



Developing education in Syria after crisis: Children in focus

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Abstract

The paradox of education in Syria is now epitomized by the trilogy of schools destruction, shortness of teachers and a situation of schoolchildren who were settled in diaspora like Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan or in the destructed regions inside Syria. Up to time, there are no factual statistics indicating the real figures of damaged / destroyed schools or even indications to the approximate number of school children that might join schools. A policy paper in London, 2016 has indicated that 5.4 millions of children and teenagers lack education. A report of UNICEF's response for children, 2018 has indicated that one of each three schools is partially or totally destroyed. According to INEE, 2016, the fatalities of teaching staff is enumerated to 150.000 personnel or more, and so this figure is close less to the facts of escape and displacement.

The reason of this study is to contribute to the educational process in Syria after crisis. So then, it requires applying a course of actions, particularly interviewing the officers of education in Syria or the commissioners of education in the hosting countries of Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan in order to principally identify the exact numbers of Syrian school-age children that might be rejoining schools in Syria within the next year. Furthermore, it requires to identify the number of destroyed schools even partially or completely of which they need to be geared up. Predictably, under this estimated supportive project, we anticipate in the first phase, to collect more accurate information more accessible in order to assess the size of aids for such needed support, and to form in the second phase a joint working committee on ground (interdisciplinary team) in collaboration with the Syrian education authorities to start supporting this assistance into an agreed plan and schedule taking the whole appropriate arrangements into consideration. Hence, it is projected that sufficient units of school children would be in schools, a sufficient number of teaching staff is actively back; and a remarkable number of reconstructed schools is geared up.

Keywords: Syria, education, developing, children, crisis.

Introduction

The crisis in Syria is in its tenth year in which education has been collapsed down to a ticklish point. The global NGOs backup of education was an emergency remedy where it could not reach the level that guarantees the least possible targets. The total of 5.4 million children and teenagers inside Syria are badly in need for educational assistance, and at least 2.1 million of them are 100% out of school according to a policy paper (Supporting Syria and the region, 2016).

During the crisis in Syria, it is seen that the level of education deteriorated in a way that reflected the worst and catastrophic chaos in the history of the region. Whilst, it is worth mentioning that the level of education, the school enrollment before the crisis in 2011, scored 97 in per centage. It indicates that the ruthless violence and war had led education in Syria to this significant

decline. Where one school of five has become unfit either it has been damaged or destroyed or become a shelter for internal displaced persons. Therefore, in areas that are mostly affected are Raqqa, Idlib, Aleppo, Deir AzZour, Hama, Homs, Daraa and the countryside of Damascus besides other regions that experienced divergence. School attendance has dropped down to a significant point, in which sex students were absent out of ten and in some areas, a full absence was recorded (UNICEF, 2013). Recent records have shown that one school out of three is now out of service which means 43% of the schools are not used (Syria crisis: UNICEF's response for children, 2018).

Many factors stand behind this collapse, but some of them may speculate the evidence to the rapid drop of education inside Syria. Mostly, the severe violence and displacement, killing or fleeing of teachers, destruction of schools or misusing them by militants, and the reluctance of parents to sending children to schools to protect them. Other reasons like ISIS control over wide regions including Raqqa, Manbej, Hasakah and Deir AzZour for more than two years to where schools were closed, and children were not only deprived of education, but also have been enforced into violent recruitment. For such reasons, schools, teachers and children are absolutely of a pivotal importance in relation to development of teaching and learning in this war torn country.

Background

Before the crisis of 2011, Syria had a worthy basic education scheme. It is free and obligatory from ages 7 to 15. Earlier, the elementary and preparatory educational levels were each self-standing and by 2002 both were combined into one basic education stage to where it is free and compulsory from grades 1st to 9th. 98% of schools in Syria are public (studycountry.com) and 1.8% are private according to 2007 census (k12academics.com). Syria has a thematic history in learning and education, being the home of the first known alphabets "Ugarit" and a home to one of the earliest recorded languages in the world "Aramaic" which is still spoken up today by a group of Syrians, experienced by the fact of its being the language of Jesus Christ (Al Hessian, Mohammed, 2016).

Education in Syria is delivered into basic education, secondary school, technical and vocational education and training, tertiary education and university education. The kindergartens are state-managed where children may enroll as pre-school pupils. Education in general is centralized by the ministry of education in Syria to which the basic education system was solid and the enrolment system hit a 74 % according to (Bouchane, 2016).

Over the last nine years in Syria since the crisis outbreak in 2011 the education system was consistent, and it had been gradually relapsed impacting by war. Under this crisis, the education in Syria had experienced difficult circumstances like mass displacement of children, schools' destruction and teachers' escape or absence. Rather than staying in schools, children had fled with their parents to stay alive since the ambience of war and conflict has been dreadful.

International communities have taken actions in supporting education inside Syria or in other bordering countries like Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. Further, the UNICIF or other NGOs have maintained remarkable approaches to deliver services.

In the light of the latest development from the beginning of the year 2018, the Syrian government has taken back many areas like Daraa, Ghuta, the suburbs of Damascus, the western rural areas of Deir AzZour, the city of Deir AzZour, the rural areas of Homs and Hamah, and

continuing in 2019 to February 2020 great parts in South Idlib and west of Aleppo taken back in which schools are counted in hundreds, and so how education is expected to be given a new lease of life and this would not happen without supportive assistance. Motivated by the children's needs, the intended scope we think about is to reconsider the process of education in such regions in specific and in the whole parts of Syria in general. This would be done by maintaining a supportive project to ensure an effectual delivery of education to the broken children whose suffering is the heaviest.

Education crisis in Syria

Nevertheless, the years of 2018 and 2019 have not recorded any escaping figures to outside Syria, there was some internal displacement, the Syrian authorities have expressed arrangements with Russian initiatives to bring back Syrian refugees from the neighboring countries those who fled during the period 2011 -2017. Which means a significant number of children will be back home, and eventually to schools.

Despite the war, the primary school enrollment rate in Syria in 2010 was 92.941 % (World Bank, Syria, 2010), in which the enrollment to education was promoting. Under the nine years of war, the situation is boundlessly different. This rate has dropped to a tremendous figure and fallen to an average of 50% down from the prewar level in which it could be said that nearly all Syrian children went to school. Based on an estimation by Save the Children ,the economic impact of 2.8 million Syrian children never returning to school could reach a staggering annual cost of \$2.18 billion (static.guim.co.uk, 2015).

Another peril that the education in Syria faces the callous indifference of other countries particularly the regions under the Syrian government control. To which other countries assume to take part in solving the education crisis and giving hands in building the educational infrastructure not to turning them into rubble (Kevin Watkins, 2016). A lot of aids allocated to Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, while none was sent to the internal regions of Syria (except the areas that are out of the Syrian authorities control). It goes without saying, there are a lot of vulnerable children and local communities in a persistent need to be supported in those areas. On the World Refugee Day, the EU Syria Trust Fund adopted an aid package of \$165 million for Lebanon where \$100 million of them to guarantee access to education for the refugees of Syrian children in Lebanon (loc.gov, 2016), (europa.eu. Syria Trust Fund, 2018). A recent aid package worth €400 million has also been offered for the education of Syrian refugees in Turkey under EU facility for refugees in Turkey (ec.europa, 2018).

It is assumed, there are two major groups of children who are prioritized to be resettled in Syria, one comes back from the neighboring countries and the other is already in the newly controlled regions by Syrian authorities. In this respect, the collaboration on the international view should be conceptualized in a look-ahead strategy-largely whole to rebuild education in Syria with a detailed operational plan to which this study offers a constituting part of this contribution.

Impacted educational infrastructure

The preparation, reconstruction, rehabilitation and reformation of schools require intensive efforts, substantial financial funding and supportive economy on the one hand, and it requires other necessary and associated supplies to manage such rehabilitation for the schools that have been destroyed in whole or in part. Such aids should be allocated to electricity supply, repairing stations and cabling, piping drinking waters, fixing network, school healthcare centers, utilities,

water and sanitation system. What is necessary more for schools is to provide the most urgent needs including boards, desks, books, copybooks, heating system like stoves and fuel for winter, tools, etc. The educational infrastructure was extensively affected by war which has overwhelmingly targeted everything i.e. residential houses, religious houses, hospitals, educational institutions, schools, Kindergartens and all other facilities. The destruction of the educational sector, included institutes; public and private schools; educational centers, has also been influenced by the loss of many cadres at different levels of education such as teachers, administrative or other personnel either by escape or dislocation or by death, which took almost 150,000 instruction staffs since the crisis began (INEE, 2016).

With insufficient financial capabilities and unaccepted philanthropy as anticipated, the Syrian authority has just started with the Russian involvement in a large-scale reconstruction of infrastructure in five Syrian governorates, namely Damascus, Aleppo, Deir AzZour, Hama and Homs. This included 59 residential centers, 46 schools, 19 kindergartens, 33 bakeries, 28 water pumping stations, 12 power plants (qasioun-news, 2018), 14 medical centers and 227 housing units (Syrian opinion platform, 2018). The latest report of the UN Security Council indicated that almost 30% of schools have either been demolished, damaged, used as shelters or for military purposes depriving 2.1 million children of education because of factors such as insecurity, poverty and displacement.

More sadly, educational infrastructure was decreased to 0% in some regions where children had zero (0%) opportunity to go to school and it actually happened that a huge number had abandoned school forever. The schools in the regions of Idlib, north Aleppo zone, in Raqqa or Deir AzZour eastern parts are gloomily destroyed (ACU report on the Schools in Syria, 2018). The schools in the eastern regions of Syria like Raqqa, Deir AzZour, Homs and Hamah are also destroyed at large in a horrible way. During the period of January, 2018 till August, 2018 large areas with schools in Damascus suburbs, Ghuta and Qalamoun, Daraa, Qunaiterah, eastern deserted areas(Badia) of Homs and Hama, Deir AzZour city and its western region) have been back to the Syrian authorities, and recently on Feb. 2020 another regions in Idlib and west Aleppo were back, too. In such regions, there are huge numbers of schools need to be reformed.

The intentions

The main objective is to get funding aids from the funding organizations to inject the educational process in those affected regions in Syria which have been recently back into life. The identified groups are the children of all ages (6-18) and the teachers of different levels. The children with the possibility to join schools, and with those children of special needs and also those who are physically and mentally traumatized.

In terms of schools, to establish new schools, reconstruct the devastated schools that are entirely or partially ruined and to gear up schools with furniture or equipment.

In terms of teachers, it is noted that a great number of teachers are lost by different circumstances. Though, engaging new teachers would be significant to revitalize the teaching and learning process. Basically, the big loss of teachers could not be filled up by that tiny employment of only 96 teachers whom are lately graduated and recruited by the ministry of education in Syria for the whole territories (<http://moed.gov.sy/site/البيانات>, 2018). Encouraging those fled or displaced teachers to rejoin schools again, and supporting the

institutes of class teachers to graduate more instructors with two-year diploma for urgent staffing is importantly a milestone.

In terms of children, with the scope of retuning a huge number of schoolchildren to Syria in the next two years. It is dynamic to provide rehab psychological support, healthcare and pedagogical improvement. Children with disabilities need more care.

The action

To revive the educational system in Syria under this supportive project, we assume that collaboration with the public administration in Syria would help to collect more technical data and detailed information about the actual school age children enrolled in schools and the expected figures of school children that might be repatriated back from the neighboring countries like Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey or North Iraq. The total of the children between 6 and 18, and the statistics of the damaged schools are significant to identify the essential requirements. Likewise, it is noteworthy to analyze the requirements of qualifying and rehabilitation of the schools and the educational institutions. Over and above, injecting the educational sector in Syria would minimize the children's suffering and would give them the chance to start all over.

Furthermore, we would interview the public educational officers in Syria if possible, and the educational commissioners in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey in order to identify the Syrian school age children in diaspora (camps of refugees) that are thinkable to return back to Syria within the next two years. Along with the reports by the international organizations and councils and the Syrian government issuances, we will be able to determine the essential requirements for schools and children. In this frame, we aim to collect detailed information by several consultancies in order to assess the possible range of assistance for the necessities of schools and in a later phase, we intend to form a teamwork to follow up with the Syrian education authorities to start working on ground.

Projected outcomes

- The deprived school children of Syria whom circumstances are harsh, would be blessed with healthy schools, fully furnished and adequately equipped.
- More children between ages 6-18 would be increasingly joining up schools.
- Repatriated Syrian teachers or those who are displaced would be encouraged to have more training and keeping fit for the challengeable priorities.
- More new staff would be stimulated to line up in teaching track.
- A reasonable number of schools would be ready to contain the upcoming figures of pupils.
- Education in Syria is predictable to be improved and revived.

Conclusion

Since the exhausted educational system in Syria has lost its essential standards and valuable criteria, and it is required to starting from scratch in the deliberately sabotage region. The UN's agenda 2030 can support the process of education in order at least to save those threatened children, where international communities put the children in the prioritized position and so do

similar studies. In such case, a deep investigation in the Syrian educational system after crisis is welcomed to offer benefits for the school children and make their education easily accessible.

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