

Education Justice in Times of War: Lebanon's Compounded Crises and Unequal Futures

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CERD	Center for Educational Research and Development
CLS	Centre for Lebanese Studies
IDPs	Internally Displaced People
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
EiE	Education in Emergency
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the major escalation of the renewed Israeli aggression on Lebanon on 2 March 2026, the attacks spread across much of Lebanon, displacing more than 1.3 million people, resulting in more than 3,185 martyrs and 9,633 injured, and more than 127,714 people are still displaced and unable to return home (as of 26 May 2026). The effects on education were immediate and far-reaching: 300,000 out of 1.1 million Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian students were displaced, 61% of children were enrolled in schools affected by war, and 550 of the country's 1,228 public schools were converted into shelters, underscoring how schools were rapidly repurposed as central infrastructures of the emergency response. As of 6 May 2026, only 54.8% of AM-shift public schools and 48.7% of PM-shift schools serving Syrian refugee students had resumed in-person or hybrid learning, highlighting the sharper disruption in the second-shift system. This study examines how the Israeli 2026 war on Lebanon reshaped access to, continuity of, and experiences of education in Lebanon within a broader context of compounded crises, institutional fragility, and deepening inequality.

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews and focus groups with principals, teachers, students, and parents, alongside a quantitative survey of 300 public school teachers. The findings reveal that the 2026 war did not create a new educational crisis in isolation, but rather intensified long-standing structural inequalities and vulnerabilities produced through years of compounded crises, including the 2019 economic collapse, COVID-19, the Beirut Blast in 2020, and the 2023 and 2026 Israeli wars on Lebanon.

The findings show that educational responses during the 2026 war were highly fragmented, reactive, and uneven across regions and social groups. While the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) introduced emergency continuity plans for online, hybrid, and offline learning modalities, implementation varied significantly across geography, security conditions, school leadership, digital infrastructure, and socio-economic status. Remote learning became the dominant mode of provision, particularly in heavily affected areas, yet participation remained low. Our survey results showed that more than 65% of teachers reported that fewer than half of their students regularly attended or actively engaged in lessons, and more than 85% described current online and hybrid education modalities as having limited or low effectiveness.

Across interviews, principals, teachers, parents, and students overwhelmingly described online learning as a temporary coping mechanism rather than a meaningful substitute for schooling. Survey findings highlight the issues with online learning: 83% of teachers identified weak or no internet connectivity as a major challenge, while 43% reported insufficient access to devices. Additionally, according to our survey, teachers reported limited preparedness to deliver effective online instruction: 79% reported not receiving adequate support in their teaching during the war; multiple unmet needs were identified, including financial support (81%), internet access (50%), access to a comfortable place for teaching (28%), and psychological support (55%). Hence, our data surveys revealed that 66% of the teachers reported fully engaging in remote teaching, around 17.5% adopted hybrid modalities, and only about 17% sustained in-person instruction during the war.

The 2026 war significantly deepened educational inequalities, as public school students, and Syrian refugee students in afternoon shifts were more severely affected by school closures and the conversion of schools into shelters, while many private schools maintained greater continuity. Access to education increasingly depended on students' displacement status, socio-economic conditions, and access to digital infrastructure. Students living in shelters experienced some of the most severe forms of exclusion, facing overcrowding, lack of privacy, limited access to textbooks and devices, and ongoing exposure to trauma and instability.

Children with disabilities and students with learning difficulties were among the most excluded groups in the education response. The study found a near-total absence of inclusive educational provision during the war. Most shelters remained physically inaccessible, while specialised educational and psychosocial services were largely suspended. Survey results indicate that only 4% of teachers said current education modalities considered the needs of students with learning difficulties, and only 5% said the same for students with disabilities.

The findings also highlight the severe strain placed on teachers and school leaders. Principals managing schools converted into shelters assumed responsibilities far beyond their formal educational roles, including shelter coordination, data management, and crisis mediation, often with limited institutional support. Teachers reported significant financial insecurity, increased workloads, emotional exhaustion, and burnout. While the majority continued teaching despite the war, many described feeling abandoned by institutions and the ministries and unsupported psychologically and materially. The survey revealed that the vast majority (96%) reported that their salaries had been affected by the war, and 50% indicated that the impact was large or significant. In addition, 88% reported having no alternative source of income, highlighting high levels of financial vulnerability.

At the same time, the study reveals important tensions surrounding the meaning and relevance of education during war. While most teachers, parents, and students emphasised the importance of continuing education, many questioned the relevance of curriculum content and formal examinations under conditions of displacement, insecurity, and trauma. The persistence of exam-oriented educational priorities was widely perceived as disconnected from students' realities and emotional needs. Participants repeatedly stressed the need for education systems to prioritise psychosocial well-being, social cohesion, flexibility, and care rather than narrowly focusing on curriculum completion and assessment.

Importantly, the findings demonstrate that the impact of the 2026 war cannot be understood separately from the cumulative effects of previous crises. Participants consistently described living and learning in a prolonged condition of exhaustion, uncertainty, and 'survival mode.' Repeated disruptions since 2019, including the economic collapse, COVID-19 pandemic, Beirut port explosion, teacher strikes, and previous phases of war (2023 and 2026), have produced substantial and uneven learning loss, weakened institutional trust, and undermined the long-term viability of education for many communities.

The report concludes that responses to education in emergencies in Lebanon must move beyond short-term continuity measures toward more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable approaches that address structural inequalities, strengthen institutional preparedness, support teachers and learners psychosocially and materially, and ensure that education systems are capable not only of surviving crises, but of protecting dignity, equity, and the right to meaningful learning for all. Consequently, various recommendations were suggested: The

findings highlight the urgent need for Lebanon's education sector to move beyond reactive crisis responses toward a comprehensive and equitable Education in Emergencies framework that strengthens preparedness, continuity, and resilience.

The recommendations highlight the urgent need for Lebanon's education sector to move beyond reactive crisis responses and adopt a comprehensive, equitable, and resilient Education in Emergencies framework. This includes the development of a national emergency education plan that strengthens preparedness, ensures continuity of learning during crises, and prioritises the needs of vulnerable and displaced learners through flexible, inclusive, and context-responsive approaches. The recommendations call for stronger support for teachers and school leaders through professional development, crisis-response training, improved working conditions, and sustained financial and psychosocial assistance. They further emphasise the need to strengthen governance, coordination, and accountability mechanisms across ministries, humanitarian actors, and education stakeholders to ensure more coherent and effective responses during emergencies. Targeted learning recovery programmes should be implemented to address the cumulative learning loss resulting from years of disruption, with particular attention to marginalised learners, displaced children, and those at risk of dropping out. Curriculum reform is also needed to ensure greater relevance to contemporary realities by incorporating critical thinking, digital competencies, social cohesion, citizenship, and skills required for an increasingly uncertain future. In parallel, the expansion and strengthening of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) pathways can provide more diverse and accessible educational opportunities for young people whose aspirations and educational trajectories have been disrupted by prolonged crises. Finally, psychosocial support and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) should be systematically integrated across education responses, recognising that learning cannot be separated from students' and teachers' wellbeing. Schools should be supported to function not only as sites of academic learning but also as safe, inclusive, and protective spaces that promote resilience, social cohesion, emotional recovery, and a sense of stability amid ongoing uncertainty and wars.

I. INTRODUCTION: THE STATE OF EDUCATION IN LEBANON AMID WAR

The present study examines the impact of the 2026 Israeli war on education in Lebanon. The war, which began on 2 March 2026, represents a renewed escalation within a protracted trajectory of war, displacement, and institutional strain, layered onto unresolved educational, economic, and psychosocial damage from previous cycles of war and compounded crises. In this sense, the study considers the immediate effects of the 2026 war while also situating them within the cumulative impact of repeated and compounded shocks on an already fragile system, embedded in a broader historical pattern of recurring Israeli aggression on Lebanon (Armstrong, 2024).

The recent Israeli aggression on Lebanon is a continuation of the previous one that has started in October 2023, which resulted in the displacement of 1.3 million civilians, over 3,500 martyrs, and more than 14,000 injuries in Lebanon. This had severely disrupted education through school closures, destruction of schools, whether partially or totally, the use of schools as shelters, and the direct impact on more than one million students and 45,000 teachers (Shuayb et al., 2024). Although a ceasefire was announced on 27 November 2024, Israeli violations persisted, with continued bombardment and destruction, especially in the Southern border villages. This has kept many families displaced, denying them the possibility of return. Consequently, early 2025 data suggest that the return to in-person education remained highly uneven after the 2023 war. Although more than 805 public schools had reopened and 276,940 students had registered in the morning shift by December 2024, over 103,000 people remained displaced in January 2025, and students in frontline areas of South Lebanon were among those least able to return to regular in-person schooling (Hammoud & Brun, 2025b; UNICEF, 2025).

The scale of the renewed Israeli war on Lebanon in 2026 has again been severe. The disruption unfolded rapidly, with more than 8000 attacks over 46 days across Lebanon (CNRS & NCNE Lebanon, 2026), and forced displacement affecting education and family life on a large scale. More than 1 million people were displaced across Lebanon from their homes, including 200,000 children (UNICEF, 2026b). The effects on education were immediate and far-reaching: 300,000 out of 1.1 million Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian students were displaced, 61% of children were enrolled in schools affected by war, and 550 of the country's 1,228 public schools were converted into shelters, underscoring how schools were rapidly repurposed as central infrastructures of the emergency response (Centre for Lebanese Studies, 2026b). After a month of the escalation, the closures affected approximately 256,000 students in public schooling alone, including 181,500 in the morning shift and 74,500 in the afternoon shift (UNICEF, 2026a).

This report is written in the context of Israel's continued violations of the fragile ceasefire announced on 16 April 2026, through repeated airstrikes, bombardment, and ongoing insecurity, resulting in more than 3,185 martyrs and 9,633 injured, and more than 127,714 people are still displaced and unable to return home (as of 26 May 2026) (Disaster Risk Management Unit, Lebanon, 2026). These conditions point to the danger of protracted crises, where the effects of war extend to shape people's safety and daily lives, displacement trajectories, and educational experiences long after a ceasefire is declared.

As of 6 May 2026, the reopening of public schools remained partial and deeply uneven across both shifts. In the morning shift, 664 out of 1,212 schools (54.8%) had reopened in person or hybrid mode, compared with only 152 out of 312 schools (48.7%) in the afternoon shift serving Syrian refugee students, pointing to a sharper disruption experienced in the second-shift system (MEHE, 2026h).

Moreover, as of 13 May 2026, a total of 448 schools in Lebanon remained completely out of operation after being converted into shelters for displaced populations. These included 332 public schools, 67 private schools, and 49 vocational and technical institutes. At the same time, more than 580 public schools continued to rely on distance learning for over 116,000 students, of which more than 320 schools were located in the South and Nabatiyeh governorates (Kawas, 2026).

Therefore, this study is situated within the continuous wars and uncertainty in Lebanon. It examines educational experiences across Lebanon, from the border areas of southern Lebanon, where schools and communities have endured wars, shattered infrastructure, and ongoing insecurity, to other heavily affected areas such as Nabatiyeh, the southern suburbs of Beirut, the Beqaa, and Baalbek, as well as relatively less affected regions such as North Lebanon and Akkar.

Initial efforts by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) to resume education further divided and sparked controversy among the Lebanese population, as decisions to reopen schools and the learning modalities offered in different contexts were perceived as unequal and unevenly adapted to the realities of war and displacement. Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to better understand the perspectives of different actors, including their concerns, needs, grievances, and readiness to sustain education under crisis. As a rapid study conducted during an evolving emergency, its findings should be read as a time-bound account of a shifting and unstable context.

To this end, this report has a twofold purpose. First, it examines the immediate educational disruptions caused by the 2026 Israeli war on Lebanon, including school closures, population displacement, and the reconfiguration of educational provision, and evaluates their impact on access and quality across Lebanon's diverse student populations. Second, it contextualises these disruptions within Lebanon's broader historical trajectory of recurring wars, displacement cycles, compounded crises, and institutional deterioration to analyse how these ongoing processes have progressively reshaped education's meaning, viability, and equity over time.

Thus, the overarching research question is:

How has the 2026 war reshaped the system, continuity, and lived experience of education in Lebanon within a context of compounded crises?

The sub-questions include:

How did students, teachers, principals, and parents experience education during the 2026 war? How did previous crises impact their current experiences?

How did education actors and institutions adapt to maintain (or fail to maintain) continuity of learning during the 2026 war?

How has the 2026 war affected access to, quality of, and equity within education across different stakeholder groups (students, teachers, principals, and parents)?

To what extent was the Lebanese education system prepared for the disruptions caused by the 2026 war, and how did this preparedness (or lack of) shape education responses?

The report is structured as follows. It begins with a context section that outlines the state of education resulting from the compounded crises that hit Lebanon over the past seven years and the pre-existing educational inequalities, followed by the state of education during the 2026 war. It then presents the methodology, followed by the main findings and a broader analytical discussion of their implications. The report concludes with key reflections and recommendations for policy and practice.

II. CONTEXT OF COMPOUNDED CRISES, INEQUALITY, AND INSTITUTIONAL STRAIN

2.1 The State of the Education System Before the 2026 War

The 2026 Israeli war on Lebanon unfolds against the backdrop of a deeply fragile education system shaped by overlapping and prolonged crises rather than a single shock. Lebanon's education sector has been affected over the past decade by the Syrian war, the financial collapse that intensified from 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Beirut port explosion in 2020, and the 2023 Israeli war, all of which have compounded pre-existing inequalities and weakened the system's ability to ensure equitable, quality, and continuous education. Consequently, successive and compounded crises have placed additional strain on an already fragile education system. Lebanon's education landscape was already highly fragmented, historically marked by sectarian and political divisions, a strong public-private split, and uneven governance across institutions. The education system has also struggled to absorb large refugee populations, with separate and unequal tracks for Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian learners, and with limited inclusion for children with disabilities. These overlapping pressures have made education in Lebanon increasingly crisis-driven, with public schools bearing the heaviest burden (Brun et al., 2024; Maalouf & Brun, 2025).

These crises have disrupted education and exposed longstanding institutional strain and ad hoc responses in the sector. Research has shown that educational responsibilities in Lebanon are dispersed across multiple ministries and actors, resulting in fragmented planning, weak accountability, and policy incoherence. Major donor-supported plans and strategies, including RACE I and II, the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), the Five-Year General Education Plan, and later reform roadmaps, sought to address access, quality, and resilience, yet they did not produce a fair or inclusive education system (Brun et al., 2024; Maalouf & Brun, 2025). At the same time, the absence of curriculum reform since 1997, weak data systems, limited transparency, chronic dependence on humanitarian aid, and recurring gaps between policy design and implementation have left the sector in a state of survival rather than recovery (Hammoud & Brun, 2025a).

The effects of compounded crises were already visible in stark inequalities across Lebanon's education system. According to pre-war education data for the 2022–2023 academic year, around 70% of students were enrolled in private schools and 30% in public schools, while by December 2023, some 27% of children were out of school, including 7% of Lebanese children and 40% of Syrian children (Inter-Agency Coordination Lebanon, 2024). Meanwhile, 55% of public school teachers were employed on contractual and insecure terms (Hammoud & Brun, 2025b).

The large-scale escalation of Israeli aggression on Lebanon in 2023 sharply intensified this fragility: between September and November 2024, Israeli aggression displaced around 1.3 million people, rendered 75% of public schools non-operational by early November, forced around 340,000 children and youth out of school, directly affected 45,000 teachers, and left more than 650,000 Lebanese and Syrian students out of school by the end of the year (Shuayb et al., 2024). The situation was further exacerbated with the 2026 Israeli war on Lebanon, triggering a new phase of crisis response in which MEHE sought to organise continuity through differentiated schooling provisions and modalities shaped by security conditions, displacement, and uneven access to resources.

2.2 The 2026 Israeli War and the Emergency Education Responses

This context provides a foundational overview, enabling a clearer understanding of the policy environment in which education responses to the 2026 war have been developed and implemented. It also provides essential background for interpreting the themes identified in this study and for the analysis presented below.

In early March 2026, MEHE implemented a series of emergency measures in response to the war. These included the nationwide closure of schools and universities, the use of public schools as shelters under the National Response Plan, and the establishment of education crisis committees within MEHE (MEHE, 2026a, 2026b, 2026c). At the same time, MEHE coordinated with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) and the Ministry of Interior and municipalities within the framework of the National Response Plan to support shelter management and ensure security around shelter sites. Schools designated as shelters were selected based on infrastructure readiness, safety conditions, and geographic distribution (MEHE, 2026e).

Then, on 9 March 2026, MEHE issued its plan for education continuity during the war. Under this plan, private schools were allowed to adopt in-person, remote, or hybrid learning depending on security conditions and in consultation with parents, starting from 10 March, while also ensuring remote learning for displaced or absent students. As for public schools, those able to operate, including some used as shelters, were instructed to begin a gradual transition to remote learning from 10 March, aiming to reach full remote learning by 16 March, or earlier if ready. In contrast, schools located in heavily affected areas were to have their classes temporarily suspended (MEHE, 2026d, 2026e). On 12 March 2026, as part of efforts to support education continuity during the 2026 war, telecom providers introduced a free one-month e-learning bundle that offered 20 GB of data for access to Microsoft Teams and the Madrasati platform on weekdays between 7:30 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. This measure was intended to reduce some of the connectivity barriers facing students and teachers engaged in remote learning, although its scope remained limited to specific platforms and time periods (Touch, 2026).

Thus, MEHE's emergency continuity plan outlined differentiated learning modalities for both teachers and students based on location and security conditions. In relatively safe areas and in schools used as shelters, the plan relied on a blended model combining printed learning materials, self-learning activities, live or synchronous sessions through Microsoft Teams and the Madrasati platform¹, phone-based follow-up, and psychosocial or recreational support. In war-affected areas where internet access was limited, MEHE proposed an offline model based on weekly printed learning packets, guided self-learning, WhatsApp groups, phone-based communication and support, and psychosocial activities delivered with education partners. For students who remained at home with internet access, learning was expected to continue online via Microsoft Teams, Madrasati, and e-books from the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD). Overall, the plan reflects a tiered response that sought to adapt teaching and learning modalities to displacement, shelter conditions, and uneven digital access (MEHE, 2026f). However, as will be demonstrated later, field observations and interviews showed that the actual implementation of these modalities, particularly the blended model in shelters, was uneven and in some cases not clearly visible on the ground, raising questions about the extent to which the planned response was translated into practice.

¹ A free online educational platform launched by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and UNICEF for K-12 education.

Consequently, by 16 March, the public schools' reopening was proceeding unevenly through blended arrangements. Schools in safer areas reopened in person or in hybrid form, while schools in heavily affected areas, schools functioning as shelters, or schools whose staff and students were displaced were directed toward remote provision (MEHE, 2026g).

Many of the inequalities mentioned above were amplified during the war. For example, children with disabilities are among the most marginalised groups in the 2026 war response. By 25 March 2026, 1,993 persons with disabilities had been identified across 374 shelters, but these figures remain incomplete, as they exclude many who were unable to leave danger zones or who are living outside collective shelters without services. At the same time, many shelters have been reported as inaccessible and inadequate, lacking basic accessible facilities, appropriate food, specialised care, and the support required for those with complex needs (Centre for Lebanese Studies, 2026a).

This unevenness is further exacerbated by the continued instability following the fragile ceasefire of 16 April 2026, as ongoing violations, destruction of villages in South Lebanon, including the targeting of educational infrastructure, as well as continued violations in Southern Beirut (Dahiyeh), underscore the uncertain and volatile conditions within which education systems are expected to function (Legal Agenda, 2026a, 2026b).

The gap between policy design and educational reality remains pronounced. To understand how these gaps unfold in practice, this report examines how education in Lebanon has been experienced by and across different contexts and groups during the 2026 war, while situating these dynamics within a longer trajectory of repeated crises and fragility in the Lebanese education system.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study aims to first examine the immediate impacts of the 2026 Israeli war on education, including school closures, displacement, and the reconfiguration of educational provision, and second, to situate these disruptions within a broader trajectory of recurring war, displacement, compounded crises, and institutional strain, in order to analyse how these dynamics have progressively reshaped the meaning, feasibility, and equity of education in Lebanon over time. To do so, the study employs a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative data to capture the scale and lived experience of educational disruption during the 2026 war in Lebanon.

3.1. Instruments

The primary component of the study is qualitative to explore how school principals, teachers, students, and parents have experienced education during the 2026 Israeli war in Lebanon. The interview guide included questions related to how the current 2026 war, as well as previous crises and changes in the country, have affected schooling, impacted learning and teaching, how the education system supported them, how they responded to it, what their thoughts were related to MEHE's decisions on online and in-person schooling, and how they envision the future of education in Lebanon.

Building on insights and observations from the early stages of the war, informed by practitioners and researchers affiliated with the Centre for Lebanese Studies (CLS), a quantitative component was developed to further explore teachers' experiences in education during the war. The quantitative component involved an online survey using SurveyMonkey addressed to public school teachers in the morning shift. The survey focused on key themes, including school closures and disruptions, displacement, modes of teaching, teachers' working conditions, their psychosocial well-being, student participation, their perceptions of the Ministry of Education's response, and their needs.

3.2. Field Visits and Discussions

The qualitative component of the study began with a selection of schools made across the Lebanese governorates. It began in January and February 2026 as part of a study aimed at understanding the impact of the compounded crises in Lebanon on education. Accordingly, a letter was presented to MEHE requesting approval to access the selected public schools. Once we gained approval from MEHE, we began contacting the principal of each school (via email or phone conversation), requesting that they specify a date for us to visit the school and collect the data. We asked the principal to select up to 2 students from Grades 8 to 11, with specific criteria including vulnerable and disadvantaged students, as well as a mixture of males and females, and 2-3 teachers. We also asked them to select 4-6 parents of students for a focus group discussion.

However, when the war began on March 2, 2026, the methodology and interview tools were adapted to capture the specific impacts of the 2026 war on education, with additional questions to address them. The sample was based on schools that we could access due to the war. Consequently, it included a combination of schools from the MEHE-approved list and three schools that had been repurposed as shelters.

The school selection thus comprised:

Governorate	MEHE-approved school	Shelter school
Beirut	1 ²	2
Mount Lebanon	2	1
North	2	0
Akkar	1	0
Beqaa	3	0
South & Nabatiyeh	3 ³	0
Baalbek	0 ⁴	0

Table 1 - Schools interviewed based on type and governorate

As for the quantitative component of the study, the survey targeted teachers working in public schools during the morning shift. This focus was selected because morning-shift public schools operate under MEHE policies and directives. Their operations differ from those of private schools, which have greater autonomy in deciding whether to open and which learning modalities to adopt based on their geographic context. Teachers were particularly selected as a key focus in this component given their central role in sustaining education under conditions of emergency, as well as their position at the intersection of policy implementation and everyday educational practice. Focusing on public morning-shift teachers, therefore, allowed us to examine how national education policies were being implemented in practice, and to identify gaps between policy guidance and teachers' lived experiences on the ground.

3.3. Data Collection Procedures

The qualitative data were collected both in person and by phone in March 2026. The principals of the schools/shelters were the main point of contact for selecting and providing contact information (for phone interviews) for teachers, parents, and students. After gaining approval from the principals to proceed with data collection, researchers visited shelters and schools, and some met with participants outside the school, where they felt safe to meet and participate in the interview. In total, 88 participants were interviewed, divided as follows: 12 principals, 27 teachers, 26 students, 44 parents (25 of whom were in focus group discussions).

Participant	Total number
Principals	12
Teachers	27
Students	26
Parents	44

Table 2 - Total number of participants interviewed

2 The MEHE-approved school in Beirut was also functioning as a shelter, where the displaced individuals were additionally interviewed.

3 These schools had been included in the pre-war phase of the data collection, and were re-interviewed during the war

4 Refer to the limitations section below.

The study encompassed both displaced and non-displaced populations, requiring different approaches to data collection due to security and displacement-related challenges. For the displaced population, face-to-face interviews were conducted at the shelter schools in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. For the non-displaced, interviews were conducted face-to-face or by phone. Where possible, focus groups with parents were conducted (6 in total). Otherwise, one-on-one interviews were conducted instead. In total, 22 interviews were conducted by phone and 66 in person.

As for the quantitative component of the study, the survey was disseminated through CLS networks and social media platforms, allowing for broad outreach across all the governorates. In some cases, the survey was also shared through school principals, who circulated the link among teachers. In total, 404 responses were received, of which 300 were deemed eligible for analysis.

3.4. Data Analysis

The qualitative data were analysed manually based on detailed notes taken during and immediately after the interviews. Regular debriefing sessions and ongoing discussions among the research team were conducted to facilitate real-time reflection, enabling the identification and refinement of emerging themes throughout the data collection process. A thematic analysis approach was subsequently employed to systematically identify and organise the main themes.

Quantitative data from the survey were analysed using descriptive statistical methods. Survey responses were compiled and processed using SurveyMonkey to generate summary statistics, including frequencies and percentages, in order to identify patterns in teachers' experiences during the war. These descriptive findings were used to complement and contextualise the qualitative data. The quantitative analysis was used to support and enrich the qualitative findings, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of how the 2026 war has affected education from teachers' perspectives.

3.5. Research Ethics

The study received ethical approval from the CLS Research Ethics Board (Ref: CLS/EDC-2026-01). The qualitative component of the study draws from the research initiated in February 2026. However, following the outbreak of the Israeli war on 2 March 2026, data collection was paused to ensure that the research remained ethically appropriate and responsive to the rapidly changing context. The research design and interview tools were subsequently adapted to better capture how the 2026 war was impacting education, while remaining sensitive to participants' conditions and vulnerabilities. These adjustments were made to ensure that the study remained ethically appropriate, responsive to participants' conditions, and aligned with the needs and realities of affected communities.

As noted by Goodhand (2000), conducting research during times of war is essential to ensure that interventions respond to rapidly evolving conditions rather than relying on pre-war assumptions. In this sense, the study seeks to generate timely and relevant evidence and remain responsive to participants' vulnerabilities.

A similar approach informed the quantitative component of the study. The teacher survey was developed based on insights from the qualitative fieldwork and in consultation with educators and practitioners working on the ground, ensuring that it reflected the lived experiences and priorities of those directly affected by the crisis.

At the procedural level, particular care was taken to avoid placing additional stress on participants. Researchers presented participants with the aims of the research study, informed them that the information included in the report is anonymous and confidential, and that no personal data was collected. Written consent was sought where possible; however, in cases where participants were not comfortable with written consent, or in cases where phone interviews were conducted, oral consent was obtained on record (recordings). Furthermore, interviews were recorded except in the case where participants did not approve to be recorded, then written notes were taken during the interview, and anonymised typed-up notes were completed after the interview.

For the online survey, consent was explicitly secured through an initial question asking respondents to confirm their agreement to participate after reading information about the study. While the survey was circulated through professional networks, participation remained entirely voluntary, and respondents were able to complete the survey anonymously.

Additional precautions were taken in sensitive settings. Particularly, in shelter settings and schools affected by the crisis, where privacy was difficult to guarantee, some interviews were conducted in alternative locations, such as cafes or other safe spaces, to reduce risks and ensure participants' comfort and safety.

Furthermore, particular attention was paid to the confidentiality and privacy of participants throughout the study. All data were handled in accordance with data protection standards, and no identifying information was included in transcripts or analysis. While interviews were audio-recorded, recordings were securely stored and anonymised during transcription. Interviews with displaced individuals were conducted by community members who were already working within these shelter spaces and had a strong understanding of the security and political dynamics affecting the schools. They also had prior field experience and experience conducting interviews during periods of war, which enabled them to approach the situation with sensitivity and respond appropriately to participants' circumstances. The online survey similarly did not collect any personal data that could be linked to individual respondents.

3.6. Limitations

Data collection took place during a period of significant instability, which posed practical challenges for participant recruitment and engagement. School principals, in particular, were operating under heightened pressure and competing priorities, and not all felt they had the time or capacity to participate in the study. While some principals were highly willing and engaged, others were unable to commit due to the demands of the context. In several cases, circumstances shifted between the point of initial agreement and the scheduled interview, such as changes in security conditions or school operations, such as in Baalbek, making it difficult to proceed with or complete interviews as planned. As a result, the sample may reflect a degree of self-selection, with greater representation from those who had the availability and willingness to participate during this period.

Additionally, relying on school principals as the primary point of contact for participant recruitment may have introduced selection bias into the study sample. As gatekeepers, principals may have, intentionally or unintentionally, nominated teachers, parents, and students who were more engaged, more readily available, or better aligned with their leadership approach and the school's functioning. This creates the risk of over-representing more positive or cooperative perspectives, while under-representing more critical, disengaged, or marginalised voices.

To mitigate this risk, efforts were made to encourage diversity in participant selection by clearly communicating to the principal the importance of including a range of perspectives and roles within the school community. Where possible, variation was sought across participant characteristics (e.g., roles, levels of experience, and backgrounds), and interview questions were designed to elicit both positive and negative experiences to counterbalance potential bias in participant selection. However, given the constraints of the context and the reliance on principals as intermediaries, the extent to which these measures were effective cannot be fully verified.

This limitation may have shaped the findings by providing only a partial account of educational experiences during the 2026 war, potentially biasing toward more functional or institutionally aligned perspectives. However, the analysis drew on data collected across multiple schools and different stakeholders and deliberately incorporated both positive and critical viewpoints to provide a more balanced interpretation.

Regarding communication with children, limited access to devices forced children within the same household to adopt rotational usage patterns, with multiple siblings sharing a single device or very few devices. This significantly constrained their ability to participate consistently in learning and, consequently, to allocate time for phone interviews.

Relatedly, the quantitative component of the study was subject to several limitations. Data collection took place during an active phase of the war, which significantly constrained teachers' capacity to participate. Many teachers were experiencing displacement, uncertainty, and psychosocial stress, limiting the time and resources they could dedicate to completing the survey.

As a result, participation relied largely on existing professional networks and direct circulation rather than open or random sampling. While efforts were made to ensure broad geographic coverage, the sample cannot be considered representative of all teachers in Lebanon. Instead, it reflects the experiences of those who were able and willing to participate under crisis conditions.

This introduces potential bias, as respondents may be those with stronger access to communication channels, greater availability, or a particular motivation to share their experiences. At the same time, the constraints on participation are indicative of the broader pressures teachers faced during the war, including fatigue, limited connectivity, and competing responsibilities. As such, the limitations of the survey also provide insight into the conditions under which education actors are operating.

IV. THE IMPACT OF THE 2026 WAR ON EDUCATION

This section synthesises the main themes emerging from the qualitative interviews, complemented by insights from the survey data. The themes are organised based on the qualitative findings in order to capture in-depth experiences and perspectives of education during the 2026 war, with the survey data used to support and complement these insights. The themes demonstrate the impact of the 2026 war on learning and teaching while situating them within broader dynamics of education and compounded crises in Lebanon. This includes temporary disruptions as well as the deeper restructuring of how education is delivered, experienced, and sustained under conditions of emergency, producing uneven forms of access, participation, and learning across different contexts. The key themes include shifts in teaching and learning modalities, followed by their implications for access and inequality, the quality and relevance of learning, and the longer-term consequences for learning and teaching.

4.1. Fragmented and Reactive Modalities of Educational Responses

While MEHE introduced emergency measures, detailed previously in the context section, to maintain a degree of education continuity, interview participants expressed mixed views regarding these decisions. A predominant concern among all participants centred on the use of schools as shelters, which many considered deeply problematic, arguing that alternative spaces, such as religious institutions, should have been used to avoid disrupting education. These concerns are reflected in the scale of disruption reported by teachers in our survey. As demonstrated in Figure 1, 46% of the teachers indicated in the survey that their schools had been converted into shelters, while 32% reported that their schools were completely closed.

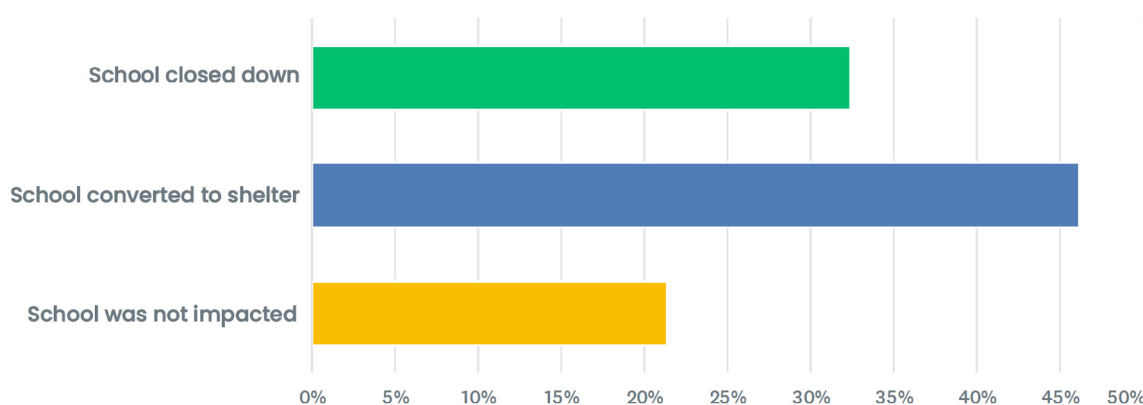


Figure 1 - How schools were impacted

On the logistical level, all interviewed principals have reported the immense pressure and layered responsibilities they carried during the 2026 war. This was particularly stark for those managing schools that were converted into shelters, as they were expected to oversee the collection of data of displaced families, remain present at the shelter site, and continue supervising online learning. Several principals responsible for schools used as shelters reported delayed or absent responses from MEHE and MoSA on logistical matters related to shelter management, despite formal circulars requiring ministerial representatives to be present in these shelters (Municipal Action Association, 2026). In practice, this has often left many principals to assume leadership beyond their formal mandate, sometimes taking decisions outside established procedures, and some of them benefited from their social and/

or political connections and networks to accelerate or facilitate certain processes. Others, by contrast, limited themselves to passive administrative compliance.

Following MEHE's emergency measures, education has been delivered across different areas through a combination of in-person, remote, and hybrid approaches, shaped by levels of security, displacement, and institutional capacity. Survey data confirm this uneven distribution. As shown in Figure 2, 66% of teachers reported fully engaging in remote teaching, around 17.5% adopted hybrid modalities, and only about 17% sustained in-person instruction during the war.

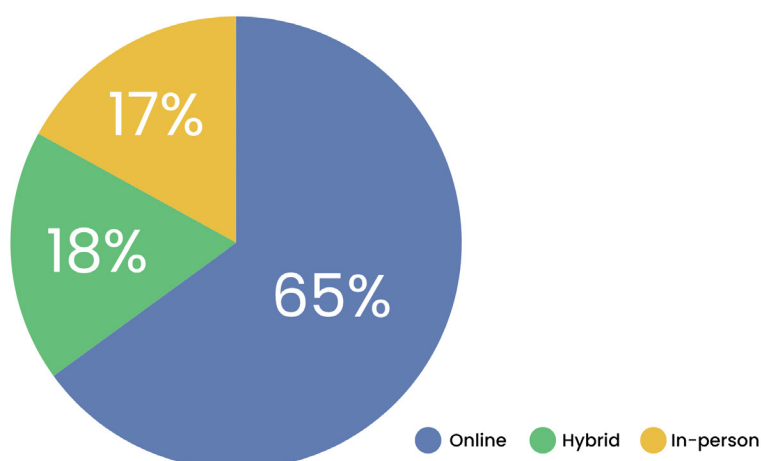


Figure 2 - Mode of Learning

For online learning, and as demonstrated in Figure 3, teachers reported relying on a range of digital platforms to deliver instruction. Microsoft Teams was the most commonly used platform, with 80% of teachers reporting using it for online learning, followed by WhatsApp, which was used by 61% of teachers.

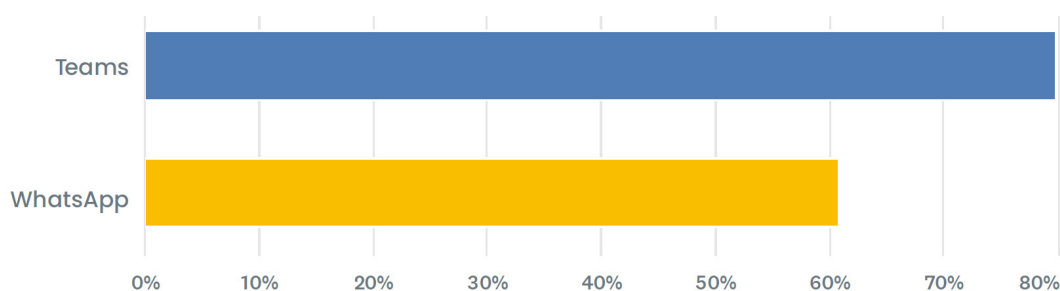


Figure 3 - Digital Platforms for Online Learning

Moreover, when disaggregating the data geographically, significant regional variation becomes apparent in the modalities through which education was delivered during the war. According to the teachers' responses, remote learning emerged as the dominant mode of instruction across most regions, particularly amongst teachers in the South (100%), Nabatiyeh (90.9%), Beirut (84%), Keserwan-Jbeil (80%), Beqaa (76%), Mount Lebanon (76%), and Baalbek-Hermel (70%). In contrast, teachers in regions such as North Lebanon and Akkar sustained comparatively higher levels of in-person and hybrid instruction. Teachers based in North Lebanon, in particular, recorded the highest proportion of in-person teaching (51.4%) alongside the highest reliance on hybrid modalities (45.7%) compared to other regions. Similarly, 46% of the teachers in Akkar reported in-person learning while 40% reported hybrid learning. These

patterns suggest that educational responses during the war were geographically uneven and likely shaped by differences in security conditions, displacement dynamics, infrastructure availability, electricity and internet access, and institutional capacity across regions.

A significant finding in this study was the decline in participation in education. As shown in Figure 4, the survey data also indicates that student attendance and engagement in current learning modalities remain low, with more than 65% of teachers reporting that fewer than 50% of their students regularly attend or actively participate in lessons. These patterns suggest that, beyond issues of access and modality, the conditions necessary for sustaining meaningful engagement in education were not met.

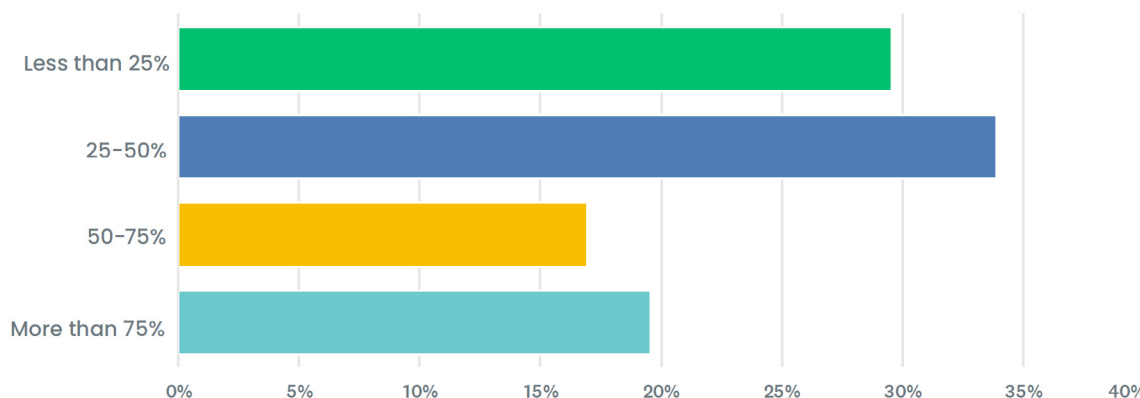


Figure 4 - Percentage of students who attended online classes according to teachers

Consequently, teaching modalities during the war were uneven and improvised rather than the result of coherent system-wide coordination. While some schools attempted to continue instruction through online or hybrid learning, these approaches were implemented inconsistently and often depended on the capacities and resources available to individual schools and families rather than on a unified national strategy. In practice, this meant that access to learning varied significantly across contexts, particularly for students affected by displacement.

'We are determined to continue and provide education even if the number of students attending is very, very low.'

In southern Lebanon, where insecurity and displacement significantly disrupted schooling, teachers faced declining attendance as families fled, relocated, or prioritised safety concerns. Nevertheless, one teacher highlighted the collective determination among educators to continue providing learning opportunities regardless of how many students were able to attend.

This commitment reflects a belief that education remains essential during times of crisis. For teachers in war-affected areas, maintaining even limited educational activities represented an act of perseverance and resistance against the disruptions caused by war. Their efforts sought to preserve a sense of normalcy and ensure that students who could attend were not entirely deprived of learning opportunities.

Vignette 1: Determination to continue education in the South of Lebanon

In shelter schools, students, parents, and teachers repeatedly described online learning as largely unworkable under conditions of displacement. Many displaced families were living in overcrowded conditions in shelter schools, with limited privacy, unstable electricity, and little

or no internet (the Ministry-provided internet packages supporting online learning), making regular participation in online classes extremely difficult. In addition, students often lacked access to devices, textbooks, and other basic learning materials needed to engage with lessons. Under these conditions, continuing education is almost impossible. Several students living in shelters explained that online learning had become almost obsolete in their daily lives. As one displaced student residing in a school shelter stated, 'I am ready to study online, but we do not have access to the internet. We have not received the internet provided by the ministry. We do not have books, and the electricity goes off repeatedly.'

This reflects the broader reality that, despite efforts to sustain education remotely, many displaced students were effectively excluded from meaningful participation in learning during the war. These experiences highlight the unequal ways in which the war affected access to education, particularly for students living in shelters, whose displacement and living conditions compounded existing educational inequalities.

Despite these critiques, a minority of interviewees, primarily parents and teachers, viewed partial continuity as preferable to a complete cessation of learning, and most expressed relatively positive perceptions of the current ministry compared to previous leadership.

Parents, teachers, and students also noted that the modality of learning was heavily dependent on school-level leadership. Several principals supported teachers and students to move quickly into online education following MEHE's decision, drawing on lessons learned from earlier crises. For example, some principals asked their teachers to adopt Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp, reduce lesson duration to 40 minutes, record classes for students unable to attend live sessions, and, in some cases, adjust curricula to suit the online phase and the emotional capacity of both students and teachers. Some principals also contacted parents and students directly to understand their circumstances, encourage engagement in online learning as a temporary measure, and communicate emerging challenges to the Ministry through regular online meetings MEHE was holding with the principals, often proposing immediate practical solutions. As one principal in the South stated, *'I insist on continuing education even with low attendance and refuse to stop it.'*

However, other principals and teachers argued that, in the context of ongoing war, such measures place additional pressure on schools, as completing the curriculum within the prescribed timeframe remains highly challenging.

During our interviews, principals in relatively safe areas also described formal attempts to preserve in-person learning, including allocating one floor of a shelter school for teaching, or merging two public schools into one building, and introducing split shifts, especially for students preparing for official examinations.

As a result, these modalities produced differentiated learning environments across contexts, contributing to inequalities in access, participation, quality, and relevance of education, as explored in the following section.

4.2. Access and Inequality in Education

Building on the uneven and fragmented reconfiguration of teaching and learning modalities outlined above, the findings show that these differentiated responses have translated into

deeply unequal patterns of access to education. The modalities adopted during the war have actively shaped who is able to participate in education, under what conditions, and with what outcomes. As a result, access to education became increasingly stratified across contexts, reflecting disparities in resources, displacement status, socio-economic backgrounds, and living conditions.

A key manifestation of this inequality is the shift to online learning. Across interviews, participants, including parents, students, teachers, and principals in safer areas and shelter schools, consistently described remote learning as, at best, a temporary and largely ineffective solution, a perception strongly shaped by negative experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2023 war. Principals and teachers emphasised that the shift to online education has resulted in substantial learning gaps and a marked decline in students' academic engagement. As one teacher stated, *'The experience of online learning was not effective, and upon returning to in-person education in 2024, it felt as though we had not taught online at all.'* Survey data further reinforce these findings. While more than 70% of teachers believe it is important to continue education during the war, more than 85% described current online and hybrid education modalities as having limited or low effectiveness. The vast majority of teachers (80%) believed that these modalities would negatively affect students' academic futures and educational pursuits.

These immediate challenges are closely linked to structural and material constraints, most notably the unequal distribution of digital resources. Qualitative data show that in many households, particularly those with multiple school-aged children, a single device, often a mobile phone, is shared among siblings. This necessitated staggered learning schedules, with students attending classes or completing assignments at different times depending on device availability. In some cases, households of people who were not displaced possessed only one phone used by a working parent, requiring children to delay learning until the parent returned home. In such contexts, only one child could attend synchronous sessions at a time, effectively excluding others from real-time participation. Consequently, attendance rates for live online learning remained low. Survey data confirm the scale of these barriers. Figure 5 shows that 83% of teachers reported weak or unstable internet connectivity, and 46% identified the lack of adequate devices as a key challenge. Under these conditions, access to education becomes contingent on the availability of basic infrastructure rather than guaranteed as a right.

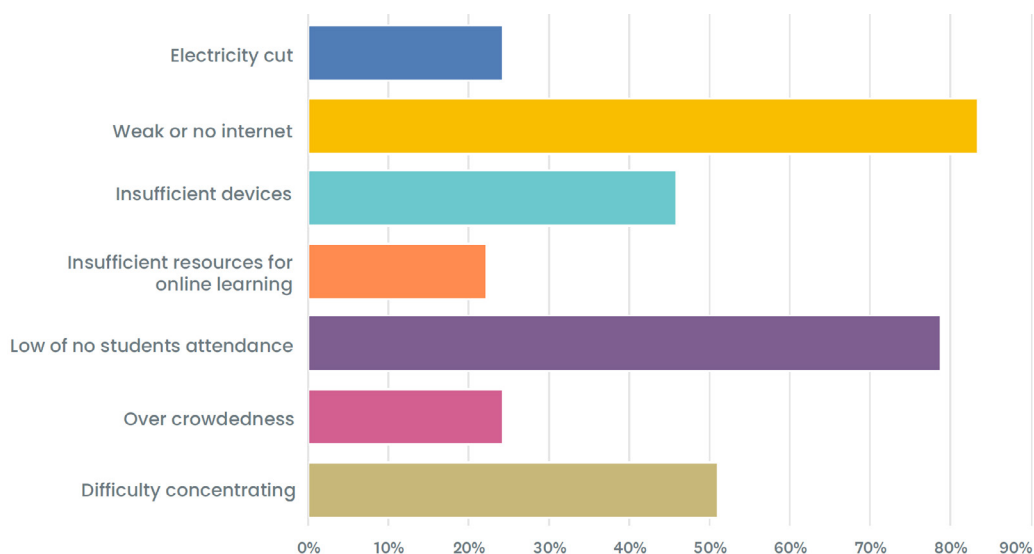


Figure 5 - Challenges teachers faced when teaching online

These constraints were further compounded by the limitations of both synchronous and asynchronous learning modalities. While platforms such as Microsoft Teams were promoted by MEHE for live instruction, participation remained low due to device-sharing constraints and connectivity issues. At the same time, asynchronous modalities, often relying on WhatsApp, offered flexibility but resulted in irregular learning patterns, with students submitting assignments late at night or early in the morning. This disrupted students' learning routines and extended teachers' working hours well beyond formal schedules, adding further strain.

Students, teachers, parents, and principals in safer areas and shelter schools also highlighted that policy interventions aimed at supporting remote learning were insufficient in addressing these disparities. As shown in Figure 6, almost 60% of teachers reported that the ministry's response contributed to increased inequalities. At the same time, 55% of teachers felt that the response did not provide enough support for teachers and school principals, while around 25% assessed it as contributing to ensuring the continuity of education.

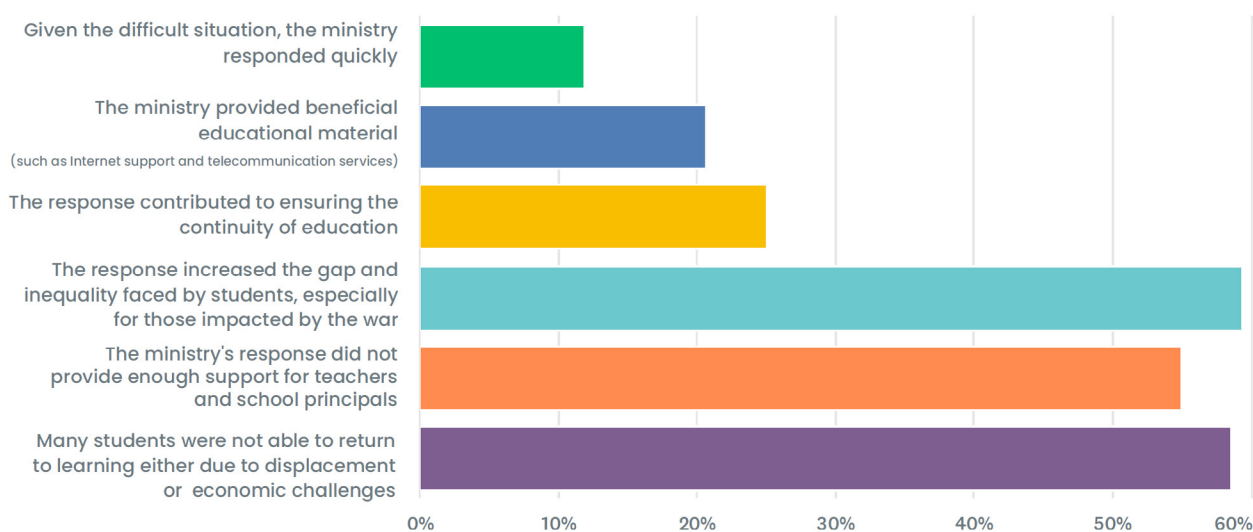


Figure 6 – Teachers' response to how they evaluate MEHE's response to educational needs

The following sub-sections present further findings, focusing on participants' learning experiences and abilities, displacement status, and their access to, or lack of access to, the resources necessary for online learning.

4.2.1. Remote learning

Although MEHE introduced an internet quota of 20 GB per user, this measure proved inadequate in practice. The quota applied only to specific platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Madrasati Digital Platform, excluding widely used tools such as Zoom or WhatsApp which, according to the survey, is used by more than 60% of the teachers (refer to figure 3 above). In addition, the allocated data was often insufficient or not useful for teachers managing multiple classes and different platforms. As one displaced teacher said, *'The internet package provided by the ministry does not meet the need, because it is limited to the Teams platform and we need to use the internet to access educational resources and multiple sites to prepare lessons.'* Additionally, in some cases, students did not receive the quota at all, with various students stating that they either did not even know about the quota, if they did, they did not receive it, or it arrived to their parents' phone instead of theirs, and hence not be able to make use of the quota. As one displaced student indicated, *'The internet package arrived on my father's phone, but I don't know how to use it because it's not on my phone.'*

while another stated, *'I don't know anything about the internet packages distributed by the ministry, and they haven't reached us yet.'* Furthermore, technical issues, including incorrect login credentials for teachers, further delayed access. As one parent noted, in general, *'There isn't enough support by MEHE to conduct online learning and teaching.'*

4.2.2. In-person learning

Beyond remote learning, access to in-person education was also significantly disrupted. The widespread repurposing of public schools as shelters resulted in prolonged interruptions to face-to-face instruction. Parents, teachers, and principals expressed concern that this disproportionately affected public school students, while private schools were perceived to maintain greater continuity, thereby exacerbating existing inequalities. Some teachers and parents suggested the use of alternative spaces, such as religious institutions, to preserve schools' educational functions.

Moreover, in some cases, sections of schools were repurposed as shelters while students in other sections resumed in-person learning. This situation affected both learners and displaced children residing in the shelters. In certain instances, learners were instructed to avoid contact with displaced students in an effort to prevent tensions and maintain social cohesion. As one teacher explained, the experience of students walking past displaced families while attempting to continue their education was emotionally difficult for everyone, including the learners, the displaced children, teachers, and the principal.

4.2.3. Learning when displaced

The inequalities in access were significantly visible among displaced people residing in shelters, where limited devices and poor internet access were compounded by overcrowding, lack of privacy, limited access to books, and ongoing exposure to war-related stressors. As one displaced student stated, *'We do not have school textbooks... There is no internet available in the building... Electricity is not consistently available... Classrooms are overcrowded.'* These conditions, combined with trauma and instability as well as the cumulative psychological burden, the ongoing human and material losses caused by military actions, and the persistent anxiety surrounding an uncertain future, severely undermined students' ability to concentrate and engage in learning. These constraints were also experienced by teachers who are central to educational provision. As shown in Figure 7, survey data show that 40% of the teachers who participated in the survey reported that they experienced intermittent displacement, moving back and forth, or relocating for extended periods. Among those affected, 46% stayed with relatives or family members, while 40% rented accommodation. However, 35% reported that their living conditions were not comfortable, further undermining the conditions necessary for effective teaching and learning.

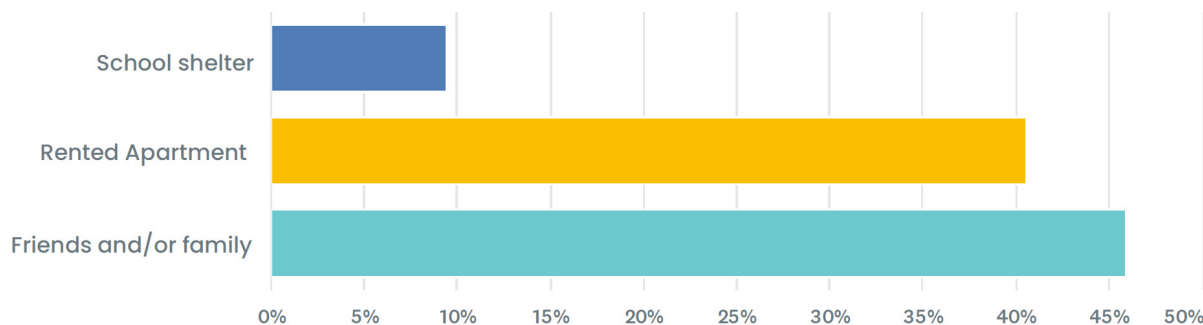


Figure 7 - Where teachers were displaced to

Overall, these findings demonstrate how displacement and unequal living conditions deepened existing educational inequalities, creating significant barriers to both teaching and learning and disproportionately affecting those already most vulnerable to exclusion.

4.2.4. Children with Disabilities

Patterns of exclusion were further compounded for students with disabilities and learning difficulties. Survey data show that only around 4% of teachers reported that current education modalities take into account the needs of students with learning difficulties, and just 5% indicated the same for students with disabilities, pointing to a near-total absence of inclusive provision. Interviewed teachers and principals linked the difficulties faced by students with learning difficulties mostly to families' economic hardship and limited ability to secure additional support, a situation further exacerbated by the suspension of counseling services during the 2026 war.

Qualitative data indicate that this exclusion reflects broader shortcomings in the policy response. Despite prior preparedness efforts, schools were once again used as shelters, many of which did not meet minimum standards of accessibility. As a result, children with disabilities were displaced into environments that were unsafe or inaccessible and were effectively denied their right to education. While some organisations have stepped in to provide support, the scale of need far exceeds available provision (Centre for Lebanese Studies, 2026a). As a school principal managing a shelter indicated, *'For students with disabilities, their locations have been investigated. However, no specialised services have yet been provided to them.'* Similarly, a teacher said, *'Students with learning difficulties are not currently receiving any specialised support.'*

These factors have contributed to widening learning gaps. Educational inequalities have become increasingly pronounced among marginalised groups, as opposed to those with access to better educational resources and infrastructure, such as multiple devices, stable internet, and supportive environments. Nonetheless, these disruptions intersect with long-standing structural challenges. The findings indicate significant and cumulative learning loss resulting from repeated and overlapping disruptions since the 2019 economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. Educators highlighted the lasting impact of pandemic-related school closures, particularly for early-grade students, many of whom were unable to retain foundational literacy skills such as letter recognition. These gaps continue to affect students' progression in higher grades and, in some cases, have contributed to disengagement from formal education, including dropout or transition to vocational pathways.

Importantly, this learning loss is unevenly distributed, disproportionately affecting marginalised students, many of whom received little to no support following the 2023 war and entered subsequent school years without sufficient foundations.

4.3. Readiness for Teaching and Learning

'I thought about quitting my job yesterday. But if I fall apart today, what will happen to the children? When you find yourself alone but a group is tied to you, how can I fall while they are holding on to me?'

As a result of the different learning modalities, challenges in accessing education, and existing inequalities, levels of readiness among key stakeholders, including teachers,

students, and parents, varied considerably. Readiness for teaching and learning was shaped by a combination of technical, material, and psychological factors.

At the level of schools and teachers, teachers reported limited preparedness to deliver effective online instruction. As shown in Figure 8, a large majority of teachers (79%) reported that they were not receiving adequate support in their teaching during the war. Teachers identified multiple unmet needs, including financial support (81%), internet access (50%), access to a comfortable place for teaching (28%), and psychological support (55%).

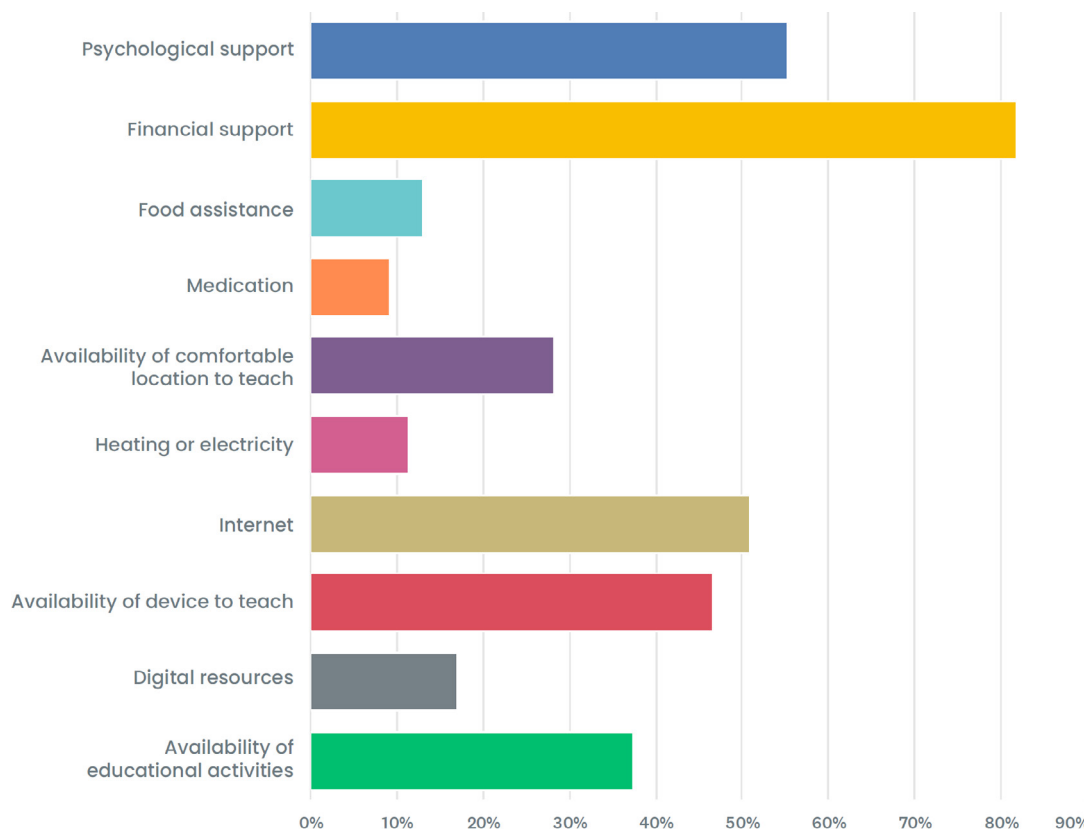


Figure 8 - The different types of support teachers need

These results were also highlighted in the interviews. A displaced teacher clearly indicated, 'As for schools in areas affected by displacement, the administration conducted a survey to assess the teachers' situation and their readiness for online learning. The results showed difficulties for both teachers and students.'

'I am so excited to return to teaching, even if it is under a tree. I have so much to give.'

For some teachers, returning to the classroom represented more than a professional obligation; it was a source of purpose and hope. One teacher who teaches at a school in Beirut that is now a shelter for the displaced spoke passionately about her eagerness to resume teaching despite the severe disruptions caused by the war. Whether in a formal classroom or an improvised learning space, she remained committed to her students and her profession.

Her statement reflects a strong sense of vocation and resilience. Rather than focusing on the limitations imposed by the war, she emphasised her determination to continue educating children in whatever circumstances were available, demonstrating how commitment to teaching persisted even when educational infrastructure had collapsed.

Vignette 2: The Desire to Teach Against All Odds

Moreover, the interviews showed that many educators lacked the necessary training and resources to adapt their teaching methods to virtual platforms, while technical disruptions remained frequent. Teachers without prior exposure to digital tools or formal training in platforms such as Microsoft Teams encountered particular difficulties in designing pedagogically effective and engaging lessons, especially in online and hybrid formats. While some demonstrated adaptability, these efforts were uneven and often unsupported. Similarly, teachers indicated that the internet bundle provided by MEHE was ineffective. For example, a teacher noted that the internet package distributed by the Ministry is only operational until 2:00 p.m., while Syrian students receive instruction in the afternoon; therefore, teachers cannot benefit from this package to teach Syrian students in the afternoon shift.

Readiness for teaching was also profoundly shaped by psychological strain. Teachers consistently emphasised the severe levels of exhaustion they experienced. Prolonged exposure to crisis conditions, increased workloads, and the demands of adapting to shifting instructional modalities contributed to widespread burnout. For many, this burden was compounded by their dual roles as educators and parents, as they navigated the trauma and uncertainty of war while supporting their own children's learning. Survey data reinforce this pattern, with 55% of teachers reporting that they were not feeling well psychologically while teaching during the war, while only around 1% reported receiving any form of psychosocial support. This stark gap highlights not only the scale of emotional strain experienced by educators but also the near absence of institutional support mechanisms.

4.3.1. Challenges Facing Teachers

Teachers faced significant material constraints, with the vast majority (96%) reporting that their salaries had been affected by the war, and 50% indicating that this impact was large or significant. In addition, 88% reported having no alternative source of income, highlighting high levels of financial vulnerability. The survey data shows that currently 91% of teachers continued teaching during the war, with the majority (58%) teaching between 4 to 6 hours per day. However, the qualitative data show that a number of teachers are considering resigning from the profession. For example, a displaced teacher explained in an interview that she was considering leaving teaching due to frustration and low pay (approximately \$9 per hour), despite feeling a strong sense of responsibility toward her students. This raises serious concerns about teacher retention and the system's capacity to sustain quality education.

'I thought about quitting my job yesterday. But if I fall apart today, what will happen to the children? When you find yourself alone but a group is tied to you, how can I fall while they are holding on to me?'

A teacher working in the afternoon shift with Syrian students was herself living in a shelter school after being displaced by the war. Like many educators, she was navigating the dual burden of supporting students while coping with her own uncertainty, loss, and exhaustion. Reflecting on the emotional toll of the situation, she described reaching a breaking point. Her words reveal the profound sense of responsibility many teachers felt toward their students, even when their own wellbeing was compromised. Despite experiencing displacement and instability firsthand, she continued teaching, viewing her role not only as an educator but also as a source of continuity and support for children facing similar hardships.

Vignette 3: Carrying Others While Struggling Alone

Teachers similarly expressed profound emotional strain. As one teacher working in the afternoon shift with Syrian refugee students in Beirut said, *'There is a feeling of neglecting an entire generation and leaving it to face its fate alone.'* Another teacher described how

teachers felt they had been left to face the crisis without adequate support. Similarly, a teacher fervently expressed that teachers have the feeling that *'they were left to face the situation alone without sufficient support'*.

4.3.2. Challenges for Learners

At the same time, the data also reveal a discourse of endurance among participants. As one parent stated, *'We, the Lebanese people, are patient. No matter what crises and wars occur, we rise, confront them, and persevere for our sake and for the sake of our children, in the hope of living in peace.'* Another mother from Beqaa explained, *'My children had become accustomed to the sounds of war and were now able to distinguish between the sound barrier breaks and actual bombings...they are not afraid.'*

Interviewed students and teachers reported that returning to school after the 2023 Israeli war was already emotionally difficult, marked by fear, uncertainty, and persistent anxiety. For some students, the effects of trauma persisted even after the war had ended. One student said, *'After returning to the village, I experienced health issues (high blood pressure, rapid heart rate, and stomach problems). According to the doctor, these symptoms are caused by fear and psychological stress.'* This clearly highlights the lasting impact of war on students' well-being.

This earlier phase forms an important backdrop to the current escalation, as the renewed war has deepened an already fragile psychosocial reality. The qualitative data point to widespread exhaustion among teachers, students, parents, and principals, shaped by repeated crises, displacement, insecurity, and the strain of sustaining education under conditions many described as emotionally unmanageable. Some participants described their situation as living in *'survival mode.'*

A private school teacher, displaced with her family to a public school shelter and mother of three children in basic education, described the immense challenges of balancing her professional responsibilities with supporting her children's learning during the war. Her school resumed teaching only one week after the outbreak of the war, yet the school where she had sought shelter offered no special accommodations for teaching. She had neither access to a quiet space nor a reliable internet connection. At the same time, her children's classes also resumed, creating competing educational demands within the confines of displacement.

'I felt tremendous pressure,' she recalled, 'but I decided I had to find a solution.'

Determined to maintain educational continuity, she subscribed to a private internet connection for the room in the shelter where the family was staying. Each morning, she woke up at 6:00 a.m. to get her children ready for school. She encouraged the older children to have breakfast and spend time in the school's shared spaces when possible. To help them focus, she purchased headphones for each child, allowing them to attend online lessons from different corners of their room while minimising the impact of the surrounding noise and activity. Meanwhile, she moved to an empty classroom within the shelter where the internet signal reached and taught her students using the laptop she had brought with her when she fled her home.

Reflecting on her experience, she acknowledged that *'the situation is far from ideal,'* but emphasised her determination to do everything within her power to ensure that both she and her children could continue learning and teaching despite the difficult circumstances.

*Vignette 4: Resilience in a Shelter School:
A Teacher-Mother's Commitment to Educational Continuity*

Among displaced families living in shelters, parents reported pressuring their children to continue online education despite recognising that children were often unable to concentrate, which heightened tension within households. Parental readiness also emerged as a critical factor. Caregivers were often required to assume a more active role in supporting their children's education, particularly in online settings, despite facing significant economic, emotional, and logistical pressures. These responsibilities were often not feasible, especially for working parents. Teachers and school leaders reported increasing parental disengagement, which participants attributed to the broader economic crisis, as many families prioritised basic survival needs over educational support. As a result, parents often lacked the time, capacity, or resources to effectively assist their children's learning.

4.4. Quality and Relevance of Learning

The findings indicate that teaching and learning under the 2026 war have significantly affected the quality and relevance of education, while also exposing deeper structural challenges within the broader education system. Survey data suggest that teachers continue to value education during the crisis, with 70% emphasising the importance of continuing education during the war. However, a majority (71%) indicated that education in this context is not effective, pointing to a tension between the perceived importance of education and its limited relevance and responsiveness to students' needs.

Teachers and principals raised important concerns regarding the relevance of learning content in the context of the ongoing war. Many perceived a disconnect between what students were being taught and the realities they were experiencing, particularly in situations of displacement, insecurity, and economic hardship. These concerns are especially critical in the current context, where the war has deeply affected social relations. For example, an overwhelming majority of teachers (95%) reported in the survey that the current war has negatively affected social cohesion. In this sense, education can extend beyond academic learning, emerging as a critical space for rebuilding social cohesion and supporting psychosocial well-being in the context of war.

4.4.1. Official Examinations: Inequality, Pressure, and the Politics of Normalcy

Official examinations emerged as one of the most contested issues during the 2026 war, reflecting broader tensions around educational inequality, crisis governance, and the meaning of educational continuity under conditions of war. Despite widespread displacement, school closures, and uneven access to learning, MEHE maintained its intention to proceed with official examinations, framing this decision as necessary to preserve academic continuity and institutional normalcy. However, the findings of this study suggest that the continuation of official exams under wartime conditions generated significant anxiety and was widely perceived as disconnected from the realities experienced by many students, teachers, and schools.

Participants repeatedly highlighted the deeply unequal conditions under which students were expected to prepare for examinations. While some students, particularly those in relatively stable private schools or less affected regions, were able to sustain hybrid or in-person learning, large numbers of public school students experienced prolonged interruptions, unreliable internet access, overcrowded shelter conditions, repeated displacement, and severe psychosocial distress. More than 65% of teachers reported that fewer than half of their students regularly attended or actively participated in lessons during the war, while 83%

identified weak internet connectivity and 46% identified lack of devices as major barriers to learning. In this context, many participants questioned the fairness of evaluating students through standardised examinations despite such radically unequal learning conditions.

Teachers and parents repeatedly described official examinations as a major source of stress and emotional pressure for students already struggling with fear, insecurity, and trauma. Several participants argued that the insistence on completing the curriculum and maintaining examination schedules reflected a narrow understanding of educational continuity focused on administrative normalcy rather than student wellbeing and equity. Participants particularly criticised the disconnect between the ministry's expectations and the realities facing displaced students, students in public schools, Syrian refugee students in afternoon shifts, and students living in shelters.

The findings further suggest that the continuation of official examinations risked deepening existing educational inequalities. Participants perceived that the decision disproportionately favoured students from more privileged educational and socio-economic backgrounds, particularly elite private schools that had greater capacity to maintain continuity through stable infrastructure, digital access, and safer learning environments. By contrast, many public school students experienced fragmented or severely disrupted learning. In this sense, official examinations became not only an educational issue but also a reflection of broader social and political inequalities within Lebanon's education system.

At the same time, some participants recognised the symbolic importance of official examinations as an attempt to preserve institutional continuity and prevent the total collapse of educational structures during the war. However, the findings suggest that maintaining examinations without sufficiently addressing unequal learning conditions, psychosocial distress, and access disparities risks reinforcing exclusion rather than promoting educational justice.

Overall, the debate surrounding official examinations reveals broader tensions within emergency education responses in Lebanon between preserving academic normalcy and responding equitably to the realities of war, displacement, and social fragmentation.

4.4.2. Curriculum Relevance and Changing Learner Trajectories and Aspirations

Beyond the immediate impact of the 2026 war, educational challenges are embedded within longer-standing systemic issues. Principals, teachers, parents, and students in the safer areas noted that the current curriculum is outdated and overly dense, containing content perceived as of limited relevance. They emphasised the need for curricular reform that integrates contemporary domains such as robotics, coding, and artificial intelligence, reflecting both local needs and global trends. Relatedly, teaching methods were often characterised by traditional approaches, including rote memorisation, which limited opportunities for critical thinking and meaningful engagement. This raises questions about the extent to which the education system is responsive to students' immediate needs, including psychosocial wellbeing, critical thinking, and practical life skills. The findings therefore suggest a need to re-evaluate curricular priorities to ensure that learning is meaningful, contextually grounded, and aligned with both current realities and learners' lived experiences, especially amid the ongoing instability in Lebanon.

'The wars did not impact my future plans. I still hold on to pursuing a degree in engineering even till my last breath.'

A student living in a shelter school had experienced repeated displacement across successive wars. During the 2024 war, the student and family relocated to an apartment, while in 2026 they found themselves residing in a shelter school. Despite these repeated disruptions and the uncertainty that accompanied them, the student remained firmly focused on future ambitions.

The student's determination illustrates how aspirations can endure despite prolonged instability. While war disrupted educational pathways and everyday life, it did not extinguish the student's belief in the possibility of higher education and professional achievement. The statement reflects a powerful form of resilience grounded in hope, persistence, and a continued investment in the future.

Vignette 5: Holding on to Future Aspirations

Beyond academic outcomes, parents, teachers, and students also highlighted a noticeable shift in students' motivations and aspirations. Prolonged instability and repeated disruptions have contributed to declining motivation to engage in schooling, as well as a reorientation of aspirations toward more immediate, income-generating opportunities. For some students, the perceived value of formal education has diminished, particularly in light of uncertain returns and limited prospects. In parallel, aspirations for higher education are also changing: many students in relatively safer areas indicated that they are increasingly unlikely to pursue private universities and are instead more inclined to attend the public Lebanese University, largely due to the ongoing effects of the financial crisis that began in 2019.

These dynamics are also reflected in the growing shift from formal schooling toward vocational pathways. Economic pressures, combined with declining confidence in the quality and relevance of formal education and students' limited ability to recover lost learning, have led some families to move their children into vocational education.

At the same time, survey data suggest that educational responses should extend beyond purely academic objectives. Figure 9 demonstrates that a majority of the teachers in the survey (71%) indicated that education during the war should include both academic and psychosocial components, highlighting the need for a more holistic and responsive approach to learning.

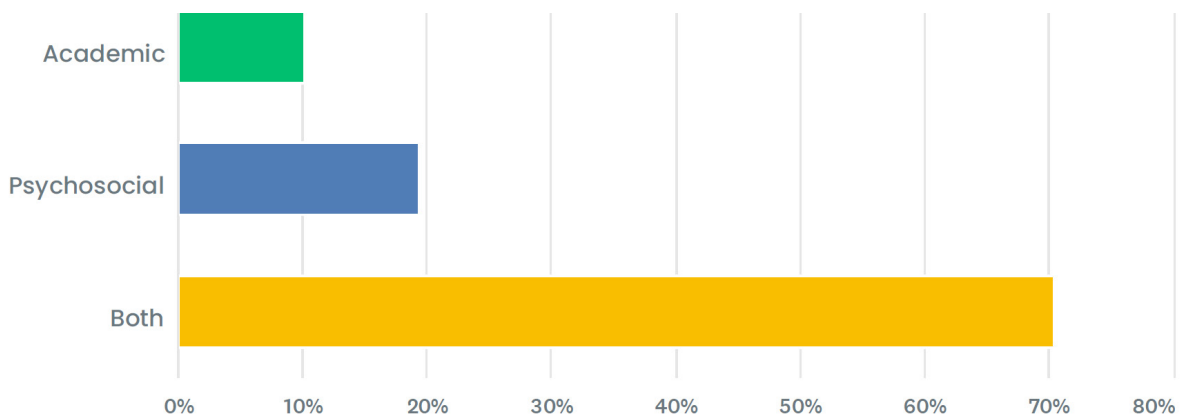


Figure 9 – The types of education teachers think should be provided during the war

This is further reflected in broader social dynamics, with an overwhelming majority of teachers (95%) reporting that the current war has negatively affected social cohesion. A teacher clearly stated, *'At the community level, there is a division: some people refuse to mix with the displaced people.'* The same issue was raised by parents, who in a focus group stated that the social situation is uncomfortable for displaced people; they are easily identified in markets, and sometimes face exploitation instead of sympathy. However, this situation is not common to all regions. A teacher said that the area they were displaced to had decided to welcome them.

In this sense, education is not only a means of academic learning but also a critical space for rebuilding social cohesion, supporting psychosocial well-being, and fostering resilience in contexts of war.

'Other students have continued attending classes while we stopped learning altogether,' she said. 'How are we expected to sit for the same exam?'

A Grade 9 student displaced to a school shelter in Jdeideh described the profound uncertainty and disappointment she experienced after the war disrupted her education. Enrolled in a public school, she explained that teaching had been suspended throughout the first month of the war and that the shelter environment was not conducive to learning. She was also deeply worried about the official examinations.

As she spoke, she broke down in tears. She explained that her fear was not of failing. Rather, she had been preparing to achieve one of the highest scores in South Lebanon on the official examination. She hoped that outstanding results would help her secure a scholarship from a prestigious university, as her family lacked the financial means to support her higher education.

'I feel that I have lost this opportunity because of the war,' she said.

Despite these setbacks, she remained determined to continue learning. Every day, she opened the textbooks she had managed to bring with her when she was displaced and reviewed lessons completed before the war. This highlights the resilience and perseverance that continued to sustain her educational ambitions despite the disruption and uncertainty caused by the war.

Vignette 6: A Student's Aspirations Interrupted by War

V. CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate the impact of the ongoing Israeli attacks on Lebanon on education, focusing particularly on the experiences of students, teachers, principals, and parents. Since the escalation of war in 2023, the Israeli attacks have displaced hundreds of thousands of Lebanese and non-Lebanese children and claimed thousands of civilian lives, severely disrupting access to education and everyday stability. The study included interviews with people forcibly displaced across Lebanon, communities hosting displaced families, and populations not directly affected by displacement. By capturing perspectives across these different groups, the research sought to understand how the war has generated varying experiences of loss, insecurity, grievance, and perceived injustice. These differences point to the risk of widening educational inequalities and deepening social and community divisions if not addressed carefully.

Findings from this study demonstrate that the war did not create an entirely new educational crisis but rather intensified a prolonged process of educational deterioration shaped by overlapping crises since 2019, including the economic collapse, COVID-19 pandemic, the Beirut Port explosion, and the successive 2023 and 2026 wars. Across all participant groups, the study reveals a system operating in 'survival mode,' where maintaining minimal continuity has increasingly replaced the goal of ensuring meaningful, equitable, and quality education. These dynamics were evident across multiple levels of the education system: at the micro level, affecting the daily experiences and well-being of students, teachers, and families; at the meso level, shaping school leadership, coordination, and institutional responses; and at the macro level, reflecting broader structural and policy failures within the national education system.

5.1. At the micro level

Teachers emerged as key actors sustaining educational continuity despite severe professional, financial, technical, and emotional challenges. The findings indicate that teachers were largely unprepared for the rapid shift to online and hybrid learning, with many lacking adequate training, digital resources, and institutional support. At the same time, teachers experienced significant financial insecurity, salary reductions, and deteriorating living conditions due to the 2019 economic collapse, as well as displacement during the 2023 and 2026 wars, all while continuing to teach under highly unstable conditions. Survey and qualitative data highlight widespread exhaustion and burnout among teachers, many of whom described feeling abandoned and unsupported during the crisis. Teachers also questioned the effectiveness of remote learning, emphasising that online modalities contributed to substantial learning loss, disengagement, and widening inequalities among students. Many reported that fewer than half of their students regularly attended or participated in online lessons due to technological and socio-economic barriers. Teachers further highlighted the near absence of inclusive support for students with disabilities and learning difficulties, raising concerns about growing educational exclusion. Despite these constraints, many teachers continued to express a strong sense of responsibility towards their students and viewed education as essential not only for academic continuity but also for psychosocial support and social cohesion during the war.

Principals emerged as central actors in sustaining schools during the war, yet they operated under extreme strain and with limited institutional support. Particularly in schools converted into shelters, principals were required to simultaneously manage displacement-related needs, coordinate with ministries and humanitarian actors, supervise teachers, and maintain online or hybrid learning. Educational continuity frequently depended on the initiative, adaptability, and leadership capacities of individual principals rather than on coordinated national planning. While some introduced flexible schedules, shortened lessons, and alternative teaching arrangements, principals consistently highlighted broader systemic concerns, including outdated curricula, inconsistent policies regarding official examinations, and the absence of effective crisis-response mechanisms capable of addressing students' educational and psychosocial needs.

Parents' experiences reflected the intersection of educational responsibilities, economic hardship, displacement, and ongoing insecurity. Although most parents valued the continuation of education during the war, many questioned the quality and effectiveness of online learning, especially after the educational experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown. For displaced families in particular, remote education was often neither psychologically nor materially feasible due to overcrowded living conditions, unstable or no internet access, limited devices, and severe financial pressures. At the same time, parents' ability to support learning varied significantly according to socio-economic conditions and displacement status. Working parents in relatively safer areas frequently lacked the time, resources, or technological means to adequately supervise online learning, especially in households where multiple children shared a single device.

Parents living in shelter schools described existing in a constant state of fear that directly affected their children's emotional well-being. In focus group discussions, parents reported that children increasingly exhibited signs of nervousness, tension, and declining motivation, while many parents themselves struggled to manage their children's behaviour under conditions of prolonged insecurity and stress. Parents also expressed frustration with the inadequacy of ministry support measures, particularly limited internet assistance and weak implementation mechanisms. In addition, uncertainty surrounding official examinations generated significant stress for both parents and students. The prolonged crisis environment further contributed to shifting educational aspirations, with some families increasingly prioritising vocational pathways due to economic constraints and declining confidence in the value and quality of formal education.

Students experienced the war through deeply unequal educational conditions shaped by displacement, socio-economic status, and access to resources. Their ability to engage in education was constrained by unequal access to devices and internet connectivity, limited digital literacy, and environments that were often not conducive to sustained learning. These challenges were particularly severe for displaced students living in overcrowded shelters, many of whom were effectively excluded from meaningful participation in education. Displaced students expressed deep frustration regarding perceived inequities in access to both in-person and remote education, as well as feelings of exclusion from these educational opportunities. As one student stated, *'There needs to be equality for everyone... or else we will become the minority who are not impactful and whose voices are not heard by anyone.'*

Students widely perceived online learning as ineffective and difficult to sustain, particularly in contexts of displacement and insecurity. Overcrowding, lack of privacy, unstable electricity, weak or no internet access, and limited availability of devices and textbooks contributed to low participation, declining academic engagement, and significant learning loss, especially among already vulnerable students. At the same time, students reported severe psychosocial distress linked to repeated crises, displacement, fear, and exposure to war-related violence. Many described difficulty concentrating on education while struggling to cope with ongoing insecurity and uncertainty in their daily lives.

Even students living in relatively safer areas experienced heightened anxiety due to the war, particularly concerning the safety of family members in war-affected regions. One student explained, *'I worry about my brother every day, who is studying at the Lebanese University in Beirut.'* She further noted that witnessing his struggles with online learning had made her reconsider continuing her own education, stating, *'I have seen how much he has struggled studying online. I do not want to experience that too.'* These findings demonstrate how prolonged instability not only disrupted students' immediate learning experiences but also reshaped their educational motivation, aspirations, and confidence in the future.

These war-related experiences have led some to disengage from formal education or shift toward vocational pathways and immediate income-generating opportunities. While vocational education can provide valuable skills, this shift is often not the result of informed choice but rather constrained circumstances brought on by socio-economic conditions, resulting from the 2019 economic collapse. As such, this shift raises concerns about early tracking, limited educational mobility, and the potential reinforcement of social inequalities, particularly if students exit the formal education system prematurely without adequate support or guidance. At the same time, students highlighted broader concerns regarding the relevance of education, viewing curricula and teaching approaches as disconnected from both their lived realities and future needs.

Moreover, the impact of prolonged crises extends well beyond academic achievement to encompass students' broader developmental trajectories. Principals and teachers highlighted significant and ongoing challenges related to students' psychosocial well-being, attention spans, motivation, and ability to engage in collaborative or physically coordinated activities. The long-term effects of COVID-19 and extended reliance on remote learning throughout the crises in Lebanon remain evident, not only in cognitive learning gaps but also in diminished social interaction and motor skill development. As illustrated by one teacher's experience, even older students struggled to concentrate and participate in structured group activities such as Dabkeh, pointing to deeper disruptions in developmental and social learning processes.

Taken together, the experiences from war illustrate how the cumulative impact of successive and overlapping crises has fundamentally weakened educational processes, student development, and institutional capacity. Participants consistently emphasised that declining educational quality did not begin with the 2026 war alone. For example, principals and teachers explained that the decline in students' educational levels is not solely the result of the current 2026 war, but rather part of an ongoing deterioration that began during the COVID-19 pandemic and whose effects continue to be felt today. They noted that students in the early grades were particularly affected, as many were unable to properly learn foundational literacy skills, such as letters and reading, through online learning during COVID-19. This cumulative deficit

has been further exacerbated by continued disruptions, including teachers' strikes and the 2023 and 2026 Israeli wars, creating a cycle in which learning gaps are not only unaddressed but also continuously widened. Similarly, parents explained that, as a result of the economic crisis that began in 2019, many were forced to move their children from private to public schools, while some students dropped out of the education system entirely. These decisions were often shaped by and dependent on families' changing financial circumstances and the availability of financial support. This continual disruption and school switching negatively affect students' learning, mental health, and social relationships.

5.2. At the meso level

The findings demonstrate that schools during the war functioned far beyond their traditional educational role. In many cases, schools simultaneously operated as learning spaces, shelters for displaced families, and sites for managing social tensions arising from displacement and unequal access to education. School principals and teachers were required to continuously improvise responses to challenges such as overcrowding, shifting learning modalities, limited resources, teacher displacement, and students' psychosocial distress. However, the ability of schools to maintain educational continuity varied significantly depending on principals' leadership capacity, available resources, school location, and the extent of displacement affecting the community.

The findings also show that using schools as shelters, alongside prolonged reliance on online and hybrid learning, altered students' experiences of schooling as spaces of safety, stability, and social interaction. Unequal access to devices, internet connectivity, and in-person learning opportunities contributed to fragmented educational experiences. While many principals and teachers demonstrated strong commitment and adaptability in sustaining learning under extremely difficult conditions, these efforts often depended on individual initiative and their leadership rather than coordinated institutional preparedness or systemic support. This highlights how the war not only disrupted educational delivery but also exposed and intensified existing structural inequalities and weaknesses within the education system.

5.3. At the macro level

The study highlights that, although an emergency response plan was in place, participants frequently perceived existing educational responses as insufficiently aligned with the realities and challenges experienced on the ground during the crisis. Principals, teachers, parents, and students described significant gaps between policy decisions and their practical implementation, particularly in relation to online learning, educational continuity, and support for displaced and vulnerable learners. These findings suggest that the educational response often struggled to adequately address what was practically feasible and sustainable under conditions of ongoing disruption and insecurity.

Educational responses during the 2026 war were often inconsistent and improvised rather than guided by a unified national strategy. Some schools resumed in-person or hybrid learning relatively quickly, while others, particularly those functioning as shelters, remained closed for extended periods. Principals and teachers repeatedly reported receiving limited guidance regarding curriculum adaptation, learning modalities, psychosocial support, and official examinations. Consequently, educational continuity became highly dependent on the capacities of individual schools and families rather than guaranteed through equitable national provision.

The consecutive crises have also exposed a broader failure by various ministries and decision makers to adequately prepare for, respond to, or recover from emergencies within the education system. While lessons from the 2023 war informed certain adjustments, particularly in relation to online learning and continuity measures, these adaptations remained limited in scope and were not sufficient to address the scale of disruption during the 2026 war. Preparedness for anticipated needs, such as expanded digital learning capacity, shelter management, and alternative education centres, remained uneven, and implementation gaps persisted across different contexts. Consequently, the ministries' (MEHE and MoSA) responses often remained reactive and uneven, leading schools and principals with greater financial, social, and political resources to be better able to access educational continuity and support. This raises important concerns regarding whose needs are prioritised in times of crisis and the extent to which educational decision-making adequately considers the realities of the most vulnerable groups.

Overall, the findings across the micro, meso, and macro levels demonstrate that the impact of the war on education cannot be understood as a temporary or isolated disruption, but rather as part of a cumulative and interconnected process of educational deterioration shaped by successive crises since 2019. The experiences of students, parents, teachers, and principals reveal how overlapping crises have deepened pre-existing inequalities, weakened institutional capacity, disrupted learning processes, and undermined both educational quality and psychosocial well-being. These findings further show that educational experiences during the war were highly unequal and largely determined by socio-economic status, displacement, access to technology, school resources, and local leadership capacities.

At the same time, the study highlights that educational continuity during the war depended heavily on individual coping strategies, school-level improvisation, and unequal access to financial, social, and technological resources, rather than on coordinated and equitable systemic support. While teachers, principals, parents, and students demonstrated considerable adaptability under extremely difficult conditions, these individual efforts often compensated for broader structural and policy failures. The findings, therefore, illustrate how the education system has increasingly shifted into a prolonged state of 'survival mode,' in which maintaining minimal continuity has taken precedence over ensuring meaningful, inclusive, and high-quality education.

Importantly, the findings also suggest that the consequences of these prolonged disruptions extend far beyond immediate learning loss. Repeated crises have affected students' educational aspirations, motivation, social development, mental health, and confidence in the future, while simultaneously reshaping families' educational decisions and increasing the risk of exclusion for already vulnerable groups. In conclusion, the education system's current state reflects not only crisis exposure but also the absence of transformative reform. Without substantial and coordinated interventions that must be taken in the near future, there is a significant risk that the education system will remain locked in this 'survival mode,' unable to transition to a model centred on learning, inclusion, and development. Addressing this requires a shift toward addressing root causes rather than managing symptoms that arise during crises.

Ultimately, the transformation of education in Lebanon under prolonged crisis is both systemic and generational. If current conditions persist and remain unaddressed, the consequences will be severe, extending far beyond immediate learning loss to shape long-term social,

economic, and developmental outcomes across generations. The term 'lost generation' has often been used to describe Syrian students who endured years of crises, war, and disruption; however, there is a growing risk that Lebanese students may soon be characterised in similar terms. Having experienced seven or more years of compounded crises, layered onto an already fragile education system, many learners are now at risk of enduring deep, long-lasting educational and developmental setbacks that could define their future trajectories and be a 'lost generation'.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings demonstrate that the 2026 Israeli war on Lebanon did not act as an isolated disruption to education, but instead intensified pre-existing structural weaknesses and inequalities shaped by successive crises. As such, recommendations must address not only immediate disruptions to educational continuity but also the systemic conditions that influence access, quality, and equity in education.

6.1. Moving Beyond Reactive Educational Responses During Crises

The findings highlight that the disruption of education during the 2026 war cannot be understood solely as a direct consequence of military actions. Rather, educational disruption has also been shaped by the cumulative effects of previous crises and by weaknesses in the governance and management of the education sector during emergencies. The study demonstrates that lessons from the 2023 war were not adequately translated into effective preparedness measures, resulting in continued reliance on reactive and insufficient responses during the 2026 war. Instead of strengthening resilience within the education system, the accumulation of crises has contributed to a further deterioration in educational access, quality, and continuity. Accordingly, it is recommended that future educational planning move beyond short-term emergency responses and adopt a proactive, long-term Education in Emergencies (EiE) framework that is operational, flexible, and responsive to diverse crisis contexts.

6.2. Prepare a Comprehensive, Operational, and Equitable Emergency Education Plan

The findings of this study highlight the urgent need for MEHE, in coordination with relevant ministries and educational stakeholders, to develop a comprehensive, operational, and equitable emergency education plan that moves beyond reactive responses toward long-term preparedness. Our recommendations for the emergency plan address key actions for students, teachers, schools, and at the institutional and governance levels.

6.2.1. For students

When crises and disruptions occur, the most vulnerable learners are often affected first and experience the greatest impact. In Lebanon, the compounded crises have deepened inequalities in access to education, with disruptions affecting students unevenly across socio-economic and geographic contexts. The results of this study have pointed to deepening class and socio-economic inequalities that have been further aggravated by successive crises, whereby those who are already marginalised and vulnerable, including displaced learners, students living in shelters, learners with disabilities, and those from low socio-economic backgrounds, have become increasingly disadvantaged with each additional crisis. Although these groups may constitute a minority, their voices, needs, and rights should not only be acknowledged but also meaningfully integrated into the emergency education plan, educational policies, and decision-making processes. Addressing educational inequality, therefore, requires prioritising justice and support for the most marginalised populations. Emergency planning must place equity, inclusion, and social justice at its centre by ensuring that vulnerable groups are not excluded from educational opportunities during crises. It is crucial that these groups, including the displaced and persons with disabilities, are provided with accessible educational opportunities and support services.

The emergency plan should also include guaranteed access to devices, reliable internet connectivity, electricity, and digital learning platforms for all students and teachers. It should also provide structured, safe, and dedicated learning spaces, including within shelter schools and alternative education centres, where students can learn in conditions that support concentration, protection, and psychosocial well-being. At the same time, the emergency plan must be prepared for the case where digital learning is not possible. Hence, there is a need to adopt more flexible, context-sensitive approaches that reflect the diverse realities across Lebanon. This includes expanding low-tech and no-tech alternatives to ensure inclusion of students who lack access to devices or connectivity. Participants also highlighted practical solutions such as double-shift schooling and the consolidation of schools within shared buildings to maximise available infrastructure and sustain in-person learning.

In addition, emergency responses should actively promote interaction and cooperation between displaced populations and host communities. Educational activities that encourage joint participation, collaborative learning, cultural exchange, and social interaction can help strengthen social cohesion and reduce tensions arising from displacement and unequal access to resources. Emergency plans should therefore integrate community resources and prioritise flexible, participatory, and socially inclusive approaches to educational continuity. For example, displaced students should be granted the right and opportunity to attend in-person classes in operational schools, including schools hosting displaced populations, rather than being excluded from existing educational spaces and services. Ensuring the inclusion of displaced and non-displaced students within shared learning environments is essential not only for educational continuity but also for strengthening social cohesion and reducing divisions between communities.

Finally, particular attention should be given to ensuring that examinations and assessment systems remain equitable and responsive to unequal learning conditions. This may include providing students with flexible official examination pathways, alternative evaluation mechanisms, or the option to defer official examinations without penalty in situations where access to learning has been severely disrupted. Such measures are especially important for students affected by displacement, insecurity, or prolonged interruptions to schooling.

6.2.2. For teachers

The findings point to the need for more effective mobilisation and support of educational personnel during emergencies. Teachers and principals represent one of the largest qualified professional groups capable of supporting not only educational continuity but also broader community responses during crises. It is therefore recommended that:

- Emergency plans clearly define the roles of educational personnel in psychosocial support, educational activities, and support for vulnerable populations, including persons with disabilities.
- Targeted financial and institutional support should be provided to teachers affected by displacement and economic hardship. This includes allocating exceptional emergency budgets to support psychosocial programs, learning centres, educational activities, and initiatives aimed at sustaining teacher motivation and well-being during prolonged crises.
- Teacher training should constitute a central component of the plan, particularly in relation to the effective use of digital tools, online pedagogy, psychosocial support, and flexible learning approaches, in order to better prepare both teachers and students to transition between in-person, hybrid, and online learning modalities when necessary.

- Emergency plans should also recognise that education is not confined to formal school buildings. In contexts of displacement and crisis, alternative spaces can be transformed into learning environments when adequate support and trained educators are available. Therefore, teachers should be empowered and supported to establish flexible and community-based learning spaces as part of broader emergency preparedness strategies.

6.2.3. For schools

Israel's bombing and targeting of schools and educational facilities constitutes a violation of international law and has severe consequences for students' safety, educational continuity, and psychosocial well-being. Therefore, emergency education plans should minimise the use of schools as shelters wherever possible, as their widespread use for displacement purposes significantly disrupts access to education and places the displaced at risk. Alternative sheltering arrangements should be developed to reduce prolonged school closures and interruptions to learning.

In situations where schools are already not operating or are temporarily closed prior to the crisis and must be used as shelters, each school should establish a context-specific evacuation and emergency response plan in coordination with municipalities, civil defence, parents, and local communities.

6.2.4. At the institutional and governance levels

A recurring issue identified in the findings is the disconnect between policy formulation and implementation, which has consistently undermined effective responses during crises. Whether in relation to emergency preparedness, coordination mechanisms, or continuity planning, policies have often failed to translate into action. Strengthening governance, therefore, requires the institutionalisation of crisis preparedness frameworks with clear operational protocols, defined roles, and enforceable accountability mechanisms.

A more balanced approach to centralisation and decentralisation is needed, whereby MEHE provides strategic direction, resources, and oversight while granting schools and local communities greater autonomy to adapt responses to their specific contexts and realities. This includes encouraging community-led initiatives and locally grounded solutions that can respond more effectively to diverse needs on the ground.

At the same time, while overarching national frameworks and policies remain necessary to ensure consistency and equity across the education system, they should also allow for flexible, tailor-made approaches where feasible, particularly in contexts heavily affected by displacement, war, or resource shortages. Strengthened coordination across sectors and actors, supported by real-time data systems and clearer lines of accountability, is essential to reduce fragmentation and ensure more consistent implementation across the education system.

Together, all of these approaches would help shift the education system away from reactive and unequal responses toward a more predictable, inclusive, and adaptable model of continuity during crises.

6.3. Providing Effective Recovery Programmes

Participants' experiences have revealed a significant decline in the quality of education, with many students progressing through grade levels without mastering foundational skills. This highlights the urgent need to find a solution to recover the learning losses accumulated throughout the seven years of crises, as well as re-enrol students who have dropped out of education altogether. Hence, it is crucial for MEHE to prepare an effective, targeted learning recovery plan that addresses accumulated gaps, ensuring that progression within the system reflects actual learning rather than procedural advancement.

There is also a need to strengthen the emphasis on self-directed learning as a key strategy for supporting educational continuity, particularly in emergency and crisis contexts where formal instruction may be disrupted or inconsistently accessible.

6.4. Updating the curriculum

Participants consistently highlighted the need for an updated national curriculum, describing the current curriculum as outdated, overly dense, and insufficiently responsive to contemporary educational realities and students' needs. Many felt that the curriculum no longer reflects current trends, technologies, or the skills required in today's world. In this regard, there is a critical need to reform the national curriculum, which has remained largely unchanged since 1997. A revised curriculum should be up-to-date and designed with greater flexibility to allow adaptation during periods of crisis and disruption.

6.5. Expanding and Strengthening TVET Pathways

The findings point to an increasing shift among students toward Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), driven by declining academic achievement, disengagement from formal schooling, and reduced confidence in traditional academic pathways. Many students are failing, dropping out, or intentionally pursuing vocational education as a more practical and attainable alternative. In response, MEHE should expand and strengthen TVET programs by improving their quality, accessibility, and alignment with evolving labour market demands. TVET should be repositioned as a respected and credible educational pathway rather than being perceived as a secondary option, while also ensuring clearer and more flexible transitions between academic and vocational tracks. To support this shift, the TVET curriculum should be updated to better reflect technological developments and students' changing aspirations and realities. Such measures could help reduce long-term disengagement from education while providing students with more meaningful and relevant learning opportunities.

6.6. Integrating Psychosocial Support and Reframing the School Experience

The impact of the crisis extends beyond academic outcomes, significantly affecting students' and teachers' psychosocial well-being and motivation. As a result, education responses must adopt a more holistic approach that integrates psychosocial support as a core component of schooling. This includes training teachers in trauma-informed practices, while also ensuring that teachers themselves receive adequate psychosocial support and assistance in coping with the prolonged effects of crisis and war. Furthermore, establishing referral mechanisms for students requiring specialised support is equally important. Embedding Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) within the curriculum is recommended as a systemic approach to promoting students' psychosocial wellbeing, strengthening coping skills, and supporting

positive adjustment to challenging and unstable learning environments. At the same time, schools must be supported in re-establishing their role as safe, inclusive, and stable environments, even when operating under crisis conditions. Reintroducing opportunities for social interaction, collaboration, and physical activity is essential to addressing the broader developmental impacts of prolonged disruption and rebuilding a sense of normalcy and cohesion within school communities.

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