

EDUCATION UNDER COVID-19 LOCKDOWN: REFLECTIONS FROM TEACHERS, STUDENTS & PARENTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

KEY FINDINGS	1
COVID19- exposes the weak infrastructure of the education systems in the three countries: A severe setback of access and quality of teaching and learning for most vulnerable children	1 2 2
INTRODUCTION	7
METHODOLOGY OF THIS STUDY	8
Desk research	9
Online Survey	9
Research Sample	1
EDUCATION SYSTEM RESPONSE TO COVID-19	2
Jordan	3
Lebanon	3
Palestine	3
FINDINGS FROM THE ONLINE SURVEY	3
Teachers Experience with Distance Learning	3
Worsening Work Conditions	3
Weak Infrastructure	2
Technology Used in Distance Learning	6
Limited Prior Experience Using Technology	7
Impact on Access and Quality on Teaching and Learning	8
Student Views in their Schooling Experience Amid Covid	4
Psycho-social Impact of the lockdown on students	5
Parents views on their children’s schooling experience during COVID-19	6



KEY FINDINGS

COVID-19 EXPOSES THE WEAK INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN THE THREE COUNTRIES: A SEVERE SETBACK OF ACCESS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING FOR MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN.

Teachers, students, and parents all agreed that the quality of teaching and learning deteriorated during the distance education period imposed by the lockdown. Well adapted school-designed distance learning programs did have a positive impact on students' perception regarding the quality of education they were receiving, but this was largely attributed to those attending private schools. For the most part private school students indicated that the quality of education during the pandemic was good to very good followed by students enrolled in UNRWA programs. Students in public and non-formal schools reported much lower satisfaction levels.

READINESS AND PERFORMANCE BY COUNTRY

Jordan appeared to be the most prepared for distance learning due to a pre-existing online platform which the Ministry of Education developed prior to COVID19-

crisis. UNRWA too, having developed an education for emergency plan, managed to better cope with the crisis. In Lebanon, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education was the least prepared and lacked any platform or provision that could help provide quality teaching and learning. Lebanese MoE resorted to TV platform to support the age groups set to undergo end of year official exams. Refugee children enrolled in afternoon public schools shifts in Lebanon were not included in the distance learning plans and thus lost access to schooling. Distance learning was also obstructed by well-known and longstanding structural barriers such as long hours of power cuts in Lebanon and Palestine and snail-like internet.

RESORTING TO LOW TECHNOLOGY

Low technology seemed to be most used by teachers in distance learning. The most widely used technology in all three countries was WhatsApp, followed by Zoom and Microsoft Teams respectively. The lack of technological support from schools and ministries could also explain resorting to such low technology. Television with its lowest level of tech and connectivity requirements provided an outlet for classes

through local TV channels. Teachers however did not find value in it and it was not widely used as a source of teaching in online instruction.

Students' from private schools stated that they had good or very good internet connectivity while those from UNRWA, public and non-formal schools indicated that connectivity was weak to good. Most students in all three countries indicated that they do not own a tablet (%57), laptop (%45) or a personal computer (%63). However, the vast majority indicated that they own a personal smartphone (%67).

THE PLIGHT OF TEACHERS

Teachers were exploited by schools, particularly those in the private sector. The majority worked longer hours without adequate financial compensation, most suffered salary cuts, and others were asked to take unpaid leave. Teachers also reported receiving limited professional development, technical or financial support from both their private organizations and Ministries of Education.

In contrast, public sector teachers did not endure salary cuts but aside from a few lonely personal initiatives, they didn't have to conduct formal online classes. Teachers had limited prior experience using technology which could explain the focus on low technology such as WhatsApp.

THE PLIGHT OF STUDENTS

Students with special needs and male students were the two groups who according to teachers suffered the most in terms of exclusion or dropping out from distance learning provisions. Male students were most reluctant or unwilling to join or commit to distance learning perhaps drawn to paid work. Students with special needs were largely excluded or marginalized due to inaccessibility or /and unsuitability of provisions to their needs. The study was conducted by information collected from a total of 678 persons who responded to an online survey. The majority were parents (299), followed by teachers (274) and (105) students.

This report is based on an online survey conducted by the Centre for Lebanese Studies (CLS). It maps out main trends of the impact of COVID19- on the access and quality of education as well as the impact on teachers, students and parents. Based on the data, the report gives an overall understanding of where the main gaps and challenges are when planning for distant education in contexts of emergencies in Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine. Finally, it gives a number of recommendations to be considered by policy makers, educators, and parents to better respond to emergencies in the future particularly to safeguard the access to quality education with a special focus on marginalised groups.



INTRODUCTION

In response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID19-) pandemic, 107 countries had implemented national school closures by March 2020 ,18. This has affected 862 million children and young people (Viner et al. 2020). According to UNESCO this number roughly amounts to %60 of the world's student population. Several other countries have implemented localised closures impacting millions of additional learners (UNESCO 2020a).

Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine (Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip) implemented the full national closure, which led to a full closure of schools, universities and other learning spaces, negatively affecting the learning processes of young people who already experience regular disruptions to their education particularly in Lebanon and Palestine as a result of the political situation.

While Jordan and Lebanon have been struggling in accommodating a series of refugee crises and a weak socio-economic situation, the Israeli occupation of Palestine have managed to destroy and strip Palestinians of their basic living needs. Thus, the lockdown instigated by COVID 19 further accentuated the dire living conditions of large segments of the population in these three countries which have already been considered to be quite vulnerable.

In Lebanon, this interruption followed earlier school closures in October - November 2019 when protests against economic uncertainty [and corruption] gripped the country (Save the Children 2020). Additionally, according to HRW (300,000 ,(2018 Syrian refugee children were out of school. The majority of these children did not get any support from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) in Lebanon during the COVID19- response. This is due to a number of reasons such as: the lack of infrastructure and teachers working double shifts not receiving their salaries during the crisis (Jawad Hussain 2020).



In the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, the school closures due to COVID-19 exacerbated an already volatile situation and continuous interruption to education. School children face regular school closures due to Israeli Occupation imposed curfews and attacks against school students and school buildings by Israeli soldiers and illegal settlers. In the Gaza Strip, air strikes and mortar shells damaged or destroyed hundreds of Palestinian schools and universities (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack 2018). While the Ministries of Education in both the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip launched National Response Plans (UNESCO 2020b), in practice, the closure left thousands of children with no access to schooling.

Ministries of Education prepared plans and strategies for a rapid response. They created platforms for online education, or devised other strategies to use TV, radio and other paper based solutions to ensure the continuation of education. However, these efforts fell short of being sufficient. Many challenges were faced by policy makers, school leadership, teachers, students and parents. These challenges hindered access to education and substantially impacted the quality of education particularly for vulnerable communities and refugee populations.



METHODOLOGY OF THIS STUDY

DESK RESEARCH

Starting 18 March 2020, the research team at CLS started following the announcements and circulars issued by the ministries of education in the three geographical areas covered in this report (Jordan, Lebanon and the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip). We also monitored various platforms where the ministries deposit information and created online learning spaces such as Facebook pages and specialised platforms including Darsak in Jordan and the CERD Digital Learning Initiative in Lebanon. Also, the research team attended the myriad of webinars, online workshops and conferences that took place between mid March and end of May 2020, particularly those organised

by Manhajat, the Arab Campaign for Education for All. Those online gatherings were initiated by educationalists from the Arabic speaking countries and focused on topics such as: The future of education after COVID19-, Online education opportunities and challenges, and reimagining education in light of COVID19-. These webinars gave the researchers the ability to better contextualise the primary data that emerged from the online survey.

ONLINE SURVEY

An online survey was designed by the CLS research team and launched on 5 May 2020. The survey was designed for teachers, students and parents in Jordan, Lebanon and the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip in both English and Arabic. The survey focused on the types of distance education provided by ministries of education, the private sector, (I)NGOs and UN agencies, accessibility to distance education, quality of distance education, and types of support available (or not) for teachers, students and parents.

The survey aimed to shed light on the experiences of teachers, students and parents to give an alternative narrative from that dominated by the formal institutions that report achievements that might not be representative of the reality of the most affected groups particularly teachers, students and parents who are working with or are from marginalised and refugee communities. The survey data is not representative as the sample is small, however it identifies some trends that emerged as a result of the COVID19- education response in the period mid March - mid June 2020.

Telephone interviews with 14 principals in Lebanese public schools running morning and afternoon shifts for Syrian refugee children were also conducted.

RESEARCH SAMPLE

The survey was filled by 678 participants as follow:

	TEACHERS	STUDENTS	PARENTS
Palestine (Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip)	90	37	88
Jordan	65	21	104
Lebanon	119	47	107
Total	274	105	299

Table 1 Breakdown of the research sample in Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan

As for the gender breakdown of the sample, the majority of respondents were females as presented in the table below.

	TEACHERS	
	Male	Female
TEACHERS	29	70
STUDENTS	21	71
PARENTS	30	69

Table 2 Gender breakdown of the sample

The quantitative data was analysed using STATA and Excel where different cross-tabulations were carried out. The statistician used the cross tabulation method to quantitatively analyse the relationship between multiple variables. Percentages were rounded so the total may not add up to 100.

EDUCATION SYSTEM RESPONSE TO COVID-19

In this section we give a quick overview of the strategies and steps taken mainly by the ministries of education in Jordan, Lebanon and the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. There are also examples of initiatives taken by private schools and (I)NGOs/ UN agencies. In general, the ministries of education in the three countries launched online platforms, TV channels and attempted to reach marginalised areas that suffer from connectivity issues by distributing paper material. While the approaches were similar, the research shows that Jordan was ahead in terms of its preparedness particularly in terms of the utilisation of digital technology, as well as the strength and reach of the infrastructure in the country. These conditions made Jordan able to respond to the crisis more effectively than Lebanon and Palestine. It is important to highlight here that Jordan is politically stable and has more available resources in comparison to Lebanon and Palestine which are struggling with political fragility and chronic economic crisis.

JORDAN

With the lockdown implemented throughout Jordan, all schools in the kingdom were forced to close without prior preparation on 15 March. More than 2 million students across public, private, and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) schools have had their education interrupted. The Ministry of Education (MoE) developed a quick response plan mainly by launching Darsak education platform on March 22. Nearly a month after the launch of the platform, «assessment for learning» tests were conducted for all students starting from the fourth grade, and with the approach of the General Secondary Certification “Tawjihi” Examination, experimental exams were also launched for students in the different Tawjihi streams. The MoE also launched three national TV channels to broadcast and maximise accessibility to the educational content, one of which is specifically designated for

DARSAK EDUCATION PLATFORM

The platform introduces educational content for all students from Grades 1 to 12 through video recordings of core subjects including Arabic Language, English Language, Science, Maths, as well as content for the different streams within Grades 11 and 12. In partnership with the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship and developed by Mawdoo3, with the educational content developed for free by Abwab, Jo Academy, and Edraak. The platform can be accessed for free without the need for internet from six in the morning until four in the afternoon.

12th Grade Tawjihi students. The MoE also launched in partnership with the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship and the development of Mawdoo3 a platform for teachers that contains 6 massive open online courses (MOOCs) from Edraak on distance learning tools, education technology, blended learning, the inverted classroom, teaching with confidence, and reflective teaching. The Ministry has also re-launched the Digital Curriculum Library to allow all users to digitally review curricula for all grades (Batshon and Shahzadeh 2020).



UNRWA IN JORDAN

Palestinians in Jordan

Jordan hosts over 2 million Palestinian refugees, according to UNRWA registration (2019). UNRWA in Jordan provides basic education to over 121,000 students at 169 schools from grades 10-1 (UNRWA 2019a). As a COVID-19 response, UNRWA in Jordan launched a rapid response distance learning plan, the “Education Cannot Wait” initiative for Palestine refugee students in the Agency’s 169 schools. The plan ensures continuity of their scholastic programming, allowing for access to a quality and inclusive education despite the COVID19- related school closures. UNRWA’s educational staff at every tier of educational provision were involved to ensure student access to various e-learning platforms, as well as resources launched by the Jordanian Ministry of Education. These platforms include: Darsak (1) and Darsak (2) online platforms, as well as lessons broadcast on television channels across Jordan. The UNRWA education programme provided remote training teachers, preparing them for the new mode of teaching (UNRWA 2020). UNRWA also implements its Self-learning programme which is part of its Education in Emergencies approach (more details under the section below - Lebanon).

Syrians in Jordan

Jordan also hosts over 650,000 Syrian refugees (UNHCR 2020). According to HRW (2020) there are 233,000 Syrian refugees. %40 of Syrian school age children are out of school. Remote learning provided by the MoE, including lessons via national television, a website and a smartphone app do not take into account the lack of resources available to both refugees and low-income Jordanians (Middle East Research and Information Project 2020). There are no studies, reports or assessments of the accessibility and/or quality of learning for children in marginalised and refugee communities in Jordan.

LEBANON

As schools closed, over 1.2 million school-aged children affected in Lebanon, including public, private, semi-private, and UNRWA schools. In addition to that, nearly 30,000 children and young people in non-formal schools have had their education disrupted (Inter-Agency Education Cluster, Save the Children and UNICEF 2020). The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) introduced distance learning in three tracks: television, online and paper based (Jawad Hussain 2020). On 30 April 2020 MEHE launched an online platform under a Digital Learning Initiative. The online educational platform included resources (learning resources, assignments, assessment tools, planning widgets, and other enhancers of the educational experience) for teachers and students. The platform is composed of 5 main sections, or various ways of learning:

- TV sessions
- Assignments (Learning Management System)
- Digital Library (mainly composed of local, regional, and international resources. There's nothing from the official Lebanese curriculum per se)
- Live online classes
- Collaboration (with teachers and friends)

To be able to access the 5 domains, students and teachers have to either register or login. The platform has support in the form of video tutorials, and a “need help?” portal.

All the material is provided in 3 languages (English, Arabic, French). When the platform was launched, MEHE announced that when the material is only provided in English, it will be provided in Arabic and French in the following weeks. This has not been substantiated by the CLS researchers for the purposes of this report. The platform is an open resource that's publicly available for everyone. MEHE mentioned that the platform will remain as an open source after the lockdown ceases as it is one of the first

steps for curriculum reform.

Teachers raised concerns regarding access to the internet and issues of temperamental electricity connectivity. They asked if it is possible to access this platform offline or if fees for the internet could be waived for the teachers or, if there is anything that could be done in conjunction with the Ministry of Telecommunications to support with this issue. No answers has been given by MEHE and these facilitating steps have not been taken. Moreover the availability of smart phones, or tablets or computers for all children in one household especially those on limited income remains to be a major obstacle.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 on SYRIAN refugees enrolled in public schools

Syrian children attending second shift in Lebanese public schools were almost excluded from MEHE's interventions. The Project Management Unit (PMU), which is responsible for the education of refugee children at the Lebanese Ministry of Education, was almost silent concerning the distance learning provisions to be followed in the afternoon public school shift developed specifically for Syrian children. It was left to principals and teachers' own initiative to run MEHE's distance learning programme designed for the afternoon shift. Some dedicated principals and teachers in the afternoon shift took the initiative and sent all the learning material prepared for Lebanese children enrolled in the morning shift to Syrian students attending the second shift. Other principals assumed that Syrian children will not be able to afford the cost of internet and thus did not provide any learning opportunities.

Whatsup was the preferred means of communication for Syrian parents and students. Having the sessions recorded proved to be quite helpful for children how had difficulties keeping up with face to face classroom instructions. To date, MEHE and UNICEF have not communicated their plans concerning distance learning for Syrian students attending second shift in public schools.

Refugee Education

MEHE's decision was not clear on refugee education, especially for Syrian children attending afternoon shifts. To fill this void, educationalists and (I)NGOs stepped up their efforts to ensure that the digital gap is not keeping refugee students from learning. Thus, some (I)NGOs provided education material for teachers and facilitated online communication such as providing phone cards for 3G/4G charging or tablets for students and teachers. They also supported parents over the phone, and worked to provide assignments, guidance, and feedback to Syrian refugee children. All these efforts have resulted in distance education being provided in half of the public schools teaching refugee children (Jawad Hussain 2020). Any refugee children did not have access to distance learning programmes due to the lack of support from MEHE and the lack of infrastructure.

All these efforts have resulted in distance education being provided in half of the public schools teaching refugee children. Unfortunately, many refugee children did not have access to distance learning programmes due to the lack of support from MEHE and the lack of infrastructure. Moreover, many teachers working double shifts did not receive their salaries during the crisis (Jawad Hussain 2020).

There are various (I)NGOs that support the education of Syrian refugee children. However, reports and evaluations of their efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic are scarce at best. However, the level of learning has not been assessed.

UNRWA in Lebanon

UNRWA in Lebanon provides education services to 36,960 students (31,706 Palestine refugees and 5,254 Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS)), in its 65 schools (UNRWA 2019b). UNRWA has a special Education in Emergencies (EiE) Programme which was developed in response to conflicts in Syria and Gaza [and implemented in some refugee camps in Lebanon where the security situation is volatile]. This EiE approach has been adjusted to the COVID-19 crisis and implemented. UNRWA provides weekly updates on the implementation of its education programmes particularly its self-learning programme. The programme was designed to facilitate the learning of basic skills and core subject concepts in Arabic, mathematics, English and science especially for children who cannot regularly access school to learn at home or in their communities. It includes: Self-learning materials for Grades 1-9, based on the Syrian curriculum; an Online Interactive Learning Programme (ILP) with educational games focusing on literacy and numeracy (available at [HTTP://ilp.unrwa.org](http://ilp.unrwa.org)) for UNRWA students in Grades 1-9 in Jordan, Lebanon, Gaza, Syria and West Bank; and UNRWA TV educational lessons available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/user/unrwatv>), covering the core subjects of Arabic, English, mathematics and science for UNRWA students grades 4-9 in Jordan, Lebanon, Gaza, Syria and West Bank. Also UNRWA provides support for the use of these materials, and developed guidelines for parents (English, Arabic) and teachers (English, Arabic).

Yet, in spite of the preparedness of UNRWA, the accessibility to these programmes and the quality of teaching and learning are yet to be assessed, especially with the deteriorating economic situation in Lebanon which is exacerbated with the refugee status.

PALESTINE (OCCUPIED WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP)

The Palestinian Authority announced the State of emergency on March 2020,5, and requested the closure of all schools and universities in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip as a protective measure to avoid the spread of the Corona Virus. The Ministry of Education (MoE) immediately launched its National Response Plan where distance learning was highlighted as an alternative solution to ensure the continuation of learning to their students. The MoE launched the platform Ta2ammal (UNESCO 2020b) which originally was expected to bridge the distance gap with the students and receive feedback on their progress as well as their challenges during this outbreak (ibid). However, the platform seems to be limited to allowing teachers and students to share their reflections during the lockdown.

The MoE shared various educational videos on its facebook page particularly for the core subjects (English, Arabic and Mathematics) for grade 12. In cooperation with Palestine TV and Al Quds Educational Channel, the Ministry also launched an online initiative to provide support to -12grade students (ibid). In the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip 12th grade students sat for their final national exams (Tawjihi) on 30 May 2020 with no disruption but with special health procedures and social distancing, unlike in Jordan and Lebanon where the final national exams were either canceled (in Lebanon) or postponed (in Jordan). Initiatives for lower grades were implemented at directorates' level; including producing YouTube channel videos and using other social media platforms (UNESCO 2020b). In the Gaza Strip, the MoE started a media campaign to encourage students to take online courses broadcasted through its media outlets, Rawafid website, and Voice of Education Radio. The radio station included lessons for all grades in its broadcasts. Four Task Forces were established, one of which on distance learning. The MoE and UNESCO lead the Taskforce for Distance Learning (ibid).

While there seems to be an abundance of initiatives and substantial effort by the MoE in both the Occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip and their partners, the efforts are sporadic and the impact, accessibility and quality of teaching and learning remain unknown. The obstacles to e-learning in Palestine mainly involve infrastructure, weak internet networks, power outage (especially in Gaza). In addition, the low accessibility to online material and availability of computers or smartphones to some students, especially those in the most vulnerable areas mainly in Gaza, East Jerusalem and Area «C» in the Occupied West Bank (UNESCO 2020b).

UNRWA in Palestine

In the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA provides basic education, which covers grades 1-9, and Grade 10 in two schools in East Jerusalem. In the 2019/2018 school year, UNRWA reached over 46,310 students in its 96 schools. UNRWA in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip followed similar policies as it did in Jordan and Lebanon, where the EiE approach was implemented and the self-learning programme followed in addition to the resources provided by MoE since the curriculum used in UNRWA schools is the same as the one in public (PA) schools.

FINDINGS FROM THE ONLINE SURVEY

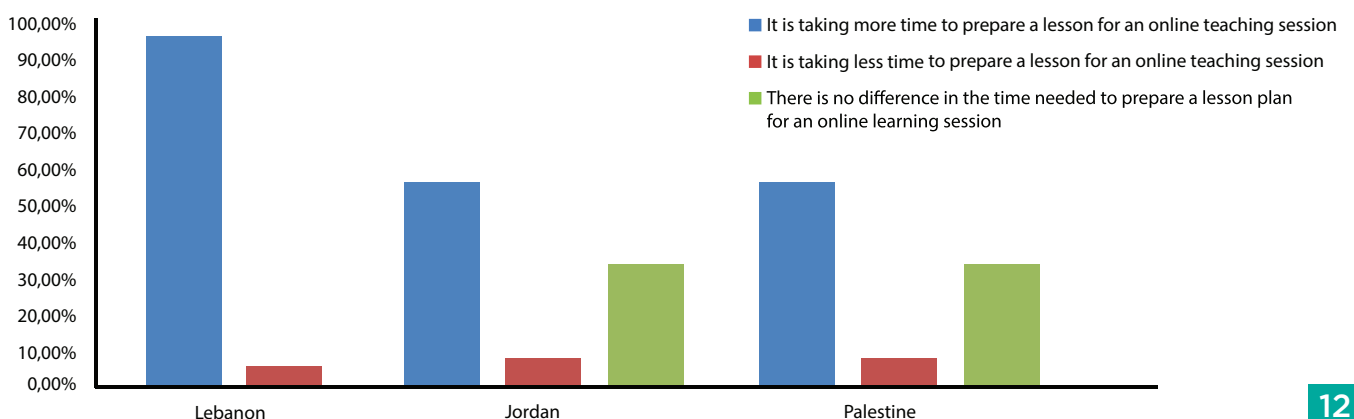
Against the review of various initiatives, strategies and policies stated above, the CLS research team wanted to better understand the experiences and perspectives of the teachers, students and parents rather than only looking at top-level policies. Considering that the impact of these top-level policies have not been assessed yet, CLS researchers aimed through this survey to highlight trends that frame the distance teaching and learning experience that took place between March -June 2020. Below, we analyse the data under three categories: teachers, students and parents. The survey questions are listed in annex (2).

TEACHERS EXPERIENCE WITH DISTANCE LEARNING

Worsening Work Conditions

With the move from the classroom (face to face) environment to the online platforms in various modalities, teachers found themselves working longer hours with limited support, particularly teachers working in the public sector. Half of the teachers surveyed who work in the public sector stated that they are working longer hours with no change to their salary or with partial payments. In the private sector the percentage increases to %82 of the teachers who are working longer hours with the same salary or partial payments. This is supported by the data indicating that teachers are spending more time to prepare

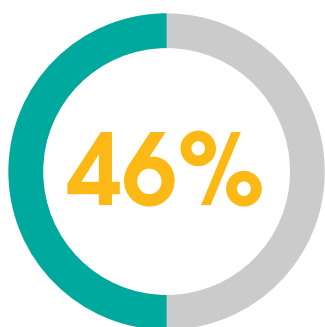
CLASS PLANNING BY COUNTRY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS



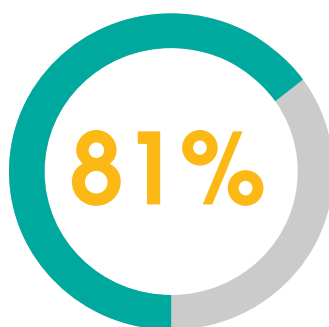
their online lessons or material to send to students for distance learning. Over two thirds (%68) of teachers in the public schools indicated that they spend more time preparing online lesson plans and material, in the private schools the percentage was almost %82, compared to %60 in UNRWA and %67 in non-formal schools. Additionally, %12 of the teachers in the private sector stated that they were forced to take leave without pay. This particularly difficult situation for teachers in the private sector is not surprising for a number of reasons. First: in some private schools parents stopped paying school fees due

Weak Infrastructure

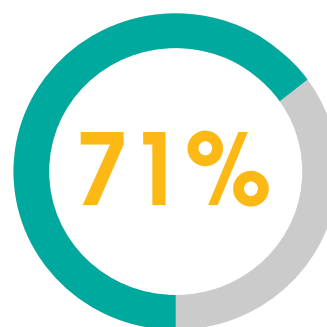
Teachers in Lebanon and Palestine, particularly in the Gaza Strip, stated that they struggle with daily prolonged electricity cuts. Around %46 of teachers in Lebanon and Palestine have to deal with regular electricity cuts that range between 3-12 hours a day. The majority of teachers indicated that they use both WiFi and 3G/4G to connect to the internet. Just over %69 use WiFi with the highest percentage in Palestine %81 and then Lebanon %71. While also the majority of teachers in Jordan use WiFi, but more teachers in Jordan use 3G/4G. This is for two reasons: first: In the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip the Israeli Occupation for a long time did not allow Palestinians to use this technology (3G/4G). The new introduction of the 3G technology is currently expensive and unreliable. In Lebanon the service is one of the most expensive in the world with low quality of connectivity.



of teachers in Lebanon and Palestine have to deal with electricity cuts between 3-12 hours a day



of teachers use WiFi in Palestine



of teachers use WiFi in Lebanon

Technology Used in Distance Learning

Low technology seemed to be most commonly used by teachers in distance learning. Teachers in the survey mentioned a number of platforms that they use to communicate with the students and utilise for teaching. The platform that is the most used is Whatsapp in the three areas, followed by Zoom and Microsoft Teams respectively. While Television requires low technology (connectivity) and governments provided classes through local TV channels, teachers seemed to refrain from using it as a source for teaching.

Percentages of types of technologies used by teachers in distance learning

Zoom	Skype	Moodle	Blackboard	Television	Microsoft Teams	WhatsApp	Messenger	Email
21	2	1	0.4	3	13	31	12	14

Only %8 stated that they use TV in Lebanon with only %1.6 and %1.5 in Jordan and Palestine respectively. While using Whatsapp seemed to be widely used through this survey, this poses a question about the learning outcomes. Through Whatsapp, teachers communicated with students and parents and sent educational material such as lessons' content, homeworks and various activities. However, there is no follow up in terms of the learning outcomes and the teachers have no control over the engagement of the student with the material they send. In an interview with an educator who works with a Syrian NGO in Lebanon that runs non formal schools for Syrian refugees, she said:

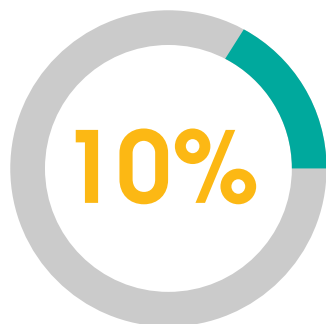
'Although there is a wide spread of mobile phones amongst parents, many parents do not have the knowledge or skills to support their children in all their school subjects. With the pressing economic crisis, families priorities work and produce income to support the family over spending time supporting their children's education at home, which is a complicated task with no resources and limited guidance from the school, government or any other organisation'.



Limited Prior Experience in Using Technology

When asked about their prior experience in using technology for teaching, the majority of the teachers surveyed in the four types of schools (Public %50, private %67, UNRWA %6 and non-formal %67) stated that they have somewhat to good experience in using technology as presented in below figure.

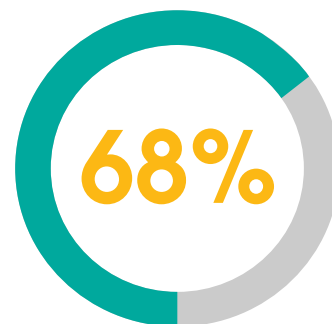
TECHNOLOGY USED



reported using their own Ipad or Tablets



reported using their own smartphone



reported owning a laptop

The focus on Whatsapp indicated that teachers are using low technology and low interaction platforms. That could be either because of low connectivity and accessibility to a reliable internet connection or because of lack of training available for teachers to use more interactive platforms. These two possibilities are supported by the data from this survey as the majority of teachers mentioned that they have not received any technical support from their schools or the MoE, an issue which requires further investigation.

The survey showed that technical support provided for teachers is limited. Over half (%51) of the teachers in Lebanon said that they had to self-learn and do their own research and practice to be able to move to distance teaching compared to %34 in Jordan and %44 in Palestine. A quarter of teachers sought support from teachers in their own school or from other schools in Jordan and Lebanon, (%27 and %23 respectively) compared to less than %17 in Palestine. Only %23 of all teachers surveyed mentioned that they received support from the MoE in their country with the lowest in Lebanon with %4.

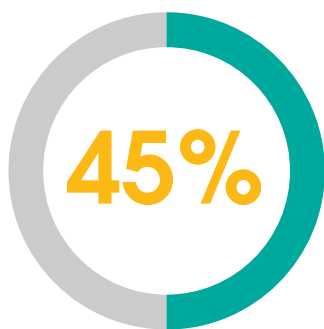




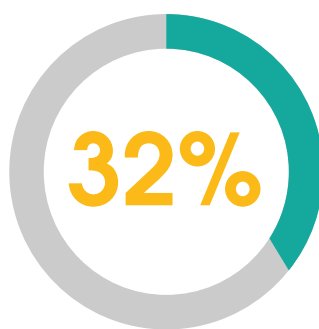
IMPACT ON ACCESS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

In the survey, teachers stated that they have noticed dropout amongst their students. The highest dropout rates were noticed in non-formal schools with %77 of the teachers mentioned that they have noticed decreased numbers of students participating. In private schools the percentage was %62, followed by public schools where the percentage was %49. The data shows that the majority of the students who dropped out are male students. Over two thirds (%70) of the teachers stated that they witnessed high numbers of male students dropping out, while %53 mentioned students with special education needs are also dropping out. The number is higher for male students dropouts in Palestine while in Lebanon the impact according to teachers have been felt the most by students with special needs. These results confirm the trends highlighted in a number of webinars and online workshops with educators from the three countries claiming that the difficult economic situation leads to an increased child labour particularly amongst boys. Additionally, educators mentioned that the various platforms utilised for distance education are not suitable and do not cater for children with special education needs which leads to these children falling behind or dropping out.

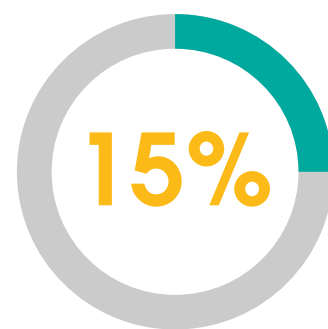
QUALITY OF EDUCATION DURING PANDEMIC



of Dropouts in Lebanon were students from difficult social & economic background



of teachers reported a pay cut

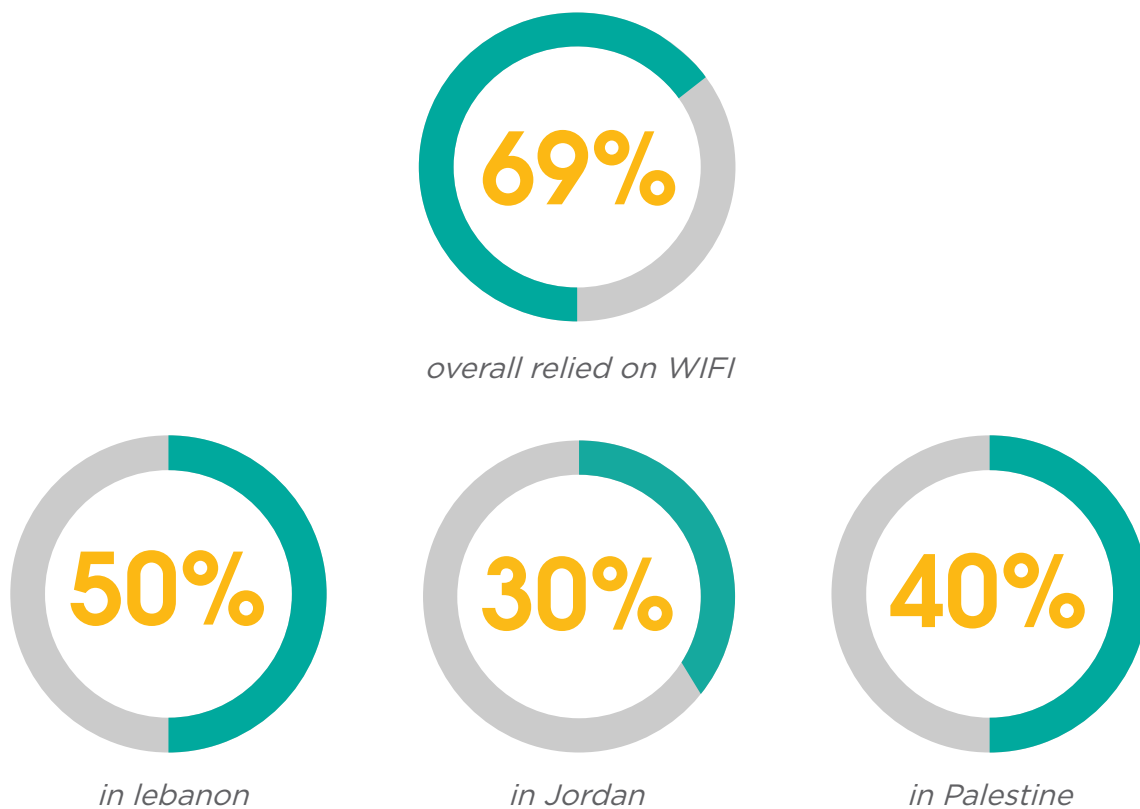


reported a drop in quality of education during the Pandemic

STUDENTS VIEWS IN THEIR SCHOOLING EXPERIENCE AMID COVID-19

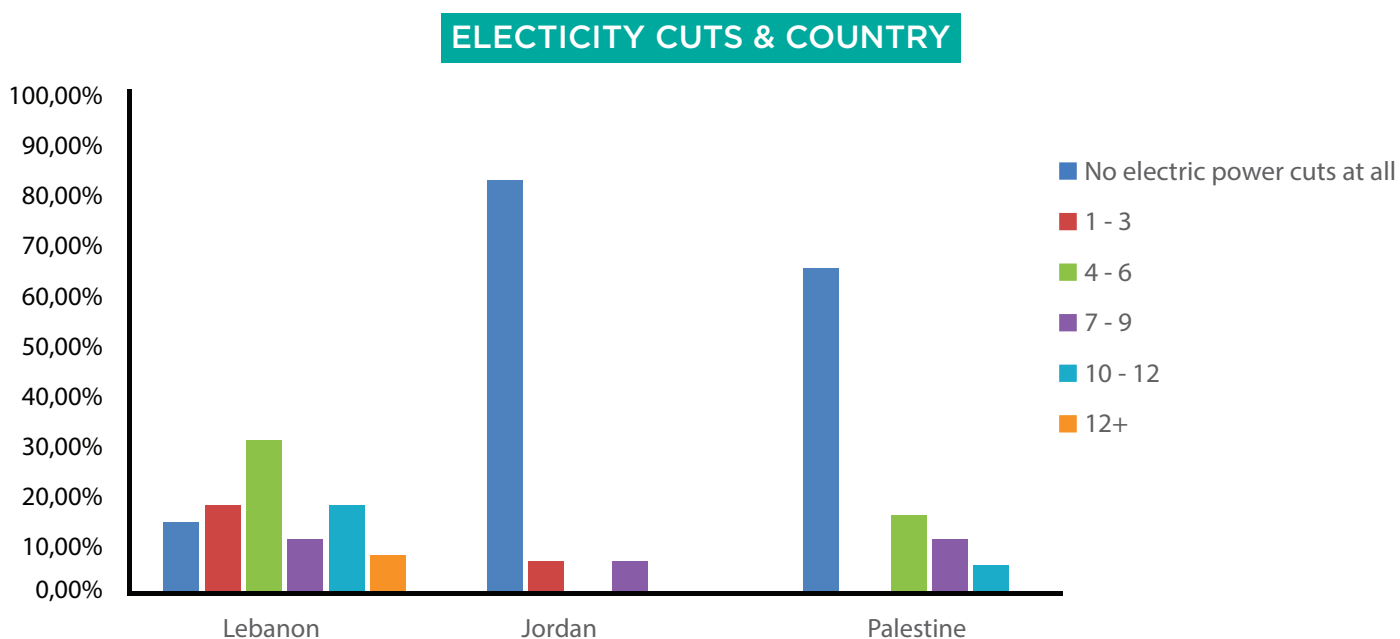
In this section we present students views on their schooling experience during the lockdown due to COVID 19 pandemic. There has been a paucity of research and debates around students own experience in distance learning. Students have been largely overlooked and excluded from workshops, webinars and online conferences on the impact of distance learning on the quality of their learning and their ability to access education. Hence, through this survey we aimed to include students from various sectors: public, private, UNRWA and informal education to identify some trends that emerged during the schools closure period as well as challenges and possible opportunities. The disparity in answers received from the three geographical locations reflect the disparity in access. For example, CLS ensured the widespread dissemination of the link to this online survey through social media posts, emails to contacts in the field of education in the three countries and direct contact with (I)NGOs working particularly with refugee children in informal schools. In spite of this effort only %9.5 of the respondents were Syrians (from Jordan and Lebanon). This calls for more in depth qualitative and quantitative research to better understand the impact of the closure of schools and the move to online spaces and distance education particularly for marginalised children.

The majority of the surveyed students from the three countries in the three types of schools (Private, Public and UNRWA), not including non-formal schools as there were no answers from that group, stated that they have some type of internet connectivity, which is expected as this survey was an online survey. What is interesting, but not surprising, is that the students from private schools stated that they have good or very good connectivity to the internet, while those from UNRWA and public schools indicated that connectivity is weak to good. As the graph below shows, none of the students from UNRWA schools who participated in the survey said that they have a very strong connection.



Reasonable connection in Lebanon

The lack of internet connectivity is linked to more basic services such as electricity. In Lebanon and Palestine (particularly in the Gaza Strip) students indicated that they deal with regular electricity cuts that sometimes last for up to 12 hours a day or more. The longer the electricity cuts, the lower the quality of the internet connection.



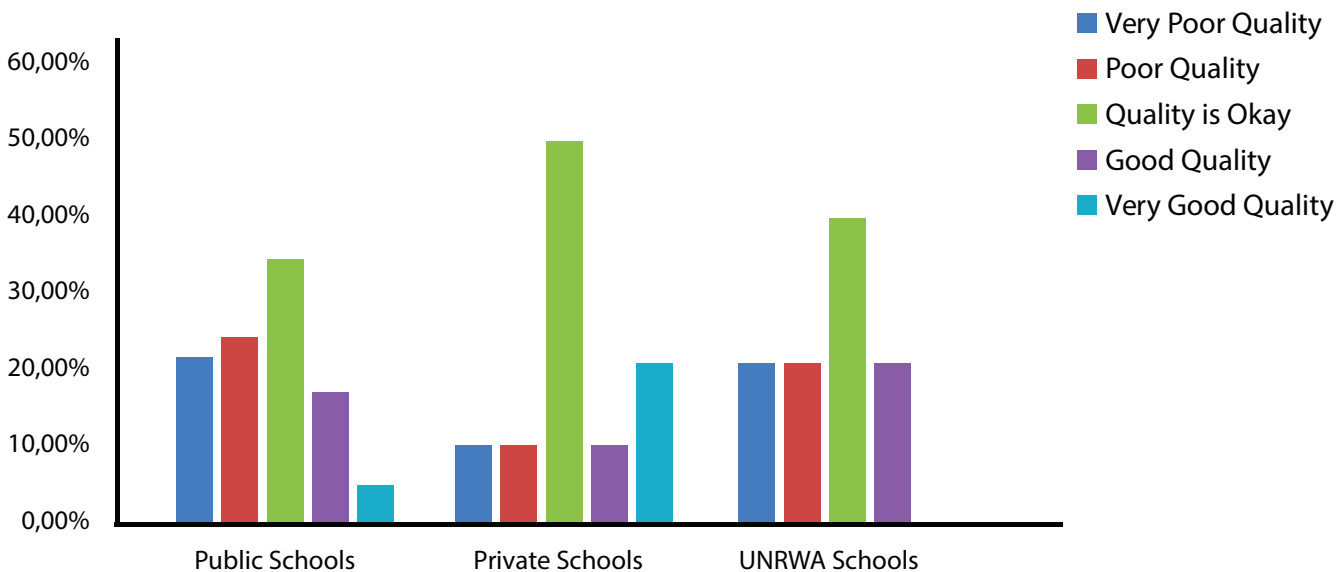
Highlighting the relation between electricity cuts and connectivity to the internet is important as it is an indicator that needs to be considered when MoEs and other (I) NGOs plan to provide distance education that solely depend on connectivity particularly for children from marginalised areas that are mostly negatively impacted by the lack of connectivity and weak or no-existing infrastructure(s).

When asked about the devices the students use/have at home that they would use for their online education, the majority in the three countries indicated that they either do not own a tablet (%57), laptop (%45) or a personal computer (%63) or have a shared device at home: tablet (%13), laptop (%24), personal computer (%15). However, the vast majority of the surveyed students indicated that they own a personal smartphone (%67). This indicator might explain the heavy use of Whatsapp as a medium for education by teachers.

In Spite of the interrupted connectivity, the majority of the students indicated that they continued their education. As with the teachers, the students used mostly social media as a source of information, a way to access education material and communicate with their teachers. They mainly used Whatsapp and facebook, in addition to relying on their parents' support. However, just less than half of the students in UNRWA and private schools (%46) were more likely to report that their schools developed special programmes and platforms for the students to continue their education while only %27 of the students in public schools reported that their schools had special programmes or developed special educational platforms. These findings support the information stated in the context of this report especially for UNRWA schools as the agency has a history of EiE programming and so the level of preparedness and expertise are higher than that of public schools and MoEs. As for private schools, especially those for profit, they have the financial resources to build such programmes and trained teachers unlike public schools.

The availability of the special programmes designed by schools had a positive impact the perception of the students regarding the quality of their education. The majority of the students from private schools indicated that the quality of education provided during the pandemic was of good to very good quality. UNRWA students indicated that it was mostly OK to good, with the highest number of students who indicated that the quality was poor or very poor were from public schools.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION & TYPE OF SCHOOL (DURING PANDEMIC)



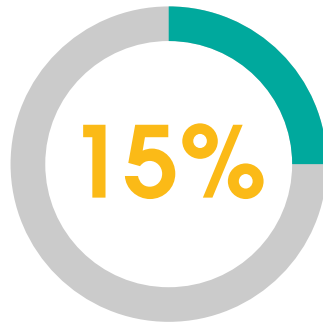
Psycho-social Impact of the lockdown on students

The impact of not going to school has varied amongst students as well as the ways through which they spend their time while being at home. In the three countries the majority of the students who participated in the survey in the three countries indicated that the most negative impact was the social aspect of their school life. Most of the students noted that they miss their friends and teachers.

EFFECT OF NOT GOING TO SCHOOL



reported feeling bored



reported a decline in their performance



reported started doing other things such as reading & cooking

This indicator is important when MoEs and educationalists/ policy makers and EdTech experts design and advocate for online education. The social aspect is crucial in the students' school life and an integral part of their education. The lock down due to the COVID 19 pandemic deprived them from that social aspect. If education in the future will include more online teaching and learning, how will the social aspect of education look like?

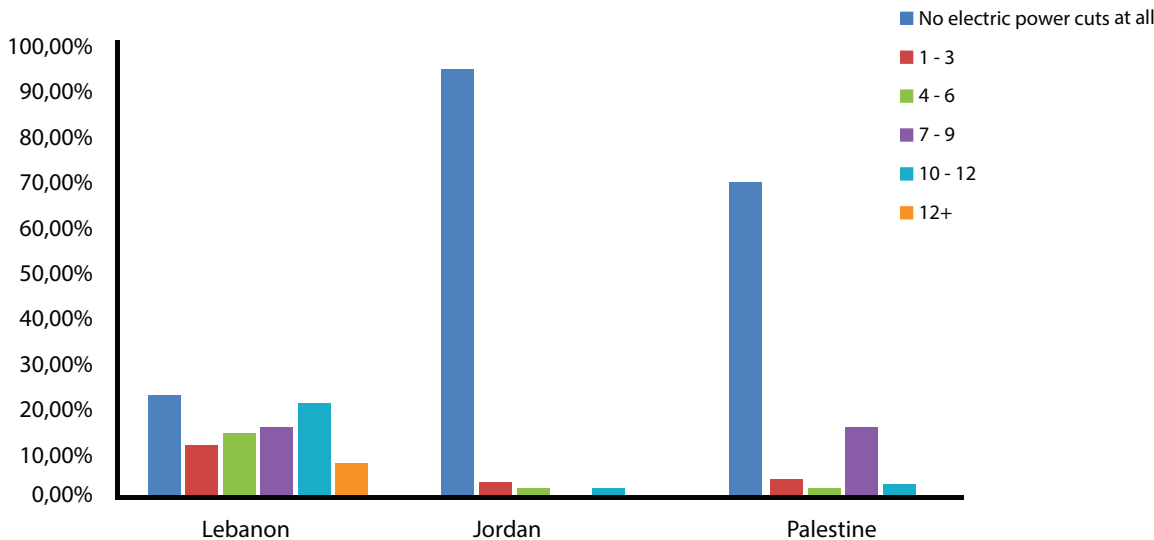
Finally from observations in the field and contacts with students, we also learnt that some schools almost moved the whole school programme online so they were in zoom classes for over 6 hours which had a huge impact on their learning capacity, physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. Yet this practice was mainly adopted by private schools partially to justify the tuition fees they were charging from parents. Obviously this had also a negative impact on teachers in general but also those who have children to look after at home.



Parents views on their children's schooling experience during COVID-19

In this section, we examine parents' views on their children's schooling experience during COVID 19 lockdown. Unlike the surveyed teachers and the students, parents' answers to the survey questions were less critical and more positive. Similar to teachers and students, some parents indicated that they face the challenge of electricity cuts.

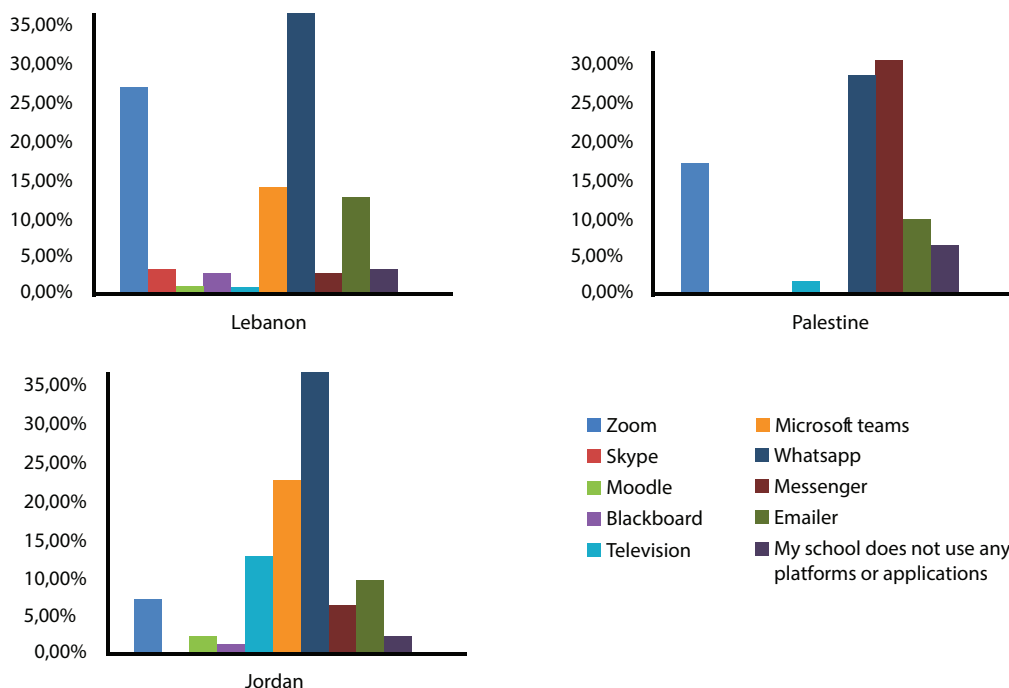
ELECTRICITY CUTS & COUNTRY



The majority of the parents indicated that they have access to good connectivity to the internet using WiFi. As mentioned earlier, this result is skewed as this survey was an online survey and participants needed electricity and internet connectivity to take part.

Similar to the teachers and students, parents stated that they used Whatsapp as the main platform for their children's education in the three countries. However, it was noticed that Zoom was a popular platform in Lebanon.

TYPE OF PLATFORM & COUNTRY



Parents indicated that the quality of education their children received during the pandemic was okay. However, as the chart below shows, parents whose children attend non-formal education stated equality that the quality of education was poor.

In comparison to the chart that assess the quality of education pre-pandemic below, there is a stark difference due to COVID 19 and the poor quality of distance learning.

The majority of parents whose children attend non-formal schools pre-pandemic (chart above) indicated that the quality of education was okay. This is an indicator of a significant deterioration in quality of education for the most vulnerable children, mainly Syrian refugee children who attend non-formal schools in Lebanon and Jordan. Even in private schools, while pre-pandemic, the majority of parents indicated that the quality was good, during the pandemic the quality seemed to have deteriorated.

During the pandemic and the closure of schools, parents found themselves in a position where they have to homeschool and that their children's' education is the main responsibility. The deteriorating quality can be (according to this survey) linked to two factors. First, parents indicated that they have limited experience in using technology. While the majority of schools and MoEs relied heavily on technology for distance education during the closure period. Which means that parents faced a major challenge in this case.

Second, parents indicated that they do not get sufficient support from MoEs, (I)NGOs, or teachers. Some parents indicated that they had to do their own work and research to be able to support their children. An effort that many parents are unable to commit to due to their other responsibilities, such as work, having a number of children and not having the knowledge or skills to be able to support their children. All these factors negatively impacted the quality of education for children.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of our rapid study highlights a number of factors that can have implications on the kind of interventions that can be developed to improve the quality of distance teaching and learning. However, it is crucial to highlight the several limitations of this study, starting with the sample size and most importantly the fact that it was conducted online and thus excludes the most vulnerable population who doesn't have access to internet. Thus there is a need for further in-depth research into the impact of COVID 19 on the schooling experience of children.

Having said that, based on the results of the survey, as well as the various discussions that took place over the lockdown period amongst educationalists and policy makers, we put together the following recommendations. We do not claim that these results are conclusive, but they help us identify alarming trends that need further research.

For Policy Makers

- Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the experiences of school leadership, teachers, students and parents to draw informed policies and strategies for the post COVID19-phase.
- Develop policies and strategies for preparedness and recovery due to the lockdown and missed learning.
- Professional development on distance and online learning is for teachers and school leadership and administrative team.
- Online learning necessitates the availability of smart phones, laptops and tablets for administration, teachers and students.
- Strengthen partnerships and collaborations between the public, private and non-formal education by creating schools' networks that include private, public, UNRWA and non-formal schools, and teachers and parents' associations in order to share experiences.
- Need to make agreements with private internet suppliers to provide concessions for schools.
- Electricity is an essential requirement for online learning and thus ministries of education need to work around this issue until such basic right is reached.
- Guidelines and strategies concerning summative and formative assessments need to be developed.
- Learn from the experiences of other institutions such as UNRWA and other countries that have experienced crisis/ conflicts and natural disasters and thus developed systems to provide education in case of emergencies.
- Ensure the fulfillment of the right to quality education particularly for children in marginalised areas through providing alternative solutions that do not depend solely on high technology or internet/electricity connectivity and high costs of equipment.
- Establish online platforms that are accessible to the wide variety of sectors.

For School leadership, administration and teachers

- Support teachers, students and parents in coping with the lockdown technologically and psychologically
- Provide professional development on distance learning
- Involve the students in assessment and planning
- Provide tablets and laptops for teachers and cover any additional cost that teachers might incur due to distance teaching and learning.
- Establish online platforms for distance education.

For Parents

- Create parents networks that can support them with home schooling.
- Provide instructions accessible to parents with different socio-economic backgrounds.
- Have continuous communication with the teachers and the school administration that is built on clear guidelines and collaborative approaches
- When possible, engage in training courses designed for educators such as MOOCs
- Ensure a proper balance between the importance of academic education but also the emotional and physical wellbeing of children.
- Ensure there is clear down time for the children when they are home schooled
- Raise parents' awareness of cyber bullying and bullying of both children and adults.

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