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Investigating Syrian refugees' education in Jordan: From policies to pedagogy

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Syrian refugee students;
training teachers of refugees.

Abstract

This study critically examines the gap between policies and practices in the context of refugee education in Jordan. To understand the extent of the gap, this paper analyzes the official policies that outline the priorities of refugee education and compares these results with the perceptions of teachers of refugees with a focus on the types of curricula refugees study and the professional development programs these teachers receive. This study casts more light on this area by employing a mixed methods approach, namely, content analysis and conducting an online survey with the teachers of refugee students. This study found that the education of refugees should be reformulated in terms of appointing qualified teachers who could adapt the curriculum according to the refugee students' levels and needs. This study revealed that there is a gap between what policymakers think and teachers' perceptions of education. The latter highlights the importance of advancing education when strategizing future policies on refugees' education.

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Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed many fluxes of refugees. The Syrian refugee crisis is considered one of the most severe and complex humanitarian emergencies after violence erupted in Syria in 2011, leading to an unrelenting civil war. After a decade into the Syrian crisis that resulted in the death of hundreds of thousands of people and made more than 12 million Syrians homeless (Baeyer, 2017), education for these children has been in a crisis. According to Alshoubaki (2017), four million Syrians became refugees in Arab countries and Turkey. Jordan received a large percentage of refugees that has reached an alarming number of 1.3 million people, 647,148 of them registered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This, in turn, put an additional burden on the Jordanian government. Specifically, the schooling system has been overburdened and could not absorb all school-aged refugees. This threatens the quality of schooling. Since 2013, five response plans have been formulated, and there are several studies that have investigated whether these strategic response plans have achieved their targets.

General education principles in Jordan focused on the principle of *Everyone has a right to a free and public education*, the educational services in Jordan are introduced to everyone equally and without any discrimination based on sex, language, ethnicity, and religion. The educational system in Jordan covers kindergarten to twelfth grade, including basic (primary and middle schools) and secondary schools. The basic school consists of grades 1-10. Basic schooling is free and compulsory for all Jordanian students. At the end of the tenth grade, the scores of each student for the previous three years (8th, 9th, and 10th) are combined to determine in which secondary stream (track) students will continue. Usually, students' preferences are considered, but the final decision rests with the Ministry of Education. The secondary cycle (grades 11 and 12) is divided into two main streams: one being an academic stream. This stream ends with a general secondary education examination called *Tawjihi*. The other is the applied (vocational) stream. This track consists of specialized vocational courses and prepares the student for skilled labor through apprenticeship programs, which are run by the Vocational Training Corporation and the Ministry of Education (Al Jabery & Zumberg, 2008).

The overall context of schooling of refugees in Jordan

Jordan hosted 1.3 million Syrians, of which 661,997 were registered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR: Queen Rania Foundation, 2017). According to the annual UNHCR report in 2022, 676,606 refugees have been recorded. This means Jordan has the second highest number of refugees per capita ratio in the world. 80% of the refugees in Jordan live in the host community (about 542,855), and the remainder are in camps. About 36% of the registered Syrian refugees are school-aged children. Therefore, since the outset of the crisis, official authorities in Jordan, such as the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG), have worked collaboratively to support capacity building in the public education system for current and

future emergencies. These bodies have formulated a response strategy to ensure continued access to quality public education in safe environments. It is worth noting that ESWG includes members from UN agencies and national and international non-governmental organizations. The overall objective of the response strategy is to reduce educational barriers and facilitate Syrian children in returning to schools in Jordanian host communities. Therefore, Syrian school-aged refugees were provided with the opportunities to be enrolled either at United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) schools or public schools of the MoE in the host communities. In addition, schools were established in the camps for Syrian refugees.

Informal education programs were designed to help students perform better at school and to provide equal educational opportunities to those who cannot access formal education. According to MoE reports, 70,000 Syrian refugee children participated in these informal programs. Lee (2016) estimated that 50% of refugee children attended primary education. However, attendance declined when learners failed to complete their respective school grades. Likewise, Al-husban and Shorman (2020) and Christophersen (2015) stated that despite the desire and generous efforts exerted by the Jordanian host authorities to provide education for Syrian refugees, about 40 percent of Syrian school-aged refugees in Jordan either did not receive formal primary education or aborted their studies after only having attended a few grades because of poverty, child labor and marriage. The following table shows the number of Syrian refugees enrolled over grades in schools in camps and the host community from 2017- 2020, according to MoE statistics:

Table 1: The number of Syrian refugees students in schools of camps and the host community from 2017 to 2020.

Grade	2020	2019	2018	2017
KG2	5664	5172	5120	4602
1st grade	14170	15266	18385	21044
2nd grade	15081	15429	18796	21484
3rd grade	15137	15850	19949	18845
4th grade	15720	16170	17251	18101
5th grade	16713	14545	16621	16130
6th grade	14461	13847	14414	10837
7th grade	13738	11934	9538	8686
8th grade	11528	7594	7441	7757
9th grade	7320	5911	6565	6205
10th grade	5682	5078	5143	4855
Total	135214	126796	139223	138546

The decrease in the number of students per grade each year, especially in the upper primary stages (7th, 8th, 9th and 10th grades), led to an assumption that in spite of the intensive efforts to provide Syrian refugees with quality education, they did not attend classes regularly, did not want to attend or they were forced to leave schools. This assumption was supported by the Education Sector Working Group (2015) which attributed the reasons for the low formal attendance rates among Syrian children to inaccessible curricula which Syrian students could not deal with. Therefore, the unavailability of accessible textbooks coupled with learners'

absence from classes could be the result of teachers' unpreparedness in dealing with such learners. Teachers of Syrian refugees were chosen from retired teachers or from those waiting to be appointed by the MoE as 'substitutes'. Therefore, it could be inferred that the teachers of refugees either continued with teaching traditionally without taking the psychological status of refugees into consideration or they did not receive any specialized training in pedagogy, assessment, and psychological counselling in dealing with traumatized children. As a result, Syrian refugees or their parents found that it is better for them either to work to meet the requirements of their family, especially as adults are prohibited to work in the job market in Jordan, or that female Syrian refugees marry prematurely (Cohen, 2019; Alshoubaki, 2017; Jalbout, 2015).

To investigate the above-mentioned assumptions, it is of paramount importance to examine the efforts of the Jordanian authorities in leveraging the quality of education for refugees, particularly considering that Jordan is not a signatory to the 1951 convention on the status of refugees. Likewise, there are no national regulations for the protection of refugees. Consequently, Jordanian authorities depended on the law of residence of foreigners for dealing with refugees. The effect of the Syrian crisis in forcing more than 1.3 million refugees to flee to Jordan and the education of refugee children came under scrutiny. It can be said that providing education in such an emergency should be continuous and holistic and demand support from Jordan and other surrounding countries. Therefore, several documents were formulated to plan the procedures of how to guarantee quality education for refugees like response plans and disaster risk reduction. This paper investigated national policies by analyzing the objectives and impact of implementing them and their role in transforming policymakers in Jordan from embarking on mere emergency work to providing a more sustainable long-term approach to educating refugees' children. This investigation examines some of the advantages of such educational initiatives in both refugees' camps and schools in the host communities.

Literature review

A decade after the outset of the Syrian crisis, it became obvious that this crisis has long-term consequences in all respects, of which refugees' displacement can be considered as one consequence. Therefore, education could be an essential weapon to ensure the legitimate empowerment of refugees who can choose to remain in the host communities or return to their homeland. But leaving refugees uneducated could lead to severe social and economic ramifications (Beste, 2015).

The topic of education in emergencies becomes prominent in this situation, as education seems to be the only response to let refugee students feel they can lead normal lives and internalize hope for a better future. In order to manage the process of providing education in these emergency circumstances and ensure it is at an acceptable level, it becomes a priority to provide students with the skills, values, and knowledge that make them able to adapt to international demands. The United Nations High Commission

on Refugees' (UNHCR) Regional Refugee Response Plan has been formulated to make sure that refugee learners are provided with quality education. Jordan is one of the states that formulated this plan which has been revised regularly. The Jordanian Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) contextualized the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards to education to monitor and implement education interventions for refugees. This analysis aims to serve the response to the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis as an essential preparation for any future crisis and to assist the education sector to minimize gaps in quality services provided to Syrian learners. Likewise, the Jordanian authorities responded to this unprecedented crisis by formulating two policies, namely, the sixth regional response plan overseen by UNHCR, and the national resilience plan (NRP), under the patronage of the Jordanian government. The two policies were issued to reduce any kind of interference with each other's work. According to Shteivi et al. (2014), the 6th regional response plan (RRP6) is a project of the UNHCR that mainly provides relief to Syrian refugees themselves.

On the other hand, the national resilience plan (NRP) is a governmental response to the Syrian crisis under the direction of the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation. NRP is a three-year plan intended to provide short-term emergency aid to SR. It was established in 2013 in order to prevent the deterioration of Jordan's development achievements in the face of the Syrian refugee crisis. Many groups emerged from the RRP6 and what is important in this study is the work of the education working group to ensure uninterrupted access to public education for displaced Syrian children across the country, including those in refugee camps. This means that ESWG enhances the capacities of the Jordanian educational system, through the provision of additional learning to disadvantaged Syrian learners in remedial classes, re-training of Jordanian teachers, and ensuring that SRs have equal access to schooling. Since 2014, four national response plans have been issued, with education being one of them (Naseh et al., 2020).

In 2014, the government of Jordan established the Jordan Response Platform to the Syrian Crisis (JRP) as the main strategic initiative for refugee response. This initiative, supported by 11 task forces in 2015, undertook a vulnerability assessment and prepared the JRP 2016-2018 document. The plan comprises two pillars: resilience and refugees. It is intended to support both Syrian refugees and Jordanian host communities and institutions (Jordan Response Plan, 2015) in their responses to the refugee crisis. Simultaneously, UNICEF partnered with several NGOs on the No Lost Generation initiative, which aimed to increase enrollment, attendance, remedial resources, and access while also providing a protective environment within schools and broadening opportunities by teaching life skills and providing vocational training (No Lost Generation, 2015). To combat overcrowding issues, Jordan has implemented a double-shift system in 209 Jordanian public schools to accommodate more students. Ministry of Education (MoE) has also trained over 5,000 teachers, facilitators, counsellors, and school staff in psychosocial support and life skills and implemented non-formal and informal education systems to target students who have been out of school for longer

than three years for over 77,000 students (Jordan Response Plan, 2017). MoE also hired about 8,900 new teachers and provided classrooms for 28 schools (Christophersen, 2015). Through these efforts, MoE was able to enrol over 126,000 students in Jordanian public schools in 2016. Despite this, over 75,000 Syrian children are out-of-school, and many who attend school do so on a part-time basis (Sieverding et al., 2018).

In 2016, Jordan received support from international organizations to open public educational access to all children in the country, rather than just Jordanians according to the JRP 2017-2019. This plan aimed to create more learning spaces, include remedial classes for students who have missed large chunks of the school-day, provide access to certified alternative education opportunities, and offer teachers with professional development opportunities. JRP also hoped to expand access to universities and community colleges (Jordan Response Plan, 2016).

The focus of the third JRP was on quality and on combating the challenges facing Syrian students, some of which are caused by the implementation and expansion of the double-shift schooling (Jordan Response Plan, 2018). JRP 2020/2022 focused on translating the commitments and pledges into real and track-able support. That is, the top priority of JRP 2020-2022 is to empower the systems to address such challenges by showing an enduring commitment to build an integrated multi-year framework to most effectively respond to the Syrian crisis in a transparent, collaborative, and sustainable manner in line with the Global Compact on Refugees and the 2030 agenda.

Thus far, JRP led by the government of Jordan present a genuine model of a strong longstanding partnership between the host community and the NGOs, and offer planned interventions to improve the quality of the lives of the SR, especially their education. This could be the criterion that identifies if what is happening is a matter of implementing the content of the plans, and if the policies are able to determine Syrian refugees' priorities besides rapid access to education.

Schooling for refugee children and young people: between the urgency of access and the lack of quality

The overflow of Syrian refugees in Jordan has drained the resources and services of the country, particularly the education system. The percentage of enrollment of Syrian refugees within the education system has exceeded its limits. According to Wahby et al. (2014), the Ministry of Education registered 120,555 Syrian students, 20,174 in side camps and 100,381 outside camps. Another study in 2020 stated that 83,232 Syrian students enrolled in public schools in Jordan, which constitutes 44% of the total number of SR students (Mrayan & Saleh, 2020; Younes & Morrice, 2019). The MoE stated that there were 35,691 SR in three camps: Alzatari, Mkhaizen, and Mrejeeb Alfhood, and 108,200 SR students at schools in the host communities; only 38,923 SR students have been integrated with Jordanian students. Table 2 displays the distribution of students over grades in camps and in public schools:

Table 2: Numbers of students in camps and in the host community in 2021.

Grade	Camps	Second shift schools in host communities	Integrated with Jordanian students
KG2	2959	2545	160
1st grade	3908	7975	2287
2nd grade	3978	8102	3001
3rd grade	3546	8471	3120
4th grade	3663	8616	3441
5th grade	4372	8360	3981
6th grade	3683	7008	3770
7th grade	3029	6716	3993
8th grade	2334	5402	3792
9th grade	1493	3105	2722
10th grade	1163	2232	2287
11th grade	933	565	3402
12th grade	630	180	2967
Total	35691	69277	38923

As described in Table 1, the rate of dropping out of school is annually increasing. Table 2 indicates that Syrian students' enrolment did not persist over grades. To enhance the percentage of enrollment on the part of Syrian students, the Jordanian authorities waived tuition fees for all Syrian children and encouraged a double-shift system in its public schools in both governorates and camps. However, this did not lead to any of the envisaged outcomes. On the contrary, according to Sieverding et al. (2018), Syrian refugees had depleted education outcomes in comparison with Jordanians, and faced several challenges in either enrolling or persisting in schools due to financial pressures upon their parents. They had to work to meet the daily demands of their parents, with instructional obstacles having posed another challenge to refugees' learning. Instead, many of them were forced to leave schools at different times before and after fleeing from their country which created some language differences as well as a low quality of instruction due to the limited professional development of teachers, large class sizes, and curricula that may be difficult for refugees to relate to due to cultural and historical differences (Younes & Morrice, 2019).

In Jordan, Syrian students faced issues related to the lack of skills that helped them to cope with the demands of the subjects in their grades, especially teachers not making time to build refugee students' skills due to the limited time for instruction in double-shift schools. Several studies stated that shift schools are associated with lower quality of education globally, and according to Table 2, the highest number of Syrian refugees attending double-shift schools was about 69, 277 in 2021, according to the MoE in Jordan. Likewise, Syrian students faced some discrimination and bullying,

especially at the beginning of the crisis, so some parents preferred to marry their girls to avoid such problems and because they could not afford their expenses (Sieverding et al., 2018). Likewise, Majthoub (2021) stated that school enrollment and Jordanian educational services for refugee children were adversely affected by policies besides other barriers like child labor, early marriage, limited skillful and qualified teachers. It also highlighted a gap between educational policy development and the implementation of these policies. On this basis, the author recommended providing refugee children with a good quality education in an inclusive and safe learning environment.

School curriculum and teachers

Refugees who are able to enrol in schools after arrival in the host country faced additional challenges with the school system itself that served as barriers to progression or even persistence in education. Globally, instructional challenges facing refugee children include language differences and low quality of instruction in refugee schools due to the limited training of teachers, large class size, and curricula that may be difficult for refugees due to cultural and historical differences (Naseh et al., 2020). This idea has been reinforced by Culbertson and Constant (2015), who stated that despite the efforts to ensure access for refugee children at schools, less than 60% of refugee children attended schools due to social reasons, economic, and teacher characteristics and the nature of the curriculum.

For Syrian students, the Jordanian curriculum may be difficult to adjust to, especially science, math and English subjects. The language of instruction being English and the knowledge of other subjects like math and science rendered the curriculum more challenging. In this regard, Sieverding et al. (2018) investigated the perceptions of SR refugees of the textbooks they studied. Participants reported that they did not understand the subject at hand or that it took them more time to understand the topics especially in English. Respondents contrasted the level of English expected in the Jordanian curriculum with the curriculum in Syria, where they said English was not introduced until later in their schooling careers (Sieverding et al., 2018; Achilli, 2015).

That Jordanian authorities prioritized quality education regarding Syrian refugees education since the outset of the crisis, remains outstanding. However, all these efforts and projects implemented did not necessarily solve the refugee crisis, and it can be inferred the same trend recurred over several years. A large number of students attended schools in the lower primary stage from 1st grade until 5th or 6th grade, and then Syrian refugees started to drop out, as indicated in Table 1. Therefore, this study tries to go deeper to investigate the targets and the priorities of the official plans and policies Jordanian authorities formulated to leverage the level of Syrian students' schooling and keep them sustained till the end of the primary stage. Needless to say, COVID- 19 exacerbated the problem due to the limited resources for using online learning during the school closure from March, 2020 till mid-2021 due to technology barriers as well as the economic challenges of losing some of the international aid and increasing unemployment.

These effects of COVID-19 added a layer of complexity to the already profound challenges of providing education to refugees.

The perceptions of Syrian refugees' teachers on the effect of implementing these policies in relation to Syrian refugees' quality of learning and the role of textbooks and teacher education contributed to minimizing the refugees' educational crisis. An in depth understanding of these two components may inform and deepen not only ones' familiarity with the efforts of policy makers in Jordan, but also the overall initiatives of stakeholders, and partners working with Syrian refugees.

The significance of the study

Jordan has continuously encountered enormous struggles to face the non-stop fluxes of refugees since decades, and the Syrian crisis has exacerbated the challenges and has put extra huge demands on its strained capacity to make education accessible for students of all ages. However, Jordan is struggling to keep up with the demand on education by the massive number of refugee students either Syrians or other nationalities. Thus, education of refugees should be thoroughly evaluated in terms of the authenticity of the policies, statistics, and perceptions of teachers of refugees of the services and challenges provided by the authorities so as to design future plans by taking into consideration the outcome of this study. Consequently, mistakes would not be repeated, new lessons learned how to leverage the education of refugees, and challenges solved to reach the possible outcomes. This study provides a comprehensive picture about education in emergencies in Jordan for practitioners, researchers and policymakers to be familiar how to investigate different variables in varied ways.

Methodology

To consider the focus of the policies and response plan of the Jordanian authorities towards the SR challenges and to what extent they have been translated into practice and the alignments between the two perspectives will gain priority in this study. A mixed-method approach was employed to synthesize two strands of data obtained from the review of documents containing the plans and policies facing the SR problem in Jordan, and complementary data were gathered from an online open-ended questionnaire conducted with teachers of Syrian refugees in response to the following research questions:

- What do response plans (policies prepared by the official authorities) attempt to achieve regarding the quality of education in relation to teachers and curricula of refugees?
- What are the perceptions of refugee teachers in terms of the curricula and the efficacy of training courses they received in empowering them to teach refugee students?

- Are there any gaps between the response plans' targets and teachers' perceptions of refugee students' education?

Sampling, coding and content analysis of policies and response plans to the SR, and their ability in facing the challenges that SR students encounter in continuing their education, particularly in terms of teacher development and curriculum types were considered. Response plans for the years 13/15, 16/18, 18/20, and 20/22 were investigated together with developments in envisioning their priorities and targets, how they deal with the issues of curricula for SR, and their teachers, and teacher empowerment to deal with SR. Analyses focused on the following: the addition, deletion, or modification of objectives and procedures in presenting these issues specifically, and comparing these data with the findings that researchers identified with primary data that was collected by conducting an online open-ended question survey solicited from 112 SR teachers about their satisfaction and perceptions of the services provided by the authorities that seemingly translate policies and plans into practice. 47 participants, who completed the open-ended survey, taught in public schools, mainly in double-shift schools, and 65 teachers of SR teachers taught in Syrian camps of which 59% of them had less than 5 years' experience, and 41% of them had more than 5 years' experience.

Selection of the SR teachers focused not only on the convenient access to schools of SRs, but also the access of the knowledgeable teachers with teaching SRs, to provide in-depth information regarding their experiences of teaching Syrian refugees and the textbook at hand. 112 teachers who completed the online open-ended survey had experience ranging from one to more than five years of teaching experience. 65 of them work as SR teachers in camp schools and 47 as SR teachers in the second shift schools in the host community.

The online open-ended questions were as follows: Do you find textbooks that you used to teach SR difficult, and to what extent? And why? Do you receive training courses while working as an SR teacher? Identify their topics. Over years of working with SR students, do you think the official procedures regarding empowering you as SR teachers are dramatically developing or do they remain the same? Official approval was granted by the Ministry of Education to conduct this research and collect data online from teachers in public schools in the host community and in camps.

Findings and discussion

To identify the data included in the JRP since 2013 regarding curricula and teacher development, the qualitative analysis of the JRP could be done in the following manner:

Table 3: Overview summary of the main domains of National Response Plans from 2014-2022 to face the challenges Syrian refugees encountered.

No.	Document title	Objectives related to curricula and teacher development	Procedures to attain objectives	Notes
1.	Jordan Response Plan 2015	Strengthen the capacities and resilience of the education service system in the national system by ensuring sustained quality educational services for all refugees	120,000 SR students were enrolled at schools, 100,000 in host communities and 20,000 in camps, an increase from 2013 which indicates positive trends for enrolment rates. Over 1,000 teachers and staff received training on psychosocial support, child-friendly teaching techniques and coaching. 70,000 SR are outside any type of formal or non-formal schooling.	The focus was to increase SR students' access to schooling in any form: formal, informal, non-formal, so double-shift schools had been established. There is a focus on training teachers on the psychological perspectives but without any emphasis on how to adapt curricula and their suitability to SR student's needs especially in the English language subject.
2.	Jordan Response Plan 2016/2018	Boosting the capacity of the education system with much needed learning spaces, remedial/	The major procedures focused on providing enough space to enroll SR students and to recruit 3,446 additional teachers who often lack	It focused on the quantity domain ratio of classes to students; ratio of students to schools;
		catch-up classes for those children who have missed out on weeks or months of schooling, and access to improved and diversified certified alternative learning opportunities, and delivering capacity building of teachers to safeguard the quality of education	sufficient preparation and experience to deal with challenging classes. Classes became crowded to 49% and 98 schools changed to double-shift schedules. This reduced the quality of education. Therefore, 2,900 teachers trained about how to deal with students in emergencies settings.	and ratio of students to teachers. No attention is paid to curriculum and textbook, in spite of establishing remedial programs for students who lost weeks or months of schooling, this means they could not study the official textbooks as they do not have the necessary skills and knowledge to cope with them.
3.	Jordan Response Plan 2018/2020	Ensuring sustained quality educational services for children through a holistic, inclusive and equitable approach, improving capacities of education authorities to the continuous delivery of quality inclusive education services, and improved provision of educational facilities	By focusing on providing Syrian children with quality and relevant education by establishing more schools in camps and adopting double shift system at schools, and enhancing in-service training opportunities for public school teachers. Providing financial supports to families to cover the expenses of education to avoid any barrier to education like stationary and transportation.	It is clear that curricula and textbook and the idea of adapting them to SR students' needs is not one of the priorities in spite of its importance.

		sustained access to adequate, safe, and protective learning spaces		
4.	Jordan Response Plan 2020/2022	The main aim of the plan is to improve education access, equity, and quality for all children. It focuses on the pre-primary stage, primary, and teacher development, and curriculum development, all of these priorities are in line with the perspectives of 2030 agenda	From 233,000 SR students, 136,400 SR students enrolled in formal education in 2019/2020, 86.6% of the attendance of SR in the primary stage. For learning, the majority of public in-service teachers have taken induction training or in-service training, with around 6,700 school teachers provided with professional development opportunities at directorate and school levels, including training on pedagogy and learning support.	No practical actions and procedures regarding curriculum development to meet the needs of SR students, training of teachers did not focus on traumatic issues, there is no mention to the double crisis of the pandemic COVID-19 and the educational effects on their performance that started to be improved as the plan stated at the beginning of 2019.

The above analysis reveals that all response plans had two main pillars over a decade: to ensure the education system could absorb SR students without affecting the quality of education, and procuring qualified teachers to teach SR students. Despite the challenges that Jordanian authorities have faced to make these targets authentic, these authorities seemingly did not pay much attention to the attributes of teachers they recruit, and to the suitability of curricula and textbooks for SR students to learn. Also, they have not taken into consideration that since 2016, the MoE started to perform remedial programs for those who missed schools for weeks or months, because their age could be in line with a specific grade, but they do not have the necessary competencies to meet the requirements of that grade, so they need remedial preparation before moving to their actual grades. This entails that SR students needed textbooks that are planned based on their cognitive and psychological needs. It can be said that none of the response plans formulated by the Jordanian authorities paid any attention to the importance of developing textbooks appropriate to the needs, skills, and abilities of SR students. It is expected that SR students would be able to take the national examinations and to be able to join the tertiary education. This initiative seems plausible but investigating the statistics by the MoE revealed that out of 143,891, only 3,777 took the national exam, and 1,670 passed it (about 44.2%). These results reflected a deficit in teachers' performance and the inaccessibility of textbooks used.

To identify if the targets and objectives identified by the authorities in the response plans had been achieved in the field, researchers collected data from a group of the direct beneficiaries: SR teachers either in the camps or at double shift schools. 112 SR teachers completed the open-ended survey to investigate their perceptions regarding the suitability of textbooks and the efficacy of training courses they have taken to be able to deal with SR students, especially those who witnessed events that caused psycho-

social effects, so those teachers need different training support in dealing with SR students.

Table 4: Teachers' perceptions of the training courses they took, and the suitability of the textbooks.

Open-ended question survey	Teachers' responses
1. To which extent do you think the textbooks that SR students study are difficult? And why?	69 teachers stated that textbooks are difficult, and exceeded the skills and the abilities of SR students, 28 of them said the textbooks are difficult in more than 50%. The reasons of why they think textbooks are difficult: the conditions in the camps, no interest or motivation on the part of students, they are not suitable for students, some subjects are difficult: math, science, and English language, the problem is not in the textbooks but in students' ability of reading and writing, most of them did not have these skills, their parents did not follow up with them because they are illiterate, or busy in their work, they did not receive quality education in the lower primary stage, they did not focus. 43 teachers said the textbooks are not so difficult and students could get high marks, there are no differences in the academic achievement between the Jordanian and the Syrian students especially in Arabic language, social education, religion subjects, they are diligent and strive to study and complete to Tawjih exams (national exams).
2. During your teaching of SR students, what are the training courses that you have taken?	24 teachers out of 112 said they have taken several training courses, one of them focused on how to deal with Syrian refugees psychologically, inclusive education, designing and ensuring safe environment. 4 said they did not receive any training course. 84 teachers said they took training courses focused on pedagogy, curricula, and online learning.
2. What is your opinion of the procedures taken by the MoE to develop you professionally as a teacher of SR students.	25 teachers of SR think that they needed more substantial procedures to empower them to be able to deal with refugees effectively, influence them, meet their needs, desires, and motivate them to study, relieve their sorrow, pain, and negative feeling towards life. One of the teachers said "I received training as a teacher, but not as a teacher dealing with kids who faced severe challenges. The traditional ways of teaching could be acceptable with students in normal situations but for refugees, I need different approaches and knowledge to know how to deal with them, motivate them, attract their attention, and help them mitigate their suffering." 87 teachers said that they were satisfied with the procedures taken by the MoE in training them and being able to teach effectively. They stated that the procedures are enough and effective or that the training courses developed their ability to teach.

Findings related to teachers' perceptions revealed that teachers were aware of the problems they faced due to learning the current textbooks. 69 teachers perceived that the textbooks are difficult. The difficulty is confirmed not because of the unsuitability of the textbooks but because of the academic levels of students in having faced difficult situations, discontinued their education, and lack of essential skills that helped them to perform better, like reading comprehension and a scarcity of supporting families, at times illiterate or busy in their work to meet their families' requirements. In this context, teachers, especially English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, should be familiar with how to adapt the textbook according to the needs of students since teachers invariably attempted to attain the desired learning outcomes.

Regarding the second question, the MoE and its partners mainly focused on pedagogy and teaching online, and how to teach newly developed curricula without paying much attention to the psychological perspectives of learners' personalities and how to meet these perspectives, change their negative attitudes to life, and learning by the host community. It is significant for teachers to acquire such skills because students need supporters and motivators, and facilitators of their learning rather than traditional teachers who deliver information and focus on completing the textbooks. Instead, teachers have to ensure that students comprehend their work, and if students could not learn, they have to look for the reasons and try to solve their challenges or overcome constraints to their academic achievement.

Teachers' replies to the third question showed that unawareness of some teachers of what they needed to teach refugees, whom they consider similar to teaching non-refugee students, thus ignoring their need to be more psyche-socially supportive, to pursue intensive follow-ups, and to emphasize the creation of positive attitudes to everything in their new lives in the host country. The perception that most teachers had seemed to be in line with the response plan, which focused on two main domains: increasing SR students' access to primary school and leveraging the quality of teachers through training provision. This inference ignored the type of training and professional development teachers needed to influence their suffering students to meet their pedagogical needs.

In response to question three, whether there are any gaps between the response plan targets and refugee students' teachers' perceptions of their education, the following can be said:

It is necessary to reflect on the target of several response plans formulated by the Jordanian authorities, which focused on attaining high access to education and training teachers and providing quality education to SR teachers. However, interviewees stated that textbooks are somewhat unsuitable for SR students not because of the nature of the textbooks but due to not having the necessary skills to learn from such texts due to cognitive deficiencies, or because of their families' social deprivations, or because of a lack of interest and motivation to learn effectively.

Teachers perceived the unsuitability of textbooks in leveraging SR students' level of learning because of cognitive challenges. The response plans did not pay much attention to the latter, and it can be conceived that there is a gap between the perceptions of teachers of SR and the Jordanian authorities, who seemingly have conflicting ways of seeing things. Teacher training is one of the main domains of the response plans, and most interviewed teachers stated that they received several pedagogical training courses. So, it seems there is no gap between teachers' perceptions and the themes of the response plans. The congruence between the two dimensions could be described as superficial and nonsystematic. Most interviewed teachers mentioned the training courses they took and expressed satisfaction with the procedures to empower them to deal with SR students. The response plans focused on training teachers to make sure teachers provide SR students with quality education without deterring standards and benchmarking that measure this target. Over a decade, the emphasis of the Jordanian authorities was to enrol all the school-aged Syrian children, but this, in turn, needs appropriate textbooks that improve their abilities and skills to be up to the level of their counterparts in the host community. In addition, recruiting, supporting, motivating, and facilitating teachers who focus on the affective and psychological needs of SR students are also of paramount importance. What the Jordanian authorities did was to enrol SR students who were of school-going age, and recruited teachers either as substitutes or retired teachers (Naseh et al., 2020; Saleh et al., 2019; Salem, 2018). As a result of recruiting additional teachers in dealing with such a crisis, they could have enrolled SR students in schools. However, they could not guarantee that students remained at school to achieve the targets of the plans. Some of the reasons for preventing continuity of learning could be attributed to the types of teachers and the inaccessibility of textbooks for SR students.

Reviewing several reports, studies, and papers regarding the efforts exerted by the Jordanian authorities, Majthoub (2021) and Saleh (2019) revealed that providing access to formal education for 14,381 Syrian students is considered a remarkable accomplishment of the education response plans since 2014. However, having at least 60,000 – 97,000 Syrian children out of school is a critical issue after a decade of working to respond to this challenge considered a priority by the Jordanian authorities (Jalbout, 2015; Culbertson et al., 2016; Salemi et al., 2018). This challenge could be justified because learners over the world do not need only a class to sit in. They need a teacher who caters for their needs and interests, solves their pedagogical problems related to their achievements, and produces relevant textbooks that are aligned with their skills and abilities.

Reports and studies like Majthoub (2021), Cohen (2019), Sieverding et al. (2018), Sweis et al. (2016), and Achilli (2015) examined this issue and revealed that Syrian school children's learning levels are less than three years behind the appropriate level for their age groups, and so their attendance rate has not reached the universal acceptable level in spite of the plans, projects, policies, and strategies that have been executed since 2013. This finding is raising a question regarding the lack of quality of education that is provided to SR students, in particular regarding lessons

learnt from having analyzed such plans and reports and having listened to the direct beneficiaries as they are in close contact with those children and know what they desire, what motivates them and what forces them to stop attending classes. Similarly, Alkhawaldeh (2018) and Saleh et al. (2019) pointed out that, according to teachers, the lack of achievement and learning outcomes, absence of sufficient teacher training, behavioral difficulties and overcrowded classrooms exacerbated the crisis of learning experienced by Syrian refugee children. According to the refugee parents, most challenges focused on a deterioration in the refugee students' instructional achievement, insufficient school assignments, and carelessness of the refugee students in learning school subjects such as math and English.

Conclusions and implications

It seems that managing the crisis was based on finding emergent and short-term solutions. Finding enough spaces at schools and teachers for refugees were the top priorities of the MoE and NGOs. These procedures could be acceptable at the beginning of the crisis, but after all these years of efforts, plans, and procedures to enrol and sustain SR learners in the education system, more sustainable solutions should be at the top of the policymakers' agenda. However, the result is still having lots of school-aged children out of schools or dropped out of school, now is the right time to strategize long-term development planning of how to manage the education of refugees in a more sustainable way.

Some of the reasons are related to the unpleasant effects that the findings of this study highlighted and related studies. That is, ensuing plans and policies should depend on the ideas of the direct beneficiaries regarding the needs and interests of refugees, thinking of the cognitive, affective, and psychosocial reasons that demotivate students from attending schools regularly. Taking these reasons into consideration when formulating future plans and policies, especially the issues related to schooling: quality of teachers' training pedagogically and sociologically and adapting textbooks should be the future priorities, which could ensure the attainment of the desired benefit from the funds of the NGOs, particularly that funding will not be ongoing. Therefore, focusing on sustainability in dealing with the schooling of refugees is a matter in the following years to be addressed to improve the livelihoods of SR students not only in Jordan but also in the region. This means contributing to their future in education and not in labor or early marriage. Teachers and curriculum are key factors in achieving this trend. A regional framework for refugee education should be formulated because the number of refugees at school age has been increasing during the last decade, either from Syria or Middle Eastern states. Thus, urgent or humanitarian plans are no longer sufficient in dealing with the refugee issue.

This issue also needs further investigation and research with a large sample, including not only teachers but also students, their parents, and officials, to shape a comprehensive vision of what should be planned in the future for refugees to be agents of positive change.

To the best of the author's knowledge, this academic study is the first of its kind in Jordan. There are not many articles of this kind published except reports by NGOs. This study covers all the main response plans and teachers' perceptions of refugee education. Therefore, this study should help other researchers in conducting further studies, especially in the case of revision and development of the current textbooks. They could assess how refugee teachers can adapt the curriculum in light of students' needs, and this study could help international agencies and educators in conducting comparative studies.

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Appendix

Open-ended questions to investigate refugees' teachers' perceptions

1. To which extent do you think the textbooks that SR students study are difficult? And why?
2. During your teaching of SR students, what are the training courses that you have taken?
3. What is your opinion of the procedures taken by the MoE to develop you professionally as a teacher of SR students?