# THE EDUCATION OF SYRIAN CHILDREN IN TURKEY

CHALLENGES and RECOMMENDATIONS



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# The Education of
# Syrian Children in Turkey

Challenges and Recommendations

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# The Education of Syrian Children in Turkey

## Challenges and Recommendations

Coşkun TAŞTAN

Zafer ÇELİK

**PREFACE**

# PREFACE

Since the start of the civil war in Syria in 2011 millions of people have had to leave their homes in Syria to seek refuge in neighboring countries During this period, Turkey has become a refuge for over 3 million Syrians, living in 81 provinces across Turkey. 1.5 million of the Syrians in Turkey are under the age of 18 and 1 million consist of school age children. More importantly, hundreds of thousands of Syrians have transitioned from childhood to adulthood in Turkey over the last six years. In an environment in which it is unclear when the war will end and stability in Syria will be achieved, hundreds of thousands more Syrian children will continue to live in Turkey and transition into adulthood during this time. Thus, the skills and qualifications with which hundreds and thousands will enter adulthood are of critical importance. The youth who enter the labor market without adequate skills and qualifications will have to work in low-skill jobs with low wages. This in turn will lead to an uneducated population with no hope for the future and will further perpetuate the cycle of poverty. Schooling helps normalize the lives of children by helping them overcome the effects of war and providing them with the skills and qualifications that they will need for their future professions. When children are unable to access education, they lose hope for the future and are prevented from escaping the cycle of poverty. As a consequence, social instability persists. Young people who are not schooled will be pushed to the margins of their community and become more vulnerable to ghettoization and radicalization. Recognizing the opportunities generated by education and the crises brought about by the lack thereof, Turkey has been making a significant effort to increase the enrolment of Syrian children in schools in Turkey and to provide them with a quality education. However, despite this effort almost half of the Syrian children in Turkey remain out of school. It is apparent that there are still many issues with the quality of education and there are many obstacles facing children in education settings which have yet to be resolved. Access to a quality education for every Syrian child is of critical importance not only for the individual himself/herself, but also for the Syrian community living in Turkey and for Turkish society as a whole. In light of these circumstances and our responsibility as Eğitim-Bir-Sen, we have prepared this report entitled the *The Education of Syrian Children in Turkey: Challenges and Recommendations.* This report focuses on Turkey's efforts to school Syrian children and provide them with quality education, as well as to overcome the obstacles that prevent children from attending schools and the difficulties that children face at school. In addition, the report provides recommendations for increasing the schooling of Syrian children and providing them with access to a higher quality education.

The high-ranking administrators of the Ministry of National Education as well as regional school administrators, public institution employees who attend to matters on Syrian children and NGO's all share the important responsibility of providing all Syrian children with a quality education. In addition, the international community is urged to provide more support for the education of Syrian children and to take on more responsibility. I believe that this report will provide guidance for those in both the international and national community who are working on providing Syrian children with quality education. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the research team who prepared this report.

**Ali YALÇIN**

General President

Eğitim-Bir-Sen and Memur-Sen
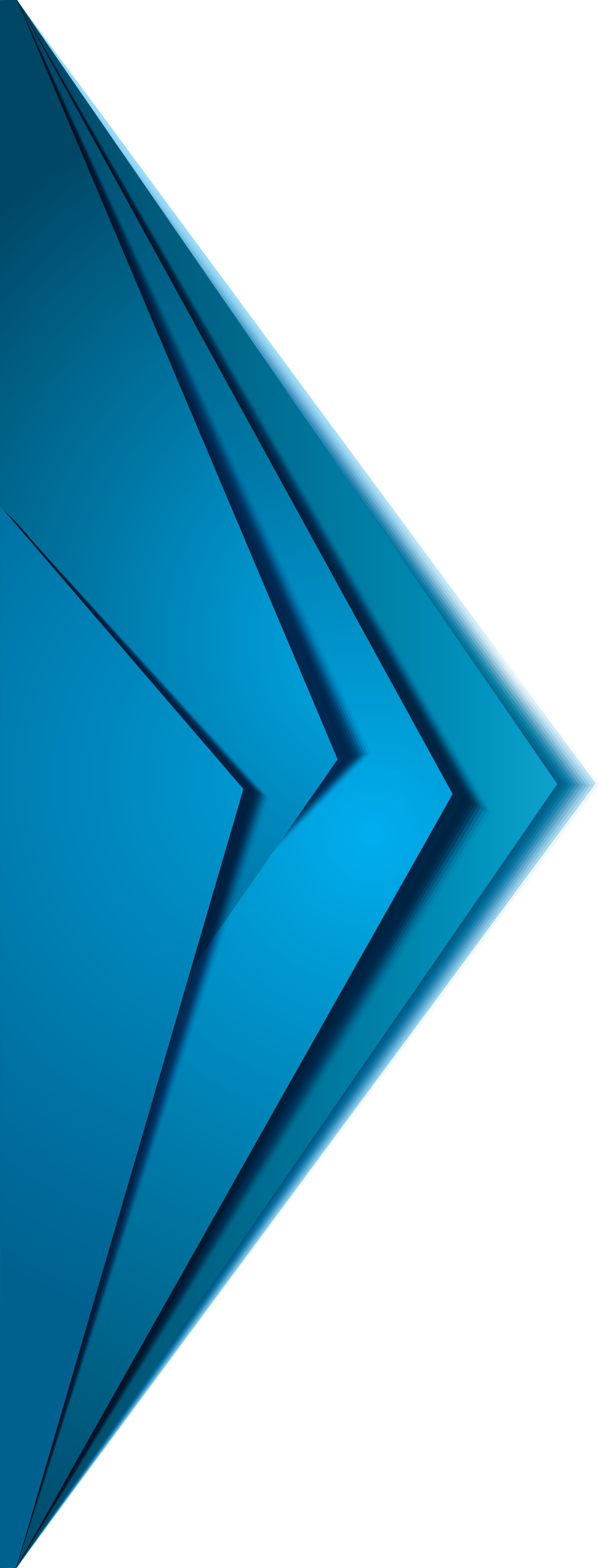
**FOREWORD**

# FOREWORD

Education is a critical tool for the millions of Syrians living in host countries who are in need of motivation and hope for the future. With a high-quality education Syrian children can overcome their challenging circumstances and have the opportunity to forge new futures for themselves. Moreover, education will support the integration process of Syrian children into Turkish society to become a part of Turkey's economic and social life. If these children miss out on education, there will be many consequences for them as well as for Turkey and neighboring Syria. Not being schooled and not having access to quality education will push Syrian children to the margins of society and lead to their ghettoization, radicalization and despair.

*The Education of Syrian Children in Turkey: Challenges and Recommendations* report has been prepared in two stages. During the first initial stage, interviews were conducted with the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), Disaster and Emergency Management Center (DEMC), the Türkiye Diyanet Foundation, and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). The scope of the study, research questions and sample were all defined after this first stage. In the second stage, 60 interviews were conducted in 9 provinces and 15 focus group interviews were carried out. The sample was quite diverse in terms of participation. Focus group interviews and detailed interviews were conducted with children not in school along their parents, schooled children and their parents, Turkish coordinates working at Temporary Education Centers, Syrian teachers and students, Turkish and Syrian students in public schools, school administrators and teachers with regional administrators and national and international non-governmental organizations engaged with the education of Syrian children.

The report consists of five chapters. The introduction provides general information about the study and Chapter 1 provides facts and figures about the general condition of Syrians. The following three main chapters deal with three important aspects of the education of Syrian children, *management*, *access* and quality, respectively. Each of these three chapters begins with a review of the efforts Turkey has made for Syrian children from the point of view of management, access and quality. Following this, each chapter identifies the difficulties that are relevant to the issue at hand. Finally, the chapters are concluded with the issues that require policy development or intervention. The report ends with conclusions and recommendations for the schooling of Syrian children and the provision of a quality education. In the preparation of this report, an extensive and multi-dimensional study was carried out utilizing the assessments of MoNE administrators at various levels and teachers supplemented by interviews with Syrian teachers, schooled and unschooled Syrian children and their parents, as well as the representatives of national and international NGOs.

I believe that this report which examines the issue of Syrian children's education in Turkey, for the first time, through such a broad perspective will contribute to the schooling of Syrian children and increase the quality of education they receive, as well as the development of policies aimed at solving the problems. Our main goal as a union with this report is to examine the issue of Syrian children's education by means of the data obtained through a multifaceted approach, to observe and assess schooling policies and school environments, and contribute to the quality of education every Syrian child receives with the recommendations offered. The report will be successful so long as it identifies the difficulties of Syrian children correctly and accurately defines the ways to improve access to quality education. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Assoc.Prof. Coşkun Taştan and Assoc.Prof. Zafer Çelik, for preparing this report.

**Atilla OLÇUM**
Vice General President

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| | |
|---|---|
| ASAM | Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants |
| BoE | Board of Education |
| CCTE | Conditional Cash Transfer for Education |
| CRSEC | Center for Research on Science, Education and Culture (BEKAM) |
| CTTL | Center for Teaching Turkish Language |
| DEMC | Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency |
| DNE | Directorates of National Education |
| ECHO | European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations |
| EU | European Union |
| FRIT | Facility for Refugees in Turkey |
| HRF | Humanitarian Relief Foundation (İHH) |
| HSPAEFS | High School Proficiency and Accreditation Exam for Foreign Students |
| IEED | Immigration and Emergency Education Department's Directorate |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| MoNE | Ministry of National Education |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organizations |
| PICTES | Promoting Integration of Syrian Children to Turkish Education System |
| PSSE | Public Staff Selection Examination |
| PTA | Parent-Teacher Association |
| RRP | Syrian Regional Response Plan |
| SETA | Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research |
| TBESE | Transition from Basic Education to Secondary Education |
| TEC | Temporary Education Center |
| TECHSPAE | Temporary Education Centers High School Proficiency and Accreditation Exam |
| TDF | Türkiye Diyanet Foundation |
| TSC | Temporary Sheltering Center |
| UNICEF | United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund |
| YÖBİS | Information System for Foreign Students (ISFS) |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Because of the war raging in Syria for the past 6 years, millions of people were forced to leave their home, 3 million of whom have sought refuge in Turkey. Half of the Syrians in Turkey are school-age children under the age of 18. Moreover, during this 6-year period, hundreds of thousands of children became adults and this will also be the case in following years. Remaining uneducated and/or lacking a good quality education will have important impacts upon individuals' futures, the future of Syrians in Turkey as well as on the future of Turkish society as a whole. Those who are uneducated lose their hope and are forced to work in low-paying jobs as they lack necessary knowledge and skills. All this leads to the risk of marginalization, ghettoization and radicalization. Access to quality education will help Syrians overcome psycho-social issues caused by war, violence and relocation and will contribute to the normalization of individuals and society. Moreover, a quality education will be helpful in enhancing hope for a better future, and will allow Syrians to integrate into Turkish society and benefit more from economic and social opportunities.

This report seeks to identify the obstructions to Syrian children's schooling and to assess the various issues they face in the school environment. Schooling issues ranging from the preschool to high school level were researched within the context of this study. That is to say, vocational and non-formal education along with higher education were not included in the research. The research was based on two stages. Firstly, meetings were held with actors that are directly concerned with Syrian children's education, such as the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), Disaster and Emergency Management Center (DEMC), Türkiye Diyanet Foundation (TDF) and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). After said meetings, the scope of the research, research questions and sample were determined. In the second stage, 60 interviews and 15 focus group meetings were conducted in 9 cities. The sample was wide enough to include unschooled children and their parents; schooled children and their parents; Turkish coordinators; Syrian teachers and students at Temporary Education Centers (TECs); Turkish and Syrian students; school administrators and teachers in public schools; regional officials responsible for Syrians' education and national and international NGOs. The findings are presented and analyzed under three headings, namely *management, access and quality.*

### Management of Syrian children's education process

Turkey started to focus its efforts on schooling Syrian children from 2014 onwards and has since successfully completed the required institutional structure. With the establishment of the Information System for Foreign Students (ISFS [YÖBİS]), Syrian students' registration, success and attendance are now easily tracked. Syrian children can receive an education in public schools and TECs. According to MoNE data from September 18 2017, there are 280,602 Syrian students receiving an education at 370 TECs. While 201 TECs operate in public school buildings, others operate in buildings provided by various public institutions. Most of the expenses for Syrians' education are covered by the Turkish state. However, UNICEF also provides support by covering equipment and infrastructure expenses of TECs along with the salaries of Syrian teachers. Moreover, countries like Korea and Taiwan help by supporting the construction of school buildings and classrooms. Nevertheless, only 300 million of the 3 billion euros

promised by the European Union (EU) to Turkey is accessible at the moment. The EU has to allow access to the rest of this budget especially for the construction of school buildings and classrooms.

As Turkey aims to completely integrate Syrian children into the Turkish education system, starting from the 2016-2017 academic year onward, the registration of 1st, 5th and 9th graders have been at public schools, instead of TECs. As part of the curriculum, 15 hours per week out of a total of 30 and 35 hours are dedicated to Turkish language courses at the primary school and high school levels, respectively. While this is a positive development in terms of decreasing the language gap between Syrian children and their Turkish peers, it also causes issues as the time devoted to Turkish lessons leaves less time to be dedicated to other courses. For instance, while 2 hours per week is dedicated to mathematics at TECs, 6 hours per week is allocated in public high schools. Transcripts are enough for a Syrian child to be registered to a public school; however, if he/she is without any transcripts, his/her grade is determined with a test. Syrian children who successfully complete TECs enter a proficiency and accreditation exam. Those who are successful in this exam are considered as graduates and are accredited. However, with the new application, those who are unsuccessful in the said test are able to graduate if they register to an open education high school and pass at least two courses.

Since the Turkish education system is centralized, the approval of MoNE is sought for certain initiatives at the local level which in turn prolongs bureaucratic processes. Because of this prolongation, the implementation of certain projects is hindered. Another issue with the administration is that the data which could be used for the monitoring and evaluation processes of Syrian children's access to school and the quality of education they receive are usually neglected by local administrators. Most of the Provincial/District Directorates of National Education (MEM) officials that were interviewed during this study were unable to provide precise statistics about school-age Syrian children and their schooling rates; they only replied in speculations by saying "around 50-60%."

Public and civil society personnel are working hard to school Syrian children. Observations at schools visited, showed that surveys were being conducted, especially by Syrian teachers, and that significant efforts were being made to ensure that children were being schooled. In addition, it the findings show that there is at least one NGO working hard to school Syrian children in each of the cities that research was conducted in. Moreover, the Conditional Education Aid Program for Refugee Children was initiated as a collaborative project between MoNE, the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, Turkish Red Crescent and UNICEF.

### Syrian children's access to education

According to the September 15 2017 data acquired from MoNE, 54.5% of 976,000 school-age children are registered in schools. In other words, there are approximately 450,000 unschooled Syrian children in Turkey. Obstructions to Syrian children's access to education are divided into three groups according to the severity. The first category consists of minor obstructions that could be removed relatively easily with a plan in the short-term. For example, psychological obstructions such as disorientation and lack of motivation. It was observed that some children were ready to go to school, but were unable to do so as they lacked information about the bureaucratic processes. In certain cities, DNEs and NGOs visit families and these visits prove helpful in getting children back to school. These children, namely the

children who can be included in the educational system with relatively less resources, are referred to as *Unschooled Type-1* in this report. The second type of obstructions requires a robust plan of action and systematic approaches. Obstructions faced by children who had to discontinue school for a couple of years or who fell behind their peers at some point are some of the examples. Moreover, children who work as a source of cheap labor in order to support their family or children who left school because of coeducation are also included in this category. It is possible to school these children with the right planning and by implementing certain regulations. These children are referred to as *Unschooled Type-2* . The third type of obstructions are the most difficult barriers to remove; these might be based on economic, cultural or socio-psychological issues. The hardest economic barrier to remove is when the child is the only breadwinner in the family and the whole family relies on him/her. Those who cannot go to school because of tending to a family member in need are also included in this category. These children are referred to as *Unschooled Type-3.*

The research revealed that the most prominent obstructions to schooling are economic issues. During the interviews with unschooled children, many of them expressed that they would like to go to school, but are unable to do so as they are obliged to work and contribute to their families. These children also expressed that they would be able to return to school if a certain financial aid was provided to their families. Another obstruction to schooling is the language barrier. It was observed that especially 5th and 9th graders who were not well-versed in Turkish left school after a while because of an inability to understand the courses and a feeling of alienation in the school environment. On the other hand, Syrians are also concerned about forgetting Arabic; because of this concern, it was observed that certain families and children distanced themselves from schools. Another obstruction is cultural in nature; early marriage, Syrians not wanting to send their children to institutions that provide coeducation and some students wanting to wear the veil at school, for example are some of the reasons.

Another one of the most important obstructions to schooling is transportation. As TECs are not everywhere, many families reside far away from school and lack the financial resources to pay for school-buses and public transportation affects children's attendance. Moreover, TEC working hours are also problematic as the hours can be quite late in certain cities which means that children are travelling home after dark, which is a problem especially for families who do not want to send their daughters to school as a result.

On the other hand, some children are not schooled because they and their families are not aware of the bureaucratic procedures involved in registering their children in school or how to acquire the required documents. Social and spatial uncertainty is another important factor that affects Syrians. Another obstruction to schooling is the unfavorable attitude that Turkish teachers and parents have towards Syrian children. Lastly, Syrian children are not eligible to study in Science High Schools, where the most successful students are found, nor in Anatolian High Schools where generally the moderate students are placed by way of entrance exams. The Syrian students are usually placed either in *imam hatip* high schools[1] or in vocational schools, where the least successful students are placed. In addition to all these barriers, there are also children who are unable to continue their education because of the inadequate capacities of classrooms and school facilities to accommodate more students.

1) Imam-hatip high schools offer a type of secondary education which provide religious as well as general education

### Quality of education provided to Syrian children

There are many factors influencing the quality of education provided to Syrian children. The planning of Syrian children's education is one of the essential elements. There are many challenges to planning a quality education for the continuously growing Syrian population, such as increased mobility between cities and the concentration of over 2.8 million Syrians in 13 cities where issues of infrastructure and schools are apparent. Another important factor is the class hours offered at TECs: Usually, the education at TECs start at later hours (14:30) within the double-shift education system because of the unavailability of classrooms and school buildings. Children's performance at school declines as a result of late class hours and some children are occupied with other obligations until the beginning of classes creating additional strain. In addition, many schools lack certain educational materials. While the communication between TEC school administration and students or their families takes place without any problems, this becomes an issue at public schools as children and their family usually lack the necessary language skills to communicate properly. On the other hand, TECs use another location for administrative purposes and have had instances of carelessly prepared announcements being posted on the school walls which negatively affect children's feelings of belonging and ultimately has negative effects on the quality of their education.

TECs selection of teachers takes place in multiples stages. Through in-service training and teacher selection according to various assessments such as interviews will have a positive effect on teacher quality. The curriculum has been revised and, content legitimizing the Assad regime and antagonizing Turkey were removed from textbooks. Parts of textbooks inciting tension have been replaced with texts introducing Turkey and Turkish culture as well as content promoting peace between Syrian refugees and the host country have been placed in the textbooks.

Absenteeism, lack of motivation and aimlessness are the most prominent factors which affect Syrian children's success. As Syrian families continuously move between cities and relocate frequently, absenteeism becomes an inevitable consequence for children. Moreover, a lack of Turkish language skills significantly affects the success of children in public schools. Certain factors like the effect of war, loss of family members and uncertainty of the future, all contribute to lack of motivation and aimlessness in some Syrian children. On the other hand, some interviews conducted as part of this study revealed that some of the Syrian children are highly motivated and some are even among the most successful students in public schools. Yet, the number of these students is fairly low and these cases are rare.

Psycho-social issues have also been observed among Syrian children who were exposed to war and violence. Counseling for these children is an absolute necessity. However, until very recently, TECs lacked school counselors while the counselors in public schools are indifferent to Syrian children. The rehabilitation of Syrian children has mostly been done by Syrian teachers. A final point of concern emerging from this study in-class environment, as bonding between Turkish and Syrian students is below the desired level.

### Recommendations

• Initiative must be taken to increase teachers' and school administrators' awareness concerning Syrian children. It is important to have civil servants who are committed to Syrian children's schooling.

• Syrian children should continue to study at TECs until they obtain proficiency in Turkish. Children will still be in need of support to improve their Turkish language even after the closure of TECs; this should

be considered in future planning. Moreover, Syrians' concerns about forgetting Arabic and their own culture after the closure of TECs should be acknowledged and policies addressing these concerns must be developed.

• Even though Turkey dedicates significant resources to the schooling of Syrian children, these resources are still far from sufficient. For this reason, the international community should take on more responsibility and provide more resources to Turkey. In particular, the promised EU funds as part of the convention between Turkey and EU must be obtained in order to enable the much-needed construction of more classrooms and schools. Financial aid for classroom and school construction, transportation costs, educational materials and staff will increase Syrian children's schooling rate and allow them to have a higher quality education.

• Unschooled children are divided into three different groupings in this report. Individuals in different typologies should be approached with different methods and means, taking into consideration the specific types of obstruction these children face. In the case of *Unschooled Type-1* children who are generally characterized as disoriented, children themselves and their parents should be kept informed and receive regular household visits from officials. Meanwhile, financial aid, support for transportation costs and the like should be provided for *Unschooled Type-2.* The *Unschooled Type-3* who are characterized as having been away from school for several years or who are the sole breadwinners in their families, can be provided with alternative methods of education such as evening classes and financial aid.

• In order to identify children who are not going to school, Turkish and Syrian teachers, school administrators, national and international NGOs and Syrian notables should cooperate.

• To improve the schooling of Syrian girls, all girls schools should be supported.

• Considering that certain children are prevented from accessing an education on the basis of insufficient school capacity, additional school buildings and classrooms should be built as soon as possible.

• Highly successful Syrian children should be directed to Science, Anatolian and Social Sciences high schools where the focus is on science and mathematics and they are better enabled to excel in their studies.

• To ensure the quality of education for Syrian children, Syrians must receive a full day education. In this respect, in order for TECs to start at earlier hours, TECs' physical and infrastructural facilities should be supported and new school buildings and classrooms should be constructed.

• Syrian teachers should be selected meticulously. These teachers should be trained through in-service trainings.

• In public schools, Turkish teachers' positive attitude towards Syrian children is very important. Teachers should be more sensitive to enable these children to actively participate in classes. Organizing events and activities in mixed groups (i.e. Syrian and Turkish students brought together) will create better ties between Turkish and Syrian students.

• Make-up classes should be organized for TEC students to compensate for their deficiencies in mathematics, physics, chemistry and foreign language courses, which are limited in regular course schedules due to the significant need for Turkish language courses.

• Considering that many Syrian children are experiencing psycho-social issues because of war and immigration, it is very important to provide an effective counseling service for those children.

CHAPTER 1

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

As a result of the ongoing war in Syria, now entering its sixth year, more than 13 million people have been displaced. Approximately 5 million of the displaced Syrians sought refuge in neighboring countries Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. According to the data from August 2017, there are 3.1 million Syrians in Turkey, 1 million in Lebanon, 660,000 in Jordan, 240,000 in Iraq and 120,000 in Egypt. Out of the 5.2 million Syrians who are currently hosted in these 5 countries, 750,000 are between ages 0-4, while 1.75 million are between ages 5-17. In other words, almost half of the Syrians who sought refuge are school-age children under the age of 17 (UNCHR, 2017). In Turkey alone, there are 1 million school-age Syrian children between ages 5-18 and 490,000 toddlers between age 0-4 (Göç İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü [General Directorate of Migration Management], 2017). In addition to these figures, hundreds of thousands of individuals have transitioned into adulthood while living in Turkey over the last 6 years.

Indeed, access and participation in formal education are issues of paramount importance for Syrian children and youth. Moreover, with protracted conflict in Syria and no resolution in sight, Syrian people's education and the quality of this education are crucial for their future and prosperity. Unschooled children are more vulnerable to child labor, early marriage, radicalization and prone to joining radical organizations (Watkins and Zyck, 2014). People who do not receive adequate education will be forced to become a source of cheap labor. As long as Syrians are not engaged in the host country's education system, issues of integration are inevitable. Furthermore, when the war ends in Syria and the country stabilizes, education will be the most important factor influencing Syrians' contribution to the reconstruction of their country. The education Syrians receive and the quality of this education are the two main factors that will affect their individual futures and prosperity. Secondly, through education, Syrians will have the opportunity to better integrate within the host society and benefit more from economic, social and cultural facilities. Thirdly, education will ensure the qualified human capital that is required for Syria's reconstruction in the post-war era that will hopefully come one day.

The crisis in education for Syrian children is expected to have serious repercussions for decades to come. By way of education children can obtain the support they need to help them overcome the trauma of war and acquire the valuable skills they will need for their future occupations. When children are deprived of education, they lose their hope for the future and this in turn reinforces the cycle of poverty.

The absence of education leads to ongoing social instability and impairs any hopes for restructuring. As a result, unschooled Syrian youth may lose any opportunities that would have been available to them if they were educated and instead will be pushed to the margins of society. As a consequence, youth may resort to alternative pursuits such as risking their lives in the hands of smugglers or joining radical organizations due to a lack of opportunity (Watkins and Zyck, 2014). In light of these risks facing vulnerable youths, the international community started to address Syrians' education, as soon as humanitarian aid reached an important level. In line with this concern, UNICEF initiated the "No Lost Generation" project in 2013. Despite everything, one cannot confidently say that Syrians' education receives enough attention nor   adequate support from the international community and the media. While there is a plethora of reports and research conducted on the general plight of Syrians, there are very few works on the education of Syrian refugees. This is an important gap in the literature. In

a report published in April 2017, UNICEF analyzed Syrian children's education in the aforementioned 5 host countries along with Syria. While acknowledging that significant progress was made in each of the host countries, UNICEF's report asserts that there is more room for improvement (UNICEF, 2017). Similarly, RAND Corporation, one of the most significant US-based think-tanks, also released a report analyzing education policies and their applications looking specifically at Syrian children in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. That report was prepared with findings from field research conducted in 2014. The report identifies significant barriers to accessing education, including a lack of facilities, language and curriculum, transportation, documents, child labor and early marriage, school tuition fees and security. Despite efforts to increase the number of schools in Turkey, there is not an adequate number of schools/ buildings dedicated to Syrians' education. Culbertson and Constant (2015) suggest developing a strategy to coordinate efforts for schooling unschooled children, constructing adequate schools, planning quality full-day educational alternatives to public schools and focusing on the quality of education (Culbertson and Constant, 2015). Assistance Coordination Unit, on the other hand, has analyzed the condition of schools in Syria in a report published in 2016 (ACU, 2016) concluding that enrollment ratio in primary education is higher than secondary education and many schools in Syria are not functioning because of insecurity and schools bombing. Furthermore, a study conducted by the Overseas Development Institute affirmed that the international community was not providing adequate aid to Syrian children and that the international community was not upholding its promises to these countries (Watkins and Zyck, 2014). An extensive study on Syrian children's education at a national level was published by SETA Foundation and TheirWorld in August 2017. Field research was conducted in 5 cities, looking specifically at obstructions to education for Syrian children alongside the condition of schooled children (SETA Vakfı and TheirWorld, 2017). This study found that single parenting, high mobility, lack of information and guidance, economic reasons, and cultural reasons are the main reasons of being out of school.

Countries hosting Syrians have been supporting Syrian children and trying to provide them with an education since the beginning of their immigration. However, these countries lack the necessary financial and human resources as well as a robust system equipped for providing education to children. Despite the tremendous importance of education, international donor institutions and countries have been reluctant to make financial contributions to education initiatives in host countries. Indeed, it is a challenge for the host countries to provide a quality education to Syrian children without any international financial and human support (Watkins and Zyck, 2014).

Even though Turkey has made an effort to provide certain initiatives in terms of Syrian children's education since the very beginning, it can be said that Turkey was late in developing policies and in understanding the importance of education for Syrian children. The main reason for this situation is the assumption that the conflict in Syria would soon come to an end and Syrians would eventually return to their country. However, with protracted conflict and ongoing mass immigration to Turkey with Syrians continuing to spread across the country, it became clear that the war in Syria would not end in the short-term. For this reason, active policies pertaining to Syrian children's education have begun to be implemented. Turkey has faced many issues in Syrian children's education. First of all, cities like Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep and Istanbul where most of the Syrians reside already had existing issues regarding their educational infrastructure. The numbers of students per teacher and per classroom in these cities are already above Turkey's national average (MEB [ MoNE], 2017). In addition, 19.3% of the primary schools in Turkey employ a double-shift education system and 45.9% of students study in these schools. Moreover, 65% of

primary school students in Gaziantep, Adana and Bursa and 55-64% of students in cities like Istanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Şanlıurfa, Mersin and Osmaniye are educated in schools with the double-shift system (Eğitim-Bir-Sen, 2016). The cities with the largest population of Syrians also happen to be the cities with the greatest and where double-shift education is a common phenomenon. Another challenge is the mobility of Syrians within Turkey. More than 60% of the Syrians who fled their country are currently in Turkey and their numbers are increasing every day. In addition, Turkey's policies towards Syrians' education are constantly changing. In 2015, 40% of Syrian children were schooled however, in 2016, despite the increase in their numbers, the schooling rate rose to over 50%.[2] From 2016 onwards, Turkey began to actively teach Turkish to Syrians and to focus on integrating Syrian children into the Turkish education system. Because of shifts in policies, quick changes in applications and daily changes in the number of Syrians in Turkey, analyses and reports on the education of Syrians in Turkey quickly lose their currency. This report analyzes the education of Syrians in Turkey in the context of current education policies through an extensive field research. Ministry officials, teachers working at both TECs and public schools, public school administrators, Turkish and Syrian students, Syrian teachers at TECs, Turkish coordinators, the parents of students and unschooled children and their parents along with national and international NGO representatives were interviewed. In this respect, this report focuses on obstructions to schooling and evaluates the quality of education offered to Syrian children through a multifaceted lens.

The objective of this study is to identify the obstructions to Syrian children's schooling and to underscore the challenges Syrian children face in schools. In addition, this report also aims to provide recommendations for improving Syrian children's schooling rate, overcoming issues faced by schooled children and to boost the quality of education being offered. Moreover, Syrian children's in-class and more general school performances were assessed and their expectations for the future are also expressed in this report. Lastly, the possible effects of the closure of TECs' are examined by way of the opinions of administrators, teachers, students and parents.

In spite of the various ongoing peace negotiations in Syria, it is expected that stability will only be established in the long-term. As a result, it can be expected that Syrians will continue to live in Turkey for some years to come. This reality has also been accepted in the policy realm in Turkey. In this respect, there are increasing discussions on granting work permits and citizenship for Syrians. Considering that they will continue to live in Turkey for many years, Syrians' adaptation to Turkish society is crucial. Furthermore, access to education for Syrian children and youth is one of the critical factors that will accelerate the process of adaptation. Through education, children and youth are expected to become more qualified for the labor force and by extension more successful members of society. Schooling Syrian children will be beneficial for both those who will stay in Turkey and those who will eventually return to Syria. While the ones who remain in Turkey will contribute economically, socially and culturally to Turkish society, the ones who return to Syria will contribute to the rebuilding of their country, cities and society with the education they received in Turkey. In this sense, education is an important soft power strategy. For this reason, schooling Syrian children without any discrimination while also providing the utmost quality education is a valuable strategy. On the other hand, children and youth deprived of education will lack the qualifications they need to become successful; they will not be able to work in good professions and, more importantly, they will not be able to connect with Turkish society. This in turn could lead to marginalization, ghettoization and radicalization. Evidently, the negative repercussions of marginalized

2) While the schooling rate in 2016 was 58% according to UNICEF (UNICEF, 2017), MoNE data of September 15 2017 indicate that it is 54%.

and ghettoized masses are tremendous Considering the benefits of education and the hindrances caused by the deprivation of education, the primary aim of this study is to contribute improving Syrian children's access to high quality education.

This study employed a qualitative research methodology. The research was conducted in two stages. During the first stage, the general scope of the study was defined after meeting with key actors. In this respect, meetings were held with high-ranking officials from various organizations and institutions including MoNE and the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (DEMC), public institutions that are directly responsible for Syrians in Turkey, TDF, an NGO that focuses on Syrian children's education, and UNICEF Turkey. A meeting with the General Directorate of Migration Management was, however the meeting did not take place as the request was not processed. Therefore, in the first stage, data was collected on the experiences of these institutions regarding access to education for Syrians and the issues they face in school. With the findings from the first stage of the study, semi-structured focus groups and in-depth interview guides were prepared. The first stage was completed in March 2017.

In the second stage of the research, the sample was determined. In order to obtain a richer dataset, the sample was diversified as much as possible. In the first stage of the study data was collected from institutions. Later data was provided by MoNE about the distribution of Syrian children's schooling rates according to city and age. This data was also supplemented by findings acquired from the literature on Syrian children's education. Data was compiled and used to determine the cities in which the research would take place. The theoretical profiles of the respondents were also defined at this stage. Cities were classified into three categories: a) Cities with Temporary Sheltering Centers (TSCs), b) Cities with above-average Syrian population that do not have TSCs, and c) Transit cities (which are the points where those planning to make their way to Europe illegally embark on their journeys). In addition, the first category has two subcategories: cities that border Syria and other. In this respect, research was conducted in 9 cities as specified below.

a)      Cities with TSCs

        Cities that border Syria: Gaziantep, Hatay, Şanlıurfa

        Cities that do not border Syria: Kahramanmaraş, Osmaniye

b)      Cities without TSCs: Istanbul, Ankara, Konya

c)      Transit cities: İzmir

As the primary objective of this study is to gain a better understanding of the issues Syrian children face in accessing and receiving education, the sample was broadened to include all segments providing information on this subject. The maximum diversity sampling technique (a sort of purposive sampling method) was used to identify the respondents. Considering that conducting interviews with the same profiles of respondents in each and every city would be counterproductive in terms of repetitiveness, in-depth interviews and focus groups were only held in certain cities. Permission to conduct research for this study was obtained from MoNE on March 30, 2017 (permission number81576613/605.01/4329062). Data collection took place between April-June 2017. A total number of 60 in-depth interviews and 15 focus groups were conducted. The breakdown of profiles of interviewees and focus group participants can be seen in the following table:

**Table 1.** Number of interviewees and focus group meetings by city

| | DNE Director | Unschooled Children | | Parents of Unschooled Girl | Parents of Unschooled Boy | Parents of Schooled Girl | Parents of Schooled Boy | Focus Group with TEC Teachers | Focus Group with TEC students | TEC coordinators | Public School Syrian Student Focus Group | Public School Turkish Student Focus Group | Public School Teacher Focus Group | Public School Principals | NGO |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Girl | Boy | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gaziantep | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | 2 |
| Hatay | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | 2 |
| Şanlıurfa | - | 3 | - | 3 | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Kahramanmaraş | 1 | 2 | 1 | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | 2 | 1 | - | - | 1 | - |
| Osmaniye | - | 1 | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | - |
| İstanbul | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | - | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| Ankara | 1 | - | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | 1 | 2 | - | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | 2 |
| Konya | 1 | 2 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| İzmir | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 2 | - | - | - | - | 2 |
| **Total** | **7** | **12** | **11** | **5** | **4** | **-** | **1** | **4** | **4** | **8** | **2** | **1** | **4** | **2** | **10** |

During field research, interviews were recorded through audio recordings of with the consent of participants. Most study participants allowed meetings to be recorded, while some did not. Detailed notes were taken during meetings. In addition, after meetings in every city, a brief provincial report was prepared evaluating participants' attitudes and behaviors along with the applications taking place in each city. The purpose of these reports was to facilitate the identification of differences between cities as well as to help the reporting process. Furthermore, during the interview process, special attention was paid to language, Turkish participants were interviewed in Turkish, Syrian participants in Arabic, English or Turkish and NGO representatives in English. After the completion of the field research, audio recordings were transcribed. After compiling interview notes, audio recording transcriptions and provincial reports, the data was analyzed and coded.

In-depth interview and focus group meeting data were analyzed with the content analysis method. In content analysis, the data are gathered under descriptive categories. In order to make a large set of data explainable and understandable, certain concepts and relations should be established (Creswell, 2007; Marcasti, 2004). Codes, categories and themes were created from similar elements of the data. In this manner, under the categories of *management, access* and quality, access to education, issues that are faced during education and initiatives to improve the quality of education were analyzed.

In order to avoid the exposition of the identities of the participants, anonymity and confidentiality policies were implemented. Only NGOs were referred to as it is. On the other hand, only the city where the interview was conducted and the individual's occupation are cited, as this does not infringe the anonymity principle. For instance, the interview conducted with an unschooled girl in Istanbul is cited as Unschooled.Girl5.İstanbul Focus group meetings were cited as it is, not referring to individuals. For instance, *Turkish.Focus.1.Ankara.* refers to a focus group meeting held with Turkish teachers in Ankara.

CHAPTER 2

## CHAPTER 2

### Syrians in Turkey: Facts and figures

Since the beginning of the war on March 15 2011, more than half of Syria's population (13.5 million) was forced to leave their homes. While 6.3 million of this population relocated within Syria, the remaining 5 million people sought refuge in various countries (UNHCR, 2017). Turkey has maintained an open-door policy since the beginning of the civil war and opened its borders to the victims of war from Syria. A group of 252 people took refuge in Turkey on April 29 2011 (Topçu, 2017). From this date onward, the number of Syrians seeking refuge in Turkey has steadily increased. The attacks against civilians started to escalate from 2012 onwards and the number of people fleeing Syria and seeking refuge in Turkey skyrocketed. As can be seen in Figure 1, while there were only 14,000 Syrians in Turkey in 2012, this number increased to 225,000 by 2013. This number continued to rise, reaching 1.5 million in 2014, 2.5 million in 2015 and 2.8 million in 2016. Even though the increase rate started to decline in 2017, there are currently more than 3 million Syrians in Turkey. In fact, more than 60% of the Syrians who fled their country are now living in Turkey (UNHCR, 2017).

**Figure 1.** Number of registered Syrians in Turkey throughout the years (2011-2017)
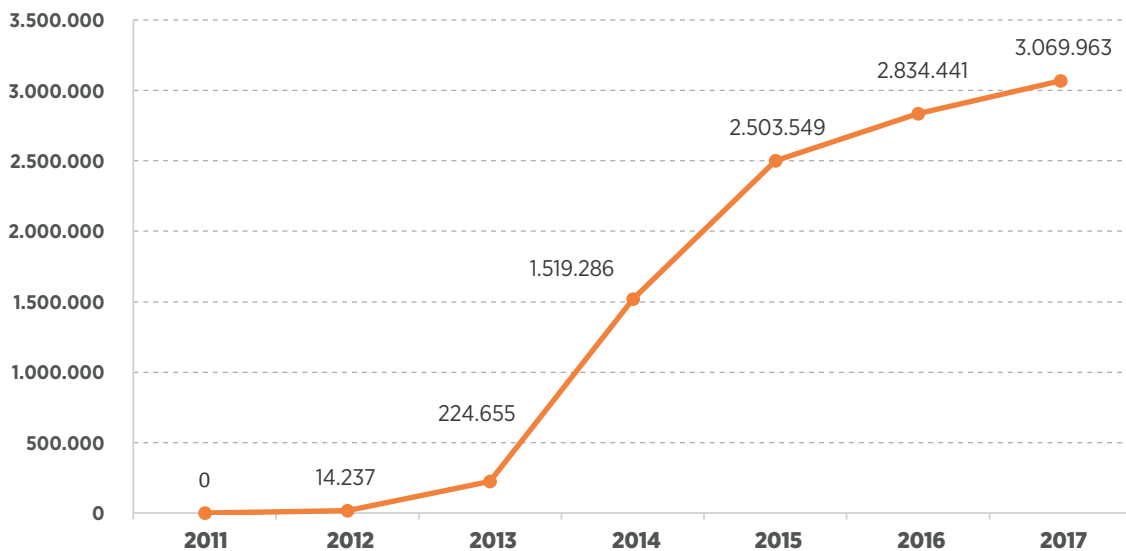


Source: General Directorate of Immigration Management, 2017.

Note: The figure was prepared using data obtained from the General Directorate of Migration Management last updated on June 29, 2017.

With Syrians taking refuge in Turkey, Temporary Sheltering Centers (TSCs) were initially built in cities that border Syria, like Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep, Hatay, Mardin and Kilis. Later, TSCs were also established in other cities like Kahramanmaraş, Adana, Adıyaman, Osmaniye and Malatya that are also near the Syrian border. As Figure 2 indicates, 245,000 Syrians live in 23 TSCs across 10 cities. The remaining 2.8 million Syrians, on the other hand, live in various cities across Turkey. In other words, only 8% of Syrians reside in TSCs.

**Figure 2**. Number of TSCs and the ratio of Syrians living outside these centers
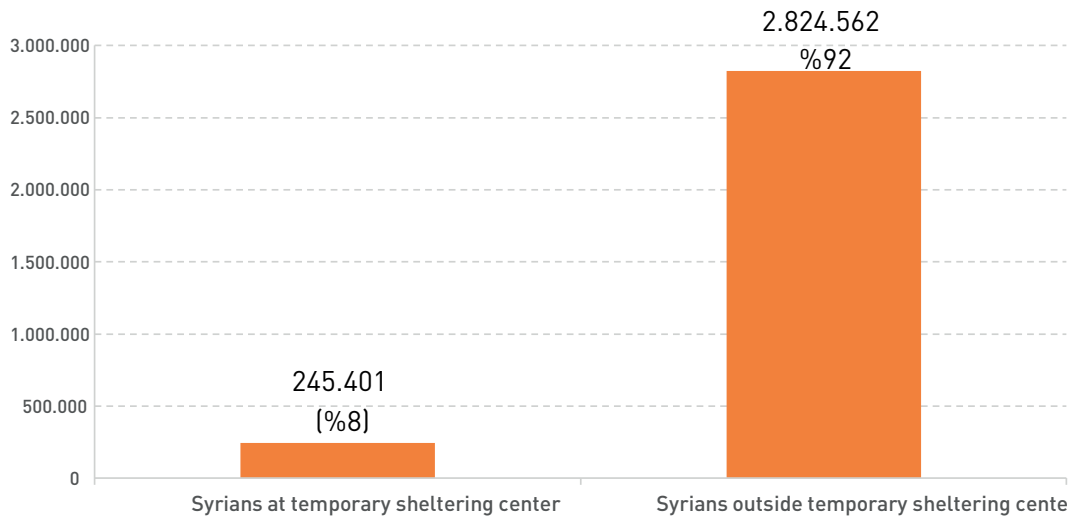


Source: General Directorate of Immigration Management, 2017.

Note: The figure was prepared using data from the General Directorate of Migration Management updated on June 29 2017.

With the rapid growth in the Syrian population in Turkey, TSCs became insufficient to satisfy increasing demands. At the onset of the war some Syrians stayed with their relatives in Turkey, however, with protracted conflict Syrians began to relocate all across Turkey. As Figure 3 shows, Syrians mostly live in cities near the Syrian border and the largest cities in other regions such as Istanbul, Ankara, İzmir and Bursa. Figure 3 shows that 1.3 million Syrians live in Şanlıurfa, Hatay, Gaziantep and Kilis alone. Syrians in these four cities constitute 42% of the total Syrian population in Turkey. When cities near the border, such as Adana, Mersin, Mardin and Kahramanmaraş, are included, this number reaches 1.8 million, corresponding to 58% of the total Syrian population. The largest number of Syrians live in Turkey's largest city, Istanbul. As Figure 3 shows, there are 488,000 Syrians living in Istanbul. In addition, there are 113,000 Syrians in İzmir and 112,000 in Bursa. Meanwhile, Ankara hosts 79,500 Syrians, while Konya is home to 78,500. 87% of the Syrians, which corresponds to 2.7 million, live in the aforementioned 13 cities. Figure 3 indicates that there are less Syrians in cities of the Black Sea and Eastern Anatolia regions which have lower populations and limited employment prospects. The cities with the least number of Syrians are Bartın (41), Bayburt (42), Artvin (45), Sinop (84), Iğdır (85), Gümüşhane (87), Tunceli (107) and Ardahan (123).

**Figure 3**. Distribution of Syrians in Turkey by city



Source: General Directorate of Immigration Management, 2017.

Note: The figure was prepared using data from the General Directorate of Immigration Management, last updated on June 29 2017.

Another very important piece of data indicating the distribution of Syrians in Turkey is the ratio of the Syrian population according to the city's population. In this respect, Kilis, a city bordering Syria, has a Syrian population that is almost on par with the local population (97%). Looking at the ratio of Syrians to the local populace in each city, it can be seen that these rates correspond to 25% in Hatay, 22% in Şanlıurfa, 16% in Gaziantep, 12% in Mardin and 9% in Osmaniye and Mersin (Figure 3). These are the cities with the highest ratio of Syrians to locals. On the other hand, Bartın, Antalya, Artvin, Giresun, Sinop, Iğdır, Bayburt, Gümüşhane, Kars, Zonguldak, Kütahya and Erzincan have a ratio below 0.1% (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4.** Distribution of registered Syrians by city (cities with more than 10,000 Syrians)
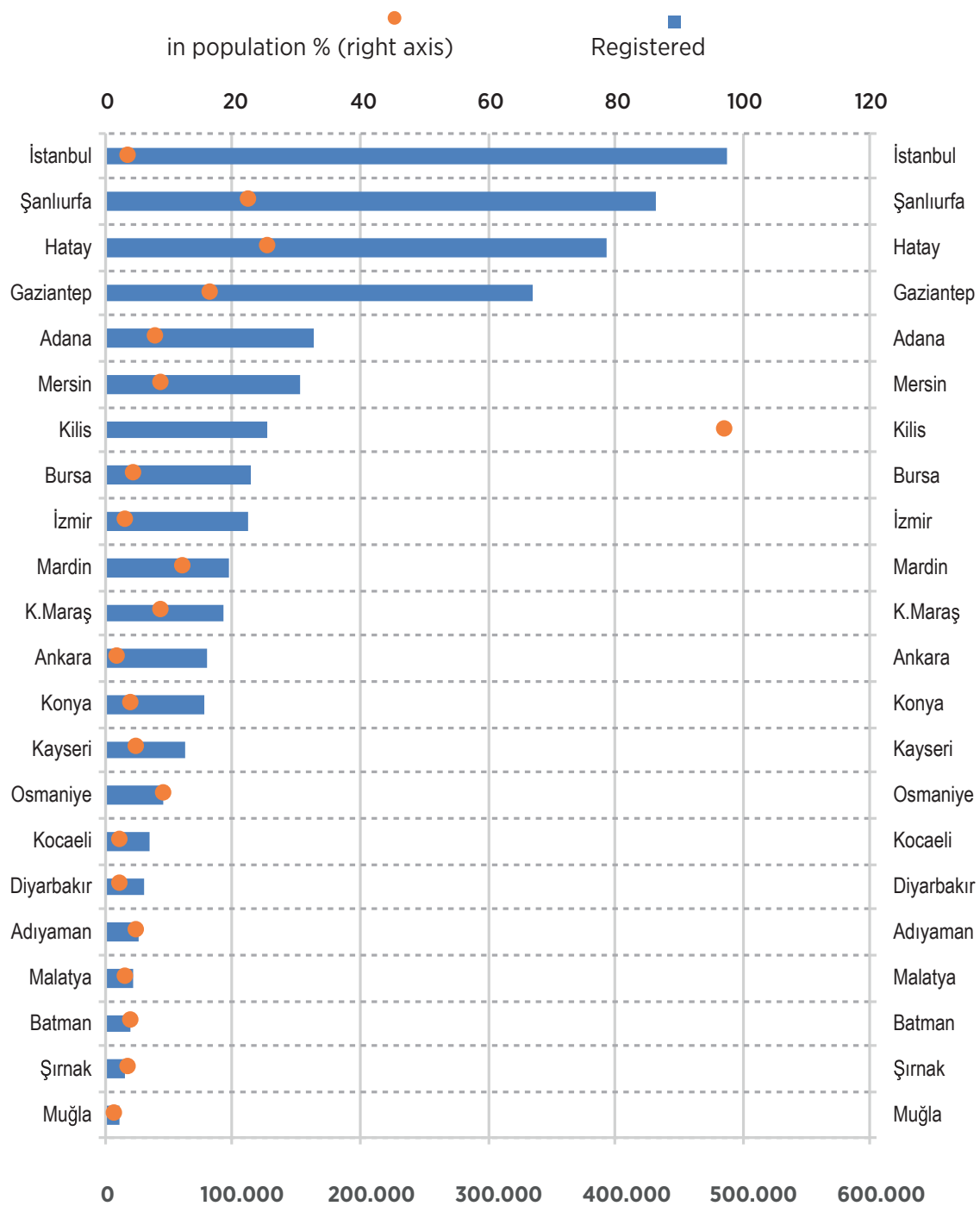


Source: General Directorate of Immigration Management, 2017

Note: This figure was prepared using data from the General Directorate of Immigration Management, last updated on June 29 2017.

**Figure 5.** Distribution of registered Syrians by city (cities with less than 10,000 Syrians)
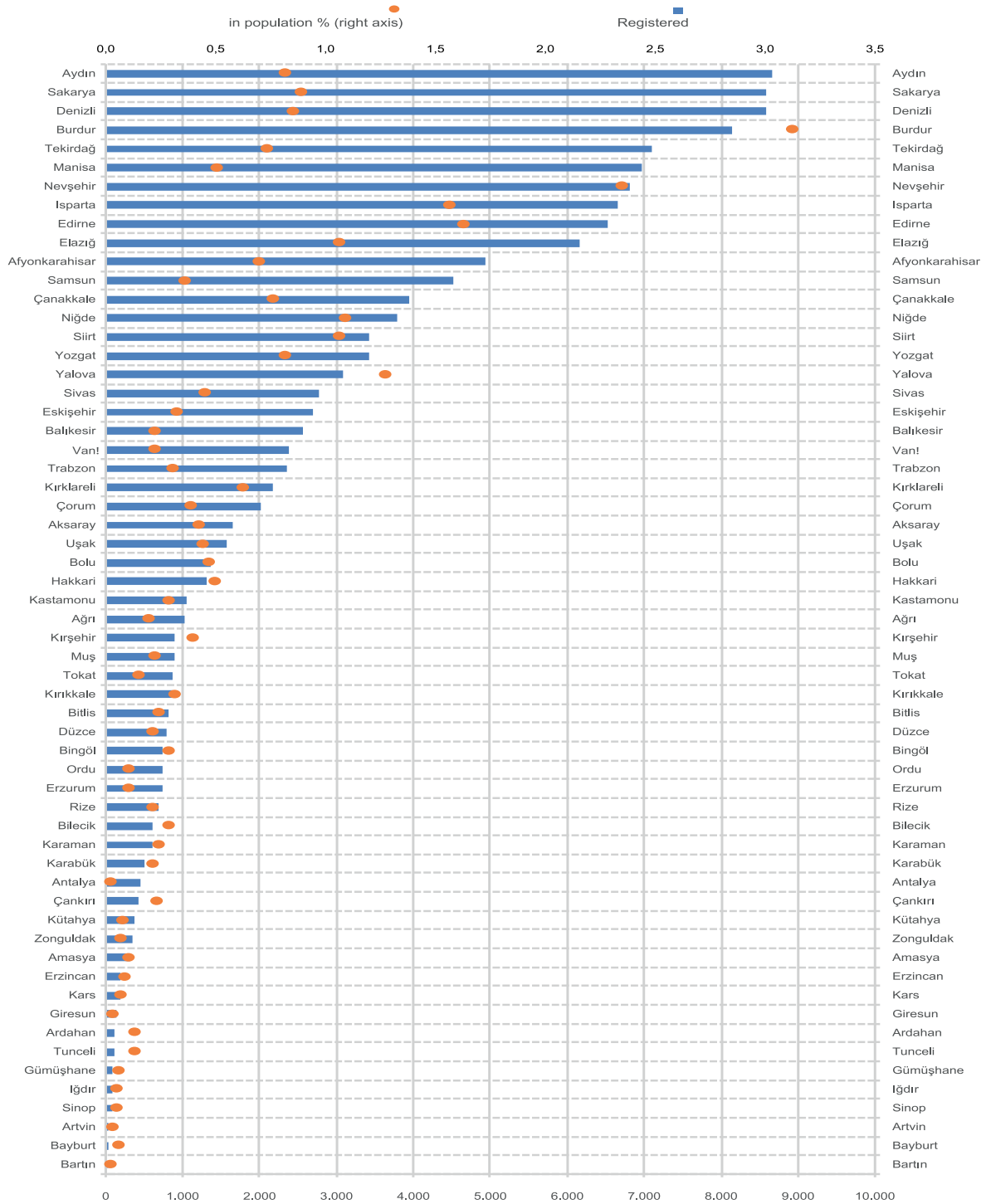


Source: General Directorate of Immigration Management, 2017.

Note: This figure was prepared by using data from the General Directorate of Immigration Management, data last updated on June 29 2017.

Looking at the Syrian population in Turkey in terms of distribution according to age groups, it can be seen that 45% of males and 47% of females consist of boys and girls under the age of 18. In other words, almost half of the Syrian population in Turkey is under the age of 18. The presence of such a large population of youth testifies to the importance of providing quality education.

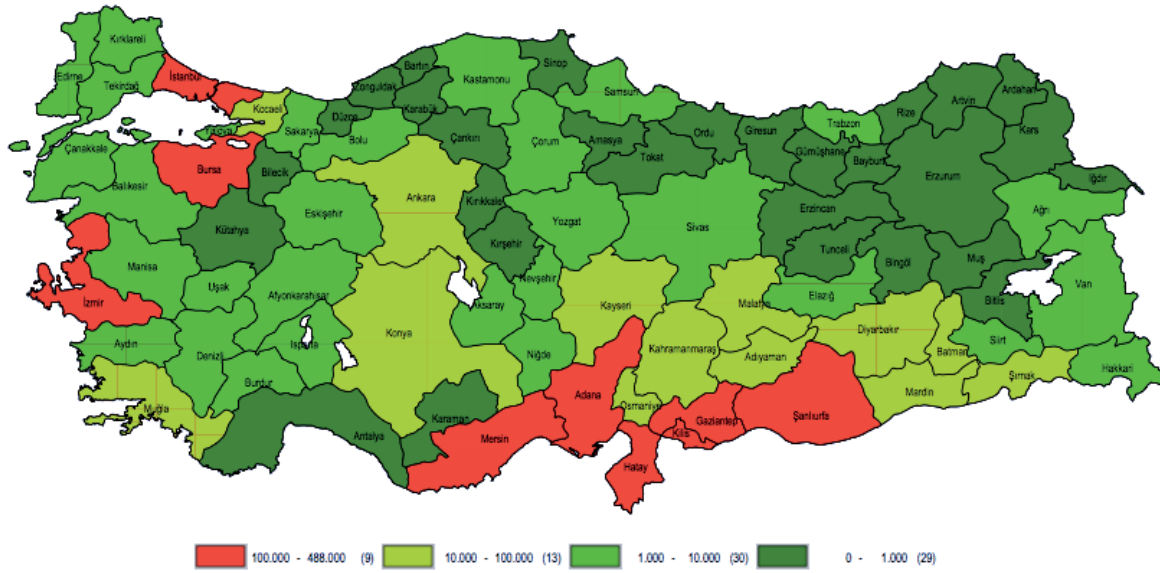**Figure 6.** Population pyramid of Syrians in Turkey
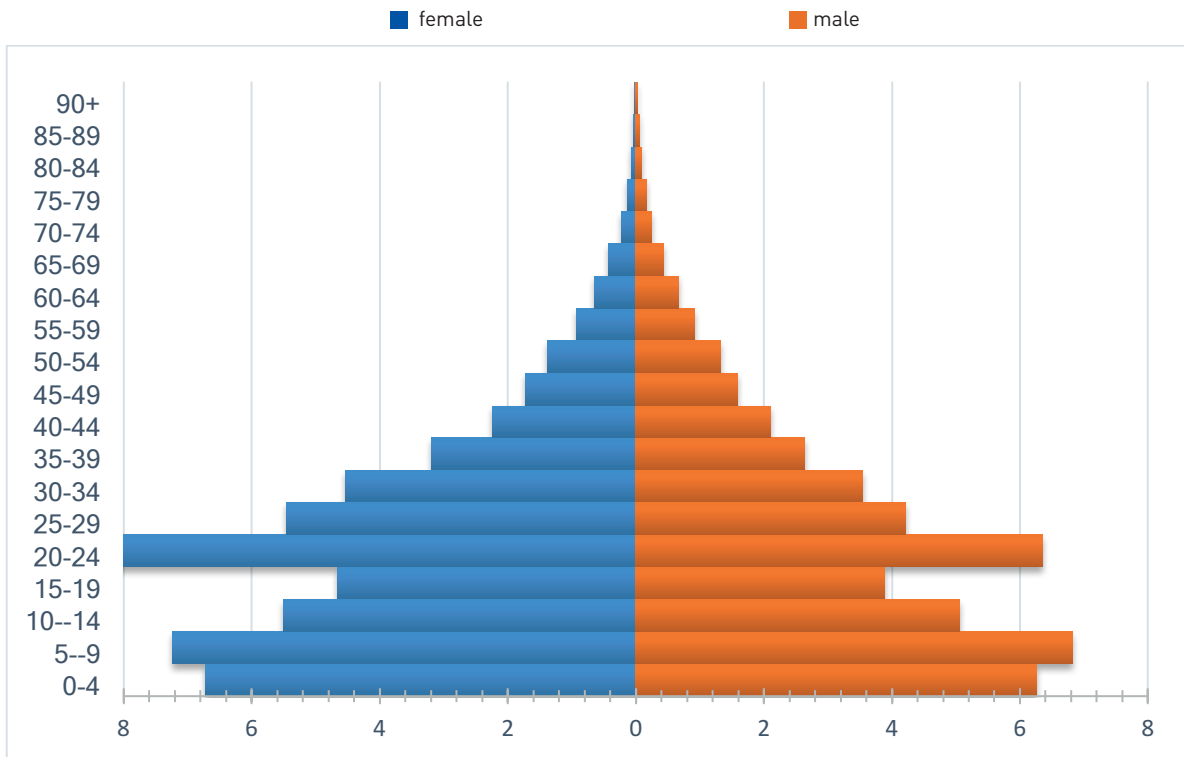


Source: General Directorate of Immigration Management, 2017.

Note: This figure was prepared by using data from the General Directorate of Immigration Management, data last updated on June 29 2017.

The only source of data on city-based differences in schooling rates is MoNE. It is important to note that despite several requests MoNE has not provided adequate and up-to-date data, and thus the report lacks this important data. However, we still have a rough picture of a sort of ranking among cities in terms of schooling ratios (Figure 7 below). On September 15 2017, MoNE announced the total number of schooled children in Turkey. As Table 1 and Table 2 indicate, at the beginning of the 2017-2018 academic year, there were 280,602 Syrian students in 370 TECs and 243,396 Syrian students in 14,742 public schools all over the country. In addition, 236 students are being trained as apprentices, while 8,235 Syrian students continue to study in open education institutions. There are 976,200 school-age Syrian children, 532,469 being registered in schools. The bottom line regarding the schooling rate is this: Among the Syrian school-age children in Turkey, 54.55% are schooled.

**Table 2.** Number of schooled children and the types of schools they are registered in

| Registration | Number of registered students | Number of schools registered to |
|---|---|---|
| E-Okul | 243.396 | 14.742 |
| YÖBİS | 280.602 | 370 |
| Apprenticeship | 236 | |
| Open education | 8.235 | |
| **Total** | **532.469** | |

Source: MoNE.

Note: Compiled using MoNE data from September 18 2017.

**Table 3.** Schooling rate of Syrian children

| Total school-age population | Total number of student | Total schooling rates |
|---|---|---|
| 976.200 | 532.469 | %54,55 |

Source: MoNE.

Note: Compiled using MoNE data from September 18 2017.

Looking at the breakdown of the total school-age Syrian population by city, we see that it is highest in cities like Şanlıurfa (15.16%), Istanbul (14.55%), Hatay (12.81%) and Gaziantep (11.67%) (this is not surprising because these cities are densely populated with Syrians (see Figure 6)). As it was previously stated, these are also the cities with the highest number of double-shift schools (Eğitim-Bir-Sen, 2016).

**Figure 7.** Ranking of cities by the burden of school-age Syrian population (%)
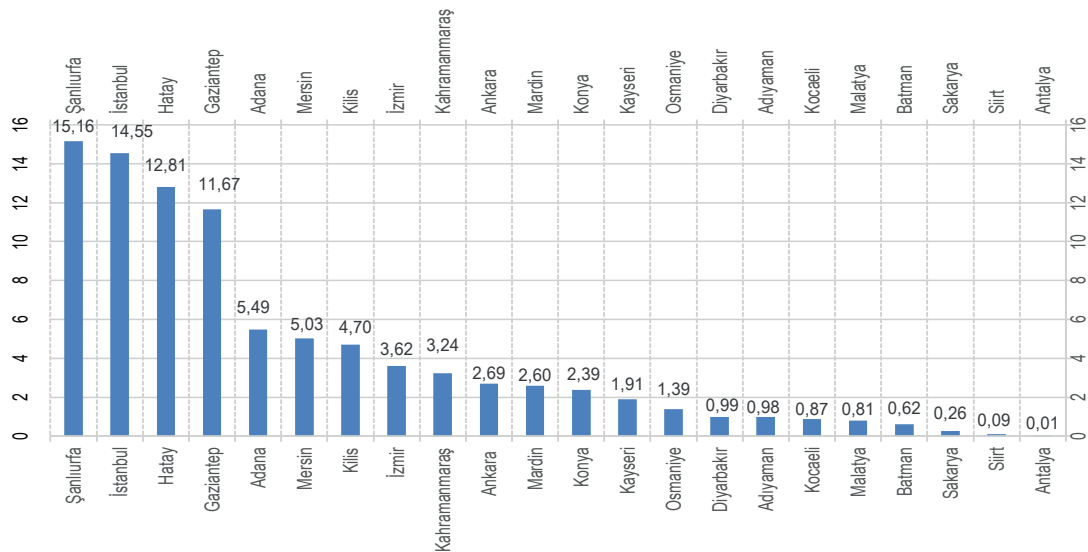


Source: MoNE.

Note: Compiled using MoNE data from March 16 2017.

Figure 7 ranks cities according to their schooling rates of Syrians. According to the data, Malatya has the highest schooling rate with 72%, while Sakarya, Adıyaman, Gaziantep and Kahramanmaraş all have a rate above 50%. On the other hand, in cities like Hatay, Şanlıurfa, Kilis, Osmaniye, Istanbul and Ankara the schooling rate of Syrian children is below 50%. It is noteworthy that these cities are the ones with the highest number of Syrians. Considering that certain cities have very low schooling rates, initiatives targeting schooling rates should be especially implemented in these cities.

**Figure 8.** Ranking of cities according to the schooling rates of Syrians (%)
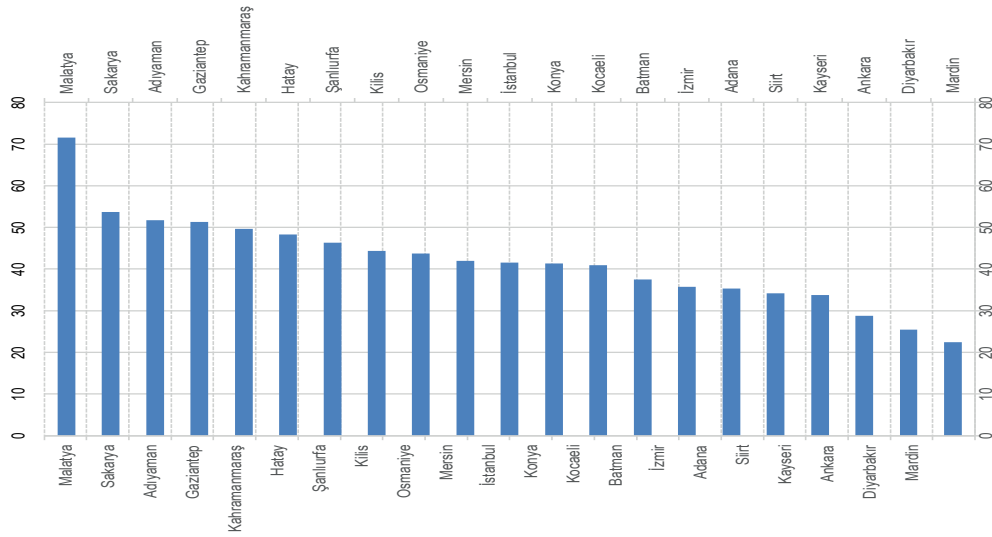


Source: MoNE.

Note: Compiled using MoNE data from March 16 2017.

**Figure 9.** Distribution of Syrian students in public schools according to city (%)
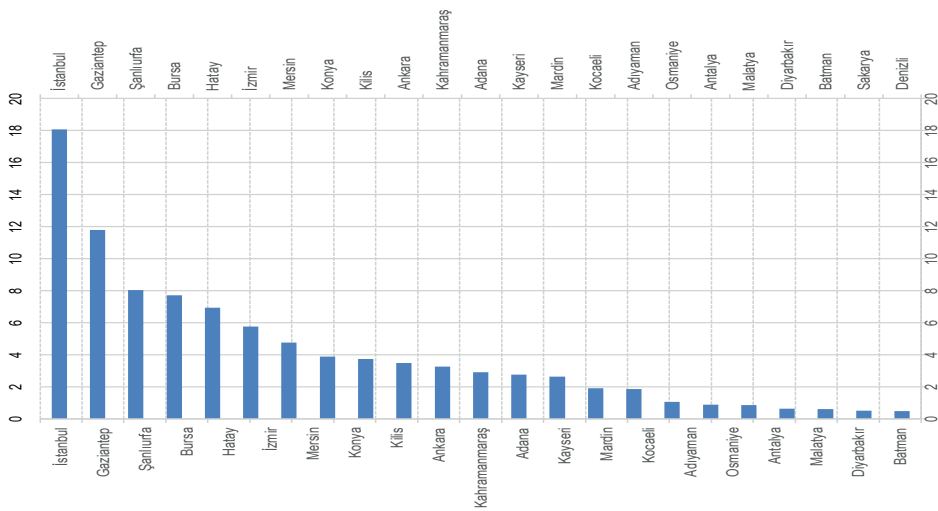


Source: MoNE.

Note: Compiled by using MoNE data from March 16 2017.

In Figure 8, the distribution of Syrian students in public schools according to city (%) is shown. According to the figure, 18% of the schooled Syrian children are being educated in Istanbul, 12% in Gaziantep, 8% in Şanlıurfa and Bursa, and 7% in Hatay.

Figure 9 shows the distribution of Syrian students in TECs by city (%). According to the figure, most of the TEC students are in Şanlıurfa (23%). Şanlıurfa is followed by Hatay (20%), Gaziantep (17%) and Istanbul (12%).

**Figure 10.** Distribution of Syrian students in TECs by city (%)
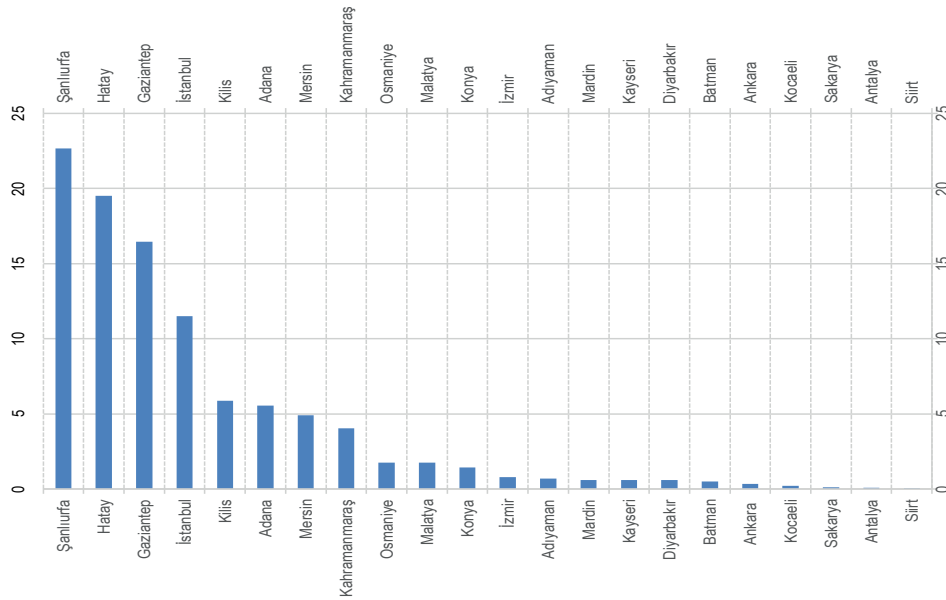


Source: MoNE.

Note: Compiled using MoNE data from March 16 2017

As the graphs indicate, Syrian students reside in cities that have the largest Syrian population. It can be seen that Syrian students are a burden on schools in cities like Şanlıurfa, Hatay and Istanbul because of a lack of infrastructure and as a result these cities require the construction of new school buildings and classrooms. In addition, it can also be foreseen that as students transfer from TECs to public schools, the pressure on public schools will increase.

**CHAPTER 3**

## CHAPTER 3

### Managing the education of Syrian children

This chapter focuses on the measures taken for Syrian children's education and the actors who take part in the planning and implementation of these measures. After examining the administrative and organizational structure of this educational process, the main issues at the administrative level and challenges regarding opportunities will be exhibited. Lastly, some policy considerations regarding the administrative processes of Syrians' education will be put forward.

### 3.1. Facilities, prominent actors and applications

Since their arrival in Turkey, Syrians have put an immense effort into ensuring that their children receive an education. As soon as basic needs had been satisfied, tent schools were established and education was provided to children. Educational activities in these schools were conducted by Syrian volunteer teachers, under the leadership of the Syrian Interim Government with infrastructural support from Turkey. Despite certain infrastructural deficiencies in the camps, education was provided unimpeded. As children's access to schools in camps was facilitated, schooling rates in these camps increased becoming relatively higher compared to the rates outside of camps.[3]

Educational activities outside camps were first initiated when a Syrian teacher who came to Nizip expressed the Syrian children's need for education to the then-President of Religious Affairs Mehmet Görmez. Görmez requested the Mufti of Nizip to arrange a place for Syrian children's education. After a short while, the Turkiye Diyanet Foundation (TDF) became aware of the importance of Syrian children's educational issues and began to support Syrian children's education with the "Farkındayım, Yanıbaşındayım" [I'm Aware and Right Beside You] project. Initiated in two Quranic course facilities in Nizip, educational activities were then transformed into formal education for Syrian children through TDF's initiative when school buildings of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Nizip and Kilis were dedicated to their education. TDF has appointed one deputy mufti in every city to supervise Syrian children's education and as the Quran course facilities fell short in locations which had been heavily populated by Syrians, the foundation requested the provincial directorates of national education to allocate public schools for the education of Syrian children'. The single-shift schools were allocated for Syrian children's education (Topçu, 2017). These schools became the basis of Temporary Education Centers (TECs) that were to be established later.

In the first years of their arrival to Turkey, the Syrian community itself was perceived as the primary actor in the education of Syrian children and MoNE adopted the role of supportive, secondary actor. As it has become clear that the civil war in Syria would not end anytime soon and as the Syrian population in Turkey has continued to increase, Syrians have spread from border cities to all across the country. Accordingly, Syrian children's education has become a prominent issue. After these developments, MoNE began to take on more responsibility for the education of Syrian children. MoNE initially focused on the education of Syrians who lived outside the Temporary Refugee Centers (TSCs) in 2013 and sent a directive to all cities regarding Syrian children's education on April 26 2013. As a result of this directive, the ministry requested the inspection of facilities that were opened by NGOs and local administrations

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3) One of the researchers had visited the tent cities in November 2012 to conduct a field research on educational environments and activities. The said statement relies on the data acquired from the visit and interviews conducted in November 2012.

for Syrian children's education and sociability; these facilities were to be examined in terms of security and adequacy, and any deficiencies found were to be addressed ( MoNE, 2013a). Five months later, with a directive dated September 26 2013, MoNE announced the application regarding Syrian children's education process. According to the directive, Syrian children were to continue their education, those who were forced to discontinue their education were to be recuperated and it was highlighted that they should be educated in any way in order to prevent the loss of years at school in case they would return to their home country or go to a third country. It was requested that supply teachers and teachers with Arabic language skills be assigned to the education of Syrians and be compensated accordingly. Moreover, the ones with teaching certificates and the ones who were capable of teaching but not holding any teaching certificate among Syrians were requested for employment on a voluntary basis, without demanding payment (MoNE, 2013b).

The above-mentioned directive of MoNE targeted the Syrians outside of camps. The number of Syrians in Turkey was around 200,000 in 2013. At that time, Syrians used to reside at TSCs and other accommodation facilities in border cities. It was specified that the curriculum to be implemented in accommodation facilities was to be prepared by the Syrian National Coalition Higher Education Commission, under MoNE's supervision. Moreover, MoNE specified that this curriculum should be enriched with subjects like basic life skills, morale education, liberal education and social skills. It was stated that Syrian citizens of Turkish descent, on the other hand, were allowed to receive education according to the Turkish curriculum and that those who wanted to learn Turkish were to be enabled to do so. In addition, it was expressed that the Syrian families outside of camps with 1st-grade-aged kids should register them to the nearest primary school and that those without a temporary residence permit should be supervised and guided by national and international NGOs to enable them to access education (MoNE, 2013b). It was evident from the details of the directive that the Ministry anticipated the return of Syrians to their homeland within a short period of time. Stemming from this expectation, the education provided at the TECs did not have a full-fledged curriculum; the education program focused primarily on providing psycho-social support to children and supporting their integration into society. Another consequence of this assumption is that MoNE passed on the responsibilities of educating Syrians to national and international education-related NGOs, instead of taking a more active role from the beginning. Lastly, as a result of this directive, the registration of off-camp Syrian kids in public schools was requested for the first time.

The assumption in Turkey was that the war in Syria would come to a rapid resolution and that Syrians would soon be able to return to their country. For this reason, Syrians were not granted a complete legal status. Officially, they were referred to as "guests" and they were treated according to this ambiguous status. In April 2013, Law No.6458 "Law on Foreigners and International Protection" was implemented providing Syrians with Temporary Protection Status. This law granted legal rights to access healthcare, education and social aid. MoNE, on the other hand, prepared a circular dated September 23 2014, entitled "Educational Services for Foreigners", which ensured access to education for Syrian children inside and outside the camps. With this circular, MoNE tried to guide the way in terms of educational services being offered. In this respect, the circular foresaw the foundation of a commission within the ministry led by a deputy under-secretary along with provincial commissions in every city, headed by the provincial deputy directors of national education or department chiefs. Provincial commissions were

tasked with determining the processes of equivalence, student transfer and placement. Having a foreign credential was deemed adequate for the equivalency, transfer and placement of Syrian students. The educational level of those lacking education certificates was to be determined through written and oral exams before students were placed in suitable schools (MoNE, 2014).

An important novelty with the circular regarding Syrian children's education was the permission to establish TECs under the control of MoNE with the approval of the city governors. Teaching Turkish language was defined as an essential function of the TECs and their general purpose was defined as follows:

> [F]oreign students who have had to abandon their education as a result of having to flee their homes in Syria shall continue their education here, in order to prevent prolonged gaps in their education whether they return to their country or continue their education at any level in institutions associated with our Ministry. To ensure a unified application, [of TECs education system] the activities in question will be determined by the Ministry and shall be conducted over weekly course schedules and education programs (MoNE, 2014).

The circular also required appointing Turkish teachers and foreign language teachers. It also specified that an Ethics Agreement should be signed with Syrian teachers who are to work on a voluntary basis and that they should be compelled to act in accordance to this agreement. Issues such as providing material, supporting morale and occupational support to voluntary teachers by cooperating with partners along with supporting students who are in need of material or morale support were also included in the circular. The circular clearly underscored that procedures regarding students must be performed systematically over e-school and Information System for Foreign Students (YÖBİS [ISFS]) respectively (MoNE, 2014). With this circular, Syrian children were granted the right to register in public schools and TECs with their foreign credentials (Emin, 2015).

Before the circular, under the leadership of teachers and with the support of NGOs and volunteers, Syrians were being educated in tents, houses, stores and warehouses. They continued their educational activities in makeshift locations in order to keep up with their education, and as a way of keeping themselves preoccupied and giving their lives meaning while in Turkey (Topçu, 2017).

Since the beginning of the 2016-2017 academic year, MoNE has put a halt to new registrations to preschools as well as to the 1st, 5th and 9th grades at the TECs.[4] The newcomers to these grades at TECs are now redirected to public schools. This is because MoNE has decided to close down all of the TECs in an attempt to integrate Syrian kids into the education systems in public schools. In this respect, TECs continue to offer educational activities with the exclusion of preschool, 1st grade and 5th grade education. Syrian children are given the opportunity to register in public schools.

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4) The compulsory education in Turkey is 12 years and covers all grades from the 1st grade up to the 12th grade. The system is known as 4+4+4. MoNE's abandoning the new registrations to the TECs for the 1st, 5th and 9th grades is functional in gradually closing down the TECs since each of those grades corresponds to primary, secondary and high school respectively.  1st grade is the beginning of the primary school, 5th grade is the first year of the elementary school and the 9th grade is the first year of the high school. It should be noted that, per ministry's instruction dated July 19 2017, any Syrian children who will register to 9th grade and will attend that grade for the first time in Turkey (i.e. a new comer of 9th grade school age) should be directed to either a suitable TEC or to a public school, depending on his or her Turkish language skills ( MoNE, 2017).

### 3.1.1. MoNE's organizational structure with respect to educational services provided to Syrian children

From the very beginning, when Syrians first began immigrating to Turkey, a deputy undersecretary of MoNE was tasked with coordinating Syrian children's education. However, no institutional structure has been established within MoNE's central and provincial administration. This type of institutionalization only became possible after the circular dated September 23, 2014, titled "Educational Services for Foreigners". According to the Circular, a ministry commission would be founded with the lead of a deputy undersecretary and the deputy undersecretary would be tasked with coordinating Syrian children's education. A unit tasked with this duty was not specified after the circular. With the foundation of the Immigration and Emergency Education Department under the umbrella of the General Directorate for Life Long Learning in May 16, 2016, a unit to manage Syrian children's education was finally established. The Immigration and Emergency Education Department is tasked with planning, coordinating, applying and supervising education during emergencies. The term "emergency" has been expanded to encompass immigration. Thus, the education of Syrians in Turkey has become a prominent working field for the department. Procedures regarding Syrian children's educations are handled by the General Directorate for Life Long Learning and associated departments. For instance, EU-funded Project for Promoting Integration of Syrian Children into Turkish Education System (PICTES) is managed by the Immigration and Emergency Education Department.

In addition to MoNE's central administration, there is now an administrative structure at the local level as well. A particular circular has been delivered by MoNE to impose the foundation of provincial commissions in every city. Those commissions are now headed by provincial deputy directors of national education or by the chiefs of departments. In other words, there are provincial deputy directors of national education and department chiefs that have been assigned in every city that coordinate the education of Syrian refugees. This structure goes further into the district level. Founded under the local branches of Life Long Learning, the Immigration and Emergency Education Departments are now the most prominent actors in Syrian children's education at the local level. In addition, these commissions founded under the provincial and district directorates of national education make decisions regarding the placement of students in schools. These commissions are also responsible for providing certificates of equivalency and managing students' applications.

 MoNE has appointed certain teachers as "coordinators" in order to organize and monitor Syrian children's education more closely. These coordinators are responsible for keeping TECs' educational activities on par with MoNE's standards and for managing communication between TECs and MoNE. There is at least one coordinator for every TEC. In cooperation with provincial and district directorates of national education and Immigration and Emergency Education branches, the education coordinators carry out tasks like coordinating Syrian children's education, observing the provision of education and contributing to on-site administration.

### 3.1.2. YÖBİS

In 2014, MoNE developed a system called YÖBİS in order to track the registration, success and absence of foreign students (including Syrian children) residing in Turkey. Working similarly to the system for Turkish students which has been in use for years (i.e. e-okul (e-school)), and used only in TECs, YÖBİS is an electronic portal that enables the management, observation and assessment of Syrian children's education digitally. Information regarding a Syrian child's education can easily be accessed thanks to this system. The transfer of TEC students to public schools and procedures following their graduation from TECs are all carried out over YÖBİS.

### 3.1.3. Good practice: PICTES

As it has become apparent that managing the education of Syrian refugees with temporary policies is no longer functional, important initiatives were implemented by MoNE to increase the schooling rates among Syrian children as well as to ease the integration of school children by way of permanent policies. One such initiative is PICTES. This two-year project was implemented under the the FRIT agreement signed between MoNE and the Delegation of the European Union to Turkey on October 3, 2016. Within PICTES framework, the EU has promised to contribute 300 million Euros towards Syrian children's integration into the Turkish education system. Covering 23 cities with the highest Syrian population, the project aims to provide activities such as language teaching, the provision of teachers and support staff, counseling and monitoring-evaluation activities (General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, 2017a). Turkish Lecturers and School Counselors were employed as temporary education personnel. These teachers and counselors who are contracted on a yearly basis are working at official schools of MoNE, TECs and Public Education Centers (Halk Eğitim Merkezi). The salaries of these personnel are covered by PICTES.

Furthermore, PICTES' activities are not limited to contributing to personnel employment; as part of the project, course materials are also analyzed. Even though there are still issues with course materials and the curriculum, many problems have been identified and eliminated with respect to the criteria set forth by the Board of Education (BoE). The orientation of Turkish Lecturers and School Counselors has also been organized within PICTES framework. They were trained on subjects such as language teaching methods, psycho-social support and the sociology of immigration. Similarly, a workshop aiming to make up for losses in school subjects, especially in Turkish language courses, was organized for Syrian children in the summer. Moreover, a request has been made for the provision Syrian children's school supplies and the transportation of 30,500 Syrian children.

### 3.1.4. Educational environments and teaching materials

Various buildings and physical environments are utilized to help Syrian refugees access education. Official MoNE schools  come first in terms of supplying classrooms and facilities. Public school facilities are used for two purposes. Firstly, they serve as TECs. Many school buildings have been arranged for double-shift sessions in neighborhoods heavily populated by Syrians. These schools provide education to Turkish students in the first shift and Syrians in the second shift. Each of these schools is officially registered with two names. For instance, there is a school named Vali Hilmi Tolun Secondary School

in Kahramanmaraş. In the morning, Turkish students are provided education according to Turkish curriculum, by Turkish teachers. In the second shift, Syrian children are provided Arabic education by Syrian teachers, in addition to 15-hour Turkish language training. For this reason, the school is officially registered as Vali Hilmi Tolun Secondary School Temporary Education Center, referring to its second shift function. In other words, the second name is used in official affairs concerning TECs, while the first one is used in the official documents regarding the education of Turkish students. A total number of 201 public schools in Turkey are utilized in this way. In addition to this, TECs operate in 46 buildings provided by the Disaster and Emergency Management Center (DEMC), 11 provided by municipalities, 20 by other public institutions, 25 by NGOs and in 84 privately owned buildings which are rented for the education of Syrians. In total, there are 432 TECs in Turkey devoted to the education of Syrian refugees[5] (General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, 2017b).

The inclusion process of Syrian children into the education system began at a critical time as Turkey was already dealing with problems related to shortcomings in the total number of classrooms available. What is more, the cities hosting the highest number of Syrian refugees are the same cities in which double-shift education is more prevalent. Turkey continues to build new classrooms with its own resources. In addition, UNICEF and other countries such as Kuwait, New Zealand and Taiwan have also pooled resources for the construction of a limited number schools and classrooms (General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, 2017b).

### 3.1.5. Budget and finance

The burden is heavy as a significant portion of the funds used for the education of Syrian students is provided by Turkey. Almost all of the expenses of these students, as well as school maintenance and teachers, are covered by MoNE. Syrian students continuing their education in public schools share all the same rights as Turkish students. All students in public schools receive textbooks free of charge.

Per the agreement between Turkey and the EU, the framework FRIT was established for the transfer of 3 billion Euros in financial aid for Syrians. However, it is known that there have been challenges in transferring the fund in question. So far, only 300 million has been transferred to Turkey through FRIT.

The expenses of the education provided by TECs are covered by Turkey and institutions like UNICEF and the EU along with national and international NGOs. Turkey provides the physical and technical infrastructure for TECs. Financial aid for Syrian volunteer teachers is granted by UNICEF; Syrian volunteer teachers receive TL1,300 monthly (General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, 2017b). Even though this amount was set to match the minimum wage in Turkey, NGOs provide an additional sum to teachers at certain TECs because of the rise in minimum wage and because the amount allocated has proven insufficient. For instance, research has revealed that the Tzu Chi Foundation grants an extra TL800 salary to teachers who work at 6 TEC locations in Istanbul's Sultangazi district. This kind of support is very important but a heavy burden still rests on the Turkish state since the staff including Turkish teachers, coordinators and school administrators are chosen from among MoNE employees and their salary is provided for by Turkish state. PICTES is helpful in many respects including the provision of salaries for the newly employed Turkish Lecturers and School Counselors.

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5) A recent data provided by MoNE on September 15, 2017 shows that the total number of TECs all over the country is 370. This indicates that there is a decrease in the number of TECs and this is quite in consent with the MoNE's policy towards converting all of the TECs into public schools.

One of the most significant components of TECs' budget is the employment and salaries of support staff. For instance, janitorial services are especially crucial for TECs in double-shift schools. Research shows that there is a tendency among the first-shift communities (Turkish students and staffs) to attribute issues with the schools' cleanliness to Syrian children. Taking responsibility on this matter, TDF has disclosed that they also paid the salaries of many members of the support staff at TECs. In addition, the employment of 1200 janitors and security guards has also been planned within the scope of PICTES (General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, 2017b).

Another issue is the provision of school supplies to students studying at TECs and equipment aid to TECs. In this respect, UNICEF provides aid for the technological and physical infrastructure of TECs. Field interviews also reveal that supplies in the teacher's lounge and teaching materials at TECs are also provided by UNICEF. In addition, school supplies were distributed to students by UNICEF. It was observed that national and international NGOs were especially helpful in providing children with school supplies and clothing. In rare cases foreign resources are mobilized to support the education of Syrian refugees but the quantity is insufficient. The Korean government has distributed computers, photocopy machines, projectors and printers to 120 public schools with the highest population of Syrian students. In addition, 16% of PICTES budget (48 million) is dedicated to expenses for equipment, material and resources (General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, 2017b).

Another fund created for Syrian children is the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE). This project aims to increase the schooling rate of children through a small stipend for children. With a $34 million contribution from the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations' (ECHO), this program is expected to reach 230,000 children by the end of 2017. At the time of the preparation of this report in June 2017 56,000 children had already received conditional cash support. This program targets children being educated at both public schools and TECs. During the academic year, schoolgirls from preschool through to 8th grade receive a stipend of TL40 per month, while boys receive TL35 per month. At the high school level, the amount increases to TL 60 for females and TL50 for male students. In addition, it is planned to make an additional one-time payment of TL100 for each child in September and January (Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı [Ministry of Family and Social Policies], 2017; UNICEF, 2017). During the research stage, it was discovered that the Tzu Chi Foundation has started a program targeting working children under the age of 14. The Tzu Chi Foundation was able to successfully sent 256 children back to school from the labor force, by providing financial support of equal amount to the children's monthly earnings (TL400-800). The Tzu Chi Foundation continues to provide this financial support to children.

One of the most important obstructions to Syrian children's access to education is the sheer distance between the kids' homes and the TECs. As a result, the transportation costs are usually unaffordable for the kids and their families. The distance matters in terms of time needed for walking as well. At this point, providing transportation support to children is crucial. Research revealed that some NGOs are already contributing to solving this problem. International Organization for Migration (IOM), for instance, supports Syrian children's transportation in Şanlıurfa and Konya. In addition, the Tzu Chi Foundation provides transportation support to children in Sultangazi. Likewise, 10% of PICTES (30 million) is dedicated to transportation costs (General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, 2017b).

In short, in addition to Turkey, it can be seen that various countries, international institutions along with national and international NGOs all provide diverse support for children. However, one cannot assert that this support is adequate. Indeed, as a part of the Syria Regional Response Plan (RRP), certain donors (countries and institutions) have promised financial aid to the UN; however, it is definite that there are certain issues in their commitment. These shortcomings have been evident since the beginning of the crisis. For instance, only 43% of UNICEF's education programs were funded in mid-August 2014 (Watkings and Zycks, 2014). The general picture has not changed much since then. Therefore, the international community must be more active in supporting Syrian children's education. Despite its prominent investments, Turkey cannot overcome issues regarding Syrian children's education by itself. As previously mentioned, the cities with the highest Syrian population are also the places where Turkey already had existing difficulties in establishing an educational infrastructure.

### 3.1.6. Curriculum

When Syrians first arrived to Turkey, expressions that supported the al-Assad family and negatively portrayed Turkey were removed from the curriculum and textbooks that were being used for the education of Syrian refugees in tent cities. In 2013, TDF and Syria Education Association systematically examined 203 books, covering primary and secondary education, and revised them. Photos of the al-Assad family, i.e. the actual people responsible for the displacement of Syrian Refugees, were replaced with more suitable photos (Topçu, 2017). Led by the Bülbülzade Foundation, a team consisting of 10 Turkish and 10 Syrian academics and teachers examined the curriculum and textbooks in detail in 2015 and found supportive expressions for the legitimacy of the current Syrian administration. The curriculum and textbooks in question also included wrong, negative and derogatory expressions about the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, the host society. In those textbooks, the Ottomans and Seljuks were excluded from Syria's history and the narratives of common history and culture were completely disregarded. Moreover, the textbooks displayed highly provocative expressions regarding Turkey's territorial integrity. With revisions, expressions legitimizing the al-Assad administration were removed from textbooks. In addition, negative expressions about Ottoman and Turkish history were also revised and have been replaced with more peaceful statements promoting peace between the refugees and the host community. Information about Turkey's industrial, technological and economic development were also included in the textbooks (BEKAM, 2015). After the detection of the aforementioned expressions in textbooks, all existing textbooks were collected and new textbooks were prepared (NGO2.Gaziantep.; AFAD).

Syrian children studying in public schools are subject to their curriculum and the weekly schedule. Table 2 and Table 3 illustrate weekly schedules at TECs. Arabic-medium education is provided at TECs. However, during 2016-2017 academic year, 15 out of 30 hours of classes were dedicated to Turkish language learning for primary education students; for secondary education students, on the other hand, 15 out of 35 hours of class were dedicated to Turkish language learning. Since the primary objective for the new academic year is the integration of Syrian children into the Turkish education system, Turkish language learning was prioritized. As a result, less time is left for mathematics, natural sciences and foreign language at the primary school level. As it can be seen from Table 5, at the high school level, 2 hours are dedicated to mathematics and 2 hours to natural sciences, while foreign language was rendered an elective course (General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, 2017). With the exception of Turkish language, all courses are taught by Syrian teachers according to Syrian curriculum at TECs.

**Table 4.** Weekly schedule of TEC primary and middle schools

| Courses | Grades | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Primary | | | Middle | | | |
| | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| **Compulsory courses** | | | | | | | |
| Turkish | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 |
| Arabic | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Mathematics | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Social studies | 3 | 3 | | | | | |
| Natural sciences | | | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Culture of Religion and Knowledge of Morality | | | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Visual Arts | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Music | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Games and Physical Activities | 2 | 2 | 2 | | | | |
| Physical Education and Sports | | | | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Traffic Safety | | | 1 | | | | |
| Free Activities | 2 | 2 | | | | | |
| Counseling and Career Planning | | | | | | | 1 |
| **Total Compulsory Courses** | **30** | **30** | **30** | **27** | **27** | **27** | **28** |
| **Elective courses** | | | | | | | |
| The Holy Quran (4) | | | | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) |
| Prophet Muhammad's Life (1) | | | | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) |
| Foreign Language (Languages approved by Cabinet Decree) (4) | | | | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) |
| Brain Teasers (1) | | | | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) |
| Drama (1) | | | | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) |
| Reading Skills (1) | | | | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) |
| Applications of Mathematics (1) | | | | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) |
| | | | | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) |
| **Number of Selectable Class Hours** | | | | **3** | **3** | **3** | **3** |
| **Total Class Hours** | **30** | **30** | **30** | **30** | **30** | **30** | **30** |

Source: General Directorate of Life Long Learning, 2017.

**Table 5.** Weekly schedule of TEC secondary education

| Courses | | Grades | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Highschool | | | |
| | | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| **Compulsory Courses** | Turkish | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 |
| | Arabic | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| | Culture of Religion and Knowledge of Morality | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| | Mathematics | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| | Physics | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| | Chemistry | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | Biology | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | Physical Education | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| | Visual Arts/Music | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | Traffic and First Aid | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | Health | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | **Total Compulsory** | **30** | **30** | **30** | **30** |
| **Elective courses** | Turkish Language and Literature (4) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) |
| | The Holy Quran (4) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) |
| | Prophet Muhammad's Life (1) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) |
| | Foreign Language (Languages approved by Cabinet Decree) (4) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) |
| | Diction and Oration (1) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) | 1/(2) |
| | **Total Elective Courses** | **5** | **5** | **5** | **5** |
| | **Total Courses** | **35** | **35** | **35** | **35** |

Source: General Directorate of Life Long Learning, 2017.

15 hours of Turkish language learning will be critical for Syrian children's integration into Turkish society and the education system. However, dedicating less time to other courses because of Turkish will cause Syrian children to lag behind the curriculum. In other words, while other high schools in Turkey dedicate 6 hours to mathematics weekly, TECs dedicate only 2 hours. Similarly, while other high schools in Turkey dedicates 4 hours to foreign language weekly, TECs dedicate only 1 or 2 hours to foreign language. For this reason, there should be make-up sessions for those educated in TECs.

### 3.1.7. Graduation and accreditation

Turkey's education system has a suitable set of legislations for the education of children who take refuge in Turkey due to war or emergencies without any credentials. According to Accreditation Regulations, in order to assess the level of education, MoNE can conduct a placement examination for those who are unable to provide the required documents because of war or other emergencies. The regulation states that the provincial commissions may test students' level of education through written and oral examinations along with an application; primary school students are tested in Turkish, mathematics and natural sciences and technology, while secondary school students are tested in language and discourse, mathematics and natural sciences (physics, chemistry and biology). Secondary students in vocational or technical schools, on the other hand, are to be tested in language and discourse along with their field of study. Accreditation is given after the examination; students possessing this document are allowed to study at any school designated appropriate for their level of education (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Denklik Yönetmeliği [MoNE's Ordinance for Equivalence], 2004). In this respect, children who do not possess the required documents as a result of having been victimized by war have the right to study at a suitable school after entering the placement exam and acquiring accreditation.

The accreditation regulation stipulates that the criteria for accreditation should be determined by BoE and that the procedures and processes regarding accreditation should be conducted by provincial directorates of national education. Even though the accreditation processes are explained in detail in the accreditation regulations, from 2014 onwards, many questions about the process have been relayed to the BoE from provincial directorates of national education. In order to further clarify the processes and procedures of accreditation for Syrian children, BoE has sent numerous bulletins to provincial directorates. These bulletins mostly concern the completion of 12th grade and graduation.

In the first bulletin sent by BoE on July 9 2015, it was announced that a central examination was to be held on June 27, 2015 for Syrian and Iraqi students who have either concluded or will be concluding their education at TECs or other educational institutions in the 2015-2016 academic year and that the Syrian Interim Government's certification examinations were finalized. The ministry underscored that accreditations must be conducted according to the result of said examination (BoE, 2015a). In another bulletin dated August 18, 2015, it was requested to provide temporary accreditation certificates to those who were applying to universities and having issues with residence permits. Secondly, this same bulletin also requested the inspection of schools established by the Syrian Interim Government's Ministry of Education and Libya Interim Government's Ministry of Education, which follow the respective curricula of their countries, in order to determine whether they were compliant with the legislation. In addition, students who received documents from the aforementioned schools were to go through accreditation processes and then transition to public schools (BoE, 2015b).

Accreditations of Syrians were provided quickly in the early years of the war. However, as the number of Syrian students grew, many issues regarding diplomas began to emerge. In response, TDF made an agreement with Libyan Schools to resolve Syrian children's diploma issues and the Libyan School agreed to provide diplomas to those educated according to the Syrian curriculum after the completion of

an examination. Similarly, the Syrian Education Association met with the Libyan Embassy and decided to implement a Libyan curriculum. In turn, Libya agreed to provide diplomas to Syrian students in Turkey after their examinations; meanwhile, Turkey agreed to accredit these diplomas. Because of issues such as forgery, MoNE decided to take responsibility for the process by holding examinations and accrediting diplomas itself (Topçu, 2017).

Since 2015, MoNE has accredited students who pass the High School Proficiency and Accreditation Exam for Foreign Students (HSPAEFS [YÖLYDS]) and the Temporary Education Centers High School Proficiency and Accreditation Exam (TECHSPAE [GEMLYDS]).  In 2016, 160 questions were asked in TECHSPAE and 180 minutes were allotted for the exam. The exam questions were distributed by subject as follows: 40 mathematics, 40 natural sciences (physics, chemistry and biology), 30 Arabic, 10 English/French, 10 geography, 10 history, 10 philosophy and 10 religious sciences questions. Coefficients for the questions vary according to quantitative and, verbal types and are equally-weighed; those who obtain 50 out of 100 and above are considered successful (MoNE, 2016).

Another important decision was taken on November 11, 2016 for Syrian students who were either unable to enter the exam or who failed it. As a result of this decision, students who finished 12th grade at TECs and were not successful in the accreditation exam were to be "registered to Open Education High School with their accreditation certificates; if they can successfully complete at least 2 courses in these schools, then they will be considered as graduates (and provided with a diploma accordingly)". In this bulletin, it was stated that students who are in 12th grade at TECs should be registered to Open Education High School with the provided accreditation certificate and that these students should be provided with a diploma if they graduate, with the condition of entering exams for at least one term. Moreover, it was expressed that TEC students in the 9th, 10th and 11th grades could register to Open Education High School. It was also stated that students in these grades who are currently receiving an education in schools established by the Syrian Interim Government's Ministry of Education, Libyan Interim Government's Ministry of Education and Iraq's Ministry of Education should be accredited and transferred into public schools. Moreover, it was underscored that children leaving camps should be accredited according to their existing documents (BoE, 2016). In one of the meetings with the Ministry which took place in the context of the research, it was expressed that TECHSPAE and HSPAEFS would longer be administered as access to open education is now provided.

The fairly complicated accreditation and graduation processes could be simplified in the following way: A Syrian student who has successfully finished 12th grade at a TEC, registers to Open Education High School (in case he/she did not enter TECHSPAE or was unsuccessful in that exam). Then, he/she is expected to enter the exams of two courses of his/her choice. If he/she is successful in these exams, he/she will receive a high school diploma. The details of this process are the following: Upon completing the 12th grade at a TEC, the student obtains a form from the school administration, titled "Form of Educational Attainment". This form includes the name of the school, the city and the district as well as the student's detailed credentials. Starting with "To whom it may concern", the form proceeds as follows:

*(Student's name), whose foreign ID number is ........., has graduated from (name of the TEC) Temporary Education Center's 12th grade with ...... diploma score during 2016-2017 academic year.*

Below is the signature of the TEC coordinator and the Provincial Education Coordinator. In addition, another form titled "Accreditation Form", which is signed by the department chief of Provincial Directorate of National Education, is given to the student.

*(Student's name), whose credentials are stated above, has finished the 12th grade at (name of the TEC). In case of registration to Open Education High School and being successful in 2 courses, he/she will be considered as a high school graduate and granted the right to acquire a diploma.*

This form is provided to the student by MoNE Provincial Accreditation Commission. Subsequently the Student goes to the Provincial Public Education Center with this form and is able to register in an open education high school. After the registration, the system indicates that the student has to pass two courses. The student enters the exams for these two courses and if he/she is successful, receives an open education high school diploma.

### 3.1.8. Syrian teachers

A large percentage of Syrian students in Turkey (60%) are educated at TECs with an Arabic-medium curriculum. For this reason, the employment of teachers who speak Arabic at TECs is crucial. In order to meet this need, MoNE has appointed 13.080 Syrian volunteer lecturers to TECs. UNICEF provides TL1,300 salary to these lecturers (General Directorate of lifelong Learning, 2017b). By selecting teachers from among Syrians with a higher education diploma and according to certain criteria, MoNE has paved the way for these individuals to become voluntary lecturers. These lecturers contribute to Syrian student's education according to the curriculum.

Here are some details of the process of the selection of Syrian lecturers to work at TECs in 2016-2017 academic year: with the cooperation of MoNE and UNICEF, 489 people were selected for in-service training as part of the "training the trainers" program. Trainings took place between August 8-19 and August 22-September 2, 2016 in Konya. Then, the participants lectured 19.700 people in their cities between August 29 and September 18, 2016. The participants were examined and those who were successful after interviews were granted a certificate and the right to work in schools. Syrian teachers working at TECs were selected among the successful ones. This new process for the selection of teachers could be deemed as an initiative to improve the quality of education (General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, 2017b).

In addition to Syrian teachers, as part of PICTES, 5.700 Turkish lecturers to teach Turkish to Syrian students at TECs and 500 School Counselors who are to ease the integration of Syrian children into schools will also be employed. The scores from Public Staff Selection Examination (PSSE [KPSS]) and interviews are an important part of this selection process. These teachers are employed on a temporary project basis; 1-year contracts are signed. These teachers' duties will be concluded at the completion of the project (General Directorate of lifelong Learning, 2017b). Data provided by the MoNE on September 15, 2017 tell us that in the 2017-2018 academic year, a total number of 5.959 Turkish staff will be employed in TECs (491 psychological counselors and 5.468 Turkish language teacher).

## 3.2. Issues related to administration

### 3.2.1. Reluctance of some local officials

Research shows an interest in the issues of Syrians' education among many civil servants and NGO staff who are doing their best to resolve these issues. Needless to say, MoNE is openly advocating and encouraging the schooling of Syrians. However, despite all this effort, there are also many civil servants and local state authorities who are trying to halt these efforts or slow them down with their xenophobic attitudes. This point has been underlined by different actors and in different contexts throughout the field research. A typical statement that expresses this ideological position looks something like this: "if you keep treating them [Syrians] like this, they will always want more and will never leave Turkey". For instance, here's a tragic case from the research that illustrates this point. Originally serving as a teacher in a city, a public staff member was commissioned by the Provincial Immigration Administration with working on projects for Syrians, as this person spoke Arabic and had lived in Syria for a considerable period of time before the war. Simultaneously working for an association that was founded to aid Syrians, this person was also active in field research, home visits and the distribution of aid for almost 4 years. This person even adopted an orphaned Syrian into his house, covering the orphaned Syrian's education and living expenses and treating the youth like family. However, after a while, this person was relieved of his duties by the Provincial Immigration Administration. After asking for a reason for his dismissal, the person in question received the following answer from the official: "You're spoiling Syrians; keep doing this and they will never leave Turkey. For this reason, it is more suitable for you to return to your former position" (NGO1.Konya). Similar negative dispositions on the part of administrators have been reported by different participants in various cities and it has been underlined by the participants that the most important actors who could potentially solve this problem are the teachers and school principals (TEC. Coordinator.Gaziantep.; TEC.Coordinator.Urfa). In some cities, researchers observed that it is expected of school principals to pave the way for the use of school facilities by Syrians in the second-shift. Although there are some people who consider the very presence of Syrians in Turkey as a great political mistake, it is expressed that school principals and teachers are important actors in shaping these attitudes and have the ability to eliminate the negative impacts of this disposition on Syrian children in school.

### 3.2.2. Issues about the usage of school facilities

One of the most important issues that is voiced by Syrian teachers concerns the usage of school facilities. In certain cities, Syrian teachers have expressed that they have limited access to schools' physical and technical facilities, including the teacher's lounge. During one of the focus group meetings, Syrian teachers at the TEC stated that it was their first time in the teacher's lounge. The Syrian teachers at TECs revealed their expectations that certain school equipment, like photocopy machines and chalk, should be more easily accessible for them. Normally, preschools are situated at the entrance level of the school facilities for the convenience of the kids. Likewise, there is an expectation among Syrians regarding the location of the preschool classrooms in their facilities (TEC.Focus.Gaziantep). In some schools, chemistry teachers have expressed that they are lacking access to the required materials for experiments (TEC.Teacher.Focus.Kahramanmaraş). Although there are some good practices at some schools, a unified approach should be standardized among TECs.

In instances where TECs are barred from using certain materials or educational equipment in the school, these are provided by UNICEF instead. TEC coordinators at some of the schools have expressed that their chairs and desks were acquired either through UNICEF or through their own means. Therefore, in order to improve the quality of TECs, some of the Syrian teachers have asserted that additional educational materials and test materials especially for courses like physics and chemistry must be added to the school supplies provided and equipment aid. Turkish school principals' and teachers' positive dispositions towards Syrian children would allow a swift resolution of issues emerging due to a lack of educational materials and infrastructure.

### 3.2.3. Issues about bureaucratic processes

One of the issues voiced by TEC coordinators concerns the speed and functioning of bureaucratic processes. As there is a justifiable lack of bureaucratic and administrative repository in terms of Syrians' education, administrative flexibility is required at the local level. However, decisions about education are made by the central administration and subsequently relayed to the local administrations who then implement these decisions. This chain-of-command causes issues, rendering the initiatives of local administrators irrelevant. For instance, a summer school was planned at one TEC and once the organizers had made the relevant preparations and were ready to carry out the plan, an official letter arrived from the ministry stating that all Syrian teachers were granted a leave of absence. The TEC coordinator who planned the summer school complained that his efforts were in vain. Similarly, local administrators have expressed that they are experiencing issues as a result of the delayed delivery of official letters.

Researchers also observed delays in the implementation and progression of some projects due to prolonged bureaucratic processes. Both the local administrators of MoNE and NGOs complain about this situation. An official from the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers (ASAM) said the following:

*Our projects for the schooling of Syrian children and their integration to local society are frequently rejected with the excuse that they did not receive approval from district and provincial administrations. Since bureaucratic processes are so time consuming, we are unable to realize our integration projects. Moreover, the association itself has its own bureaucracy. Combining it with MoNE and other public institutions' cumbersome bureaucracy causes many challenges to initiating our projects. We don't have much time for bureaucracy* (NGO1.Ankara).

### 3.2.4. Issues pertaining to monitoring-evaluation

One of the significant findings of this study is related to the monitoring and evaluation processes. There is an apparent lack of proper interest in collecting, maintaining and analyzing the data on the education of Syrian children in Turkey. For instance, research shows that almost none of the provincial nor district directorates of national education has recorded data on the rate of Syrian school-age children, their schooling rate, nor the frequency of their attendance. When asked about the schooling rate of Syrians in their district or province, officials in question often answered with rough estimates, saying something like "I believe it's around 50-60%". Needless to say, data on schooling rates should be meticulously recorded as it is one of the prominent indicators of the success level of projects and initiatives being implemented. Similarly, data on school-age children is important in terms of making detailed analyses and in preparing an informed roadmap.

### 3.3. Some policy considerations regarding the management of the education of Syrian children

• A political decision has to be made on whether Syrian teachers will continue to be employed in the case of TECs' closure. The possible unemployment of approximately 13,000 Syrian teachers may have adverse effects on integration in general and schooling rates in particular.

• The attention of decision makers and new financial resources are needed to dedicate to the funding of the maintenance, repair and renovation of TEC facilities.

• It is expected that prominent NGOs which have been working in coordination with MoNE for years will be accredited. Moreover, decisions should be taken to speed up and ease bureaucratic processes for the NGOs in question.

CHAPTER 4

## CHAPTER 4

### Syrian Children's Accsess to Education in Turkey

This chapter begins with the discussion of diverse initiatives regarding Syrian children's access to school being implemented by the public along with national and international NGOs. Then, obstructions to the schooling of Syrian children are examined. The chapter concludes with policy considerations regarding the issues related to Syrian children's access to education.

### 4.1. Smoothing the ways to education

Important steps have been taken over the last few years to include Syrian children in the Turkish education system. Syrian children can now receive an education at TECs or in public schools. In addition, civil servants and NGO officials have carried out several projects aimed at increasing Syrian children's access to schools. The following section will examine the resources mobilized for educating Syrian children and the implementation of projects concerning the provision a quality education for these children.

#### 4.1.1. Temporary Education Centers (TECs)

The commencement of Syrians' education in Turkey can be traced back to a Quran course in a district of Gaziantep, i.e. Nizip.  In 2013, for the first time Quran course facilities in Nizip were used for this purpose. This educational provision which employed around 100 Syrian teachers whose salaries were covered by TDF is the basis of TECs (Topçu, 2017).

According to data provided by MoNE on March 16 2017, there were 432 TECs operating around the country and 31 of them were located in TSCs in 22 cities, while the remaining 401 TECs were established outside of TSCs in various cities. Also, the same data set indicated that 287,019 Syrian students were registered in TECs at that time. More recent data, however, shows that the number of TECs in on a decline. Data provided by MoNE on September 15, 2017 shows that there are currently 370 TECS located in 20 different cities. This decline is a result MoNE's policy to close down TECs gradually. According to the same dataset, there are currently 13.080 Syrian teachers employed in Turkey.

TECs are unique solutions for the education of large immigrant populations. Two essential factors led to the emergence of TECs: 1) the mass movement of a population within a short period of time and 2) the uncertainty about the future of the Syrian Civil War and al-Assad regime. During these times, TECs played a crucial role in the education of children. However, the prolonged civil war in Syria and the declining possibility of Syrians returning to their homeland in the short term, MoNE has now acknowledged that is unrealistic to try to address Syrian children's education with measures and policies predicated on the so called temporary nature of their stay. For this reason, MoNE has decided to gradually close TECs down. For this reason, TECs were barred from registering new 1st, 5th and 9th grade students and these students are now being directed to public schools. The aim is to close all TECs down in the span of a few years and to co-educate Syrian students with Turkish students according to the Turkish curriculum.

### 4.1.2. Public schools

Nearly half of Syrian students are registered in public schools. According to the data provided by MoNE on September 18, 2017, there are 238.175 Syrian students registered at more than 14.000 public schools across the country. These students are all educated in the same class conditions with a common curriculum.

An increase in the number of Syrian students enrolled in public schools is expected with the gradual closure of TECs. Naturally, the improving schooling rates of Syrian children and the increase in the number of school-age children will lead to an increase in the number of Syrian students attending public schools. While public schools will provide better facilities and opportunities to Syrian children, there are also concerns regarding the emergence of new issues. For instance, there is a concern that the increased number of Syrian students attending public schools which are situated in neighborhoods highly populated by Syrians might cause certain issues.

### 4.1.3. Public initiatives for improving access

Various actors are implementing projects and programs through various channel to improve Syrian children's access to school. The most extensive systematic program regarding the improvement of schooling rates, which was observed, is the conditional cash transfer. As economic issues are among the most prominent obstructions to children's access to school, this program is expected to boost schooling rates significantly. In this respect, an excellent project has been realized: CCTE. This program is funded by ECHO. It is implemented according to a protocol signed between the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, MoNE, the Turkish Red Crescent and UNICEF. The aim of the program is to increase the schooling rate and cover the educational expenses of refugees by expanding the Conditional Education Aid Program which has been in effect since 2003 for Turkish children. Through this program, 56,000 children were provided TL3.8 million in aid through 33.000 cards up until May 31 2017 (UNICEF, 2017). Students at both TECs and public schools are eligible. But, regular attendance is a condition for eligibility. According to this program, schoolgirls in preschool and grades 1-8 receive TL40 per month. Schoolboys with the same profile get a stipend of TL35 per month. At the high school level, girls receive TL60 and boys receive TL50. In addition to this monthly stipend, it is planned to provide an additional TL100 for each child in September and January (Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı [Ministry of Family and Social Policies], 2017; UNICEF, 2017).

Aiming to increase Syrian children's schooling rate, another important initiative carried out by public institutions is family visits which are conducted by teachers, school principals and staff of the provincial directorates of national education. Research shows that family visits contribute greatly to improving school enrolment rates. Interviews conducted in Konya and Istanbul as part of this study indicate that these visits have profound effects on schooling rates. It was explained that an effective family visit is important for the following reasons: detecting children who are not in schools, identifying the reasons for families not sending their children to school on an individual and case-by-case basis, and expressing the importance of education for the children's future (as well as their family). It is reported that additional visits with the purpose of informing and persuading families to send their children to school were conducted in certain cities after identifying issues onsite.

### 4.1.4. Civil society initiatives for improving the access

It was observed that NGOs are just as active as public institutions in regards to improving the schooling rate of Syrian children. Certain NGOs conduct field surveys in order to establish contact with impoverished Syrian families and gain a deeper understanding of how to satisfy their needs. For instance, when a child who is not going to school is identified by an NGO during these field surveys, steps are taken to ensure this child has access to education. The Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ASAM) is one of the NGOs that regularly conducts s such field surveys. There is one project that was implemented by ASAM in the Aegean region which is truly exemplary. As part of the project, a Mobile Counseling Team was formed. This team consists of a leader, social workers and supporting staff who conduct regular field surveys. When the team detects a child who is not in school, they first identify the reasons onsite. Then, if the child is not enrolled in school, they register the child to a school in coordination with the child's parents (if they are available), the Provincial Immigration Administration and the Provincial Directorate of National Education. A similar program is carried out by ASAM's Al Farah Center in Ankara.

Research shows that it is challenging for NGOs to focus solely on education. Founded with the aim of focusing on Syrian children's education, many NGOs were forced to address other more pressing issues obstructing access to education like shelter, healthcare and malnourishment after observing urgent needs in the field. The Elbir Association founded in Konya is a typical example of this situation. Even though it does not conduct regular field surveys like ASAM, the Elbir Association takes initiative when its staff find children who are not being educated in schools during the distribution of aid-in-kind. Primarily founded for the education of Syrian children, this association expanded its scope to help provide food, shelter and healthcare as urgent needs started to emerge. While the association's administrators remain aware of the importance of education, they explained that they could not turn a blind eye to Syrian's more urgent needs for help. Still, this association continues to maintain its primary aim by working on increasing Syrian children's access to education whenever possible.

There are also other NGOs with different methods from ASAM and Elbir Association that actively work on and dedicate special resources to improving children's access to education by focusing on the detection of children who are not going to school. In this respect, NGOs like the Humanitarian Relief Foundation (HRF [İHH]) and the Bülbülzade Foundation can be given as examples. HRF actively supports education at every level in both Turkey and Syria. Besides their various programs providing aid to Syrians, HRF also implements special projects that aim to take Syrian children off the street and provide them with access to education. For instance, through this project, more than 50 children who were working and begging on the streets were put in school by HRF in Hatay's Reyhanlı district. Similarly, the Bülbülzade Foundation works on projects to increase schooling rates in an area that covers 94 neighborhoods across Gaziantep. Even though these projects are regional or small-scale in nature, they make an important contribution to the schooling rate nonetheless.

In addition to national and international institutions that are concerned with Syrian children's education, there are also NGOs founded by Syrians that work diligently on these matters. In order to provide

further insights into the characteristics of their work, it would be beneficial to elaborate on some of their programs and projects. The SAED Charity Association is one example; founded in 2014 by Dr. Asaad Asaad in Hatay's Reyhanlı district. SAED provides support for Syrians' education from preschool up to higher education. These activities are realized mainly through 4 different schools. The first is a preschool founded in Reyhanlı; there are around 150 students at this preschool. SAED covers the rental costs of the building and the salaries of teachers.  SAED's second school is Temkin in Reyhanlı; this is a TEC that operates at Abdülkadir İşcan Middle School. At this school, Turkish and Syrian students are educated simultaneously but in different classrooms and according to different curricula. Turkish students are educated in 8 classrooms, while Syrians study in the remaining classrooms. Teachers' salaries are covered by UNICEF. SAED, on the other hand, covers school supplies and student's transportation expenses. The third school founded by SAED is located in Şanlıurfa and was named after the association. While the association covers the rent for the school building, UNICEF provides the salaries of the teachers. The last of these educational institutions is Al-Amal School which was conceptualized by Dr. Asaad Asaad, the founder of SAED. During the interview, Dr. Asaad explained that "the school, which is not directly associated with SAED, was founded in order to providing a more religious higher education" (NGO1. Hatay). In this respect, the school reminds theological schools of the importance of higher education. Dr. Asaad has stated that he has been seeking to accredit Al-Amal, which provides 2-year religious education programs that consist of 15-30 credits.

Operating in Istanbul's Sultangazi district, the Taiwan-based Tzu Chi Foundation focuses specifically on schooling children. Indeed, the establishment of TECs in Sultangazi was realized with the cooperation of the Tzu Chi Foundation and the district directorate of national education. Moreover, all needs of TECs in this district were taken care of by the foundation. Moreover, through another special program, Tzu Chi Foundation has taken 256 children under the age of 14 out of work and put them through school. As a part of the program, a financial aid on par with their wages was provided to these children. In addition, the Tzu Chi Foundation provides financial aid and a shuttle service to address transportation issues of Syrian children. Trying to address Syrians' issues more broadly, the Tzu Chi Foundation also actively works on increasing the schooling rates of Syrian children.

## 4.2. Factors obstructing on access to school

Obstructions can be divided into three categories according to their level of severity. The first category consists of obstructions that could relatively easily be removed in the short-term with a plan of action. Disorientation and psychological challenges (like lack of motivation) are some of the examples of this type of obstruction. It was observed that while many children are ready to go to school, they were unable to do so as their family lacked information about the bureaucratic processes involved. Reaching these children's families smooths out their access to education. In certain cities family visits carried out by provincial directorates of national education and NGOs resolve these kinds of issues and help integrate children who were left out because of trivial matters obstructing access to education.

The second category of obstructions requires more effort in planning. Children who were unable to go to school when they first came to Turkey from Syria are examples of this kind. Take the example of a 10-

year old child who has never gone to school or a 12-year old child who had to discontinue his education for 2 years. Would it be easy for these kids to enter the education system? It is certainly challenging to get these children into school, but it is possible. Similarly, poverty of a certain level is also included within the category of this type of obstruction. For instance, a family with three children living on a monthly income of TL300 will not send their children to school because of poverty. Poverty in this case cannot be resolved swiftly; however, it is possible to prevent poverty from being a reason for not sending children to schools. Similarly, coeducation is an unfamiliar and undesired phenomenon for the majority of Syrians. There are families who do not send their children to school for this reason alone.

The third category of obstructions is the hardest to remove or resolve. This category includes economic, cultural and socio-psychological reasons. The most prominent economic obstruction is a family's reliance on the income earned by the children. In a father's absence, the children (especially the eldest boy) are responsible for bread-winning. Factors like having a seriously ill family member in the household, rents being relatively expensive, or having a larger than average number of people in the household all increases the possibility of children participating in income generating activities, and consequently not being able to go school. Syrian children mostly work in industrial jobs and/or as unskilled workers in metropoles. In the border cities and rural areas, they generally work as agricultural workers.

### 4.2.1. Economic issues that have obstructive roles on schooling of Syrian children

The most prominent obstruction to Syrian children's schooling is their obligation to work to help support their families. Especially boys are obliged to work even at a very young age as in many cases they have lost their fathers to war or their fathers are unable to work (Unschooled.Boy2.İstanbul). Even though they have elder sisters, these boys are obliged to become the primary breadwinners in their families (Unschooled.Boy3.İstanbul). For girls there are other obstructions to education, for example, in cases where their parents work and there is a baby or an elderly in need of care in the household, girls tend to stay at home, taking care of the baby or the elderly, thus missing school (Unschooled.Boy4.İstanbul). During the interviews conducted in Istanbul, it was revealed that employers preferred to employ children instead of their parents. This is because children are perceived as cheaper labor. Therefore, when their parents fail to find jobs, children are left with no choice but to work. As the research indicates, in most cases the housing rents charged to Syrians are higher than their usual values, and this is consistent throughout the country. Because of expensive house rents and the comparatively low income of parents, children are forced to work at a young age to contribute to their family earnings.

In certain circumstances where parents earn a lower income or no income at all, children are unable to access schools and education. The research revealed that financial difficulties and economic issues are the most prominent obstruction to children's education. Many children who are obliged to work, cannot attend school as a result. These children have asserted that they would quit their jobs and immediately return to school if their income (even half or a portion of it for some) was to be replaced by financial aid. As previously mentioned, the Tzu Chi Foundation was able to return 256 "working children" to school in Istanbul by providing them with TL600-800 monthly financial aid (with the condition that they continue their education).

In cases where children left schools because of working, it was interesting to observe that the parents are harder to persuade than the working kids themselves. What makes this situation more dramatic is that, parents' high level of education does not play any significant role in their receptivity towards recommendations on returning their working-kids back to school. For instance, when a Syrian English teacher at a TEC was asked about the reason behind his son's leaving the school, he replied "I regret it and I feel terrible for him, but that is the way it is. He is working in order to help me pay the rent and our monthly expenses". When asked what could be done for his son, who works in a flour plant, to enable him to return back to school, the parent clearly stated that he/she did not want his son to return to school, preferring him to have a job that generates income for the family (Parent.of.Unschooled-1. Ankara). Similarly, a 59-year-old Syrian parent was asked whether he would want his 14-year-old son to return to school if the option was available; the parent's answer was "No, I wouldn't want that. He is the breadwinner of this family". When this Syrian parent whose son has never been to school and has been working as a carpenter's apprentice since they arrived to Turkey was asked what could be done to enable his son to go back to school, the answer he gave was "nothing could return him to school now". Furthermore, the parent made the money gesture and reminded interviewers of the electric and water bills that needed to be paid, showing a strong will not to send his son to school (Parent.of.Unschooled2. Ankara).

When economic issues aren't an issue, most of the children are eager to return to school. However, some believe that going to school is nothing but a waste of time and that working and/or learning vocational skills is much more valuable for them. Examining the conditions of Syrian children who believe that leaving school is not a loss will provide further insights into the challenges of Syrian children's schooling. For instance, Ahmet, a 15-year-old Syrian, came to Turkey in 2013. He lives together with his parents and five siblings. His family's monthly income is TL1,200. Ahmet works as an apprentice to a Syrian barber. He has not gone to school for 2 years since his arrival in Turkey. When he finally started thinking about going back to school, he realized that he had "fallen behind". Ahmet went to school for a short period of time; however, he could not accept the fact that all of his classmates were younger than him. "I don't regret not going to school. I'm currently developing a skill and one day (within 3-4 months) I'll start to get use of this profession," said Ahmet (Parent.of.Unschooled.Boy1.Ankara). An important point here is that, some of these children are unaware of all the benefits of open high-school education (Unschooled.Girl5.İst). Other studies examining the reasons why Syrian children are out of school indicate that economic issues and children's obligation to work constitute the most prominent obstruction to schooling (Culbertson and Constant, 2015; SETA, 2017).

### 4.2.2. Language

Language is among the most prominent obstructions to Syrian children's integration into the education system. Even though they have different vernaculars, all of the Syrians speak Arabic. This is the main obstruction to Syrian children being educated in Turkish public schools. Besides Turkey, Syrians have also sought refuge in Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan and Egypt, where Arabic is the official language. For this reason, while Syrian children are able to adapt to the education system in these countries, language is a natural barrier to their schooling in the context of Turkey. Unlike other countries, Turkey is forced to take more initiative for Syrian children's schooling (Culbertson and Constant, 2015). In order to integrate

Syrian children into the Turkish education system and remove barriers related to language, Turkish language lecturers have been employed as part of the project Promoting Integration of Syrian Children into the Turkish Education System (PICTES). In this respect, Turkish language courses were increased to 15 hours a week at TECs. Yet, despite all the initiatives in place, language continues to be a prominent obstruction to schooling.

Problems related to language are more challenging for the 1st, 5th and 9th grade Syrian students who have been registered to public schools as a result of MoNE's decision to gradually transition away from TEC's.[6] Efforts to get Syrian kids into the Turkish education system and thus contribute to their integration are productive and meaningful but there are also many complications as well. For instance, a child who was educated in Arabic at a TEC and was unable to learn adequate Turkish who is forced to receive an education with Turkish students at a public school as a result of the closure of the centers may struggle as a consequence. Moreover, due to insufficient Turkish, this child's ties to school are weakened, causing him/her to leave school. During interviews with the parents of unschooled children, education coordinators and Syrian teachers, it was revealed that many 5th and 9th grade children are not attending classes despite being registered in school. As a result of not being able to learn an adequate level of Turkish, they struggle to follow the lectures and bond with their classmates. As a result, many children leave school after a while.

While MoNE works on developing new approaches to teaching Turkish, there are certain issues with its application. For instance, 1st, 5th and 9th grade students being registered in public schools as part of the compulsory education has caused certain issues for Turkish language learning. Syrians who know little or no Turkish are put in mixed classrooms and are expected to progress on two educational tracks simultaneously; while they are learning Turkish on one hand, they also have to study other subjects such as mathematics, physics and history on the other hand. There is an underlying assumption here that if you push Syrian children into a fully immersed Turkish education than they will eventually learn Turkish anyway. However, research shows that this supposition is not realistic especially for 5th and 9th grade students. Lacking the necessary Turkish skills, Syrian students aren't able to fully understand the content of other courses. As a result of this, these students' academic success falls below the class average. Moreover, in some cases this may lead to the isolation of Syrian students. During focus group meetings with Turkish teachers, it was expressed that there were some Syrian students who were unable to speak Turkish despite having been educated alongside Turkish students for 2 years (Turkish. Teacher.Focus1.Ankara). During the interviews, Turkish teachers underlined that the Syrian students face a disadvantage because of a lack of language skills (Turkish.Teacher.Focus3.Konya, Turkish. Teacher.Focus 2.Kahramanmaraş) On the other hand, it was also observed that Syrian children who did not register in schools as soon as they arrived in Turkey and instead worked at a job for 2-3 years before registering in school are more self-confident, have a better line of communication with the school administration and adapt more easily to school (TEC.Student.Focus1.İstanbul). This is certainly a direct result of having improved their Turkish at work.

There are various strategies deployed in the field to prevent children from leaving school because of the language barrier. First of all, it was expressed that some children repeat 4th or 8th grade at TECs in

6) MoNE has decided to close down TECs and direct the 1st, 5th and 9th grade newcomers to public schools in order to include them in fully-fledged Turkish education.

order to delay their transition to public schools without having the proper language skills. The second strategy observed was the implementation of intensified Turkish language courses for Syrian children studying in public schools. For instance, at a public school, Syrian 9th graders were gathered in a separate classroom. In this classroom, Syrian students are provided with an intensified Turkish language course along with a condensed form of the other courses defined and imposed by the curriculum, e with reduced class hours. This classroom is designed like a Turkish preparatory school for Syrian children. The school principal said "these students will begin to be educated together with Turkish students next year; that is, they will go back to their regular and official 10th grade classrooms but with better Turkish language skills" (TEC.Student.Focus1.İzmir). Though not officially defined, variances of this approach were observed in numerous schools in different cities.

It was observed that there is a widespread concern among Syrian teachers, students and parents that Syrian children may lose their Arabic language skills as a result of being embedded into the Turkish education system. There is, however, yet to be any evidence available to determine whether these concerns are realistic or not, but one thing is certain: these concerns do constitute a psychological obstruction to Syrian children's integration into the Turkish education system. Concerns about forgetting Arabic do distance Syrians from Turkish language and the Turkish curriculum. A frequently used argument is embodied in the following statement made by a Syrian teacher: "Arabic is the language of the Holy Quran. It is the language of Islam. Certain measures must be taken, so that children do not forget Arabic while receiving a Turkish education" (TEC.Student.Focus1.Ankara.). Concerns about forgetting Arabic were frequently uttered by both teachers and students, especially when asked for their opinions about the closure of TECs.

### 4.2.3. Cultural factors

High school education is not compulsory in Syria. With some regional variances, preschool, primary school and middle school education are compulsory. In-depth interviews and focus group indicate that education had not been a primary concern for Syrian people even in the context of normal, pre-war conditions in their country. This position is also maintained by Syrians in Turkey. In other words, education is of secondary nature for most Syrians in Turkey and this also negatively effects schooling rates, especially at the high school level.

The marriage of girls at a young age is another factor that disrupts their school life. Early marriage has adverse effects on schooling as was also confirmed by other research (SETA, 2017). In a focus group held with Syrian teachers in Istanbul, it was asserted that early marriage, that is the mating of 14 or 15-year-old girls, was common in Syria. It was expressed that a similar situation is also taking place in Turkey and that among focus group participants 5 schoolgirls who were previously being educated in school of had left their school as a result of marriage (TEC.Teacher.Focus1.İstanbul). In terms of early marriage, it was stated that sometimes girls were married in exchange for a dowry of TL10,000-15,000, (NGO1.Gaziantep).

Coeducation does not exist in Syria. In other words, girls and boys are educated in different classrooms in the same school. In some cases, this attitude is carried to the extent of practices avoiding the assignment of teachers of the opposite-gender. With this cultural background, coeducation in Turkey is usually viewed negatively by Syrians. For instance, a 14-year-old girl interviewed in Gaziantep said that she does not want to go to school "because of girls and boys are being educated in the same classroom". A TEC coordinator said the following: "Coeducation must be given up. Syrians are not able to adapt to this system; they find this approach bizarre. Even the teachers in Syria are of the same gender as the as the students in their class [female teachers for girls, male teachers for boys]; for this reason, Syrians are unable to get accustomed to coeducation" (TEC.Coordinator.Kahramanmaraş).

There are great similarities between Syrian and Turkish societies in terms of belief, tradition, lifestyle and even food. However, these similarities are overruled by differences in certain other aspects of life. Differences that would not cause any problems under normal conditions but do turn into issues under extraordinary circumstances, especially when integration is in question.

In cases where girls reside far away from a school, some families choose not to send their daughters to school because of various related concerns. Cultural pressures on girls, as well as concerns for security, have adverse effects on schooling.

In certain examples, it was observed that children did not want to attend school because of a simple disregard for the importance of education was. Deeming education meaningless, many children want to begin work-life and become income-generators as early as possible. In such examples, it was observed that these children had already left their schools in Syria. Moreover, in some cases, children do not want to continue their education as they see courses as meaningless, with the exception of courses on the Holy Quran, religious knowledge and home economy classes (Unschooled.Girl2.Şanlıurfa., Unschooled. Girl3.Şanlıurfa.).

### 4.2.4. Transportation problem

It was observed that Syrians usually live in the poorest neighborhoods, shanty towns, and suburbs near industrial zones. These neighborhoods are places where even the locals have issues accessing education and urban life. For instance, certain neighborhoods (like Solfasol) in Ankara's Altındağ district is a place where even the internal immigrant population has issues in integrating into urban life. Similarly, even the locals in these neighborhoods have a low schooling rate when compared to Ankara's other districts. Syrians' settlement to these neighborhoods constitutes another factor that increases the challenge of children's schooling. This is also the case for Syrians who settle in similar neighborhoods in other cities.

Transportation is one of the most prominent obstructions to schooling in these kinds of neighborhoods. As public transportation services are not developed in these neighborhoods, transportation to school is a serious issue for some children. During a focus group with Syrian children at a TEC in Ankara, the children complained about this very issue. Consisting of a group of 16 students from 5th to 8th grade, the focus group revealed that one of the participants was walking between his/her home and the school. This school is 3 kilometers away and each trip takes at least 1 hour. The researcher accompanied this student to his home from school. The route is shown over Google Earth in the following figure.

**Figure 11.** Daily route of a TEC student in the Altındağ district of Ankara (approximately 3 kilometers)
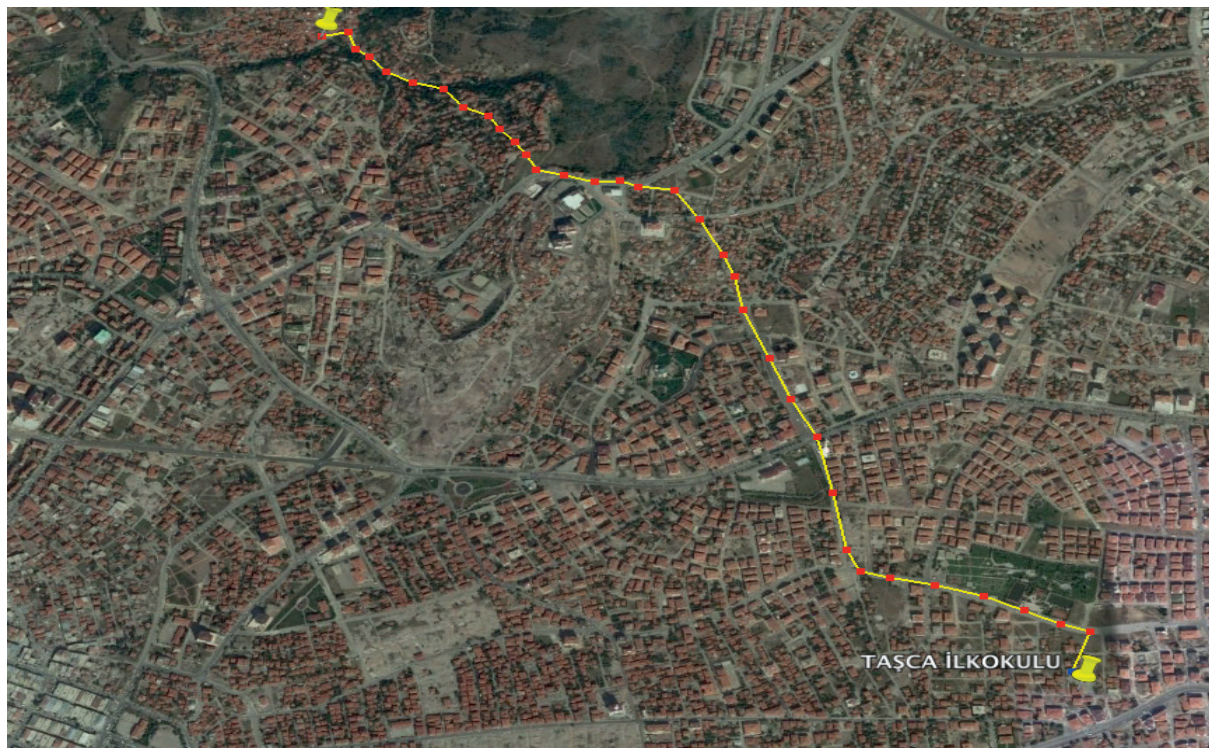


During a focus group meeting with Syrian teachers, it was learned that DEMC organizes free shuttles between TSCs and the downtown in certain cities which eases children's access to schools outside of camps. Teachers asserted that this kind of provision should become the norm (TEC.Teacher.Focus1. Kahramanmaraş). The higher schooling rates in camps comparatively to outside camps proves the linear relationship between access to means of transportation and schooling.

The research revealed that transportation, together with economic issues, is one of the factors with the most significant impact on schooling. It was observed that families residing far from schools had issues sending their children to school in almost all cities that were visited. Moreover, it was found that girls left TECs early, before sunset or did not go to the school at all, especially those in Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa because of the classes late starting hours. As the distance between home and school increases, children have the increasing need to use public transportation or shuttles between school and home. This proves to be another economic issue for the families.

An alternative to transportation is boarding schools. In order to ease their access to school, boarding opportunities were provided to Syrian children in certain cities. Governorates have sent official letters to Provincial Directorates of National Education, requesting them to adopt such facilitative approaches. However, interestingly, this approach was finalized due to regulations. For instance, one school principal in Osmaniye was providing accommodation to Syrian students. However, once he was reminded of the criteria in place for the eligibility for boarding- which stipulates "being a citizen of Republic of Turkey or Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" in Clause 2 sub-clause A of the 4th article of the "Regulations for

Boarding, Scholarship, Social Aids and School Guesthouses at Public Schools"- the school principal was forced to remove the Syrian children from the facility. As a result of this situation, these Syrian children lived far away from school were forced to drop out of school.

It is forecasted that access to school will become even more challenging in terms of transportation in the case of TECs closure; the majority of Syrian students do not have the economic means to pay for the service busses offered by private transportation companies. According to the study, many Syrian students had to leave school in certain cities (Istanbul, Ankara and Kahramanmaraş) because of high transportation costs. On the other hand, students who walked to school were observed having issues in returning home especially during the winter as it gets dark earlier. For this reason, transportation planning should take into consideration the impact closing down TECs might have on each individual school.

There are transportation and financial aids provided by both public and private actors. During the research, it was observed that IOM provided shuttles for children in Şanlıurfa and Konya. A protocol was signed between the General Directorate of Life Long Learning and IOM for the provision of transportation for 20,000 Syrian students. In addition, 30 million was dedicated to children's transportation as part of PICTES and a tender was initiated for the transportation of 30,500 students during the 2017-2018 academic year. Even though these transportation provisions had yet to begin at the time of the research, significant improvements in transportation services are expected in the 2017-2018 academic year.

### 4.2.5. Disorientation

One of the most prominent issues that emerges with migration is a lack of knowledge of the cultural, social, economic and bureaucratic structure in the host country. Immigrants/refugees tend to comprehend easier structures first and they are most interested in the structures that will allow them to survive according to the hierarchy of needs. Access to Food and shelter are usually parts of mechanisms that are relatively easy to figure out. These mechanisms are usually founded by various aid institutions and public institutions and access to these mechanisms are generally easier. On the other hand, cultural and bureaucratic structures are much harder to decrypt and require immigrants and refugees to dedicate more time and resources to comprehend.

For instance, the educational system, considering all the bureaucracy around it, is not a mechanism that can easily be figured out for refugees. Moreover, education is usually located towards the bottom in the hierarchy of needs, especially during disasters and emergency situations. For all of these reasons, refugee's access to the education system is eased by facilities provided by the host community or third parties. Syrians are reported to have been left out of the education system because of an inability to decrypt the related bureaucratic procedures. Similarly, as part of the research, it was revealed that some children lost time because they did not know the mechanisms involved in returning back to school after they were dismissed from school due to personal reasons or relocation. Taken together with the cumbersome nature and hardships of bureaucracy, disorientation can also be considered as an obstruction to schooling. Even though the registration process in public schools has been eased and foreign credentials have been deemed adequate for registration, participants of various backgrounds

have expressed certain difficulties with the application process. For instance, certain hardships regarding the appropriation of foreign credentials and other bureaucratic processes for the registration of Syrian children who newly arrived to Turkey were underscored. A significant number of Syrians have issues with residency and similar bureaucratic procedures that are required for registration. For example due to housing issues as they live in shantytowns that have been deconstructed because of urban transformation projects or because they live in areas without numbering systems and therefor don't have an official address. Even though some of these issues have been resolved by school principals or officials through special initiatives, regulations are needed to address these issues systematically. Some of the Syrian children are unable to attend schools because of issues in acquiring residency documents or credentials (NGO1. Konya. TEC. Coordinator. Gaziantep, NGO1. Gaziantep).

### 4.2.6. Uncertainties

Research revealed a subjective and clandestine obstruction to schooling: The feeling of uncertainty among Syrians regarding their social and physical position in Turkey. This feeling of uncertainty was underscored especially during the focus group sessions conducted with Syrian teachers and students. To achieve realistic educational expectations, a certain level of personal planning for the future is required. In other words, for a person to plan a career through education, he/she should first have a feeling of belonging in terms of time, culture and location. Syrian students have complained about the uncertainties of their future; they do not know where they will be in couple of years, whether or not they will be granted citizenship or even where they will be residing as a family. The Director General of the Syrian Teachers Union asserted that some children avoid facing challenges -not learning Turkish for example as they believe they will return to Syria in a short time and as a result   they are unsuccessful because of this uncertainty (NGO1.Gaziantep). Unwillingness to learn Turkish and a lack of motivation to attend Turkish schools was observed in many cases. A statement from a Provincial Directorate of National Education official summarizes this situation: "Children feel like they don't belong here. Indeed, they're not accepted by our children. Therefore, there are issues" (DNE1.Gaziantep).

### 4.2.7. Unwillingness observed among Turkish parents, administrators and teachers

Most of the Turkish society and institutions embrace Syrians. With the personal sacrifices of many administrators, important progress has been made in Syrian children's education. On the other hand, there is another segment of society that is against the very presence of Syrians in Turkey, let aside sharing economic resources and facilities such as education and accommodation. These include students, parents and administrators, who are all integral actors in the education system, who see Syrians as a socio-economic threat and object to their residence in Turkey. This approach is seen in various segments of the host society, and members of the educational system are not an exception. For instance, during the interview, the Director of the Syrian Teachers Union asserted that many Syrian students were prevented from registering to public schools for various reasons despite MoNE's ruling that TECs would no longer register Syrian students for 1st, 5th and 9th grades. The most frequent excuse expressed by the school administrators for not allowing Syrians to register is the incapacity of the school   to accommodate more students. However, it is reported that children's lack of adequate

Turkish language skills is the real excuse behind this apparent "excuse" (NGO1.Gaziantep). Another prominent reason why Syrian children are barred from registering in schools is Turkish students' and parents' objections. This issue has been raised by various participants in various contexts. The belief that having Syrians in the classroom will hinder the general quality of education plays an important role in this unwillingness. Some Syrians try to find shelters in neighborhoods with poor infrastructure, sometimes lacking running water and electricity. It was expressed that there are Syrian students who had to leave school because of the pressures coming from other students and parents, as these children lacked water for their personal hygiene and were occasionally infested with lice (NGO1.Konya). This belief becomes prominent especially when the number of Syrian children is on par or more than the number of Turkish students. This situation puts more pressure on administrators and emerges as a psycho-social obstruction to Syrian children's schooling (DNE2.Ankara.)

The first occasion that reflects teachers' and school administrators' unwillingness towards integrating Syrians into the Turkish education system is the usage of public schools as TECs. School teachers and administrators in certain cities tend to blame Syrian children and teachers for the issues. Moreover, Turkish teachers and administrators claim that Syrians leave classrooms untidy and dirty and mistreat school facilities. On the other hand, Syrian children and teachers along with TEC coordinators assert that classrooms are deliberately being left dirty by Turkish students and teachers and school administrators who do not motivate Turkish students to keep classrooms tidy and that Syrian students are usually left to tidy up the classroom at the beginning of classes. This issue emerges especially in cities where there is a larger Syrian population. During the meetings with Syrian teachers and TEC coordinators, it was underscored that the school principal is the most important actor in shaping this situation. An example from the field will help illustrate the tremendous impact of the school principal in maintaining a peaceful and successful school environment: A school visited in Gaziantep was deemed as the best TEC in the city by Arab teachers. The effort behind this success was straightforward: the principal of this school had paid regular visits to the classrooms, telling Turkish students to respect Syrian students, while also telling their parents about the importance of being well-disposed towards Syrian students. Despite everything, it was stated that Turkish students, parents and teachers behave poorly towards Syrian students. For this reason, an hour-long period was implemented between Turkish students' exit and TECs starting hours. This implementation aims to relieve possible tensions between Turkish and Syrian students. It was expressed that the most prominent sources of this issue are the school administrators and teachers; indeed, their approaches towards Syrian students influence and by extension reinforce Turkish students' behavior.

Looking at instances without issues, it can be seen that there are places where competition between Syrian and Turkish communities for the access of resources (financial aid, employment etc.) is nonexistent. There are other promising cases as well where Syrians live among Turks and together with the Turkish community are establishing better relations and thereby avoiding ghettoization. For instance, there is no division between Turkish and Syrian teachers at certain schools in Istanbul; they use the same teachers' lounge for example. Moreover, since TECs start right after Turkish students' classes it was also observed that some Turkish teachers became friends with Syrian families, and that they began visiting each other at their respective homes.

### 4.2.8. Issues related to Transitioning from Basic Education to the Secondary Education System (TBESE)[7]

As mentioned above, MoNE has decided to redirect the newcomers in 1st, 5th and 9th grade to public schools. Here, the 9th grade newcomers in particular, have become an issue. According to the current high school placement system, all students finishing 8th grade are placed in a high school according to their TBESE score. In other words, all students who finished 8th grade are placed in a high school, whether or not they enter TBESE and regardless of whether they have any preferences at all (Çelik, 2015). As a result of this highly problematic central placement system many problems have raised. More than 170,000 students out of 1.2 million did not make any preferences and an additional 90,000 were not placed in any high school in 2017 as a result. Therefore, around 260,000 students were placed to open education high schools ("TBESE 2017 Selection", 2017). Every school's success score is determined according to this placement system; while the most successful students continue their education in science high schools and certain Anatolian high schools, the least successful students are placed in vocational high schools.

The placement of Syrian students is not done according to TBESE. Since Syrian students can't be placed to high schools according to their TBESE score, Syrian students who finish 8th grade are placed in the high schools (imam hatip and vocational high schools) closest to their residence by the provincial transfer commissions. An already problematic placement system applied to Syrians complicates the issue further. A Syrian NGO official expressed that Syrian students with extraordinary success are being forced into high schools that are relatively less successful. The same official asserted that this issue is undermining academic success. Among the high schools that Syrians are placed in, the imam hatip high schools are the most preferred since these schools have an intensive curriculum on Arabic and religion. Some Syrian students request these schools because they feel more comfortable in imam hatip schools and they consider these schools to help them keep up their religious culture and Arabic language. On the other hand, although there is a tendency among Syrians imam hatip schools, the research reveals that there are also objections pointing to the disadvantages of a curriculum with less mathematics and natural sciences courses.

### 4.2.9. Shortcomings in physical facilities

Another obstruction to access is the shortage of classrooms and schooling facilities. During the interviews, it was expressed that in certain cities children were not registered in schools because of these shortages. Simply put, students were not registered because local schools were at full capacity. Not only is this a current problem, but with the closure of TECS this will become an even greater problem unless this issue is addressed through construction of more educational facilities. That is to say, in order to ensure that schools have the capacity to absorb current TEC students in after the closure of these centers, additional classrooms and facilities should be constructed immediately in anticipation.

### 4.3. Typology of Unschooled Syrian Children

Syrian children can be divided into three categories according to the severity of obstructions they face in accessing education. The first category consists of obstructions that can be removed relatively easily in

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7) While this report was being prepared, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated that the high-school student placement system TBESE should be abandoned totally. In response, on September 19 2017, Minister of National Education İsmet Yılmaz announced that TBESE will not take place any more in 2017-2018 academic year ("Son dakika, İsmet Yılmaz", 2017).

the short-term with a plan. Disorientation and psychological challenges (like the lack of motivation) are among examples of this type of obstruction. It was observed that while children are ready to go to school, they were unable to do so because their family lacked information about the bureaucratic processes entailed. The second category of obstructions requires meticulous planning to be resolved. Children who have not gone to school for two or more years and who work to support their families, along with girls who do not attend school because of coeducation are included in this category. The third category of obstructions is the hardest to eliminate. This category includes a combination of economic, cultural and socio-psychological issues. For instance, it is extremely challenging to school a child who is the sole breadwinner in a family.

Thus, we can divide the unschooled children into three types according to the obstructions that keep them out of school.

## Unschooled Type-1

Despite all aid and facilities provided, refugees generally cannot adapt to the daily routine, norms, laws, institutional and bureaucratic functioning of the host society overnight. It takes time for refugees to understand these new paradigms and to adapt to them. This period of time is full of uncertainties for refugee; they focus on survival strategies to get through the day. They need time to allow them prepare rational and long-term plans. To have put these plans in effect, they first have to be stable in terms of having a residence and generating an income. Finding their way to education in the in spite of the previously mentioned uncertainties requires time. It is observed that a significant number of children were left out of education because of either lack of motivation or disorientation. These children are addressed as *Unschooled Type-1* in this report and they can be schooled with minor expenses and the implementation of relatively easy initiatives.

### Unschooled Type-1 : Aya

*Aya is a 16-year-old girl. She came to Konya 2 months ago but her family came to Turkey 1.5 years ago. Initially residing in Mersin and struggling to find a source of income, the family moved to Konya after hearing that there were better employments prospects there. Aya has 5 siblings. She is the fourth child of the family. After receiving an education at a TEC in Mersin for one month, she left the school. For some reason, she failed to get an identity card in Konya and the school she applied to told her that the registration period was over and as a consequence she is unable to continue her studies (although this is against MoNE's regulations for the provision of education ). She is eager to go back to school. Economic issues also prove to be an obstruction for Aya's education, but these are secondary. The most prominent obstruction is her family's relocation; the fact that it occurred midterm, the associated bureaucratic issues, and the disorientation cause. With proper guidance and minor expenses, Aya will return to school.*

## Unschooled Type-2

On the other hand, it is more challenging to integrate children who were wounded whether physically or mentally in the Syrian Civil War into the education system. The civil war itself along with the process of fleeing causes a series of trauma. It is almost impossible for children to overcome these traumas by themselves. These traumas may have damaged their brain and neurological systems while also causing psychological disorders. For instance, in a focus group conducted with teachers in Istanbul, it was stated that illnesses such as epilepsy had caused 5 students to take a break from school (TEC.Teacher.Focus1. İstanbul). During another interview, a Syrian child expressed that she does not go to school because of some neurological disorders that she struggles with and instead she stays home and takes care of her siblings (Unschooled.Girl4.İstanbul). Even though some of these children have been able to overcome their problems and continue their education, it is obvious that these experiences have adverse effects on schooling rates. These unschooled children are referred to as *Unschooled Type-2* in this report. These children may also have other reasons for not going to school that do not include harrowing experiences. For instance, to school a child who entered into Turkey as a 6-year-old five years ago (now an 11-year-old) requires many pre-conditions (such as first settling, then securing a source of income and obtaining proper guidance). However, it may take months or even years to satisfy all of these requirements. As a result of such situations, children may lag behind their peers as they are not able to read nor write in any language, including Arabic.

Those who are the most unfortunate in terms of the process of registration, continuing their education and achieving academic success are "lone young" refugees. These are individuals who immigrated without their parents or legal guardians. These children, whose families could not accompany them because of old age, illness or disability, or who lost their families in the war, seek refuge in Turkey by themselves and have limited opportunities. Education, ranks last in their hierarchy of need. These individuals must first seek out a source of income. Moreover, if their family members are left in Syria, they also might have to think about their families' needs as well.

### Unschooled Type-2 : Abdullah

*He is 13 years old. When his family fled to Turkey, he was only 6. He had just started 1st grade when his family left their country. He did not have the opportunity to go to school in Turkey. His father, elder brother and brother-in-law were killed in the war. Including his elder sister who lost her husband and her three children, 15 people live in the house. Abdullah was unable to learn to read and write. His disorientation is less now when compared to his first years in Turkey; thus, he is almost ready to return to school. But from which grade will he start? While his peers go to high school, he would need to be placed in a primary school according to his level which is a problem at his age. Therefore, he needs to find an appropriate school, register himself, and continue his education there. It is not impossible for Abdullah to go to school; however, he needs proper guidance, as well as regular support and care.*

## Unschooled Type-3

The most prominent obstructions to Syrian children's access to education are generally related to economy, health, time (age), and family structure. There are children with severe psychological disorders caused by the adverse effects of war in Syria. These children are taken into rehabilitation to heal their traumas; however, rehabilitation is a long process. Therefore, children suffering from psychological and neurological disorders have to stay away from school until they are in a better state of health. Once they are ready, however, they often lag behind their peers. Moreover, there are cases in which physically wounded children are unable to go to school because of disability. Some children, on the other hand, are obliged to work as their parents cannot. In cases where families do not have another source of income, it is not possible to compensate for the income generated by the child. As conditional cash transfers and Social Adaptation Aid are insufficient (when the number of family members is high or there are ill family members), children's income is vital for their family's survival. These situations usually prevent boys from going to school; however, girls may also be forced to stay out of school as it is the case for Rama. If there is a male in the household, no matter how young, females generally do not work. For this reason, barriers to education because of work are much more frequent among boys. or girls, on the other hand, early marriage is the most frequent reason for leaving school. Girls are usually married at the age of 14 or 15 in Syria. This tendency persists among refugees in Turkey. These children are referred to as *Unschooled Type-3* in this report.

**Unschooled Type-3: Rama**

*Rama is 11. She lives in the Basmane district of İzmir with her family. They came from al-Hasakah 8 months ago. She finished the 4th grade while she was still living in al-Hasakah. She was registered to Konak TEC in Turkey; however, as she was unable to continue, she was dismissed. Her family consists of her parents and 6 children including herself, 4 boys and 2 girls. Rama is the second child. The eldest (Rama's sister) is 15, but does not work. Her family's average monthly income is TL400. This amount is earned merely by Rama. She works as a tailor's apprentice. No one else works in the family. Her father is in cardiac arrest, and is recovering from an operation. Her mother takes care of her father. Besides her elder sister, all of her siblings are younger than Rama. It is impossible for Rama to go to school under these conditions. Her family needs a regular income, if she is to go to school.*

## Unschooled Type-3: Yahya

*"I want to go to school and become an engineer"*

*He is 17 years old. He lives with his elder brother. He had been working at a bakery until it closed down. He did not work in Syria. As they were unable to cross the border (probably due to the recently constructed border wall), his parents remained in Syria. His brother works, while Yahya is currently looking for a job. He had to leave school in Syria when he was a 12th grader at a vocational high school. "If I did not have to work, I would be in school now" he says; however, considering social, economic and psychological conditions, he is preoccupied thinking about things other than school. He says "If I had the opportunity, I would finish high school and become a computer engineer." Yahya and his brother have to send money to their family in Syria. For Yahya to go to school, apart from cultural and psychological conditions, there are two main preconditions: His family needs to be relocated to Turkey and the whole family should have an adequate income. Even if Yahya registers himself in school, it seems he would not be able attend regularly. For this reason, he may be educated through an open education high school with adequate planning and regular supports.*

## Unschooled Type-3: Ayşe

*Ayşe is 17 years old. She has a child and lives separately from her husband. 3 years ago, a Turk went to Syria and met Ayşe's family. He married Ayşe who was 14 at the time. He told Ayşe's family that he had a good-paying job in Turkey. After marrying him, Ayşe found out that the man worked as a porter and was uneducated. Meanwhile, Ayşe got pregnant. She did not think about divorce; however, due to economic hardships and cultural disparities, irreconcilable differences emerged. Ayşe, taking her 1.5-year-old baby with her, moved to Ankara, together with her parents. For Ayşe to return to school, someone must take care of her baby and she will need to receive both financial and morale support. Unfortunately it is impossible for her family to satisfy all of these needs as her father works as a teacher at a TEC.*

## 4.4. Policy considerations regarding access

• There is a need for policies that will enable successful Syrian children to attend Science and Anatolian High Schools.

• The current placement system places even the most successful Syrian students into the least successful schools. For this reason, a new placement system is needed.

• Perceiving Syrians as "temporary" or "guests" causes issues in terms of their feelings of belonging. It should be considered that their integration will improve through education, they will make plans for their future and will be able to implement these plans more easily, if they have a greater sense of belonging to Turkish society. In this respect, political statements addressing the uncertainties of Syrians' futures in Turkey should be made.

• There are many Syrian students who are rejected by school administrators from registering into schools with the excuse of shortages in facilities. MoNE should actively take precautions to prevent such situations.

• While a significant portion of the Turkish population is positive towards Syrians, there are those who are negative towards them. The negative approaches of Turkish parents, students, teachers and administrators towards Syrians has become a prominent factor that hinders schooling. In order to resolve this issue, political party leaders, the media and various notables should take on more responsibility and avoid negative statements targeting Syrians. Moreover, it is definite that the positive statements of the aforementioned can help ease the school lives of Syrian children.

**CHAPTER 5**

## CHAPTER 5

### Quality of Education Provided to Syrian Children

This chapter will discuss programs and projects initiated to ensure a quality education for Syrian children along with their obstructions. There are many elements involved in a quality education. First of all, a qualified teacher can provide a quality education despite a lack of educational materials, physical facilities and many other disadvantages. In addition, planning based on objective data and adequate resources is an important part of a quality education. The adequacy of financial resources, physical and technical facilities along with human resources are also important components of quality education. Moreover, administration supervising planning and needs, monitoring-assessment processes and a well-planned curriculum are prominent tools for a quality education. When students come across certain difficulties their readiness to learn and motivation determine their ties with the school.

### 5.1. Effects of planning issues on quality

As a result of the massive refugee influx since 2011, Turkey was caught off-guard in terms of education. In fact, no country can possibly be ready to accommodate an influx of 3 million people. As previously indicated in the *Introduction* and *Management* chapters, MoNE, tasked with the planning and management of education in Turkey, prepared plans based on the premise that Syrians were only in Turkey temporarily and that they would return to their country within a short period of time. However, from 2014 onwards, MoNE began to implement more long-term programs for Syrians' education. This shift in approach was not able to yield any rapid proactive or fundamental resolutions to the issue as the number, demographic composition and spatial distribution of Syrians is constantly changing. By 2017, it can be asserted that Syrians are relatively stable in terms of their demographic, social and spatial aspects. However, as the field research indicates, Syrians' internal mobility is still a factor at hand. To put it more clearly, there were 2.9 million Syrians in Turkey (460,000 in Istanbul alone), by February 2017 during the planning of this study, however the most recent data (of September 14 2017) shows that that this number has since increased to 3.18 million all across Turkey (507,000in Istanbul). Syrians' mobility across turkey, even at the provincial and district levels, makes the preparation of realistic plans based on objective data that could improve the quality of education more challenging. Increased mobility causes issues in tracking school-age children and also increases the pressure on schools in certain regions.

#### 5.1.1. Resources and quality

Another factor that determines the quality of education is the availability adequate resources. The largest share of financial, physical, technical and human resources used for Syrians' education is provided by the public. For instance, according to data from the 2016-2017 academic year, only 25 TEC facilities out of 432 were financially supported by NGOs and international institutions. The majority of the facilities TECs use are school buildings provided by MoNE. A significant portion of the remaining facilities is provided by various public resources (General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, 2017b). During the interviews with TEC coordinators and Arab teachers working at TECs, it was expressed that there was a lack of educational materials. Moreover, there is an inadequate number of computers available for

teachers. As mentioned earlier, an important way of overcoming this problem is the school principals' and teachers' goodwill to share the school facilities with Syrians. Therefore, issues caused by the lack of resources, like lab materials, school equipment, heating and janitorial services, affects the quality of education adversely.

TECs operating on the second shifts due to the lack of facilities is also an important factor in the quality of education. In certain cities, TECs begin classes at 14:30. It was expressed that the late schedule at TECs negatively affects children and especially in the winter, children are forced to leave early, before it gets dark. During interviews with coordinators and Arab teachers, it was asserted that rescheduling TECs programs to earlier hours would improve not only the quality of education but also students' motivations.

### 5.1.2. School administration and quality

As is the case with the curriculum and in the classroom environment, the most prominent obstruction to communication between school administrators, parents and students is language. Language issues are resolved by Arab teachers and administrators at TECs. However, this issue is not resolved systematically at an institutional level in public schools. It was observed that Turkmens[8] and students with higher level of confidence in Turkish communicate directly with the administration. Moreover, it was revealed during the interviews that students with Turkish language skills have a stronger feeling of belonging to the school, are more self-confident and have communication with the school administration. Yet, students who do not know Turkish have minimal interactions with the administration. Similarly, it was revealed that the parents of these students either do not attend PTA meetings or just sit through the meetings unable to engage as they are unable to understand what is being said (NGO1.Gaziantep.). When it is necessary, directions, signs and announcements are written in Arabic. However, these signposts and announcements are made in such a way that they embody the temporariness attributed to Syrians: rather sloppy signposts and announcements printed on A4 paper are posted on columns, walls and windows of schools.

**Figure 12.** An announcement posted by the administration on the school wall at a TEC



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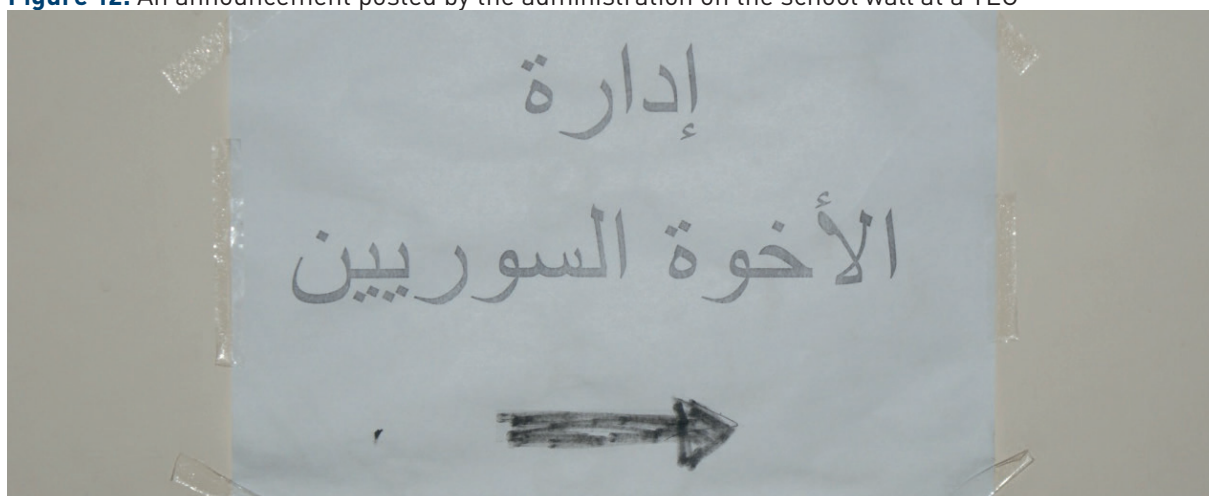
8) The Turkish speaking people of Iraq and Syria.

**Figure 13.** A signpost hanged by the administration on a school wall at a TEC



Similar signposts and announcements litter the schools that were visited as a part of the research; these have a negative impact on children's feelings of belonging. With minimal costs, a more professional accurate, effective and efficient line of communication could be achieved between school administration and students.

### 5.1.3. Teachers and quality

Even though teachers are employed according to certain criteria, since the very first wave of Syrians, some participants have expressed that there are issues with the qualifications of teachers. In particular, the Syrian Teachers Union has expressed that many people have become teachers through forged documents. Moreover, those who were not trained to be teachers were employed as teachers during the very first years of the crisis. It is highly improbable that these people who lack experience and knowledge can provide quality education. Today, teachers at TECs are selected more meticulously. At TECs visited by researchers, it was seen that all of the teachers there were also teachers in Syria. During the interviews, children stated that they have good relations with Syrian teachers and think highly of them. Coordinators have also expressed that most of the Syrian teachers were enthusiastic and diligent; on the other hand, it was also asserted that some of them lacked certain qualifications.

Examining the relations between Turkish teachers and Syrian students at public schools paints a different picture. It was observed that often teachers were discomforted by the presence of Syrian students, that they approached Syrian students in a negative way and did not proactively attempt to incorporate these children into class activities. Meanwhile, in other examples, for instance at a high school in Istanbul, it was seen that there was a positive relation between Turkish teachers and Syrian students and that teachers appreciated the success of Syrian children.

### 5.1.4. Curriculum and quality

Curriculum is also one of the most important components that determines the quality of Syrian children's education. It has been at the heart of discussions since Syrians first started receiving an education in Turkey and seemingly it will continue to be important in the future. While the initial curriculum utilized affirmed the al-Assad regime and contained some negative representations of Turkey, these sections were identified and removed from textbooks. Education at TECs continue with a revised curriculum.

On the other hand, it was observed that Syrian children going to public schools together with Turkish students were unable to benefit from the curriculum because of the language barrier. In addition, Syrian children believe that the content of the curriculum and certain values do not correspond to their own social structures.

Another prominent issue relate to quality is the 15-hour Turkish language courses which naturally create a time limitation for other courses. For instance, while other high schools in Turkey offer 6-hours of mathematics course every week, at TECs, as a result of time constraints only 2 hours are dedicated to mathematics. Similarly, while 4 hours are dedicated to foreign languages in public high schools, only 1 or 2 hours is dedicated at TECs. During the focus groups with Syrian students, they complained about the hours dedicated to courses like mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology and English. They have also expressed that they were unable to learn much in these courses because of limited class hours and that this negatively affects their future goals (TEC.Student.Focus3.İstanbul).

## 5.2. Issues experienced by students

### 5.2.1. Absenteeism-instability

Absenteeism is one of the most prominent factors that decreases the quality of education. The research indicates that there are serious issues with Syrian children's attendance. A certain portion of Syrian children continue to attend classes despite all hardships. Moreover, there are various initiatives that help ensure Syrian children's attendance in school. For instance, conditional aid provided by UNICEF requires children's dismissal from YÖBİS in the case of continual absences. In practice, however, instead of dismissing children from the system the conditional aid is put to an end. It can be asserted that conditional cash transfers will improve attendance as well as the schooling rate; because, conditional cash transfers are only provided to children who continue to attend school.

As part of the research, the reasons behind absenteeism were also examined. One of the most commonplace reasons is children trying to balance their time between income generating activities and education. Students registered in TECs outside camps are educated at double-shift schools in the afternoon. It was observed that children especially in metropoles who are educated at TECs with the double-shift system tend to work in the morning and go to school in the afternoon (TEC.Teacher.Focus1. İstanbul, NGO1.Gaziantep.). For instance, it was reported that some children sell napkins on the street, work as apprentices for tailors and barbers, or work in restaurants or stores until 14:30, the time classes at TECs start and then go to school afterwards (NGO1.Gaziantep.) Trying to contribute to his/her family income by working while also receiving an education is a heavy burden for children. As a consequence of

dividing their lives between work and education, children's motivation in school may decline.

Another prominent reason for absenteeism is the movement of families either within the same city or between different cities. When moved from one place to another, children may become disoriented and the distance between home and school may grow or children's socio-psychological conditions may change. During an interview conducted in Konya, it was observed that all 6 school-age children in a single family had never gone to school. When asked for the reason they replied that they used to live in Mersin, but had moved to Konya just 2 months ago. However, when they relocated, they were unable to register their children in new schools because of issues regarding identity cards and residence documents; moreover, the children had already lost their motivation as they moved midway through the term (UnschooledBoy2.Konya.). Another child in Konya expressed that she had come to Turkey with his family three years ago and had their identity cards issued. However, they decided to return to Syria and eventually came back to Turkey again after staying for 2 years in Syria; she said that it was impossible to go to school while all this was taking place (UnschooledGirl2.Konya). Families of both children have stated that they had issues while acquiring identity cards and being officially registered.

There are various possible reasons behind absenteeism. Having a family member that needs care, children having physical or psychological disabilities, experiencing unfortunate events at school or while going to school, the distance between home and school being too long, having unfavorable weather conditions (for those who walk) and the fact that schools in Syria are closed during Ramadan are just some of these reasons. It was expressed that there was an increase in absenteeism at certain public schools, especially in the 1st, 5th and 9th grades, and that it was because of loss of motivation caused by not being able to follow courses due to lack of Turkish language skills (TEC.Coordinator1.Gaziantep). Allegations that Syrian children, especially 5th and 9th graders, face hardships after transitioning from Arabic-medium TECs to public schools where all courses are in Turkish are also voiced by the General Director of the Syrian Teachers Union (NGO1.Gaziantep)

### 5.2.2. Lack of motivation and aimlessness

It was observed that Syrian children and their family members were not completely aware of the benefits of receiving an education in Turkey. Despite ongoing war, they still haven't  given up hope of eventually returning home one day. Their ties to Syria are still very much alive because of the property they left behind. This emotional commitment observed in adults naturally prevents them from imagining a future for themselves in Turkey. Combined with the traumas they have suffered and the hardships of making it in Turkey, this situation causes many Syrian children to lose motivation. In fact, it was also observed that some children left school, despite not working anymore, just because they didn't feel like going. For instance, in an interview in Istanbul, a woman said that her child did not want to wake up early to go to school and even if he did want to go to school, he was afraid of being maltreated by schoolmates (Parents.of.Unschooled3.İstanbul). The research revealed that some children did not want to go to school merely because they were afraid of harassment and fights breaking out at school or on the way to school. This lack of motivation proves to be an obstruction to schooling to an extent; however, it also has an impact on schooled children as well. Many schooled children are unable to benefit from education largely because of lack of motivation and feelings of aimlessness.

Even though some students suffer from a severe lack of motivation which causes them to leave school, it was observed that certain groups of students have a very high motivation. Meetings with Syrian teachers and coordinators revealed that Syrian students' motivation for learning are fairly high. In fact, during a meeting with Syrian students in Istanbul, it was observed that each student that participated in this focus group wanted to study at the most respectable universities in the UK, Germany, Canada and the US and to return to their country afterwards in order to contribute to the reconstruction efforts (TEC.Student.Focus3.İstanbul). Interviews with Turkish and Syrian teachers have also confirmed this motivation of students (TEC.Teacher.Focus4.İstanbul, TEC.Teacher.Focus4.İstanbul). Another common trait of children with high motivation is that they tend to be the children of well-educated families and have parents who had respectable jobs back in Syria like medical doctor, administrator or judge. It was detected that these highly motivated students were successful in both TECs and public schools.

### 5.2.3. Academic unsuccessfulness

Interviews with teachers and school administrators revealed that Syrian students' general success level is below average. Indeed, language (Turkish) is the foremost factor in this situation. It was expressed that there are Syrian students who completed their high school education and were placed in good departments in universities; however, it was added that their numbers are few. The following assertion about Syrian students' academic success was frequently voiced during focus group with teachers: "If Syrian students' issues with the language are resolved, there will be significant improvement in their academic success." Indeed, Turkmen students from Syria are relatively more successful than other Syrian children. Meanwhile, a significant amount of time is required to solve Syrian Arabs' issues with language (Turkish). In this respect, it can be foreseen that these children will continue to place below school average success level for some time to come. Interestingly, it was expressed that these students performed better in courses that require memorization (for example the Holy Quran, fiqh, hadith and al-sira) and that do not require robust Turkish knowledge such as mathematics and English.

The supposition that Syrians exposed to Turkish will learn the language faster is not very accurate for children who are in intermediary grades and comparatively older than their classmates. Indeed, some teachers complained that there were Syrian children that did not learn Turkish despite being among Turkish students for two years.

Despite everything, there are successful students among Syrians. Even though their numbers are relatively few, these students have become an inspiration to teachers and students alike. For instance, during a focus group with Turkish teachers working at a public school in Konya, the success story of one Syrian child was highlighted. It was emphasized that this particular student contributed to breaking down prejudices about Syrians among teachers and students. Furthermore, it was expressed that Syrian children are among the most successful students at this particular school in Istanbul.

## 5.3. In-school and in-classroom applications and quality
### 5.3.1. Counsel and guidance

It was revealed that Syrian students are in great need of counseling and guidance especially in public schools. The presence of a large number of Syrian teachers at TECs is comforting for Syrian children. Children who have issues regarding school or family can easily explain their problems to Syrian teachers

who they trust in; in turn, the teacher shares this information with the administrator or resolves issues at his/her own discretion using his/her own social network. However, Syrian students in public schools do not have this opportunity. In this respect, a greater responsibility falls on counseling services. School counselors should also actively observe children and intervene to resolve issues when required, instead of just aiding students in applications. Observations and interviews conducted in the research stages uncovered that most of the counselors at public schools were indifferent. In fact, it was observed that counselors at certain public schools were even unaware of the number Syrian children at their school. When a counselor was asked whether he had met with any of the Syrian children, he replied "I have never met with even one Syrian student until this day." This is just one example of how the counselors in general are indifferent. However, in reality, they should be engaged in these issues as much as teachers and school administrators. Their active observations of students, tests and evaluations to identify issues have the potential to help resolve many issues faced by Syrian students along with removing certain obstructions. Counselors, especially those in public schools, despite the challenges posed by not knowing Arabic, could resolve issues by reaching out to Syrian teachers, voluntary translators and students with good Turkish language skills. During the fieldwork for this research, new counselors were being appointed to TECs in 23 cities per PICTES protocols. Time will tell how these "provisionally contracted counselors" will perform in improving the communication between the administration and Syrian students as well as whether they will be able to advance Syrian students' integration process. Syrian teachers attribute great importance to these counselors along with psychological counselors (TEC.Teacher.Focus4.Istanbul).

**Figure 14**. Caption: "Counseling"

### 5.3.2. In-class environments

There are two main options for Syrian children accessing education in Turkey: the public schools and TECs. TECs are exclusively for Syrian children. Syrian children studying in public schools outside camps are educated together with Turkish students, although in most cases their numbers are less than Turkish students. Thus, Syrian students' placement within the classroom is an important detail. In order to prevent them from forming isolated subgroups within the classroom, they should be placed dispersedly. It was observed that in general, teachers and school administrators were aware of this detail. However, at certain schools, it was perceived that Syrians were placed in a way that makes them more prone to the formation of subgroups. These kinds of situations have a negative impact on the quality of education as it prevents interactions between Turkish and Syrian children, which as a result has negative impacts on the integration of Syrian students.

One of the factors that has an effect on the quality of education in in-class applications is the number of students per classroom. The average number of students per classroom in Turkey is higher than the OECD average (OECD, 2016). This being the case, it might seem meaningless to correlate Syrian children's education to the number of students per classroom; however, considering that language (not knowing Turkish) is one of the greatest obstructions to Syrians' access to education and to the quality of their education, classroom size becomes prominent. The effectiveness of language learning does not only ensure the quality of education; it is also crucial for integration into society. It was observed that there were more than 30 students in language learning classrooms; this means there are almost 30 students per Turkish language lecturer. In such a crowded classroom, children are sure to have challenges in learning Turkish.

During the focus groups with Turkish teachers in public schools, it was expressed that Syrian students have issues in participating and doing homework. With the exception of a few successful students, it was stated that they were mostly passive in classes and that they never complete their homework, despite attending school regularly. Moreover, teachers highlighted that there are many Syrian students who show up late to class. This is related with Syrian children having loose ties to school and more broadly education. Turkish teachers and students have a great responsibility in turning this negative attitude of Syrian students into a positive one. For this reason, there are many tasks that should be completed to further enable Syrian students' adaptation to the school and classroom.

According to the data acquired from the research, issues related to concentration, the presence of different age groups in the same classroom and coeducation are some of the other factors that have adverse effects on the quality of education for Syrian students.

## 5.4. Issues concerning work ethics

Even though there are positive assessments on Syrian teachers work ethics, vocational knowledge and in-class discipline, in some schools, there have also been some issues reported. For instance, assessments on teachers were positive at TECs visited in Istanbul, Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa. On the other hand, TEC coordinator in Kahramanmaraş has said the following about Syrian teachers: "They lack in-class discipline. Only 3 or 4 out of 25 teachers are qualified. The rest, they don't resemble what a teacher is" (TEC.Coordinator1.Kahramanmaraş.). This kind of criticism towards Syrian teachers was also voiced by others in various cities. Another TEC coordinator compared Turkish and Syrian teachers, stating: "Turkish teachers conduct 6 hours of class and monitor the halls. Syrian teachers, on the other hand, complain about having 4 hours of class; they don't do what is required of them" (TEC.Coordinator1. Konya.). While some TEC coordinators believe this is a matter of work ethics and culture in Syria, others believe it may be related to the traumas of war and a lack of motivation.

Meanwhile, Syrian teachers complained about work conditions, claiming that their summer vacations aren't as long as Turkish teachers' for example (Parent.of.Unschooled.Ankara). Similarly, Syrian teachers at certain TECs asserted that there is a need for a more constructive and positive approach from Turkish language lecturers. In addition, they expressed that monitoring and evaluation was also required for Turkish teachers.

Considering the data, it could be said that there is a concealed tension between Syrian teachers and Turkish administrators and teachers at some of the TECs. Even though there is a lack of data to conceive this as a norm, it is obvious that this will affect the quality of education. Thus, socio-cultural activities aimed at bonding Turkish administrators and teachers would be beneficial. Bonding between teachers will contribute to the quality of education along with the midterm and long-term integration process.

The 1st grade is the least desired grade among homeroom teachers. Since the classroom consists of new students, more energy and effort is needed in helping children adapt to school life and the workload is heavier, therefore homeroom teachers are usually less enthusiastic about teaching 1st graders. When Syrian students are in question, unwillingness becomes more apparent. Per MoNE's decision, Syrian children beginning 1st grade were registered to public schools; it was expressed that this situation disgruntled homeroom teachers who were appointed to the 1st grade and that this affects the quality of education (TEC.Coordinator1.Gaziantep).

## 5.5. Lack of parental support

Education is not a process that begins and ends at school. Other factors, such as family complement and reinforce education. It is well known that a mother's level of education is a prominent factor in a child's academic success. Syrian students are mostly deprived of these complementary and reinforcing factors; this affects their academic success negatively. A female parent in Istanbul expressed the following: "We

came here [Turkey] and watched TV series [to learn Turkish]. Yet, we don't know the alphabet and how to write in Turkish. Because of this, we're unable to help our child" (Parents.of.Unschooled3.İstanbul). The focus groups with Syrian children revealed that they rarely receive complementary support from their parents (TEC.Student.Focus1.İstanbul).Furthermore,, during the focus groups held with Syrian teachers, it was expressed that children who have lost their parents are in a direr situation.

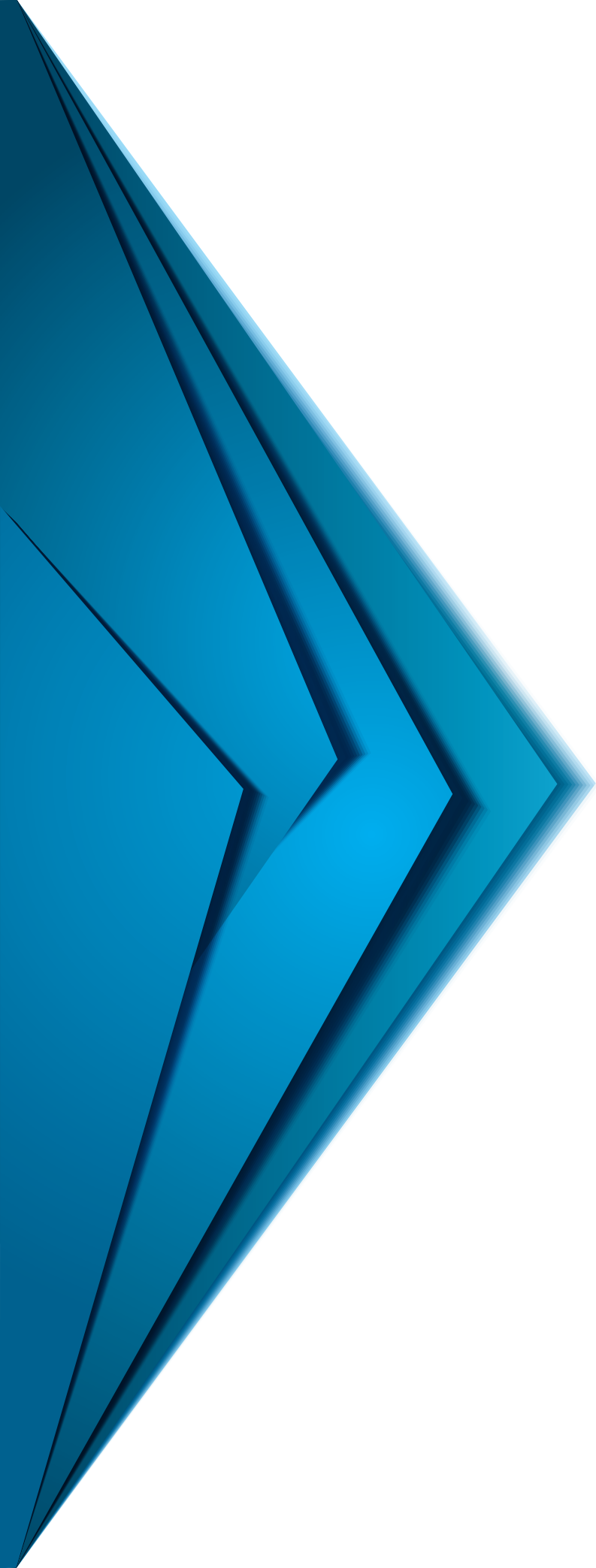### 5.6. Issues concerning monitoring and evaluation

It was observed that there are deficiencies in terms of monitoring and evaluating the quality of education Syrian children receive. This is due to the already pressing issues in schooling including, access, physical and technical infrastructure, curriculum and staff. Despite all this, it was seen that plans have been prepared for monitoring and evaluation activities along with the appointment of officials at an institutional level.  Naturally, MoNE, is the most prominent actor in terms of monitoring and evaluation. Founded as a component of MoNE's General Directorate for Life Long Learning, the Immigration and Emergency Education Department (IEED) is tasked with "monitoring and evaluation" in addition to the duties of policies development and implementation (GADEDB [IEED], 2017). Since GADEDB [IEED] was just recently founded, it has yet to produce significant results in terms of monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation activities of previous years were published in reports relying on macro-level data (number of teachers, resources, number of TECs and public schools). Therefore, it can be asserted that the assessment and evaluation of the quality of education relying on standard indicators has yet to be conducted. It is seen that regular assessments and evaluations relying on standard indicators are planned as part of PICTES. As this is still a fairly recent plan, only time will tell what activities will be realized and what kind of data will be produced on the quality of education.

### 5.7. Policy considerations regarding the quality of education provided for Syrian children

• A decision that allows Syrian teachers to attend Turkish courses at their schools would be beneficial.

• Regulations and new approaches are needed to facilitate Syrian teachers' appointment to public schools with an appropriate legal status. Proactive measures against the possible issues that may arise with the closure of TECs will be useful. Employment of Syrian teachers at public schools will be helpful in overcoming miscommunication between the school administration and Syrian students and parents, just as it will be useful in integrating Syrian students into public schools.

• There are demands to inspect Syrian teachers' diplomas in detail. A political and administrative decision is expected to be taken on this matter.

• During the field research, it was observed that the scales developed and applied by the staff of MoNE to make assessments the quality of education Syrians are receiving need to be more scientific and objective.

An administrative decision is needed regarding the scientific standardization of data acquisition utilities and indicators that are required for the assessment of quality.

• An administrative decision is needed for the registration of and access to data on quality which is acquired through systematic assessments.

**CHAPTER 6**

## CHAPTER 6

### Conclusion and Recommendations

#### 6.1. Conclusion

This research was conducted to identify issues and provide recommendations on Syrian children's education through fieldwork and the data acquired from MoNE. the education of over 3 million Syrians in Turkey is a crucial subject. The education of children between ages 5-17 in particular will determine the course and content of all discussions to be held in the near future in Turkey. Issues concerning Syrians' social, cultural and economic adaptation to Turkey are not independent from education.

Various sociological functions are attributed to education in the modern world. Education provides the opportunity to advance class and status, improve adaptation skills, find employment and acquire vocational aptitude. In terms of society, education allows individuals and masses to gather around a social consensus, it reduces social conflict and facilitates the resolution, foresees the division of labor and spreads ethical values. For this reason, it could be asserted that uneducated children are in a fairly disadvantageous position. Moreover, this situation implies serious risks for society. When refugee children are in question, these societal risks may be exacerbated. For instance, uneducated Syrian children are more vulnerable to being abused as cheap labor. On the other hand, refugee children are more prone to e early marriage, becoming members of radical ideological groups and social adaptation issues.

Many countermeasures are being taken for the sake of Syrians' education in Turkey by various partners. Undoubtedly, public institutions are under the most pressure in terms of Syrians' education. Since the Syrian experience, mass migrations taking place within a short period of time are now defined as "disasters" by the Republic of Turkey. In this respect, with the Syrians' mass migration to Turkey, disaster and emergency practices were implemented and the Prime Ministry tasked the DEMC. The DEMC produced quick resolutions to emergency needs like shelter, healthcare and food. Education, on the other hand, didn't become a part of policies seeking a permanent resolution until much later. With the supposition that the war in Syria would quickly come to an end and that refugees would be able to return to their country in a short period of time, on the matter of Syrian children's education, only small-scale resolutions were implemented using local resources. From 2014 onwards, MoNE started to seek out a more permanent solution for Syrian children's education, as hope for the conflict's resolution had disappeared. Previously makeshift educational applications were systematized; beside physical facilities like schools, classrooms, laboratories and equipment, human resources like teachers, administrators and counselors were mobilized for the education of Syrians.

In addition to public institutions, resources provided by NGOs and international actors also contribute to this cause. For instance, NGOs like TDF and the Bülbülzade Foundation contributed to improving the curriculum employed at TECs. The Yunus Emre Institute helped in the preparation and publication of textbooks. Similarly, global NGOs like HRF and local NGOs like the Elbir Association (in Konya) were helpful in the provision of school supplies and clothing for Syrian children. In terms of schooling,

institutions like the Tzu Chi Foundation (Istanbul), IOM, ASAM, the Turkish Red Crescent and UNICEF continue to play an important role. UNICEF also contributes to many aspects of Syrian children's education, such as paying the salaries of teachers, Turkish language lecturers and counselors working at TECs. Even though they are not mentioned in the research because they were not included in the sample, the immense efforts of many other NGOs and volunteers cannot be disregarded.

Despite all the support and efforts, the current state of Syrian children's education is far from ideal. In fact, there are still many issues with their education. This research identifies issues regarding Syrian children's education and provides recommendations. The issues identified in this report are divided into three categories: Management, access and quality.

It is MoNE's duty and responsibility to establish and manage a comprehensive system for Syrian children's education. Between 2012 and 2014, MoNE's approach was to manage the situation through temporary solutions. During that period of time, MoNE had relinquished the issue to NGOs instead of taking the initiative. However, once the assumption that the war in Syria would soon come to an end was deemed unrealistic, MoNE began to actively engage in the issue and started to manage each and every aspect of Syrian children's education. There are many issues caused by the established system and administrative capacities. These issues are elaborated below and subsequently recommendations for them are provided. To summarize, the main issues concerning the management of Syrian children's education are related to the problems of accreditation and diplomas, difficulties stemming from bureaucracy, administrative resistance, local limitations to resources and facilities, financial constraints and the shortcomings in monitoring and evaluation.

All Syrian children have the right to access education in Turkey. This right is defined and protected by national and international regulations. For this reason, there are diverse options in terms of access to education. For most Syrian children, there are two options for education: public schools and TECs. There are obstructions to Syrian children's access to education, such as economic issues, the language barrier, early marriage, a negative perception from Syrians towards coeducation, transportation issues between home and school, disorientation, uncertainties about the future and social/legal status, limited options in transitioning to high school due to the placement system in place and the inadequacy of physical facilities (shortage of classrooms and laboratories etc.) in the schools. Issues Syrian children face in terms of access and recommendations to these issues are elaborated below. In addition, unschooled Syrian children are divided into three typologies in this report. *Unschooled Type-1* is used for children who are relatively easier to be schooled. Children who are unschooled because of relatively simpler reasons are also included in this typology. *Unschooled Type-2* is used for children that are unable to go to school because of more challenging and permanent reasons that require planning for their continued attendance at school. *Unschooled Type-3* refers to the children that are hardest to get to the school. Children that are physically or mentally disabled, have significant familial issues and that are in an impoverished condition are included in this type.

Syrian children's access to school does not ensure that their issues regarding education will be completely resolved. After getting access, issues regarding the quality of education are at stake. There

are some analyses about the quality of Syrian children's education. The main elements of a quality of education are teachers, planning, resources, school administration, in-class applications, the curriculum, student readiness, support outside of school and monitoring and evaluation activities., Challenges and recommendations concerning Syrian children's quality of education are elaborated below. Broadly speaking, it is possible to make the following statements about education in general: There are discrepancies between the central administration (MoNE) and local administrations in terms of vision (including ideology), which cause issues in mobilizing the resources and facilities needed to implement educational applications. All of this, in turn, affects the quality of education negatively. Moreover, Syrian students' challenges concerning motivation, language and adaptation have become a significant obstacle, preventing them from fully benefiting from the education they receive.

## 6.2. Recommendations

### Recommendations regarding management

• Considering that  Syrian children's schooling is a basic human right and that the deprivation of this right may lead to marginalization, ghettoization and radicalization, along with the fact that a quality education will resolve the aforementioned issues, while also allowing children to rebuild a better future for themselves and their country, MoNE should work on raising awareness about Syrian children's education, which should be especially geared towards the actors  tasked with improving Syrian children's' access to education. In addition, the ministry should cooperate with NGOs to break families' prejudices about Syrian children.

• Civil servants and citizens must be reminded that humanitarian and political approaches are different entities and that education is a part of the humanitarian approach.

• All kind of school resources, fixtures and equipment should be available for Syrians at the schools used as TECs.

• The physical capacities of the public schools that Syrians will be directed to in the event of the closure of TECs must be assessed carefully. When a TEC is closed down, students' domicile addresses should be considered and the physical capacities of the nearest public school should be assessed in terms of adequacy. After the assessment, a specific schedule for the closure of each TEC should be prepared. Otherwise, many schooled Syrian children risk to be left out of the education system.

• Plans should be prepared for Syrian teachers' futures in the event that TECs are closed down; measures should be taken to ensure that these teachers are reabsorbed into the education system. These teachers can teach Arabic courses at imam hatip schools, while also playing an important role in the integration of Syrian children.

• The Syrian population is largely unaware of the differences between TECs and public schools.  Syrians should be made aware of the differences and the advantages of being a public-school graduate should be emphasized. This will relieve some of the concerns Syrians may have during the closure of TECs.

• All Syrian teachers, students and parents along with Turkish administrators, teachers, students and parents should be informed about the closure of TECs.

• Syrian teachers should be regularly consulted during the closure process of TECs and their opinions and recommendations should be regarded.

• The buildings currently used by TECs, should be maintained for education purposes in the future and resources should be dedicated to the maintenance of these buildings.

• Turkey is dedicating significant resources to the schooling of Syrian children; however, these resources are inadequate. For this reason, the international community should take on more responsibility in the education of Syrian children and transfer more resources to support Turkey. In particular, the budget that is to transferred from EU funds should be employed as soon as possible in the construction of new school buildings and classrooms. Financial support for the construction of classrooms and school buildings, transportation, education materials and staff will improve the schooling rate of Syrian children, while allowing them to receive a higher quality education.

• In order to reduce the burden on the public sector and to speed up the implementation of activities, national and international NGOs should be accredited, allowing them to cooperate more efficiently with MoNE.

**Recommendations regarding access**

• Three unschooled typologies were identified in the research. The children classified within these typologies must be approached using appropriate methods and tools according to the issues they face. For instance, it is not economically rational to spend scarce resources on commodities in cases where children be schooled merely through psychological support and encouragement. Such material resources as money and aid should be dedicated to children who cannot go to school because of economic or work-related issues. Appendix I elaborates on the attributes associated of these typologies, what should be done to school them and by whom it should be done.

• Disorientation is a hidden element that usually accompanies other obstructions. There are children who want to go to school instead of work, but lack the knowledge of where to start; these children may be integrated into the education system rather easily with the proper guidance

• All girls schools should be opened to increase the schooling rate of Syrian girls.

• Considering that certain children are left unschooled because of inadequate physical facilities in schools, the number of school buildings and classrooms should be increased quickly.

• Highly successful Syrian children should be enabled to attend top tier high schools such as Science, Anatolian and Social Sciences high schools that focus on sciences and mathematics.

• Much work is needed in terms of disabled students' access to education. Because of war and extraordinary conditions, the number of disabled people among Syrians is rather high. The physical and architectural resolutions that are required for these children's access to school should be emphasized.

• During most of the interviews conducted with children who are unschooled, or have left school, it was revealed that none of the state officials or NGO personnel had hitherto contacted them. It is especially

easy to reach children who were dismissed from school due to absenteeism (in terms of finding their residence and such and getting in contact with them). These children should be identified and their families should be visited in order to persuade them to go back to school.

• Syrians continue to establish social networks among themselves, maintaining their norms and values. So, there are certain notables among the community. In order to improve schooling rates, public institutions and NGOs should cooperate with these community leaders along with mukhtars.

• Since Syrian teachers and students lack import knowledge about educational prospects, they should be informed on this matter.

• For schooling campaigns and in order to break prejudices against Syrians, the local and national media should be employed efficiently.

• Alternative resolutions must be produced to school children who were unable to go to school for years and were left behind their peers. Institutions that are to provide night- school education should be opened for children of similar age groups.

• A preparatory school of sorts should be opened for Syrian students with low Turkish language skills. This practice has already been employed by certain school administrators for practical reasons. Teachers, students, parents and administrators from various schools have expressed that 15-hour weekly Turkish language lessons at TECs are inadequate for academic success. On the other hand, increasing the weekly Turkish class hours is unrealistic. The situation is not much different in public schools. Syrian students studying in public schools try to learn Turkish while simultaneously following the curriculum in Turkish. Teachers' discriminations aiming to compensate for this situation further undermine the in-class peace. In order to avoid these problems, Syrian children should first go through intensive Turkish language courses at institutions similar to the Center for Teaching Turkish Language (CTTL) and then transfer to public schools once they have achieved an adequate level of Turkish. These courses could be held at Public Education Centers or even at schools, if sufficient number of students is present.

**Recommendations regarding quality**

• Academic success is closely related with integration into the school environment and the school premises are not the only places where this takes place. Out of school social environments are also important for integration. Bringing Turkish and Syrian families together and helping them bond will help Syrian children integrate into schools.

• Joint socio-cultural activities in public schools play an important role important fin forcing Turkish and Syrian students into positive interaction. On the other hand, even though cultural trips and activities organized exclusively Syrian students do have some benefits, they have a negative effect on integration. The field research revealed that non-competitive trips and activities which included the participation of both Turkish and Syrian students proved effective in nurturing friendship and solidarity.

• The cultural and social activities organized to promote bonding should be extended to include Syrian and Turkish teachers, as this will increase the quality of education.

• Syrian children demonstrating superior academic success should be identified and provided with the opportunities for an appropriate education. Also, NGOs working in this area should be supported.

• The needs of TECs in terms of required textbooks and curriculum should be met (at least until the TECs are closed down). Delaying the fulfillment of these needs just because TECs are scheduled to be closed down will have adverse effects.

• It is foreseen that issues regarding curriculum will be a main subject of debate especially with the closure of TECs. In this respect, proactive measures should be taken and plans should be made to ensure that the curriculum incorporates both national/local and global values.

• Socio-cultural projects that could improve Syrian students' motivation for education should also be supported. Moreover, Syrian students should be informed about the realistic future prospects that the education they receive will provide them with.

• It is expressed that there are ongoing issues regarding the proficiency and diplomas of Syrian teachers. To resolve this matter, well-educated Syrians should be consulted. Syrians who are experienced in the field of education asserted that they are ready to volunteer to help with this matter.

• It was observed that Syrian teachers lack important information about the Turkish education system. Syrian teachers should be effectively informed about the Turkish education system, as they also serve as consultants to Syrian students. Informing Syrian teachers also means indirectly informing Syrian students; Syrian students will be able to consult their teachers without having a language barrier. This will, in turn, improve the motivations of students and the quality of their education.

• Syrian teachers should be provided with in-service training that will allow them to improve and develop their vocational knowledge.

• Regular and systematic assessments, relying on objective and standard indicators that will allow the evaluation of "quality" should be defined. Furthermore, the data acquired from these assessments should be available through open access.

• The research revealed that most Syrian parents were unable to help their children with their studies as a result of not knowing the Turkish alphabet (reading and writing) themselves. This situation has adverse effects on children's success and integration. For this reason, the number of literacy and Turkish language courses offered for adults should also be increased.

• A full day education is crucial for the quality of education received by Syrian children. In this respect, classes at TECs should begin at an earlier hour and TECs should be supported through the provision of better physical and infrastructural facilities. This requires new classrooms and school buildings.

• As 15 hours of class is dedicated to Turkish language learning on a weekly basis, there is limited time left over for mathematics, physics, chemistry and foreign language courses. To ensure that Syrian students are not at a disadvantage as a result of their Turkish language learning process, make-up hours and courses should be scheduled especially in summer in order to compensate for the shortage of essential courses.

• Considering that many Syrian children have psycho-social issues because of war and immigration, active counseling services should be provided for these children.

• In order to improve the quality of counseling services, a special monitoring and evaluation system must be implemented specifically in this area.

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**Appendix**

Table 6. Categorization of unschooled Syrian children according to their reasons for not attending and strategic recommendations to school these children.

| | Unschooled Syrian Children | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Definition** | **Main Obstructions** | **Recommendations** | **Actors** |
| **Unschooled Type-1** | Children who do not go to school because of issues that could easily be resolved with minimal resources in the short-term. | -Disorientation<br><br>-Non-clinical psychological issues (lack of motivation, uneasiness, fear of rejection and insecurity around physical environments of the school)<br><br>-Logistic deficiencies (school supplies, clothing and transportation)<br><br>-Registration being rejected by the school administration (for not having foreign ID car, inadequate physical facilities of the school) | -Individual monitoring and case-by-case strategies<br><br>-Orientation<br><br>-Distribution of media providing guidance (short and effective movies, texts)<br><br>-Facilitating bureaucratic procedure and regulations<br><br>-Building new classrooms, improving school's physical capacity<br><br>-Bureaucratic supervision and inspections on registration rejections | - MoNE<br><br>-Ministry of Family and Social Policies<br><br>-Turkish Red Crescent<br><br>-DEMC<br><br>-Academic institutions<br><br>-National and international NGOs<br><br>-General Directorate of Immigration Management<br><br>-Local administrations |
| **Unschooled Type-2** | Children who do not go to school because of reasons that could be resolved by financial and human resources, planning, monitoring and evaluation and institutional interventions. | -Substitutable job obligation (when the wage is compensated with financial aid, these children may return to school)<br><br>-Frequent relocation<br><br>-Cultural factors (neglection of school and education, being against coeducation) | -Efficient and credible field researches<br><br>-Popularizing Conditional Cash Transfer programs<br><br>-Providing guidance after relocation, facilitating bureaucratic procedures | - MoNE<br><br>- General Directorate of Immigration Management<br><br>- Ministry of Family and Social Policies |
| **Unschooled Type-3** | Children obstructed by permanent issues like time, health and composition of family, and economic that require alternative education methods. | -Clinical psychological reason<br><br>-Serious physical health issues<br><br>-Falling behind peers because of losing time<br><br>-Lack of parents<br><br>-Non-substitutable job obligation (mostly boys)<br><br>-Having children because of an early marriage (girls) | - Individual monitoring and case-by-case strategies<br><br>-Improving open and remote education options<br><br>-Facilitating education for the disabled | - MoNE<br><br>-Ministry of Health<br><br>-NGOs<br><br>-Aid organizations |

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The inclusion of Syrian children into the education system is an important matter. There are many risks associated with being uneducated. First of all, the uneducated ones lose their hopes and are forced to work at low-paying jobs as they lack the necessary knowledge and skills. What follows is the risk of marginalization, ghettoization and radicalization. Access to quality education will help Syrians overcome psycho-social issues caused by war, violence and relocation and will contribute to the normalization of the individuals and the society.

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