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Refugees, Identity, and the Fight for Education: A Study of the Cultural and Political Context of Education Policy for Syrian Refugees in Neighboring Host Countries

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Refugees, Identity, and the Fight for Education:

***A Study of the Cultural and Political Context of
Education Policy for Syrian Refugees in
Neighboring Host Countries***

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Abstract

The Syrian Refugee Crisis has significantly impacted Syria's surrounding countries, in particular Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, who have welcomed the largest number of Syrian refugees. International organizations have recognized the importance in providing education opportunities for the millions of refugees who have left Syria. Each host country has enacted its own education policy to accommodate for the refugees, but a significant number of refugee children remain out of school. This paper argues that it is possible to make improvements to the education policies, and that these policies have been affected by the historical, cultural, and political contexts in the host countries. By analyzing the cultural context behind these policies, international organizations and NGOs will be able to enact more effective education initiatives.

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Introduction to Refugee Education Policy

The Syrian Civil War has caused refugee crises in countries across the world, but few countries have been affected by the situation as much as Syria's neighbors. Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan have taken in the highest number of refugees; it is estimated that there are at least 3.7 million refugees in Turkey, 950,000 in Lebanon, and 670,000 in Jordan,¹ constituting significant portions of the countries' populations, and compounding the already strained economic and political situations in the countries. With the help of aid provided by foreign governments and international organizations, these three countries have worked to provide humanitarian assistance to the tide of refugees crossing their borders. One of the most important components of humanitarian assistance is education. Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan have all implemented new education initiatives in order to adapt to the high volume of Syrian refugees entering their countries. Education is important not only to teach literacy and career skills, but to provide a safe space for children to learn to cope with the physical and emotional trauma they have lived through. As of August 2019, over 800,000 Syrian children were out of school in refugee host countries.² If the shortage in education continues, the likelihood of violent extremism increases, and the ability of Syria to recover after the war will be in serious jeopardy. For these reasons, the education initiatives in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey are incredibly important.

Many scholars and human rights workers have studied the education policies in these three countries in order to make suggestions for improvement, suggestions which are slow to be implemented. Although there are many perspectives out there, few have examined the education policies in Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan through an international relations'

¹ Staff, World Vision, 2019

² "Syria Crisis Fast Facts." UNICEF 2019

perspective, examining the cultural ties, historical background, and identities that could influence these countries' refugee policies, and more specifically, their education initiatives. Historical and cultural narratives have a significant impact on a country's policies, and the effectiveness of the policies. Culture and identity go hand in hand with a country's education curriculum; education shapes a person's national identity, and can affect the way a population views and receives refugees. This paper argues that in order to gain a more complete understanding of the education policies' effectiveness, the policies must be examined in a wider cultural and political context. Education is an extremely important issue, and in order to affect change, these initiatives need to be examined from every angle. Studying the cultural history of the countries, along with the countries' political and national identities, will aid in a more complete comprehension of the new education initiatives, and enable international organizations to work more closely with the countries' governments and enact significant improvements in education policy.

Methodology

This paper will examine the education initiatives of Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan along with the countries' cultural and political history in order to gain a deeper understanding of the refugee crisis in the Middle East. It will start with a general overview of common stereotypes surrounding refugee situations and discuss the relationship between national identity and education. Next the paper will compare the three countries' policies, histories, and cultures in order to identify points of commonality and contrast between the countries, and target methods and suggestions for improvement. In doing so, this paper utilizes reports from the United Nations, Human Rights Watch, and other international organizations to analyze current data on education policies. These reports are thorough, up-to-date, and use statistics from a wide sampling of data from surveys and personal interviews. It is necessary to use the most current reports while the numbers are in constant fluctuation, as some refugees return home and others

enter the country. Furthermore, the governments and international aid organizations have continued to change and update their policies to adapt to the large number of refugees and in an effort to enroll more children in schools. This paper also examines scholarly articles on refugee policy—both current policy and past policy—to grasp the historical perspectives leading to the current policies. Thirdly, this paper uses historical books and academic journals in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the cultures and the history of refugees in the three countries.

Harmful Stereotypes

The media's portrayal of refugees is not always accurate. News channels and even aid organizations often show photos of skinny children standing in front of tattered tents in refugee camps, in order to evoke sympathy and get donations for food and medicine. As effective as this portrayal may be in soliciting donations, it is not an accurate representation of the modern refugee situation. In fact, the majority of refugees are not in refugee camps, contrary to popular belief. Over 80% of refugees in Jordan and 90% in Turkey live outside camps, and Lebanon has no formal refugee camps at all.³ Despite this fact, most people still picture long lines of dusty tents when they think of refugees. This idea can be detrimental to the education initiative, because, despite the fact that most refugees live outside camps, a large part of international education initiatives adopt a "camp-centric approach".⁴ They base their initiatives off of the refugee camps, in order to try and organize the chaos within the camp. This is effective and easier for the people living within the camp, but leaves the majority of refugees outside the camps without an effective education program. Part of the problem is transportation; within a camp, the refugees are contained and a school programs specifically designed for them would be easier to implement. Outside of the camps, the refugees are more spread out; in fact, the

³ Baeyer, 2017, 444

⁴ Baeyer, 2017, 445

vast majority of refugees live in low-income neighborhoods.⁵ This makes it more difficult to implement education initiatives because the aid organizations have to consider transportation and other costs that wouldn't occur inside a camp.

In order to address the education crisis in a significant matter, the traditional aid methods need to be reevaluated. Current representations portray refugees in poor, backwards living conditions with no access to modern appliances or technologies, in desperate need of food or medical care, with no agency of their own. In fact, Baeyer's report found that nearly all out-of-camp Syrian households had at least one smartphone in their possession, and many owned laptops or tablets as well.⁶ In the camps, cell phones are viewed as highly valuable, "a crucial resource akin to food",⁷ and vital for information. Baeyer suggests utilizing the technology that's readily available to the refugees to improve on current education initiatives and reach a larger number of people. Waters and Leblanc write, "in the international system of refugee relief, refugees are perceived as primarily being acute victims who have been denied access to physiological needs such as food, medical care, and potable water."⁸ They argue that due to this perceived victimization, planning is often done *for* refugees by external actors instead of *with* refugees, and suggest that giving refugees agency of their own would improve education systems. The international perspective on the refugee crisis needs to change in order to better address the problems, and the education crisis needs to be understood in the long term perspective instead of being treated as a short term problem. Refugees are more than hapless victims and have agency of their own, and if the stigma associated with the modern refugee crisis is broken, more effective solutions to the education dilemma can be found.

⁵ Baeyer, 2017, 444

⁶ Baeyer, 2017, 444

⁷ Baeyer, quoting Wall, 2015

⁸ Waters and LeBlanc, 2005, 130

Education: Why it's Important

Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey have the highest numbers of refugees from Syria. Since the start of the conflict in Syria in 2011, thousands of refugees have been pouring into these three countries at alarming rates, overwhelming the governments of the countries as they struggle to find space for the newcomers. Syrian refugees have increased the population by 10% in Jordan, 10-20% in Turkey's border areas, and 25% in Lebanon.⁹ The governments of these three countries, along with international aid organizations, are struggling to accommodate the refugees. The main priority for many of these organizations is providing food, shelter, and healthcare to the refugees, but sometimes the importance of education gets forgotten in the mix.

The first goal of international aid is to provide for "immediate and important basic needs"¹⁰ in countries of first asylum. This means that long-term needs, like education, are often overlooked in favor of short-term goals. However, this is detrimental to the refugee children. Education is not only needed to teach basic literacy skills, but it can also be used to create a stable environment for children coming from situations of conflict and displacement; it is essential to meeting children's needs and promoting social and economic development.¹¹ Refugee children who have lived through conflict are living in various states of trauma and PTSD, and many of them have moved multiple times, lost family members, or are currently still not living in a safe and stable environment. Children in these situations are more likely to turn to violence and other dangerous means as a way of dealing with their trauma. Education can prevent this, as schools create safe spaces for children and provide stable and caring adults in the children's lives; school is the first place they can start to regain normalcy, and find safety, friends, and order.¹² International organizations and governments tend to treat refugee situations as short-term problems, but, historically, refugee situations are not resolved quickly; in

⁹ Culbertson, 2015, ix

¹⁰ Qumri, 2012, 195

¹¹ Qumri, 2012, 196

¹² Turn the Tide, UNHCR, 2018, 7

fact, on average they now last close to 20 years before the refugees can return home or a permanent solution is found.¹³ For these reasons, education, often viewed as a long-term problem, should be an immediate, top priority for both governments and international organizations working with refugee situations.

The lack of education opportunities is detrimental not only to individual Syrian children, but to the future of both the host-countries and Syria. “The stability and prosperity of the region will depend on ensuring that school-age children receive the education they need to be resilient to the circumstances they face and have the capacity to provide for themselves and their families.”¹⁴ Over 4 million Syrian refugees have left the country,¹⁵ and the majority of those refugees are now living in Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan. The high number of refugees out of the country threatens to create a “Lost Generation”: as more Syrian children are born or grow up outside Syria, Syria is left with a much smaller younger generation. If these children are not educated, Syria will suffer from an uneducated generation and struggle to recover from the war. “Allowed to learn, grow, and flourish, children will grow up to contribute both to the societies that host them and to their homelands when peace allows them to return”.¹⁶ As the conflict in Syria draws to a close, thousands of Syrians will be returning home— it is important that they are given an education so that they will have the opportunity to contribute to the rebuilding of their nation. Although all three host countries have implemented policies to adjust for the high volume of refugees, more needs to be done to ensure all children receive an education.

Education and National Identity

In order to understand the importance of studying the cultural history and identity of these three countries, it is necessary to understand the link between education and cultural, or national, identity. In their article, *Refugees and Education: Mass Public Schooling without a*

¹³ Culbertson, 2015, x

¹⁴ Culbertson, 2015, x

¹⁵ Culbertson, 2015, ix

¹⁶ Turn the Tide, UNHCR, 2018, 8

Nation-State (2005), Waters and LeBlanc argue that public schooling is a means for governments to teach the ideologies of their nations. Each nation-state strives to establish, as Benedict Anderson wrote, an “imagined community”, and they do this through educating the public on the nation’s identity through language and history, which creates a sense of belonging in the nation. This causes a problem in creating an education system for refugees, because they are not included in the imagined future of the nation. “The problem of refugees itself is rooted in the connection between nationalism and the state. Thus, answers to the questions of how and why schools should develop in refugee camps will always be imperfect.”¹⁷ Refugees may not use the same language or learn the same history, and this leaves them as outsiders in a government’s education system. For this reason, education for refugees usually falls into the hands of humanitarian aid organizations, which usually focus on solutions for short-term, not long-term, relief, and make consistency impossible. Waters and LeBlanc write:

“By engaging in planning for an educational system on behalf of refugees that is based on “lessons learned” in earlier relief efforts and not on the legitimated myths of a nation-state, the inherent connection between mass public schooling and national identity is ignored. As a result, refugees themselves are not typically engaged in overall planning, even though there may be a number of original and creative initiatives.”¹⁸

For these reasons, it is important to take cultural and national identity into account when examining the host countries’ education policies for refugees.

Lebanon

Lebanon and its current government is a product of colonialism and a long history of sectarianism. Originally two regions, Mount Lebanon (inhabited by mostly Maronite Christians

¹⁷ Waters and LeBlanc, 2005, 144

¹⁸ *ibid.* 145

and Druze) and the Bekaa Valley (mostly inhabited by Sunni and Shi'a Muslims), these regions were combined into one state, the Greater Lebanon, during French rule in 1920.¹⁹ Lebanon is a "collection of heterogeneous religious communities",²⁰ a country with many minority groups all living in a delicate balance. The French mandate produced a parliamentary system and a constitution which gave proportional representation to each minority group.²¹ Although this was an effective way to grant a voice to every group, this also entrenched the Lebanese government in a parliamentary system based off of communal and religious identities instead of a united Lebanese identity. This sectarian system makes it difficult for the Lebanese government to centralize and put forth strong policies, and instead relies on compromises and efforts to retain the delicate balance. At times the different sects are able to unite, especially when it is against a common enemy; the desire for independence from France, for example, united the Lebanese and encouraged the different groups to compromise in order to create the Republic of Lebanon in 1943.²² In recent times as well, many of the sects have come together to protest corruption and inefficiencies in their government. However, this sectarianism, when unbalanced, can quickly turn violent, as it did during the fifteen-year Lebanese Civil War between 1975 and 1990.

The division and balance of minority groups has a major effect on Lebanon's response to and policies regarding Syrian refugees. Lebanon's government is the opposite of most Middle Eastern governments, which tend to be autocratic and heavily centralized. Instead, in Lebanon, the society is stronger and more durable than the state.²³ Local governments and religious-affiliated organizations, like Hezbollah, often play a larger and more decisive role in governing than the state government. Lebanon relies on a careful balance between Christians, Sunnis, Shi'a, and other groups; the Syrian refugees, a majority of which are Sunni Muslims, now make

¹⁹ Malik, 1997, 4

²⁰ Malik, 1997, 2

²¹ Malik, 1997, 5

²² Malik, 1997, 5

²³ Malik, 1997, 22

up roughly 25% of Lebanon's population, and threaten to upset this delicate balance in Lebanon. This is cause for concern for many Lebanese and affects their stance on refugee policy. This sectarianism affects education policy in particular, because public education is neglected in favor of a private, sectarian school system run by local organizations. Refugees, most of whom cannot afford a private education, are sent to public schools, most of which were already straining under a limited budget and a weak government.

Lebanon's Education Policy: A Brief Background

Lebanese education policy is largely a result of French colonial rule, and is based off of the French system. The Ministry of Education requires all children ages 6-14 to attend school. In primary school, the primary language is Arabic, and English or French is introduced to prepare children for secondary school. Lebanese law requires that math and science in secondary school be taught in French or English. In secondary school, after students pass the Brevet exam, students must choose between three tracks: literary, scientific, or vocational. In their final year, students take the Baccalauréat Libanais (Lebanese Baccalaureate), which determines if they can go to college.²⁴ Before Lebanon's fifteen year civil war (1975-1990), Lebanon's education system was admired for its high enrollment rates and above average quality compared to the rest of the region; however, the civil war undid many of these achievements.²⁵

Currently, there are many problems with the public school education policy outside of the refugee situation. Public schools face a shortage of qualified English and French speakers who can teach math and science, and a large number of schools have infrastructure problems as well.²⁶ In fact, about seventy percent of Lebanese children attend private schools, which are typically affiliated with one sect or religion; the lack of investment in public education reinforces sectarian divisions by encouraging private education.²⁷ Although the country rates high in the

²⁴ Lebanon: an Educational System Overview, SpanTran, 2015

²⁵ Visconti and Gal, 2018, 112

²⁶ "Education: Lebanon", USAID 2015

²⁷ Buckner, 2017, 448

quality of its education system, efficiency rates were low even before the Syrian crisis.²⁸ This has in turn increased the gap between economically advantaged youth, who can afford to attend higher quality private schools, and their poorer peers who can afford only public school.

Reaching All Children with Education Policy

Over 25% of Lebanon's population currently consists of refugees. According to Human Rights Watch, there are 1.1 million registered refugees in Lebanon, with another estimated 400,000 unregistered.²⁹ Lebanon has not opened formal camps for Syrians, so the refugees must find shelter either in apartments or in one of the 1,900 informal settlements across Lebanon.³⁰ Originally, Lebanon was for the most part open to the refugees, but the Ministry of Education was uninvolved and allowed NGOs to take the lead in providing educational services to refugees.³¹ In 2014, the number of refugees in the country surpassed one million, which made the Lebanese and political officials uneasy and forced them to take the lead in policy decisions.³²

Lebanon, deciding to lead the educational response in an abrupt policy shift, adopted the Reaching All Children with Education (RACE) policy to adjust for the high volume of refugees.³³ RACE targeted 400,000 out-of-school Syrian refugee children with formal education, foreign-language education, Basic Literacy and Numeracy, or Accelerated Learning Programs.³⁴ The policy had three parts: school rehabilitation and enrollment support, improving the quality of teaching and learning, and strengthening national education systems.³⁵ This policy implemented a second-shift system in many public schools. These schools open twice: once in the morning for Lebanese students and again in the late afternoon/early evening for refugees. The policy

²⁸ Visconti and Gal, 2018, 112

²⁹ Khawaja, 2016, 9

³⁰ Khawaja, 2016

³¹ Buckner et al, 2017, 452

³² Buckner et al, 2017, 453

³³ Khawaja, 2016

³⁴ Buckner et al, 2017, 452

³⁵ Khawaja, 2016

also makes public school free for everyone, including refugees, and allows refugee students who do not have legal residency papers to attend as well. This has significantly increased the number of refugees able to enroll in schools and helped the school system handle the overload of students. In the 2013-2014 school year, the program had been implemented in eighty-eight public schools, and by the end of the 2015-2016 school year enrolled 158,321 Syrian children in public schools.³⁶ By 2017, the program was in more than three hundred schools, and Lebanon had begun the second phase of the program, RACE II. This policy has been instrumental in allowing more refugee children to enroll in public school.

In 2012, the Education Ministry waived enrollment fees for refugees and dropped requirements for Syrians to provide legal residency documents. Many Syrians do not register with UNHCR when they come in, and are not legal residents in Lebanon. Dropping the legal residency requirement made it much easier for refugees to enroll in public schools in Lebanon. Unfortunately, other papers are often required instead, which can still make it difficult for refugees to register. Although all schools have been directed to allow refugees without paperwork, some schools still ask parents for it, which prevents the children from registering;³⁷ this is a result of a weak central government which allows local actors to take a more central role. They also may ask for paperwork about the children's level of completion in Syrian schools, health documents, or identification documents. Many families left Syria in desperate situations, and no longer have the paperwork needed for registration.

Education Policy at the Local Level

Lebanon's national government is weakened by sectarian divides and charges of corruption. Periodic conflict and political instability have made for uneven education reform, and Lebanon's government ranks low in efficiency on a global scale.³⁸ As a consequence,

³⁶ Visconti and Gal, 2018, 109

³⁷ Khawaja, 2016

³⁸ Visconti and Gal, 2018, 112

communities often rely on local governments representing their minority instead of the national government, and local governments have much more power to enact policy decisions. Schools run by these local governments do not always comply with the Ministry of Education's directives, which can cause problems in implementing a successful policy. *Between Policy and Practice: The Education of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*³⁹ discusses the gap between the government's policy and its implementation in Lebanon. The gap is common, Buckner argues, in education because education policies often have bureaucratic and political challenges when transitioning from the national to the local level.⁴⁰ This gap is worse, however, in Lebanon and other states that are weak and do not hold a lot of central power. Lebanon, a country consisting of numerous minorities and sects, has a lot of local actors with their own authority based on the religion or culture of the area, which may compete with national authority.⁴¹ Local or municipal government officials sometimes disregard the Ministry of Education's policies based on their own political or religious affiliations and their relationships with the regional government.⁴² This means that RACE and other Ministry of Education policies are not evenly implemented across the country. Local authorities, and even school principals, can choose when and when not to listen to directives, leading to diverging policies and general confusion over policy implementation.

There are also non-formal education options for Syrian students, ranging from unstructured, makeshift classrooms to full-time, non-formal schools run by Lebanese and international NGOs.⁴³ Many of the local communities also run schools and non-formal education services of their own. The government often has a better relationship with these local communities than they do with NGOs and international services.⁴⁴ The community-based organizations (CBOs), in contrast, operate under the government's radar, and sometimes are

³⁹ Buckner et., 2017

⁴⁰ Buckner et al., 2017, 449

⁴¹ *ibid.* 449

⁴² *ibid.* 455

⁴³ Khawaja, 2016

⁴⁴ Buckner et al, 2017, 457

even operating full-fledged schools. These schools are often used to help children who are unable to enroll in formal education due to various reasons, such as overcrowded schools, language barriers, or age limits preventing enrollment. However, these schools are unregulated by the Ministry of Education and do not offer recognized diplomas. They are backed by a number of different parties, including the Syrian diaspora, international donors, Lebanese grassroots organizations and faith-based charities, and may enroll up to 100,000 Syrian students.⁴⁵ Although these schools are unofficial and do not offer a legitimate diploma, they can supplement the Lebanese curriculum with a Syrian curriculum and make an easier adjustment for Syrian refugees. The schools often teach in Arabic and help the students catch up in English or French in order for them to enroll in public schools.⁴⁶ They can also provide psycho-social support to refugee children, or provide specific vocational or language trainings.⁴⁷ CBOs provide a good alternative to formal education, and can help meet refugee needs which are unmet in the public sector.

Policy Flaws

Although the non-formal education options can be beneficial, there are also a lot of problems with implementation between national and local levels. Some schools require legal residency paperwork or require refugees to be registered with the UNHCR. These are requirements that the Ministry of Education waived, but which some schools still ask for. Some schools also require enrollment fees that should not exist; these fees are difficult for the families to pay and make it harder for families to register. The lack of oversight and standardization by the Ministry of Education has placed many families in difficult situations.⁴⁸ National-level policy is often broad, and has provided little beyond a framework for policy implementation. This framework has to be followed up with operating procedures and more detailed instructions, but

⁴⁵ *ibid.* 458

⁴⁶ *ibid.* 458

⁴⁷ *ibid.* 458

⁴⁸ Khawaja, 2016

these specifics change from year to year and are often circulated at the last minute, making it difficult to implement.⁴⁹ The unofficial education space is also unregulated, and therefore varies. In Northern Lebanon there are some ideological schools operating that recruit children to return to Syria and fight.⁵⁰ The lack of governmental oversight contributes to significant divergence in policies and is harmful for refugee education.

Although RACE has been successful in creating access to education for a greater number of children, it hasn't reached the goals the Ministry of Education promised at the start of the program. An estimated 180,419 Syrian refugees are still out of school, and even when students do enroll, they do not always remain in school—about 7,000 Syrians dropped out of school in 2015-2016.⁵¹ This is due to various issues; some families report harassment and bullying, inability to afford transportation or supplies, or failure to pass the grade level.⁵² Additionally, some students drop out to help their families earn an income. In order to increase the number of Syrian refugees receiving education, Lebanon needs to improve retention rates while continuing to enroll new students.

One of the other reasons RACE hasn't successfully enrolled as many students is the government's restrictions on Syrian refugees in other public sectors. Although Lebanon relaxed their requirements for school enrollment, their requirements for legal residency and work authorization outside of school enrollment remain tight. Lebanon's restrictions on legal status, raids of ITS and arrests of Syrians at checkpoints undermine the Ministry of Education's efforts to improve enrollment rates.⁵³ There can sometimes be checkpoints between camps and schools, preventing children from legally getting to school; it's an odd contradiction, because they are allowed to get into school without papers, but they cannot get past the checkpoint

⁴⁹ Buckner et al., 2017, 454

⁵⁰ Buckner et al., 2017, 459

⁵¹ Buckner et al., 2017, 454

⁵² Khawaja, 2016

⁵³ Buckner et al., 2017, 454

without them.⁵⁴ Furthermore, refugees are not allowed to work without legal residency papers, which makes it extremely difficult for unregistered refugees to find legal jobs and earn a steady income. The difficulties many families face in obtaining legal residency and finding jobs negatively affects school enrollment. Parents are unable to find legal jobs in Lebanon, and therefore struggle to earn a living. As a result, they are often unable to afford even the lowered school fees, supplies, or transportation. Their children, especially older children, also may be forced to drop out of school to help earn money for the family. Although Lebanon's policy on education for Syrian refugees is progressive, its restrictions on refugees in other spheres make it difficult for Syrians to enroll in education.

Another problem that affects dropout rates is the language barrier. Although both Lebanese and Syrian students speak similar forms of Arabic, most Lebanese secondary schools instruct in French or English. This makes it difficult for Syrian students to adjust when they are coming into secondary school without any background in French or English, and causes many to drop out. These are some of the most prominent issues affecting refugee education in Lebanon. Additionally, many students drop out or are unable to register for classes due to an age limit in schools.⁵⁵ Students who have missed multiple years of education due to conflict in Syria or difficulty in Lebanon are therefore still unable to register and receive an education. In 2015, the Ministry of Education introduced an accelerated-learning curriculum for students that had missed up to two years of schooling.⁵⁶ This is a strong start, but it is still a small program and needs to be expanded if it is to be effective in enrolling more refugees in education. Overall, Lebanon's weak national government makes it difficult to enact uniform policy across the nation, causing complications with enrolling refugees in education.

⁵⁴ Buckner et al., 2017, 455

⁵⁵ Khawaja, 2016

⁵⁶ Khawaja, 2016

Jordan

Jordan, like Lebanon, was created based on European colonial interests. Originally called Transjordan and a part of the Greater Syria region, it was divided up after World War I between British and French interests, and eventually, King Abdullah, who had little claim to Transjordan, was placed in charge.⁵⁷ At the time, Jordan was mostly just small villages and divided up by tribes—it had little significance in the eyes of the colonizers. As a result, Jordan did not have the chance to develop a strong national identity—it was ruled by a king who had little connection to the land, and was divided by tribal groups who had no concept of a united Jordanian identity—Jordan, after all, was only created and partitioned out of colonial interests.

In 1947, with the UN partition of Palestine and Israel and the ensuing conflict, Jordan became a haven for Palestinian refugees. George argues in his book, *Jordan: Living in the Crossfire* (2005), that many Palestinians, especially those that came before 1967, integrated into Jordan and became Jordanian, while those that came after 1967 remained separate, living in UNRWA refugee camps and retaining their Palestinian identity in hopes of one day returning to Palestine.⁵⁸ Jordan became a base for the Palestinian Liberation Organization, and by the late 1960s, the PLO had become a “state-within-a-state”, running its own attacks on Israel out of Jordan and disregarding Jordanian policy.⁵⁹ In September 1970, one of the PLO factions hijacked three airplanes, and fighting broke out across the country between the PLO and Jordan’s military. Jordan’s military ultimately prevailed and began brutally expelling the PLO and many Palestinians from the country.⁶⁰ This caused many Jordanians to regard Palestinians more warily, and influenced their perception of refugees. This mixed-origin background makes it

⁵⁷ George, 2005

⁵⁸ *ibid.* 25

⁵⁹ *ibid.* 32

⁶⁰ *ibid.* 33

difficult to pin down Jordan's collective identity,⁶¹ and later affects Jordan's response to Syrian refugees.

Jordan's Education Policy: A Brief Background

Jordan has worked hard to provide education for everyone, and is investing heavily in it; in 2011, for example, Jordan spent 12.2% of its GDP on education, compared to 1.6% in Lebanon and 2.9% in Turkey.⁶² Jordan began an aggressive reform program in 2003 with its implementation of the Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy Program (ErfKE I) from 2003 to 2009 and ErfKE II from 2010 to 2015; ErfKE I's goals focused on expanding access to primary and secondary education, while ErfKE II focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning.⁶³ According to Human Rights Watch's *Barriers to Education*, the Jordanian education system is divided into two years of pre-primary education, ten years of primary education and two years of secondary education. Primary school is free and compulsory, and students who pass a tenth grade exam are eligible for two years of secondary education, which can either be focused on professional training or on university preparation. After completing secondary education, students take a final graduation exam, called the *tawjihi*, and, if they pass, are eligible to go to universities.⁶⁴

Jordan has successfully expanded access to primary education, with 97% of Jordanian children enrolled in schools, although access to education for refugee children remains lower.⁶⁵ However, despite achieving nearly universal access to schooling, the quality of schooling is still low, and students consistently perform low by international standards.⁶⁶ Overcrowding is also a problem: in 2011, before Syrian children arrived in large numbers, 36% of public schools were overcrowded, and now with the arrival of refugees, overcrowding has increased to 47%.⁶⁷ Poor

⁶¹ George, 2005, 26

⁶² Van Esvald, 2016, 14

⁶³ Visconti and Gal, 2018, 112

⁶⁴ Van Esvald, 2016, 14

⁶⁵ "Education" UNICEF Jordan, 2019

⁶⁶ "Education: Jordan," USAID 2019

⁶⁷ Van Esvald, 2016, 15

learning environments, especially for boys, are also undermining education, and teachers have been undervalued, resulting in low teacher quality.⁶⁸ While boys are more likely to drop out of school due to violence, labor, and the low availability of male teachers, girls are more likely to drop out due to concerns about safety and protection and for household chores, or for early marriage.⁶⁹ Furthermore, more than half of the secondary students who took the *tawjihi* exams failed in 2014 and 2015,⁷⁰ evidence that secondary schooling is not completely effective. Although Jordan has greatly improved access to education throughout the country, and significantly decreased the gender gap in education, there are still many challenges to the education system, challenges which have been exacerbated by the recent influx of refugees.

Education Policy for Refugees

Currently, there are over 670,000 registered refugees in Jordan.⁷¹ In 2012, Jordan opened refugee camps for Syrian refugees, and the majority of refugees that first entered Jordan were sent there. In order to get out of camps, the refugees had to have a Jordanian relative account for them, but before 2014, many refugees left camps without a relative and were still eligible to register with UNHCR and receive Ministry of Interior service cards, which allowed them access to government services like education.⁷² Now, Jordan is enforcing the registration process more strictly, and refugees living outside of camps without a Jordanian relative are not allowed to register with UNHCR or obtain service cards—this makes them ineligible for humanitarian assistance or government services.⁷³

In 2013, Jordan's Ministry of Education introduced a double-shift policy into some of its schools. According to Human Rights Watch, Syrians can either attend in the morning or

⁶⁸ "Education: Jordan," USAID 2019

⁶⁹ "Education" UNICEF Jordan, 2019

⁷⁰ Van Esvald, 2016, 15

⁷¹ Staff, World Vision, 2019

⁷² Van Esvald, 2016, 21

⁷³ *ibid.* 21

afternoon classes, while Jordanians can only attend in the morning. Schools in refugee camps divide shift by boys and girls. In 2014, 98 schools in Jordan had implemented the two shift program, and by 2015, 49,064 Syrians were enrolled in second shifts in host communities, while 25,736 were enrolled in refugee camp schools.⁷⁴ These second-shift schools are the main mechanism for providing education to Syrian refugees. However, there are many non-formal education options for Syrian children as well. Similar to Lebanon, there are many community-based and religious-based organizations in Jordanian host communities which offer educational programs. Some of these schools are part-time or extracurricular, while some of these operate as full schools, but most non-formal schools are not accredited with the Ministry of Education and the students who complete the programs are unable to register in formal schools.

Policy Flaws

Jordan's shift in registration requirements is a major setback for enrolling students in the education system. Families that left refugee camps illegally are ineligible for service cards and therefore lack the required documents for registration in schools. Furthermore, in 2015, Jordan introduced a new policy requiring all refugees outside of camps to re-register with the government in order to access government services, a process that is expensive and difficult for refugees, many of who do not have the required identification documents.⁷⁵ This is a major barrier to enrolling children in the school system.

Another barrier is the Ministry of Education regulation, similar to that of Lebanon, that bars children who are more than three years older than the grade level for their age from registering in schools. According to Human Rights' Watch Jordan, up to 77,000 Syrian children were unable to enroll in public school in 2014 for this reason.⁷⁶ Jordan, however, is allowing certain NGOs to run accelerated catch-up programs, but these are usually non-formal education

⁷⁴ Van Esvald, 2016, 17

⁷⁵ *ibid.* 22

⁷⁶ *ibid.* 24

options and do not produce degrees.⁷⁷ Other challenges are common in Lebanon as well, like a decrease in the quality of education in double-shift schools, poor infrastructure, overcrowding, and inadequate training for teachers.

Jordan also has a strict work policy for refugees, which can affect education. Refugees need to apply for permits before working, and their right to work is not guaranteed.⁷⁸ This affects Syrian families, because the adults are not allowed to work or cannot afford work permits, and therefore cannot afford school; it also increases child labor as a means to supplement a family's income, and studies have shown that the rates of child labor among Syrian refugees in Jordan is up to four times higher than in pre-conflict Syria.⁷⁹ Jordan has laws to prevent child labor, yet nearly half of working Syrian children ages 12-17 work 60 hours or more per week, while this is true for only ten percent of working Jordanian children.⁸⁰ Evidently, Jordan enforces its child labor laws more strictly with Jordanian children, and is not offering the same protection to Syrian refugees. Furthermore, refugees who are found working without permits or have overstayed their residency permits are subject to arrest and deportation. Jordanian work policy, a work policy that had originally been open and fairly easy for visitors and migrants,⁸¹ is being enforced more strictly due to the influx of refugees, and as a result, more Syrian children are working and not enrolled in school.

Jordanian Hospitality and its History of Refugees

Jordan, a country with the highest ratio of refugees to indigenous population in any country,⁸² has long been regarded positively on its willingness to accept refugees from other Arab countries, like Palestine, Iraq, and now Syria. Palestine in particular has shaped modern Jordan, which hosts the largest number of Palestinian refugees in the world, and whose

⁷⁷ *ibid.* 25

⁷⁸ Soh et al, 2016, 7

⁷⁹ Van Esveld, 2016, 38

⁸⁰ Van Esveld, 2016, 41

⁸¹ Chatelard, 2010, 5

⁸² Chatelard, 2010, 3

population is roughly sixty to eighty percent Palestinian origin.⁸³ Despite the fact that Jordan has not ratified the standard refugee conventions, it has maintained a generous policy toward refugees, particularly when compared to European countries.

Labelling, and the international and domestic policy that comes with labels, is extremely important when studying refugee policy. To Jordan, the only officially recognized refugees are those of Palestinian origin—the Refugee Convention, which Jordan did not ratify, excludes Palestinian refugees from consideration by the UNHCR and Palestinians are instead aided by a separate organization, the UNRWA.⁸⁴ Jordan, instead of referring to refugees from Iraq, Syria, and other countries as ‘refugees’ or ‘asylum seekers’, prefers to call refugees ‘visitors’, ‘guests’ or ‘Arab brothers’.⁸⁵ Refusing to label refugees excuses Jordan from international and domestic laws protecting them; however, by referring to refugees as ‘guests’ and ‘Arab brothers’, Jordan is tying the refugee situation to the Jordanian cultural tradition of hospitality—a tradition which may commit Jordanians to even stricter codes than the international policies.

Modern Jordanian culture derives from the tribal Bedouin culture, a pre-Islamic culture that existed long before Jordan. In his paper *The New Jordanian Hospitality: House, House, and Guest in the Culture of Public Display*, Shryock explains what Jordanian hospitality means to both Jordanians and foreigners. Jordanians emphasize components of hospitality such as security, protection, and respect.⁸⁶ Arabs have an obligation to receive visitors and treat them well: greet with respect, serve lots of food and tea or coffee, and protect them from harm. Shryock states that “Throughout the Arab world, houses are marked by a strong desire to receive visitors and, at the same time, to safeguard their own interiority”.⁸⁷ Hosts should welcome guests while simultaneously separating guests from their own private lives; guests are

⁸³ George, 2005, 24

⁸⁴ Stevens, 2013, 7

⁸⁵ Van Esveld, 2016, 51

⁸⁶ Shryock, 2004, 36

⁸⁷ *ibid.* 36

not members of the household, but visitors who should be well-treated. This strict code of conduct towards guests originated in private homes, not the public sphere; however, hospitality, or *karam*, is featured proudly by Jordan and many Arab nations as an aspect of traditional culture, and Shryock notes that this culture has permeated the public sphere as well, in restaurants, markets, and government offices.⁸⁸ The culture of hospitality has become a prominent feature of national identity and policy throughout the Middle East; this cultural background must be understood if one is to analyze the policies toward refugees, or ‘guests’, in Jordan.

This strict hospitality code has compelled Jordan to be more open and welcome more refugees through its cultural duty toward guests. Jordan perceives itself, and is internationally perceived, as a country open to Arab nationals; however, Stevens notes that Jordan is open only when Arabs enter to visit, not stay permanently.⁸⁹ Treating refugees as ‘guests’ and fellow ‘Arab brothers’ opens Jordan to its hospitality culture, but this culture works both ways. ‘Guests’ are treated as visitors and offered hospitality, but, Stevens argues, not protection, which is associated with asylum. In return, “the guest is expected to respect the laws of the hosting state, comply with temporary residence obligations, and *leave once these have expired*.”⁹⁰ Most notably, a guest is treated as a temporary resident—they are expected to leave once it is safe to do so, and resettlement in Jordan is not considered a viable option. This cultural background must be taken into account when analyzing Jordanian policy in relation to refugees and also to international organizations and NGOs which work in Jordan to assist refugees. Jordan’s expectation that the refugees will not stay long can lead them to treat the education crisis as a short term problem instead of long-term, which can hurt education initiatives.

⁸⁸ *ibid.* 38

⁸⁹ *ibid.* 14

⁹⁰ Stevens, 2013, 24, *emphasis added*

Despite Jordan's overall welcoming attitude toward refugees, Jordan continues to resist ratifying the 1951 Refugee Convention; Jordan and other Arab countries have resisted ratifying the convention because of its controversial stance on Palestinian refugees. Another reason, however, is Jordan's desire to maintain control over the refugee situation in its country. Although obligated to act by a host of other international laws and conventions that Jordan is signatory to,⁹¹ by refusing to ratify the convention, Jordan holds more sway over international institutions working within the country, and is able to decide when to allow or restrict their actions. Jordan does guarantee rights to refugees in its constitution, and rights to access the courts of law along with Jordanian citizens.⁹² However, Stevens argues that signing the conventional UNHCR documents could be perceived as restricting Jordan's sovereignty and its right to determine entry and exclusion for refugees;⁹³ by refusing to sign on to these agreements, Jordan is retaining its sovereignty and its right to make decisions about refugees on its soil. It also maintains its cultural traditions and continues to refer to refugees as guests. Although Jordan has not signed on to these international conventions, evidently Jordan has been following international norms and even exceeding them, taking in many more refugees than European countries would accept and making an effort to include them in its healthcare and education system.

Public Opinion on Refugees

As in most countries, public opinion of refugees is divided in Jordan. Much of the negative attitude toward refugees stems from Jordan's history, in which refugees are deeply involved. In 1948, with Israel's independence and Transjordan's annexation of the West Bank, thousands of Palestinians fled to, or in the case of the West Bank, became a part of, Transjordan.⁹⁴ Jordan was widely regarded as having the most open policy of any Arab nation

⁹¹ *ibid.* 24

⁹² Soh et al, 2016, 7

⁹³ Stevens, 2013, 10

⁹⁴ Soh et al, 2016, 3

toward the Palestinian refugees;⁹⁵ within a few years, Palestinian refugees were given citizenship, and later, with more conflicts, Palestinian refugees continued to arrive. The immense impact of Palestinian refugees on Jordanian identity, history, and culture has greatly influenced both government policy and public opinion in the current refugee situation.

For many Jordanians, the Syrian situation reminds them of the Palestinian crisis. Although Palestinians were supposed to be temporary residents, and many still live in semi-permanent camps run by the UNWRA, the Palestinian situation does not appear to be close to a solution. Likewise, some Jordanians fear that the Syrians living in Jordan will also become quasi-permanent residents, and become a permanent burden on the Jordanian government.⁹⁶ Carrion argues that the Palestinian and Syrian crises are very different in this way—in the former Palestinian territory, the government is preventing refugees from returning and has transformed the demographics of the country, while in Syria, although the situation may not resolve itself quickly, the government is unlikely to resist the return of refugees.⁹⁷ Despite their differences, some Jordanians have linked the two situations together, and therefore are wary of Syrian refugees and the possibility that they will overstay their welcome. This is evidenced by Jordanian policy as well, which purposefully distinguishes between Palestinian ‘refugees’, who are in Jordan permanently or for an extended period of time, and Syrian ‘guests’, who are expected to leave when the war ends. This negative public opinion can have a significant impact on Jordanian education initiatives; Human Rights Watch reports that instances of harassment and violence against Syrian refugees are common at schools.⁹⁸ The significant influx of Syrian refugees and their negative impact on the education system has exacerbated tensions in host communities around Jordan.

⁹⁵ Soh et al, 2016, 5

⁹⁶ Carrion, 2015, 334

⁹⁷ *ibid.* 334

⁹⁸ Van Esvald, 2016

Turkey

Unlike most Middle Eastern countries, Lebanon and Jordan included, Turkey was not a result of colonial interests. Turkey had the advantage of being the seat of the Ottoman Empire, and after the Empire's fall, Turkey, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, was united and centralized. Ataturk was intent on removing ties to the old Ottoman government and modernizing Turkey: he abolished the caliphate, banned the fez (a traditional Turkish-Muslim hat) and made western-style hats mandatory for civil servants, changed the calendar from Islamic to Gregorian, and even changed the Turkish language from an Arabic-based script to a Latin-based one.⁹⁹ Ataturk idolized Western values and was confident that creating a modern, secular nation-state would be the best way to make Turkey successful.¹⁰⁰ Although Ataturk did successfully remove many ties to the Ottoman Empire, the advantage Turkey had to that connection cannot be denied. Turkey already consisted of a strong majority of Turkish people with a common language, history, and identity; the Turkish government further entrenched this majority by removing large minorities, such as the Armenian and the Greek Orthodox Christian population, even though many of these minority groups had coexisted with the Turkish for centuries and mostly spoke Turkish as well. Despite creating a secular government, Turkey, determined to create a unified national identity, removed minorities based off of religious affiliation, ignoring the territorial, linguistic, and ethnic factors that are also considered essential characteristics of national identities.¹⁰¹

Turkey is one nation with a common history dating back hundreds of years, comprised of a solid majority of Turks, and a majority religion of Islam as well. This strong national identity gave Turkey a distinct advantage over other Middle Eastern states, like Lebanon and Jordan, who did not have a strong national identity before colonization. This strong identity made it

⁹⁹ Bozdaglioglu, 2003, 48

¹⁰⁰ Bozdaglioglu, 2003, 45

¹⁰¹ Goalwin, 2018, 128

easier for Turkey to build a stable government and implement sustainable policies. It also gives Turkey an advantage when managing the refugee situation. Since the days of Atatürk, Turkey has sought inclusion in Western structures, even joining NATO and seeking to join the European Union. Intent on proving itself to the West, Turkey has complied with most international conventions for refugees and been willing to take in more refugees in order to gain standing in negotiations for entering the European Union. With a stronger government, a stronger education system, and the capability to implement successful programs, Turkey has the ability to take a more direct role in managing the refugee crisis.

Turkey's Education Policy: A Brief Background

According to Human Rights Watch's *Barriers to Education for Syrian Refugees in Turkey* (2015), Turkey, as of 2012, mandates twelve years of free and compulsory education: four years of primary school, four years of lower secondary school, and four years of upper secondary school.¹⁰² Schools and curriculum are developed by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). At the end of upper secondary school (high school), students sit for a final exam: if they pass, they are allowed to sit for university entrance exams, which, if passed, allows them to attend universities.¹⁰³ Schools in Turkey all operate in Turkish—this causes a significant language barrier for Syrian refugees. Overall, Turkey's education system is strong and enrollment rates for Turkish nationals is high: 96.3 percent enrollment in primary schools and 94.4 percent in junior high school.¹⁰⁴

The education system in Turkey is highly centralized, and individual schools do not have their own funds to control; therefore, individual schools are less capable of responding to their individual needs.¹⁰⁵ This is the opposite of Lebanon, where individual schools have much more power, and the lack of oversight of the Lebanese government is cause for concern. Turkey, as

¹⁰² Gee, 2015, 18-19

¹⁰³ "Profile" turkeyeducation.info

¹⁰⁴ Gee, 2015, 38

¹⁰⁵ Gee, 2015, 19

an upper middle-income country, has succeeded in providing education to the majority of its citizens, although some poorer areas still struggle with low-quality schooling and overcrowding.¹⁰⁶ The recent influx of refugees has seriously taxed the Turkish education system, which is struggling to provide schooling for the 1.6 million Syrian children that have entered the country.

Education Policy for Syrian refugees

Turkey has largely kept its borders open to refugees, and hosts the world's largest refugee population, currently numbering over 3.5 million Syrian refugees.¹⁰⁷ In 2014, Turkey issued Circular 2014/21, which created new regulations for the education of refugees, or, as Turkey legally refers to them, "temporary protection beneficiaries".¹⁰⁸ The circular allowed for refugees to enroll in Turkish public schools and temporary education centers with only a foreign identification document instead of requiring a residency permit as it had done before; its goal was to work towards the elimination of language, legislative, and technical barriers that prevented enrollment.¹⁰⁹ School is free for refugees, as it is for Turkish students, and transportation is also provided in rural areas where walking is not possible. Covering transportation costs can make a huge difference; the cost of transportation is a detriment to refugee education in both Jordan and Lebanon. Turkey's approach to providing education for refugees differs significantly from Lebanon's and Jordan's approaches.

Circular 2014/21 also created a system of accreditation for temporary education centers (TECs), which Turkey has opened throughout the most highly-populated refugee areas both in and outside of refugee camps, in order to accommodate the refugees and the language barrier. These TECs operate under the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), and are accredited,

¹⁰⁶ "Education" UNICEF Turkey, 2019

¹⁰⁷ Akar, 2018

¹⁰⁸ Gee, 2015, 16

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*17

meaning they qualify as legitimate alternatives to the public education system and offer equivalent degrees. TECs operate in Arabic and use a curriculum only slightly modified from the curriculum in Syria, which is managed by the Syrian Interim Government's Ministry of Education in cooperation with Turkey's MoNE.¹¹⁰ These Temporary Education Centers are very different from most of the non-formal education centers set up in Jordan and Lebanon, which are not accredited and not authorized by the countries' Ministries of Education. These education centers are formal alternatives to Turkish public schools and are viable options for Syrian students who do not understand Turkish and want to continue learning the Syrian curriculum. These temporary education centers are operated either by local authorities or by charitable organizations and nonprofits.¹¹¹ Unfortunately, since these schools are not public schools, some schools charge tuition fees and do not cover transportation costs;¹¹² these fees can be unaffordable for many families, and cause some to seek other options for their children.

Providing the Syrian curriculum for refugees will make the transition back to schools in Syria easier, and allow Syrians to return home having received an education similar to what they would've received in Syria. The large majority of refugees in Turkey use this option as opposed to enrolling in Turkish schools. It is important to acknowledge this difference between Turkish policy and Lebanese and Jordanian policy—by creating a separate system for Syrian refugees, Turkey is not integrating refugees into its education system. It is providing a separate education, with a Syrian curriculum, in the expectation that Syrians will return home as soon as it is safe to do so. There is no discussion of integration, or of allowing refugees to remain longer than the minimum necessary; the refugees are separate from Turkish citizens, and will remain separate.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ Gee, 2015, 20

¹¹² *ibid.*20

There are also non-formal education centers open to refugees. These are usually run by private organizations, and are not regulated by MoNE, so therefore are not accredited. These centers usually offer classes only a few times a week, and can range from Quranic studies to catch-up programs or other subjects such as computers or music.¹¹³ These non-formal education opportunities are not meant to substitute for a formal education, but some families who cannot afford to send their children to other schools or who were not allowed to register for Turkish schools enroll their children in these instead.¹¹⁴

International organizations have also stepped in to help the Turkish government provide education; UNICEF and UNHCR consult with the Turkish government in creating education policy, and provide technical and financial support to teachers and schools.¹¹⁵ While in Lebanon and Jordan, these international organizations often helped contribute to non-formal education opportunities and provide schooling that was not always regulated by the governments, in Turkey, these organizations usually focus on temporary education centers and other MoNE-regulated schools to contribute to what the government already has in place. Turkey, with a stronger, more centralized government and with a significantly higher number of refugees, has been able to create a capable, more consistent education policy that caters to a higher number of students.

In 2017, UNICEF, through a partnership with Turkey's MoNE, introduced the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) program for Syrian refugees in Turkey. This program, which was a government program available to Turkish citizens, expanded to include refugees in mid-2017.¹¹⁶ Families with children enrolled in public education receive a monthly stipend from the government; the amount paid depends on the number of school-going children and their

¹¹³ *ibid.* 21

¹¹⁴ Gee, 2015, 22

¹¹⁵ *ibid.* 17

¹¹⁶ "Education" UNICEF Turkey, 2019

grade level.¹¹⁷ The program has been enormously successful—in one year, the program expanded from 188,500 children to 411,000 by the end of 2018.¹¹⁸ The CCTE program is a great way to encourage enrollment for children; by paying a monthly stipend, parents will be more likely able to afford school fees and transportation costs. It also removes the incentive for parents to send their children to work instead, as they are now receiving money for their children to attend school. This policy is evidently effective: In 2014-2015, 175,000 Syrian refugees were enrolled in temporary education centers, and another 36,000 were enrolled in Turkish public schools.¹¹⁹ By 2019, the number of Syrian student enrolled in one of these formal education options had increased to over 680,000.¹²⁰ If expanded to help more families, and implemented in Jordan and Lebanon as well, the CCTE program has the ability to significantly increase school enrollment rates for Syrian refugee children.

Policy Flaws

Although Turkey has made significant improvements to its education policy, there are still many children who remain without an education. In 2018, there were 1.6 million Syrian children in Turkey;¹²¹ of those, only 680,000 are enrolled in either Turkish public schools or accredited TECs. Language remains a significant barrier to education, along with overcrowded schools, school fees, and a lack of employment opportunities for adults. In order to enroll more children in the education system, Turkey and international NGOs have been working to find solutions to these problems.

According to Human Rights Watch, language remains one of the most significant barriers to enrollment in Turkish schools.¹²² The majority of Syrian refugees enter Turkey with

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Gee, 2015

¹²⁰ "Education" UNICEF Turkey, 2019

¹²¹ Turkey Humanitarian Situation Report, UNICEF 2018

¹²² Gee, 2015, 24

no experience with the Turkish language, and therefore find it difficult to keep up in Turkish public schools. This language barrier is more severe than in Lebanon, where the Arabic language is used in primary schools and a language barrier only arises in secondary schools, which instruct in English or French. The language barrier for Syrian students is not only felt in the classroom: it can also lead to teasing and bullying from their Turkish peers.¹²³ There is also no formalized support for non-native speakers in the Turkish public school system, although MoNE was in the process of developing an accelerated language program for temporary protection beneficiaries as of 2015. Placing children who face a language barrier in a lower grade can sometimes serve as a solution to the problem, and allow Syrian students an adjustment period as they learn Turkish; NGOs recommend that schools follow their guidelines and take into consideration the language barrier and the years of schooling some children may have already missed when deciding on the grade level in which to place children.¹²⁴ Turkey does not have a law limiting the age difference in children enrolling in a grade; however, some schools have evidently required Syrian students to enroll in the grade level of their age group despite having missed grades or not knowing the Turkish language.¹²⁵ Due to the language barrier, temporary education centers, which instruct in Syrian, are a helpful alternative to Turkish public schools. These schools, however, are not available throughout the country, only in regions with the highest refugee populations. They are also often overcrowded, charge tuition fees, and do not cover transportation costs, which makes public schools sometimes the only viable option for many Syrian families.

Economic hardship is also a significant barrier to enrollment for Syrian families. While public schools and transportation to public schools are free, this is not true for temporary education centers, many of which charge fees and can be expensive to travel to for families with

¹²³ *ibid.* 25

¹²⁴ Gee, 2015, 31

¹²⁵ *ibid.* 29-30

very limited income. Also, although public schools do not charge tuition, the associated costs—school supplies, activity fees, etc.—can still be a burden on refugee families.¹²⁶ Syrians do not have a legally-protected right to work in Turkey; those that are able to find jobs are often severely underpaid and treated poorly.¹²⁷ The lack of stable income leads many families to send their children to work instead of school, and also creates difficulty in paying school fees and other costs. If Turkey granted refugees work permits and allowed them to work legally, the financial situation for many families would improve, and more children would be able to attend school.¹²⁸

Turkey and the European Union: A Struggle in Balancing Identities

A major difference between Turkey and Lebanon and Jordan is Turkey's proximity to Europe. With the country split between the continents of Europe and Asia, the conflicting Eastern and Western identities have long been a source of contention in Turkey.¹²⁹ For years, Turkey has aspired to join the European Union, an aspiration which the European Union has used to its advantage to influence Turkish policy. Turkey prides itself on being a secular state: although the majority of its population is Muslim, Turkey has aimed to keep religion out of its government and policies and created a democratic state. This, Turkey argues, relates it more closely to Western countries than Middle Eastern ones, which is part of its argument for entering the European Union; however, the EU has consistently come up with excuses for not allowing it to enter: it is not economically viable, it is not democratic enough, etc.¹³⁰ Turkey's relationship with the EU and its aspirations to join have largely impacted its current refugee policy.

¹²⁶ *ibid.* 32

¹²⁷ *ibid.* 35

¹²⁸ Gee, 2015, 37

¹²⁹ Bozdaglioglu, 2003

¹³⁰ Bozdaglioglu, 2003, 97

A member of NATO since 1952, Turkey has long emphasized its potential as a bridge between Europe and the Middle East and Asia.¹³¹ In arguing for admission to the EU, it has promoted itself as a means to spreading Western values in the Middle East. For Europe, Turkey has also acted as a boundary between the Muslim Middle East and Christian Europe.¹³² Europe, Goalwin argues, has always perceived Turkey and the Middle East as its 'other', a threat to its Christian identity, and has therefore sought to keep Muslims, and Muslim refugees, out of Europe.¹³³ This perception contributed to the EU's 2016 agreement with Turkey, which announced that refugees illegally arriving in Greece would be returned to Turkey. For the EU, this was a way to externalize the migration problem and rely on countries outside the EU to secure its borders.¹³⁴ After some significant terror attacks, this agreement limited the number of refugees entering Europe and calmed European fears of a 'Muslim invasion'.¹³⁵ For Turkey, this was not only a way to secure financial support for the millions of refugees it had already taken in; it also reopened negotiations for Turkey's entrance into the European Union, something Turkey has requested for years.

Through financial incentives and promises of joining the European Union, Europe has been able to significantly influence Turkey's refugee policy, and more specifically its refugee education policy. Through the hopes of joining the EU, Turkey is trying to satisfy European requirements and demonstrate its Western values. Turkey has been willing to work with and listen to the guidelines of Western-based NGOs, and, as a result of the 2016 agreement with the EU, has received more funding for other policies as well. The EU, in deciding to return refugees out of fear instead of welcoming them in Europe,¹³⁶ is pressed to contribute more money to the refugee crisis in Turkey, improving Turkish policy. The Conditional Cash Transfer

¹³¹ Bozdaglioglu, 2003, 103

¹³² Goalwin, 2018, 124

¹³³ Goalwin, 2018, 124

¹³⁴ *ibid.* 130

¹³⁵ *ibid.* 131

¹³⁶ Goalwin, 2018, 132

for Education program, for example, was started in 2017 by UNICEF with significant funds from the EU.¹³⁷ This program most likely would not have been possible or quite as effective without the EU's aid. Although it has been in use for less than two years, it has already increased the number of refugee children enrolled in education in Turkey. Turkey's relationship with the European Union has given Turkey a significant advantage over other host countries in responding to the refugee situation, and although there are a lot of problems associated with the 2016 EU agreement, it has led to an increase in financial support of Turkey and its refugee policy.

Conclusion

Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, the three major host countries for Syrian refugees, have implemented education policies which are significantly impacted by their cultural and historical identities. This paper has examined the cultural and national identities of these host countries in relation to their refugee policies and approaches to education initiatives. Through analyzing the impact of these identities, NGOs and international organizations will have a more complete grasp of the motives behind these education policies, and will be able to enact more effective policies and initiatives to address the growing number of Syrian refugees in the host countries.

Lebanon's deeply sectarian government relies on maintaining a delicate balance between its numerous minorities, and therefore many fear that the influx of Syrian refugees, the majority of which are Sunni Muslim, will upset the relative equal power-sharing arrangement between Christians, Sunnis, and Shi'a. The sectarian divide affects all aspects of life in Lebanon, including the education system, where most families send their children to private schools associated with their minorities instead of Lebanese public schools. Due to a lack of a strong government and the lack of interest by most wealthier families in public schools, public

¹³⁷ "Education" UNICEF Turkey, 2019

schools, even before refugees, were failing. With refugees, the public schools are facing an even bigger strain. The corruption and sectarian divides have weakened Lebanon's national government and caused Lebanese to rely instead on their local, minority communities for support. As a consequence, the government is unable to implement a consistent policy across Lebanon, and the Ministry of Education's national policies for refugees have little support and ineffectively address the crisis.

One of the most important steps Lebanon needs to take in order to improve its education system is to centralize its Ministry of Education and enforce its directives equally across the country; the sectarianism dividing Lebanon makes it difficult to implement an overarching program for refugees. This, however, may be difficult to do: Lebanon's government struggles with corruption and inefficiency, and it is unlikely the government will be able to enact significant change within the next few years. Therefore, NGOs and other international organizations should be taking Lebanon's lack of centralized policy into account. Instead of encouraging broad policy change at the national level, policy which is limited by minority divisions, NGOs should focus on policy at the local level. They should be working more closely with local organizations and encouraging the Ministry of Education to accredit local schools as formal education alternatives. Since local schools and organizations decide whether to enact national policy directives, NGOs should work directly with these organizations rather than focusing on national policy. In doing so, NGOs will be able to provide more funds directly toward local education initiatives, and provide oversight to ensure these initiatives are effective and a viable education option. By analyzing the cultural identity and governmental structure of Lebanon, it will be easier to understand the strain on Lebanon's education system and its struggle to implement a streamlined refugee policy that is consistent across the country.

Jordan has a long history of refugee integration, a history which is reflected in its large Palestinian-Jordanian population. Due to this history, Jordan would probably be more likely to integrate Syrian refugees into Jordan and allow them to remain there. However, with the history

of Palestinian refugees and the PLO, Jordan has some negative associations with refugees; some fear that the Syrian refugee situation will turn into the Palestinian one, and that Syrians will become a permanent part of Jordan, although this is unlikely. This idea is reflected in their use of 'guest' instead of 'refugee' to account for Syrians—refugee is a term reserved for Palestinians, who ended up becoming permanent residents and will most likely not be leaving in the near future. Meanwhile, its Syrian 'guests' are expected to leave after the war. This affects Jordanian education policy for refugees; with the expectation that refugees will be leaving soon, Jordan treats the education crisis as a short-term problem, and is less willing to make permanent adjustments to its education system. Even so, Jordanian education policy reflects a willingness to treat refugees as "Arab brothers" and integrate Syrians more fully into Jordan and the public education system.

Turkey's strong national identity and its relationship with the European Union has significantly affected its education policy for refugees. Turkey's strong national government is better equipped to handle the mass influx of refugees, a fact exemplified in Turkey's centralized Ministry of National Education, which produces strong directives implemented uniformly across Turkey's education system. Turkey's relations with the European Union also grant Turkey access to more funds and aid, which contribute to effective policies such as the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education program. Turkey's separate Temporary Education Centers for refugees and use of the Syrian curriculum is helpful for educating Syrians who wish to return after the war, but it is also a means of separating Syrians from the Turkish community. By attending separate schools with a Syrian curriculum, Syrians will not learn the local language and culture; despite living in local Turkish communities, Syrians are separated by these language and cultural barriers and are prevented from integration. Turkey's strong national identity contributes to this separation; as Waters and LeBlanc argue: "In effect, the nation and its schools define the "we" that is the citizenship of a modern state. By default, it also defines a

“them.”¹³⁸ Turkey’s schools contribute to the idea of a Turkish nation, one which includes only Turkish citizens and excludes those who are not Turkish, like the Syrians (the “them” in this setting). Therefore, Turkey keeps Syrian refugees separate from Turkish schools for the most part, and does not use a Turkish curriculum for these schools.

Separate schooling in Turkey is not necessarily a negative feature; allowing Syrians a separate system of schooling makes it easier for refugees to adjust and will allow for a smoother transition when they return to Syria as well. However, it is important to recognize that this system is a byproduct of a strong national identity which has no room for Syrian integration into the country. Turkey has made it evident that it does not expect refugees to stay past their welcome, and is now reportedly forcibly returning some to Syria, where the region is still dangerous and unstable.¹³⁹ Turkey, although it has not ratified the refugee convention and labels refugees as “temporary protection beneficiaries,”¹⁴⁰ is still subject to international laws and the rules of nonrefoulement, so the forcible return of refugees is a cause for serious concern. In analyzing the cultural identity of Turkey and its relations with the European Union, Turkey’s education policy for refugees can be understood in a more complete context.

Integration is an important aspect of education for refugees, especially in long-term situations like the Syrian Crisis. In *Syrian Refugees in Turkey and the Integration Problem Ahead*, Akar argues, “One of the main factors of education is the provision of education services to the refugees. Local language, local history, and the fundamental knowledge of host country culture are very important for integration.”¹⁴¹ Integration of the refugees into the host community can reduce tensions and violence, and also limit stereotypes that often develop in host environments. Lebanon and Jordan have less-streamlined national identities than Turkey, which

¹³⁸ Waters and LeBlanc, 2005, 129

¹³⁹ Turkey is Illegally Deporting..., Amnesty International, 2019

¹⁴⁰ Akar, 2018, 935

¹⁴¹ Akar, 2018, 932

contributes to increased levels of integration. Their double-shift education policies allow for Syrian and Lebanese/Jordanian children to attend the same schools, and classrooms often include both refugee and host children. However, the shifts are often divided into Jordanian/Lebanese children in one shift and Syrian in the other, which limits integration and also contributes to bullying and confrontations outside the classroom.¹⁴² Social integration is a major factor affecting refugee enrollment rates in Lebanon and Jordan as well as Turkey. Especially in Turkish public schools, Syrians face bullying and teasing due to their difficulties with the Turkish language and sometimes just for being Syrian.¹⁴³ Although the separate TECs for Syrians prevent integration in education, Turkey could put more effort into encouraging integration in host communities and offer Turkish language classes outside of school. In all three host countries, policies increasing integration would encourage cross-cultural understanding between the parties and decrease instances of harassment and violence.

Another recommendation for all three countries is for the governments to allow and encourage Syrian teachers to teach in the schools. In Lebanon and Jordan, many teachers are overworked due to the two-shift system and work with overcrowded classes; as a result, students are not receiving the attention and lessons they need to succeed in school. Currently in Lebanon, some Syrian teachers are teaching in non-formal education services, but these schools are unlicensed and the teachers are unpaid.¹⁴⁴ Like in Lebanon, Syrian teachers, even those who received proper schooling and training, are barred from teaching in Jordanian public schools; instead, Jordan, which is struggling to recruit teachers, often uses Jordanians who have not gone through proper training and are poorly paid.¹⁴⁵ These teachers are quick to leave when given an opportunity, which results in high turnover rates in refugee schools and

¹⁴² Van Esvald, 2016

¹⁴³ Gee, 2015

¹⁴⁴ Khawaja, 2016

¹⁴⁵ Van Esvald, 2016, 29

inconsistency for the students. Jordan does allow some Syrians to act as assistants in overcrowded classrooms, but refuses to allow them to teach. Allowing Syrians to teach would help more Syrians access employment opportunities, and the increased number of teachers would improve the quality of education and reduce overcrowding. Additionally, allowing Syrian teachers to teach in Lebanese and Jordanian classrooms is another method of encouraging integration, and could increase cross-cultural awareness. Furthermore, the additional teachers could expand Lebanon and Jordan's educational and extracurricular programs, including catch-up programs for children who have fallen behind in school. The catch-up program is currently a small program in both Lebanon and Jordan, and mostly run by NGOs and other non-formal education initiatives, but expanding it would be instrumental in supporting children who have been out of school for extended periods of time and allow them to re-enroll in school.

Turkey currently allows Syrians to teach in Temporary Education Centers due to their knowledge of Arabic and their experience with the Syrian curriculum. However, like other Syrian workers in Turkey, Syrians do not have lawful permission to work from the Syrian government,¹⁴⁶ and therefore do not receive the same benefits and protections of Turkey's labor laws afforded to Turkish citizens. The teachers do not get paid by the Ministry of National Education despite working in TECs which are regulated by MoNE, and rely on financial incentives from UNICEF or TEC administrations which are often below minimum wage and not a source of steady income.¹⁴⁷

Increasing support for Syrian teachers in the classroom and allowing more Syrians to teach can significantly improve both access to and the quality of education in all three host countries. Low wages and overcrowded classrooms compel teachers to search for other

¹⁴⁶ Gee, 2015, 48

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.* 48

employment opportunities, and the low retention and high turnover rates negatively impacts the children's education. According to UNICEF,

“Syrian refugee teachers constitute an underutilized resource across almost all host countries. The under-utilization of this resource impact both access to and quality of education for Syrian refugee children... the lack of employment opportunities for refugee teachers in host countries contributes to instability.”¹⁴⁸

Utilizing Syrian teachers, while properly paying and supporting them, can significantly contribute to the quality of children's education. It would create stability in schools, as teachers would be more incentivized to remain in the school, and it would make Syrian children feel welcome and comfortable having a teacher who is from the same country and has gone through a similar situation. It would also allow for more classrooms and schools to open and reduce overcrowding in schools, allowing more children to enroll.

Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan have all implemented significant policy changes in order to accommodate the refugees. However, over 800,000 Syrian refugees remain out of school. Many scholars have suggested improvements, but in order for these changes to be effective it is necessary to take into account other factors in creating the policies for refugees. Tensions between local populations and Syrian refugees are currently running high in all three countries, and one possible solution to this issue is to integrate schools more completely. If children learn together in the same environment, the breakdown of stereotypes and fear of “the other” would become possible, and ease integration issues. The cultural identity and history of refugees in the three countries significantly affects their policies, and by taking these factors into account, we can find more viable solutions to the education crisis.

¹⁴⁸ UNICEF 2015, quoted in Gee, 2015, 49

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