 2015, this number almost doubled to about 2 million people entering the country (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2016; BAMF 2015), which corresponded to a spike in the number of children and adolescents filing applications for asylum. More than half of the refugees arriving in Germany are under the age of 25 and considered to be in need of education by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, which – in line with the National Action Plan on Integration (Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung,

⁴ In the age bracket of 6 to 18 year old children 12.700 of the children recorded are of Syrian background (Massumi et al. 2015: 6). Syrian refugees are the focus of this study concerned with the schooling experience of Syrian refugee children in Lebanon and Germany. However, there is no sufficient data available specifically concentrating on the country of origin of pupils in the German educational system and underage refugees (Ibid.). Hence, this review elaborates on the educational situation of refugee children in Germany in general.

2011) – identifies language and education as the critical elements for successful integration of refugees. The national goals listed for education, vocational training, and continuing education emphasise the need to foster equal opportunities for access to education, the implementation of measures to increase the permeability of the education system, the promotion of the potential of children with immigrant background, and a qualitative development of education and education research (Ibid.: 63ff.). To this end, the central ministry offers financial packages to assist federal states and municipalities as a way to ensure the implementation of suitable measures, such as German language courses, and to promote continued analysis and refinements in municipal education management (BMBF, 2016).

A 2013 brochure written by Barbara Weiser and published by the Informationsverbund Asyl und Migration e.V.⁵ outlines the main education and training regulations for asylum seekers, refugees, and people holding a temporary suspension of deportation.⁶ The right to education, as stated in Article 28 of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations 1990), is specified in the German constitution⁷ and applies to both children holding German citizenship and asylum-seeking minors. This basic right is supplemented by the Reception Conditions Directive of the European Union (2013) which calls for free-of-charge education, and the stipulates a range of preparatory courses and language classes. The directive states access to schooling should be granted no later than three months after a request for asylum has been made. In addition to the basic right to education, all children residing in Germany are obliged to attend school. Compulsory education usually starts in the fall of the year in which a child turns six years old and lasts until the child turns eighteen (Weiser 2013: 8ff.; BAMF 2016b).

De facto, the access to education proves difficult for underage refugees in Germany. Since the educational system is not the responsibility of the German government, but falls under the jurisdiction of the sixteen federal states, laws and practices differ considerably.⁸ Furthermore, as permanent residence is a prerequisite to claim this right to education, the legal status of underage refugees has a major influence on their access to schooling. The Robert Bosch Expert Commission to Consider a Realignment of Refugee Policy Foundation found the states of *Saxony* and *Saxony-Anhalt* do not apply the principle of compulsory education to refugees. Both federal states only grant a right to attend school which has substantial disadvantages compared to compulsory education. In *Bavaria*, *Baden-Wuerttemberg*, and *Thuringia*, refugees come under compulsory education after a waiting period of three to six months. In other federal states, the

⁵ The Information Network Asylum and Migration depicts itself as the main German independent institution providing background information for asylum and migration practitioners (asyl.net/, 24.04.2016).

⁶ A temporary suspension of deportation (Duldung) is not to be confused with a temporary residence permit (Aufenthaltserlaubnis). The former is a permit issued for refugees who have not been recognised as eligible for protection and thus are obliged to leave the country within the validity timeframe of one year. This status may be extended for periods of two years each. Thus, it comes with certain legal disadvantages concerning rights to free movement and education (BAMF 2016a).

⁷ Art. 1, Par. 1 and 2 read in conjunction with Art. 3, Par. 1 GG.

⁸ The fact that educational provision is different in each federal state also makes it difficult to compare the German system at a European level.

compulsory attendance of school only applies after asylum seekers are registered, depart the specific initial aid facility to which they first arrived, and are assigned to a municipality. Furthermore, refugees who have been issued a temporary suspension of deportation are not included in compulsory education in many federal states. *Berlin, Hamburg, Saarland, Rhineland-Palatinate*, and *Schleswig-Holstein* are the only states to offer access to education for underage refugees directly after their registration. (Robert Bosch Expert Commission to Consider a Realignment of Refugee Policy, 2015: 8-10).

According to Massumi et al., the lapse of time between the arrival of a refugee and required attendance at a school can last several months. During this time, the children usually have little or no access to education or language courses (Massumi et al., 2015). Key recommendations of both the Massumi et al. and Robert Bosch Commission's papers underscored the need to integrate children into the educational system as soon as possible, to implement compulsory education for refugees in all federal states, and to introduce a comprehensive range of preparation classes to ease the transition. At this time, the endeavours of the government to enhance the provision of language and literacy classes are to a great extent accompanied by efforts of non-profit organisations and volunteers trying to bridge the educational gaps.

The Massumi et al., study, conducted for the Mercator Institute for Language and German as a Second Language, is the first research presenting comprehensive data on the conditions of education access for young immigrants and refugees in Germany. The authors analyse data collected by the Federal Statistical Office, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), and municipal offices. The authors explored the question of how children and adolescents immigrating or fleeing to Germany are taught once they enter schools. Specifically, the study assessed the different organisational models and various forms of classes offered to young refugees. The systematic overview identified five organisational models for the integration of children (Massumi et al., 2015: 7, 43ff.):

- 1) The submersion model, in which children enter mainstream education classes (so called *Regelklassen*) and are taught in German together with the German pupils. Students are able to access general support offered for all pupils.
- 2) The inclusive model, in which children enter *Regelklassen* and do receive additional German language training.
- 3) The partially-inclusive model, according to which children are taught in separate classes established for refugees,⁹ but attend *Regelklassen* for specific school subjects.

⁹ Depending on the federal state, these are called *Willkommensklassen* (welcome classes), *Vorbereitungsklassen* (preparation classes), *internationale Vorbereitungsklassen/IVK* (international preparation classes), *Basisklassen* (basic classes), *Auffangklassen* (reception classes), or *(Deutsch-)Förderklassen* (remedial classes).

- 4) The parallel model, in which children spend a specific amount of time taught in classes especially established for refugees before subsequently entering a *Regelklasse*.
- 5) The parallel model with graduation, in which children enter a class especially developed for refugees and spend their entire school time as a class, graduating school together.

Depending on the respective educational system, structure, size of the federal state and the number of refugees of a specific age bracket distributed there, the federal states apply several of the models. According to Massumi et al., the different educational stages and the number of children entering a specific school have particular influence on the application: (partially-)inclusive models are more likely to be implemented in primary education and schools in congested urban areas with good infrastructure usually apply the parallel or partially-inclusive models, while schools in rural areas are more likely to offer either the submersion model or inclusive models. In practice, the form and outcome of the organisational models can vary significantly, especially considering the extent to which a child is taught German language. Furthermore, the study did not gather data on the quality of language training and schooling received, and thus cannot issue recommendations or identify best practice models, but only characterise existing models based on the present data.

Another report presented by the Robert Bosch Expert Commission to Consider a Realignment of Refugee Policy in 2016 acknowledges the lack of available examples of best practice as well and demands 'that the Conference of Ministers of Education should establish a task force on the theme of school teaching for refugee children'. Such an effort would synchronise the uneven practices across the federal states and coordinate the tasks necessary to ensure access to education for refugees. The task force should also be in charge of 'collect[ing], document[ing] and mak[ing] available best practice examples' (Robert Bosch Expert Commission, 2016: 28). In general, the statistical data available at this point does not offer sufficient information on refugee's access to education and 'their participation in education, their school qualifications, success [...] and problems at school' (Johansson, 2014: 23ff.).

While the policy reports and brochures concentrate on gathering primary data and documenting organisational structures in order to revise and potentially realign policy, media coverage focuses on the vast number of children entering the German educational system in 2016, as well as the problems faced by schools and teachers (e.g., Greiner, 2016, Vitzthum and Büscher, 2015, Somaskanda, 2015, Emmrich, 2015, Reiter, 2015). In 2015, the German Teachers' Association issued a ten point plan in response to the challenges faced by teachers all over the country, and requested the federal government issue a master plan for the integration of adolescent refugees into the educational system (DL, 2015). Schools all over Germany face considerable logistical struggles. Besides the lack of rooms available to set up new classes, personnel issues present organisers with further challenges. According to news reports, about 20,000 new teachers will

need to be employed to provide sufficient learning possibilities for young refugees. As the vast majority of children speak little to no German, the teachers will need advanced training in teaching German as a second language. The German Teachers' Association also expressed a significant demand for schoolbooks and teaching materials customised for the education of young refugees. Moreover, the majority of the children fleeing to Germany suffer from emotional stress and trauma, many of them developing post-traumatic stress disorder. Teachers are not adequately trained to handle these cases, and are in need of support from psychologists and social workers. The placement of refugee children in communal accommodation (often characterised by noise and high density) poses additional strain on their learning abilities and similarly adds to the need for emotional and structural support.

Most of the federal states are currently developing support programmes for teachers and schools, both in the form of financial support for additional human resources, as well as through supplemental training and qualifications. Massumi et al. (2015) identified six fields addressed by municipalities. About 8,000 new teachers have already been enlisted, some of them retirees returning to teaching. During the study, most of the federal states indicated emerging counselling services for these and other personnel concerned with the education of young refugees. Federal states are increasingly conducting trainings for teaching German as a second language and in the process of developing course hand-outs focussing on classes for children who have experienced migration or flight. Currently, most teachers design their own teaching manuals and pedagogical materials due to the lack of available resources suitable for recently settled students. Furthermore, additional educational projects, such as full-day care and extra-curricular activities addressing the needs of underage refugees, are also in the development stages. Another important component of educational development support programmes is close cooperation and working with parents. Two strategies are currently implemented in establishing ties to the newly arrived families: appointment of qualified personnel¹⁰ in charge of approaching families and leaflets available in different languages providing parents with information about the German school system and their rights and choices, as well as the obligations their children will have upon entering schools (Ibid).

Little published research engages the issue of future prospects and opportunities for children who dropped out of school in Germany. Again, there is no sufficient data on the rates of early school dropouts amongst asylum-seeking children in Germany. While most of the very young children seem to be eager to attend and succeed in school, the school attendance of adolescents close to legal age proves to be difficult (Robert Bosch Expert Commission to Consider a Realignment of Refugee Policy, 2015). The Robert Bosch Expert Commission found that once

¹⁰ These individuals are usually multilingual skilled experts or language professionals trained in intercultural mediation and counselling with an immigration background (Massumi et al., 2015: 59).

compulsory education ends (in some cases even before legal age: after nine years of schooling), and since attendance of vocational school is linked to coming of age, most secondary schools refuse to admit adolescent refugees. Additionally, mainstream schools are not obliged to teach children over the age of 16. These structural hurdles can, in some cases, render it impossible for refugees aged between 16 and 18 years to enter any school or obtain any starting qualification. Vocational schools thus face a pressing need of reformation of the regulations on compulsory schooling. An expansion of school age to the age of 25 is being considered for refugees. Newly developed models and classes – such as so-called production schools (*Produktionsschulen*) and preparation classes for asylum seekers and refugees between the ages of 16 and 21 – can help young refugees settle into vocational training and graduate (Ibid).

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the research questions, the study relied primarily on qualitative instruments in three different stages: desk review, in-depth interviews, and comparative school case studies in Lebanon and Germany. A quantitative analysis of student surveys conducted in both countries compared Syrian refugee students' schooling experiences. This chapter presents the various research instruments, data collection process, the sample, and the research limitations.

1. UNDERSTANDING THE POLICY CONTEXT

DESK REVIEW: We conducted a review of the education policies and provisions of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Germany to better understand the policy context. This review focused on the enrolment, graduation, and retention rates, grade assignment, and language provisions. Additional knowledge and expertise is drawn from the numerous studies conducted by The Centre for Lebanese Studies on the education of Syrian refugees in Lebanon; these reports focused on different aspects of education provisions, such as language barriers, government policies, teacher practices, as well as the cost of education of refugees in Lebanon for morning and afternoon shifts. We also completed a comprehensive literature review of policy documents, academic articles, and newspaper articles to better understand the German education policies and provisions for Syrian refugees as well as the challenges experienced by Syrian refugee and their host communities in Germany.

2. SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES

LEBANON

CASE STUDIES OF THREE SCHOOLS: In order to investigate the educational experiences of Syrian refugee children in Lebanon, three elementary schools were selected as case studies. The study focused on cycle 2 and 3 students, particularly in grades 6 and 9, which witness the highest level of dropouts amongst Syrian children in Lebanon. The case studies compared the perspectives and experiences of students, parents, and teachers in Lebanon to those in Germany. As part of the case studies, we employed the following instruments to analyse education provisions for Syrian refugee children in Lebanon: enrolment, grade assignment, language provisions, quality of teaching and learning, school environment, bullying and main challenges, as well as the current support systems that exist.

- **STUDENT SURVEYS:** Surveys were distributed among Syrian students (grades 6 & 9) in different schools across Lebanon.
- **INTERVIEWS WITH STUDENTS:** Individual interviews were conducted with Syrian students (high achievers, average and low achievers based on school exam results) enrolled in the formal education institutions in Lebanon in order to investigate the factors contributing to the success and failure of Syrian refugee students in Lebanese public schools.
- **INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS & PRINCIPALS:** Individual interviews with language, math, and science teachers, as well as principals were conducted.
- **FOCUS GROUPS WITH PARENTS:** Focus groups with Syria parents conducted in Lebanon.

GERMANY

- **STUDENT SURVEYS:** Surveys were distributed among Syrian students (grades 4 - 9) in different schools across Germany in order to compare with the experiences of Syrian refugee students surveyed in Lebanon.
- **INTERVIEWS WITH SYRIAN REFUGEE STUDENTS:** Individual interviews were conducted with children enrolled in schools in order to gain insight on their experiences in the educational system Germany.
- **INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS:** Individual interviews with teachers teaching Syrian refugee children were conducted.
- **INTERVIEWS WITH PARENTS:** Individual interviews with parents of Syrian refugee students in Germany were also carried out.

3. OUT OF SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

INTERVIEWS WITH ADOLESCENTS & PARENTS: In order to investigate the factors contributing to the dropout of Syrian refugee students in Lebanon, as well as their experiences after dropping out, we conducted individual interviews with adolescents (ages 12-18 years) who enrolled and dropped out of Lebanese public schools across several regions. Interviews were also conducted with their parents to examine the current social, economic, and labour conditions in order to identify the potential risk of recruitment by extremist groups, as well as their future prospects in Lebanon after dropping out of formal education. While education in Lebanon is compulsory for ages 6 to 15, the law is not enforced and hence there are high dropout rates amongst both the Lebanese as well as Syrians.

Germany, on the other hand, has compulsory education for ages 6 to 18. The widespread enforcement of the law made it not possible to find Syrian children who had enrolled and dropped out of school to survey for our study. Although many Syrian refugee children in Germany are on waiting lists for placement in welcoming or language classes and have not yet been enrolled in schools, it is unlikely that these experiences can provide any value to the purpose of this study. The scarcity of dropouts in Germany might also be due to the recent nature of the influx in Germany compared to Lebanon, where the steady influx of Syrian refugees began in 2011. It is likely to be a few years before it is possible to study dropouts amongst Syrian refugees in Germany. Moreover, the rates of dropout between the two countries prior to the crisis differ greatly. Dropout rates amongst Lebanese themselves were 55% in 2013-2014 (CRDP, 2014). In contrast, dropout rates in Germany amongst migrant population is 10%, and around 2% amongst Germans. Therefore, this study was only able to examine Syrian refugee children who enrolled and dropped out of school in Lebanon.

INTERVIEWS WITH NGOS: NGOs in Lebanon and Germany play a crucial role in supporting Syrian refugee education. Interviews with two NGOs were conducted in Lebanon and Germany

in order to learn more about the challenges Syrian refugees faced upon arrival in Lebanese classrooms, the difficulties education access, and the role NGOs play .

SAMPLE

LEBANON

Case selection in Lebanon focused on regions hosting the majority of refugees and sought representation of both urban and rural areas. The schools were ultimately selected based on their high levels of Syrian refugee enrolment. Both students from morning and afternoon shifts were selected. The sample was distributed as follows:

- **BEIRUT:** Two schools that host a large number of refugees were selected in Beirut (urban) as case studies. In addition, interviews were conducted with Syrian refugee adolescent dropouts and their parents.
- **AKKAR:** One school was selected in Akkar (rural) as a case study. In addition, interviews were conducted with Syrian refugee adolescent dropouts and their parents.
- **BEKAA:** Interviews were conducted in Bekaa (rural) with Syrian refugee adolescent dropouts and their parents. An interview was also conducted with the principal of a non-formal school, which provides support for children and adolescents who are not enrolled in formal education.

GERMANY

Selection in Germany was based on the regions and cities, such as Berlin, Hamburg, and Dresden, with the highest concentration of refugees. However, due to the limited time to complete the study, selection of interview participants in Germany was based on snowball sampling. An email was sent out to a mailing list of teachers in Berlin and Hamburg introducing the study and explaining its purpose. A number of teachers wrote back and expressed an interest in participating. The researcher in Germany also approached her contacts and asked to be put in touch with teachers working with Syrian refugees. This yielded a number of interviews with teachers in Berlin and Hamburg, and facilitated access to their students and their parents. Moreover, limited access to East Germany did not allow us to conduct interviews in Dresden, where the majority of refugees are placed and where there are great hostilities between the local communities and Syrian refugees. Therefore, the sample reflects the experiences of those in former West Germany, which is in contrast more welcoming.

LIMITATIONS

The study has a number of limitations bearing on the research findings and their generalizability. The major limitation was the limited time available for fieldwork, as well as its overlap with many holidays and end-of-year exams. These limited the sample size of the study, particularly in Germany. We had less than two months to plan and finish the study. This affected several decisions, including the inability to reach areas in eastern Germany and undercut efforts to interview policy makers in the various federal states hosting Syrian refugees. Moreover, the limited time also affected the sample, as we were not able to conduct interviews with a larger sample. Separate challenges included the difficulty in meeting parents and students. Non-camp dwellers are prohibited from entering and speaking with children requires the presence/consent of their parents. Time limitations compounded these logistical challenges with a bearing on the samples in Germany and Lebanon. Time limitations also impeded the identification of any existing Syrian refugee dropouts through NGOs, which may have contact or more knowledge concerning dropouts amongst Syrian refugees in Lebanon. This inability to access dropouts thus limited the sample size of dropouts to those interviewed in Lebanon over the age of 14, and the inability to locate dropouts in Germany undercut efforts to compare.

Further challenges the research team faced were the decentralized nature of education in Germany and divergent policies in each of the various federal states. These factors constrained the sample to a singular organisational model for education predominant in Berlin and Hamburg, namely the parallel education model, where refugee children are enrolled in a preparatory programme before being integrated into regular German education. We were unable to collect data from other organisational models. Moreover, while the sample targeted the age groups 14 and above, students surveyed in Germany ranged from 12 to 15 as this range offered the easiest access within the time limitations of the project. Another factor that limited the sample size of Syrian students surveyed in Germany was due to the high illiteracy rates among students in both Arabic and German. As a result, we resorted to structured interviews. This placed limitations on the comparability of responses of Syrian refugees in Lebanon to the quantitative survey to that of their peers in Germany. Finally, due to the limited time, most of the interviews in Germany were with children and teachers in welcome classes. We were only able to interview three children in mainstream German schools.

The last limitation, reluctance of families to discuss social and political activities, affected the ability of this study to answer one of the main objectives. The relationship between dropping out of school and the possibility of being recruited by extremists requires robust ethnographic and anthropological work rather than individual interviews. As such, we were unable to unravel the political or social activities of children who dropped out of school.

CHAPTER THREE: THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF SYRIAN REFUGEE CHILDREN IN LEBANON AND GERMANY

In this chapter we present and compare the experiences of Syrian refugee children enrolled in Lebanese and German schools. We first compare the enrolment and access in both countries, then explore the teaching and learning experiences, as well as the school environment and social integration within the schools.

ACCESS AND ENROLMENT PROVISIONS FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANESE AND GERMAN SCHOOLS

Syrian refugees tend to face significant enrolment challenges upon arrival in Lebanon. Problems persist, despite the Lebanese government's recent attempts to simplify enrolment procedures by reducing the number of documents needed for Syrian refugee enrolment. For instance, due to the extent of physical and infrastructural damage in their home country, many Syrian students were unable to provide personal documents, such as school certificates and official grades, or were not able to have documents authorised by the Syrian government. This forced many of the Syrian refugee youth who arrived to Lebanon in 2011/12 to drop out of education as they did not meet the entry requirements. Many others lost several years of schooling until they were able to re-enrol under more lenient regulations. In contrast, the only German requirement in the various federal states was mandatory enrolment of refugee children between three and 6 months after a request for asylum was submitted. However, there are numerous cases of delay in finding school places for refugee children. Children and their parents are not expected to show any certificates or documentation of previously attended classes. All children have the basic right to education and all children residing in Germany are obliged to attend school. Students are often placed according to age or last year attended after an assessment of their needs and language abilities is carried out upon which they are placed in specifically established classes for refugees that concentrate on language acquisition

One of the main factors to affect the enrolment rate in formal education among Syrian refugees is **the political status and consequently the rights offered by the hosting country. Most Syrian refugees interviewed perceived their stay in Lebanon as temporary**, and survival as their primary priority, whereas those interviewed in Germany were more likely to perceive their presence as a new beginning. Nearly all the parents of Syrian refugees interviewed in Germany claimed they risked their lives in order to provide a good education for their children in Germany. Moreover, Syrian refugees in Germany who passed through Turkey identified education opportunities in Turkey as severely limited, and argued that many Syrian refugees left Turkey to Germany in order to benefit from better quality access to education. They argued that humanitarian assistance in Turkey was very limited and that Syrian refugee youth in camps were

often forced to work in order to help their families afford basic needs. The situation in Lebanon is similar, with many children in Lebanon opting to work to support their families instead of pursuing their education. Hence, the temporary political status significantly shapes refugees' decisions to either invest in their children's education or to merely survive and make ends meet by putting their children in the labour market. Hence, the temporary status of the Syrian refugees in some of the host countries is likely to affect enrolment rates amongst the refugee community. The longer the crisis continues, the greater the risks for the Syrian refugee children to drop out, face challenge to enrol in education, or even to aspire for a better future is greatly compromised.

Another factor that seem to also affect the enrolment in education is the **lack of choices available for the Syrian families** to chose a quality education that suit their needs. This is not helped by the rigidity of the Lebanese provisions to education. Most Syrian families living in lower socioeconomic areas in Lebanon due the relative affordability only permits access to a limited number of schools with a limited enrolment capacity. The majority of Syrian refugees in Lebanon live in the most disadvantaged areas, where the demand on the public schools is one of the highest in Lebanon. Hence there are major issues of access. The quality of education offered in these schools are also often very poor, and prioritization of Lebanese students over Syrian students often discourages many parents of Syrian refugees from pursuing enrolment of their children in formal education. In addition, many parents of Syrian refugees in Lebanon cite registration and transportation costs as additional strains to their already constrained financial situations. Syrian refugees in Germany are relieved from these challenges, given education is free of charge for all those who reside in Germany. In addition to that, most of the federal states offer funding for school season tickets for the children. Enrolment of refugees in formal education is not the responsibility of the parents, but rather the responsibility of the respective authorities of the German federal-state concerned. According to a teacher in Wupperstraße 17 in Berlin-Steglitz, unaccompanied youth refugees who arrive in Berlin are sent to the district's clearing facility where they receive basic healthcare and are assignation of a case worker from the youth welfare services. The refugees leave the facility within 2-3 months and are allocated to another district, where they can find accommodation and access to education. Most of these refugees often register for basic German language learning before being transferred. Hence, Syrian refugee youth are provided with access to education, even in cases where their parents are absent, or in cases where they might be unaware of the value of education for their children's futures, as is often the case among parents of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The possibility of employment under age 18 is thus not an option for Syrian refugee children in Germany.

An important factor that effect enrolment and retention of Syrian refugee children in education is grade placement in formal education. In Lebanon, children are directly integrated into Lebanese public schools and distributed to grades according to their ages or the last attended grade, depending on the decision of the school in which they enrol. In the beginning of the crisis,

children were automatically demoted two to three years due to the poor command of English or French, the instruction languages for mathematics and science in Lebanon. Currently, age is the central criteria for of student placement in Lebanon. The same appears to hold in Germany, although some interviewed teachers noted older children in grade 10 and above are often placed in grade 9 or 10, depending on the type of school taking them. The interview with policy maker revealed that that young people who are too old for school are placed into vocational schools in order for them to get a qualified education. In Hamburg the older children are allocated to international preparation classes that comprise 2 years after which they undertake the official exams and can gain the equivalent diploma to the one German children get in regular class. However, the major difference in placement between the two countries is the preparations for all students before enrolling in school. Most children receive preparatory language courses in addition to science, mathematics, psychical education, and arts before official placement in a formal school. Yet some of these preparatory classes, such as sports, take place in the mainstream classrooms with other German students.

It is worth mentioning that grade allocation in Germany is not consistent or unified. There are 12 districts in Berlin, and each district has a respective office dealing with the implementation of classes for refugees and the allocation of children to the schools, some of them have only recently been established and staffed. According to the teachers interviewed there, allocation of students is managed differently in each of the 12 districts of Berlin. Each district has an office, and the offices are relatively new. Children who are identified as illiterate are sent to beginner level classes designed to teach basic German as a second language before they can be transferred to welcome class programmes that prepare students for integration into the public school system. Some beginner level classes also include basic math taught at a second grade level by German language teachers in order to further orient students to the language of instruction. After basic training at the beginner level, students are sent to welcome classes to gain more writing and comprehension skills. Some welcome classes include math and science as well as language (different teachers for language), while others only have language classes.

The welcome programme is meant to both confront the language barrier and provide the children with a much needed sense of security and protection. The goal is to prepare students for integration into the German education system, which many of the students might feel apprehensive about. Children in the welcome class programme usually come from different socioeconomic backgrounds with diverse educational experiences and are likely to be of different age groups. According to the teachers interviewed in Germany, most Syrian refugee children enter at the beginner level, given many of them have not been to school before or have lost several years of schooling due to the war. The focus of the welcome class programme is to gear students toward comprehending German as the primary language of instruction as well as guaranteeing that children are placed in formal education based on their academic level and motivation to learn. Children in grades 1-2 enter regular primary school without having to attend

welcome classes. In addition, adolescents at age 16 are sent to schools for young adults that teach grades 9 and 10.

According to a teacher interviewed in Germany, welcome classes were not strictly for refugees, but they included all non-German speakers. They also included children from different age groups, and German teachers often catered to the needs of the students in each class. Usually, welcome classes had around twelve children. Some welcome class students were sent to regular classes throughout the year if they had gained a strong command of the German language. According to their teachers, their experiences often differ. Many of the interviewed teachers believed students who were encouraged to interact with regular German students during extra-curricular activities might feel more comfortable when attending regular classes with them. Some teachers argued that some regular classes were more welcoming than others, and this was another area in need of further attention. If any students left the welcome class, other students were enrolled to take their place. Once students entered a regular class, they sat next to 20-30 new students, and they could only do this once they were able to endure it, since teachers in regular schools did not have the same luxury of time to help each student individually. This was a common struggle faced by many of the teachers interviewed in Lebanon. Teachers in Lebanon felt **many Syrian refugee students required more individual attention than they are able to offer them.**

The German welcome programme also offered students a chance to express themselves and their experiences through the learning process. Teachers focused on integrating the children's personal. For instance, teachers typically asked the students to write about an inspirational person in their lives. These individualised methods were much less common in Lebanon, however, teachers who were more engaged in their students' lives were more likely to help the students improve academic performance. The German welcome programme was a critical factor that contributed to the integration of Syrian children into the German educational system. Students who exhibited advanced knowledge and skills were allowed to integrate earlier, while students who were unable to acquire the necessary skills during the one-year programme were granted special permission from the authorities to re-enter the programme for another year. The students were then allowed to repeat the grade they last left when being integrated into the German educational system, thereby boosting their chances to succeed academically, and bolstering enrolment and retention rates among Syrian refugees.

While Germany started the welcome classes for refugees almost three years ago as a way for smoother transitions of refugee children into mainstream education, Lebanon adopted a reactive approach as it places children directly into mainstream schooling without any needs assessment or additional support, despite the fact most of the interviewed students missed at least two years of schooling. In Lebanon, students were enrolled immediately without any type of welcome classes, or supplemental preparations, or a thorough assessment of their abilities.

Many schools in Lebanon placed students in grades that did not necessarily correspond with their academic abilities. As a result, most Syrian students faced both academic and social challenges at school. For example, several 14-year-old Syrian refugee boys claimed they were placed in grade 5, even though the last grade they attended was grade 3. These boys continued to struggle to keep up with the rest of their class and were not provided any preparatory courses or supplemental training. Additionally, several teachers interviewed in Lebanon also claimed to struggle with Syrian students who did not have the adequate background to learn new material. The Lebanese approach to grade distribution was often associated with high drop out and repetition rates as well as low enrolment amongst children in grade 7 and above, who tend to experience insurmountable difficulties due to the lack of educational support.

Having examined the enrolment policy in Lebanon and Germany, we will compare students' perception of schools between Germany and Lebanon.

SYRIAN REFUGEE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL

Probably the most striking difference between Syrian refugee children in Lebanon and Germany is attitude toward school. Almost all Syrian refugee children in Germany reported positive attitudes to school compared to their peers in Lebanon. Around 75% of the students in Germany claimed they often felt safe at school, compared to around 25% who rarely felt safe at school. There was also little difference when asked whether students were beaten or fought with other students. Nearly 20% of Syrians in both countries claimed they were beaten or fought with other students. However, nearly 20% of Syrian students stated they did not like going to school in Lebanon, while none of those in Germany made the same claim. All Syrian students surveyed in Germany believed school staff respected their families, whereas nearly 15% in Lebanon believed they rarely respect them. Moreover, almost 60% of Syrians in Lebanon experienced hunger at school, and around 40% wished they had gone to another school. Overall, only 10% of Syrians in Germany stated that they preferred to stay home, because they felt their school was unsafe, compared to nearly 40% of those in Lebanon.

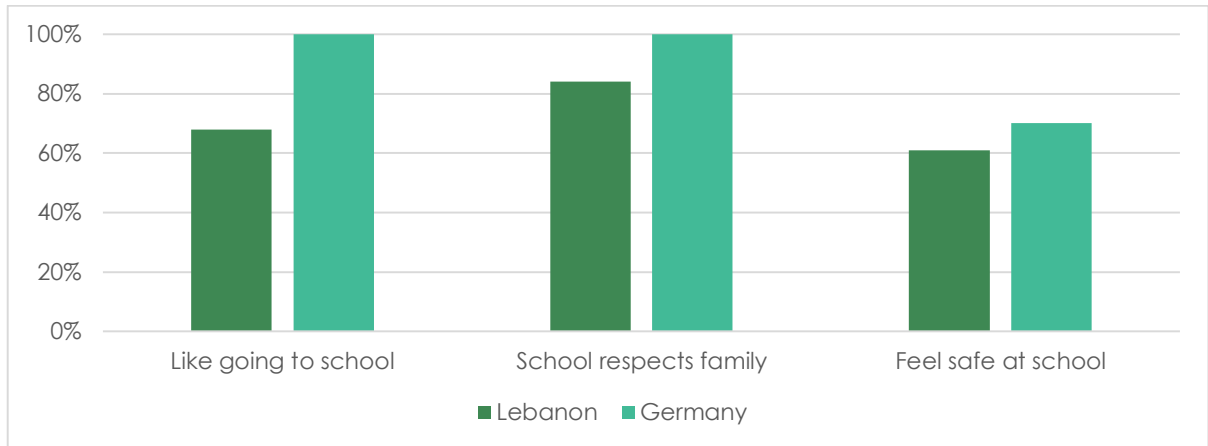
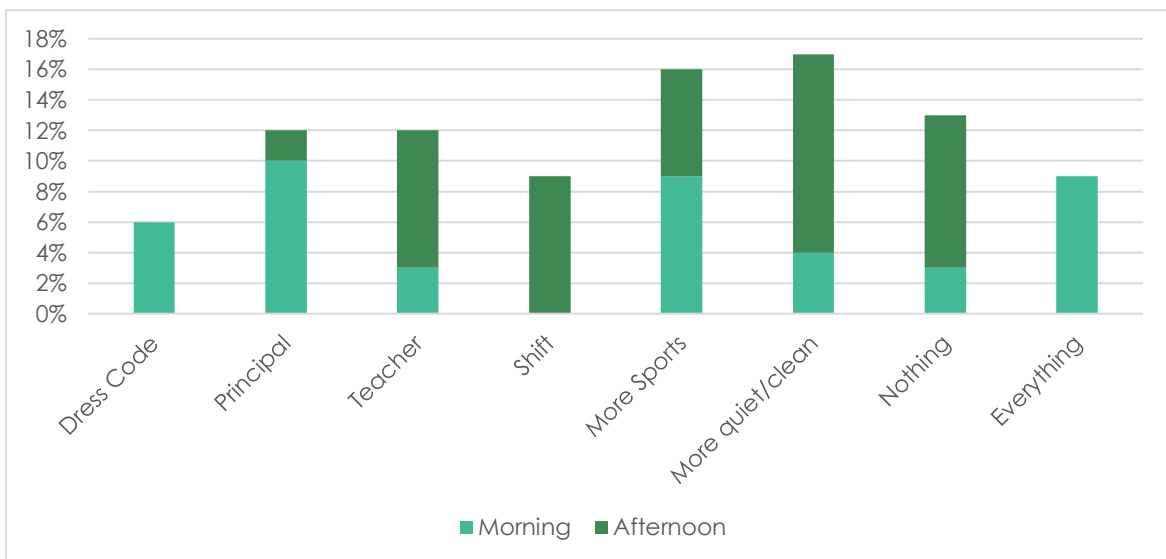


FIGURE 1: PERCEPTIONS OF SYRIAN STUDENTS TOWARDS SCHOOL IN BOTH LEBANON & GERMANY

All the Syrian refugee students surveyed in Germany claimed they liked going to school, and felt the school administration and staff always respected their family. On the other hand, only around 70% of the Syrian refugee students surveyed in Lebanon claimed they liked going to school, and around 80% claimed that they felt their families were respected by the school, indicating that Syrian refugee students in Lebanon were more likely to face problems regarding discrimination and parent/teacher relationships. However, less than 70% of Syrian refugee students in both Lebanon and Germany felt safe at school, with slightly less students felt safe in Lebanon. This suggests that Syrian refugee students' sense of safety at school is not necessarily dependent on how the school treats their family or how much they like going to school. However, Syrian students' experiences in Germany were overall more positive than those surveyed in Lebanon.

The positive experiences of Syrian children in Germany was further manifested in their responses to a question about the changes they would like made in schools. The majority of Syrian students



in Germany (70%) claimed they would not change anything, while 10% claimed they would add extra language courses/support, and the remaining 20% asked for more sports and activities. In Lebanon, only around 15% of Syrian students claimed they would not change anything about their school. In Lebanon, Syrian students' desire to change aspects of their schools varied according to whether they were in grades 6 or 9 and enrolled in morning shifts or afternoon shifts. For example, nearly all of those in Lebanon who claimed they would change their shift were students enrolled in afternoon shifts. The Figure 2 charts illustrate what students would change about their school according to shifts and grades respectively.

As can be seen in the two above figures, children in the afternoon shift were not pleased with their schooling experience compared to those in the morning. Changing shifts as well as teachers were two of the most mentioned issues which shows a poor perception towards school. In the following sections we examine some of the factors behind these differences.

PERCEPTION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The differences in attitudes toward school between the two groups was also accompanied by large variations in **perception of teachers' practices** in Germany and Lebanon. Syrian children described their teaching experience as engaging and interactive. The majority also reported positive attitudes toward their teachers. Nearly all Syrian students in Germany stated that their

FIGURE 2 ASPECTS SYRIAN STUDENTS WOULD CHANGE IN SCHOOL IN LEBANON ACCORDING TO TYPE OF SHIFTS

teachers use resources outside the textbook more often than not, while in Lebanon, nearly 30% claimed their teachers never use outside resources. In Germany, some of the interviewed teachers claimed speech activities and student presentations became more frequent in classes as a teaching method, which is rarely used in Lebanon. Another teacher in Germany indicated she usually started classes with a ritual and a sentence. She also cited singing as a useful way to help the students practice their language and articulation, and also relied on interactive activities, such as juggling and other exercises, to help students focus and discipline their behaviour and body language. The teacher usually designed the lesson according to the assigned topic, such as geography. She claimed that most of the children had very little general knowledge, so she taught them the difference between countries, states, and cities. The findings suggest Syrian refugee students in Germany benefitted from more exposure to diversity than those in Lebanon, and as a result, learning about diversity became much less abstract and therefore easier for the students to understand. In Lebanon, several interviewed teachers indicated Syrian refugee students struggle to learn about new countries.

Another important finding was the level of both academic and social integration support provided to students in each of the two countries. According to many of the interviewed teachers in Germany, secondary schools provided homework clubs where students benefit from additional homework lessons until 4pm. They also claimed most Syrian refugee students attended after-school care offered by their school; these programmes provided additional opportunities to interact with German pupils. In contrast, school support and provisions are much more limited in Lebanon. Syrian refugee students, especially those in the afternoon shifts, face many struggles integrating to the new learning environment. Due to time limitations, schools do not offer psychological education, arts, and music as part of the regular scheduled school days, but rather such activities are offered one hour per week with a social worker. The findings also indicate slightly more Syrian students in Lebanon had trouble focusing on lessons and understanding their teachers' instructions, compared to those in surveyed Germany. Around 50% of those surveyed in Lebanon claimed they had trouble understanding their teachers' instructions, compared to 40% in Germany. Nearly 40% of those surveyed in Lebanon had trouble focusing on their lessons, compared to only 15% of those surveyed in Germany. Moreover, at least 5% of those surveyed in Lebanon admitted they always have trouble focusing and rarely understand their teachers' instructions, while none of those in Germany expressed similar sentiments, indicating that those learning in German classrooms benefit from a better learning environment than those in Lebanon.

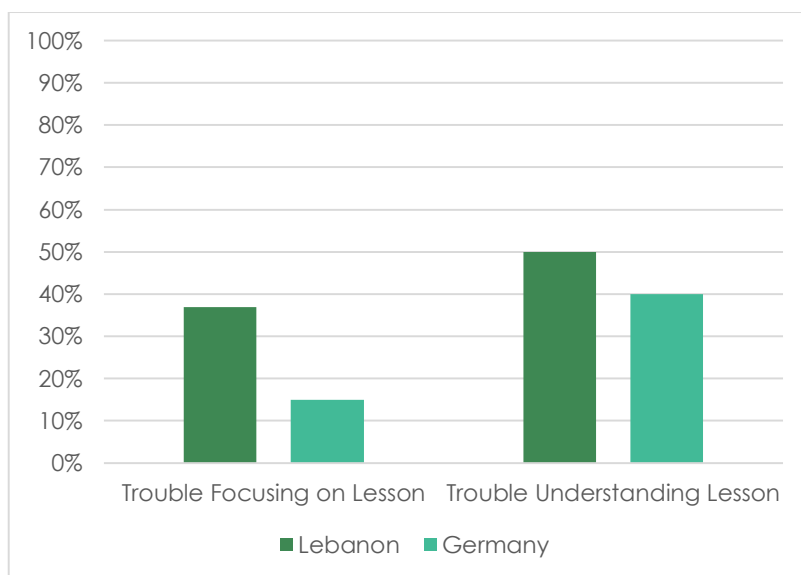


FIGURE 3: PERCENTAGE OF SYRIAN STUDENTS WHO STRUGGLE WITH LESSONS IN LEBANON & GERMANY

In order to further explore students' perceptions of their teaching and learning experience we investigate their views on the curriculum, learning a second language, support provided at school, use of homework as well as the issues and challenges faced by teachers.

CURRICULUM: FLEXIBILITY VERSUS RIGIDITY

We noticed two different approaches to curriculum in Germany and Lebanon. There was a great deal of flexibility for teachers to prepare their own material based on students' needs in Germany. All of the interviewed teachers developed their own material and chose the most suitable textbooks for their group of students. When asked if they modify their teaching material and methods to suit Syrian children, one teacher answered: "but you always modify with every class. I always did this with my students even before the Syrian refugees came to Germany."

When asked what if the students did not meet what is expected from them for their age at the end of the year, one teacher noted: "it's not my problem. It is the problem of the other teacher. My role is to get them to learn based on their needs. If I go too fast or difficult they will not learn." At the end of the preparatory year, each child was assessed, and based on his/her abilities would be placed in a programme that responds to their abilities and needs. Some ended up in Gymnasium, a highly academic route whereas others attended other forms of schools which vary from less academic to vocational programmes. In contrast, children in Lebanon who fail can go to vocational schools, however, a very small percentage do actually take this route, as they prefer to learn on the job, while earning money. This is evidenced by low enrolment rates in vocational schools in Lebanon.

The MEHE adopts a rather rigid approach to instruction. The curriculum must not only remain unchanged, but the national curriculum textbooks are to guide all instruction. Teachers in Lebanese public schools are expected to adhere to the national textbooks as the main source of information for all lessons. According to the interviewed teachers, the mentors sent by the ministry emphasize the need to follow the textbook and to teach from it, although they allow the teacher to use other resources some of the time. The majority of Lebanese teachers had a highly critical view of the national textbook. Many of them remarked that the book is short on activities, particularly listening and speaking activities, despite the fact these are main objectives on the national curriculum.

Most teachers noted that they are prohibited from the use of any resources other than the textbook. Some were convinced the guidance from the MEHE did not allow for deviation from the textbook, whereas others were told this by MEHE-designated counsellors and still others indicated their school administration did not permit the use of non-textbook related materials. Some teachers used other resources, such as supplementary stories that might be of a greater interest to students, or additional grammar exercises alongside the national textbook. Unsurprisingly, we observed a marked difference in children's attitude toward learning second language, as indicated in the following section.

LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE

Learning a second language was identified as one of the main barriers for Syrian student access and retention in Lebanese public schools. While the law in Lebanon grants schools the right to teach all subjects in Arabic, English, French and provides the official exams papers in these languages, the national textbooks for mathematics and science are only available in Arabic up to grade six. This was one of the major factors for low enrolment rates above grade six. In the beginning of the crisis, MEHE allowed Syrian children to learn these subjects in Arabic in second shifts, however, this year the minister issued a decree stating all schools should teach these subjects in English or French, thus crystallising a further challenge for students and teachers. In Germany, children face an even a bigger challenge with language, as all formal education is in German, and thus students must gain proficiency to integrate. These linguistic challenges make the comparison of the education provisions in these two countries particularly valuable.

The teacher and student interviews as well as the survey responses revealed major differences in approaches to language (speaking and reading) instruction. When asked about classroom methods for language instruction, seventy percent of Syrians in Germany indicated their teachers always used listening activities in class, compared to only around 50% in Lebanon. Around 80% of Syrian students in Germany claimed their teachers often used pictures and drawings when explaining lessons, whereas 90% claimed they often used songs. In contrast, around 65% of Syrians in Lebanon indicated their teachers only sometimes used pictures, and around 90% claimed their teachers never used songs, particularly when learning languages. According to the students, videos were the least used materials in both countries, with only slightly more use in Germany than Lebanon (50% sometimes used videos in Germany, compared to 35% in Lebanon).

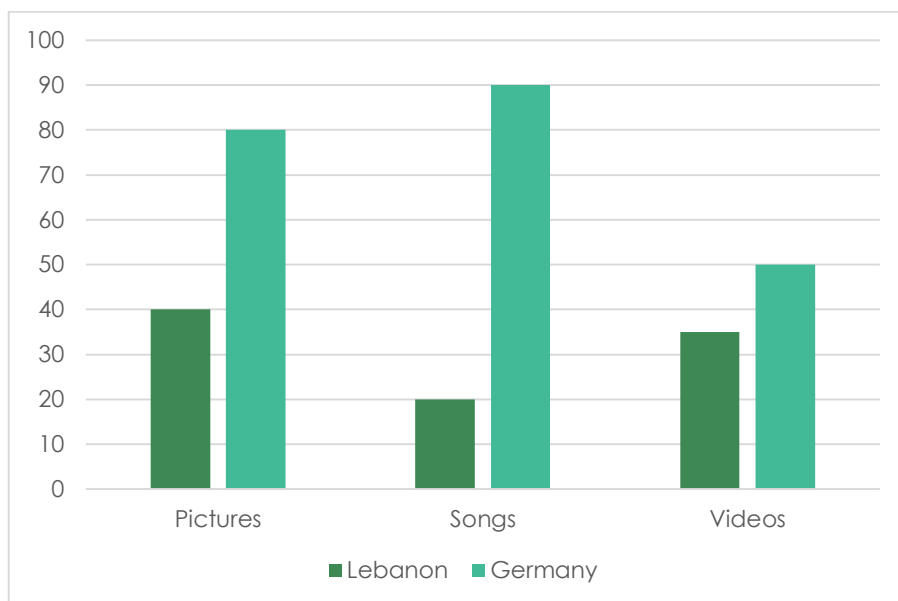


FIGURE 4: FREQUENCY OF PEDAGOGY METHODS USED BY TEACHERS IN LEBANON AND GERMANY

According to one of the teachers in Germany, songs were most often used to teach language to younger children as a way to gain phonological awareness of the language, while adolescents were taught grammar by comparing the grammar structures of different languages. When teaching illiterate children, the German teacher stated she focused more on vocabulary and less on grammar, instead of teaching both together. She argued illiterate students must first gain more experience of the language so it becomes less abstract and more familiar and easy to understand. She claimed she mostly worked with word cards and audio-visual materials to teach these students.

A particularly interesting case was of a German teacher who taught a welcome class. The teacher explained he relied on real, tangible objects rather than pictures or printed forms. For example, instead of using a picture of a banana, he would use a real banana to teach students through sensory experience. His method of teaching was intuitive. He usually tried to situate each lesson in common, everyday situations to help students use German to express their needs. This teacher claimed that this method worked well with students, because they felt learning was more practical and less abstract. He baked with his students, planted beans, or interacted with animals on the premises. Since many of the students often came to school without having had breakfast, the teacher brought in his apprentice to cook with the students. This way, the students learned the German they needed to cook or eat. In addition, this teaching method started with listening and speaking, then segued to writing. Reading was at the end of the learning curve and was learned mostly through the experience of writing. This teacher praised his students more than

regular German classes, because he believed these students need constant validation to stay motivated.

In contrast, teachers of a second language in Lebanon completely overlooked oral proficiency. The majority of interviewed teachers noted most students find it difficult to speak in French or English and there is not an oral proficiency assessment. Typical second language instruction mainly involved content-specific questions derived from traditional reading and comprehension lessons with the objective to provoke students to speak and participate using foreign language from the lesson rather than learning through a particular interactive speaking activity. Additionally, most teachers in all schools relied exclusively on reading in class to evaluate their students' listening capacities. They read or asked a student to read from the textbook or from a story followed by questions and discussion in order to evaluate students' level of understanding. Therefore, students' engagement with a foreign language, particularly in the forms of speaking and listening, was highly content-specific and rarely encouraged students to leverage their socio-cultural backgrounds to improve proficiency through self-expression.

In terms of attitudes and perceptions towards learning a second language, the findings indicate that Syrian students in Germany have more positive attitudes towards learning German than those surveyed in Lebanon, and are less likely to perceive it as difficult. For example, all the Syrian students surveyed in Germany claimed they liked German language class, while only around 55% of those surveyed in Lebanon made the same claim about foreign language instruction. Moreover, 35% of those surveyed in Germany perceived learning German as difficult, compared to around 45% of those surveyed in Lebanon. However, when Syrian students were asked whether they believed learning in Arabic instead of a foreign language would help them pass more easily, 70% in Germany agreed, while the remaining 30% disagreed with this statement. In Lebanon, around 55% agreed, 20% disagreed, and the remaining 25% were unsure. A closer look at the data suggests that those in Lebanon are more likely to struggle with both Arabic and a foreign language. In Germany, however, students who are illiterate may be more likely to feel comfortable learning in German, while those who are used to learning in Arabic might feel that learning in Arabic would save them more time than learning a second language first.

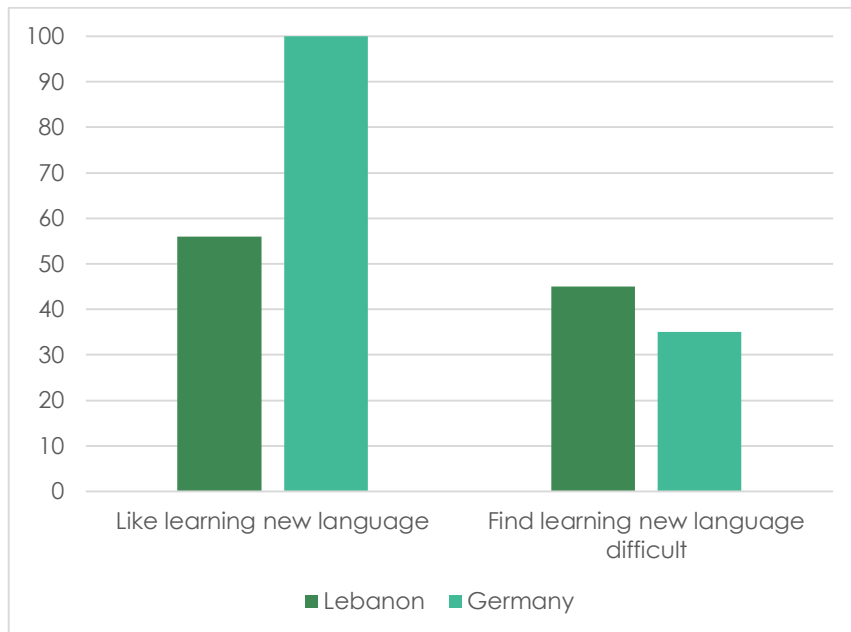


FIGURE 5: PERCEPTIONS & ATTITUDES OF SYRIAN STUDENTS TOWARDS FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN LEBANON AND GERMANY

As for using Arabic in the classroom, teachers in Lebanon indicated they mainly used foreign language in the class, but often used Arabic to explain new and difficult words and to save time. They allowed students to speak in Arabic and helped them reiterate what they said in a foreign language. In Germany, teachers would encourage children to use Arabic with each other in order to explain to each other.

Teachers in Lebanon, including language teachers, were expected to teach from a textbook and to follow the national curriculum. Several teachers complained that some students were illiterate, yet they were nevertheless expected to teach them long texts, something which many of the students struggled with, and consequently, dropped out. This brings us to the issue of the **curriculum**. In Germany, students were screened in order to identify their language abilities and literacy in their mother tongue prior to placement in a grade level or school. Here it is worth noting that a quarter of these surveyed children were unable to read and write Arabic. Their age varied between 12 and 15 years old. Due to the war, they missed several years of schooling and, as a result, forgot what they previously learned. Illiterate students were sometimes assigned to special programmes for learning German. Interviewed teachers highlighted that teaching these illiterate children reading and writing is quite different from teaching literate students. Another teacher who had a mixed ability classroom where some students with a high proficiency in Arabic and others who were illiterate did not consider this mix to be a problem. This latter teacher relied on visuals and applied learning where students engaged in interactive activities while learning

German. He also used dancing and other arts activities to help children express themselves and pronounce sounds that are difficult for native Arabic speakers to pronounce.

One important issue highlighted by the study was teachers' attitudes toward learning a second language. Most interviewed teachers in Lebanon considered parents' backgrounds and a poor foundation in English or French coupled by the unwillingness from the side of students made language learning very difficult. In contrast, teachers in Germany viewed language acquisition as one important step to proceed with mainstream schooling. This was manifested in the set up of the welcome classes, which were designed for a maximum of two years. Most children enrolled in mainstream education by the end of the first year and some after six months. One shortfall of the system was children did not receive ongoing language support once they complete the course. This was one of the issues in need of modification highlighted by interviewed teachers.

However, teachers in Germany identified a number of factors with the potential to promote or hinder the acquisition of German as a second language. First, the willingness of German teachers to shift their attitude from teaching German as a first language to that of a second language. According to one teacher, "many teachers don't want to alter their teaching to address this. They all need training in teaching German as a second language. Mathematics teachers, for instance can simplify their language because these children don't have cognitive issues, it's just a language issue." Another teacher noted that "many of the problem solving questions in math require children to understand a lot of German, including cultural representations. This can be easily solved if less words were used and more numbers." Interestingly one teacher noted that teaching refugee children is much easier than teaching native German "with the latter, ten percent don't usually get what I am saying without me knowing that. With Syrian children, I assume they will not understand so I keep explaining."

The second issue highlighted by teachers was parents' backgrounds. Children with a better socioeconomic background often learned faster and were highly motivated. This was a feeling echoed by Lebanese teachers, too.

Unaccompanied children were more likely to learn faster than those living with their parents, as they had greater exposure to hear and speak German. Finally, the mixing of Syrian children with other German counterparts through sports, arts, and the playground were all important factors contributing to German language acquisition.

Teachers in Germany also underscored the significant challenge to teach illiterate students. Some teachers argued one year of the welcome class was not long enough to teach non-Germans, and particularly illiterate students, enough German grammar to be able to speak and write at the levels needed to integrate into regular education. Another struggle was the lack of resources for teaching illiterate adolescents. Teachers claimed they often adapted books and lessons typically

used for teaching illiterate adults in order to teach adolescents. Many of them also claimed to use their own resources and activities.

Finally, despite the great demand in students to master a second language in public schools in Lebanon did not prompt additional language support programmes for Syrian refugee students. To date, only NGOs offered some language support outside public schools. Many Syrian refugee students in Lebanon claimed they continued to struggle in school, because of the language barrier. In contrast, the German welcome classes focused mainly on language, and allowed students a fairer chance to succeed since academic performance was only evaluated after they have crossed the language barrier.

HOMEWORK

The survey revealed around 70% of Syrian students in Germany claimed they never struggled with their homework, compared to only 32% of those in Lebanon. However, nearly 9% of Syrians in Germany claimed they always struggled with their homework, compared to only around 1% of those surveyed in Lebanon. The findings for language homework indicated nearly 7% of Syrians in Lebanon claimed they could never complete their language homework, while no Syrian students in Germany made the same claim. This indicates that although Syrian students in Germany struggle less with their homework on average than those in Lebanon, a larger percentage of those in Germany always struggle. The findings suggest this discrepancy may be due to the fact that Syrian students in Lebanon who have learning difficulties have the option to drop out of school, whereas those in Germany are not permitted to do so, and are therefore more likely to continue struggling. It also may be due to the fact that most of the students in the sample surveyed in Germany have been at school for a shorter duration of time than those in Lebanon.

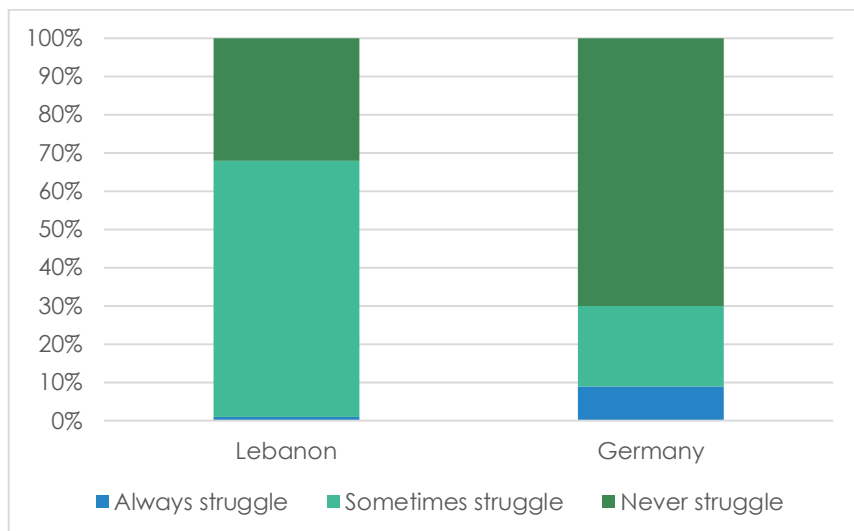


FIGURE 6: PERCENTAGE OF SYRIAN STUDENTS WHO STRUGGLE WITH THEIR HOMEWORK IN LEBANON & GERMANY

One interviewed teacher in Germany always gave her students homework. Yet she claimed that while most students did their homework regularly, some of them wanted more difficult homework assignments, because they know they have limited time to progress. However, the teacher argued that if the homework was too complex, then students would not be able to learn. Another teacher noted she very rarely gave homework due to the fact that many students did not want to do homework. She typically assigned specific tasks to be completed instead. Other teachers occasionally gave homework, but usually assessed each student individually based on their level. Similarly, while some teachers in Lebanon claimed to always assign student homework, others claimed they never did, primarily because most of the students would likely to struggle with such assignments. Moreover, around 65% of Syrians in both countries claimed their teachers always corrected their homework, while 10% of those in Lebanon claimed that their teachers never corrected their homework, compared to none in Germany who made this claim.

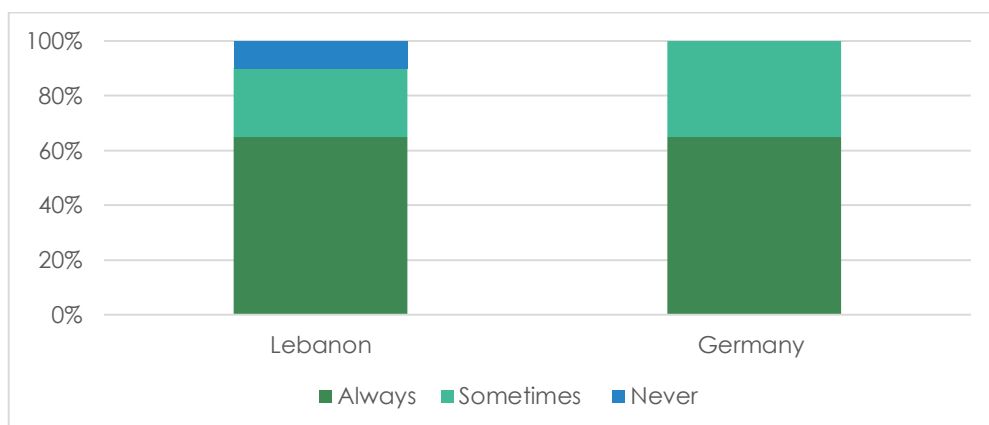


FIGURE 7: PERCENTAGE OF TEACHERS WHO CORRECT THEIR STUDENTS' HOMEWORK IN LEBANON AND GERMANY

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS' LEARNING

There seem to be some flexibility given to both teachers in Lebanon and Germany in terms of assessing student progress. At the same time, students must complete official standardised examinations. According to the interviews with teachers in Germany, students were not officially graded/graded until they had proper command of the German language, an issue which was not yet resolved in Lebanon, where students were evaluated every year in order to progress to the next academic year.

In Germany, most welcome class teachers stated they maintained a lot of liberty when it came to the teaching and evaluation and had few specifications required by the state. One such requirement was a national test for pupils in Europe that must be conducted after 6 months in formal education. This Europe-wide test uses pictures to assess whether a student is able to accurately position verbs in sentences for a span of about 15-20 minutes. The teacher documented the results and repeated the test after eleven months. Based on the results, the teacher assessed whether the student was able to join regular classes after the summer. If the student was unable to reach the baseline standard, the teacher must justify this position to the authorities and explain why she/he was unable to teach the child enough for him to be ready to be integrated. If the authorities accepted the explanation presented by the teacher, the student was to attend the welcome class for another year.

One of the interviewed teachers taught basic German to illiterate students claimed she evaluated students based on three tests conducted throughout the year and with a report card at the end of the year. If students did not meet the minimum standard, they must repeat the class another year. Another welcome class teacher claimed she conducted test phases where she evaluated certain students on whether they were ready to integrate into regular school. Students were evaluated by being sent to regular classes with German students, depending on their age group and last grade attended, then monitored to find out whether they could keep up with the lessons. Teachers interviewed in Germany also stated that they used small indicators in class to monitor the progress of students. For example, one such indicator was whether students could open the right page number in a book after a lesson about numbers.

According to the interviewed teachers in Germany, there was little data or experience as of yet on whether these procedures were successful, and many decisions were still based on improvisation. The teacher at a school in Berlin believed the national tests did not accurately reflect the students' skills. He argued students would likely be able to pass the test, if they practiced being in the situation illustrated in the pictures commonly found on the tests. As a result, students were trained on how to answer these particular types of exams.

In contrast to the findings in Germany, most of the interviewed teachers in Lebanon resorted to monthly assessments, a mid term, and an end-of-year evaluation. Students final grade would take all these grades into account, upon which they would be promoted or asked to repeat the same grade. However, due to the difficulties that Syrian children faced, particularly in second shifts, teachers were simplifying the exams. Thus most teachers and principals noted that the expectations of students to pass the year in the morning shift were much higher than those in the second shift. As one principal noted, “there is grade 6 morning which equal to an average grade 6 and grade 6 afternoon which is equal to a grade 3 morning shift.” While this was done to support Syrian children and reduce repetition, the lack of additional support meant students would reach grade nine, where they had to sit for an official exam without adequate preparation. Many of the interviewed students complained about feeling like they hadn’t learned the necessary lessons in their previous grades in order to keep up with new material. This is often the case with donor-funded education, where a minimum level of success is required in order to continue with the funding, which often leads to inflation of success rates and lowered standards. One example of this is The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), where 80% of students were automatically promoted to the next grade, even if they did not pass school exams. Moreover, these students do not receive additional or supplemental remedial support. The negative consequences of this strategy is then manifested in the low success rates of Palestinian students in grade 9 official exams, ‘the Brevet’, and this corresponds to the highest dropout rates in Lebanon. While a margin of flexibility in exams for the refugees is needed, this must be accompanied by diagnostic assessment of their needs and consequently a provision for support in order to meet the requirements of their grades.

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY TEACHERS

In Germany, and to a larger extent Lebanon, one of the most common problems teachers struggled with was the wide spectrum of abilities students had in the same classroom. This makes instruction much more difficult for teachers, particularly in Lebanon, and undermines the teacher’s ability to respond to the individual needs of each student. While some students appeared to attend very good schools prior to their arrival to Germany tend to be more interested and able to learn, others with less experience in schools or have been out of school for several years tend to struggle more. This latter group of students also confront a new culture and language, thus compounding the difficulty to adapt and feel secure enough to learn. However, teachers in Germany have the advantage of time to focus on teaching and learning before students integrate into formal education. In contrast, teachers in Lebanon were under tight time constraints to complete an extensive curriculum for end-of-year examinations. Since the teachers interviewed in Germany did not teach regular classes, but taught either basic German for beginners or welcome classes, they were less stressed about the material they needed to cover and whether each student was progressing fast enough.

On the contrary, most teachers interviewed in Lebanon claimed they had difficulties teaching the Lebanese curriculum to Syrian students. These teachers argued the Lebanese curriculum was too long and complicated for Syrian students, who already struggled with the math and science instruction language barrier. Unlike Germany, Syrian refugee students in Lebanon are integrated into schools, regardless of their language skills. Teachers interviewed in Lebanon also complained about struggling to teach illiterate students or students with very little reading/writing skills, which was compounded by the fact these students were placed in the same classrooms as regular students. Most interviewed teachers in Lebanon also complained the state textbook was too complex for both Lebanese as well as Syrian students, and called for simpler resources and worksheets. Many teachers interviewed in Lebanon also claimed they felt the need to alter their teaching methods to suit the abilities and preferences of Syrian students. Some teachers claimed Syrian students were more comfortable working individually rather than in groups. Many teachers in the afternoon shift complained that they could not go as slow as some of the Syrian students in class needed, since this would mean the class would not be able to finish the curriculum in time for exams. This might be one of the reasons why many of the Syrian students in Germany feel teachers were more patient with them compared to Lebanon.

In Germany, some interviewed teachers reported feeling overwhelmed by the influx of Syrian refugees, which they claimed added too many additional responsibilities. One teacher even declined to be interviewed, because she perceived it as yet another responsibility brought about by the crisis. Other teachers complained they did not have the training necessary to deal with refugees, while others, although they also lacked training, felt more comfortable because of their personal interest in Syrian culture. Teachers who felt more comfortable teaching refugees were more likely to also be remedial teachers. Teachers interviewed in Germany stated that training for teaching German as a second language for children between 9-14 is not yet available, but will be in the near future.

A common struggle raised by teachers interviewed in Germany was teaching German as a second language. Although all the teachers interviewed were language teachers, none had any experience teaching German as a second language, which required different teaching methods. One of the interviewed teachers taught English as a second language to non-Germans, and only started teaching German due to the increasing demand for German second language teachers following the influx of Syrian refugees. Due to the shortage of staff, many teachers lacked experienced or training for teaching German as a second language. These teachers faced difficulties teaching Syrian students who had no basic German or English education, and in some cases, did not have much schooling.

According to some of the interviewed teachers in Germany, teaching illiterate students, particularly refugees, posed a distinct challenge. Many teachers often simplified their lessons in order to teach adolescent students at a first grade level. However, some teachers argued that they did not have enough time during the one year welcome class programme to teach illiterate students the amount of German grammar and vocabulary necessary to integrate. According to one of the teachers, the Ministry of Education had not yet recognised illiterate students as a special group, so their objective in teaching such students German was not yet clear. The teacher explained her personal objective was to work with them in preparation for integration of regular language classes, and to obtain the minimum certificate of education. In Germany, the minimum certificate was the 'Hauptschulabschluss', which entitled its holder to low-skilled vocational training. However, the teacher also claimed instruction largely depended on how eager the students were to learn and how well they coped with challenges in the classroom.

Moreover, students in welcome classes did not start and finish the school year together, which many teachers claimed created problems. Some teachers started with eight students and ended up with twelve after two months, and sometimes continued to receive more students throughout the year. In other schools, the exchange between students who left for regular classes and those who enter in their place is much faster. This meant teachers often juggled an ever-changing classroom with a wide variety of more or less developed students. Although the welcome classes were designed to integrate students into regular classes within ten months, some teachers claimed that policy makers by now realised that this only worked for literate students with basic skills in their native language. According to some of the teachers, not all students in welcome classes were literate, particularly boys. One welcome class teacher gave the example of an eleven year old boy who had never been to school before. Most teachers agreed that students like him will not likely be able to learn what they need to learn in a timespan of ten months.

A further challenge raised by teachers in both countries was that most Syrian refugee children needed to learn how to learn before being educated. Most of the students had either never attended formal education before, or had been away from a structured environment an extended period of time. This caused many teachers difficulties in class management and discipline. Most teachers interviewed in Lebanon also claimed to struggle with class management, and believed they could benefit from trainings on how to manage disruptive students. Teachers in Lebanon had particular difficulties disciplining adolescent male students. Classrooms where the number of males greatly exceeded the number of females proved to be particularly problematic, especially for female teachers. Another struggle raised by many teachers in Lebanon was managing classrooms with students with a wide range of different ages and levels of education. Most of the teachers interviewed in Germany claimed they often struggled with punctuality when dealing with Syrian refugees and refugees in general. Some teachers noted they

made it a point to teach students in welcome classes that if they were not punctual, they would not be permitted to enter regular classes. However, interestingly, almost none of the interviewed German teachers reported encountering behavioural problems amongst Syrian refugee children, a challenge regularly mentioned by Lebanese teachers. There was only one case of a young Syrian refugee who came to Germany with his brother who was aggressive. However, according to his teacher, this was the only case she experienced.

SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN EDUCATION

Having examined the learning experiences of Syrian refugee children in Lebanon and Germany including the teaching practices, we now examine the relationship within the school, which serves as a major factor in student academic success and retention. To investigate the school environment, we examine the relationships between students and staff, parents and school staff, and finally student-student relationships.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SYRIAN REFUGEES AND STUDENTS IN HOST COUNTRIES

As indicated earlier, there were little differences between how safe Syrians felt at school in Lebanon compared to Germany. Around 75% of the students claimed they often felt safe at school, compared to around 25% who rarely felt safe at school. There was also little difference when asked whether students were beaten or fought with other students. Nearly 20% of Syrians in both countries claimed they were beaten or fought with other students. However, nearly 20% of Syrian students stated that they did not like going to school in Lebanon, while none of those in Germany made the same claim. Nearly all Syrian students surveyed in Germany believed school staff respected their families, while nearly 15% in Lebanon believed they rarely respect their families. Moreover, nearly 60% of Syrians in Lebanon felt hungry at school, and around 40% wished they had gone to another school. Overall, only 10% of Syrians in Germany stated that they preferred to stay home, because they felt that their school was unsafe, compared to nearly 25% of those in Lebanon.

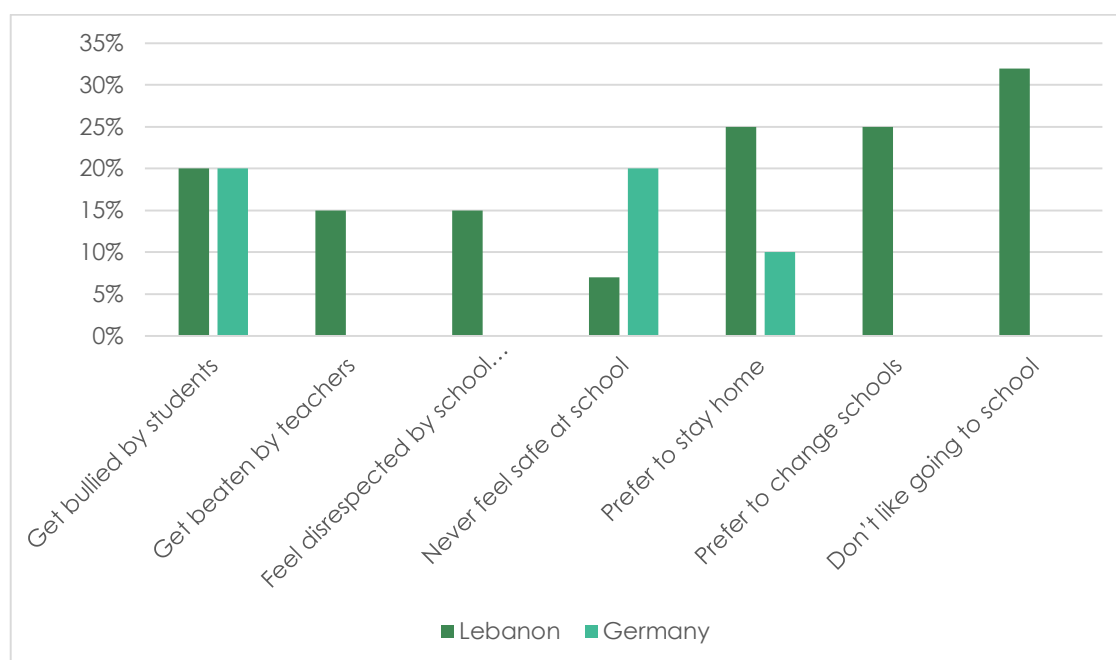


FIGURE 8: PERCENTAGE OF SYRIAN STUDENTS WITH NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES AT SCHOOLS IN LEBANON & GERMANY

STUDENT/STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

One of the most interesting differences between Syrian refugee children studying in Lebanese and German schools was violence. While most principals and teachers in Lebanon described Syrian children as violent and aggressive with a tendency to bullying each other, their peers in Germany had different views. Violent incidences or bullying by Syrian children in Germany were rare. However, some German teachers reported teasing behaviour amongst Syrian students and other refugees or migrants. In one extreme case, a violent Yemeni refugee was expelled from school for holding a knife up to another student, and for climbing into the girls' bathroom. German teachers also reported one case of drug dealing between refugees and older migrants as the most serious issue.

In Lebanon, teachers and principals reported bullying among Syrian students and between Syrian and Lebanese students as common at schools. Teacher acknowledged there was little done to prevent it from recurring. Most principals, in fact, reported clashes between Syrian and Lebanese between the two shifts. As a result, one school administration resorted to various measures to stop the clashes, mainly by created human shields to separate children during the transition of the morning shift and the beginning of the afternoon shifts. The two remaining schools did not do much about this issue. Parents of Syrian refugee children in Lebanese schools complained primarily about the bullying their children experience at school, although on parents commended the strictness their principal adopted when dealing with bullying, especially between Lebanese

and Syrian children. The principal would threaten to send both students to the nearby police station if such behaviour continued.

A separate common conflict reported by German teachers was gender conflict. One teacher argued that since girls in her class were much smarter and more confident than boys, boys often felt insecure, because they could not compete. Some teachers also argued girls were more shy and less integrated than boys, while others noted that some more religious students tried to intervene in cases where girls were to join boys in swim class. The findings suggest that given the differences in culture and values between Germany and Syria, some students struggled to cope with the contradictions they faced at school.

As for friendships, the study revealed that Syrian refugee students in Lebanon were less likely to have non-Syrian friends compared to Syrian refugee students in Germany. Although all Syrian surveyed refugee students in Lebanon and Germany claimed they had friends, around 50% of those surveyed in Germany claimed they had friends both inside and outside school, whereas 85% in Lebanon claimed they only had friends at school. Moreover, around 50% of Syrian students in Lebanon claimed they only had Syrian friends, compared to only 10% of those in Germany.

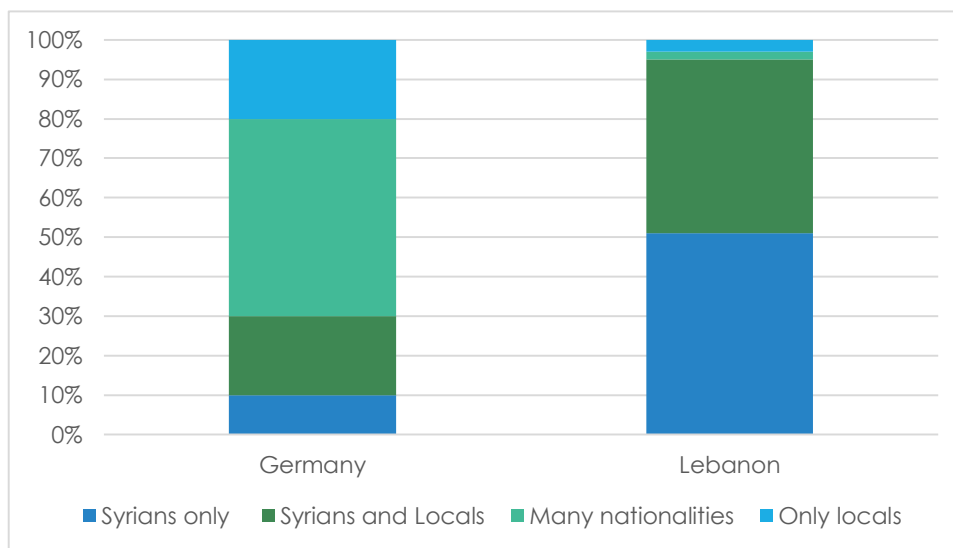


FIGURE 9 NATIONALITY OF FRIENDS IN LEBANON AND GERMANY

In addition to having less Syrian friends than those in Lebanon, around 20% of Syrian refugee students in Germany had mostly German friends, and around 50% had friends from many different nationalities. In Germany, Syrian refugee students were exposed to much more diversity than Syrian refugees in Lebanon. When Syrians enrolled in welcome classes, they interact with refugees from many other countries, including ethnic Germans from Russia and Afghanistan, refugees from Iran, Kurdistan, Albania, Belorussia, and Kosovo. The chart below

illustrates the differences in nationality of friends between Syrian refugee youth in Lebanon and Germany.

The findings also indicate Syrian refugee students who had less friends and felt less socially integrated were more likely to struggle academically. According to one German teacher interview, refugee students with German friends were usually more communicative and better learners. However, many teachers also claimed refugee students were generally not very well integrated. One of the most common recommendations by Syrian refugee students interviewed in Lebanon was activities facilitating integration between Syrian and Lebanese students, as well as extra-curricular activities and opportunities to socialise outside school. This could introducing new students to older students, who act like mentors and orient them to the rules of school.

In order to strengthen the integration and relationships between Syrian refugee students and children from host communities, teachers interviewed in Germany provided a number of recommendations, including sport lessons with German students in regular classes or more projects and extracurricular activities that allow them to work together. One of the teachers initiated a buddy-system between German and Syrian students, where 100 out of 800 German students volunteered to help. This was a recommended by a number of Syrian refugee students in Lebanon, particularly those who were struggling academically. This paired each refugee student with a buddy that is the same age or older, and they spent school breaks together and visit each other at home. The teacher who initiated the system argued that the backbone of teaching language is finding German speaking friends and practicing the language, given that most of refugees don't speak German at home.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SYRIAN REFUGEES AND TEACHERS IN HOST COUNTRIES

Another area of difference in the education of Syrian refugees in the two countries was in teacher student relationships. Syrian refugee students in Germany were more likely to feel that their teachers were more invested in their education. The findings also indicate teachers in Germany were more likely to communicate with students on an individual level, whereas teachers in Lebanon were more likely to communicate with students as a group. Teachers interviewed in Germany were also more likely to identify key challenges each student faced individually than those interviewed in Lebanon. Although teachers in Lebanon were also able to identify students according to their academic abilities, they were less engaged in their personal experience and had little to almost no contact with their parents. Teachers interviewed in Lebanon were more likely to report problem classrooms rather than a problem child.

The findings also suggest teachers in Germany were more likely to engage with the individual student experiences as refugees than those in Lebanon. Ninety percent of Syrian students interviewed in Germany claimed their teachers often encouraged them to discuss their

experiences related to Syria, while around 30% in Lebanon claimed their teachers never encouraged them to discuss these experiences. Additionally, 70% of refugee students in Germany claimed their teachers prohibited silly comments on Syria, compared to around 60% in Lebanon. Around 5% of Syrian students in Lebanon claimed that their teachers beat them, while none of those surveyed in Germany made the same claim. Nearly 40% of Syrians in Lebanon believed that their teachers sometimes disrespected them. However, around 80% of Syrians in both countries claimed they had good relations with their teachers.

Around 70% of Syrian students in both countries stated their teachers helped them when they had problems learning lessons with the exception of 5% in Lebanon, who claimed their teachers never helped them. The same percentages applied when students were asked whether language teachers clarified new foreign language words or terminology and whether language teachers checked and corrected their writing, indicating that Syrians learning in Germany are more likely to receive support from their teachers when they struggle with language and lessons. Moreover, nearly 60% of Syrians in both countries claimed their teachers were always patient with them, however, 11% of Syrian students in Lebanon claimed their teachers were never patient with them when they made mistakes, whereas none of those surveyed in Germany made that claim.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTS OF SYRIAN REFUGEES AND TEACHERS IN HOST COUNTRIES

Two very different paradigms for teacher-parent relationship exist between Germany and Lebanon. Most of the teachers interviewed in Germany made great efforts to engage with parents of Syrian refugees, and most of the parents interviewed had received visits from their children's teachers. For example, one of the schools visited in Berlin, as soon as a student was assigned to the school, the teacher paid the family a visit at home and scheduled an interview with the parents at school. Teachers who visited their students at home before they started school noted that the parents were very grateful for the visits, since their children were quite afraid of going to school. However, the language barrier often caused constraints between parent/teacher relationships in Germany. One teacher stated she had not yet invited the parents to school, because of the language barrier, which would require the presence of at least four translators. Otherwise, she would need to invite the children as well so they could translate, however limited their knowledge might be. Cases like this also required collaboration of other colleagues who were able to speak the language, and having individual meetings with parents rather than conferences. Some of the teachers interviewed in Germany noted that in cases where there were language barriers between them and the parents, they often communicated with the children's designated social worker instead. With regards to unaccompanied refugee students in Germany, most teachers interviewed stated that they were usually in close contact with their guardians.

Despite the language barrier, many teachers in Germany continued to take personal initiative to help integrate parents. One teacher noted a presentation she set up in class for parents to share what their children learned in class. Another teacher cited the example of a Christmas party she held where all the parents were invited. Some schools also cooperated with NGOs that work in translation services for migrants. Another teacher pointed out a centre which recently employed three social workers to help with the welcome classes. She claimed that they were very competent and helped both teachers and families. Many teachers in Germany also perceived part of their role as social workers, while others who had the advantage of an Arab cultural background played a significant role in communicating with and orienting other Arab families towards the German system. For example, one of the German teachers interviewed cited an example of how her colleague with an Arab background once resolved the issue of a father who had a problem with his daughter attending swim class. Given that the father argued against it based on religious beliefs, as a German, the teacher claimed she did not feel comfortable arguing with him. However, her colleague managed to convince the father that he must accept the way the school works in Germany.

In contrast, none of the interviewed teachers in Lebanon knew any of their students' parents although there was no language barrier. Moreover, Lebanese teachers exhibited negative attitudes towards Syrian parents and described them as careless and neglectful. Parents similarly expressed negative attitudes towards teachers while exhibiting a more positive views on school administration. Some parents reported that Syrian children were treated as 'second or ten class citizens' as one father noted. In two schools most parents described verbal abuse by many teachers and racist comments. One parent noted "the minimum the teachers say is you are a just a piece of a Syrian." Another said "just check our buses and how our children are cramped in them like animals." In one school, parents complained about the schools' strictness in allowing students to access the toilets. Another reported humiliation of children by teachers. "My daughter was asked to crawl on her knees," one father commented.

It is worth noting that parent teacher meetings did not occur in any of the afternoon shifts, whereas most schools with Syrian refugees in the morning shift most schools held only one meeting per year, except for one school which held monthly meetings. Syrian parents were not always informed of school regulations. For instance, Syrian parents in one school did not know when they could come to ask about their children. Hence, when they attempted to visit the school, the caretaker turned them down without informing them of the school's policy concerning visits, which had designated specific day of the week for parent visits. Some parents interpreted this as an unhelpful administration. The school administration, on the other hand, was quite understanding of the difficult situations the Syrian families faced, particularly in terms of housing conditions. They also described Syrian parents as attentive and cooperative.

While most teachers interviewed in Lebanon claimed most Syrian refugee parents were disengaged with their children's education, a teacher interviewed in Germany claimed that Syrian refugee parent involvement in their educational lives varied, depending on their level of education. She argued that parents who were more educated held higher educational aspirations for their children. Most teachers claimed parents normally want the best for their children, however, they noted some simple parents were unable to take care of their children. Overall, most parents interviewed in Germany seemed to be more invested in their children's education than those interviewed in Lebanon. Many of those interviewed in Lebanon also often felt disrespected by the school staff and administration, and contended conflicts over issues of hygiene and misbehaviour were often conflated with discrimination.

Several of the teachers interviewed in Germany offered recommendations to facilitate the integration and engagement of parents of Syrian refugees. These included offering language courses for parents at school and training on how they can support their children. Some of the teachers argued their schools did not offer many opportunities for parents, particularly in secondary education, even among Germans. Parents were invited to school more often in primary education, and only some schools have a parent council. Many teachers in Germany believed more parent integration and engagement was necessary, and some even requested more parent integration in the classroom. One of the teachers interviewed was also working on establishing peer-to-peer mentoring for both children and parents.

CHAPTER FOUR: DROPOUT CHILDREN IN LEBANON: CAUSES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

This Chapter presents the main findings on the factors influencing the decision of Syrian refugee students to drop out of school, their current post-drop out activities, and their future prospects in Lebanon. The interviews with Syrian refugee dropouts in Lebanon were conducted in three of the largest areas to host refugees. A combination of urban and rural areas was selected, namely Beirut, Bekaa, and Akkar. In each area, interviews were conducted with 2-4 Syrian refugee youth as well as their parents. In total, interviews with nine young Syrian refugees were carried out. Their ages ranged from 12-18, and the number of years out of school ranged from 1-3 years. Most of those interviewed came from lower socioeconomic conditions and lived in UNHCR camps or makeshift camps constructed themselves. However, some of them also lived in small apartments or spare rooms in residential buildings. Most of the children's parents did not graduate high school with the exception of one family where the mother had a university education.

The findings suggest five main factors influence the decision to drop out. These are losing more than two years of schooling, enrolment difficulties or incorrect grade assignment, low achievement, lack of secure learning environment, and parental influence. Each factor was necessary, but not sufficient, and usually a combination of two or more factors shaped a student's decision to leave school.

CAUSES FOR DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL:

Five main factors shaped the decision of Syrian students to drop out of school in Lebanon. These were derived from interviews with Syrian refugee youths who enrolled then dropped out of school and with their parents. In most cases, a combination of two or more of the five factors would impact the decision to drop out. These reasons can be grouped as follows:

1. Enrolment Difficulties or Incorrect Grade Assignment

Results reveal that students who faced enrolment difficulties or were assigned grades higher or lower than their academic level were more likely to drop out of school. Three of the dropouts identified enrolment difficulties or incorrect grade assignment as the primary factor contributing to their decision to drop out of school. In terms of enrolment difficulties, one dropout who last attended grade 11 in Syria claimed he was unable to register in grade 12, as he could not meet the official examinations requirement, authenticated certificates by the Ministry of Education in Syria, as stipulated by MEHE. Instead, he decided to pursue vocational education, which in Lebanon does not prevent one from pursuing a university education. Cases of incorrect grade assignments were most common among the interviewed dropouts. Two of the dropouts

interviewed were assigned to grades higher than their academic level, when registering in Lebanese formal schools.

In Lebanon, there was no standardised placement test to determine appropriate grade, so each school assigned students based on its own criteria. There were two stages at which a refugee student could be incorrectly placed. First, when enrolling in non-formal education, and second, when transferring to formal education. For example, one dropout noted the last grade he attended in Syria was grade 5, when he was 10 years old. He missed two years of schooling in Syria due to the war, and when he arrived to Lebanon, he was enrolled in a non-formal school and assigned to grade 3 at age 12. The next year, the non-formal school transferred him to formal education, which assigned him to grade 5 at age 13. Another dropout claimed he was placed in grade 8 at a formal school, although the grade he last attended at non-formal school was grade 6. These dropouts stated the placement in a grade where they did not belong in terms of academic level or age contributed to their decision to leave school.

2. Losing More than Two Years of Schooling

The findings indicate children who lose two or more years of schooling were more likely to dropout. In some cases, missing school was due to the war in Syria. In other cases, it was due to moving around in Lebanon before finding a stable location. Losing more than two years of schooling was likely to cause learning difficulties. All of the dropouts who lost more than two years of schooling claimed they faced learning difficulties and felt that they couldn't keep up with the class. Moreover, losing more than two years of schooling was also likely to cause re-enrolment difficulties. The dropouts who missed several years of schooling claimed they did not feel comfortable re-enrolling in classes where the average age group is younger.

3. Difficulties in coping with the Learning

With the exception of three cases, all interviewed dropouts experienced difficulties catching up with what they were expected to learn and hence contributed to the failure of their exams. In most cases, inappropriate grade placement combined with losing more than two years of schooling contributed to the learning difficulties. These dropouts claimed they were in need of accelerated programmes to be able to catch up with their peers. Moreover, they experienced significant difficulties in learning enough English/French required to pass. Language was deemed a significant barrier to learning and passing the exams. All of the dropouts interviewed with learning difficulties identified the language barrier as a primary challenge, and claimed they were in need of more language support programmes. Moreover, several of the interviewed dropouts also complained they were unable to cope with the Lebanese curricula, particularly those who started in non-formal education before transferring to formal education. The interviews with the

parents of dropouts revealed that with the exception of two cases, parents were less likely to encourage their children to pursue their education, if they were facing learning difficulties. This lack of encouragement, coupled with their academic struggles and lack of supplemental support programmes, was highly likely to contribute to the decision to drop out of school. However, the two exceptional cases revealed that students who faced learning difficulties but received encouragement from their parents to pursue their education were likely to enrol in non-formal or vocational education instead.

4. Lack of Secure Learning Environment

The findings indicate the lack of a safe and secure environment was likely to contribute to the decision to drop out of school. In most cases, when security was the issue, the decision to leave school was often the parent's decision. Interviews with the parents of dropouts revealed that parents whose children faced risks of harassment or assault in or on their way to school were more likely to ask them to leave school, particularly among girls. A further interview with a principal of a non-formal school revealed that incidents of parents deciding to drop their children out of school was common among parents of teenage girls. Parents were also likely to drop their boys out of school in the event they frequently fought at school or were bullied.

5. Parental Influence

With the exception of three cases, all of the dropouts left school as a result of their parent's request. Half of the parents interviewed stated that the absence of a secure learning environment was one of the factors that motivated their decision to drop their children out of school, while all stated financial constraints as the primary factor motivating this decision. For example, one parent complained that she had to send her children to school carrying their school supplies in a plastic bag. Another parent claimed that her son often got bullied at school because they couldn't afford new school clothes for him. In addition to not being able to pay for the expenses that came along with going to school, the parents also cited the need for financial contributions of their children. For example, one of the dropouts claimed his decision to leave school was influenced by his father's need for help in his job following an injury. In another case, a parent claimed that she would not have requested her daughter to leave school and take care of the house, if she didn't need to work all day.

Moreover, many of the parents appeared to have misconceptions towards formal education. For example, one of the parents stated that she and many other Syrian parents thought that afternoon shifts did not offer certificates. In addition, according to the interview conducted with a principal in a non-formal school, many Syrian parents thought formal education costs money.

This led many parents, especially those who were in Lebanon prior to the war in Syria and who were used to enrolling their children in the morning shift, to miss enrolling their children at school when MEHE introduced the second shift to Syrian children.

The findings also reveal children were heavily influenced by their parents' attitudes towards education. Parents who were apathetic about their children's education were more likely to influence their decision to leave school and pursue more important priorities, such as work. Six of the nine parents did not prioritise education for their children. However, in half of these cases, the children did not want to leave school, but justified the decision based on their parent's reasoning. In two cases, however, the decision to leave school was made not by the parents, but the children, mainly due to inaccurate grade placement and learning difficulties. Despite their parent's encouragement of them to re-enrol, these students refused to do so. Nevertheless, given that their parents had a positive attitude towards education, these dropouts continued to value education and have pursued non-formal or vocational education.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES POST DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL:

The findings reveal a significant difference in the types of activities dropouts engaged in based on their gender. Nearly all of the male Syrian refugee dropouts work. Their occupations included semi-skilled labour, such as working as mechanics or butchers, or non-skilled labour, such as delivery boys or vegetable stand attendants. Those who worked with their parents were more likely to work in heavy-labour jobs, such as the case of one 12-year-old boy who helped his father in construction work. The interview with his parents revealed that they did not perceive of this kind of work as inappropriate. On the contrary, the father claimed that in order for his children to claim any rights, they must contribute financially to the household. Those who did not work did not cite participating in many activities beyond watching television or playing with their friends in their local neighbourhood. Those who live close to a non-formal school also claimed they participated in school-organised activities, such as plays, albeit infrequently. The female dropouts, on the other hand, did not work and participated in very few activities beyond helping out around the house, which usually involved making several trips to bring in water, or taking care of younger siblings, whether or not the mothers work.

FUTURE PROSPECTS:

Around half of the dropouts interviewed regretted the decision to leave school. In cases where the children did not face much learning difficulties and did not decide to leave school independently, the dropouts claimed they would go right back to school, if their parents allowed. On the other hand, in cases where children left school due to inaccurate grade placement, the dropouts admitted that they would go back to school provided they were offered accelerated

programmes that would allow them to catch up with their peers. In addition, children who faced learning difficulties were either likely to pursue their education by other means (vocational, non-formal, language) in cases where their parents valued education, or pursue work in cases where their parents did not value education. Furthermore, the findings from the interviews revealed Syrian refugee youth who dropped out of school in Lebanon have three possible prospects for the future:

1. Non-formal education

Three of the dropouts interviewed decided to pursue non-formal education, since it was less demanding than formal education, and does not present the same learning difficulties as formal education. According to them, non-formal education allowed students to learn at their own pace in a less structured environment and permitted them to pursue other interests, such as work alongside education. However, these students were at a structural disadvantage since until now non-formal education programmes did not provide any certification or opportunity to pursue university education. However, these dropouts particularly focused on learning English in order to compensate for their lack of formal education. These students continued to see learning English as an advantage beyond its instrumental use in formal education.

2. Vocational education

Two of the interviewed dropouts decided to pursue vocational education. One of them was graduating this year, and planned to pursue a university education. An advantage of vocational education in Lebanon was that it did not prevent its graduates from pursuing a university degree.

3. Semi-skilled or non-skilled work

As mentioned above, all of the male Syrian dropouts worked. Above all, work seemed to be the priority for most male Syrian refugee adolescents. Given that skilled labour was much more competitive in Lebanon than semi or non-skilled labour, many Syrians opted to pursue a job rather than an education, since they perceived it as a more achievable goal.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION: FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON

The findings indicate future prospects for Syrian refugee youth in Lebanon is dependent on the extent to which policies towards Syrian refugees are geared towards long-term and sustainable solutions. The regional practice of excluding refugee populations from the labour force, or marginalising them into specific sectors, largely influences their perceptions of their future prospects. Evidently, this pushed many refugees to seek better opportunities in Europe. Evidence also suggests education is often considered secondary, when means of securing livelihood are scarce. Syrian refugees are more concerned with securing their livelihoods in Lebanon, which often reflects negatively on their children's likelihood to pursue their education. Moreover, Syrian refugee children are in need of intensive support in order to confront the language barrier, which is their primary challenge when it comes to academic progress. In addition, teachers can benefit from social work training in order to deal with possible social challenges that Syrian refugee students might face, as well as facilitate their integration with other students.

The study also reveals students who felt more integrated were much more likely to progress academically and remain in school. Since many Syrian refugee students lack the support of their parents to pursue their education, more teachers need to be trained to encourage Syrian students to learn and provide them with incentives to stay in school. Furthermore, special attention must be paid to students who have lost more than one year of schooling. These students are often in need of accelerated programmes to catch up, yet are usually placed in schools in Lebanon without any previous or additional support. Grade placement is particularly important, since many students struggle in school due to weak foundations. Additionally, options

to pursue vocational training, as well as resources, such as books to facilitate studying for students who wish to pursue the exams independently are needed.

The above findings highlight a major issue in the education response to refugee instruction. Education is often seen by donors and some governments and policy makers as a classroom, a teacher, and textbooks. However, education involves much broader than merely becoming literate. Education is most importantly about feeling integrated, respected, and be able to foresee a better future. When these are available, then the school will become the instrument that makes this dream of a better future realisable. On the other hand, when future prospects are bleak, the environment is hostile, the respect is missing, and most important, the willingness to acquaint refugee to a new environment does not exist, all the efforts of providing schooling become redundant. Parents of refugee children need to feel welcomed, respected, and understood by the school as well as the teachers. Children need a curriculum that enables, rather than renders them as failures and incapable of learning and producing. A rigid educational policy that favours a curriculum and adherence to textbooks instead of the individual student development hardly prepares children to pursue a more hopeful future. More flexible arrangements are needed from policy makers and more genuine care, even acknowledgement from the host community and teachers is needed. These are the most viable ways to respond to children's needs. Otherwise, marginalised children will remain on the socioeconomic periphery where other groups might provide a more responsive environment. Yet research into the risks of Syrian refugee dropouts and the potential to come under the sway of extremism requires anthropological and more in-depth empirical research that is difficult to be carried out in a one-month period or a one-hour interview.

Yet we can unequivocally assert such concerns would likely be marginalised and perhaps mitigated by providing dropout children with education that protects them and provides them with a set of skills that can prepare them for the job market and a fulfilling life. Such interventions would also need to address parents' insecurities and concerns so that the latter become a push factor into school rather than a pull factor to withdraw. Moreover, creating learning paths that suit the aspirations and abilities of these children will lead to higher enrolment and retention rates in schools.

To conclude, education for refugees in Lebanon still operates under the rubric of emergency, despite the fact that the war entered its 6th year. Even if a political solution was reached and the war concludes tomorrow, it would take a long time before these children return. Therefore, a shift in the approach is urgently needed. Education should be offered as a path with the support needed to impart the intellectual and social skills essential to enabling a better quality of life, rather than to merely keep children out of the street. As the case of Germany demonstrates, the support prior to integration into formal schools is absolutely essential, yet at the same time

refugee education requires ongoing support, as many German teachers noted. The learning experiences of these children within mainstream schools is yet to be investigated.

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