

CULTURES OF LEARNING

Report 1: Perceptions by refugees of education and
pastoral opportunities in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey

British Council

*Socio-cultural
considerations
for engaging
refugees in
education in
MENA*

Perceptions of Syrian refugees of education and pastoral support in

MENA

A comparative report

Lebanon- Jordan - Turkey

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Foreword

The Syrian civil war has resulted in one of the largest and most complex humanitarian crises of our times. Since the start of the civil war in 2011, there are approximately 13.5 million people within Syria who are in need of humanitarian assistance, and 6.6 million people who are internally displaced (Migration Policy Centre, 2016).

This report is one of two reports commissioned by UNHCR with the British Council Research team, aiming to explore the efficacy of the socio-cultural and educational support provided to refugees displaced from Syria. The first report analyses the available provision of programmes, interventions and funding provided by international agencies, local charities and NGOs and local providers such as the local educational sector. The second report provides the perspective on this provision, the access and suitability of it, by refugees themselves in three countries in MENA.

Together, the objectives of the study are as follows:

Firstly, to present the perceptions by refugees of socio-cultural and educational interventions and provision in the MENA region in their own words. These are voices that are often hidden and who do not form part of the process of the development and delivery of the programmes and interventions designed for their support. Through these two reports we hope to contribute to shift the notion of refugee support towards a relationship where refugees are co-creators and active participants in designing what works for their needs.

Secondly, to analyse what provision exists, who is providing it – whether UN agencies, how it is coordinated, funded and designed – recognising that we can all be constrained by time, urgency or indicators and led by funding, rather than pausing to consider what best provision and practice looks like.

Thirdly, we present this data as an exercise in shared learning, in the hope that it will lead to better coordination, provision and participation of refugees in these interventions. At the British Council, we have played a small but welcomed role in providing language programmes, online and blended learning opportunities, socio-cultural, artistic and pastoral support programmes and scholarships alongside our partners in Europe, MENA and the UNHCR. What started as an urgent humanitarian response has developed into a position of advocacy and longer term responsibility as

the crisis has developed and become protracted. Through research and evidence from our programmes we are learning collectively the crucial value that such socio-cultural and educational support provides to those displaced by conflict alongside the essential provision for their basic needs. Our collection of research reports including *Languages for Resilience* provides useful further insight in the growing collection of thinking by academics, practitioners and refugees themselves on how to provide these communities with the best chance for rebuilding their lives in the future.

I hope you find these reports useful and we always welcome collaboration and feedback.

Emily Morrison

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1. Introduction

By the end of December 2017, 5,263,146 Syrians were registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the neighbouring countries; 3,359,195 of them were in Turkey, 1,001,051 were in Lebanon, 655,588 of them were in Jordan and the rest (246,195) were in Iraq. This makes the Syrian refugees the largest refugee population in the world; even exceeding the nearly five million Palestinian refugees population (Nebehay, 2015).

The Syrian civil war has also created an education crisis for the Middle East. Before the war, around 26 per cent of university-aged men and women from Syrian towns and cities, and 17 per cent of men and 15 per cent of women from rural areas, were enrolled in some form of tertiary education in Syria, including bachelor degrees and vocational training programmes (El-Ghali, Berjaoui & McKnight, 2017; Watenpaugh, Fricke & King, 2014). A general estimate places the total participation from Syrians aged 18-24 in tertiary education as less than 5 per cent in 2016 (El-Ghali, Berjaoui & McKnight, 2017; EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, 2016; Luo & Craddock, 2016).

The majority of young Syrians who are deprived from access to further educational paths may find themselves among the unqualified, illegal and poorly paid work force in the host countries, become potential candidates for recruitment in regular or irregular armed forces (Barakat & Milton, 2015; Deane, 2016), or may find themselves victims to radicalism and crime. Their motivation to pursue any of these paths depends on which one of them will be able to satisfy their families' needs with honour and dignity. It also depends on which path will enable them to claim an identity, redefine their role in society and do something to change their miserable status (Human Rights Watch, 2016; Jamjoom & Khalaf, 2015).

This problem is complicated by the fact that approximately 861,000 school-aged child refugees from Syria are out of school in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt (UNICEF, 2016) constituting what has been dubbed by international media and aid/development agencies as the 'lost generation' whose limited enrolment in primary and secondary education will no doubt close off future opportunities to pursue any form of tertiary education. This is compounded by the fact that 23 per cent of the total number of Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR are under the age of 18 (UNHCR,

2017) suggesting a long-term challenge with regards to expanding access to tertiary education for this ‘lost generation’.

According to the UNHCR, the key durable solutions for refugees from Syria are resettlement and complementary pathways of admission to a third country, voluntary return to Syria in safety and dignity, and protection and assistance in countries of asylum. In all cases, tertiary education seems to play a vital role in solving the crisis and preparing Syrian refugees for the future (UNHCR, 2017).

The provision of tertiary education for Syrian refugees, however, depends largely on the levels of socio-economic development in the host nations. Most of them suffer, already, from structural and functional socio-economic problems, such as unemployment, income inequality and social injustice (ILO, 2013, UNHCR-UNDP, 2015). At the same time, some of them follow a neoliberal economic policy that makes such problems even worse (Selby & Tadros, 2016).

Therefore, in applying any provision of tertiary education for Syrian refugees, the unique characteristics of the host countries must be taken into consideration. The influx of Syrian refugees has not impacted neighbouring countries in a uniform way, because of the sheer differences in their numbers. The distinct socio-political and economic country contexts of host countries have influenced the state of education for both Syrian refugees and host communities in these countries in many ways (UNESCO, 2016).

Many aid workers are coming to the Syrian crisis holding a different perspective of the crisis concept. The understanding of what a refugee means then is transplanted across contexts and borders thereby removing history, culture and different levels of access to opportunities; as though by virtue of becoming a refugee, people’s experience, needs and expectations become the same. This clearly demonstrates the importance of understanding the social, cultural, economic and political context from which refugees have fled, to best serve their needs and develop programmes that can support their on-going development, regardless of their status as refugee (Sherab & Kirk, 2016). Moreover, this requires a complete understanding of their perceptions and attitudes towards the tertiary education programmes provided to them in the hosting countries. There is accumulated evidence that there is a discrepancy between what is actually provided to them and their perceptions and attitudes towards what has

been provided. This discrepancy was not tackled before and represents an important research gap that needs to be considered.

To address this gap, the BUE research team has made use of most of the extant literature on tertiary education programmes provided to young Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. A thorough desk research was conducted to identify the main key issues related to such programmes, their coverage, limitations and success stories. This literature was used to help design the primary data collection tools.

Using qualitative methodology that depends on focus group discussions with Syrian refugees as well as semi-structured interviews with major stakeholders, this report presents the perceptions and attitudes of young Syrian refugees in their own voice regarding the importance of tertiary education for their present and future. It also provides a detailed description of their perceptions of the availability of tertiary education programmes within the hosting countries. These perceptions, in turn, are compared against the actual provisions of such programmes obtained by the second phase of this research project conducted by the Centre for Transnational Development and Collaboration.

In addition, this report highlights the accessibility of such programmes. More specifically, it demonstrates the Syrian refugees' perceptions of the different barriers that prevent them from pursuing their higher education. These barriers are discussed across genders and within country-specific contexts. Furthermore, Syrian refugees' perceptions of the suitability of tertiary education programmes for their present and future needs are also reported.

Special attention is also given to their perceptions of the quality and desirability of these programmes. Moreover, their suggestions for how such programmes can be improved and tailored to suit their current and future needs are reported.

2. Tertiary Education for Syrian refugees in the Hosting countries: A comparative analysis

2.1. The Macro Picture:

Most Syrian families living in host countries try to create a future for their children by enrolling them in local education or by sending them to pursue education abroad. However, higher education directed towards refugees has not received as much attention as primary and secondary education, either from the humanitarian agencies or from donors (Barakat & Milton, 2015; Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Kirk & Sherab, 2016).

The response to the need for tertiary education opportunities has been limited to scholarship programmes, distance learning, providing e-learning platforms and some projects to fund universities for refugees (Barakat & Milton, 2015; Luo & Craddock, 2016). However, tertiary education for refugees has increasingly come to the forefront as a key issue since 2015 - one year after the large wave of young refugees travelling to Europe. Higher education was expressed as a priority in the UNHCR 2012-2016 education strategy (UNHCR, 2015), and several initiatives have emerged since. In the case of Syria, scholarship programmes have been expanded to cover larger numbers of students and provide tertiary education opportunities at universities in Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon. In addition, many capacity building and training courses have been announced for skilled Syrian refugees such as the Tahdir programme of Arab Reform Initiative 2017 (O'Keeffe & Pásztor, 2017).

Tertiary education and capacity-building as a contribution to reconstruction of post-war Syria has become a mainstream topic in several international reports and press articles (Gonzalez, 2017; Magaziner, 2015; UNHCR, 2016). Donor countries as well as international development and humanitarian organisations have made efforts to coordinate their activities related to higher education. (Lindsey, 2016). The foundation for refugee students (UAF), German Academic exchange services (DAAD), the Swedish Institute, the international NGO SPARK, the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI), as well as Al-Fanar, are some examples of the initiatives that deliver HE to Syrian refugees (Bollag, 2016; CAE-team, 2017).

There is, nonetheless, a number of regional challenges that face many stakeholders while providing tertiary education programmes to Syrian refugees. First, there is an observable lack of number of opportunities provided and the overall level of demand. Although there is an increasing pattern of the number of provided opportunities, still it is not enough to cover the high demand level (Al-Ahmad, 2017).

A second major challenge that jeopardizes sincere efforts to provide tertiary education programmes to Syrian refugees is the lack of effective coordination mechanisms. Although some hosting countries have tried to create some coordination mechanisms (e.g., regular meetings amongst NGOs, and government institutions), these efforts have led to some tactical and operational cooperation but have not led to the strategic coordination demanded by the crisis.

There is also a challenge in communicating opportunities, such as scholarships or training programmes, to potential refugee applicants. The majority of Syrian refugees in the region live in urban areas outside formal camps. Therefore, there is a major difficulty in communicating these opportunities in a timely fashion; indeed, many refugees express their disappointment and frustration about finding out very late about scholarships and missing deadlines.

2.2. Country Specific Profile

2.2.1: Lebanon:

Most of the 47 higher education institutions currently in operation in Lebanon were legally established in the late nineties when the private sector flourished in a sudden and rapid expansion following the 15-year civil war in Lebanon between 1975 and 1990, which had a very damaging impact on the country's higher education sector. The freedom and independence of Lebanese higher education is protected by the Constitution. Tertiary education in Lebanon is divided into two categories; vocational tertiary education and general or non-vocational higher education.

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) is in charge of managing all tertiary education in the country. In 2002, a Directorate General of Higher Education (DGHE) was established to regulate the private higher education sector and supervise and coordinate all actions related to it. The DGHE is in charge of the 46 private higher education institutions currently in operation in the country, while the

only state university, Lebanese University (LU) enjoys clear autonomy with its own system of governance. The number of students enrolled in the Lebanese HEIs was 199,867 in 2015-2016, 36 per cent of which are in the public LU and 64 per cent are in the private sector.

As for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, it was reported that 95 per cent of Syrian refugees aged 15-24 are not enrolled in secondary or tertiary education in Lebanon (El-Ghali, Berjaoui & McKnight, 2017; Kirk & Sherab, 2016; London Progress Report, 2016). This means that there is a large number of students of university-age in Lebanon without a secondary leaving certificate, and who will not be able to take advantage of the tertiary education opportunities. Today, Syrian children are allowed to attend public schools, but many of them are only allowed to attend evening shifts. Moreover, many cannot afford to go to school because they lack the money to cover transportation and other related costs (Avery & Said, 2017; ILO, 2013).

The cost of education is a major impediment to attending tertiary education. Examination fees at the Ministry for Education and higher education reach up to \$200 for Bachelor diplomas. Student fees at Lebanese universities vary between \$600 at public and more than \$4,000 at private universities per year. A large number of Syrian refugees were denied access to higher education after January 2015 due to the stringent university requirements of obtaining a residency permit. Obtaining residency permits is not only expensive, but the conditions that applicants need to meet are prohibitive. Legally enrolled students at universities get six months to one-year permits. Securing a permit extension is a time-consuming process, as it requires the resubmission of all the documents that were already provided for the first application (Avery & Said, 2017).

In addition, scholarship conditions to study in Europe or non-Arabic speaking countries are quite demanding for a refugee student who has limited opportunities to improve English language skills or access e-learning programmes. Long years are lost in acquiring residency status, validating prior qualifications, learning foreign languages, and gaining social capital in the host countries (ILO, 2013).

2.2.2: Jordan

Extensive efforts have been made to increase children's access to basic education to ensure their continued healthy development and provide security and stability during the refugee experience. As the majority of Syrian refugees in Jordan are under the age of 17, this attention is not unfounded. However, refugees' access to higher education in Jordan did not receive the same focus. The initial response to higher education was isolated and sporadic, only recently becoming coordinated as the crisis and consequent displacement has protracted (DAFI, 2013).

Analysis of media, organisation reports and academic literature shows that there has been a very limited yet consistent dialogue on the issue of higher education for Syrian refugees prior to 2015. During 2015, higher education was included in the Jordan Response Plan (JRP). For many, this largely accords with the nature of emergency response. There is little understanding at the beginning of a refugee crisis regarding how long the situation will endure. Accordingly, planning focuses on the short term and measures are stop-gap rather than systemic (Sherab & Kirk, 2016).

In Jordan, 1,692 youth received scholarships and technical skills training (UNICEF, 2018). The first major programme to offer higher education scholarships to refugees of Syrian origin was DAFI in October 2013, with an initial 33 places offered and then continued in 2014 with 144 scholarships offered throughout the region. Of this total MENA allocation, in Jordan 17 Syrians secured scholarships in 2013, a total of 57 in 2014. As of June 2015, 59 Syrian students were receiving DAFI scholarship in Jordan. A July 2015 DAFI status report indicated that only 10 scholarships would be made available in 2016. A representative from UNHCR has since indicated that 1700 DAFI scholarships will be given within the MENA region although a further breakdown by country is not yet available (Sherab & Kirk, 2016).

In October 2014 the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) established a major scholarship programme for Syrians wanting to study a master degree in Germany. The following year DAAD established a host country scholarship programme in partnership with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), 'New Perspectives for Young Jordanians and Syrians,' which aimed to provide scholarships for Syrian refugees and Jordanian host community members. The programme targeted 'highly qualified Jordan and Syrian academics' for Master programmes at specific Jordanian universities, including German

Jordanian University, Yarmouk University, Jordan University of Science and Technology, or University of Jordan. Applicants were required to ‘intend to actively contribute to the peaceful co-existence of Syrian refugees and Jordanian communities.’ The first cohort for fall 2015 consisted of 20 Syrians and 20 Jordanians and offered summer preparatory courses for Syrians to facilitate completion of mandatory requirements for master programmes. A second round of 20 Syrians and 20 Jordanians were accepted for the fall 2016 academic semester. In addition to a full scholarship, the programme also provides psychosocial support in the form of both individual and group sessions to help manage stress levels and ease the transition back to education. To increase social cohesion and emphasize the benefit of higher education, recipients also have the opportunity to “earn” items that complement their education through community engagement activities (DAAD, 2016).

Another edition to the scholarship opportunities for Syrian students in Jordan was made available in 2016 through EDU-Syria, a project funded by the European Union, to provide higher education to both Young Syrians and Jordanians. The project is led by the German Jordanian University with three partner institutes: Zarqa University, Yarmouk University and Al-Quds College. This is potentially the largest scholarship opportunity currently available, with 300 places to be offered at Zarqa University alone. In this project, scholarships will primarily be provided to those whose university studies were disrupted as a consequence of the crisis, with clear provision for both Masters, undergraduate and vocational courses. There were 2,000 Syrian students in attendance at the Zarqa open day in early 2016, clearly demonstrating the significant demand for such an initiative (EduSyria, 2016).

Increasingly individual universities in third countries have offered scholarship opportunities for Syrian refugees. International Institute for Education (IIE) has consolidated a list of colleges and universities predominately in the United States, which offer a range of scholarship opportunities which are either partly or fully funded. Following the DAAD “Leadership for Syria” scholarships, other scholarships were advertised by IIE in quick succession in 2015. In large part these scholarships appear to have been galvanized by the IIE consortium who have long advocated for universities to play a larger role in the response to the Syrian crisis (Sherab & Kirk, 2016).

The original call for scholarships came in 2013 through funding from the US Department of State and Global Platform for Syrian Students and Kaplan Test Prep International. Since the original opportunity another round of scholarships has been launched. Over the course of the two rounds 333 Syrian students have received support of some kind including 159 scholarships, 175 free online test prep courses and 24 institutional top up grants. In each round of applications there were approximately 4,000 applications for 100 scholarships available.

It is not clear how many Syrian students from Jordan received scholarships. Based on their experience, IIE now advocates for fully funded scholarships over an increased number of partial scholarships. This is primarily due to the financial challenges students face under partial funding as well as the need to prove financial independence for the visa application process. IIE also started a pilot programme in Jordan to provide scholarship opportunities for Syrian refugees through the Emergency Student Fund.

In early 2014, the Jordanian Secretary General of the Ministry of Higher Education indicated the importance of supporting Syrian refugee students enrolled in Jordanian Universities. The pilot programme was then developed to assist those at risk of dropping out due to financial reasons. The first six scholarships were dispersed during the fall semester of 2015 and due to the success of the pilot programme it was expanded in the fall of 2016.

The foundation for refugee students (UAF), the Swedish Institute, the international NGO SPARK, as well as Al-Fanar, are other examples of the initiatives that deliver HE to Syrian refugees (Bollag, 2016; CAE-team, 2017).

2.2.3: Turkey:

In the 2016/17 academic year, more than 15,000 Syrians were enrolled at Turkish universities. Even though the number of Syrian university students has increased by about 5,000 students each year over the last two years, the current number of enrolled students still only represents less than 3% of Syrians in Turkey aged 18-25 (Yavcan & El-Ghali, 2017).

Early in the Syrian crisis, it was estimated that there were about 4,000 Syrian students enrolled in Turkish universities, until 2015-2016 when enrolment increased to around 10,000 students and more recently to around 15,000 students for 2016-17 as reported

by the Higher Education Council in 2016. The majority of Syrian refugees (12,127) pursue a bachelor degree, 1102 pursue an associate degree, 1067 pursue a master degree, and 335 of them pursue a doctoral degree (Yavcan & El-Ghali, 2017).

The university with the highest number of Syrian students is Gaziantep University, with some 2,000 enrolled Syrians, followed by Istanbul University and Karabük University, with about 1,000 each. In contrast to the cities of Istanbul and Gaziantep in south-eastern Turkey, where huge numbers of Syrians reside, Karabük has not been a common destination for Syrians. Approximately 35% of the Syrian students at Turkish universities are women, while 65% are men. In contrast, in pre-war Syria half of the students were female. Even though the percentage of female university-aged Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey is a bit less than their male counterparts (approximately 42% vs. 58%), this difference still does not justify the existing gender imbalance. That is why several Turkish and non-Turkish stakeholders in the field of higher education take gender issues into account when trying to bring more female Syrians to universities (Yavcan & El-Ghali, 2017).

Several factors may contribute to this discrepancy. Possibly, families may prefer to allocate resources to their sons rather than their daughters due to strategic, economic, and cultural reasons. Families may differentiate between their sons and daughters. If not being able to continue their studies, young men may be expected to potentially return to Syria to fight; daughters, in contrast, alternatively could marry at an early age and leave the economic responsibility to their husbands. Another factor that keeps families from sending their daughters to university refers to the security situation and the related fears of parents leaving their daughters living alone in unknown areas—specifically, the areas or cities in which they were accepted at a university. However, in-depth research is necessary to further understand the reasons for the gender imbalance in order to implement constructive measures (Yavcan & El-Ghali, 2017).

There are a few avenues through which Syrian students can apply for admission to higher education institutions in Turkey. Syrian refugees may apply to public and non-profit foundation universities as regular international students, though they are subject to public universities' department quotas, and are also eligible for government-funded scholarship programmes (Fricke et al., October 2014). All international students have to take the admissions exam; however, since 2010 each university has created its own version of the test in the language of its choice (Fricke et al., 2014). Since 2013, Syrians under temporary protection were given the option to be exempt from this

exam and the right to apply to universities directly without an exam. This was implemented first at seven universities in cities bordering Syria and then at all universities across the country.

Students may also be required to submit national or international baccalaureate test results, high school transcripts and diplomas, passports, Turkish residency documents, and language proficiency test results (Fricke et al., 2014).

Until 2013, Syrians were subject to the same university admissions criteria as other international students. However, the Higher Education Council of Turkey took a series of decisions in 2013 facilitating the Syrians' access to higher education. Several legislations and bylaws were passed, such as easing transfer processes, relaxing the original documentation submission for degree equivalency, providing a high school completion test option (in the absence of a high school diploma), a university fee waiver system for all Syrian students and availability of a large number of state scholarships (Yavcan & El-Ghali, 2017).

High school diploma equivalency and high school proficiency and equivalency exams are required for accessing higher education as per the Ministry of Education bylaw 2014/21. As a result, provincial MEB offices were assigned to issue high school diploma equivalency to Syrian prospective students with proper documentation, which could be a copy of their high school diploma. This is important, because prior to their arrival to Turkey a number of the prospective Syrian students had applied to and were admitted to programmes at Syrian universities. This bylaw allows these students to establish their diploma equivalency in the absence of original documents. Additionally, students get a second option if they fail to establish equivalency of their diplomas, which is the 12th grade high school proficiency test. About 5,000 students are reported to have taken the exam in 2015. Over 7,000 students were reported to take the exam in 2016. The exam is conducted by MEB at the temporary education centres in the cities with highest numbers of Syrians, namely Adana, Adiyaman, Ankara, Batman, Gaziantep, Hatay, Istanbul, Kahramanmaras, Kilis, Konya, Malatya, Mardin, Mersin, Osmaniye and Sanliurfa. The applicants need to have their information entered into the ministry's system for foreign students called YOBIS and this is mostly done by registering at a temporary education centre with their temporary protection identification card (Yavcan & El-Ghali, 2017).

There are several open spaces in two-year tertiary education programmes, i.e., associate degrees and vocational training, whereas study places in undergraduate

degrees are limited for certain fields of study and are not sufficient in number. This situation as well as the demand for technical training on the Turkish (and possibly a future Syrian) labour market has resulted in considerations on how to increase the number of interested young Syrians in this form of post-secondary education. With regard to online education programmes, these ideas range from using international platforms such as Coursera or edX to other specific open education programmes offered by Turkish universities. The pioneer of open education in Turkey, the Faculty of Open Higher Education at Anadolu University, has provided open and distance learning since 1982 and has enlarged its range of study programmes over the last decades with several new programmes in associate and undergraduate degrees. These courses range from economics and business administration to social sciences and humanities. Anadolu University is currently offering open higher education to 1.4 million students in total (Hohberger, 2018).

Another supportive initiative, Kiron, a German NGO, was founded in 2015 to enable refugees to access higher education. It provides online courses in cooperation with different universities primarily in Germany, France, and Jordan. It is currently also operating in Turkey in cooperation with Istanbul Aydın University and Yaşar University in Izmir with the aim to provide programmes with 80% online and 20% offline courses as well as a common certificate (Hohberger, 2018).

Within this socio-economic-political regional context, the current research will build on the previous research to present the perspective on higher education by young displaced Syrians in hosting countries (Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey) in their own voice, and to understand what role it may play in their current situation and attitudes to the future. Moreover, the research will consider opportunities provided by Higher Education Institutions and local tertiary education organisations as well as those provided by international agencies which are delivered within hosting countries (Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey). The research will also analyse the coordination mechanisms for the provision of Higher Education opportunities and how accessibility, suitability and quality are assured at the present and in the future.

3. Methodology

The methodology for this report has been designed and implemented by BUE research team. Research data has been mainly collected through primary and secondary data methods, which included focus group discussions with young Syrian refugees, semi-structures interviews with stakeholders and desk-based research (literature review).

It is worth noting that the literature review covers tertiary education programmes provided to Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, while the focus groups and semi-structured interviews were conducted only in Lebanon and Jordan. No primary data collection took place in Turkey or Iraq due to political and security reasons, respectively.

3.1. Secondary Data:

Secondary data collection method includes an analysis of most existing reports related to tertiary education programmes provided to young Syrian refugees in the four countries and most relevant reports written by major organisations (e.g., UNHCR, UNICEF, etc.).

3.2. Focus groups:

The main purpose of the focus group technique is to collect qualitative, collective, and detailed information from individuals who experienced life events related to the researched themes (Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007). The interactive nature of the focus groups allowed the research team to form a sound understanding for Syrian refugees' perceptions of the tertiary education programmes provided to them. It is worth noting, however, that these perceptions may be biased or even distorted in some cases which requires another technique to validate the collected data. This technique was the semi-structured interviews conducted with some major stakeholders in Lebanon and Jordan. However, as objective researchers, the BUE research team presents the perceptions of Syrian refugees as collected.

The discussion within each focus group discussion covered the following main themes:

- 1) The role of tertiary education programmes in the current living conditions of Syrian refugees.

- 2) The role of tertiary education programmes in drawing the future line of Syrian refugees.
- 3) Tertiary education programmes provided by local organizations and academic institutions.
- 4) Tertiary education programmes provided by international organizations and academic institutions.
- 5) The accessibility of tertiary education programmes provided by local or international organizations.
- 6) The main barriers that prevent Syrian refugees from enrolling in tertiary education programmes, include- but are not limited to- the following:
 - Previous education is not recognised or accredited
 - The lack of the required documents (i.e. transcripts, passports)
 - Financial barriers
 - Language barriers
 - Transportation barriers
 - Cultural barriers (i.e. gender – domestic responsibilities, childcare, *sharaf*).
 - Security barriers (i.e. required to mix with opposing political/religious groups).
- 7) The suitability of tertiary education programmes provided by local or international organisations.
- 8) The quality of tertiary education programmes provided by local or international organisations.
- 9) Education programmes that are existent, known and accessible but are not desirable to refugees for the following (possible) reasons:
 - Unfamiliar (i.e. online learning) Lack status (i.e. TVET)
 - Poor quality
 - Perceived not to enhance employability
 - Non-accredited, don't lead to a degree or diploma (i.e. non-formal)
 - Require travel abroad (i.e. overseas scholarships – difficult for married students, females, poor, disabled)
- 10) The type of tertiary education programmes that are desirable to Syrian refugees in terms of content of programme and mode of delivery.

3.3. Interviews:

The BUE research team used semi-structured open-ended interviews with major stakeholders in Lebanon and Jordan. This technique that requires active questioning and effective listening, proved to be very useful in obtaining intensive, in-depth information about the different themes of the research. It also helped in creating a shared understanding between the interviewer(s) and the interviewee(s) (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). An interview guide was prepared based on the results of the literature review process and the areas of interest of the interviewees. The semi-structured interviews allowed the research team to be flexible in handling different research themes with different stakeholders.

The interviews with stockholders covered most of the focus groups themes along with discussions regarding the tertiary education programmes that exist but were unknown to refugees (degree programmes, foundation courses, entry courses, online and digital learning, and so forth).

3.4. Sampling:

For the focus groups sample, a purposive sampling technique was used to draw Syrian participants based on the following criteria:

- 1) Both genders are represented in a balanced way.
- 2) Young Syrians both with and without experience of higher education were represented.
- 3) Young Syrians either pre-crisis or post-displacement were represented.
- 4) University-age range (18-32) that covers undergraduate and post graduate students.

Accordingly, twenty focus groups were conducted in both Lebanon and Jordan with a total of 306 Syrian refugees (157 in Lebanon and 149 in Jordan). All participants signed a consent form to participate in the study and none withdrew from it (response rate is 100%). Each participant was compensated with \$30 (or equivalent) for their time and participation. Each focus group last for 60- to -75 minutes. The main characteristics of focus groups participants are summarised in Table 1 below.

As for the semi-structured interviews, a total of fourteen interviews (7 in Lebanon and 7 in Jordan) were conducted with representatives of major stakeholders (experts in the

field, workers in development and humanitarian organizations, and representatives of local educational institutions, etc.). These organizations include the United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – Lebanon, the British Council (BC) – Lebanon, the Multi-Aid Programs (MAPS)- Lebanon, Terre des homme (TDH) – Italy-Lebanon, the United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – Jordan, the British Council (BC) – Jordan, the Jubilee Centre for Educational Excellence (JCEE) – Jordan, the Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) – Jordan, Al Gharaa Charity Organisation (GCO) – Jordan, and Soureiyat Across Borders (SAB) – Jordan. Each interview lasted for 30-45 minutes. All participants were volunteers and there was no financial compensation.

3.5. Data collection procedures:

Data collection process took place in the period between December 2017 and February 2018. Focus groups were conducted in coordination with the main stakeholders in each country. Unfortunately, the research team could not conduct focus groups within refugee informal settlements (in Lebanon) or formal camps (in Jordan) for security reasons. Each focus group was facilitated with one of the lead researchers with the help of the research coordinator. Each participant was awarded \$30 as transportation incentive to reach the focus group destination/venue.

The FGD covered a reasonable mix of refugees from different backgrounds, these include:

- 1) Those who already started their tertiary education in Syria
- 2) Those who received their high school in Jordan and continuing their tertiary education
- 3) Those who are in high school and about to enrol at tertiary education
- 4) Those who live in camps and outside camps
- 5) Different tertiary education programmes

3.6. Data analysis procedures:

A qualitative thematic content analysis was used to analyse the answers and responses of participants with respect to the main themes of the study. To ensure the objectivity and reflexivity of the results, the thematic analysis and inferences were produced by the research coordinator and verified by the two lead researchers, separately.

Table 1. Sample characteristics

Characteristic	Lebanon		Jordan	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Gender				
Male	101	64%	76	51.2%
Female	56	36%	73	48.8%
Age				
18-22	76	48%	76	48%
23- 27	68	44%	68	44%
28-32	13	8%	13	8%
Educational level				
High School	40	25%	20	14 %
University	111	71%	129	86 %
Graduate studies	6	4%		
Educational state				
Never enrolled (in Syria)	30	19%	32	21%
Enrolled but had their education interrupted	59	38%	18	12%
Continuing education	68	43%	99	67%

4. Results & Findings: Comparative analysis

This section demonstrates the combined results of focus groups and the stakeholders' interviews with respect to the main themes of discussion. These can be presented as follows:

4.1. Theme #1: The role of tertiary education programmes in the current living conditions of Syrian refugees

In a crisis such as the continuing war in Syria, people may tend to place emphasis on immediate needs rather than long term developments. Higher education may be viewed in such contexts as less fundamental and urgent than satisfying the basic survival needs (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Selby & Tadros, 2016). However, deprioritising tertiary education for young Syrian refugees is risky and has serious outcomes. This may result in brain drain on the one hand, and on the other, creates a 'lost generation' of young people (Deane, 2016).

In Lebanon, with respect to the role of tertiary education programmes in the current living conditions, young Syrian refugees identified themselves into two different cohorts; the first cohort believed that tertiary education in their current situation is considered a luxury that they could not afford as priority goes towards providing their families with food and basic living supplies. There is also a considerable belief among refugees in Lebanon that the level of education is inversely proportionate to employability. In this sense, the higher the education pursued by an individual, the less likely they are of also finding a job. This perception is largely reflected by the job market in Lebanon, where even highly skilled/trained Lebanese citizens are unable to find skilled work. The job market is also more restrictive toward refugees, who cannot be employed in a number of skilled industries, such as medicine and engineering, even if they may have attained a degree in these subjects in Lebanon. In recognition of this, many young people would rather not waste time and money on education, and start working as soon as they can.

In addition, working conditions in Lebanon are quite stressful; hence it is difficult to balance between work and tertiary education responsibilities. When these responsibilities contradict, they may prefer to continue to work rather than to continue their tertiary education. Furthermore, some may decide to work instead of their

parents in order to protect them from the stressful work conditions that may harm their dignity and self-esteem.

The second cohort, on the other hand, believed that tertiary education is important to their current living situation and may be more important for their future conditions. They gave several reasons to justify the importance of tertiary education for their current situations in Lebanon; these include, but are not limited to, the following

- 1) Tertiary education will allow them to be eligible for a wider range of opportunities for personal growth and personal development of skills.
- 2) It will ensure that young Syrians, especially young females, are independent and capable of managing their lives.
- 3) It will allow them to make a difference in the local and global community.
- 4) It will help them to be cultured and mature individuals.
- 5) It will give them the know-how of building new generations. They stress on the fact that most young Syrian children within and outside Syria are deprived of education opportunities, and it is their responsibility to help those unfortunate children to get proper education.
- 6) It will ensure that they are up to date with technological and scientific advances.
- 7) It will allow them to be unique.
- 8) It will allow them to be effective individuals.
- 9) It will allow them to better serve the countries that hosted them (Lebanon) and to prove to all others that they (young Syrian) are distinguished and qualified individuals.
- 10) It will allow them to make sound decisions as individuals and as a nation.
- 11) It will prevent them from being victims of radicalism or victims of drug abuse and crime.

As per Jordan, Syrian refugees acknowledged the importance of tertiary education for improving their current situation in Jordan and help them satisfy a wide range of their needs. These cover the following needs:

- 1) Satisfying their basic needs: They express this by saying:
 - It is a safeguard from poverty and social inferiority

- For girls it is essential and not an option (maybe for a boy education is an option because he can work and sometimes must give work priority due to family obligations and responsibilities).
 - For girls it is also a safeguard from trafficking, abuse and her way of understanding her rights in such volatile times.
 - For boys, it is essential in the case there is no other option because it protects them from being abused at work
- 2) Satisfying their social needs: They express this by saying:
- It gives us the opportunity to help ourselves and in turn help others
 - It is my gateway to interacting with society and building relationships
 - It is important to us as Syrians because it allows us to give back to the Jordanian community
- 3) Satisfying their self-esteem needs: They express this by saying
- It is important to us and we eagerly await the opportunity to enrol in a reputable institution.
 - It gives girls a sense of pride
 - It is our door to freedom from being subordinate
- 4) Satisfying their self-actualization needs: They express this by saying
- It is the means by which I will fulfil my dreams
 - It will help me mature as a person
 - It is our way of overcoming challenges and proving to ourselves that we can rise above the crisis
 - It is a means to an end; we study at university in Jordan in order to receive a recognised higher education certificate that would allow us to travel and work anywhere in the world.
 - It is a weapon to fight against the effects of the war (hopelessness, depression and loss of vision for the future).

4.2. Theme # 2: The role of tertiary education programmes in drawing the future life of Syrian refugees.

In Lebanon, young Syrian refugees gave several reasons to justify the importance of tertiary education for their future circumstances, especially if they get the opportunity to return back to their country. They believe that only Syrians will rebuild Syria again. With this respect, they believe that tertiary education will help them re-build

their nation again without external interferences. They indicated that completing tertiary education will ensure that there is diversity in the social fabric and the required academic fields when they begin to rebuild their nation. Some of them indicated that they are keen to continue their tertiary education even if in a field that they did not want in the first place, because this field may be important and required in the rebuilding process of their nation. In addition, they indicated that tertiary education will help them in the future, on the personal level, to acquire better living conditions (better marriage, better job, better salary, better working conditions, etc.), and will enable them to be better parents who can raise their children in healthier and more favourable conditions. One participant said: “education is our door to hope”. Another participant adds: “We must use this opportunity of living in a safe environment in the host nation and make something of ourselves we can’t guarantee the future. The post-war period is more difficult than during the war”.

In Jordan, similar results were obtained. Syrian refugees indicated that tertiary education will help them to be well prepared for their future and their country’s future. They believe that only Syrians will rebuild Syria again. With respect to this, they believe that tertiary education will help them re-build their nation again without external interferences. They indicated that completing tertiary education will ensure that there is diversity in the social fabric and the required academic fields when they begin to rebuild their nation. They express this by saying:

- If it is absent from our lives, this will be a destructive situation because it is our line of hope to the future and to rebuild our nation.
- It will give us the strength we need to rebuild our nation; we cannot go back to our nation weak.
- It will allow us to enrol in different specializations (e.g., civil engineering) required to rebuild Syria.
- In addition to joining the workforce and contributing in rebuilding their country, Syrian girls stated that tertiary education is considered to be an investment for their future because they are the ones who will teach future generations whether their own children as they raise families or through volunteer work to ensure they strengthen the community or as an educated wife to stand by her partner.

As can be concluded from the participants' responses, higher education serves a dual purpose for the refugee community: it is both a tool for sustainable development and a component of immediate security and stability (Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development, 2016).

4.3. Theme # 3: Tertiary education programmes provided by local organizations and academic institutions.

Within this theme, a comparative analysis between the actual tertiary education provisions and their perceptions is conducted as can be shown in the table below.

Table 2. Comparing actual local tertiary education provisions and their perceptions in Lebanon

Tertiary Education Provisions		Young Syrian Refugees' Perceptions and Attitudes
AGFUND (Arab Gulf Program for Development) in Partnership with the Arab Open University Lebanon	Provide University Diplomas in Business (Accounting, Marketing, & Human Resources Management), Diploma in Information Technology, Diploma in Education, and online certificate in Microfinance. The British Open University accredits the courses offered by the Arab Open University.	<p>Young Syrian refugees in Lebanon indicated that they are quite aware and familiar with the tertiary education programmes and services provided to them within the Lebanese society. However, they stressed the fact that these educational programmes and services may vary from one district to the other. Below are the tertiary educational programmes and services provided through local organisations which Syrian refugees are aware of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Lebanese International University (LIU) Al Lebnaneyah El Alameyah 2) The Arab Open University. However, they indicated that the AOU provides them with educational programmes in five majors only. Most Syrians are not interested in these degree programmes. 3) The German University in Lebanon. 4) The Islamic University. 5) Al Ginan University. 6) American University of Beirut (AUB). However, they indicated that the educational programmes provided by the AUB are very challenging to most of them.
American University of Beirut (Al Ghurair STEM Scholars Program)	University scholarships (for Undergrad or grad students) for high achieving and financially disadvantaged Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian students.	
AMIDEAST	Diana Kamal Scholarship Search Fund, Education USA Competitive College Club	
Jesuit Commons: Higher Education	Provide tertiary education {Two	

at the Margins	<p>academic programmes: The Diploma of Liberal Studies and Community Service Learning. Tracks (CSLTs)}</p>	<p>7) The Lebanese American University (LAU)</p> <p>8) Rafic El Hariri University (RHU)</p> <p>Moreover, they indicated that there are other organisations that provide them with some tertiary education services including language skills, computer skills and soft skills. Among those organisations which they mentioned are: Inarah, Injaz (skill building), Tomorrow's Leaders, and the British Council in Lebanon which offers grammar courses and English language courses which run for four months. Students who take the British Council language courses are provided at the end with a certificate showing their English language level and are given the opportunity to take the IELTS exam. These skill building courses helped them develop academically but did not necessarily help them in accessing tertiary education programmes.</p>
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Table 3. Comparing actual local tertiary education provisions and their perceptions in Jordan

Tertiary Education Provisions		Young Syrian Refugees' Perceptions and Attitudes
IIE (Institute of International Education)	IIE has established a pilot Emergency Student Fund programme in Jordan. These provide scholarship opportunities for Syrian refugees. The pilot project has also received support from the then Jordanian Secretary General of the Ministry of Higher Education (Sherab and Tranchik 2016: 19).	Young Syrian refugees in Jordan indicated that they are quite aware and familiar with the tertiary education programmes and services provided to them within the Jordanian society. They shared the information they know about the tertiary education programmes and services provided by the following local organizations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Al-Zarqa University 2) Applied Sciences Private University 3) Amman University 4) Jordanian – German University. 5) Talaal Abou Ghazala University with MITY online 6) Gharnatah college 7) Al-emirati Camp 8) Jesuit Refugees Services 9) Al-Quds College which offers a diploma for vocational studies. 10) Al-Aqsa Foundation 11) Al-Gharaa Charity organization: They indicated that this organization is very selective of the students and the areas which they come from in Syria, students believe that those from Adleb
Jamiya Project in Jordan	The Open Society Foundation funds the Jamiya project in Jordan (Open Society Foundations 2016) which focuses on overcoming the barriers that refugees face in accessing tertiary education. Jamiya blends online and in-person university courses for Syrians in Jordan, and aims to create a replicable blueprint	

	that can be deployed in future refugee crises.’ (O’Keefe 2016).	are excluded while those from Damascus are selected. It is a partial scholarship and requires you to achieve 70%. Enrolling in Al Gharaa scholarship does not allow you to apply for another scholarship. This is a disadvantage.
Kaplan Test Prep	This project has offered support to five hundred students in crisis, since 2013, but involvement requires individuals to have proficiency in English.	Moreover, they indicated that there are 10 extra marks added to their overall grade when they enrol at any tertiary education programme. However, they referred to that this is not special to them and these marks are added to all students except Jordanian students.

4.4. Theme # 4: Tertiary education programmes provided by international organizations and academic institutions.

Within this theme, a comparative analysis between the actual tertiary education provisions and their perceptions is conducted as can be shown in the table below.

Table 4. Comparing actual international tertiary education provisions and their perceptions in Lebanon

Tertiary Education Provisions		Young Syrian Refugees' Perceptions and Attitudes
Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education	Offers scholarships to individuals who are: High achieving, Financially disadvantaged students admissible for a higher education STEM degree at the undergraduate/graduate level (provided they have not interrupted their education after high school for more than 4 years). To apply students must meet program eligibility criteria, including most notably a GPA of 85% or 3.0	<p>Young Syrian refugees indicated that they are also aware of most of the different scholarships provided to them via international organisations for joining tertiary education programmes in Lebanon, among these initiatives and scholarships they mentioned:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) UNHCR- DAFI Programme. 2) SPARK 3) LaSer 4) HOPES – Masters Programme 5) Jusour 6) Sirat (religious) <p>Some of them revealed that they are also familiar with other organisations that provide tertiary education programmes abroad, these include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) JICA – Japan 2) Chevening UK.
Ambassade de France au Liban	Scholarship program to study in France (for Syrian students in Lebanon)	

European Union Erasmus+ Programme	Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees: open to all Bachelor students. Erasmus+ Credit Mobility: exchange programmes for students and staff at all levels, all disciplines. Erasmus+ Capacity building: open to all Lebanese Higher education institutions. Erasmus+ Jean Monnet : open to all Lebanese Higher Education Institutions	3) DAAD – Germany 4) WUSC - Canada 5) Hungarian scholarship 6) France 7) Catalonia 8) Turkey 9) New Zealand However, comparing the actual provisions against youth’ perceptions indicates that a more effective communication mechanisms is required to raise their awareness about the different possibilities provided to them through international organization.
Heriot-Watt University	Scholarships for Master in HW in Britain 2017 2018 academic year	
HOPES (Project funded by the European Union’s Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis , the Madad Fund)	University scholarship and English courses	
JICA	The Japanese government grant research students "MONBUKAGAKUSHO: MEXT"- 2017 to study the master's and doctoral	

JUSOOR: Lebanon for Higher Education	Funded by expatriated Syrians living abroad, including the Asfari Foundation, Said Foundation and Chalhoub Group, JUSOOR funds outreach activities to thousands of Syrian youth, as well as scholarships, and activity centres.	
LASeR	University scholarships Language training Capacity building	
MasterCard Foundation Scholarship	MasterCard has committed to supporting refugees enrolling in the Faculty of Health and Sciences at AUB. The scholarships aim to provide Syrians with quality leadership skills, offering 180 scholarships over next nine years. Of these places, 33% will go to refugees from Syria, with equal focus on refugees from Africa and members of the Lebanese host community.	

SPARK	University scholarships (BA) Vocational studies scholarships (TS)	
UNESCO Scholarships	Much of the money for such programmes has come from Kuwait, which granted UNESCO \$5 million to support young Syrians with accessing tertiary education.	
UNHCR DAFI Scholarships	Up to 300 students were supported through the UNHCR DAFI scholarship programme in 2016 (El-Ghali, Berjaoui, and McKnight 2017). In Lebanon, this programme also offers language support in coordination with the British Council, the American Centre for English and Institut Français for French.	
Unite Lebanon Youth Project – ULYP	Language training + college counselling University Scholarships (BA) + Stipend	

University of West London	Provides financial support for outstanding students who wish to act as ambassadors for the University of West London	
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Table 5. Comparing actual international tertiary education provisions and their perceptions in Jordan

Tertiary Education Provisions		Young Syrian Refugees' Perceptions and Attitudes
EDU-Syria	EDU is a 2016 project funded by DAAD New Perspectives Scholarships (European Union), which aims to provide higher education to young Syrians and Jordanians. This is led by the German Jordanian University in partnership with Zarqa University, Yarmouk University and Al-Quds College. This has seen 300 places open to refugees at Zarqa college alone. Places are prioritised for those whose university studies were interrupted	<p>Young Syrian refugees indicated that they are also aware of the different scholarships provided to them via international organizations for joining tertiary education programmes in Jordan, among these initiatives and scholarships they mentioned:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) UNHCR- DAFI Programme. 2) EU- EduSyria 3) Mercy without Limit¹, (a new organization which opened within the past two years- Rahma), 4) Canadian Government Scholarship for Syrians to study and work in Canada. 5) Hayah Foundation. 6) Jesour Scholarship 7) Kiron 8) SPARK

¹ It is an organization to help widowed Syrian Women and orphans. It is also supporting the education of Syrians in higher education in Amman. Source: <https://mwlimits.org/>

UNHCR	<p>Advocacy in Jordan meant that as of November 2015 the ‘Ministry of Higher Education would recognise the Ministry of Interior card and asylum seeker certificate in lieu of education documentation and transcripts with support of the Jordan Hashemite University and al-Bayt university’ (Sherab and Tranchik 2016: 21). University focused advocacy has also seen JHU informed offer a reduction in school fees by 20%. Moreover, 33 Jordan-based scholarships were offered through the DAFI scheme in 2013, 17 of which went to Syrians (Shuyab, Makkouk, and Tuttunji 2014: 18).</p>	<p>9) Hayah Education Fund 10) Al-Hokair Scholarship</p> <p>Some of them revealed that they are also familiar with other organizations that provide tertiary education programmes abroad, these include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Chevening UK. 2) DAAD – Germany 3) WUSC – World University Service in Canada <p>They referred also to the English language courses provided by the British Council that include 100 hrs. and the Aptis test. However, they indicated that it was stopped in September 2017.</p>
UNICEF	<p>UNICEF provided support to the Jordanian Ministry of Education to establish ‘learning spaces in the refugee camps and strengthen the</p>	

	capacity of primary and secondary schools in the host communities' (Sherab and Tranchik 2016: 15).	
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4.5. Theme # 5: The accessibility of tertiary education programmes provided by local or international organisations.

Although young Syrian refugees in hosting countries revealed that they are quite aware and familiar with tertiary education programmes provided to them by local and international organisations, they stressed the fact that these tertiary education opportunities are challenging and inaccessible to most of them. They attributed this inaccessibility to several barriers and challenges. The comparative analysis of such barriers and challenges between service providers (provisions) and service recipients (young Syrian refugees) can be summarized in the table below:

Barrier/challenge	Provider's perspective	Lebanon	Jordan	Turkey
Language	Many higher education courses and programmes in Lebanon and Jordan are often instructed in English or French (in the case of Lebanon), especially Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects, but also some arts and humanities courses too. This is not so much the case for vocational training, which is often instructed in Arabic. As such, this is more of a barrier to higher education in particular, constituting in this regard a major challenge for Syrian refugees who lack English and/or French language skills. Similarly, in Turkey, where subjects are not instructed in English, courses are taught in Turkish (Abu-Assab and Nasser-Eddin 2015). In Lebanon, some courses are also instructed in French (El-Ghali, Berjaoui, and McKnight 2017). Overall, there is also a distinct lack of Arabic content across the board, and also in online and distance learning options, limiting overall access and attainment (INEE 2017).	Most tertiary education programmes are provided in English or French which makes it extremely difficult for young Syrian refugees to be accepted in a large number of degree programmes offered to the public; even if they do get accepted, it is still a challenge which may gravely affect the quality of their academic study. Some young Syrian refugees have reported that they completed all the “technical” or practical modules adequately, but they were unable to graduate because they could not pass some of the modules which were taught in English in addition to the English language modules. This is also quite problematic for those who wish to enrol at the AUB or try to get a scholarship to study abroad. The English language proficiency test requirements (TOEFL or IELTS) represent one of the major barriers that prevent young Syrian refugees from being accepted in such programmes.	Most tertiary education programmes are provided in English. Teaching at universities in Jordan is in English but professors are lecturing in Arabic/English and give students the necessary vocabulary in English in some of the degree programmes. This in a way is good for Syrian students because they can follow the lectures and not struggle with both language and content. But Syrian students of course understand that the use of English will ultimately prepare them for the work environment should they travel abroad.	Language is probably the biggest obstacle for Syrians' integration into the higher education system in Turkey (Erisman and Looney, 2007). Studying in Turkey is particularly difficult because most Syrians do not know Turkish, the main language of instruction, or English: language barriers emerge as a problem even in the process of applying for universities and filling out applications (Fricke et al., 2014). Besides the expansion of TÖMER courses offered by universities in the region after admission, which have high fees, the Higher Education Council issued a regulation allowing the universities in the region to offer programmes in Arabic. Also, within the scope of the challenges presented by the language of instruction, it was reported that most universities place students in the same classes with little attention to the varying levels of Turkish proficiency.
Accreditation and qualifications	Many refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq find that they are unable to apply for or access tertiary education because they cannot	Previous education is not accredited or recognised. This presents a major barrier for young Syrian refugees who received “Al-Eitelaf” certificate.	More flexible procedures are conducted within the Jordanian government to facilitate the accreditation of the previous	The Higher Education Council of Turkey in 2013 made some decisions to allow Syrian refugee students to transfer their

	<p>produce proper copies of their past qualifications, often because they were left in Syria or have been destroyed during the crisis. This severely restricts the ability of refugees to access programmes. For example, ‘out of 400 applicants for a scholarship program, only 130 had the necessary documents to enrol at a Jordanian university’ (Al-Fanar Media 2016: 7). Some universities and initiatives are attempting to verify degrees or offer opportunities to demonstrate ability through specially tailored entry exams. NOKUT (Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education) verifies degrees through an intensive interview process that could be a model for others to replicate. This challenge also interacts with a number of socio-economic obstacles. For example, recovering or securing copies of past attainment and academic certificates can be expensive so whilst such documents are accessible in theory, they remain de facto out of reach for less privileged Syrians (ILO 2015; Dakkak, Yacoub, and Qarout 2017).</p>	<p>This certificate is provided by the party known as “Syrian coalition” (“National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces” to be equated to the High School certificate. According to the respondents’ answers, students in both programmes (formal and Al-Eitelaḥ) study the same exact curricula and go through the same examination process. However, the “Al-Eitelaḥ” certificate is not accredited nor recognised by almost all higher education institutions. Therefore, the holders of this certificate need to join the high school system to receive a recognised certificate in order to continue their tertiary education. On the other hand, the “Al-Sharia” certificate is accredited and recognised yet is stigmatised. Each holder of this certificate is viewed to be a potential terrorist, as a result, they find it challenging to enrol in scholarships or and are not seen as a priority in being accepted in many tertiary education programmes.</p>	<p>study. Many placement tests and exams are conducted to determine the suitable level for students in the basic and secondary education. Therefore they can obtain Jordanian certificates.</p>	<p>studies to a higher education institution given that they had the required authenticated documentation and academic records. In the absence of such documentation, students were accepted as special students at seven universities across the country and allowed to transfer their completed credits upon authentication of their academic records. Despite this procedure, the challenge of obtaining academic records or high school degrees was echoed as one of the challenges facing the Syrian refugee students in pursuing their studies. Despite the efforts made by the state institutions to facilitate admission processes, many universities introduce additional requirements that are perceived as challenges to access.</p>
Financial	<p>The conditions of Syrian refugees are very unstable in hosting countries; Syrian refugees have to support their families financially to</p>	<p>It is evident that all tertiary education programmes are expensive. Even when the young Syrian refugees receive a scholarship that covers the</p>	<p>It can be noticed that all tertiary education programmes in Jordan are expensive. Even when the young Syrian refugees receive a</p>	<p>Given the dire socioeconomic situation many of Syrian students live in, making ends meet and earning living remains</p>

	<p>secure a basic standard of living and that results in many students leaving education. Moreover, Syrian refugee students cannot afford the tuition fees of the university and also there is a huge demand on scholarships and usually the number of students applying for the scholarships is much higher than the scholarships. Cost (both direct and indirect) prevents young people from enrolling in tertiary education. Whilst donor support exists, this does not cover the overall level of demand, and often falls short of full support for living costs and so forth</p>	<p>degree programme's tuition fees, they still need to cover 1) Living expenses and accommodation (rent- food- electricity- water supply- gas- etc.). Lebanon is very expensive compared to Syria, 2) Daily transportation to and from university, and 3) Study supplies: some study programmes requires laptops, digital cameras, laboratory supplies, etc.)</p>	<p>scholarship that fully covers the programme's tuition fees, they still need lots of money to cover Living expenses and accommodation: 1) Living conditions (rent- food- electricity- water supply- gas- etc.) in Jordan is expensive compared with the situation in Syria, 2) Daily transportation to and from university, and 3) Study supplies: some study programmes require laptops, digital cameras, laboratory supplies, etc.)</p>	<p>a burden beyond the university costs. Many of these students need to work to support their families and cannot afford language fees or application fees, let alone sustain themselves during college without working. Scholarships are an important but short-term solution. The turbulence in students' financial status leads to missed opportunities as well as a waste of time and funds.</p>
Documentation	<p>Lack of documentation, particularly for young men, prevents their movement and access to tertiary education institutions of tertiary education. Many young men also face a higher risk of being stopped at checkpoints, leading to possible arrest or deportation. In the case of Lebanon, Syrian refugees especially are reluctant of pursuing tertiary education because of the existence of check points. Residence permits are not easy to acquire in Lebanon, and are very hard to renew if they expire.</p> <p>Palestinians from Syria encounter a more complex situation: these refugees must possess an entry permit approved by the General</p>	<p>All tertiary education programmes require validated and accredited certificates of previous education. Obtaining these certificates puts young Syrian refugees in extreme hardships because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is a bureaucratic and time consuming process, and they need their time to work and support their families and /or to study and develop themselves. - It is an expensive process that requires a considerable amount of money that some of them cannot afford. - It is a risky process hence it may require travelling back to Syria and being exposed to unsecure conditions especially for young men who may 	<p>All tertiary education programmes require validated and accredited certificates of previous education. Obtaining these certificates puts young Syrian refugees in extreme hardships because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is a bureaucratic and time consuming process, and they need their time to work and support their families and /or to study and develop themselves. - It is an expensive process that requires a considerable amount of money that some of them cannot afford. - It is a risky process hence it may require travelling back to Syria and being exposed to 	<p>Syrian refugees are requested to provide proper documentation and authentic academic records from Syria, affording associated education costs, and transferring credit from previous years of study.</p>

	Directorate of General Security, residency of between one to three years, or an exit and return permit. These obstacles are so severe that they drastically limit Syrian Palestinian access to tertiary education, forcing them to 'remain in a war zone.	be dragged to join the military or face imprisonment.	insecure conditions especially for young men who may be dragged to join the military or face imprisonment.	
<i>Employability and work permits</i>	Restrictions imposed on employment and employability for refugees in hosting countries discourages refugees from pursuing tertiary education. Refugees who complete university or technical degrees in many cases are not allowed to work using their attained skills. Work permits, when granted by the government, limit Syrian refugees to specific low-skilled jobs, undermining the long-term practical benefits of pursuing tertiary education.	In Lebanon, Syrian students are not permitted to work and obtaining work permits is time consuming and expensive. Working without such permits is illegal, stressful, low-paid and insecure	In Jordan, Syrian students are not permitted to work. However, the government allowed some of them to obtain work permits. However, this is limited to specific low-skilled, underpaid jobs.	In Turkey, the lack of an existing legal framework for integration into the labour market constitutes a major shortcoming. Turkish state officials acknowledge this limitation and point to the internationally well-received new draft law which is set to allow the Syrian population the right to apply for work permits within the industries selected by provincial governance boards. As it stands, however, most Syrians still need to work without a legal framework in order to survive. This has led to the creation of a dual labour market where refugees are willing to work for two-thirds of the wages paid to locals. A new legislation to grant refugees work permits was adopted in January 2016, but its actual implementation may take further time. Up until then, lacking the ability to work

				legally, the only alternative has been (and continues to be) to work illegally for low wages, without any entitlements or social benefits. This makes Syrian refugees vulnerable to exploitation.
Cultural barriers	<p>There are some unique challenges that face certain groups, such as women, when it comes to accessing tertiary education opportunities. For example, scholarships for fulltime courses require successful applicants to often travel far from where young Syrian women live. In this case women are unable to benefit as they have other priorities such as taking care of family members. They also face security and social challenges when it comes to mobility.</p> <p>In addition, scholarships provided are very competitive, which means that those who benefit from these opportunities are the ‘cream of the crop’. Often, they are young Syrians who have language skills, mobility and access. Under this context, providers of such scholarships are perpetuating inequalities in the society.</p>	<p>It was quite evident from the focus groups discussions that young female Syrian refugees have the same passion as males for continuing their tertiary education. Some have indicated that it is difficult to balance between education and family particularly if they are married or looking after the family in the case of the death of a parent. Yet they explained they are willing to live with these burdens to guarantee a better present for themselves and a better future for themselves, their children and their country. Many have even expressed their readiness to continue their tertiary education abroad by themselves if they get a good opportunity that covers all their living expenses and academic tuition. They indicated that their families may not oppose this opportunity because they trust them and have great aspirations for them. However, few of the young female Syrian refugees particularly those from Adleb in Syria indicated that they may feel uncomfortable to be by themselves because they are</p>	<p>The focus groups discussions revealed that female young Syrian refugees have the same passion as males for continuing their tertiary education. They have admitted that they are suffering from both education-family conflict and family-education conflict. Yet they explained they are willing to live with these burdens to guarantee a better present for themselves and a better future for themselves, their children and their country. Although many girls confirmed that they rejected opportunities of study abroad due to family and cultural barriers, they indicated that they may feel uncomfortable to be by themselves because they are not accustomed to be away from their family and supporters or because they share the burden of housekeeping. However, some of them express their willingness to continue their</p>	

		not accustomed to be away from their family or because they share the burden of housekeeping. One girl stated that “I love my family and will not leave them for the sake of education or a particular degree programme”. Another said “I shoulder the burden of housekeeping and it is a priority for me” another stated “I wouldn’t travel to study, it is a huge responsibility to be alone.”	tertiary education abroad – only by themselves- if they got a good opportunity that supports their living over there. They indicated that their families may not oppose this opportunity because they trust them and have great aspiration of them. Moreover, it was noted that on the other hand, girls who live in camps may be forced into early marriage instead of pursuing education. This was an element that over decades had disappeared from Syrian culture but has resurfaced with the current refugee situation in camps.	
Legal		Focus groups indicated that a considerably large percentage of participants are living in Lebanon without legal residency. Residency permits are a major deterrent in their daily lives (an illegal residency permit can cost them a \$700 fine, deportation to Syria or detention from 48 hr. to 1 week in Lebanon). In order to rectify their legal situation they have to have a sponsor (Kafil). This sponsorship system (Kafala) puts them in an extremely stressful situation for several reasons: 1) Scarcity of Lebanese sponsors. 2) Financial obligations towards the sponsor (some ask for \$500 to agree		Syrian refugees are currently under “temporary protection status”, which grants them access to health, education, and social and legal assistance through a provisional identity card. This ad hoc status does not grant them internationally recognised refugee status and will not lead to citizenship rights. The current legal arrangements make it difficult for the refugees to envisage any mid to longer-term prospects in Turkey. Most of them feel trapped in a situation in which it is uncertain whether they will be

		<p>to be a sponsor), 3) Humiliation, physical, and emotional abuse they may be exposed to from the sponsors. Residency and sponsorship renewals are bureaucratic, time consuming and expensive.</p> <p>Moreover, the curfew imposed on Syrian refugees till 5pm in some areas and till 8pm in other areas, limits where they can go to access higher education degree programmes particularly if they have to travel. One participant said “the security inspections are so many by Lebanese authorities and this forces us to live in constant fear.”</p>		<p>able to work legally or claim citizenship rights in the future. These problems are compounded by the perceived lack of available and clearly defined channels of communication between Syrian refugees and official bodies, from local authorities to the central government.</p>
Other barriers	<p>Camp and non-camp differences: the study environment in camps is often not suitable for students, where the infrastructure is poor, and cannot accommodate for students to pursue their education in a holistic way. Additionally, in camps, students are unable to access tertiary education academic institutions as their mobility is highly restricted.</p>	<p>Age and GPA: Many scholarship providers put an age limit (usually 25 year for the undergraduate programmes and 32 years for post-graduate programmes) which prevents a considerable number of young Syrian refugees’ equal opportunities to be enrolled and get accepted in higher education programmes. Among other barriers is the required GPA which some participants viewed to be high and impractical for them especially when we take into consideration their current circumstances as individuals who have fled a war and their sufferings. Moreover, some scholarship providers require applicants to have participated in</p>	<p>Age and GPA: many scholarship providers require an age limit (usually 28 year for the undergraduate programmes) which prevents some young Syrian refugees their equal opportunities to be enrolled and get accepted. Among other barriers is the required GPA (at least 70%) that some participants viewed to be high and impractical for them especially when taking into consideration the conditions they were suffering. Moreover, some scholarship providers require applicants to have participated in charity and community service activities to</p>	<p>Limited educational Infrastructure, difficult entry requirement, challenging university regulations, bureaucracy and marginalisation.</p>

		community service activities to get the opportunity to enrol. This may not be feasible to many of the young Syrian refugees who spend their time working to support their families and their educational and personal growth.	get the opportunity to enrol. This may not be feasible to many of young Syrian refugees who spend their time working to support their families and their educational and personal growth.	
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4.6. Theme # 6: The suitability of tertiary education programmes provided by local or international organisations.

As a result of the above mentioned barriers, many of the young Syrian refugees in Lebanon have found themselves forced to accept any available tertiary education programme offered even if it does not suit their personal interests, aspirations, previous academic backgrounds and/or living conditions. Using their own words, “We would be ready to enrol in any degree programme available to us even if we feel it does not add to our knowledge because in this day and age it is paramount to have a recognised higher education certificate”. Another participant adds: “Due to financial restraints we enrol in whatever degree programmes are accessible even if we know we will not use this degree to work with it in Lebanon or Syria.” This is supported by the response of a third participant who said “ Sometimes we feel that what we studied is not relevant nor has it helped develop our skills as individuals who need to build themselves as humans and rebuild their nation.”

Within many Lebanese universities, young Syrian refugees are treated as international students. This implies they should pay approximately double the, already high, tuition fees. This forces them to search for full scholarships that cover tuition regardless of the major of the degree programme. Accordingly, high quality education degree programmes that are not covered by any scholarships specifically, medicine, oral medicine, veterinary medicine, pharmacy, and engineering) are out of their reach. A limited variety of degree programmes are available for them. These include degrees in mass communication, business administration, history, sociology, psychology, Arabic language and literature, English language and literature, graphic design, computer science, basic sciences and laboratory sciences. Other degree programmes including, for example, political science and law are available; however, represent major challenges for young Syrian refugees who may consider returning back to their countries because of the major disparity in these disciplines between the political and legal situations in Syria and Lebanon. With respect to those refugees who may consider remaining in Lebanon, focus group discussions reveal that political science programme in Lebanon is much better because they have more freedom of speech. With regards to the Faculty of Law some said: “why we should study Lebanese Law it will be useless”, others said: “being enrolled at university they realised that there is a

lot of similarities between Lebanese Law and Syrian law”, and many of them join this faculty because it is mostly in Arabic with few modules in foreign language.

Nevertheless, the focus group discussions revealed very high level of adaptability, resilience and acceptance from young Syrian refugees for their new reality. One participant said “Higher education will help me create opportunities for myself instead of waiting for opportunities to happen for me and in turn I can create opportunities for others.” Another participant added “This generation is adapting to the circumstances, we are determined to succeed despite the difficulties by loving what is forced on us and ensuring we succeed.”

The situation was quite different in Jordan, where most (about 90%) of Syrian refugees manage to enrol at their desired tertiary education programmes. Most of them desire practical “prestigious” programmes (e.g., pharmacy- engineering - medical schools) and they manage to convince scholarship providers with their competencies and their desires so they were able to get the desired scholarship. More specifically, the DAFI scholarship covered all degree programmes and all universities. Moreover, it gives each student \$1000 (700 GD) per academic year to cover transportation, pocket money and study requirements.

4.7. The quality of tertiary education programmes provided by local or international organizations

When it comes to the quality of tertiary education programmes provided to young Syrian refugees in Lebanon, the focus group discussion revealed three mainstreams. The first mainstream believes that the tertiary education programmes provided to young Syrian refugees are of high quality. They attributed this to several reasons, including the following:

- The programmes meet their needs.
- The content is good. It gives them a wider scope of learning and ensures they are aware of a variety of perspectives on the same topic.
- The quality of the academic programmes is much better than the Syrian ones because they improve their language skills and ensure there is some practical work (not in all programmes).
- The teaching method is interactive.

- The interpersonal relationship with the instructors is good, and instructors are available whenever they are needed.
- There is peer interaction.
- Degrees are accredited and recognised (especially AUB and LIU)

The second mainstream believes that, many barriers prevent them from attaining the education quality they need and deserve. Using their own words, “Lebanese universities do not take into account our circumstances as individuals who have fled a war and are in dire straits.” The Lebanese higher education system does not offer them, as Syrian refugee students, any foundation courses to degree programmes prior to enrolling. They do not have the option of enrolling in English language proficiency courses in parallel to their degree programme study to help them succeed academically. There is no academic and personal advising or orientation programmes for Syrian refugee students. There are no clear entry guidelines for some universities which is confusing for them as non-natives to this country. Some universities offer scholarships to students including Syrians but it seems that this is insufficient to ensure they do not drop out of higher education in order to cover their basic living expenses.

More specifically, the focus group discussions identified the main explanatory factors for why young Syrian refugees undervalue the quality of tertiary education programmes provided to them in Lebanon. These include the following:

- Higher education degree programmes are three years and this puts too much pressure on the student, also Syrian students are not used to this system.
- The work load is immense and at times prevents some of them from continuing their education or carrying on with their employment.
- Not all faculties provide essential reading material or reference texts and this can be a problem if they need to study on their own.
- In some degree programmes, there is little practical work or hands-on activities.
- The degree offered by some universities (e.g., LIU) is not favoured by the job market
- Examination schedule is crammed and needs to be revised to allow them a day or two for preparation.

- Academic staff need professional development in teaching and learning.
- Student affairs do not allow them to appeal their grades whenever they have complaints.
- Lebanese universities do not always have clear cut policies and regulations.
- Curriculums are weak and it is just a way to pass time but no real skills are developed.
- Curriculums must be reviewed and revised. The Lebanese curriculum is crammed with unnecessary information. Each semester consists of 9-12 modules.
- Student's academic schedule is not organised and wastes the student's time.

The third mainstream believes that the quality of education differs from one university to another. It depends on many factors and we cannot reach a viable generalisation with this concern.

In Jordan, the situation was more specific. The results from the focus group discussions revealed that each programme has its own distinct, positive and negative, features. The main advantages mentioned throughout the discussions included the following:

- 1) Elective modules are varied and ensure maintaining students knowledgeable with various disciplines.
- 2) Independent learning is good and helps students learn how to search and where they can find reliable sources of information
- 3) Assessment strategies are good as assessments are divided into three stages. However, some believe it would be even better if there was only a mid-term and final exam.
- 4) Professors are accessible and approachable especially for elective modules.
- 5) They can select their own study load per semester where the maximum load is 18 hrs., 15 hrs. is the minimum but 12 hrs. is acceptable only in the first semester

On the other hand, several disadvantages of tertiary education programmes were reported as well, these include:

- 1) The huge gap between the theoretical study and the real world practices particularly in the STEM degree programmes.
- 2) Syrian students are exempted from Military Studies at university but are required to take another subject which requires registration and extra fees. This is not perceived as fair, Syrian students don't have enough money to spare.
- 3) No internship or employability skills training are provided to prepare students to the labour market.
- 4) Overall grades above 95% are reduced by HoDs to 90% because it is an internal policy that no one should get higher than that ceiling which is demotivating.
- 5) Most degree programmes are 4 years (or 5 years in medical schools), students prefer to finish their study in shorter time periods².
- 6) Some online degree college programmes (e.g., JRS scholarship) are accessible but leave the student feeling lost as a result of the lack of supervision and follow up from instructors; students are left completely on their own to complete the first part within the first year.
- 7) Transportation services are available but sometimes buses are late so students take other means of transportation which is costly.

The majority of participants, however, stressed the fact that the quality of education differs from one university to another. It depends on many factors and we cannot reach a viable generalization with this concern.

4.8. Theme # 8: Education programmes that exist, are known and accessible but are not desirable to Syrian refugees.

In Lebanon, most of the young Syrian refugees believe that “It’s better to have a higher education degree than none at all.” Using their own words, “We don’t pick and choose we apply to any degree programme.” Accordingly, they are craving for any possibility of tertiary education. However, some participants indicated that this is not

² This point of completing studies in a shorter time period is different with regards to the Syrian refugee students in Lebanon where the degree programmes follow the French system and are 3 years. Syrian students indicated in Lebanon that this was too great a load on them.

Research coordinator

always the case. For example, Arab Open University offers five degree programmes which are weak programmes and are not attractive to many Syrian refugee students. In addition, Tourism & Hotels is a degree programme that is of no interest to most Syrian students. The same is true for a degree programme in Education (especially for primary schools).

A similar pattern of results exists among Syrian refugees in **Jordan**. Focus group participants determined several characteristics of the undesirable programmes, these include:

- 1) Accreditation and recognition: For example, Al Quds College is a two year scholarship for vocational studies followed by an exit exam which will determine if you are capable of completing another two years to equal the degree of higher education but this requires additional separate funding. Most Syrian students do not find this a rewarding opportunity despite the financial support in the form of a scholarship because it is not a higher education degree nor is it recognised by the job market or the international community.
- 2) Market demand: Teacher education, history, philosophy and humanities are undesirable programmes because they are not in demand by the job market
- 3) Low social status (e.g. TVET programmes).
- 4) Poor quality and reputation
- 5) Inflexible: UNICEF, for example, offers three, six and nine month TVET programmes. Almost no one enrolls in the nine month programmes, whilst the majorities enrol in the three-month programmes.
- 6) Require travel abroad (i.e. overseas scholarships – difficult for married students, females, poor, disabled

4.9. Blended and online tertiary education programmes

In Lebanon, the MEHE is open to accepting 50/50 blended learning, in recognition of many of the challenges highlighted above, in particular documentation and cost. Under these schemes, students can attend 50% online modules and 50% face to face modules at Lebanese universities, allowing their diplomas to be accredited.

However, this decision has not been guaranteed by a government circular or regulation. It is also unclear how universities will implement such blended courses.

On the other hand, blended learning was perceived to be suitable for English language learning and it is preferable to have English language courses prior to the start of the academic year, during the summer and in the evenings.

Moreover, many tertiary education programmes are provided on line. The provision report mentions the following:

EDRAAK	Free access (in Arabic) to courses taught and developed at international higher education institutions (platform)
Education without Borders	Provide an opportunity to obtain an international, distance learning higher education degree, taught in universities around the world. Provide language learning services as well as professional recognitions services
Global Institute for Health and Human rights	On-line courses (mainly health science) in Arabic targeting medical students in camps.
Jamiya Project	Piloting one course: one 12 week blended (online and in-person tuition). 'Small Private Online Courses' (SPOCs, not MOOCs) in Applied IT
KIRON- Kiron Open Higher Education	Free higher education and graduate with an accredited university degree.

However, focus group discussions indicated that online degree programmes are not of interest for most of them especially if they are not accredited or recognised. They see these programmes as useless because without a recognized certificate these degree programmes will not help them get a job or be recognized by the community.

For example, according to the interviewed Syrian refugees, Kiron³ is a German online degree programme but it is not certified or accredited, therefore, it is not desirable for most of them.

Another problem with online education programmes is that internet service is quite expensive and the internet speed is slow. Moreover, online programmes, , as perceived by young Syrian refugees⁴, have a major drawback which is the lack of interaction with academic staff and no follow up from faculty staff members and, as Syrian students; they need this to ensure they stay on track. It can be noticed that Syrian students seem to require follow up and interaction in person as they are products of an educational system that does not foster independent learning and critical thinking. They are also unaware that some online courses or educational programmes do provide extensive support by faculty staff via the internet and the course/module platform with discussions and peer interaction on a daily basis.

At the same time, a rather few participants see online courses as a way to develop their skills and build their knowledge even if they do not get a recognised certificate. In addition, online degree programmes will not require a residency permit or transportation.

³ Kiron Open Higher Education (gGmbH) is a non-profit organization founded in 2015 with the mission to enable access to higher education and successful learning for refugees through digital solutions. As part of an innovative educational model Kiron offers coherent curricula using MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) from partner platforms like Coursera and edX so that refugees can start studying regardless of their status. Courses are mostly provided in English, completely free of charge for the students and all accessible via our learning platform Kiron Campus. Through strong partnerships with accredited universities worldwide, students have the opportunity to finish their program with a regular bachelor's degree. Today, a team of 70 employees receives further support from volunteers worldwide and a competence pool consisting of experts from relevant fields, such as professors, psychologists and business specialists.

The Kiron courses, which lead to a certificate, are considered 'micro-credentials', which can be recognized at local, international and online Universities, and in the labour market in Jordan, in refugees home country, and also in resettlement countries. Therefore, our students have the flexibility to study, whilst deciding or waiting for the next step.

Kiron has created a unique learning program set up by a committed team of learning engineers. Our courses are designed to utilise the reputed online MOOC platforms such as Coursera, Edx, FUN or Open Classrooms and are devised based on academic demands. Our students have constant access to our program from wherever they may be, completely free of charge. Kiron offers two study tracks to students:

- Business and Economics
- Computer Science

Source: <https://kiron.ngo/project-manager/>
<https://kiron.ngo/jordan/>

⁴ This is a fallacy, this is their perception but the reality is that online programmes are interactive and are facilitated by qualified academic staff and there is weekly follow up and discussions with student support.

A similar pattern of results occurs among Syrian refugees in Jordan, where online degree programmes are considered by most participants to be a waste of time because the certificate is not recognised by the Ministry of Higher Education or the job market. Moreover, when they were told that the Ministry of Higher Education is looking into recognising online degree programmes such as Kiron, they continued to perceive these programmes as undesirable compared to traditional degree programmes. They explained this by stressing the fact that the traditional university life provides them with the required space to express themselves, meet others, and establish healthy social relationships. This explanation occurred repeatedly especially from camp participants.

4.10. Theme # 10: The type of tertiary education programmes that are desirable to Syrian refugees in terms of content of programme and mode of delivery.

Based on their perceptions and their awareness of what they actually need, young Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan prescribe the desirable characteristics of tertiary education programmes. These characteristics include the following characteristics:

1) Academic support

- Offer English language support and foundation programmes to help Syrian refugee students acquire the basic knowledge they need in order to succeed academically prior to joining the degree programme.
- Availability of material and lectures online after lectures.
- Ensure interaction between student and academic staff member.
- Availability of academic advising, personal tutoring and orientation sessions for Syrian refugees to help them make a smooth transition into the university system.
- Curriculum needs to be revised to remove out-dated content.
- Variety of assessment methods

2) Financial aids and other types of support

- Scholarships should cover transportation because it is expensive.
- Medical insurance.
- Recreational space and programmes at university.

- There should be opportunities for students to work part-time during study on campus to ensure students do not fall short financially particularly those not enrolled on a full scholarship.
- Awareness campaigns on campus about the Syrian crisis and mentoring on how to accept others on campus so that it is an inclusive campus and learning environment. There is no discrimination but the fact that Syrian students are high achievers is causing them problems with other students. However, students claim that professors and universities are welcoming and encouraging Syrian students because they raise the profile of the university.

3) Technical Support

- Availability of internet as this is currently limited and slow.
- Well-equipped study rooms for students on campus.
- There is a need to renew equipment and ensure the facilities are available for students to conduct their experiments.

4) Flexible University Regulation

- Attendance for Syrian refugees should be optional not compulsory.
- Flexibility of sessions: morning and evening to suit their work schedule.
- Entry requirements should depend on entry assessments not just the high school certificate overall grade because that limits them to certain degree programmes.
- Introducing some degree programmes in Arabic.
- Lectures should end around 2pm to allow those who need to work to do so as some students are responsible for their families.

5) Clear link between education and employability

- Curriculum needs to develop their language and vocational skills for the job market.
- Practical training during the study of the degree programme.
- The programme must include internship and academic advising to help students develop employability skills.

4.11. Theme # 11: The tertiary education programmes that exist but are unknown to refugees.

The assessment of this theme was driven directly from the interviews results with major stakeholders in Lebanon and Jordan. It can be noticed that networking among young Syrian refugees, through Facebook, word of mouth and social networks like whatsapp groups, is the main channel for learning about most of the available scholarships. The focus group discussions revealed that they were quite aware and familiar with all the scholarships provided within their local communities. However, many of them were not aware of the tertiary educational programmes and services provided outside of their local communities and those which provide these opportunities for study abroad.

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