

## Education and Integration in Countries with Syrian Children: Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Germany and Turkey

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**Abstract:** Today, the number of people fleeing conflicts, wars, human rights violations and difficult living conditions in their countries and seeking refuge in other countries is rapidly increasing all over the world. We witness the migration movements of people fleeing from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, and Eritrea and pursuing their right to live elsewhere. This necessitates the countries hosting refugees to adopt an integration approach towards the refugee population. This research aims to describe integration in refugee education, the inclusive education approach and the education policies and practices of the countries that host the highest number of refugees after the Syrian migration. Research data were collected through document analysis, one of the qualitative research techniques, and analyzed with descriptive analysis method. It is clear from the findings of the research that in countries where Syrians are concentrated, a truly holistic approach model is not applied in the education of refugee children and therefore presents serious problems in refugee education. As a result of the research, it is proposed to carry out studies that will describe the problems experienced in refugee education, solution proposals and educational practices of host states.

**Keywords:** Integration, migration, refugee education, inclusion and Syrian refugees

Education plays an important role in the overall well-being of refugee children. Schools can also help improve social relations where families go (Ratini, 2019; Pinson & Arnot, 2010). When migrant students are not supported, refugee children may feel disconnected from learning. Therefore, students experience problems with school attendance and are unlikely to communicate with peers (Block et al., 2014). In this context, education is an enabling right that helps the child reach other rights (Pigozzi, 1999). In case of migration, the first priority is to direct refugee students to education and to ensure that they adapt to the school environment without any problems (Watkins & Zyck, 2014). Although this situation causes problems in the process of adaptation of the refugee students to the new educational environment, it is possible to find solutions to the problems experienced with educational practices. By providing a regular routine, educational programs pave the way for the child's psychological recovery and can support social adaptation (Beehler et al., 2012; Masia-Warner et al., 2006; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012).

This research was carried out to describe the education of refugee students, exemplary practices in the holistic approach model and the education policies of the countries hosting

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Syrian refugees. Therefore, it employs a qualitative design based on the analysis of national and international research and documents in the field of migration. Document review includes the analysis of written materials that contain information about the subjects to be researched (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). In order to conduct a successful document review, it is necessary to find, examine the relevant documents and analyze them to reach a synthesis that will reveal a specific situation (Karasar, 2007). The data obtained for this purpose are primarily described in a systematic and understandable way. Then, some conclusions are reached by interpreting the explanations (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). With the data obtained in the research, the education of refugee children and education practices in countries where Syrian children are concentrated are described and explained.

## **Refugee Children and Education**

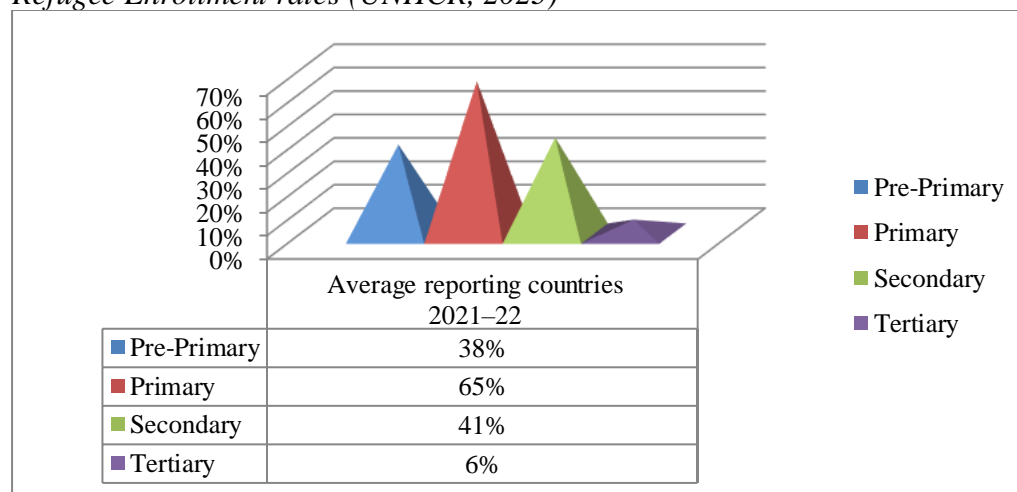
The civil war that started in Syria on March 15, 2011 spread throughout the country and as a result, nearly five million Syrian people (4,980,680) left their country and took refuge in other countries (UNCHR, 2024). Children are the group most heavily affected by the consequences of the civil war in Syria. Traumatic events experienced by refugee children before and after migration can cause problems in their emotions, thoughts and behaviors. In addition, since these children are vulnerable to all dangers, they may also need protection (Jourová & Avramopoulos, 2017). People who have to leave their country because of war, no matter how severe the conflict environment in their country, seek to meet their children's education needs as a basic need, in addition to their sheltering needs. Undoubtedly, education is also a fundamental right for refugee students. Refugees have the right to demand from the authorities of the country where they come for any reason and by any means, not to discriminate against them, to guarantee their religious freedom, to benefit from free access to the courts, to meet their work, education, accommodation needs, to benefit from administrative assistance, to travel and not to be expelled from the country they are in (Geneva Convention, 1951; art. 3, 4, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, 26, 32). Article 26 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that everyone has the right to education, that education will be free at least in the primary and basic stages and primary education will be compulsory. It also emphasizes that education should be aimed at the full development of the human personality, the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and that parents have the right to choose the type of education that shall be given to their children.

## **Refugee students' access to education**

Refugee students' access to education is as important as their education. Students sometimes cannot access education for reasons such as economy, transportation or documents and diplomas. In the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) report titled *Unlocking Potential: The Right To Education and Opportunity*, it is stated that average gross enrollment rates for refugee stands at 38% for pre-primary, 65% for primary, 41% for secondary and 6% for tertiary education, which means more than half of the world's 14.8 million school-aged refugee children remain out of formal education, risking their future prosperity and denying them the chance to fulfil their potential. Therefore millions of refugee children and youth miss out on the right to quality education, which is a basic human right (UNHCR, 2023). The enrollment rates of refugee students in schools are given in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Refugee Enrollment rates (UNHCR, 2023)*



It is thought that the students of higher education who left their countries due to the war are effective in reducing the schooling rate because of various reasons and inequalities (Arar, 2021; Lambrechts, 2020; Naylor et al., 2021). Considering basic needs, they stay out of education if their parents have no or insufficient income (Taştan & Çelik, 2017). Poverty and high family population make the contribution of children to family income important. This may affect their school attendance.

### **Integration and inclusion in the education of refugee students**

Refugees encounter a new language and a new life order wherever they migrate. This change can sometimes cause difficulties in the lives of refugees. Refugee children face various and unique challenges in the countries they take refuge in such as interrupted education, learning the language of the country of refuge and adaptation to the new education system (Magos & Margaroni, 2018). It is also important for these students to be able to communicate with others, feel safe or cope with the trauma they experience, and feel a sense of belonging in terms of adapting to their education life. Therefore, in addition to the academic needs of refugee children, their psychological and social needs should also be met. In short, due to forced migration, refugee children face more hindrances than other children with a migrant background. These hindrances include adapting to a new language and culture, continuing their education, interruption in family ties, insecure life, shelter, poverty, and discrimination (Bloch et al., 2015; Şirin & Rogers-Şirin, 2015). These challenges are numerous and their intertwining makes the situation more complex (Radhouane, 2023).

Inclusive education has been defined as an education model that includes all different aspects of students' needs, not only academically but also socially, culturally and emotionally (Forbes & Martin, 2004). Inclusive education is possible when schools are integrative, accept all children unconditionally, and respond to their various needs (Winzer & Mazurek, 2011). Inclusive education emerges as a search for solutions depending on the needs or problems faced by education systems all over the world (Ainscow, 2005). The educational problem of children who have taken refuge as a result of forced migration can also be seen as a problem that inclusive education will find a solution to. With regard to refugee education, the first challenge faced by host countries is to ensure that refugee children have access to education, and the second challenge is to develop educational policies and practices that encourage refugee students to be included in schools and communities that respond to their needs (Pastoor, 2016). In the inclusive education model, schools act as a bridge to connect immigrant children and

their families with other institutions and organizations that concern them (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). Similarly, Bhavnagri (2001) emphasizes that inclusive educational environments are effective in meeting the needs of migrant children and their families. It is thought that this approach basically strengthens the integration and belonging of immigrant children to society through schools. It is claimed that teachers do not understand students with different cultures and have problems communicating with students in countries with high cultural diversities. It is also stated that this affects students' school success negatively (Gurer, 2019; Szabo & Anderson, 2009). While debates on inclusive education have undoubtedly played an important role in raising concerns about children with disabilities in international forums, it is important to understand this not just as a philosophy or educational approach for children with disabilities but a fundamental approach to achieve the right to education of children from all different groups (UNICEF, 2012).

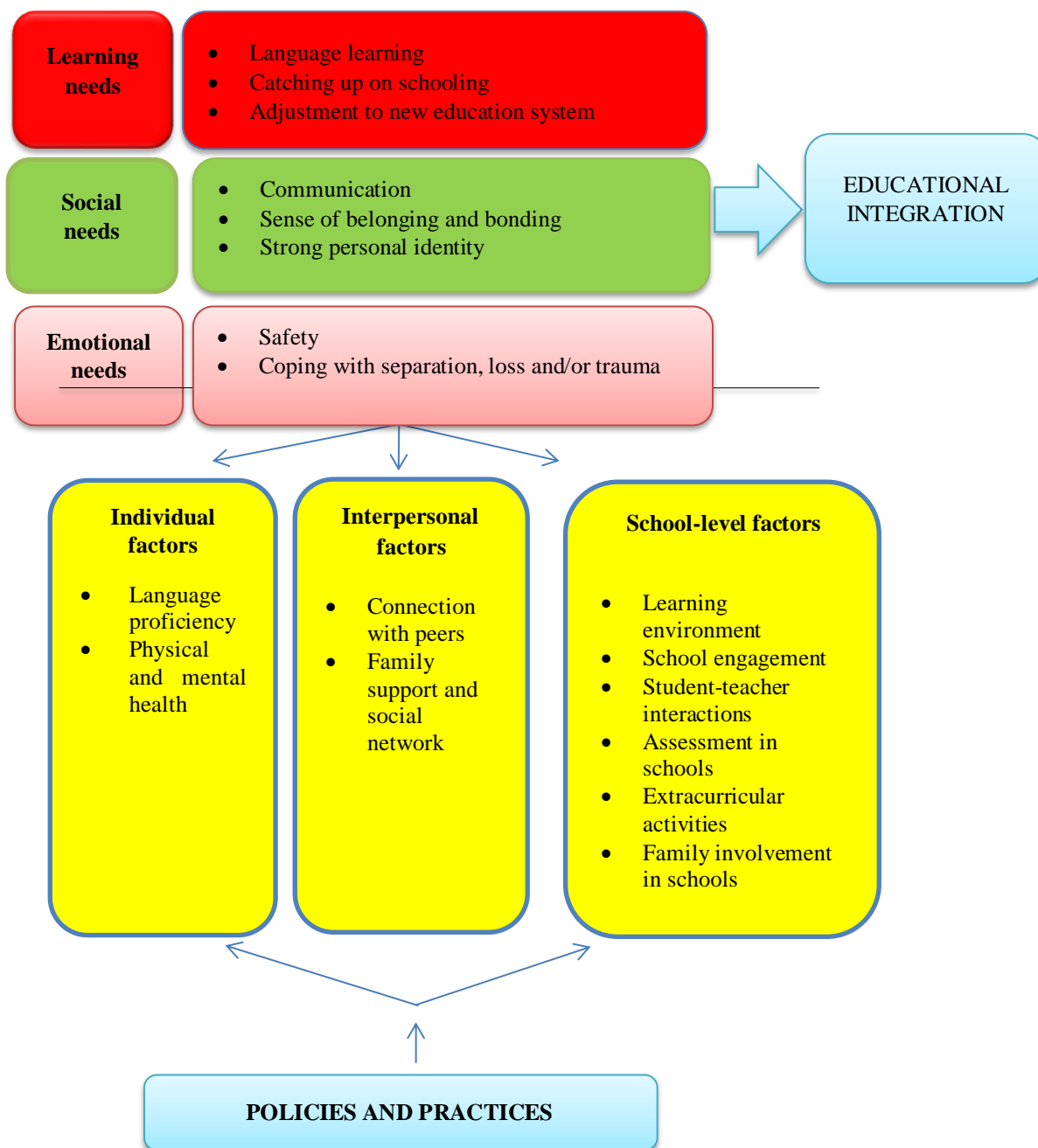
Tensions may arise as children try to understand each other or, more commonly, try to avoid each other in daily school practices (Von Aspern, 2009). Playgrounds are important places where refugee students encounter different social dimensions of society and learn about social classes (Kelly, 1994). When inclusive practices are not followed in schools, students may face the risk of social and moral exclusion and internalizing that they do not deserve fair treatment. Such unfair treatment can be accepted as deserved, inevitable and normal (Bland, 2012). When refugee students experience a lack of social acceptance and understanding in the school environment, this can lead to a decrease in their sense of belonging (Williams & Butler, 2003). The point to be emphasized here is that inclusive practices in school can be powerful in changing the current power dynamics. Schools that prioritize involving parents and families and improving communication between school and home ensure greater involvement of minority group members (Taylor, 2008). Also, providing appropriate support and inclusive environment to all students can promote well-being throughout the school, removing barriers to participation and success (Block et al., 2014). In this context, the holistic approach model in the education of refugee students has a guiding feature in ensuring integration.

### **Holistic approach model**

Rutter (2006) mentioned good practices in the education of refugee students as the need for a warm environment free of racism and to have their linguistic and psychosocial needs met. Addressing the learning, social and emotional needs of refugee children is important for the successful integration processes. These range from communication, belonging, education, security, loss of identity, and the way in which trauma is overcome. For the educational integration of refugees, Arnot and Pinson (2005) propose a 'holistic education model' that recognizes and addresses the learning, social and emotional needs of students with refugee backgrounds. It is important to consider individual, interpersonal and school-related factors in meeting the needs of children and ensuring adaptation to their educational life (Cerna, 2019). The holistic model summarizing the educational integration of refugees is shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*Holistic Model for the Educational Integration of Refugee Children (Cerna, 2019)*



In the educational integration of refugee students, a holistic approach in education is taken as a basis by meeting the learning, social and emotional needs of the children. In meeting these needs, it is important to consider individual, interpersonal and school-level factors of refugee students.

Individual factors include the language of the host country and mother tongue proficiency and physical and mental health. Refugee children may experience mental health problems due to their experiences and this may affect their adaptation to education. In addition to the academic success of refugee students, language skills are also necessary for them to develop a sense of belonging and overcome the trauma they experience through social relationships. It is beneficial for students to improve their mother tongue proficiency both in

terms of learning the language of the country they are seeking refuge in and encouraging their own development (Eurydice, 2009).

Interpersonal factors include peer interaction, family and social support. Children may have difficulties in adapting to the new environment they encounter due to different cultures and languages. Because of these differences, they may feel culturally alienated and have harder times developing a sense of belonging (Nakeyar et al., 2017). Moreover, refugee children may have problems communicating with others, as they do not know the language of the countries in which they took refuge. Therefore, refugee children need a solid and common language to communicate (Szente & Hoot, 2007).

Schools regularly provide parents with information about the child's educational status in order to ensure children's attendance at school and prevent class repetition (Tudjman et al., 2016). School-level factors include the learning environment, school-level assessment, extracurricular activities, teacher-student interaction, school involvement and parent involvement in the school community. The learning environment can be important in the integration of refugees into schools. All school approaches can provide refugee students with the necessary support to address the challenges before and after displacement (Hek, 2005; Sidhu & Taylor, 2009).

In the holistic approach, parent involvement and family support are of great importance in the education of refugee children. While some parents increase their participation in school by learning the language of the country they take refuge in, some parents may remain indifferent to their children's education. Another problem experienced in the participation of parents in school, apart from the language barrier, is that teachers have difficulty in reaching the parents when students are absent from school (Aykırı, 2017; Kılıç & Gökçe Toker, 2018). While the indifference of some parents is emphasized by teachers and administrators in this regard (Tösten et al., 2017), it is also reported by teachers that positive relations are developed with the help of translators when parents are interested (Aykırı, 2017).

## Methodology

In this qualitative research, document analysis technique was used as data collection tool and descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data. The main purpose of document analysis is to analyze written materials containing information about the phenomenon or phenomena which will be studied (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). Document analysis is used as a stand-alone research method, especially in cases where direct interviews and observations are not possible. This method includes the analysis of written and oral materials containing information about the topics to be studied. The document analysis conducted in our research covers the analysis of written materials related to the subject. Scientific studies published on the subject of education and integration of Syrian children in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Germany and Turkey were included in the analysis.

The study employs one of the purposeful sampling techniques used in qualitative research, typical case sampling. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2006), in typical case sampling, the most relevant case among the cases affected by the innovation or application is selected in order to reveal and introduce an innovation or a newly created application. The aim is not to reach a general opinion about the universe by taking typical situations as a study group, but to have information about a specific subject and to enlighten those who do not have enough information. In order to collect the data for the research, apart from the reports related to the literature, Web of Science and Google Academic databases were reviewed. In addition to databases, a literature review was also conducted via web logs and press sites. As a result of the preliminary examination of the studies, the articles that were found to be suitable for our research were included in the study. In this context, the data collected within the scope of the research was explained as a result of descriptive analysis.

## **Education in Countries with Syrian Children: Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Germany and Turkey**

It is known that Syrian people flee from the war and migrate to border countries and to European countries through these countries. UNHCR stated that 768,353 Syrians live in Lebanon, 621,182 in Jordan and 295,547 in Iraq, 94.5% of them in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) (UNCHR, 2024). According to the official figures of 2024, there are 3,093,909 Syrians living in Turkey (UNCHR, 2024). Although the exact number of Syrians in Germany is not known, more Syrians (621,740) took refuge in Germany than other European countries (ACW, 2022). The education of Syrian children is one of the most crucial elements of the refugee crisis, playing a vital role in shaping their future. In the countries they have migrated to, access to education for Syrian children is directly related to both the refugee density and the capacity of the host countries' educational infrastructure. In countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey, and Germany, various educational policies have been implemented to ensure Syrian children can access school. However, despite these efforts, Syrian children's full participation in education still faces various challenges, particularly language barriers, psychological trauma, and economic difficulties. Education can be a source of hope for these children's future, and the education of refugees is not only critical for individual development but also for societal peace and economic growth. In order to describe the education of Syrian refugees in the international context, the education policies and practices in the countries where they are concentrated are briefly mentioned as follows.

### **Lebanon**

Lebanon is the country that hosts the highest number of Syrian refugees after Turkey. There are 918,974 Syrian refugees living in the country, which corresponds to approximately 25% of the country's population. Lebanon ranks first in terms of population density (BBC, 2019). In spite of the response by local and international NGOs, the challenges are urgent and various in Lebanon because of the mass influx of Syrian refugees. This is also the case in the field of education. However, after the agreement with the United Nations, the enrollment rate of students in local schools began to increase. Due to the excessive increase, the administration decided to open a second shift in the afternoon to prevent the decline in the quality of Lebanese students' education. This caused Syrian families to question the quality of the second shift (Shuayb et al., 2016).

In 2014, the administration developed a strategy titled Reaching All Children with Education (RACE), which aims to ensure that all children in Lebanon have access to education (MEHE, 2014). With this policy, more Syrian children had access to school. With this program, in January 2016, the Ministry of Education started to implement an accelerated education program for children aged 3-18 who had been out of school for more than two years, and 18,990 students received education in 57 schools. Moreover, in 2016 Lebanon adopted a framework program that regulated and formalized Syrian students' access to non-formal education and increased their access to formal education. In 2016, Lebanon started to implement the RACE II program, which is a follow-up of the previous RACE program, for five years. With this program, it was planned to enroll 440,000 Syrian students in formal education by the end of the 2020-2021 academic year. However, despite all these initiatives, more than 200,000 Syrian children remained out of school in the 2016-2017 academic year (El-Ghali et al., 2016).

As Syrian refugees are not allowed to enroll in public vocational training centers, there is very little emphasis in the RACE I and II measures on post-compulsory education in Lebanon. The high dropout rate and the extremely low enrolment (only 3% after age fifteen) in upper level secondary education among refugees have pushed the government to address dropout

(Crul et al., 2019). According to a study (Abu-Amsa & Armstrong, 2018), half of the students decided to drop out of the Lebanese schools. The students felt that the risks they encountered while attending at the schools were not worth the rewards they got. The barriers for Syrian children's access to education in Lebanon can be listed as socio-economic status, demand for many official documents for residence renewal, institutional lack of education capacity, and corporal punishment (Carlier, 2018; Watkins & Zyck, 2014; Yassin et al., 2015). As a result, it can be said that gaps between policy and practice are common. While policies point to the ideal, the problems that arise on the field show the realities. Barriers to the education of refugee children in Lebanon are similar to those in Jordan.

## **Jordan**

Jordan's population is 11,552,876 according to official data for 2024, and the total number of registered refugees in the country is 689,880. The number of Syrian refugees is 621,182 (UNCHR, 2024). Ninety-seven percent of the Syrian population in Jordan lives outside the camps, and most Syrians are struggling with economic difficulties. Child labor is most prevalent among Syrian children (UNICEF, 2017). Since the beginning of the crisis, Jordan has made some arrangements to increase school capacities for Syrian refugee children to attend public schools. When the increasing number of students started to push the limits, double shift schooling was applied, and 206 schools were opened in the regions where refugees are densely populated (Kubilay, 2020). Jordan has different models of inclusion for refugee students. These are camp schools, second-shift schools, host community schools and regular schools (Small, 2020). Syrian refugee students follow the Jordanian curriculum at schools in the camps and outside the camps. Thanks to double shift schooling, the number of Syrian students attending Jordanian public schools reached 126,000 in 2017. Despite these developments, the rate of Syrian students out of school in Jordan is 31.4% (UNICEF, 2020). The Ministry of Education launched non-formal educational programs to bring Syrian and Jordanian dropout students back into formal education. Children aged 9 to 12 can enroll in the "catch-up" program and enroll in basic education if they acquire the curriculum (Small, 2020). The barriers for Syrian refugees to access education in Jordan can be listed as economic problems, insufficient capacity of schools, administrative barriers due to lack of diplomas and documents, and transportation problems (Carlier, 2018; ESWGJ, 2015). Also, Syrians are not allowed to be teachers in public schools in Jordan. Instead, Syrian teachers can support Jordanian teachers in camp schools and work as lecturers in NGO education programs (Culbertson & Constant, 2015). However, there is little analysis of the long-term consequences of Syrian refugee arrival in Jordan on educational attainment. Most of the attempts to remove educational barriers for Syrian refugees were through education policies. However, the refugee students still face barriers to access the schools because of the connection between immigration and policies. Therefore, a gap exists between educational policy and the implementation of these policies (Majthoub, 2021). Similarly, Dhingra (2016) claimed that the quality of education declined in the country's schools because of overcrowded classrooms and overstretched resources. For this reason, policies and practices must be compatible with the emotional, social and learning needs of refugee students.

## **Iraq**

Iraq treats Syrians as guests on its territory. Thus, according to the directives of the Council of National Security Agents and the Iraqi Ministry of Immigration, it prevents the opportunity to obtain Iraqi citizenship and settle in Iraq (El-Ghali et al., 2017). Iraq did not follow an open door policy for Syrian refugees because of internal turbulence, unlike Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. However, KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government) has an open door



policy for Syrian refugees to access basic services (Pirinççi, 2018). For this reason, the influx of refugees is mainly to KRG cities such as Erbil, Dahuk, and Sulaymaniyah. According to UNHCR (2022) data, 253,871 of 263,783 refugees took refuge in KRG, which constitutes 96.3% of the total number. The distribution of refugees by cities is as follows:

**Table 1**

*The Syrian Refugees distribution in Iraq (UNHCR, 2022)*

Location name	Percentage	Population
Erbil	50.5%	133,221
Dahuk	32.4%	85,380
Sulaymaniyah	13.1%	34,447
Other	2.9%	7,602
Anbar	0.6%	1,627
Kirkuk	0.3%	823
Ninewa	0.3%	683
Total	100%	263,783

According to the report by UNHCR (2024), 35% of refugees in Iraq live outside the designated refugee camps. Syrian refugees have the right to work and access the same services as the host population, although Iraq is not a signatory to the Geneva Convention. Despite the inclusive approach of the regional government, many refugees face considerable challenges in accessing services in KRG. One of them is education, especially secondary education (Grisgraber, 2012). In Northern Iraq, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, while Sorani Kurdish is used as the language of instruction in the majority of public schools, the language of instruction in schools in Duhok is Kurmanji Kurdish. So, the language of instruction at schools is a major challenge for refugees. The percentage of schools whose language of instruction is Arabic in Northern Iraq constitutes only 1%. For this reason, the primary problem that hinders Syrian refugees from entering schools is language (Ahmadzadeh et al., 2014). However, the KRG Ministry of Education issued a directive that allows Syrian refugee children to continue learning in Arabic-language schools (UNICEF, 2019).

The risk of marginalization, stigmatization, isolation or radicalization can be reduced when an appropriate education policy is implemented for the refugee crisis (Deane, 2016). However, the current circumstances lack this policy. For example, the infrastructure of KRG is quite inadequate. Schools in KRG were overcrowded even before the influx of refugees. Therefore, with the new arrivals, this situation deteriorated rapidly, and overcrowded classrooms with 35 to 45 students became common. More teachers are needed to decrease this ratio. Moreover, the majority of the schools are in city centers while refugees tend to live in more affordable areas. As a result of this, refugee students have to travel long distances, and many of them drop out of school because of financial strain. (UNESCO, 2013). Besides economic hardships and insufficient family income increases the possibility of dropping out of school and child labor (Yassen, 2019). Furthermore, current schools in the camps suffer from inadequate sanitary facilities and inconsistent electricity supply. Tent classes in camps and suburban areas remain, as a rule, for refugee students (Ahmadzadeh et al., 2014). According to the research conducted by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNHCR (2018), the purpose of education policies for Syrian refugees was to increase the equal and sustainable access of refugee children to formal and non-formal education and to improve the quality of the education system by strengthening its capacity. However, the objectives and the results of the practices do not match. For this reason, it can be said that the integration of Syrian refugees into education system in Iraq may not be successful so far.

## Germany

Germany is the most preferred European Union member country by asylum seekers (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2015; Heisbourg, 2017). According to the official figures of December 2019, there are 1,800,000 registered asylum seekers living in Germany, and most of them come from Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Eritrea (Deutsche Welle, 2020). Germany has been involved with international asylum applications, especially in recent years. The most applications came from Syrian asylum seekers. The number of asylum applicants in Germany in 2024 is 27,530 (Statista, 2024). People who take refuge in Germany are admitted to the nearest temporary accommodation center originally set up for them (Vardarlı et al., 2019). In these centers, the identity information of the refugees is obtained, and they are given refugee registration documents. All refugees are equally distributed among the 16 German states. Although this distribution is made according to the request of the refugees, the main criterion is to send an equal number of them to each state (Vardarlı et al., 2019). In Germany, the temporary accommodation center is responsible for providing shelter, education and health services to refugees. Refugees must submit their application to the office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in order to obtain a residence permit. After the application is found to be valid, temporary residence permit is given to the refugees. Refugees who are entitled to a residence permit have right to attend free language and integration courses. All children and young people have to participate in formal education. Some states provide free school transportation for some refugee children, but this varies from state to state. Families of children who attend schools and kindergartens have the right to seek help from the social welfare office (Flüchtlingsrat BW, 2014). Germany, due to previous waves of immigration, has developed a multicultural society, which makes the adaptation process more manageable for refugees. Equal rights in basic areas such as education, healthcare, and social services form the foundation of the opportunities Germany offers for the integration of immigrants. As a result, Germany's immigrant experience supports an infrastructure that enables refugees' education and integration processes.

Education in Germany is compulsory for primary school-aged children (starting at six years old) until the end of secondary education, for a total of nine years (HIWG, 1994). People who have gained refugee status in Germany have the same right to education as German citizens. However, there is no legal regulation for those who do not know German. Although some schools organize special programs for children who do not speak German, the general policy is that children are placed in standard classrooms that provide education in German (DRC, 2000). Humanitarian organizations or regional institutions have organized special programs for German language training in some refugee centers (Bank, 2000). Löhrmann, one of the German state education ministers, stated that the German language inadequacy because of the economic situation of the families has an influence on the problems that most immigrant children experience regarding their school grades and graduation. There are several models of Willkommensklasse (Welcome Class) in Germany. For example, some schools create "Welcome Classes" that teach immigrant students only German, while others try to support their German language by including immigrant students in classes with native students whenever possible from the beginning of the teaching process. Both have different or inclusive approaches to transferring children to regular schools (Ahrenholz et al., 2016; UNESCO, 2018). Refugee children from different cultures who live in Germany and cannot express themselves in German are directed to lower-level schools due to their low level of education and it is seen that students' failures and problems of adaptation to school increase in these schools (Şahan, 2018). Refugees must have a C1 level of German in order to be admitted to post-secondary vocational or university education. Refugees who meet the German language proficiency criteria can start free vocational and university education. In addition, refugees residing in

Germany for more than four years have the right to benefit from scholarships given by the state for university education (Flüchtlingsrat BW, 2014).

## Turkey

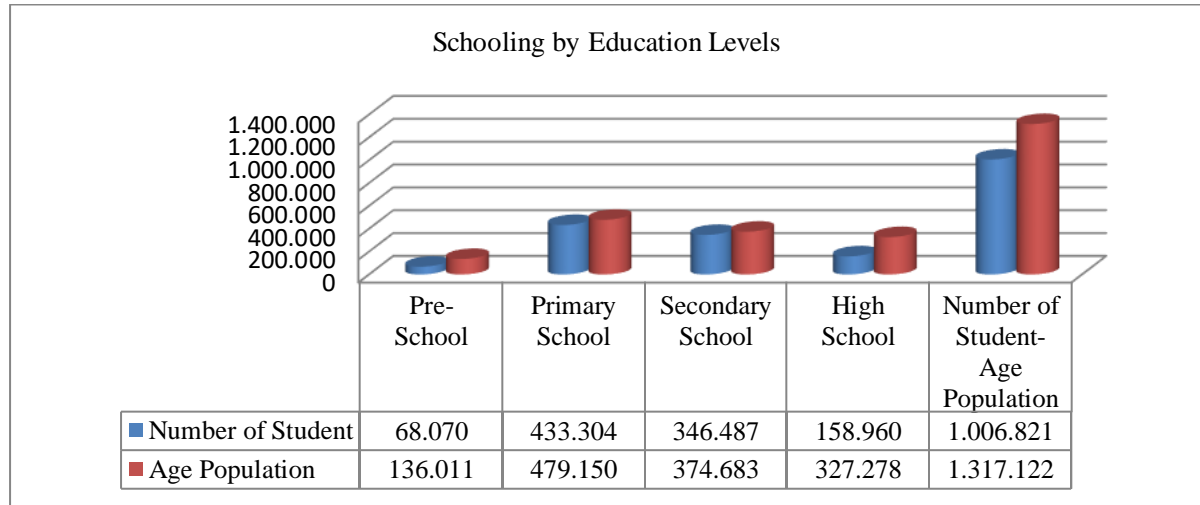
The number of Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey had reached 3,088,863 in 2024 according to the data of the General Directorate of Migration Management [DGMM] (GİGM, 2024). The country hosting the largest number of Syrian refugees in the world is Turkey. This rapid and intense migration wave has also caused Turkey's policies in education, health and other public areas to change. Turkey enacted the Law on Foreigners and International Protection on April 4, 2013 because of rapid and mass migration (Resmi Gazete, 2013). The text of this law includes common provisions on foreigners' entry and exit from Turkey, residence permits, determination of statelessness, deportation, types of international protection and foreigners and international protection. Persons under temporary protection are defined in the text of the LFIP as persons who are forced to leave their country, cannot return to their country, and have sought refuge in Turkey en masse in order to find temporary protection (Law on Foreigners and International Protection, 2013). With this law, temporary protection identity cards have been issued to Syrians who have taken refuge in Turkey, and they have been provided with the opportunity to use public services such as education and health.

Turkey did not have a legal education policy for the Syrian people who were granted temporary protection in 2011. In the first years of migration, some Syrians under temporary protection rented buildings in places where migrant students were concentrated. These people, who claimed that their profession was teaching, started education in these buildings with the support of NGOs. The migration started in 2011, but over the years, the Syrian population in Turkey has increased rapidly. Temporary education centers were opened by the Ministry of National Education in 2014 in order to provide education to Syrian children. Temporary education centers were established by the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency, AFAD, an institution working to prevent disasters and minimize disaster related damages, plan and coordinate post-disaster response and promote cooperation among government agencies. AFAD provided primary and secondary education for Syrian children and youth in 25 provinces. Education and training centers that operated inside and outside the camp adhered to the Syrian curriculum in Arabic (MONE, 2014). Syrian students under temporary protection started to receive education in these centers in 2014, and 12,630 Syrian volunteer teachers worked in these centers (TBMM İnsan Haklarını İnceleme Komisyonu, 2018). These volunteer teachers were selected from among those who had previously taught in Syria or had a teaching diploma.

The school-aged population of Syrians was 1,047,536 according to the 2018-2019 data of the General Directorate of Lifelong Learning of the Ministry of National Education (MONE). In the 2018-2019 academic year; 90,512 students studied at TECs, and 534,922 students studied at public schools. Due to the national policy change aiming for integration of refugees, Syrian students have been gradually enrolled in public schools since 2016, and the number of students in TECs has decreased year after year, and the number of students in public schools has increased. It is also aimed to accelerate the adaptation and integration processes by providing education to refugee children in public schools. When the schooling rates of Syrian children according to their education levels are examined, it is revealed that there are serious imbalances in the schooling rates (MEB Hayat Boyu Öğrenme Genel Müdürlüğü, 2024). Schooling rates according to education levels are given in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

*Distribution of Syrian Students in Turkey by Education Levels (MEB Hayat Boyu Öğrenme Genel Müdürlüğü, 2024)*



As shown in Figure 3, the schooling rates of the students in public schools and TECs according to their education levels are 50.05% in pre-school, 90.43% in primary school, 92.47% in secondary school and 48.57% in high school. Accordingly, the education level with the highest rate of enrollment is secondary/middle school, and the lowest level of education is high school. It is thought that the low schooling rate in high school is due to the fact that children have to work in order to support their families economically. Syrian students continued their education by taking 15 hours of Arabic and 15 hours of Turkish lessons in temporary education centers (Turan & Fansa, 2021). However, since 2016, they have been transferred to public schools and their education in Arabic has come to an end. Integration classes were opened in public schools for Syrian students who started to receive education in public schools and those whose Turkish level was low, and these students tried to learn Turkish. Syrian students in Turkey have been receiving their primary, secondary and high school education in public schools since 2016. In order to continue their university education after high school, if they do not hold Turkish citizenship, they take the Foreign Student Exam for foreign students and enter the universities within the quota for foreign students (Şahin & Kaya, 2021).

The General Directorate of Lifelong Learning lists the reasons why students do not have access to education as follows:

- High school is not compulsory in the Syrian education system
- They are out of school for a long time
- High school-age children support their families by working at a job due to economic reasons
- They do not know the target language, which is a barrier for them
- Some families resist to enroll their children in schools with the thought of immigrating to a third country (The General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, 2022).

For these reasons, Turkey must take effective precautions to diminish the barriers in front of the refugee children to access to education.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

This research highlights the importance of integration and inclusive practices in the education of refugee students. Moreover, it also provides information about the ways to be followed in the education of refugee students with exemplary practices. Besides economic difficulties or familial problems, young people who lose their educational opportunity are at risk of being dragged into radical groups (Watkins & Zyck, 2014). It is extremely important that immigrant or refugee students have access to education and receive an education in a holistic approach model. Only in this way can refugee students integrate into their lives in their new homes and compensate for the losses caused by war. Although education is essential for refugees' integration into their host nations and for reducing the loss of human capital because of the conflict, refugee children living in underdeveloped nations face some of the greatest educational marginalization worldwide (Dryden-Peterson, 2015; Yigit & Tatch, 2017).

When the research results are examined, it is seen that the countries have different practices from each other. Considering the education levels, it is seen that while the rate of access to education is high in the primary school level, it decreases towards the upper levels. In summary, in Lebanon and Jordan, many students cannot access education due to physical conditions such as lack of buildings. Barriers to Syrian refugees' access to education in Jordan and Lebanon can be listed as economic problems, insufficient capacity of schools, administrative barriers due to lack of diplomas and documents, transportation problems, socio-economic situation, demand for many official documents from institutions, institutional lack of education capacity (Carlier, 2018; Yassin et al., 2015; Education Sector Working Group Jordan, 2015). Additionally, the integration of refugee students into the education system in Lebanon is a structural situation. It results in the downward integration of refugees by providing access to poorer education opportunities than host citizens (Bellino & Dryden-Peterson, 2019; Shuayb et al., 2016). In order to boost school enrollments and offer alternatives to those who are not enrolled in the official school system, multiple policy and programmatic approaches are required at different levels of the educational system and for different groups of children and teenagers. In the research, it is mentioned that the right to education of people who have gained refugee status in Germany is the same as German citizens. However, although Willkommensklasse (Welcome Class) classes have been created for children's access to education in Germany, it is understood that children are placed in lower-level schools such as Hauptschule in the upper grades due to language problems. In Turkey, in the first years of migration, Syrian children were taken under temporary protection and received education in their mother tongue and Turkish in the temporary education centers opened for them. However, since 2016, Syrian students have gradually transferred to public schools. It is understood that most Syrian children in Turkey have access to education at the secondary school level. Taştan and Çelik (2017) stated that the biggest obstacle to schooling in Turkey is economic problems and revealed that language and cultural barriers, lack of school and buildings, education program problem, transportation, child labor are the other factors that prevent access to school.

Adopting a holistic approach in the education of refugee children encompasses not only the curriculum but also psychosocial support services, language training, and community integration. Countries should consider the challenges these children face on both individual and societal levels while developing their educational strategies for refugee children. Education policies need to be more inclusive and flexible in order to maximize the potential of refugee children and provide them with a better future. International cooperation and the involvement of local communities can enhance the effectiveness of solutions aimed at the education of refugee children (OECD, 2023).

The adoption of a holistic approach in the education of refugee children is a critical step for accelerating their social integration processes and enhancing their psychological resilience.

Education systems should support not only academic skills but also social and emotional development. Therefore, educational programs designed to meet the needs of refugee children should integrate areas such as language learning, cultural integration, and psychosocial support. Additionally, ensuring active participation from local communities and refugee families in the educational processes can encourage children to learn in a safe and supportive environment. The holistic approach model not only builds the individual's future on strong foundations but also lays the groundwork for the formation of a strong society (Arnot & Pinson, 2005). However, the research data indicates that, unfortunately, access to education for refugee children is still a problem, and having a holistic education model for these children is seen as a time-consuming process. Measures in migration management and during the crisis could make the adoption of this model more feasible. In this context, the research highlights why the holistic approach model is important and necessary in the education of refugee children.

As a result, in countries where Syrian students are concentrated, it is seen that there are serious problems in meeting the learning, emotional and social needs of students according to the holistic approach model. A paradigm change that prioritizes equity and social justice in refugee education has not yet coincided with the humanitarian focus on access and basic standards for integration. In order to implement an inclusive approach in the education of refugee students, it is necessary to improve the physical conditions of the schools and to meet the social and emotional needs of the students. The holistic model for the educational integration of refugee children covers the refugee students from every aspect such as social, emotional and educational dimensions. This facilitates and accelerates their integration both into education and social life. As all countries mentioned above focus on the learning needs of refugee students and ignore their social and emotional needs, it is clearly seen that refugee students are not educated with a holistic education model, either in Germany or in other countries neighboring Syria. However, success in the education of refugee children is possible by ensuring the cognitive, emotional and physical development of the students simultaneously.

As a result, according to the information given above, to handle the refugee education effectively, holistic approach model that handles the issue from all aspects sensitively and simultaneously can be implemented in countries hosting refugees. For this purpose, countries

hosting refugees can create strong and long-term education policies by sharing their ideas and practices on refugee education on common platforms. Moreover, risk measures can be created for new crises that may arise in the field of migration, and thus crises that may arise can be intervened earlier. The last but not the least, studies examining various aspects of the refugee integration into the education systems can be multiplied in order to understand the subject as a whole and as a result, the literature describing the problems, presenting solutions and exemplary practices in refugee education can increase.

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