Schooling Experiences and Outcomes of Refugee Children in Lebanon, Turkey, and Australia

A Comparative Longitudinal Study

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Executive summary

The field of refugee education proliferated significantly over the past twenty years evident in the increasing attention it gained and reflected in the increasing enrolment rate amongst refugees. According to UNHCR enrolment rates amongst refugee children increased in primary stage from 30 % to 70% (UNHCR, 2021). Humanitarian agencies, notably the UNHCR and UNICEF, have played a leading role in this regard. This increasing interest in education for refugees have seen the rise of two distinct approaches or paradigms. The first paradigm, Education in Emergency, is prevalent in the global south and is characterized by short-term interventions in humanitarian contexts. This paradigm is often observed in low-income countries where the host country's educational system is already constrained. Refugees in this context are typically awaiting repatriation and are denied the right to permanent settlement. The second paradigm focuses on medium to long-term education provisions and is commonly found in countries of final settlement in the global north. It is important to note that the political, economic, and social contexts in which these paradigms are implemented differ significantly, with high-income countries adopting the long-term approach and low-income countries primarily practicing the emergency model.

Education provisions, including curriculum, certification, segregation or integration policies, and language provisions, vary between countries that follow the emergency model and those that adopt long-term education policies. A comparison of these provisions reveals that the emergency model lacks a forward-looking vision, tends to employ exclusionary practices, and exhibits higher dropout rates. Conversely, countries offering long-term or permanent settlement aim to integrate refugee students into their educational systems, providing them with opportunities for further integration into economic and social life. Such comparisons are crucial for understanding the diverse conditions, including legal status, that can impact the educational attainment of refugee children and how these experiences differ under the two paradigms. Comparative research is particularly necessary to explore the role of legal status and education provisions in influencing students' educational outcomes.

This report presents the findings derived from a comprehensive longitudinal comparative study conducted over a period of five years. The study aimed to investigate the educational experiences of refugees in three distinct countries: Lebanon, Turkey (officially the Republic of Türkiye), and Australia. Specifically, our research focused on examining the aspects of schooling, including teaching and learning practices, language provisions, and school performance, within the context of refugee children attending schools in these countries, which offer varying types of settlements and consequently, different education provisions. The education provisions in each country were heavily influenced by the type of legal settlement provided to refugees. For instance, Lebanon adopted an emergency model of education to accommodate its 500,000 school-aged Syrian children. In contrast, Australia extended permanent settlement to 12,000 specifically selected Syrian refugees, integrating them into mainstream schools. Meanwhile, Turkey underwent a transition in its education and refugee policies, shifting from emergency provisions to longer-term solutions.

Our primary objective was to explore how educational policies implemented in emergency settings, as opposed to those applied in permanent settlements, shape the schooling experiences and outcomes of refugee students.

To gather empirical evidence for our study, we collected both quantitative and qualitative data, which allowed for a comprehensive analysis. The longitudinal data covers the academic years 2018-2019 (year 1), 2019-2020 (year 2), and 2020-2021 (year 3). By examining the collected data, we aimed to gain insights into the dynamics and impact of education provisions on the educational journey of refugee students in these three countries.

This study unveils insights regarding the educational experiences of refugee children, highlighting the disparities between education in emergency (EIE) and long-term educational frameworks. The findings of the study indicate that although education in emergency (EIE) initiatives have effectively facilitated educational access for a substantial number of refugees residing in temporary settlements, they have not adequately addressed the diverse barriers that hinder their academic performance. On the contrary, children who received education under the EIE paradigm reported lower perceptions of academic achievement.

Our findings illuminate the adverse effects of the EIE model, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated economic hardships and widened educational inequalities. Notably, refugees under the EIE paradigm faced more significant challenges, including prolonged disruptions to their schooling prior to resettlement and further interruptions upon arrival in the host country. These obstacles were predominantly attributed to delayed implementation of educational programs for refugees and inconsistent criteria for grade placement. Additionally, refugees under EIE received inadequate preparatory support and language training, demonstrating a failure to address their educational needs both during and after resettlement. Their subordinate position vis-à-vis the host country, made them less of a priority amid a new crisis, that is COVID where the inherently fragile educational system had to attend and priorities Lebanese children in public schools. Consequently, refugee children in Lebanon experienced a significant loss in terms of educational opportunities during the pandemic, leading to a substantial number of missed schooling years.

Despite these aforementioned struggles, refugees under EIE exhibited comparatively less difficulty comprehending the foreign language of instruction across various subjects than their counterparts in Australia. This can be attributed to the presence of native-language-speaking teachers and pedagogical practices employed to bridge the language barrier in foreign language instruction. Consequently, they surpassed their peers enrolled in long-term educational programs. It is worth noting that language difficulties were intensified in the early stages of resettlement in Australia due to the rapid integration of refugees into mainstream education. In contrast, Turkey's gradual integration approach yielded more favorable educational outcomes in terms of language acquisition and academic performance. Thus, this underscores the significance of a gradual integration process for refugee students in mainstream education, particularly during the initial years of resettlement, as an effective means of mitigating language barriers.

Furthermore, our longitudinal data reveals a gradual reduction in language difficulties over time, particularly among refugees in Australia, where the initial years of resettlement posed the greatest linguistic challenges. This suggests that, with sufficient language support, refugees under the long-term educational paradigm can overcome language barriers and eventually surpass those under the EIE model in academic achievement.

This study sheds light on the potential impact of legal settlement and education provisions on the schooling experiences and outcomes of Syrian refugee children in different countries. It highlights the importance of considering various factors such as settlement type and education paradigm when designing educational interventions for refugees. The study also underscores that within a humanitarian context, despite concerted efforts to invest in the education of refugees, societal, economic, and legal barriers persistently undermine and diminish the educational outcomes of refugees. This raises significant concerns regarding the effectiveness of advocating for the enrolment of refugee children in the educational system of the host country without concurrently addressing the barriers that hinder their full integration into the host society. In fact, the current shift towards enrolling refugees in the host country's educational system without actively removing these barriers engenders a multitude of challenges for refugees, as the educational system often lacks the necessary adaptability and responsiveness to cater to the unique needs of refugee children. Consequently, refugee children encounter compromised access to this system, accompanied by additional hurdles. Moreover, they are subsequently denied the entitlement to reap the rewards and advantages that education affords, such as employment opportunities, social status, and meaningful participation due to the constraints on legal status. Finally, the study shows that gradual integration in a longer-term education arrangement and settlement can produce better learning experiences and retention.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In the past two decades, education for refugee children has expanded and become embedded in UNHCR responses. The increasing attention accorded to the education of refugees is manifested in the increase in enrolment rates amongst refugees in the primary stage, from 30 percent to 70 percent in the past twenty years (UNHCR 2019). Despite the progress achieved, enrolment rates amongst refugees remain low in secondary and tertiary education (30 percent and 1 percent, respectively).

The Syrian conflict, which erupted over 11 years ago, led to one of the largest refugee crises in the past decade, where the world witnessed the displacement of the largest refugee population who fled to neighbouring countries. Despite the efforts exerted by UN agencies, donors, and governments, refugee children's access to education is still at risk, with nearly one out of three Syrian children in neighbouring countries still out of school (UNICEF, 2022). Over a decade later, the majority of Syrian refugee children reside in the global south while over a million have been resettled in the global north (UNHCR, 2021).

Most Syrian refugees residing in the neighbouring countries, particularly Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt, do not offer the prospect of settling for refugees. Thus, their status is one of temporality awaiting for repatriation. However, those residing in the global north have been permanently resettled or offered a medium-term legal settlement. Along this stratification of refugees in the global south appears two education paradigms. The first is embedded in a humanitarian logic and often takes place under the education in emergency (EIE) umbrella. The second focuses more on integrating refugees into the longer-term settlements in the global north. Few comparative studies exist on the schooling experiences of Syrian refugees children in the Global north and global south (Crul et al., 2019; Akcan et al., 2018; Kantarci et al., 2019a). In this report, we present the results of a longitudinal comparative study following a cohort of Syrian refugee children in Lebanon, Turkey, and Australia where refugees are offering a short-term, medium-term, and long-term legal settlements, respectively. Thus, by choosing these countries and types of settlement, we wanted to examine the schooling policies and experiences implemented in each in order to identify their strengths and limitations. The three selected countries embody both the emergency education paradigm as well as longer-term education policies.

The humanitarian-led paradigm or EIE is considered to be short-term because it's linked to emergency settings whereby, after a period, refugees are expected to return to their country of origin (INEE, 2004). Education is a long-term planned process that shapes children's future, while EIE is focused on the present. Hence, there is a contradiction between the aim of education and humanitarianism (Brun & Shuayb, 2020). Under the EIE paradigm, schooling is often reduced to literacy as refugees' ability to continue their education is limited to a great extent by many factors, including legal barriers (Brun & Shuayb, 2020; Hammoud et al., 2022). Countries offering a long-term settlement for refugees often focus on enrolling refugee children into the country's mainstream educational system with a prospect of varying degrees of joining the job market. However, the education policies for refugees residing in temporary settlements and awaiting repatriation appear to be more concerned with short-term technical discussions focused on access to education and the type of curriculum to be used, all of which are critical issues but overlook the long-term impact of education amid the precarious future refugees (Brun and Shuayb, 2023). Moreover, in many of these counties, restrictions are applied on the type of jobs refugees are allowed to work, which leaves them with no choice but to seek employment in the informal labour market and accept lower employment outcomes.

The global north-south gap concerning the education of refugee children is also evident in the literature, where research on refugee education in the global north is criticized for being Eurocentric. In contrast, the global south is criticized for focusing on Western Humanitarianism (Shuayb & Crul, 2020). In addition, a limited number of comparative studies examine the difference in education provisions, policies, and practices based on the type of settlements in the global South and global North countries hosting refugees. Hence, in this study, we aim to answer the following two research questions:

1. **How the schooling of refugee children differs between education in emergency and long-term education paradigms?**
2. **What are the factors shaping refugee children's schooling experiences?**

We target Arabic-speaking refugee children (predominantly Syrian in Lebanon and Turkey) enrolled in formal education for three to four years in Lebanon, Turkey, and Australia. As a non-signatory of the 1951 Refugee Conventions, Lebanon offers temporary protection for refugees while awaiting repatriation. Therefore, there is no prospect for settlement or naturalization for refugees in Lebanon. On the other hand, Turkey is a signatory of the refugee convention, yet many of the Syrian refugees who took refuge in Turkey chose to settle temporarily while moving to Europe. Turkey initial response was more humanitarian and gradually shifted to a medium and long-term provision for settling refugees. Australia, on the other hand, hand-picked 12,000 Syrian refugees and offered them permanent settlements. While the education response in Lebanon was embedded in the emergency education paradigm, Turkey policies, as we shall show later in this report, shifted from a temporary and humanitarian response to a medium settlement. The small number of refugees in Australia compared to the host population meant they would be integrated into the national education system.

Our comparative study focuses on factors that shape refugees' learning experiences and schooling outcomes, such as pre-settlement and post-settlement factors, preparatory classes, socioeconomic status, learning difficulties, and educational performance. To reach our aim, we collected quantitative and qualitative data to compare refugee schooling experiences and outcomes in the selected destination countries, offering short-term, medium-term, and long-term settlements.

In this report, we cover four sections. First, we present an overview and comparison of the education provisions and policies for refugee children's schooling experiences and outcomes in the three selected countries. Second, we explain our research methodology, including the instruments used, the sampling framework, data analysis, and limitations of the study. Then we present our findings, followed by the conclusion.

Chapter 2: An Overview of the Education Policy Provisions

In this chapter, we provide an overview of the countries examined within this study: Lebanon, Turkey, and Australia. Specifically, we delve into educational provisions implemented by these countries while also providing a brief on their response toward hosting refugees based on the type of legal settlement offered and the policies associated with it.

Education Response for Syrian Refugee Children in Lebanon

Lebanon, a small neighbouring country, currently hosts the world's highest number of refugees per capita (Norwegian Refugee Council and International Rescue Committee, 2015; UNHCR, 2018). After almost ten years of the ongoing crisis, the Lebanese government persists in dealing with Syrian refugees as temporary and undesirable settlers. Lebanon is not a signatory of the 1951 Geneva Convention related to the status of refugees (United Nations 1951) and refuses to acknowledge the principle of refugees' integration. Thus, it lacks formal domestic refugee legislation (Frangieh, 2015; Janmyr, 2017). For example, Lebanon is considered a country of 'transit,' not one of asylum, according to an agreement signed with the UNHCR in 2003 (UNHCR 2011). However, Lebanon is a signatory of other international conventions and is bound to protect refugees by other principles (Janmyr, 2016), such as the principle of non-refoulment. Though, at the beginning of the Syrian influx, Lebanon kept its borders open until the end of 2014, allowing a large number of Syrians to enter chaotically within a short period. Municipalities took the lead in that duration, whereby each municipality adopted its own approach to welcoming or excluding refugees depending on the political and socioeconomic contexts. Syrians settled informally because the Lebanese government decided to prohibit organized camps, thus avoiding the replication of the 70-year presence of Palestinian refugees (Janmyr, 2016).

Nevertheless, the Lebanese government engaged in the refugee crisis by the end of 2014. It issued the first official paper when the Council of Ministers approved a 'Policy Paper on Syrian Refugee Displacement' while also closing the official border crossing points with Syria. This paper consisted of a new set of regulations banning Syrians from entering Lebanese territory and tightening restrictions on residency and work permits for Syrians residing in the country, hence aiming to reduce the number of Syrians in Lebanon (Kikano, 2021). This resulted in most Syrians turning into illegal settlers and putting their freedom of commute at risk (Frangieh 2015; Lenner and Schmelter 2016). According to Kikano (2021), these regulations deprived Syrians of a number of rights and privileges, including (1) accessing most public services, (2) legally owning or renting a dwelling, (3) participating in the formal job market, (4) seeking aid and protection from official institutions, and (5) moving freely within the country.

Despite the above restrictions, the education of refugee children in Lebanon received considerable attention and funding. In March 2012, the UN enacted the first Regional Response Plan (RRP), a humanitarian project that collaborates with NGOs, to organize Syrian refugees' education in Lebanon. In 2014, the Lebanese government and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), with the backing of humanitarian agencies and donors, took the lead in providing education for refugee children. The public sector became the main route for providing education for refugee children. Non-formal education provisions were put on hold until MEHE developed a national framework and organised the work of NGOs. Two educational strategies, Reaching All Children in Education (RACE I & II), were developed in collaboration with UN agencies (MEHE, 2014 and 2016).

MEHE's decision to resort to the public education sector as the main education provider for refugee children meant that it was necessary to introduce afternoon shifts to accommodate the sudden increase in students. Prior to the Syrian refugee crisis, 1 million students were enrolled in K1 to grade 12. Less than 30% were enrolled in the public education sector as most parents preferred to enrol their children in private schools due to the negative perception of the quality of education in public schools. In 2010, just prior to the breakout of the conflict in Syria, the student/teacher ratio in public schools reached seven students per teacher. MEHE's minister at that time, Hassan Mneimneh, considered closing public schools with hardly any students as one of his achievements. Despite the poor performance of the public sector, which was plagued with mismanagement, it was redeemed as the most suitable sector to accommodate 500,000 school-age Syrian students and provide certified schooling. RACE I strategy, which came almost three years following the crisis and spanned over three years, aimed to enrol less than 50% of school-age children. This meant that a remainder of 50% of children would have been left without schooling for over 5 years, thus jeopardizing their academic future.

The decision of the host government and donor to restrict formal schooling to the public sector without engaging the non-formal or private education sector resulted in the introduction of separate afternoon shifts for Syrian students. Syrian students were taught using the Lebanese national curriculum by contractual teachers whose experience and qualifications are questionable in many cases, and this threatened the quality of education (LCRP, 2018, Shuayb et al., 2014). They also had to learn Math and Science in either English or French, which Syrian children were not taught in Syria, and, as a result, were demoted several years below their age group without additional foreign language support. Poverty was another major barrier pushing refugee children to leave schooling and start working. After 11 years since the breakout of the Syrian crisis, less than 1% of the 50% of enrolled made it to grade 9, indicating a high dropout rate.

Additionally, 50% of those had repeated their grade twice (PMU 2019). In addition, another report by MEHE indicates that only 4% of Syrian children are enrolled in secondary education (NRC, 2020). Furthermore, COVID-19 worsened the crumpling education system in Lebanon and further intensified educational inequalities. According to Hammoud and Shuayb (2021), students' financial situation during the lockdown negatively affected refugee students' access to education, mainly those who were enrolled in the second shift. Additionally, the quality of distant education deteriorated during the lockdown for various reasons, such as teachers' lack of experience in distance learning, poor infrastructure (electricity and internet), and equipment needed for distance learning (Abu Moghli and Shuayb, 2020; Hammoud and Shuayb, 2021).

Eleven years since the eruption of the Syrian conflict and 45% to 55% of Syrian children are currently still out of school, with 30,000 students identified as dropouts during the academic year 2019-2020 (UNHCR, 2021). A recent study by the Centre for Lebanese Studies reveals that 43% of refugee students in public school afternoon shifts dropped out (Hammoud and Shuayb, 2021). Despite all the funding and efforts invested into the schooling of refugee children, both RACE I and II failed to reach the 50% enrolment target. Moreover, less than 4 percent are enrolled in secondary, indicating a massive rate of school dropout and promoting the question about the effectiveness of the educational policies targeting refugees in Lebanon.

Education Response for Syrian Refugee Children in Turkey

As the Syrian war started in 2011, Turkey initially held an open-door policy and allowed Syrians to seek refuge across its neighboring border. The Turkish government initially adopted an encampment policy under the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency with the support of the Red Crescent. Currently, only five percent of the refugees live in camps, while the vast majority live outside camps, mostly in the cities. More than half a million live in Istanbul, closely followed by Gaziantep, Hatay, and Sanliurfa (Nimer, 2022).

However, as it became clearer that it was a protracted displacement, the state, with the help of humanitarian assistance organizations, started to focus on developing strategies to improve Syrians' situation. Although Turkey is a signatory of the 1951 Convention, the Turkish government did not give Syrians an official refugee status; instead, in 2013, Turkey granted Syrian refugees the status of Temporary Protection, which is defined under Article 91 of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (Law No. 6458). The Temporary Protection Regulation (TPR) issued by the Council of Ministers on 22 October 2014 further specifies this status, which provides them access to basic rights such as health services, education, and employment. Still, it does not lead to permanent residency or citizenship.

To accommodate for more than 1 million school-age Syrian children out of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees who arrived in Turkey, Temporary Education Centers (TECs) started opening across the country. These centers charged varying tuition fees and received funding from various institutions. TECs varied in terms of quality of instruction and were primarily staffed with Syrian teachers who taught according to a modified Syrian curriculum where the language of instruction is Arabic (Nimer,2022). Nevertheless, as the conflict protracted, the Ministry of Education progressively took control, intending to close TECs to integrate Syrian children into public schools. In 2014, a circular was issued to provide a legal framework for the supervision and monitoring of the TECs by the Ministry of National Education (Aras & Yasun, 2016), thus regaining control over the education landscape of refugee children. The Turkish Ministry of Education introduced more Turkish classes into their curriculum and worked in collaboration with UNESCO to train teachers in these centers to facilitate the integration of Syrians into mainstream education (UNHCR, 2019b). Also, extensive efforts were invested by the Ministry of National Education with support from EU funds through a variety of programs, such as Promoting Integration of Syrian Children to the Turkish Education System (PICTES) and Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) (Nimer, 2022). This program included training and employing 5,600 Turkish Language teachers to provide language training for 390,000 children and provide the 30,000 students out of school with catch-up courses. It also provided support to overcome social and cultural barriers, as well as guidance and counseling services for traumatized children.

Further, in mid-2017, the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) program was extended to Syrian and other refugee families with the support of the EU. This program aims to encourage enrolment and improve children's school attendance by providing families with limited financial support (35-60 Turkish Lira/per month). These projects initiated by MoNE significantly increased the enrolment of Syrian children in schools (Nimer, 2022). Besides, governmental agencies, local municipalities, and national and international NGOs also supported Syrian children's education (Coşkun & Emin, 2016). The number of students in public schools increased while that in TECs decreased (Nimer,2022). In 2019-2020, all TECs were closed. Nevertheless, a growing body of literature suggests that due to the language barrier, teachers still face difficulty in communicating and teaching Syrian students, in addition to the lack of resources and proper in-service training programmes and activities (Cetin and Icduygu, 2018). As of September 2019 onwards, some Syrians were separated into the so-called "Cohesion Classrooms" in public schools. Syrian students were assessed based on a written and oral exam where those who scored lower than 66% on average were placed in these cohesion classes (Nimer,2022). According to the Ministry of education (MoNE), the enrolment rates of Syrian children under temporary protection in formal education programs reached 684,728 or 62.3% at the end of 2019, out of which only 3.7% are enrolled in TECs; The enrolment rates/level are as follows: 1) 32.88% in upper secondary, 2) 70.5% in lower secondary, 3)89.27% in primary, and 4) 27.19% in pre-school. However, 36.7% of Syrian children are out of school (UNHCR,2019c). In 2021, the number of refugee students enrolled in schools increased, reaching a total of 771, 428 divided as follows: 1) 35,707 students in kindergarten, 2) 442,817 in elementary school, 3) 348,638 in middle school, and 4) 110,976 in high school. In comparison, 432,956 children are out of school (Refugees Association, 2022). This means that the dropout rate has increased since 2019.

Despite the efforts made to integrate and support refugee students, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the schooling of refugee children and put their families at a larger disadvantage, exacerbating pre-existing inequalities in Turkey (Nimer, 2022). Refugees had limited access to secure employment, education, and health services. For example, around 89% of Syrian refugees were unemployed in May 2020, and the only assistance available for refugee families was provided by the Turkish Red Crescent (Türk Kızılay), whereby approximately 1.7 million Syrians received around 1000 Turkish liras per family per month.

Following the breakout of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of National Education's response consisted of closing schools of all grade levels starting March 16, 2020. This was followed by the launch of an online distance learning program known as Eğitim Bilişim Ağı (or EBA) website for all students across the country. Further, the TRT TV channel streamed pre-recorded videos by public school teachers for students of all grade levels. Additional support was given through a hotline, whereby all operators provided free access to the EBA website. Specific Turkish language programs were added to EBA TV for Syrians who attend "cohesion classes." However, Syrian students faced difficulty understanding the language, especially since they couldn't interact with the teachers and parents couldn't fill the education gap for their children due to language barriers (Nimer, 2022).

Furthermore, several reports have documented child labour and early marriages that result from financial deprivation among refugee families, which in turn is likely to increase the school dropout rate (Ustubici & Ince, 2020). For example, the number of work permits issued continues to be very low. A total of 132,497 work permits were issued to Syrian nationals between 2016 and 2019. This can be attributed to the unwillingness of employers to apply for work permits, instead preferring to hire refugees informally and pay them less. In addition, there is a limit on hiring non-Turkish employees, a restriction that falls under Turkish work legislation. Furthermore, work legislations in Turkey restrict Syrians from practicing several professions in fields like healthcare and legal services. This limits their access to minimum wage paying jobs which they struggle with to cover their basic needs.

Education Response for Syrian Refugee Children in Australia

Australia has been responding to humanitarian crises and resettling refugees and vulnerable people for so long (Maadad, 2022). What frames Australia's obligations to refugees is the fact that it is a signatory to the United Nations 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol. Australia accepted the moral responsibility to coordinate with the United Nations' effort to respond to people in humanitarian crises, including refugees coming into the country and those living in offshore camps. However, the Australian government considers the capacity to assist, so it reserves the right to set the targets and mechanisms for accepting humanitarian entrants for ongoing humanitarian programs and put in place objectives and mechanisms for ongoing humanitarian programs (Australian Prime Ministers Centre, 2018).

Based on the annual report published by the Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA, 2019), in 2017, 10,644 refugees out of the announced 16,250 arrived in Australia from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Most of the Syrian refugees have been settled in different areas, such as New South Wales (39%), Victoria (32%), Queensland (13%), and South Australia (6%). In contrast, the rest were distributed in Western Australia, Tasmania, Northern Territory, and the Australian Capital Territory (10%). A report by Collins et al. (2018) shows that from 2015 to 2017, there was a total of 24,926 humanitarian entrants, and approximately one-third of the refugees were children below 18, most of whom were school-aged, 6-17 years old. Under the Multicultural Education policy, the Australian Government is tied to the Australian Multicultural Advisory Council statement on cultural diversity and recommendations, so Australian schools are inclusive, and other education policies have been revered in legislation to ensure that practical barriers to education are addressed (Blythe et al., 2018).

For example, the Department of Social Services (DSS), a government institution that collaborates with other government agencies, ensures various policies and services to assist people in need throughout Australia. Through the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP), DSS supports the integration of refugees by offering services for their settlement. In comparison, the practices of settlement agencies that serve refugees in all states and territories are regulated by the Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA) (SCOA 2017).

Furthermore, in Australia, education is considered a fundamental right for all children, regardless of their nationality. It is compulsory in all states and territories from preschool through high school. Besides, regardless of the district boundaries, Australian public schools are open to all students and are tuition fees-free. Hence, refugee students residing in Australia have access to high-quality schools and related services. They enjoy the same schooling privileges as the local students and have access to the Australian curriculum and support available from both the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments and various non-government agencies catering to the education of refugee-background students. They have the right to non-discrimination based on gender, race, color, or national or ethnic origin when accessing education and support mechanisms. In reference to the policy of non-discrimination and based on the Australian National Curriculum, all refugee children attend school five days per week and receive the same educational services as their national peers (Maadad, 2019). In addition, the Australian curriculum provides the framework for what students should learn from preparatory years until grade 10, regardless of State and Territory education policies and requirements. The framework involves major learning areas such as English (and English as Additional Language/Dialect - EAL/D), health and physical Education (HPE), mathematics, science, humanities and social sciences (HASS), the arts, technologies, and languages. On the contrary, each state and territory provides the senior secondary curriculum for years 11 and 12 to meet the qualifications needed for further pathways such as university, vocational education, or employment. Refugee children receive the same provisions regardless of the state in which they reside (Maadad & Yu, 2022).

The Australian federal government cooperates with states and territories through the Council of Australian Governments and the Education Council to develop and implement policies. However, each state and territory is self-governing and has the right to create educational plans, activities, and programs for refugee children. Hence, there is no overarching Australian government policy for students from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds (Hirsch & Maylea, 2016; Mulkerin, 2017; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). Instead, States and Territories have the autonomy to deliver a range of policies, programs, and activities for refugee education. For example, in Victoria, students from refugee backgrounds can access services from government and non-government agencies through the Refugee Education Support Program (RESP). RESP aims to provide positive educational achievement outcomes, well-being, and engagement in learning. The Queensland Government has supported Syrian refugees by providing the Safe Haven Enterprise Visa Arrangement (SHEV), a visa option that can lead to permanent residency. Schools grant improved access to playgroups for preschool children of refugees, access to kindergarten programs, and equip teachers and principals to deliver effective support for refugee students. In South Australia, the Department for Education, in partnership with the Australian Migrant Resource Centre (AMRC), has recently set up the program Backpacks for Refugee Children to provide school welcome packs for children from a refugee background (Maadad, 2022). Additionally, year 12 graduates have access to a wide range of vocational education programs provided by Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions. Many refugees access TAFE to learn English through the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) and as a pathway to employment (Maadad, 2022).

In addition, the New Arrivals Programme for refugee children supports refugee students' English language learning and helps them access the Australian curriculum, which most state and territory schools adopt, including independent and Catholic schools. However, some provisions are limited to certain areas. For example, in metropolitan areas, students from refugee backgrounds may initially enrol in specialist schools or attend special programs within schools which offer a modified curriculum and literacy and intensive English language support (South Australian Government 2017; Sidhu, Taylor, and Christie 2011). After spending one-and-a-half years, students can transition to another learning environment without extra support based on their age and assessed readiness. They can even transfer to a school and integrate with their Australian peers while receiving extra English language support. Although all children from refugee backgrounds enjoy the same schooling privileges as local students, more funding is needed for schools to support students from refugee backgrounds (Pugh, Every, and Hattam 2012). In addition to ESL support (Weekes et al. 2011), school staff needs more learning resources (Miller, Mitchell, and Brown 2005) and professional development on cultural competencies (Cassity and Gow 2006; Taylor 2008; Block et al. 2014). To reach these goals, more systematic funding and, thus, approaches to educational policy are needed, as in the Australian context, the funding arrangements are intermittent and ever-changing (Matthews 2008).

The country overview presented in this chapter explains the rationale behind selecting Lebanon, Turkey, and Australia for this study. With Lebanon insisting on dealing with Syrian refugees as temporary settlers, Lebanon presents a good example of the education in emergency model. Furthermore, Turkey presents a good example of a country that switched to a more developmental model after initially adopting a humanitarian response. Finally, Australia's response was from the very beginning based on a long-term vision of permanently hosting refugees; therefore, its positioning strengthens the comparative aspect of this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

To investigate the impact of different legal settlements and education paradigms on refugee students' schooling experiences and outcomes, we selected three countries - Lebanon, Turkey, and Australia - encompassing the emergency and longer-term education provisions. The study examined refugee children enrolled in formal education in middle school (years 7, 8, and 9) to examine their educational development and progression over five years (2018-2022). We decided to focus on this school level due to low enrolment rates in Lebanon and Turkey in post-middle schooling. Further, starting at this level allows us to witness the transition from school to work or university in five years. The longitudinal data analysed in this study is limited to the data we collected during the academic years 2018-2019, 2019-2020, and 2020-2021 only. We aim to update this work after conducting the remaining longitudinal data collection waves in the coming years.

The study follows a mixed-method research design based on quantitative and qualitative components. Our quantitative survey includes several closed-ended questions about refugee children's living conditions, household characteristics, socioeconomic status, and schooling experiences and outcomes. Furthermore, our interview questionnaire includes several questions that provide an in-depth understanding of refugee children's living and schooling experiences in the host country. Mixed methods is a valuable approach because it offers different perspectives on the policy environment and refugee students' education outcomes. In year one (2018-2019), we administered face-to-face student surveys and conducted interviews with parents, teachers, and school principals in a face-to-face approach. However, we resorted to online data collection in the second (2019-2020) and third (2020-2021) years due to the COVID-19 lockdown. Student surveys were administered over Kobo and followed by phone call follow-ups. Similarly, interviews with students, parents, teachers, and principals were conducted over the phone.

Our qualitative data are based on interviews and focus group discussions with parents, teachers, school principals, and policymakers in Lebanon, Turkey, and Australia. School visits took place in 2018-2019, where interviews were recorded after seeking the interviewees' permission. On the other hand, phone interviews were conducted and recorded during the academic years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 due to the COVID-19 lockdown. After completing the interviews, all audio recordings were translated into English and coded using NVivo.

Research Sample

The following table shows our student survey sample breakdown by country across all three years of data collection. In year one, we surveyed 1,298 refugee students, while in year two, we could only reach 919 of our sampled refugee students. Hence our attrition rate from year 1 to year 2 was around 29%. In year three, however, our attrition rate dropped to approximately 19% after reaching 716 of the 919 students contacted in year 2.

In Lebanon, throughout all three waves of data collection, we surveyed the same refugee students distributed across all eight districts. In Turkey, we surveyed refugees in only two districts (Gaziantep and Istanbul) known to host the highest number of Syrian refugees. In the second year, we could not conduct the survey with the same students in Turkey; instead, we conducted repeated cross-sectional data with 411 refugee students. However, in year 3, the survey in Turkey was conducted with the same participants as in year 2. Henceforth, the dataset analysed for Turkey in this study is considered a repeated cross-section for years 1 and 2 while longitudinal when looking at years 2 and 3. Like Lebanon, the same students were located and surveyed in Australia, keeping our panel data intact across all three years. We targeted four main states in Australia - New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, and Victoria.

Table 1. Surveys Breakdown by Country

Country	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Lebanon	**247**	**167**	**134**
Turkey	**710**	**411**	**247**
Australia	**341**	**341**	**335**
Total	**1298**	**919**	**716**

The table below shows the gender breakdown of our survey sample by country. A relatively equal percentage of males and females were surveyed in Turkey and Australia for all three data collection waves. However, around 60% of the surveys were conducted with females in Lebanon, while 40% were conducted with males.

Table 2. Breakdown by Gender

Country	Gender	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Lebanon	**Males**	**40%**	**40%**	**41%**
	Females	**60%**	**60%**	**59%**
Turkey	**Males**	**44%**	**54%**	**52%**
	Females	**56%**	**46%**	**48%**
Australia	**Males**	**52%**	**52%**	**53%**
	Females	**48%**	**48%**	**47%**

The table below shows the breakdown of our surveyed sample by type of school for each country. We mainly targeted the afternoon shifts in Lebanese public schools in Lebanon as most refugee children attend these shifts. The first wave of data collection in Turkey targeted both temporary education centers (TECs) and Turkish public schools, as these were the two primary providers of refugee education. However, by the time we conducted the second wave, most TECs were closed by the Turkish governments, which turned our focus in waves two and three to Turkish public schools as they became the primary provider of refugee education. Therefore, our sample of refugee students enrolled in TECs only constitutes 4% of our sample for the academic year 2019-2020 and 0% for the academic year 2020-2021. Most of our sampled students were enrolled in government schools in Australia, while the remaining were distributed between religious and independent schools.

Table 3. Breakdown by School Type

Country	Type of School	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Lebanon	Morning Shift in Public Schools	18%	22%	21%
	Afternoon Shift in Public Schools	82%	78%	79%
Turkey	Public Schools	51%	96%	100%
	Temporary Education Centers (TECs)	49%	4%	0%
Australia	Public Schools	64%	64%	72%
	Roman Catholic Schools	7%	7%	9%
	Independent Schools	30%	30%	19%

The following table shows our qualitative interview sample breakdown by country across all three waves of data collection. In year 1, before the COVID-19 pandemic, we were able to conduct in-person field interviews in all three countries. Our research teams visited schools and conducted individual and focus group interviews with different stakeholders such as principals, teachers, parents, and students. In addition, our teams in Lebanon and Turkey were able to reach out to and interview policymakers. The total number of interviews in wave 1 was 165. However, in year 2, during the COVID-19 lockdown, almost all interviews were conducted online where we reached a total of 173 interviewees. In year 3, we also conducted most of the interviews online for safety reasons and because the majority of schools were still adopting the online teaching and learning method. In year 3 we reached out to 242, as presented in the table below.

Table 4. Interview Breakdown by Country

Year	Interviewee	Lebanon	Turkey	Australia	Total
2018-2019	Parents	27	5	30	63
	Teachers	46	12	14	67
	Principals	15	3	6	24
	Policymakers	7	4	-	11
2019-2020	Students	68	17	-	85
	Parents	30	19	26	49
	Teachers	13	-	10	23
	Principals	12	-	1	13
	Policymakers	-	-	3	3
2020-2021	Students	65	34	25	124
	Parents	30	30	11	71
	Teachers	16	-	6	22
	Principals	13	-	5	18
	Policymakers	-	4	3	7

Limitations

Due to several limitations, convenience sampling was used for this study. In Lebanon, this approach was necessary because of a lack of information regarding the target populations, given that the latest official Lebanese census dates back to 1932. Convenience sampling was also necessary because access to schools was determined by MEHE, which provided us with a list of public schools that included a large number of Syrian students. To reduce sampling bias, we collected data from all eight governorates and from urban and rural areas as well as for males and females. Convenience sampling does not allow us to make generalizations about our target populations. As such, the quantitative results reported here are indicative of the phenomenon of interest and, in conjunction with our rich qualitative data, offer valuable insights into the policy environment and educational outcomes of refugee students. It was also difficult to obtain rich qualitative data from Turkey and Australia, mainly because of the difficulty of obtaining information from school staff and recruiting native Arab-speaking researchers in each of the two countries.

Besides, logistical challenges in Turkey prevented us from surveying the same students in the second data collection wave. Therefore, the data analysed for Turkey in year 2 is a repeated cross-section, unlike the panel data collected in Lebanon and Australia. However, the same students were followed in Turkey's year 3, and we aim to do the same in future data collection waves.

Finally, our second and third waves of data collection were collected in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it was challenging to travel and conduct face-to-face surveys and interviews. As a result, data collection was limited to online surveys with students and phone interviews with parents, teachers, and school principals. This limited our ability to meet the students, visit the school and observe the school environment.

Research Ethics

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the Lebanese American University. Further, all researchers have a certificate from the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative, a research ethics and compliance training program. For participants under 18, their legal guardian's consent was sought first. The names of participants were anonymized while analysing the data. Finally, the researchers would always ensure that the survey was carried out in conditions that allow privacy while at the same time ensuring the safety of both the participant and the researcher.

Chapter 4: Schooling Experiences and Outcomes

To investigate how schooling experiences and outcomes differ between education in emergency and long-term education paradigms, we analysed quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interviews) data collected from Lebanon, Turkey, and Australia during the academic years 2018-2019, 2019-2020, and 2020-2021. In order to reveal the factors that shape refugee children's schooling experiences and outcomes, we grouped our findings into six main sections: (1) socioeconomic factors, (2) pre-arrival factors, (3) post-arrival factors, (4) schooling experiences, (5) foreign language of instruction, (6) schooling performance.

Socioeconomic Factors

It is crucial to consider socioeconomic factors when looking at refugee children's schooling experiences, especially since most refugees struggle financially after forcibly leaving their home countries and continue to struggle for years until they are fully integrated into their new country of residence settings (Block et al., 2014; Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Essomba, 2017; Crul, 2016). Socioeconomic factors are also crucial determinants of school outcomes since disadvantaged refugee families struggle to secure their basic needs and school fees, leading to higher anxiety levels and lower overall schooling outcomes (Karanja, 2010).

Our interviews with refugee parents in all three counties revealed that most refugees experienced some deterioration in their financial situation over the past two years as a result of the pandemic; however, refugee parents in Lebanon were affected the most. This was due to several driving forces that were already affecting refugees' socioeconomic status in Lebanon, even before the pandemic. As indicated earlier in the introduction, temporary settlements are usually accompanied by restrictions on residency and work permits, which increases refugees' vulnerabilities. Many interviewed refugee parents in Lebanon reported that they struggled to find sustainable jobs and were exposed to employment exploitation. Findings from interviews were consistent with the survey results. According to the surveyed students, most children's parents struggled to renew their residency permits, which restricted their mobility and thus their sources of income, increasing their struggles as presented in the figure below.

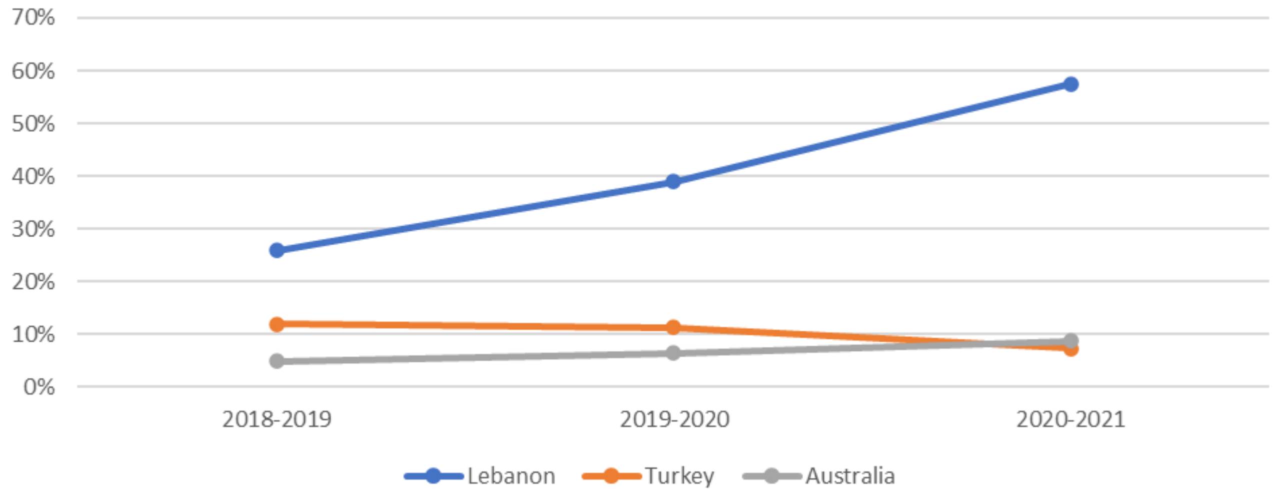

Figure 1. Percentage of Students Whose Families Always Struggle to Pay their Bills

The figure above reveals the impact of deteriorating economic condition and work restrictions on refugee families in Lebanon. Over 50% of the respondents in Lebanon reported that their families always struggled to pay their bills in year 3 (2020-2021), compared to only around 10% in Turkey and Australia. Lebanon's recent financial crisis and the pandemic could have exacerbated the results above; however, year 1's (2018-2019) results confirm that refugees in Lebanon were financially worse off even before 2019's crisis. Furthermore, these figures explain the increased dropout rates among refugee children in Lebanon, knowing that more students are forced to work and support their families. According to our qualitative data, this was mainly true among male students who had no choice but to drop out and support their families.

" During my last year at school, my father wanted to leave to Syria because he could no longer afford it here, so I dropped out and joined him in his work. We paint walls and furniture." (Student, Lebanon)

Our interviews with teachers also reveal that school interruption in Turkey and Australia increased during the pandemic; however, the numbers are negligible compared to Lebanon, where refugees faced compounded crises. For instance, several teachers in Lebanon indicated that during both years of online learning, most students could not secure internet access, electricity, and necessary devices. In addition, many parent interviewees reported that they were unable to cover school expenses such as transportation, books, and stationary, which was also revealed by two consecutive studies we conducted over the past two years (Hammoud, Shuayb, & Al Samhoury, 2021; Hammoud & Shuayb, 2022).

Therefore, more students are pushed to work during their academic year in Lebanon due to increasing financial struggles, as presented in the figure below.

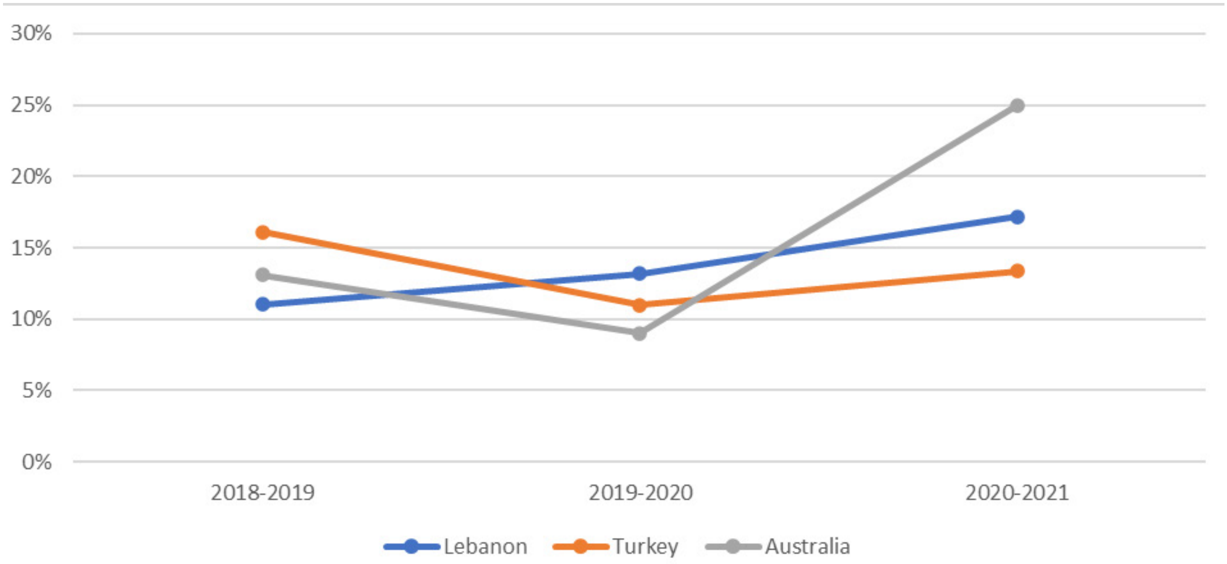

Figure 2. Percentage of Students Working During the Academic Year

We also observe a significant increase in the percentage of students working during the academic year in year 3 in Australia. This increase could be explained by the fact that at the age of 15, children in Australia are legally allowed to work. However, their work is regulated by the government and must not exceed 40 working hours within two weeks. Therefore, we would expect lower dropout rates in Australia due to work since their work is regulated and less invasive to their schooling time.

On another note, some students in Lebanon shifted to vocational education because they couldn't afford to pay for their residency permit, which is a requirement to register in high school, as indicated by several student interviewees. This reflects the sort of bureaucratic barriers refugee students face under the emergency model.

"I couldn't register at high school because I am required to get a residence statement and a residency permit which I didn't have. Eventually, I went to vocational school in order not to lose the year" (Student, Lebanon)

In order to further explore the socioeconomic factors that might shape schooling experiences, we looked closer at refugee children's living conditions and parents' educational attainment. According to Saegert and Evans (2003), living in a crowded home leads to a lack of productive sleep due to limited space and household members' different schedules. Our quantitative data reveals that the average number of people per room is the highest in Lebanon, indicating the worst housing conditions for refugee children under the emergency model. On the other hand, a significantly lower average was observed in Australia under the long-term model, as presented in the figure below. This is an important factor to consider when looking into schooling outcomes because students' learning process is affected by poor housing conditions, where students living in overcrowded houses are less likely to attend school regularly (Harker, 2006). This was also evident in our interviews during COVID-19, whereby many students in Lebanon and Turkey mentioned that their homes were too crowded and unsuitable for learning, which decreased their online attendance and forced them to drop out.

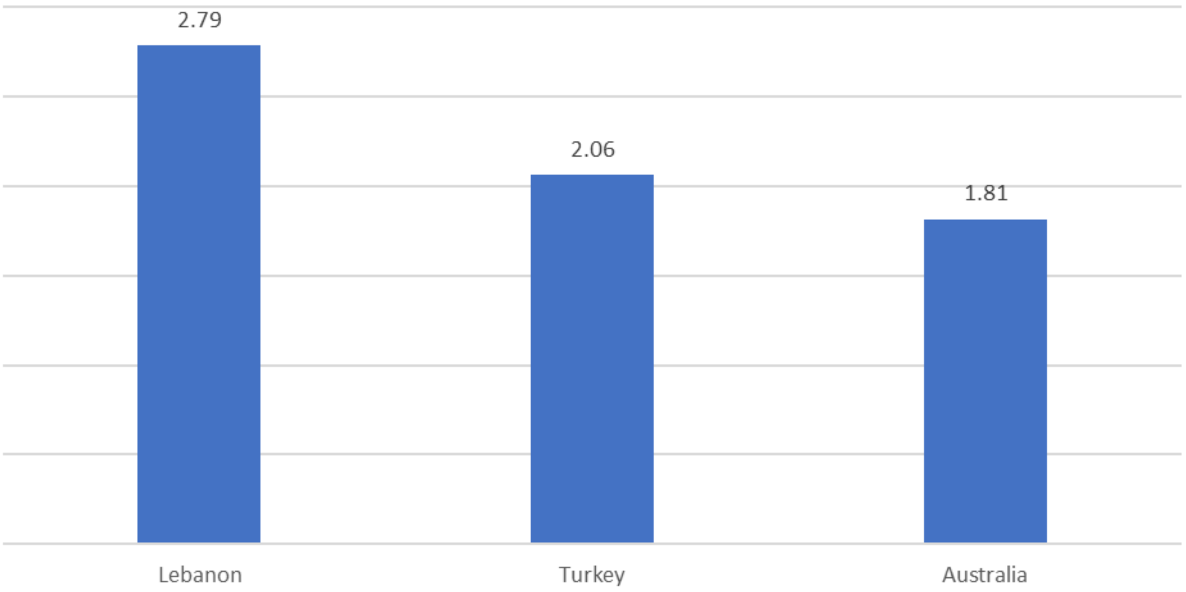

Figure 3. Average Person per Room

Moreover, studies also show that parental involvement may positively impact refugee students' educational experiences and achievements (Koyama & Bakuza, 2017) and that refugee students' learning process can be affected by the parents' capability to support them. Therefore, it is important to look at parents' educational attainment when comparing the schooling outcomes of refugee children. Our quantitative results reveal that refugee parents in Lebanon were significantly less educated than in Turkey and Australia, with Turkey having the highest percentage of educated parents.

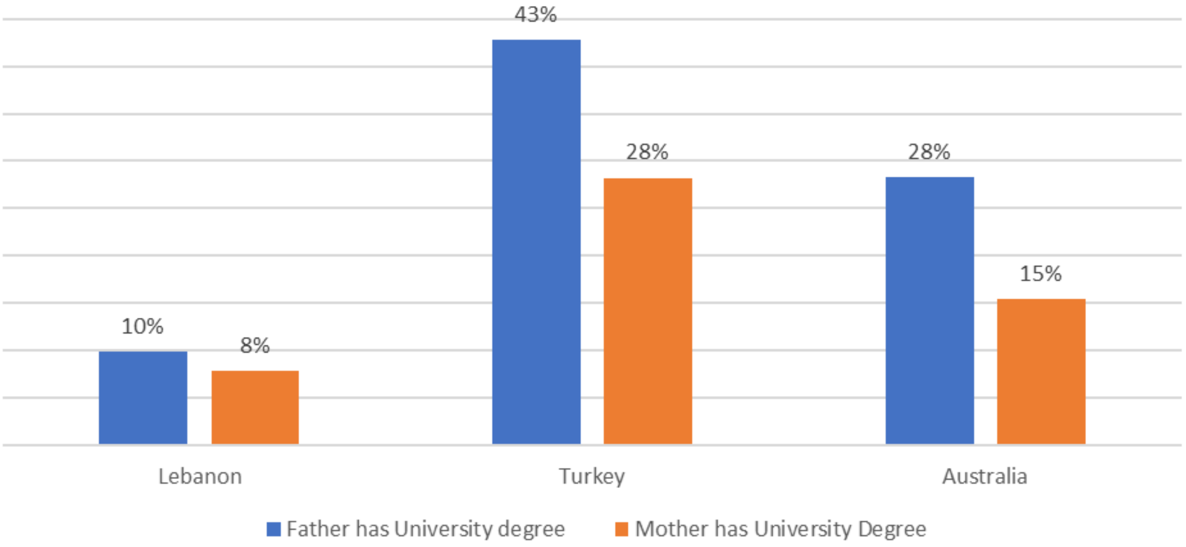

Figure 4. Parents Educational Attainment

The importance of this finding will be later revealed in our attempt to understand the differences in refugee children's language difficulty and schooling performance.

Pre-arrival Factors

To better understand and compare the impact of different educational models on refugee children's schooling experiences, it is important that we first understand the pre-existing challenges refugee children faced prior to moving to each respective host country. One of the factors that could have a stark impact on refugee children's schooling experience is the number of schooling years they missed since the eruption of the conflict in Syria and before becoming a refugee in another country. The longer children stay out of school without any academic learning, the harder it is to re-enrol them back to school and support them in catching up on their learning. This is mainly because the longer students remain out of school, the more they miss academic knowledge, cognitive development, and behavioural skills (Custodio & Loughlin, 2017). Our survey findings revealed that refugee children currently residing in Lebanon and Turkey had missed more schooling in their country of origin than in Australia, as presented in the figure below. Refugee children in Lebanon missed the most schooling years in their country of origin, whereby 41% of students reported missing at least one year of schooling before moving to Lebanon. Therefore, we anticipate school interruption to further intensify the educational challenges mentioned above for refugees in Lebanon, especially since the schooling years missed were in early school grades.

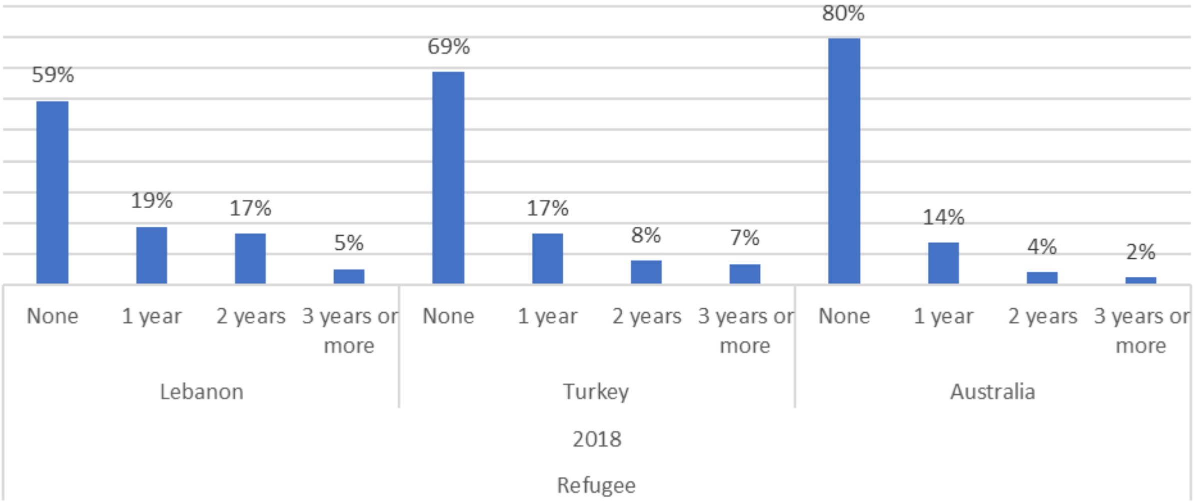

Figure 5. Years of Schooling Missed in Country of Origin

When asked about the reasons for missing schooling years in their country of origin, the three main reasons that were reported by most refugee children in all three countries were (1) due to displacement, (2) insecurity, and (3) school was closed, as presented in the table below.

Table 5. Top Three Reasons for Missing Schooling Years in Country of Origin

Country		2018-2019
Lebanon	**Due to displacement**	**69%**
	Insecurity	**32%**
	School was closed	**25%**
Turkey	**Due to displacement**	**72%**
	Insecurity	**23%**
	School was closed	**15%**
Australia	**Due to displacement**	**44%**
	Insecurity	**34%**
	School was closed	**22%**

The provided reasons for missing school reflect the experiences that those children had to go through prior to their arrival. For instance, one interviewed mother shared that her children received no education during the war as she was imprisoned with her children before escaping to Lebanon. However, her children still missed years of schooling since the government was not providing any route to education for refugees upon their arrival. Therefore, one would assume that barriers to education would be left behind in conflict zones; however, as we will demonstrate in the following sections, some of those reasons continued to exist even in the new host countries.

Moreover, some interviewed parents who took Lebanon as a transitory country to Turkey and Australia reported that they decided not to consider Lebanon as a country of final destination after realizing that their human rights were violated and that their children would not have access to quality education.

"They did not miss any schooling years here in Australia, but they missed school in Lebanon. My oldest son missed one and half years in Lebanon as it was very difficult to enrol him there." (Parent, Australia)

The above results reveal that most surveyed children had an interrupted school experience before leaving their countries since many had been internally displaced before fleeing Syria. In addition to losing schooling years as a result of the conflict, we also wanted to examine if these children were already struggling educationally at their schools in Syria. Our findings revealed that almost 10% of our surveyed refugee children in Lebanon and Australia repeated classes in their country of origin due to poor academic performance.

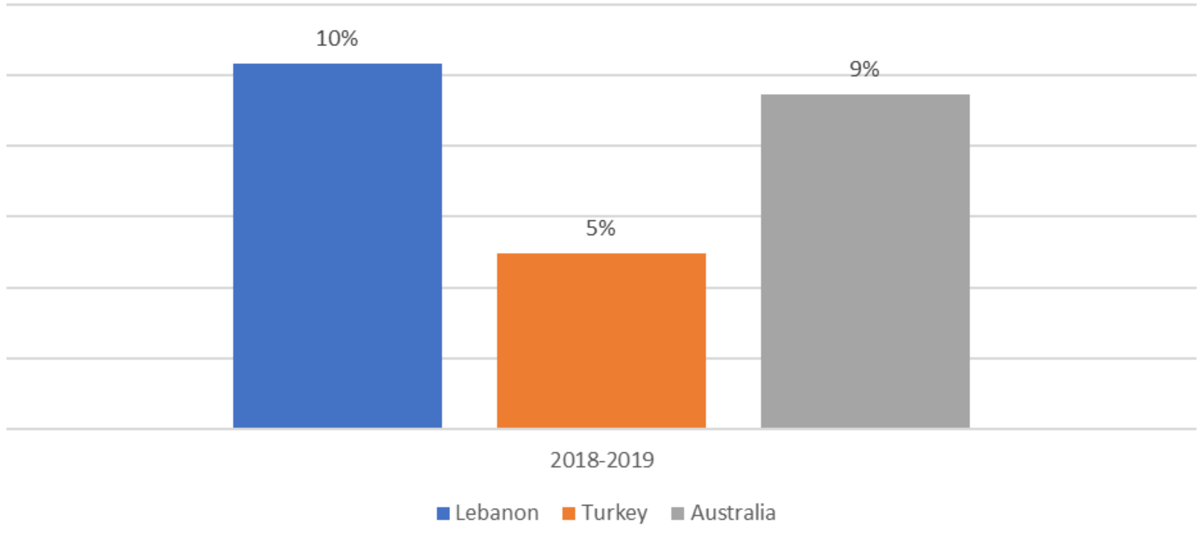

Figure 6. Percentage of Students who Repeated Classes in Country of Origin due to Poor Academic Performance

The academic history of our refugee sample gives us an indication of the challenges they could face in the host country in making up for the lost learning and the academic gap they have accumulated over the years. This background is critical for understanding children's academic performance and progress achieved over the course of our longitudinal study. Thus far, the image emerging about the schooling background of the surveyed refugee children in the three countries reveals that Syrian children currently residing in Lebanon had the most interrupted schooling experience, followed by their peers in Turkey. This will undoubtedly put a bigger challenge on their new host country when attempting to provide them with an education. Yet the challenges facing these children did not cease in their home country but continued in the new host countries. In the following section, we will examine the number of schooling years missed and school placement in the host country.

Post-arrival Factors

While our pre-arrival assessment shows that a considerable percentage of refugee students lost a year or more of schooling before leaving their homes and becoming a refugee, this section shows that most of them continued to miss schooling years in their new country of residence. Our results reveal that refugee children who fled to Lebanon missed more schooling years than their counterparts in Turkey and Australia. Almost two-thirds (60%) of refugee children indicated missing at least one school year in Lebanon, as presented in the figure below. This percentage drops to 46% for children in Australia and 29% for children in Turkey, where students seem to miss the least number of schooling years.

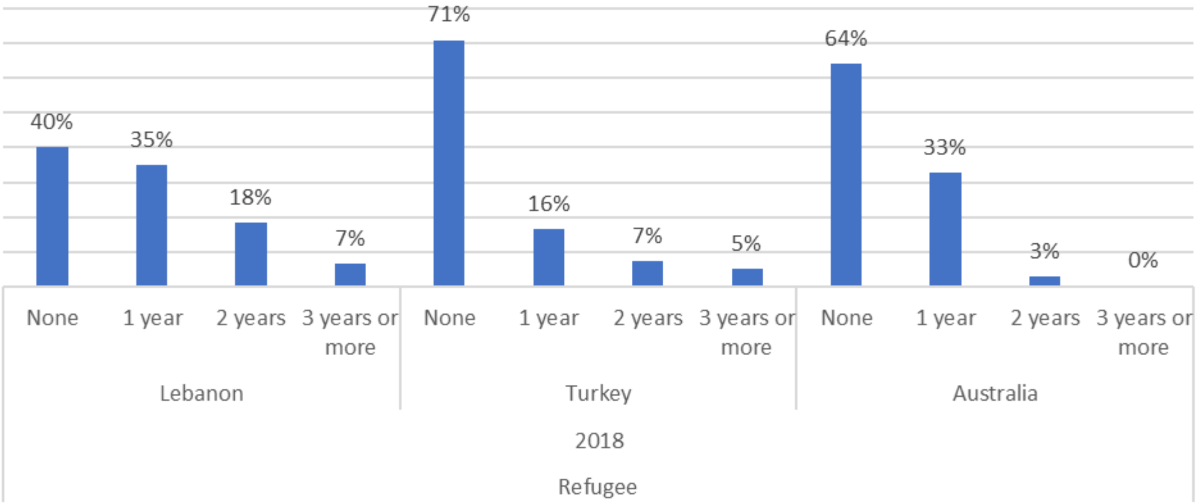

Figure 7. Years of Schooling Missed in Host Country

Based on our survey findings, there appear to be different reasons for missing years of schooling. In Lebanon, the three main reasons for missing schooling years were (1) not being offered any education opportunities, (2) lack of money, and (3) education not being a priority. Similarly, results were reported by refugee children in Turkey; however, the third cause for missing school in Turkey was security concerns. In Australia, the main reason for missing schooling years was (1) learning the local language, followed by (2) safety concerns, and (3) not being offered any education opportunities, as presented in the table below. With safety concerns in Australia being a product of discrimination practiced against refugees, which will be further discussed later in this report.

Table 6. Top Three Reasons for Missing Schooling Years in Host Country

Country		2018-2019
Lebanon	I was not offered any education opportunities	58%
	lack of money	12%
	Education was not a priority	8%
Turkey	I was not offered any education opportunities	36%
	lack of money	15%
	Safety concerns	14%
Australia	I was learning the local language	29%
	Safety concerns	27%
	any education opportunities I was not offered	13%

Other reasons for losing school years were revealed by our interviews with refugee parents and principals across all three countries. For instance, financial and bureaucratic barriers were often reported by interviewed parents and principals in Lebanon across all three years, but their effect was mostly prominent in year 3. Parents in Turkey also reported that they were met with some bureaucratic barriers as they attempted to enrol their children upon arrival. However, this did not prevent their children from receiving education as they had alternative pathways through "open education," such as TECs, where they resumed their education and were at the same time being prepared to enrol in Turkish public schools.

"When we came here, they were in the temporary Syrian schools, but we didn't make it on time for registration because it took a while to get the necessary documents. So, we just went for Open Education" (Parent, Turkey).

On the other hand, several parents in Lebanon reported that upon arrival, their children were not offered any education, and they were unable to find non-formal pathways to education, while others indicated that informal schools were not accredited, meaning that students had to repeat their classes when they later transition to public schools causing additional loss of school years.

"They didn't open registration until 2014; therefore, my children lost two school years" (Parent, Lebanon)

In contrast, interviewed parents in Australia mentioned that upon arrival, migration officers guided them in navigating the education system and promptly enrolling their children. Therefore, very few participants reported that their children missed schooling years. Moreover, interviews with parents and principals reveal that grade placement and the language barrier were also key reasons for missing school years in all three countries, with the former being more prominent in the case of Lebanon, as will be revealed in the following section.

The above results reveal that refugee children in Lebanon under the emergency model were more likely to miss a higher number of schooling years than their peers in Turkey and Australia. However, considering the bigger number of refugees per capita in Lebanon, providing them access to school is likely to impose a bigger challenge. For example, Lebanon hosted over 1.5 million refugees (500,000 school age) who arrived in two years compared to Australia, who hand-picked the 12,000 refugees through a resettlement programme and thus had the time and the process by which to enrol them into its educational system. The total student population in the state sector in Lebanon is 200,000 students, indicating the extent to which the Lebanese public educational sector had to stretch itself if it was to absorb the new number of students.

In addition, Lebanon's bureaucratic barriers and the delays in implementing RACE I and RACE II programs after putting all non-formal education provisions on hold caused further interruptions to children's enrolment in the early years of arrival. At the same time, while non-formal education was put on hold after MEHE decided to take over in Lebanon, community-based education in Turkey enrolled a substantial number of Syrian refugees into TECs. Hence, this explains the significant difference between the percentage of children who missed schooling in Lebanon and Turkey. MEHE's decision to halt non-formal education was driven by the assumption that their quality was not up to par, which left many without any form of schooling waiting for RACE I's implementation. This raises the question of whether providing any education at that time would have been considered a better alternative than not providing any education.

Furthermore, the results presented in the previous section reveal that refugee parents in Turkey were significantly more educated than parents in both Lebanon and Australia. According to several studies, parental involvement is one factor that positively impacts students' schooling experiences and achievements (Koyama & Bakuza, 2017; Sainsbury & Renzaho, 2011). Therefore, parents' socioeconomic status and educational attainment could also explain why their children in Turkey missed the least number of school years following their arrival.

Yet, despite all these challenges that Lebanon faced, especially with the recent financial crisis, Lebanon provided education to over 60% of refugee children. It is worth mentioning that our sample, which captured children enrolled in grades 7 and 8, is not representative of the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon, as the most vulnerable refugee population struggles to enrol in schools, let alone persist in continuing their education in spite of the mounting challenges they face as we will explore in the report.

Both Lebanon and Turkey authorities have insisted on treating the Syrian refugee crisis as a temporary one and even refused to consider them refugees and resorted to using terminologies such as forcibly displaced and temporarily sheltered. This emergency and short-term approach to dealing with the refugee crisis makes access to quality education a less pertinent issue. It also impacts the policies and education provisions for refugees making them more focused on access and of a temporary nature. This could partly explain why in Turkey, for example, most of the education provisions for refugees took place in the temporary schools run by the Syrian community. Providing education provisions for a large population of refugees when perceiving their stay as temporary makes providing education provisions for a large refugee population both a less pertinent issue and more challenging.

Grade Placement

School placement is another critical factor affecting refugee children's schooling outcomes. A recent study by Crul et al. (2019) reveals that refugees in Lebanon were placed in grades that did not necessarily correspond with their academic abilities. As a result, misplaced students faced additional academic and social challenges. Our results reveal that the highest grade-to-age mismatch percentage was present in Lebanon, where over half (52%) of the sample were placed in grade levels that did not correspond to their age level. On the other hand, only 27% and 18% of refugees in Turkey and Australia were misplaced, respectively.

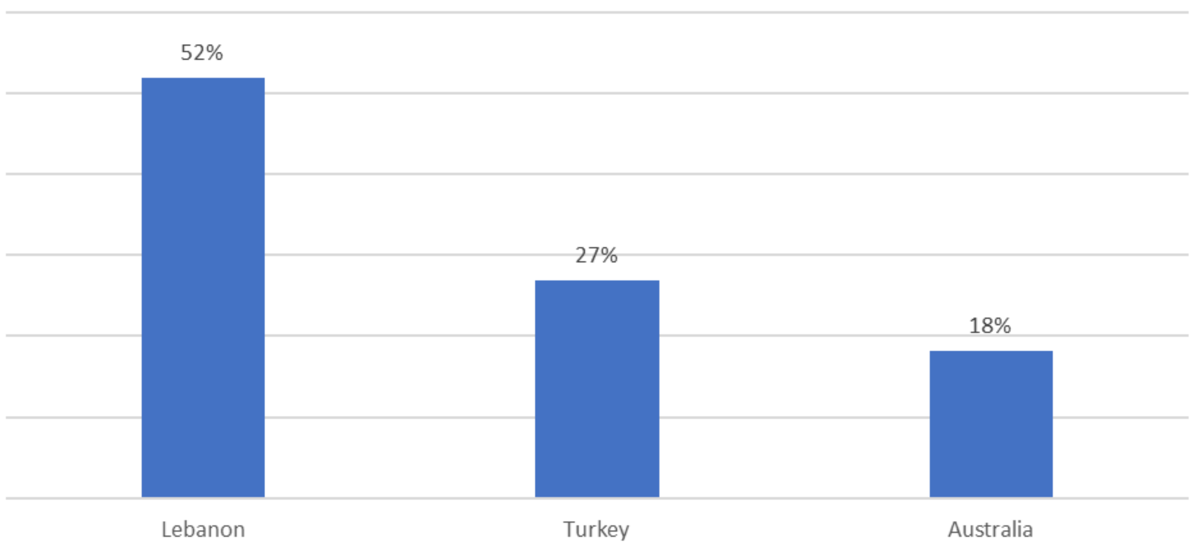

Figure 8. School Grade and Age Mismatch

Although our criteria for grade mismatch in the figure above is based on the mismatch with respect to age, other studies looked at grade mismatch with respect to the last grade refugee children attended in their home country. For instance, the study conducted by Crul et al. (2019) presented cases where in Lebanon, several Syrian children stated they were placed in grade 5, even though the last grade they attended was grade 3. Therefore, those children struggled to keep up with the rest of their class, especially since they were not provided any preparatory courses or supplemental training, as we will later see in this section.

Our interviews with principals revealed that while parents were unable to acquire school certificates from Syria, an inconsistent grade placement criterion was implemented in Lebanon. For instance, when public schools started taking in refugees, the primary policy for student placement was based on their foreign language proficiency which was later changed to be based on students' age (Shuayb et al., 2016). In both cases, many students were misplaced since the age placement criteria did not take into consideration students' readiness or that they have previously struggled with interrupted education. While the criterion based on foreign language proficiency caused significant age gaps among students within the same class-leading to increases in dropout rates in the following two ways.

"My son was 14 years old, and he was placed in grade three. He dropped out because he misbehaved a lot last year" (Parent, Lebanon)

First, when students were placed in grade levels higher than the ones they were supposed to be in, they struggled to keep up with the learning content and dropped out. At the same time, those who were downgraded due to poor language proficiency or lack of documentation were demotivated and also decided to drop out of school (Shuayb et al., 2016; Krafftrt al., 2022).

Based on interviews conducted with parents, grade misplacement was lower in Turkey compared to Lebanon. The criteria in Turkey required either official documentation of the student's prior academic history or passing a placement test which included an assessment for their Turkish language proficiency. Our qualitative data reveals that these criteria posed great challenges for parents and students. While the former struggled to acquire official documentation from Syria, the later faced difficulties in passing the language test, which in many cases led to downgrading and losing school years, as also reported in the policy brief of Çelik & Erdogan (2017). This issue was partially mitigated by TECs, where the placement criteria were based on the students' age and a previous report card.

Our interviews also reveal that, unlike Lebanon, grade placement in Australia was based on a combination of factors, including students' age, proof of readiness from a new arrival or English center, and performance results of a short literacy test. Therefore, most students were placed in their appropriate grade level based on their age and ability level. Furthermore, according to an interviewed teacher in Australia, this criterion was also used to decide on the level of preparatory support the student needed, which will be discussed in the subsequent section.

Preparatory Classes

Having missed a considerable number of years and misplaced in their new schooling environment, the majority of the refugees are in dire need of preparatory classes before enrolling in mainstream schools. Moreover, refugees in all three countries had to learn a new language to access the curriculum. In Lebanon, while Syrians and Lebanese speak Arabic, the language of instruction in Math and Science is either English or French. In Turkey (public schools) and Australia, all subjects are taught in a foreign language to the refugees. Hence, providing preparatory classes, including language, is key for ensuring a smooth transition and retention in schools in the host country. Our survey results reveal that Australia seems to be the country offering the most preparatory classes (90%), followed by Turkey (36%) and Lebanon (25%), as presented in the figure below.

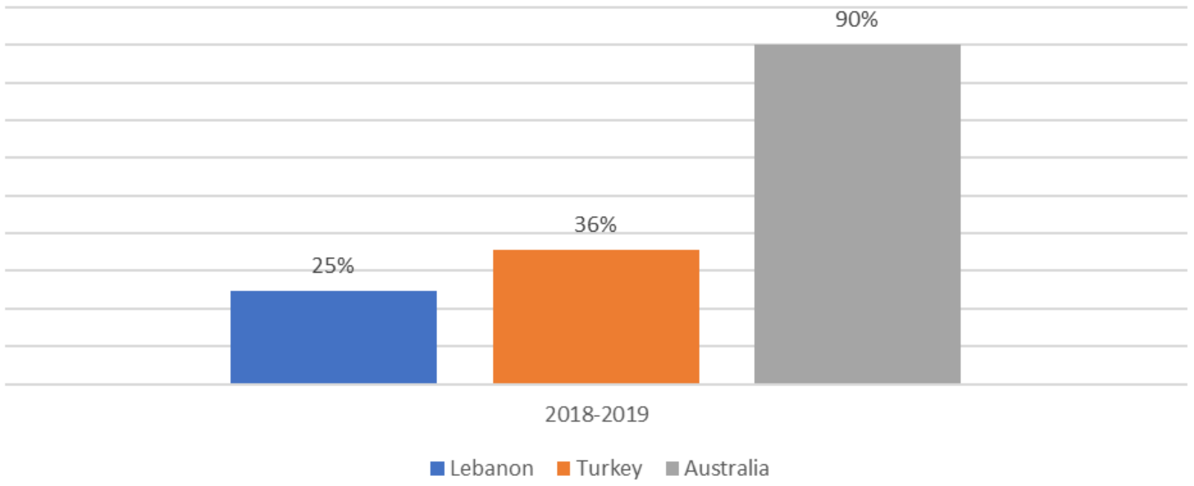

Figure 9. Percentage of Students who Attended Preparatory Classes Prior to Enrolling in Host Country's School

The lack of sufficient and effective preparatory support under the emergency model was also evident in our policy analysis and interviews conducted in Lebanon. For instance, the accelerated learning program (ALP), which was supposed to cater to the needs of out-of-school children, had low success rates, as the majority of children who enrolled in these programmes did not join school (NRC, 2020). Also, an interview with a policymaker reveals that this made donors reluctant to continue funding the program, which eventually stopped. Furthermore, interviews with teachers and parents revealed that the remedial classes offered to Syrian children were run by the Ministry of Education but carried out by NGOs through non-formal education programmes, and in many cases, they were insufficient and discontinued.

"The American center gave language support to our students at the beginning of the crisis, but recently they did not receive any training from anyone." (Principal, Lebanon)

In Turkey, as the government shifted its plan from relying on TEC to integrating refugees into mainstream education, they provided Turkish language support to newly enrolled students. This was evident in several student interviews who reported receiving academic support and preparatory classes on weekdays and weekends.

"It was part of my school schedule for the past three years; I did Turkish exams. They would gather the Arabic-speaking students and test our Turkish level. If you know the language well, you can start studying in Turkish schools. Otherwise, you keep taking the lessons" (Syrian Student, Turkey)

Unlike Lebanon and Turkey, the preparatory support programmes in Australia were more structured and readily available for refugees upon arrival. For instance, the New Arrivals Programme for refugee children provided English language training and facilitated their access to the Australian curriculum. In addition, refugees were able to enrol in specialist schools or attend special programs within schools which offer a modified curriculum and intensive English language support (South Australian Government 2017; Sidhu, Taylor, and Christie 2011). After spending one-and-a-half years, students can transition to another learning environment without extra support based on their age and assessed readiness or be integrated with their Australian peers while continuing to receive language support. In the following sections, we will reveal the importance of preparatory classes and the type of schooling (integrated vs. segregated) on refugee students' schooling experiences and performance.

Schooling Experiences

In this section, we probe into refugee children's schooling experiences and the factors determining these experiences within each country. These factors go beyond school experiences, as we will later reveal their importance in determining refugee children's language and academic performance in the remaining two sections of this report.

Our quantitative results reveal that despite being educationally segregated and not being offered equitable education, refugees in Lebanon liked going to school more than refugees in Turkyie and Australia. Also, teachers in Lebanon were found to be the friendliest; however, their disciplining was mostly controlling. Furthermore, our results reveal that in all three countries, teachers showed higher levels of appreciation for students' efforts and progress during COVID-19. Moreover, refugee children in Lebanon reported the highest levels of hostility and unfair treatment, which seem to be increasing yearly, while in Australia, lower levels of hostility were reported every year.

As a result of their temporary legal status, most Syrian refugees in Lebanon attend the segregated afternoon shift in public schools. Hence, their segregation explains why the majority (81%) of surveyed students reported the absence of locals in their classrooms, as presented in the figure below. While school segregation allows for the implementation of special learning provisions, inclusive education policies are as important to prevent refugee children from feeling excluded (Hammoud et al., 2022; Due & Riggs, 2009; Pugh et al., 2012).

Table 7. Presence of Locals in Classroom

Country	Presence of locals in classroom	2018-2019	2019-2020
Lebanon	No locals in my classroom	81%	80%
	A few locals in my classroom	2%	2%
	The majority are locals in my classroom	17%	18%
Turkey	No locals in my classroom	52%	15%
	A few locals in my classroom	7%	24%
	The majority are locals in my classroom	41%	61%
Australia	No locals in my classroom	3%	1%
	A few locals in my classroom	40%	38%
	The majority are locals in my classroom	57%	61%

On the other hand, 41% of respondents in Turkey reported that the majority of students in their class are locals, while 52% reported the absence of locals in their classrooms. These findings are explained by the fact that in year 1 almost half of our respondents were enrolled in TECs (segregated schools), while the other half were enrolled in Turkish public schools. However, by the time we conducted the second wave (2019-2020), most TECs were closed by the Turkish government, and students were enrolled in Turkish public schools, hence explaining the decrease in the percentage of students who reported that there were no locals in their classroom from 52% in year 1 to 15% year 2. Furthermore, almost all refugees in Australia reported the presence of locals in their classrooms, knowing that the vast majority of refugees were integrated into mainstream education. While rapid school integration promotes inclusivity and social integration (Due & Riggs, 2009; Pugh et al., 2012), it intensifies learning difficulties, especially in years of resettlement, as we will later reveal in this report.

The language and dialect used in the class play a crucial role in teachers' and refugee students' interaction, whereby meaningful communication, such as using the students' primary language, positively impacts the refugee students' learning process and experiences (Tillman & Scheurich, 2013). Therefore, despite being educationally segregated, the percentage of refugee students who reported that they liked attending school was the highest in Lebanon across all three years, mainly due to the presence of teachers and students who share the same native language and cultural background.

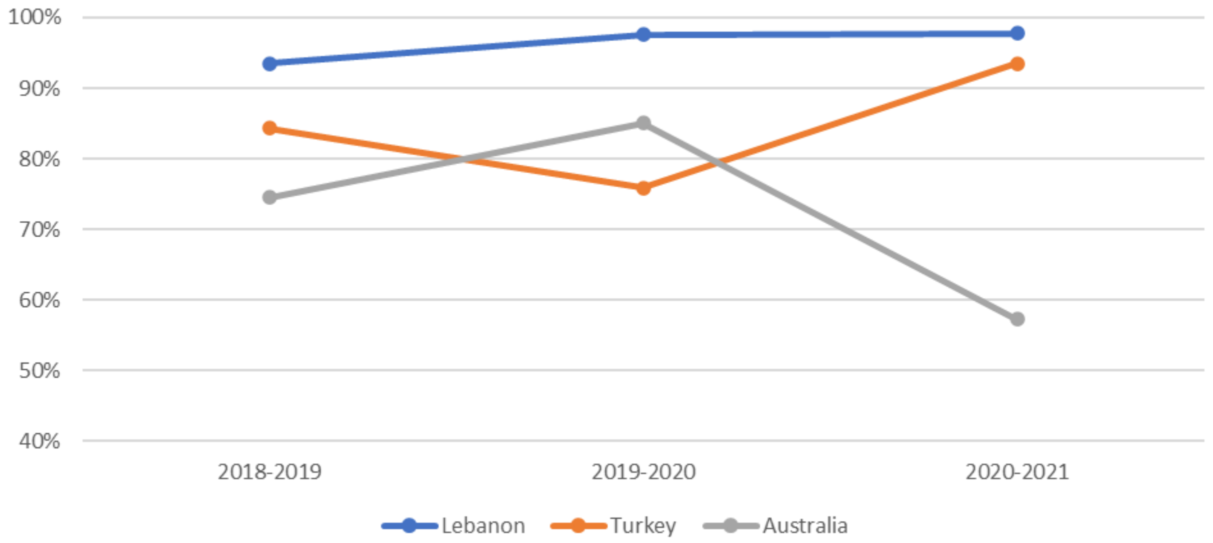

Figure 10. Percentage of Students who Like Coming to School

Despite the positive survey findings above, our interviews with students, parents, and principals have a different story to tell. For instance, several students indicated during interviews that they felt unsafe commuting back home in the evening after attending the afternoon shift, while others reported that attending afternoon classes leaves them no time to study and do their homework after school.

"They should cancel the segregated shifts and mix us with Lebanese students because the afternoon shift is inconvenient for us and leaves us no time to study and do our homework when we return from school in the evening" (Student, Lebanon)

Moreover, interviewed principals indicated that it is not normal for any child to attend classes in the afternoon because it affects their motivation and learning abilities. At the same time, parents believe that the afternoon shift is of inferior quality compared to the morning shift and that teachers are not determined to exert full effort in teaching during the afternoon shift.

In Turkey, 84% of refugee students reported that they liked attending school in year 1. This percentage dropped to 76% in year 2 and then increased to 94% in year 3. The significant decrease in Turkey's year two data could be attributed to year two's sample change, which is considered a repeated cross-section. As for the significant increase in year 3, our interviews with parents and students reveal that students' experiences in Turkish public schools improved over time after Turkish students got used to the presence of their Syrian peers. In several interviews, we noticed parents and students emphasizing that acts of discrimination from Turkish students have been reduced over the years and replaced by positive interactions. It is worth mentioning that despite the positive experiences in Turkish schools, most interviewed students indicated that they had better experiences in TECs, where they were surrounded by Syrian teachers and friends who shared the same background.

According to Schmiedebach and Wegner (2019), refugee students could suffer from bullying from their national peers when using the host country's language in class, which results in developing "language-use anxiety" and less interaction in class. Therefore, this explains why the lowest rate of students who reported that they liked attending school was among refugee children in Australia. Also, this provides evidence of the disadvantages of rapidly integrating refugees into mainstream education before acquiring the host country's language. Despite the low rate reported above, our interviews with teachers and students in Australia reveal the lowest levels of discrimination and bullying against refugees. This was mainly due to the zero-tolerance policy for bullying applied by all Australian teachers. Furthermore, several teacher interviewees reported that refugees in Australia receive equal educational opportunities as Australian students and enjoy the same access to services and activities. For example, some teachers mentioned that refugees have access to counselling and vocational courses in high school, just like nationals. While others reported that Australia's multicultural curriculum promotes positive school interactions and that schools appreciate diversity while catering to everyone's needs.

So far, our results reveal that the prioritization of educational opportunities provided to refugee children is greatly determined by the educational paradigm adopted by the host country. For instance, both Lebanese and Turkish authorities have insisted on treating the Syrian refugee crisis as temporary and thus limited their educational policies to short-term approaches, making refugees' access to quality education a less pertinent issue. While Turkey shifted its approach towards the longer-term model after realizing that the crisis is protracted, Lebanon continues to treat their presence as temporary. The continuous implementation of short-term policies while dealing with a long-term situation has caused many injustices against refugee children.

The injustice in Lebanon's educational response towards refugees can be observed from the early years of arrival, starting with delays in enrolment, grade misplacement, and lack of preparatory provisions that were all covered earlier in this report. However, the unfairness goes beyond the early years of arrival and is even carried on by the very few who make it to higher grade levels, such as the bureaucratic barriers refugee students face to sit for official exams (Shuayb, 2021). We also witnessed the unfairness of Lebanon's educational system during the COVID-19 pandemic, were although nationals struggled with reduced access and quality of education, the vast majority of refugees in the afternoon shift were not provided with any education (Hammoud and Shuayb, 2021).

Therefore, our longitudinal survey of refugee students reveals that the lowest percentage of refugees who reported that their school system offers equal opportunities was in Lebanon. This percentage further decreased in years 2 (58%) and 3 (40%) as a result of Lebanon's financial crisis and COVID-19, which intensified inequalities and excluded the most disadvantaged groups (Hammoud and Shuayb, 2021). Furthermore, our interviews with Lebanese teachers also revealed that the gap between the morning and afternoon shifts increased during the COVID-19 lockdown, whereby many Syrian students did not receive any education in the afternoon shift. At the same time, other teachers reported that students could not cope with new lessons due to the missed material during the lockdown. And instead of providing them with additional support, MEHE decided to automatically promote students to the next grade causing further deterioration in the quality of education and academic performance among refugees in the afternoon shift, as indicated by some principals.

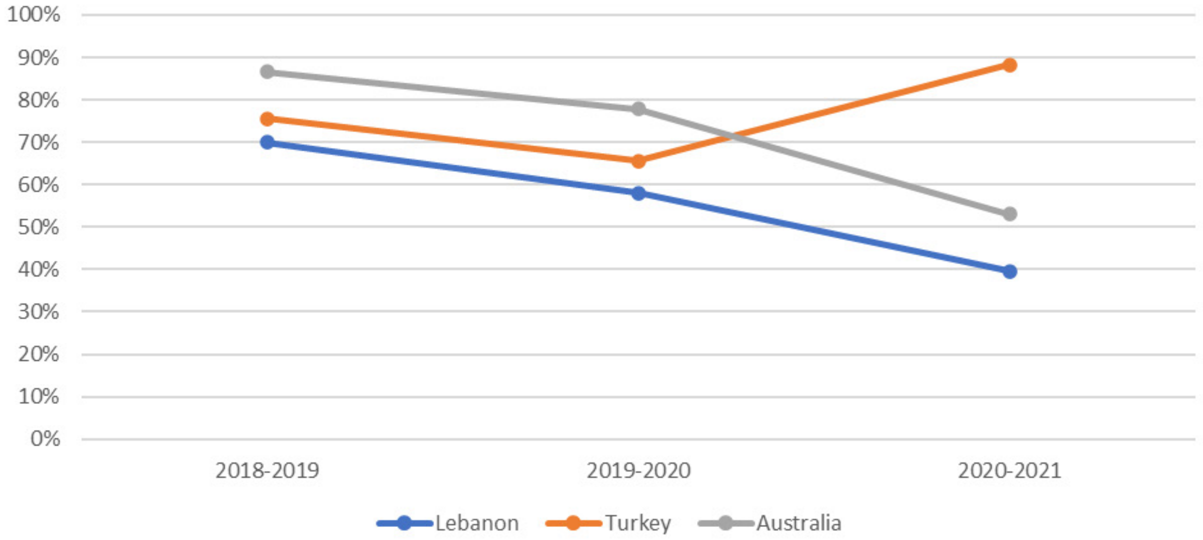

Figure 11. Percentage of Students who Agree that their School System Offers Equal Opportunities

Unlike Lebanon, our interviews reveal that refugee students in Australia were provided with all necessary resources to access education during the COVID-19 lockdown and reported higher rates of fairness across all three years.

"We had all resources and materials required during lockdown. This was not the problem. Isolation and depression were what bothered us." (Student, Australia)

This implies that refugees under the long-term educational paradigm are more likely to receive equal access to education and that the long-term model is better at handling inequalities during new emerging crises.

Student-Teacher Relationship

According to Naidoo (2015), refugee students' academic engagement and opportunities are affected by the school's welcoming environment, which teachers can create through their teaching methods and recognition of the refugee students' culture. Such recognition is essential, as it allows refugee students to develop a sense of belonging to their school (Miller, Ziaian & Esterman, 2018). Henceforth, students' positive schooling experience significantly depends on the teacher-student positive relationship (Baak, 2016). In this section, we look closer at refugee children's schooling experience by examining their relationship with their schoolteachers, which is a crucial determinant for schooling experiences and outcomes.

Our qualitative findings stress the important role of teachers in creating a positive schooling experience and contributing to refugee students' inclusion within their new environment. For instance, interviewed students reported that their teachers supported them whenever nationals discriminated against them.

"The teacher stopped the lesson and berated the students who were racist. She also talked about how we were forced to leave our homes because of the war" (Student, Turkey).

However, other interviews with students in Lebanon and Turkey revealed that teachers could also be a source of discrimination, not only national students.

“I used to be discriminated against by teachers in my old school; I do not know if it is because I did not understand Turkish or I did something that violates their culture” (Student, Turkey)

While our qualitative data reveal both sides of the story, our quantitative data indicates that, on average, a higher percentage of students reported that their teachers are friendly in Lebanon compared to Turkey and Australia. Also, this percentage increased over time in Lebanon, whereas in Australia, a slightly lower percentage of students reported that their teachers are friendly each year. As we have discussed earlier, the presence of teachers who share the same native language and culture is crucial to school experiences. Hence, we expect that because teachers in Lebanon share the same native language and cultural background as their refugee students, they are more likely to establish positive relationships and perceive their teachers' friendliness.

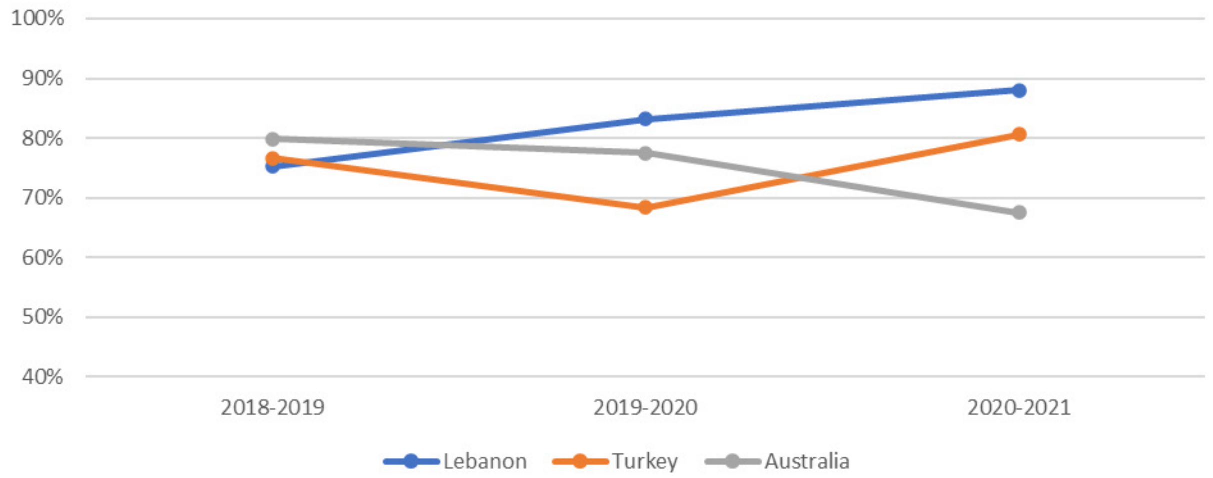

Figure 12. Percentage of Students who Agree that their Teachers are Friendly

In Turkey, 77% of students reported that their teachers were friendly in year 1; this percentage decreased to 68% in year 2, then improved in year 3 (81%). As indicated earlier, the changes in Turkey's year 2's results could be explained by the change in the sample for that year; however, the positive change between years 2 and 3 indicates that their relationship with Turkish teachers in Turkish schools is improving over time.

The difference in student-teacher relationships between Turkey and Australia could be due to the former being gradually integrated into public schools after receiving sufficient language support and spending several years in the host country. In contrast, the latter was rapidly integrated into public schools, thus leading to “language-use anxiety,” which we spoke of earlier.

Although teachers in Lebanon were perceived as the friendliest, a high percentage of students also reported that their teachers disciplining was mostly controlling and punitive. Similarly, in Turkey, around a quarter of respondents reported the same across all three years. On the other hand, the lowest percentage of students who reported the same was in Australia, mainly in year 2 during the COVID-19 lockdown, where the percentage dropped to only 4%. This was also evident in our interviews with parents, whereby many praised Australian teachers for their friendly approach to their children.

“The teachers are so nice to our children, and they like them so much. The school has few refugee students, so they get so much attention.” (Parent, Australia)

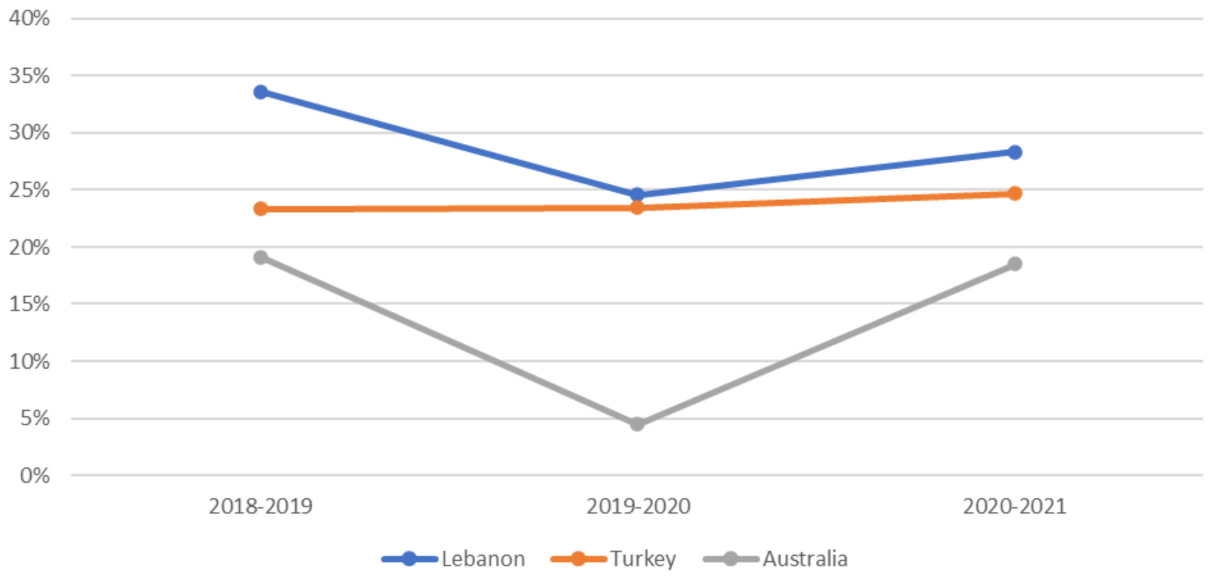

Figure 13. Percentage of Students who Agree that their Teacher's Disciplining is Mostly Controlling and Punitive

Moreover, despite distance learning measures, our results reveal that in year 2 a higher percentage of students in Lebanon and Australia reported that their teachers encourage class interaction, with the average percentage being the highest in Australia. This was not the case in Turkey, where the percentage of students who reported that their teachers encouraged class interaction significantly decreased in year 2 (47%) compared to year 1 (62%). This is a crucial determinant of schooling experiences and outcomes since teachers' support in building friendships between students is associated with an enhanced schooling experience (Ayoub, 2020).

Our qualitative data reveals that despite encouraging class interaction, interactions were sometimes halted due to the use of a foreign language of instruction. While students in Turkey and Australia, across all years, still perceive language as a barrier to class interaction, teachers in Lebanon translated class materials to facilitate students' interaction and understanding. This shows the important role teachers can play in mitigating the impact of the language barrier on schooling experiences and performance, which will be further discussed in future sections.

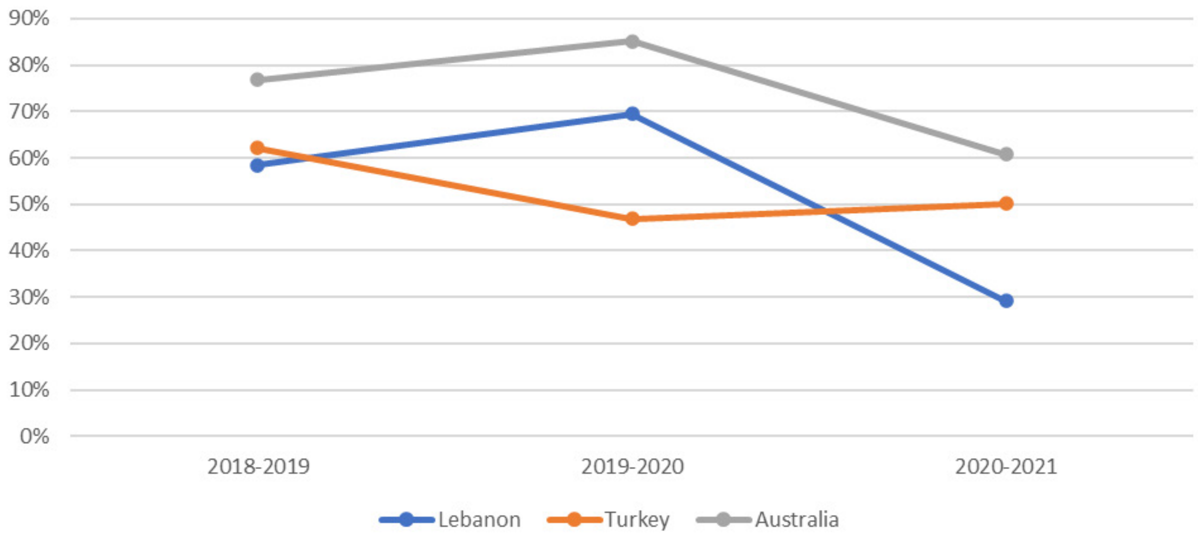

Figure 14. Percentage of Students who Agree that their Teachers Encouraged Class Interaction

Although students in Turkey and Australia continue to struggle with foreign language of instruction, our results reveal a significant decrease in their struggle to communicate with schoolteachers, especially when comparing the percentages between year 1 and year 3. On the other hand, the struggle to communicate with schoolteachers in Lebanon increased between years 1 and 3 but remained, on average, the lowest among our refugee sample when examining all three years. This could be attributed to teachers speaking the same native language as their refugee students, as we pointed out in the previous section.

Two important observations are to be noted regarding the figure below. First, the increase in the struggle to communicate with schoolteachers in Lebanon between years 2 and 3 is very likely to be due to COVID-19, strikes, and school closures rather than linguistic reasons. This was revealed in our interviews with students who reported that they couldn't communicate with their teachers because they just received videos on WhatsApp without interaction. Second, the communication between refugee students and teachers in Turkey and Australia is improving significantly and quickly over time, catching up with average levels observed in Lebanon. This implies that over time, students are getting accustomed to their school environment and the language barrier to communicate in class is becoming less of a problem.

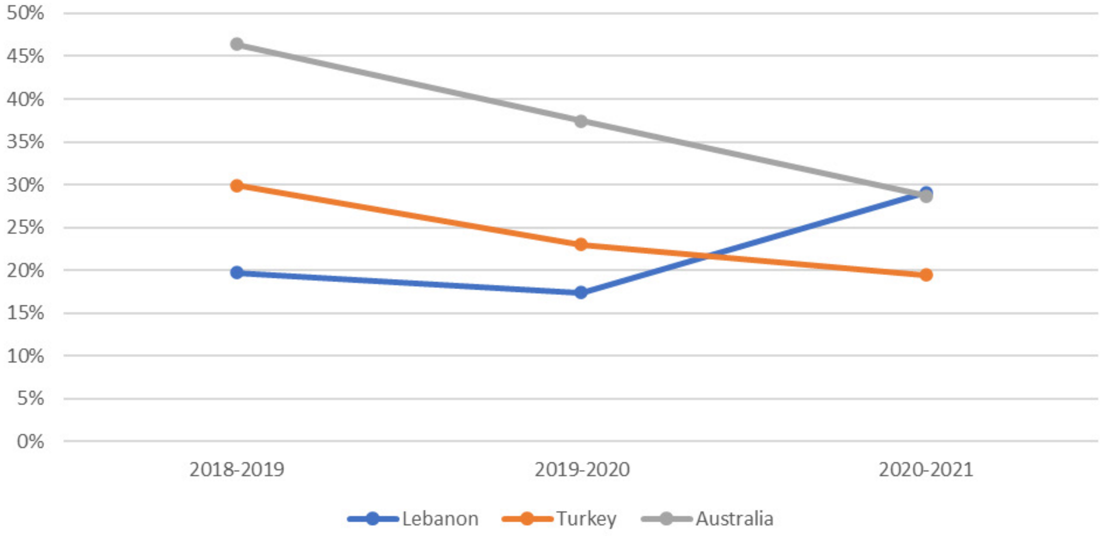

Figure 15. Percentage of Students who Struggle in Communicating with School Teacher

However, it is worth noting that refugee students in Turkey are still doing much better than refugees in Australia as the former was gradually introduced to the Turkish language while the latter had less time to get comfortable solely using English as a means of communication.

School Environment

While school hostility seems to be rising in Lebanon, the opposite is happening in Australia. Our survey results reveal that the percentage of students who reported experiencing hostility or unfair treatment in Lebanon has increased from 6% in year 1 to 8% and 10% in years 2 and 3, respectively. On the other hand, this percentage decreased in Australia from 9% in year 1 to 8% and 3% in years 2 and 3, respectively. On average, refugees in Turkey seem to experience the lowest levels of hostility across all three years, as presented in the figure below. This was also evident in our interviews with students who reported significant improvement in their relationship with nationals in Turkey, mainly in year three.

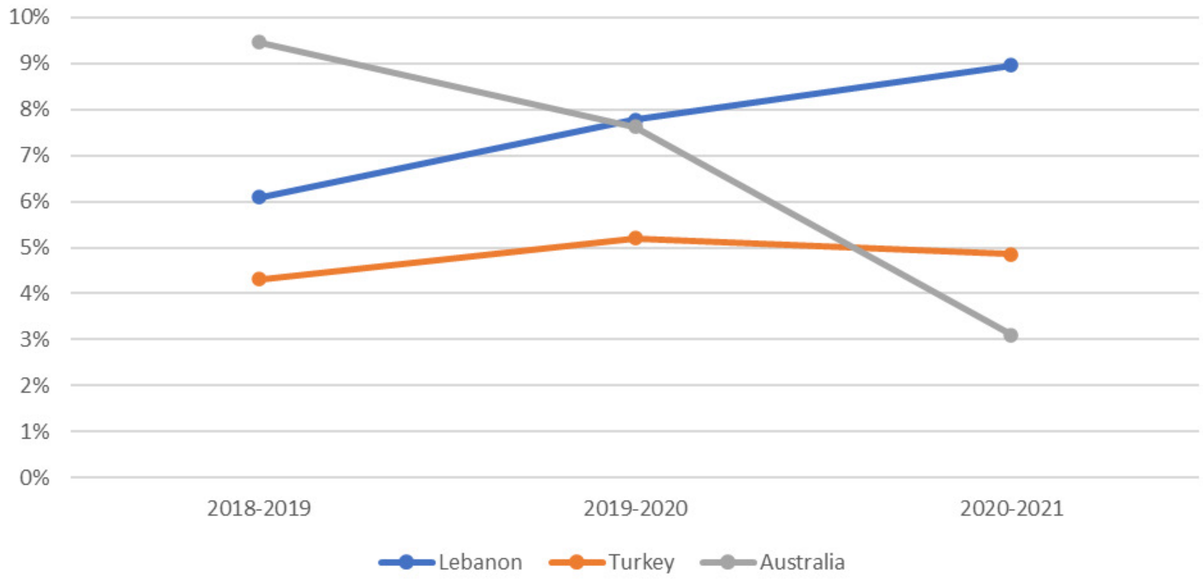

Figure 16. Percentage of Students who Always Experience Hostility or Unfair Treatment

In contrast, the increase in hostility against refugees in Lebanon mainly stems from the government's approach to handling their presence and ends with nationals' perceptions about the impact of their presence. On one side, the temporality of their settlement and policies associated with it never gave refugees a chance to integrate educationally, socially, or economically. Hence, hostility is more common in Lebanese schools and neighbourhoods, as we will reveal in the following table. In addition, the deteriorating financial and social crisis has further promoted negative attitudes toward refugees, who are often blamed for the current crisis (Brun et al., 2021), as revealed in several interviews conducted with students. For instance, some students mentioned that they had been accused of stealing jobs from nationals and worsening the economic crisis.

"Society, in general, is racist towards us. (Student, Lebanon)

On the other hand, under the long-term model in Australia, hostility levels are decreasing over time. This could be attributed to increased integration levels resulting from the prolonged educational, social, and economic integration driven by policies that carry a long-term resettlement vision.

"They make friends with nationals and enjoy social life as well as learning" (Parent, Australia)

Furthermore, the zero-tolerance policy against hostility was mentioned in several interviews, where teachers reported that bullies are immediately detained for their actions.

A closer look at the top three sources of hostility faced by refugee students within each country reveals that national students ranked first as the main source of experienced hostility in all three countries. In addition, refugee students also experienced hostility from other refugee students as it was ranked as the second main source in Turkey and Australia. However, in Lebanon, 28% reported that they faced hostility and unfairness from people living in their neighbourhood, a source that came third in the case of Australia (7%).

Table 8. Top Three Sources of Hostility or Unfair Treatment

Country		2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Lebanon	National students	58%	72%	72%
	People living in my neighborhood	28%	33%	36%
	Teachers	21%	11%	17%
Turkey	National students	63%	86%	95%
	Refugee students	26%	6%	1%
	Teachers	16%	25%	34%
Australia	National students	24%	78%	24%
	Refugee students	16%	33%	18%
	People living in my neighborhood	7%	5%	18%

So far, we have revealed that refugee children under EIE have struggled with the worst socioeconomic conditions, pre-and post-arrival school interruptions, and grade misplacement and were provided with the least preparatory support. Furthermore, despite being educationally segregated, not receiving equitable access to education, and facing higher levels of discrimination within school and society, refugees in Lebanon still expressed positive schooling experiences. This was mainly due to the presence of teachers and colleagues who share the same language and cultural background. This finding highlights the importance of language in shaping refugee children's schooling experiences. Therefore, in the final two sections of this report, we will closely examine the language of instruction and its importance in shaping refugee children's schooling performance.

Language(s) of Instruction

Several studies indicate that understanding subjects taught in a foreign language has been a great challenge for Syrian refugees (Akar-Vural et al., 2018; Alkhawalde, 2018; Şeker & Sirkeci, 2015; Shuayb et al., 2014; Naidoo, 2008). In this section, we compare refugee children's difficulties in understanding the language of instruction in the following subjects: (1) foreign language, (2) math, (3) sciences, and (4) social studies. Before we analyse the figures below, a quick overview will help us better understand the trends and variations in language difficulty between and within our countries of interest.

In Lebanon, Syrian refugees learned math and sciences in English or French, two unfamiliar foreign languages for Syrian refugees (Hamadeh, 2018). Furthermore, the data presented earlier in this report revealed that only a minority (25%) of Syrian students attended preparatory classes prior to their enrolment, indicating the absence of sufficient language training. Moreover, we revealed that refugee parents in Lebanon were significantly less educated than in Turkey and Australia, meaning that they are less capable of supporting their children in overcoming language-related challenges. On the upside, refugee students were taught by teachers who speak their native language and are taught social studies classes in Arabic, allowing them to overcome the language barrier in some cases. Furthermore, most Syrian children were segregated in the afternoon shift, which also allowed for the implementation of special education that helped them overcome the language barrier. These two factors will later prove to be of great importance for elevating difficulties in understanding the foreign language of instruction for refugees in Lebanon.

In Turkey, refugee children also faced difficulty understanding subjects taught in the Turkish language. However, unlike the case of Lebanon, the Turkish government made extensive efforts to promote their integration into mainstream education and assist them in overcoming the language barrier. Students were gradually integrated into mainstream education after learning in their native language in TECs while also receiving Turkish language support. The gradual transition is of great importance because it gave refugees enough time to learn the Turkish language without causing school interruptions. Furthermore, our previous results revealed that refugee parents in Turkey were the most educated of all three samples, which is expected to positively impact their educational achievements (Koyama & Bakuza, 2017). These factors when combined can lessen the difficulties refugees in Turkey face in understanding subjects taught in Turkish, as we will later demonstrate in this section.

According to our quantitative data, students in Australia received the most in terms of language support. The “New Arrivals Programme” in Australia supported refugee students’ English language learning and helped them access the Australian curriculum. However, as we will see in this section, their rapid integration into mainstream education and the absence of teachers who speak their native language intensified language-related challenges, especially in the early years of mainstream schooling. This was also evident in their struggle to communicate with their schoolteachers, which was previously revealed in the schooling experiences section. Therefore, Australia’s refugees faced the greatest difficulty in understanding the foreign language of instruction compared to Lebanon and Turkey. Nevertheless, this difficulty significantly decreased over time in Australia and reached lower levels similar to those observed in Lebanon and Turkey for some subjects.

Our survey results reveal that refugee children in Turkey faced the least challenge in understanding the language of instruction in foreign language classes, while those in Australia faced the highest challenge. The gradual school integration and introduction to the Turkish language could explain why refugees in Turkey faced the least difficulty. Yet, it is worth noting that the percentage of students who reported always facing difficulty in Australia decreased significantly in year 3, indicating that language difficulty starts to ease over time following their rapid integration into mainstream education.

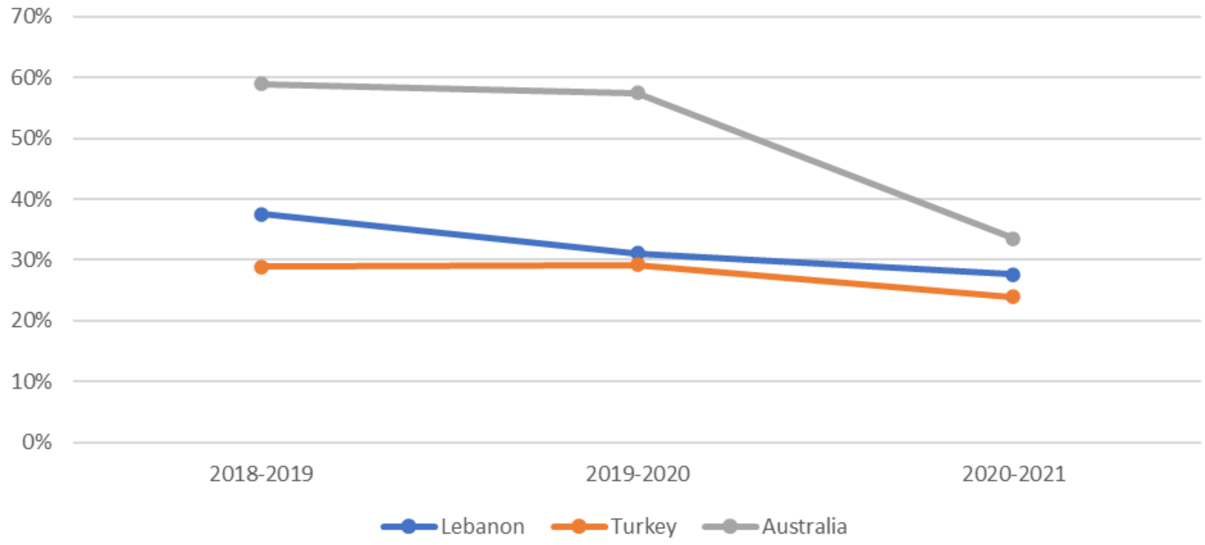

Figure 17. Percentage of Students who Always Face Difficulties Understanding the Language of Instruction in Language Subjects

In Lebanon, our data also revealed that the difficulty in understanding the foreign language of instruction was also easing up over time, but not as significant as in the case of Australia. Despite not receiving enough language support upon arrival, the difficulty reported by refugees in Lebanon was much lower than that in Australia in years 1 and 2. This could be attributed to the presence of Arabic-speaking teachers and the implementation of special education provisions in the segregated afternoon shifts. Moreover, the figure above also reveals an overall decrease in the difficulty faced by refugees over time for all three countries. Yet, this decrease was more prominent in the case of Australia, which seems to be quickly catching up with levels reported in Lebanon and Turkey.

The same trend holds for the difficulty faced in understanding the language of instruction in math. Our data reveals that refugees in Turkey faced the lowest difficulty in understanding the language of instruction in math, while students in Australia faced the highest across all years. The figure below also reveals an overall decrease in the difficulty faced by refugees in all three countries. Yet, this decrease was again more prominent in the case of Australia.

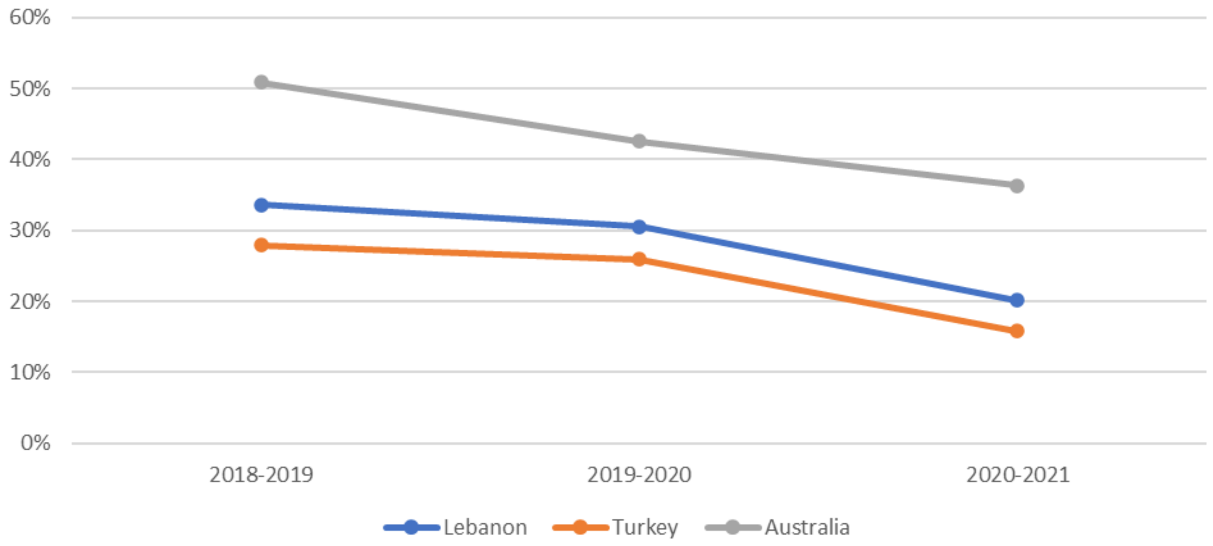

Figure 18. Percentage of Students who Always Face Difficulties Understanding the Language of Instruction in Math

The figure below reveals the difficulty refugee children faced in understanding the language of instruction in science subjects. A closer look at the results below shows that the refugees in Lebanon faced greater language difficulty in year 2 compared to year 1. Similarly, refugees in Australia faced slightly greater language difficulty in year 3 compared to year 2. In addition, the difficulty faced in understanding the language of instruction in science subjects did not improve much over time in Australia compared to other subjects. A review of relevant research revealed that Science is considered a difficult school subject, and students often confuse words used in sciences with those used every day; this makes it more difficult for students to understand its language, whether they are learning in their native language or not (Oyoo, 2015).

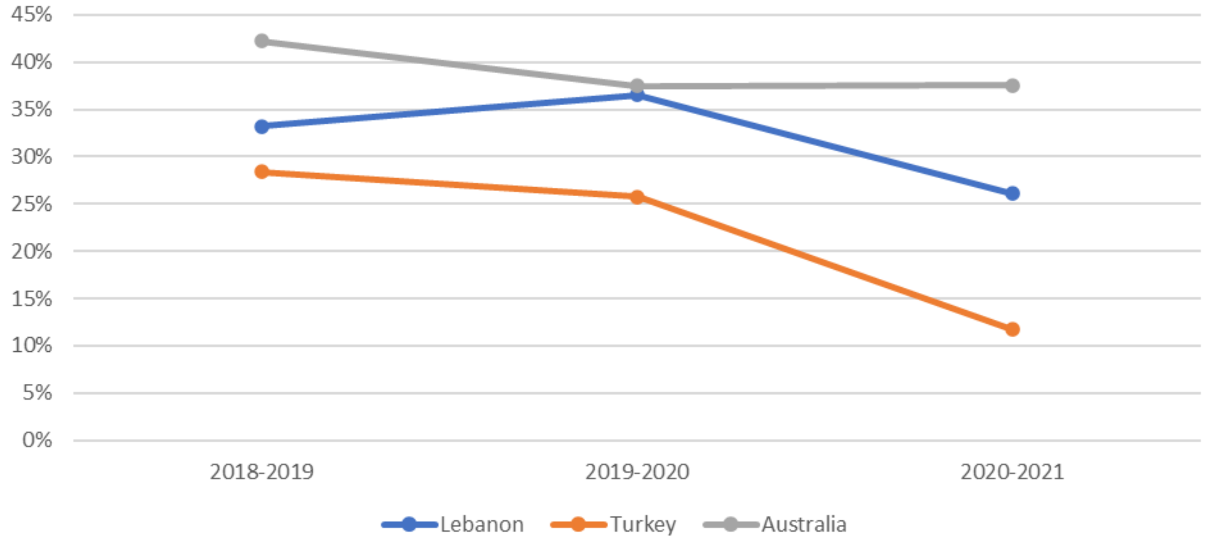

Figure 19. Percentage of Students who Always Face Difficulties Understanding the Language of Instruction in Sciences

Refugee students in Lebanon learn social studies subjects in their native language (Arabic), hence explaining why they faced the lowest difficulty in understanding the language of instruction in these subjects, as presented in the figure below. Refugee children in Australia also faced the greatest difficulty in understanding the language of instruction in social studies, with Turkey coming second in terms of the difficulty faced. Again, we observe the same trend of decreasing difficulties over time, mostly noticeable in Australia. This indicates that the language barrier is easing over time for the entire sample, in spite of the different approaches and provisions implemented by our countries of interest.

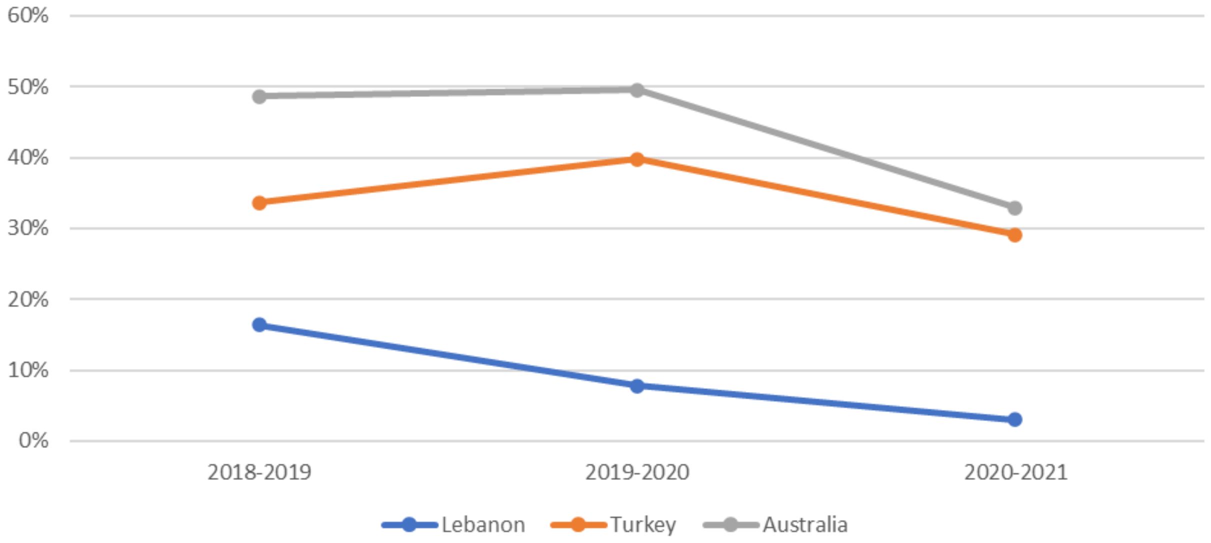

Figure 20. Percentage of Students who Always Face Difficulties Understanding the Language of Instruction in Social studies

Despite the lack of sufficient support, refugees in Lebanon faced less difficulty understanding the foreign language of instruction in all subjects compared to their peers in Australia. This could be explained by the presence of teachers who speak their same native language and their segregation in afternoon shifts that allowed for special provisions to take place. For instance, several teachers indicated that they used to translate class lessons to Arabic since most students lacked basic proficiency in English and French.

"When they first arrived, I would allow them to answer in Arabic, and then I would translate their answers into English." (Teacher, Lebanon)

Therefore, students in Lebanon did not struggle much to understand class lessons but were slowly advancing in learning the foreign language of instruction due to the absence of language support programs.

On the other hand, our interviews reveal that language support programs were more structured and available in Australia. Yet, some interviewed teachers indicated that the support was not enough to overcome the language barrier since Australia's rapid school integration intensified foreign language difficulties in early schooling years as well as difficulties in communication between students and their teachers.

"Australian-born teachers have never been through what these students have, and never heard or taught a student, like those before… They struggle to communicate with them. And it's simply because the student doesn't understand the teacher, and the teacher doesn't understand the student." (Teacher, Australia)

Moreover, some interviewed teachers revealed that language support in Australia was in some cases limited to early years of arrival and did not cover children enrolled in mainstream education due to either shortages in school staff or lack of funding. This is a crucial finding because it is important to maintain such programs for several years so that children have enough time to improve their language skills at the social and academic levels (Hauber-Özer, 2019). This also explains why refugees in Australia initially started with the highest levels of language difficulty, as we presented earlier in the figures above.

Furthermore, students and parents in Turkey indicated that TECs had a significant role in reducing language-related difficulties in the early years of schooling while also facilitating their transition to Turkish schools by providing Turkish language training. Henceforth, refugee students in Turkey reported facing the lowest difficulty in all foreign language-taught subjects, which shows the importance of gradual school integration to overcome the language barrier in the early schooling years. Moreover, year 3's data reveals that language difficulties are easing off in all three countries, which is an expected outcome following years of resettlement. However, the decrease in language difficulties was primarily significant in the case of Australia, which initially started with the highest levels of language difficulty but is quickly catching up with Lebanon and Turkey. This was evident in the figures above and our interviews with teachers in all three countries, who indicated that the language barrier is easing up over time, but more noticeable in Turkey and Australia, where sufficient language support was provided. The importance of understanding foreign languages of instruction lies in its impact on refugee children's schooling performance, which will be revealed in the following section.

Schooling Performance

Several studies emphasize the impact of language competence on refugee children's schooling performance (Schnepf, 2007; Alba et al., 2011; Azzolini et al., 2012). Therefore, in this section, we will examine this relationship by first looking at schooling performance based on a self-assessment survey question that assesses students' overall educational performance. Then we look closer at educational performance in regard to foreign language subjects, math, sciences, and social studies subjects.

The previous section on language difficulty revealed that refugees in Turkey faced the lowest difficulty in understanding the language of instruction in all subjects, except for social studies subjects, in contrast, refugees in Lebanon faced the least difficulty, knowing that those subjects are taught in their native language. We also revealed that refugees in Australia faced the greatest difficulty in understanding the language of instruction in all subjects due to their rapid integration into mainstream education and the absence of teachers who speak their native language. Furthermore, refugees in Australia struggled the most in communicating with their schoolteachers, as presented earlier in this report. We revisit these findings in this section to reveal the importance of understanding the foreign language of instruction on schooling performance (Riggs et al., 2012).

The results presented in this section will reveal that while refugees in Turkey faced the lowest difficulty in understanding the language of instruction used in language, math, and science subjects, they also outperformed refugees in Lebanon and Australia in those subjects. Furthermore, the only subjects in which refugees in Lebanon outperformed refugees in Turkey and Australia were the social studies subjects, in which they also scored the lowest language difficulty across all three samples.

In addition, refugees in Australia who reported the highest levels of language difficulties in all subjects also suffered from the worst performance in all school subjects. These findings reveal that with respect to all the earlier factors presented in this report, language difficulty is the greatest determinant of schooling performance. However, this does not rule out the importance of socioeconomic factors, school interruption, grade misplacement, and schooling experiences, which were comprehensively covered earlier in this report.

The following figure shows that children in Turkey reported the best overall schooling performance, while those in Australia reported the worst based on the self-assessment survey question for the overall educational performance. In Australia, refugee children's educational performance improved from year 1 (54%) to year 2 (58%), then became worse in year 3 (47%).

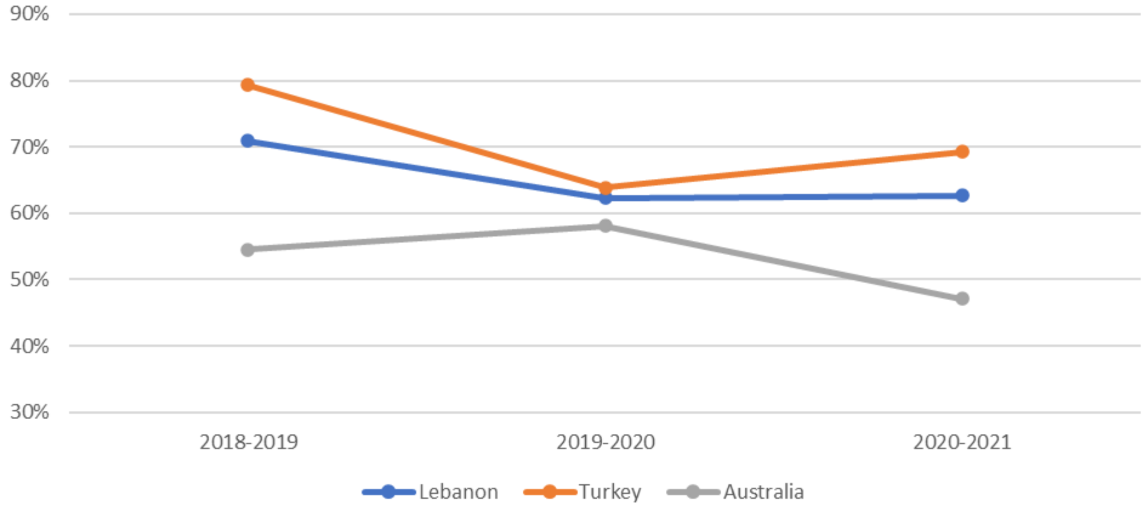

Figure 21. Percentage of Students Who Reported Good Educational Performance

On the other hand, in Turkey, refugee children's educational performance worsened from year 1 (79%) to year 2 (64%), then improved in year 3 (69%). In the case of Turkey, the deterioration in refugee children's educational performance from year 1 to year 2 could be attributed to the transition of the majority of our sampled children from TECs to Turkish public schools, where the language of instruction became Turkish instead of Arabic, as we will later reveal in this section. Also, the fact that year 2's data is a repeated cross-section change could explain the significant difference between the first two years.

In Lebanon, refugee children's educational performance also worsened from year 1 (71%) to year 2 (62%) and remained the same in year 3 (62%). However, in Lebanon, the deterioration in refugee children's educational performance from year 1 to year 2 could be attributed to the limited access to education and the deterioration in the quality of education provided during the COVID-19 lockdown (Hammoud & Shuayb, 2021), which our interviewees will later reveal.

As we proceed with examining refugee children's performance in specific subjects, we will realize that these trends and changes in students' educational performance hold true for specific subjects as well. For instance, our results reveal that, on average, refugee children in Australia performed the worst in foreign language subjects, while those in Turkey performed the best throughout all three years. Furthermore, the figure below reveals that refugee children's performance in foreign language subjects improved in Australia from year 1 to year 2, then worsened in year 3. On the other hand, in Turkey and Lebanon, refugee children's performance in foreign language subjects declined from year 1 to year 2, then improved in year 3.

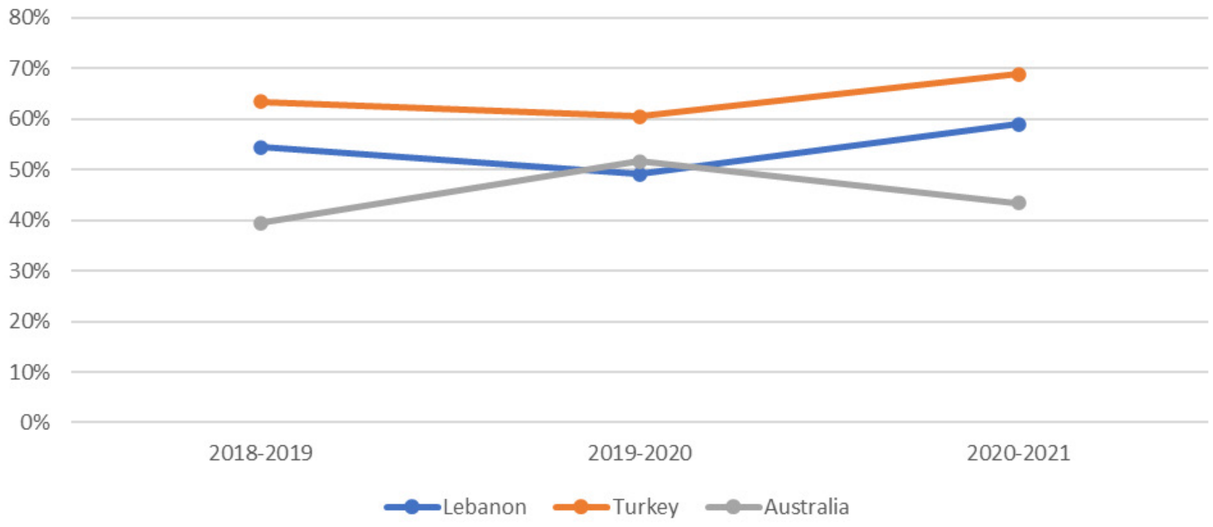

Figure 22. Percentage of Students Who Reported Good Performance in Foreign Language Subjects

Similarly, refugee children's performance in Math was the best in Turkey and the worst in Australia. While refugee children's performance in Lebanon and Australia improved from year 1 to year 2, it slightly declined in year 3. On the other hand, in Turkey, refugee children's performance in Math subjects declined from year 1 to year 2, then improved greatly in year 3. The slight decline in performance that we have seen in all three countries could be related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students' learning experiences.

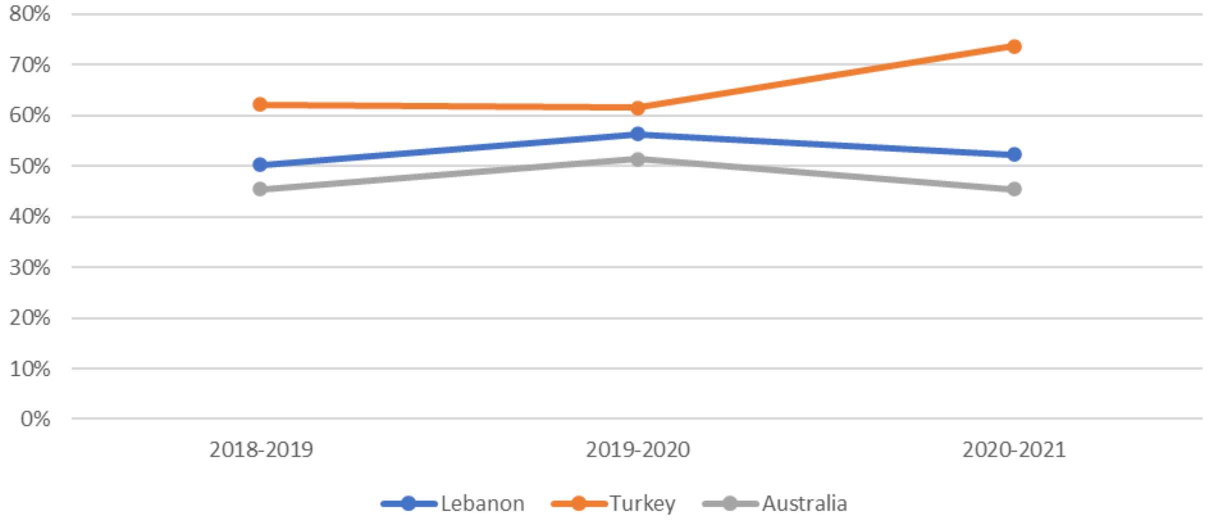

Figure 23. Percentage of Students Who Reported Good Performance in Math

As for learning sciences, refugees in Turkey, on average, also reported the best schooling performance, while those in Australia reported the worse. Our results reveal that refugee children's performance in Australia improved from year 1 to year 2, then worsened in year 3. On the other hand, in Turkey and Lebanon, refugee children's performance in science subjects declined from year 1 to year 2, then improved in year 3. However, year 2's decline was more prominent in the case of Lebanon, where refugees struggled the most during COVID-19 (Hammoud & Shuayb, 2021).

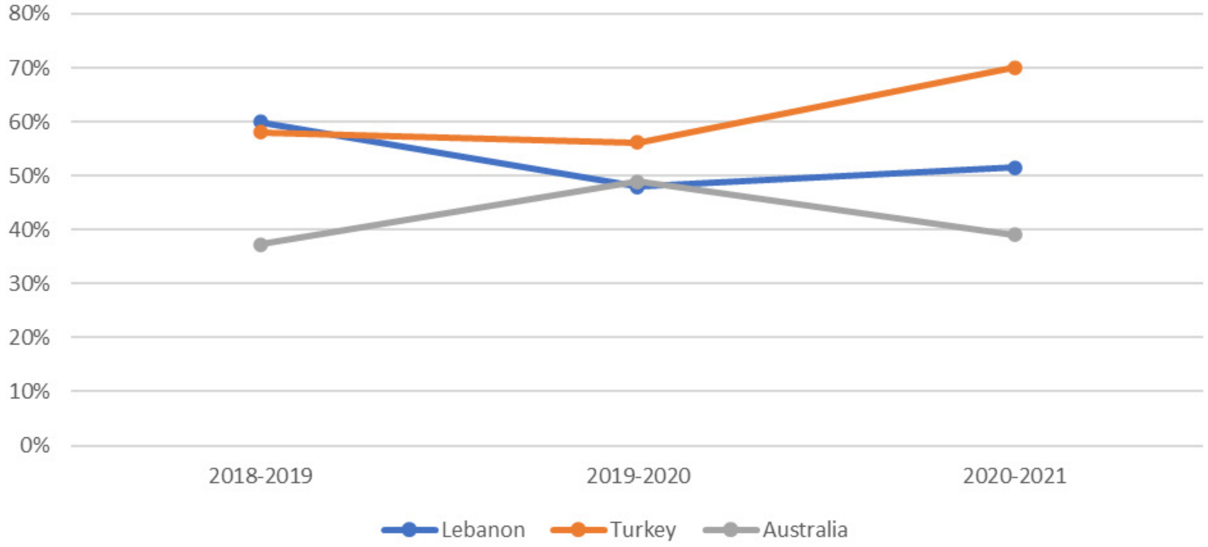

Figure 24. Percentage of Students Who Reported Good Performance in Science Subjects

Unlike Math and Sciences, in Lebanon, social studies subjects are taught in refugee children's native language, which helps them excel in these subjects and overcome the language barrier often faced in other subjects. This was evident in the previous section, where refugees in Lebanon faced the least difficulty in understanding the language of instruction in social studies subjects and also reported the highest schooling performance across all three samples, as indicated in the figure below.

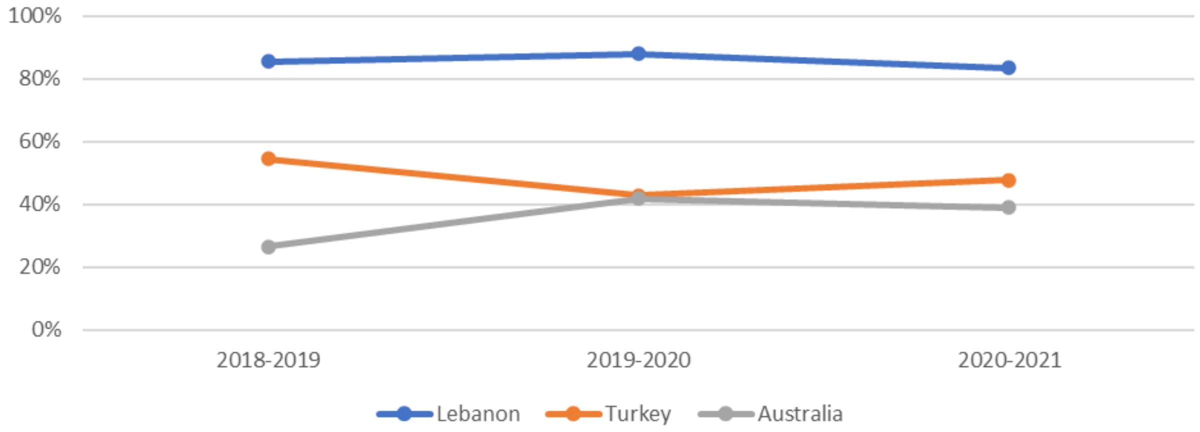

Figure 25. Percentage of Students Who Reported Good Performance in Social Studies Subjects

In Australia, we observe a similar trend to that observed earlier in foreign language and Math subjects, whereby children's performance in social studies subjects improved from year 1 to year 2, then worsened in year 3. On the other hand, in Turkey, refugee children's performance in social studies subjects worsened from year 1 to year 2, then improved in year 3. The following qualitative findings will further explain the reason behind the fluctuation in children's performance, especially during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The qualitative data collected during years 2 and 3 provide a plausible explanation for the fluctuation in children's performance, which was observed in the figures above. For instance, in Lebanon's case, prior to the lockdown, several teachers indicated that students' performance is improving over time and that translating class lessons is yielding good results. However, during the lockdown, schooling in the afternoon shift was interrupted as the majority of public schools were not offering any online learning. Furthermore, the financial crisis in Lebanon further limited their access to online learning, whereby many could not afford access to the internet and necessary hardware (Hammoud and Shuayb, 2021). Moreover, MEHE's decision to automatically promote grade 9 students to grade 10 caused a huge gap in knowledge due to missed schooling, which negatively impacted their schooling performance (Zhang &Huang, 2022). Therefore, interviewed students reported failing their grade level while others dropped out as they could not keep up with new lessons because of the lost schooling time under lockdown.

"I failed this year in grade 8 because I couldn't study during the online courses; I had to share one phone with my five siblings. (Student, Lebanon)

Several students also reported that the absence of teacher interaction and practical examples made it impossible to study subjects like science online. Besides, teachers were not used to online learning approaches, which caused an overall deterioration in students' performance.

"Teachers could not monitor students on the online platform, so students' educational performance was much worse in the last two years and unacceptable for all of us. I really feel sorry for students." (Principal, Lebanon)

In Turkey, the fluctuation in children's performance could also be attributed to the COVID-19 crisis. However, interviews with parents also suggest that the transition from TECs to Turkish public schools also took its toll on refugee children's schooling performance. Although students' language proficiency improved over time, some students still faced language-related difficulties after moving to Turkish public schools, as indicated by several interviewed parents in year 2.

“It’s not as good as when they were in Syrian schools (TECs); the language barrier is huge in public schools.” (Parent, Turkey)

On the other hand, students who were enrolled in Turkish schools for several years reported that they were doing well language-wise. Except that their schooling performance also decreased during online learning due to difficulties in understanding class lessons and focusing on teachers’ explanation, as indicated by several interviewed students in year 3.

“When the online lessons started, I was committed in the beginning, but then I got really bored, so I started performing poorly” (Student, Turkey)

Similarly, in Australia, our qualitative data from year 1 reveal that students struggled with language difficulties at first. Then, by year 2, several interviewed students reported improvements in their academic performance, as indicated by our survey findings earlier. However, year 3’s interviews reveal that students’ performance deteriorated during lockdown for similar reasons to those mentioned in Turkey. Students struggled to keep up with online lessons, and many reported being demotivated.

“I passed this year, but I did not work hard during the lockdown” (Student, Australia)

In brief, our quantitative results show that refugee children’s educational performance is greatly shaped by their ability to understand and process the language of instruction. Refugees who received enough support to improve their foreign language proficiency performed better than those who still struggle with the language barrier. Furthermore, refugees in Lebanon outperformed refugees residing in Turkey and Australia in social studies subjects, as those subjects are taught in their native language. Our qualitative results indicate that refugee students’ educational performance improved over time because of language support and training. However, during COVID-19, this progress was halted due to limited access to online learning and challenges related to distance learning. Finally, while refugees under the long-term model struggled to keep up with online learning due to a lack of motivation, those under the short-term model struggled due to the lack of learning opportunities.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This report examines how refugee children's schooling experiences and outcomes differ between education in emergency and long-term education paradigm. We targeted Syrian refugee children enrolled in formal education in Lebanon, Turkey, and Australia. The study uses longitudinal quantitative and qualitative data to compare schooling experiences and outcomes among refugees in the selected destination countries, offering short-term, medium-term, and long-term settlements.

Over the past four years, refugees residing in all three countries reported increasing financial struggles, mainly during the COVID-19 lockdown. However, refugees in Lebanon appeared to be struggling the most because of the ongoing financial crisis and, more importantly, the additional socioeconomic burdens inflicted by the temporality of their legal settlement. Restrictions on residency and work permits increased refugees' vulnerabilities in Lebanon, forcing an increasing number of children to drop out of school to support their families. Moreover, refugees under EIE appeared to be struggling with the worst living conditions and were often exposed to employment exploitations. The limitations of the EIE model were more evident during the lockdown, where online learning was almost non-existent for refugees in Lebanon (Hammoud and Shuayb, 2021). Amid this new emergency, the Lebanese Ministry of Education, with its limited resources, gave priority to its own citizens while refugees were left largely with limited education. Above all, refugees under EIE faced numerous bureaucratic barriers that hindered their access to formal schooling, forcing many to drop out.

Displacement was a main pre-settlement factor affecting students' educational attainment, mainly for students resettling under EIE who were found to have missed more schooling years before moving to Lebanon. Results also revealed that school interruption upon resettlement was more common under EIE, while in Australia, resettlement was accompanied by the necessary programs needed to overcome learning barriers related to language and curriculum. Even refugees in Turkey had better routes to education upon arrival. For instance, while children in Lebanon were put on idle awaiting the development of governmental strategies, refugees in Turkey were offered routes to accredited non-formal education such as TECs; hence they missed a lower number of schooling years upon resettling compared to refugees in Lebanon.

After missing a considerable number of years, refugees in Lebanon were subject to an inconsistent grade placement criterion upon attempting to enrol in public schools. In fact, the highest grade mismatch percentage was reported by refugees in Lebanon, where around half of the sample was found to be misplaced with respect to their age, which drove many to academic failure or dropping out. Having said that, even with their indispensable need for academic support, refugees in Lebanon received the least preparatory support and language training compared to refugees in Turkey and Australia. Further revealing the failure of the EIE model in catering to refugees' educational needs during and after resettling.

Despite being educationally segregated in afternoon shifts and not being offered equitable education, refugees in Lebanon liked going to school more than refugees in Turkey and Australia. This was mainly true due to the presence of students and teachers who speak the same language and share a relatively similar background to refugees in Lebanon. Sharing a common language allowed refugees in Lebanon to communicate easily with teachers and peers, which was a great challenge for refugees in Australia. However, their segregation in the afternoon shift deprived them of a normal schooling experience, and many students expressed the negative experiences associated with attending afternoon schooling. Furthermore, the temporality of their settlement and its policies have for years promoted educational and social segregation. This yielded increasing hostility and discriminatory acts against refugees in Lebanon, and such acts were not only limited to the school environment but also present in neighbourhoods and society. On the other hand, Australia's hostility rates continue to decrease due to policies promoting educational, economic, and social integration. Therefore, revealing that positive schooling experiences are to a great extent dictated by policies of inclusion rather than segregation.

In spite of the lack of sufficient support, refugees in Lebanon faced less difficulty understanding the foreign language of instruction in all subjects compared to their peers in Australia. This was mainly due to the presence of teachers who speak their native language and the practices undertaken by teachers to alleviate the language barrier for subjects taught in foreign languages. On the other hand, refugees in Turkey faced the least difficulties in understanding subjects taught in foreign language due to their gradual integration into mainstream education, which was preceded by their TECs and receiving sufficient language training. Over the course of this study, we observed a decrease in the level of difficulties faced by all refugees in understanding foreign languages. However, this decrease was most prominent in Australia, whereby in year 3, difficulty levels reached levels similar to those observed in Lebanon and Turkey for some subjects, despite starting off with the highest difficulty levels. Therefore, one can conclude that the longer-term model yields better educational outcomes in the long term in spite of the higher struggles faced in the early years of enrolment.

Our findings on language difficulties were of great importance for our attempt to understand differences in refugee children's schooling performance. Our findings indicate that refugee children's schooling performance is greatly shaped by their ability to understand and process the language of instruction. Refugees who faced high language difficulties performed poorly, while those who faced lower language difficulties had higher schooling performance. For instance, refugees in Lebanon outperformed refugees residing in Turkey and Australia in social studies subjects, which are the subjects in which they faced the least language difficulties. While we observed a significant improvement in all refugee students' educational performance over time, during COVID-19, this progress was halted in all three countries but mainly in Lebanon due to limited access to online learning.

As we try to understand the impact of different educational models on refugee education, we realize that EIE's advantages are limited to factors that are a by-product of the proximity between the host country and country of origin. In most cases, EIE is adopted by countries that share borders with refugees' home countries. Hence refugees are often familiar with the language and culture of the host country. While this facilitates their educational and social integration in the short run, it is not enough to guarantee the fulfilment of long-term educational objectives. In contrast, while refugees under the long-term model struggle in the early years of resettlement due to their unfamiliarity with the host country's language and culture, such barriers are alleviated over time by inclusive policies, yielding more favourable educational outcomes in the long run.

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