Towards an inclusive education: A comparative longitudinal study

A study of the education of refugee and national children in Lebanon, Turkey and Australia

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report presents the findings from the first wave of data collection for an ongoing comparative longitudinal study entitled “My Future Five Years From Now” funded by Lyle Spencer foundation.

This five-year study led by the Centre for Lebanese Studies at the Lebanese American University in collaboration with partners abroad, examines the relationship between contexts of refugee asylum, education policies and education outcomes across three national contexts: Lebanon, Australia and Turkey.

This report presents the findings from the first round of data collection in Turkey in 2018-2019 academic year.

All reported findings are statistically significant (at the 5% level), unless stated otherwise.

METHODS AND ANALYSIS

“My Future Five Years From Now” is a mixed methods study. The study uses policy analysis, interviews, survey and observational data to gain varied insights into the educational provisions made for national and refugee students. Mixed methods data offers rich and diverse perspectives on complex educational phenomena and supports the triangulation of data.

Data was collected during the 2018-2019 academic year from temporary education centers that hosted Syrian students only and, public schools that cater for Turkish nationals and Syrian refugees. These schools were located in Gaziantep and Istanbul.

Survey data was analyzed using Stata statistical analysis software to examine the difference reported by Turkish and Syrian students.

Team members

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Between 2012 and 2019, over three million Syrians sought asylum in Turkey (UNHCR, 2019). Turkey offers a medium type of settlement which allows refugees to settle down and work.

According to the statistics published by the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), around 60% of Syrian school-aged children are enrolled in schools (2019).

Less than 60% of those are enrolled in temporary centers run by the local Syrian population and the Syrian opposition’s education ministry.

On the other hand, 40% attend mainstream public schools.

Similar to Lebanon, enrollment rates drop down with age, with less than 2% enrolled in secondary education in both the public and temporary centers.

Referring to education policies, a “regulation for foreign students” was issued in 2010 before the first Syrian refugees arrived in Turkey. The government regulation provided some general rights for foreigners in terms of registration and support for schooling. For example, Temporary Education Centers (TECs) became prevalent among Syrians but the Ministry of Education (MoE) warranted private entrepreneurs to open schools and allocated some schools to provide education for refugee children after that local students finished their classes.

Apart from local public schools, Turkey’s local government authorities allowed people to conduct learning and schooling activities in private places or in municipal properties. A government regulation of 2014 ordered local agencies of the MoE to take administrative control of all TECs and governorships in consultation with the MoE.

At the outset of the crisis, Turkish principals and teachers were appointed to work in the schools and each school was administered by one Syrian and Turkish director. Syrian teachers who worked voluntarily were employed by the local MoE and got paid.

Another regulation in 2014 indicated changing the policy from one of temporary settlement in Turkey to better integration in the country’s education system. And since 2016, the Turkish government had a policy to close the TECs and integrate Syrian students into its public schools; The number of TECs dropped from 430 in 2016 to 209 by the end of 2018. It is expected that all the TECs will close by 2021.
Most of Syrian students in our sample (76%) left Syria following the crisis due to insecurity and instability in the country. Despite the protracted nature of displacement, pre-displacement education levels among these children were high. A total of 93% of Syrians in our sample were previously enrolled in formal education back in Syria.

The table below shows the degree of socioeconomic vulnerability among the students in our sample. It indicates that Syrians attending TECs are the most vulnerable group of students in Turkey, whereas those attending public schools are not only the least vulnerable but are even less vulnerable than Turkish students.
Syrians in TECs face less difficulty in comprehending the Turkish language compared to their peers in public schools, whereas Turkish students face the least difficulty in Turkish language comprehension. Perhaps this could be attributed to the homogeneity of students’ Turkish language proficiency within the classroom. In public schools, Syrian students are placed with their Turkish peers who are already adept in Turkish.

Thus, there seems to be varying levels of Turkish language proficiency within a single public-school classroom. In TECs, however, only Syrian students are present in the classroom and thus the teachers are dealing with a group of students having a more unified level of Turkish language proficiency.

This observation might explain why Syrian students in TECs also have the best educational performance.

Equal numbers of Turkish and Syrian students face difficulty in mathematics.
Syrians in Turkish public schools reported the worst schooling experiences across the sample of students in Turkey.

While language might be a barrier for them, the heterogeneity of the classroom, as stated above, is also worth consideration. This can be reaffirmed in how Syrians in TECs reported a better schooling experience than Syrian and Turkish students in public schools.

**STUDENTS REPORTING ON HOW THEY FELT ABOUT THEIR TEACHERS.**

- **63%** of Syrian students: My teachers support me when I face difficulties.
- **47%** of Turkish students: My teachers show appreciation of my efforts and progress.
- **77%** of Syrian students: My teachers are friendly and treat me well.
While the mixed-classroom setting allows Turkish and Syrian students to spend time with each other, it nevertheless poses academic challenges to their educational performance and learning experience.

Despite those academic challenges, 84% and 75% of Syrian and Turkish students, respectively, reported that they (strongly) liked going to school.

Further, 90% and 87% of Syrian and Turkish students, respectively, planned to finish university-level education.

**SOCIAL COHESION AND ASPIRATIONS**

### Students Who Like School

- **84%** Syrian students like going to school.
- **75%** Turkish students like going to school.

### Students Who Plan to Finish University-Level Education

- **90%** Syrian students plan to finish university-level education.
- **87%** Turkish students plan to finish university-level education.

**References**
