Syrian Refugees in Lebanon's Public School System

Structural and Political Limits for Access

Christopher Lindberg Brekke

Master's thesis in MØNA 4590 - Middle Eastern and North African studies

Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages (IKOS)

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

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Abstract

The civil war in Syria has entered its fourth year. Neighbouring Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey have come to host enormous Syrian refugee populations, which are expected to reach four million people by the end of 2015. The regional crisis has resulted in the largest dispersal of people since the end of the Second World War. For Lebanon, the influx of Syrian refugees represents a threat to the sectarian equilibrium that the state is founded on. By the end of 2015, the number of refugees residing in Lebanon is expected to reach two million people. Considering that the population of Lebanon is four million people, the impacts have been all encompassing. There are no official refugee camps, which is a highly politicized issue and carries with it a stigma of permanence. One implication is that the provision of basic services becomes the responsibility of the host government. Considering that half of all refugees are below the age of eighteen this creates a large demand for education. This thesis seeks to shed light on the response to provide Syrian refugees with access to public formal education. The importance of formal education is that refugees can receive a degree that will be recognized by national authorities when returning home. Although formal education is accessible through private and public sectors, the vast majority of those able to enrol have done so for the latter. As such, the primary focus of this thesis has been to explain (1) why Syrian refugees have a limited level of access to public schools and (2) why the Syrian refugees who manage to enrol may be receiving a form of education that is of lower quality than the national standard. I have employed a case study approach based on informant interviews and literature reviews. During a two-week period in November 2014, I interviewed actors involved in the forming and implementation of the education response. My findings indicate that Syrian refugees have a limited level of access to public formal education, which is validated on the basis of the number of out-of-school children residing in Lebanon. In addition, I have found that the quality of education that can be received is lower because the duration of academic semesters and school days are shorter than required by the national standard. These limits on the level of access and the quality of education can be explained by a combination of factors that may be categorized into structural and political limits. However, these cannot be separated entirely from one another as everything is politicized in Lebanon. Based on my findings, the most important factors constraining the level of access and the quality of education relates to the system of enrolment and the framework for access, which has been heavily demarcated to reduce the presence of Syrian refugees in the public school system.

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Contents

1 Introduction ... 1
1.1 Research question ... 2
1.2 Outline of thesis ... 3
2 Methodology ... 5
2.1 Defining validity and reliability ... 5
2.2 The case study method - external and internal validity ... 5
2.3 Fieldwork ... 6
2.4 Methodological limitations - measurement validity and reliability ... 9
3 Key Concepts ... 12
3.1 Operationalization of concepts ... 13
3.1.1 Formal education and non-formal education ... 13
3.1.2 Access to education ... 14
3.1.3 Quality of education ... 14
3.2 Explanatory analysis ... 15
3.2.1 Structural limits ... 15
3.2.2 Political limits ... 17
4 Background ... 20
4.1 Historical relations between Lebanon and Syria ... 20
4.2 The Syrian Civil War ... 22
4.3 No refugee camps: an urbanized refugee crisis ... 23
4.4 Refugee policy in Lebanon ... 24
4.5 The education response ... 25
4.6 A brief history of education in Lebanon ... 26
4.7 Administrative structure of education system ... 28
4.8 General education in Lebanon ... 29
5 Empirical Review and Analysis ... 31
5.1 Descriptive analysis ... 31
5.1.1 Pre-crisis school enrolment, 2011-2012 ... 31
5.1.2 The enrolment of Syrian refugees ... 35
5.1.3 The quality of education for Syrian Refugees ... 39
5.2 Explanatory analysis ... 44
5.2.1 Structural limits ... 44
5.2.2 Political limits ... 57
6 Conclusion ... 73
7 Literature ... 80
Appendix 1 List of respondents ... 85
Appendix 2 Letter of confirmation for informants ... 86
Appendix 3 Interview guides ... 87

Table of figures

Figure 4.1 The education cycle 30

Figure 5.1 Enrolment for general education 2011-2012 32

Figure 5.2Total student numbers by school type and region 2011-2012 33

Figure 5.3 Student enrolment by school type and education levels 2009-2010 34

Figure 5.4 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR between July 2012 and January 2014 ... 36

Figure 5.5 Syrian public school enrolment by level of education 2013-2014 37

Figure 5.6 Lebanese versus Syrian public school enrolment by region 2011-2014 38

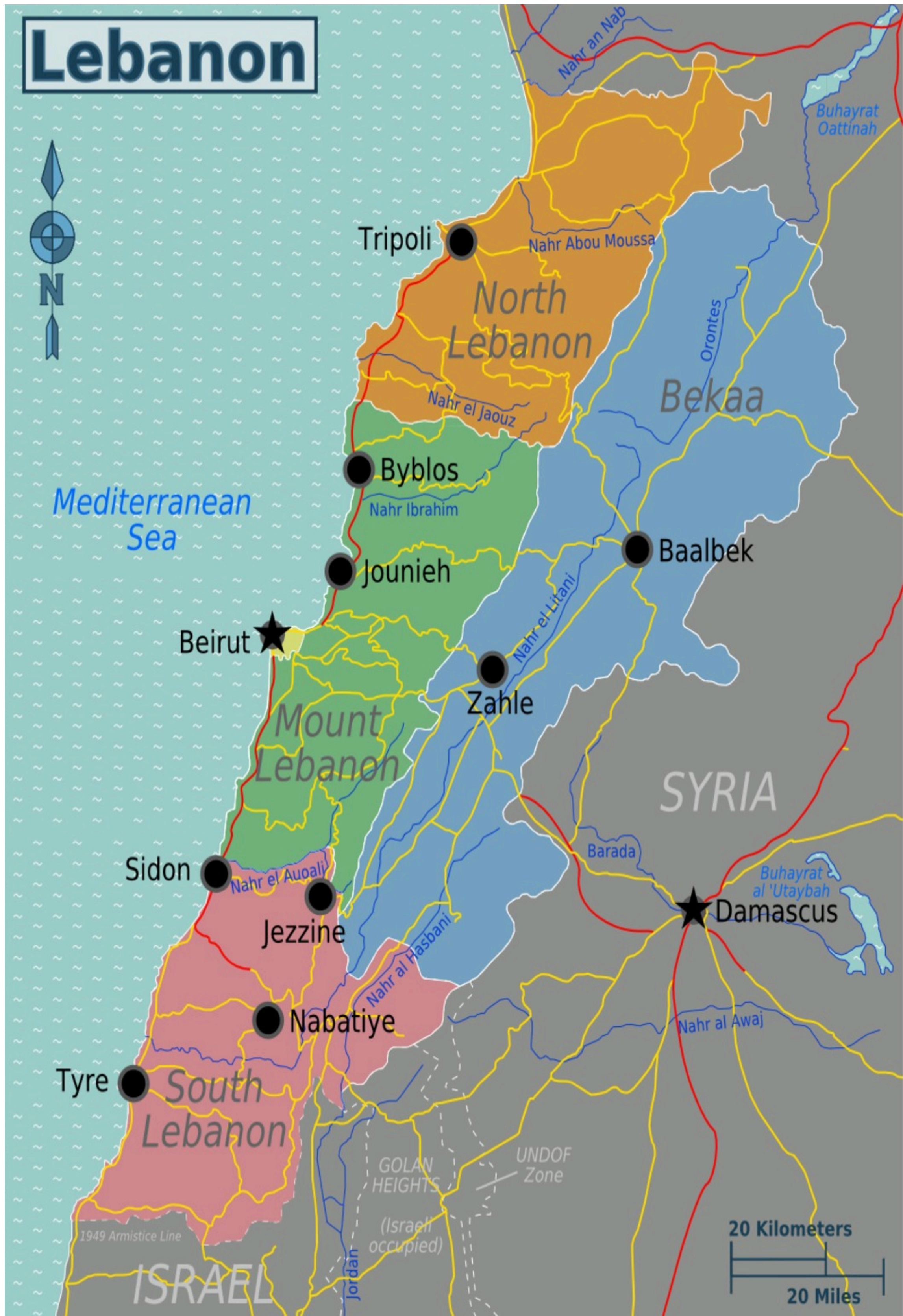
Figure 5.7 Annual Syrian enrolment in public schools 2011-2015 39

Figure 5.8 Number of public schools by region 2013 45

Figure 5.9 Teacher employment for the 2011-2012 school year 53

List of Abbreviations

ALPs	Accelerated Learning Programmes
CERD	Centre for Educational Research and Development
ESWG	Education Sector Working Group
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
LU	The Lebanese University
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NFE	Non-formal Education
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
RACE	Reaching All Children with Education
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East



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1 Introduction

The Civil War in Syria has entered its fifth consecutive year. The possibilities for a political solution remain elusive. Today it is estimated that half of Syria´s pre-crisis population of 22 million people, have become internally displaced within Syria, or externally as a result of the conflict. More than three million people have sought refuge in neighbouring Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey in what may now be defined as a protracted displacement. In the course of 2015, it is estimate that the number of externally displaced refugees will surpass four million people. The magnitude of the refugee crisis has come to exert an unsustainable pressure on the infrastructure, public services and resources of host countries. This pressure has been especially acute for Lebanon due to the numbers involved and the absence of formal refugee camps.

Beginning in 2011, Lebanon has come to receive upwards of two million refugees from Syria. Considering that Lebanon had a pre-crisis population of approximately four million people, this constitutes an enormous population increase. The crisis is made extra severe by the fact that the majority of refugees have settled in areas long considered the most socially and economically marginalized. As a result, the crisis is two-pronged. Lebanon is not only struggling to cater for a growing number of refugees, but is also facing reduced ability to provide for adversely impacted host communities. To complicate matters further, it is believed that half of all refugees are children below the age of eighteen. The need for education is thus considerable. In Lebanon, formal education is accessed through both public and private sectors.

The importance of formal education is that when refugees return home, they will have acquired a degree that is officially accredited and will be recognized by relevant educational authorities. Starting in 2011, the Ministry of Education (MEHE) opened up its national education system for the enrolment of Syrian refugees in private and public schools. The majority have enrolled for the latter. Based on projections for 2015, it is expected that there will be more than 700 000 children[1] in need of education (UNHCR 2014, 34). The focal point of this thesis will therefore be on how Lebanon has tackled the challenge of providing formal education for Syrian refugees.

[1] This figure is not limited to Syrian refugees, but includes Palestinian children from Syria and Lebanese citizens who were residing in Syria prior to the conflict.

The failure to provide access to quality formal education may culminate in a "lost generation" of children. Syrian displacement in Lebanon has become protracted, with little prospect of returning home in the foreseeable future. Idle children may provide a pool of recruitment for warring parties across the border, which may contribute to the longevity and intensity of conflict. The negative impacts will likely be severe if opportunities for education remain elusive. These children form a crucial part of the generation that will ultimately be responsible for the post-war reconstruction of Syria. Against this backdrop, it is important to examine why the majority of Syrian refuge children face limited access to quality formal education in Lebanon. The lack of which may be due to structural constraints within the public school system, but also due to political decisions that have sought to bottleneck Syrian enrolment. Throughout this thesis I will seek to argue that the answer lies somewhere in-between these two.

1.1 Research question

In this thesis I will examine the education response to provide Syrian refugees with access to quality, formal education. The public school system has been instrumental in providing access to formal education for Syrian refugees, but for the vast majority of school-aged children this access is limited. I will investigate how access may be constrained by the *structural limitations* of the education system, as well as *political decisions* governing the mechanisms for enrolment. Specifically, I will aim to answer the following research question:

RQ: Why is access to quality, formal education limited for Syrian refugees in Lebanon?

In addition, I aim to answer the following sub questions:

i. What are structural limits?
ii. What are political limits?

As I will elaborate later, *access* is here defined as (1) direct access in terms of being able to enrol in public schools, whereas *quality* refers to (2) the quality of education for those that have been able to enrol in public schools. By *structural limits* is understood the inherent limitations of the public school system, in terms of ability or capacity to absorb and cater for out-of-school refugee children. *Political limits* on access and quality will encompass refugee policy and political decisions that dictate the mechanisms for Syrian enrolment into schools. As I argue throughout the thesis, structural and political limits in conjunction, may constrain

the potential for access and the quality of education that can be received. I return to the definition and operationalization of these key concepts in chapter three.

In this thesis I focus on the 2010-2015-time period, which provides a lens to examine the public school system prior to the crisis and the subsequent enrolment of Syrian refugees. For the empirical analysis I employ information on the national education system of Lebanon and the humanitarian response to provide refugees with education. On that note, this thesis will not constitute a comprehensive analysis of the education system or a detailed review of the education response. To reiterate, I focus primarily on the Lebanese public school system and the absorption of Syrian refugees. In defining the scope of the thesis, it is important to acknowledge that refugees have also accessed private schools. The exact number is not known, but an estimated 11 000 children were enrolled in 2013 (Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 16). For the majority of refugees, private sector education is inaccessible and will therefore not constitute a focus in this thesis. The same goes for Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS), who are receiving education through a parallel structure of UNRWA schools.[2]

1.2 Outline of thesis

This thesis is based on a case study approach, where information has been gathered on the basis of semi-structured interviews as well as literature reviews. A considerable portion of empirical data stems from two weeks of field research in Beirut, Lebanon, from October-November 2014. In chapter two, I present the methodological approach of my thesis. Here I focus on outlining the process of information gathering and the field research conducted in Lebanon. In this context I discuss limitations and ethical considerations. Having presented the analytical and methodological framework of this thesis, I move on to chapter three. Here I define and operationalize the key concepts in the research question and for sub questions one and two. In this chapter I also present the analytical framework for my thesis and where applicable, I present possible outcomes supported by relevant literature reviews.

In chapter four, I present essential background information to understand the status of Syrian refugees in the Lebanese context. I examine the historical relationship between Lebanon and Syria and the sectarian nature of the Lebanese state. I go on to look at how the civil war in Syria has exacerbated divisions within Lebanon and culminated in an influx of refugees. The

[2] United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the near east.

focus will be on Lebanon as a refugee hosting country and the education response. I also examine the provision of private versus public sector education within a historical perspective. This is important to understand the position of public sector education in Lebanon. Finally, I briefly examine the administrative structure of MEHE and the general education cycle.

Chapter five constitutes the empirical review. To begin with I provide necessary information on the public school system prior to the crisis, before moving on to the descriptive analysis. Here I start by validating that (1) access to public formal education is limited for Syrian refugees in Lebanon (2) that the quality of education that can be received is limited for Syrian refugees enrolled in public schools.

Then I move on to the explanatory analysis, where I present possible factors in accordance with sub questions one and two. The explanatory framework is divided into "structural" and "political" reasons for why the level of access is limited and the quality of education the same. Chapter five forms the empirical basis on which to answer both components of the research question.

In chapter six, I summarize my findings and conclude by answering the research question and sub questions. Here I theorize on the process of providing Syrian refugees with access to quality formal education in Lebanon, as well as prospects for the future.

2 Methodology

In this thesis I have employed a *qualitative case study approach*. This implies conducting an intensive study of a single "case", as opposed to for example a "large N" statistical study. Any choice of research design entails certain methodological caveats and trade-offs that the researcher must be aware of in order to strengthen the *validity* and *reliability* of the data collected and the inferences drawn in the study. In this chapter I elaborate on important methodological considerations and limitations.

2.1 Defining validity and reliability

As a backdrop for the following methodological discussion I present definitions of scientific validity and reliability relevant for this study, that I will address throughout the chapter.

Validity and reliability refer to various aspects of the quality of data and inferences drawn in a scientific study. I focus on three types of validity identified in the literature: Internal validity, external validity, and measurement validity. *Internal validity* is concerned with causality. If inferences can be made about a causal relationship between factor X and Y, the internal validity of a study is strong. To make claims about causality, the researcher needs to identify causal effects and causal mechanisms. *External validity* deals with the potential for generalizing findings made in one study to a larger group of phenomenon. External validity is strong, where findings based on a sample is valid for a larger population. External validity is highly important in large N, statistical studies and necessitates representativeness between sample and population (Lund et al. 2002). *Measurement validity* is concerned with the operationalization of concepts in a study. Operationalization is the formulation of concepts in terms of measureable indicators (Gerring 2007, 215). Measurement validity is strong if the "measuring instrument" (the operationalized concepts) is appropriate for tapping the underlying phenomenon under study (Berry 2002). *Reliability* is the consistency of a measure. It refers to whether a repeated use of the same "measuring instrument" would produce the same results over time (Bryman 2004, 75).

2.2 The case study method - external and internal validity

A case is a phenomenon delimited in space and time (Gerring 2007, 19). The case under study may be defined as "limits on Syrian ability to access formal quality education in Lebanon during the period from 2011-2015". It is difficult to make clear-cut demarcations of the spatial and temporal limits of a case, especially for the latter (Gomm, Hammersley, and Foster

2000). As the empirical analysis will show, explanations for the lack of access and limited quality of education are partly to be found in the political past of the country and the pre-crisis state of the public school system. Thus, while I utilize evidence from a larger time period, the case is demarcated by the onset of the refugee crisis in 2011.

While the main strength of the case study method lies in its ability to generate detailed knowledge of a particular phenomenon, the purpose is also partly to shed light on a *larger set of cases*. Referring to something as a case implies that is must be a "case of something" (Gerring 2007, 20). This study may be seen as a case of "providing education in emergencies", relating to a larger literature on responding with education in emergencies (Pigozzi 1999, Sinclair 2002, Sommers 2004, Crisp 2004, Jacobsen 2006, Loescher and Milner 2013). However, in case studies, the unit under focus will rarely be perfectly representative of the larger "population" of cases and the potential for generalization will be limited (Gerring 2007, 20). Case studies are therefore commonly criticized for their weak external validity, with a lack of representativeness between sample and population (Gerring 2007, 43). The quantitative researcher, dealing with large samples of statistical data, may draw general conclusions about the larger population, provided that the sample is representative. In the case study, the results may be generalizable by having *transferability* to similar phenomenon. This implies that the reader may determine if findings are applicable to other cases (Gomm, Hammersley, and Foster 2000). Single case studies are useful for generating hypotheses that may be tested elsewhere (Gerring 2007, 41). The analytical framework and conclusions established in this study may have relevance for generating hypotheses or framing analyses in similar studies of different refugee crises, and thus have transferability to similar cases. In this manner, the thesis places itself in a relationship with a larger set of literature on responding with education in refugee crises.

What the case study method lacks in potential for generalization is countered by its great potential for "thick descriptions" (Geertz 1973). In this thesis I propose likely explanations for a lack of access and limited quality of education for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. While the study aims to identify explanations by reviewing empirical data, it does not strive to make inferences of causal relationships, c.f. internal validity.

2.3 Fieldwork

A large part of my empirical data was collected on the basis of a fieldwork in Beirut, Lebanon, from October 30th until November 15th. Prior to departure, the Norwegian Social

Science Data Services (NSD) had approved for the research project and gathering of information. During my stay in Beirut, I conducted single interviews with eight different informants. Informants were chosen on the basis of their roles within the education response in Lebanon. The sample of informants consisted of three UN representatives and five NGOs.

Sampling procedure

Initially informants were identified through reviews of relevant reports on the topic, and contact was established by e-mail. A so-called "snowballing process" guided the sampling procedure, where respondents were asked to suggest relevant actors to contact. The Royal Norwegian Embassy in Beirut proved helpful in this regard. The embassy provided me with a list of central agencies and organizations involved in humanitarian efforts. I was instructed to refer to the embassy when contacting potential respondents. To avoid being perceived as a biased actor, I made clear that my research would have no affiliation with the Norwegian Government. The referral was an important "gate-opener" whereby several informants agreed to be interviewed almost immediately. When contacting potential respondents, I made sure to introduce the research focus and allude to the sort of questions I would ask. Likely due to a hectic working environment, many did not respond or did so much later. In this context, it is important to mention that it was not possible to set up an interview with any representative from MEHE. According to informants, it is extremely difficult to secure an audience with ministry officials, which is also the case for humanitarian organizations involved in the education response.[3] I attempted to contact MEHE by e-mail on several occasions, but no response was forthcoming.

Interviews

In the course of two weeks I arranged and conducted eight semi-structured interviews with eight different respondents. Before starting I presented each informant with a letter of reference from my university outlining the project and confirming the academic nature of my research. In addition, respondents were asked whether or not they consented to the use of a recording device. Respondents were guaranteed confidentiality due to the fact that refugees in Lebanon are a sensitive issue. I emphasized that the recorded interviews would be deleted upon the completion of the project. Some informants did not specifically request anonymity, but it was accorded in line with the sensitive nature of the research. Other informants were adamant about anonymity in order to preserve working relationships and to avoid reprisals

[3] Interviews, NGO 2,3 & 5 and UN representatives 2 & 3

within an already complicated operating environment. Some respondents were quite direct in sharing opinions and personal views on the education response. Sometimes it took on the form of frustrated criticism against MEHE. As will be explored in this thesis, the coordination between UN agencies, NGOs and national authorities are not without its challenges.

The interviews were conducted on the basis of interview guides (see Appendix 3). Due to their different roles played in the humanitarian process, I prepared somewhat different interview guides for the UN representatives and NGOs. Several informants requested to receive the questionnaire beforehand. One respondent requested to look over the questions before agreeing to the interview. With this in mind, questions were formulated so as to avoid any explicit referral to sensitive topics. I considered this important so as not to ward off potential informants. The questions focused on specific areas such as: out-of-camp, urbanized refugee crises; the process of enrolling refugees in public schools; challenges in coordinating the response with national authorities and the transition to a more government-led response. Questions were rather open-ended, whereby informants were free to approach the topic according to their experiences and involvement in the education response. Since informants were guaranteed complete anonymity they were free to speak about sensitive issues at their own discretion.

A valuable aspect of semi-structured interviews is the possibility to adapt according to the situation at hand. The questions were not necessarily asked in the established order. This was partly due to informants branching out into other areas following an initial question. As such, informants were allowed to speak freely with minimal interruption. If and when the person being interviewed started on topics less relevant to my focus, I did not hesitate to return to the questions at hand. In addition, I improvised relevant follow-up questions when applicable, but especially in instances where new and significant information was presented. All interviews lasted more than 45 minutes each and one surpassed an hour. Upon the completion of an interview, each informant was asked about the possibility to ask subsequent follow-up questions by e-mail. Informants were uniformly positive in their response. On the other hand, due to the relative wealth of information gathered it was not deemed necessary to conduct a round of follow-up questions.

I employ informant data in the empirical review and analysis (chapter 5) and when discussing the education response (chapter 4). I refer to the informant interviews in footnotes. In this context it is important to note that some information is provided on the basis of informant

interviews alone. This applies for example, in regard to information about *circulars* that reflect government policy on the education response. Informants referred to circulars extensively, but these are not readily available and informants were unable to provide me with physical copies.

Document reviews

Important information was also gathered through document reviews of analyses on the public school system in Lebanon, as well as a range of relevant documents produced by UN agencies and relevant humanitarian actors. Examples include the World Bank's *Economic and social impact assessment of the Syrian conflict on Lebanon* (2013), *No Lost Children: One year on report* (2014) by UNICEF and the 3RP, the *Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan* (2015), in addition to the *Reaching All Children with Education (RACE)* (2014) proposal written by MEHE and UNICEF. I also employ analyses on the national education system of Lebanon using a variety of economic and humanitarian analyses. These include, but are not limited to UNHCR 2014, World Bank 2013, 2014, Bankmed 2014, Blominvest Bank 2014, Banque Bemo 2014, MEHE 2011 and Government of Lebanon and United Nations 2014. On this note, finding relevant information on the public school system has been one of the more challenging aspects of information gathering, especially concerning the administrative structure of the system.

2.4 Methodological limitations - measurement validity and reliability

The flexibility of the interviews proved very useful for reasons described above. However, the flexibility may also pose a threat to reliability and validity of the data collected. In all interviews I would cover a certain number of topics, with a set of open-ended questions. The formulation and order of questions would vary. The respondents gave a relatively uniform response in identifying the same aspects and challenges. This consistency could work to corroborate my findings.

Measurement validity is concerned with whether the measuring instrument (here the interview guide and questions) actually taps the underlying phenomenon under study. Even though informants at large were asked the same open-ended questions, there is a risk that respondents might have understood concepts differently than I intended, thus jeopardizing the measurement validity. This issue also relates to reliability: Since the interview guide was used in this flexible manner, a different researcher would perhaps not obtain the same results by

using the same interview guide. These are common trade-offs with the qualitative research method.

In addition, due to a relatively small sample of informants, the findings of my research cannot be said to represent infallible empirical evidence. The size and composition of the sample of respondents may pose another threat to the reliability of data. The "snowballing procedure" might have created a skewed sample of respondents. The method is based on chain referring between respondents. Because respondents commonly suggest persons with similar characteristics as them selves, the group may be composed of individuals with a similar set of opinions and knowledge.

As mentioned, a clear limitation is the lack of input from MEHE. I had sought to interview at least one representative from the ministry, but this proved impossible to arrange. As a result, my findings could potentially be biased to due a lack perspective from authorities in Lebanon. This type of input may have offered alternative explanations or views that could have impacted my findings or provided a different lens in which to view them. As such, it is recognized that this thesis may not take into account the concerns and opinions of national authorities in Lebanon.

Furthermore, I had hoped to visit some public schools and conduct interviews with a sample of school directors and teachers while in Lebanon. Towards this end, I had sought to inquire about possibilities to do so when meeting with informants. However it was made clear that an official approval would be required, which was extremely difficult to get a hold of. As I learned, even humanitarian actors were disbarred from entering public school classrooms. On top of this, the academic school year had not yet started for Syrian refugee, which had been subject to considerable delays.

In sum, the size and composition of the sample may represent a threat to the reliability of data, because there is a probability that other information and viewpoints might have come forth if I had conducted the same interviews with a different and larger sample of interviewees. The interview data must be said to represent the viewpoints of a small sample of actors involved in the larger education response. It is important to be aware of these methodological caveats, but they should not be exaggerated. In this study, information obtained through interviews is complimentary to the comprehensive literature review. Respondents were chosen because they have a central role in the education response, and

should be seen as adding value to the pool of information I have otherwise obtained about the topic.

Though methodologically challenging, an in-depth study of how Lebanon is tackling the challenge of providing education to Syrian refugees is important, for both academic and policy purposes. The magnitude of the current refugee crisis in the Middle East is unprecedented and signals the largest dispersal of persons since the Second World War. With this study, I aim to shed light on aspects of the humanitarian crisis that have been less systematically examined previously. To identify barriers or limits may be essential to finding viable solutions.

3 Key Concepts

As established in chapter one, the first focus of this thesis is to identify and validate possible explanations for *why* Syrian school-aged refugees in Lebanon have limited access to public, formal education. The second focus is to identify and substantiate explanations for why Syrian refugees, having first enrolled in public schools, may be receiving a lower quality of education than the national standard.

The research question calls for a two-fold analysis. First I will conduct a *descriptive analysis*. Here I support the claim that access to formal education is limited for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Secondly, I validate the claim that the quality of education provided for Syrians enrolled in public schools may be of a lower quality than the national standard. Having established these two premises for the research question, I move on to an *explanatory analysis* where I explore possible *causes* for these limitations on access to and quality of education.

In this chapter I present the framework I will employ to explain limitations. The framework consists of categories I have developed as a result of information gathered on the basis of my fieldwork in Lebanon, as well as literature reviews. The explanatory framework is divided into "structural" and "political" reasons for limits on access and the quality of education. The methodology of this approach was presented in chapter 2. While this chapter is concerned with presenting the analytical framework, the empirical analysis is presented in chapter 5. To establish the analytical framework, it is necessary to operationalize the key concepts posed in the research question and in the sub questions. Thus, I elaborate in further detail what is meant by the following key concepts:

i. Formal and non-formal education
ii. Access to education
iii. Quality of education
iv. Structural limits
v. Political limits

In operationalizing the latter two concepts, I develop the explanatory framework and provide a description of how empirical evidence will be employed to answer the research question.

3.1 Operationalization of concepts

3.1.1 Formal education and non-formal education

The research question focuses on *formal education* as opposed to *non-formal* alternatives. The former may be defined as education that is provided within a classroom setting, according to a centrally recognized curriculum. *Non-formal education* refers to education that is available outside of the formal setting. In Lebanon, there has been little recognition or standardization of the latter.[4] For Syrian refugees, formal education is important because it will be easier to get recognition for education attained in exile upon an eventual return home.[5]

Formal education is certified and accredited by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), which means that the students will receive education that is recognized in accordance with a national curriculum. In Lebanon, formal education can be accessed through both public and private sectors. Although Syrian refugees have enrolled in private schools also, the number is minimal and will not constitute a focus in discussing formal education. To understand the Lebanese context it will be necessary to compare the provision of public and private sector education. In the background chapter, the relationship between public and private sector education will be examined within a historical context. For the empirical review, it will be useful to compare private and public sectors in terms of the number of students enrolled. This will help to illustrate the limited nature of the Lebanese public school system and how it has had to expand in accommodating Syrian refugees.

In responding to refugee crises, non-formal education is often provided as a short-term measure to cover immediate holes in the availability of education (Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 63). In the context of this thesis, non-formal education will not constitute a significant focus. However, I examine its provision by NGOs in the second part of the explanatory analysis (political limits). The main focus will be on how non-formal education is a means in which to facilitate access to education in the formal setting. Accelerated leaning programs, remedial classes and community-based education are all examples of what is understood by non-formal education (Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 56-57). Not only

[4] Interviews, NGO 3, 4 & 5 and UN representative 1
[5] Interviews, UN representatives 1 & 2

is this provision important to ready Syrian children for a transition to formal education, but also crucial to retain and support children once enrolled in public schools.[6]

3.1.2 Access to education

Access to education will henceforth be understood as the ability to enrol for formal education in Lebanese public schools. I start by examining the level of enrolment for Lebanese students in the pre-crisis period, 2010-2012. To do so I employ statistics from economic and humanitarian analyses on public sector education in Lebanon.[7] Access to education will be measured by looking at the total number of students enrolled. As such, I examine enrolment in public versus private schools, by region and by the level of education. In sum, this will shed light on the pre-crisis capacity of public education in terms of the total number of students enrolled. With the limited nature of the public school system established, I examine the influx of Syrian refugees and public school enrolment since 2011. Having observed the numerical enrolment of Lebanese students for the pre-crisis period, it forms the basis to examine how the education system has had to expand to absorb a growing number of Syrian children. This will then show the level of access that Syrian refugees have vis-à-vis nationals. More importantly, it forms the basis to compare the number of refugees enrolled with the total number of out-of-school children from Syria. This will form the basis to claim that access to formal education is limited for Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

Henceforth, the level of Syrian enrolment in public schools will be referred to as the *level of access*. On the one hand, it will not be possible to measure the precise or absolute capacity of the public school system to absorb more refugees, but I employ data material from informants to approach this issue.

3.1.3 Quality of education

Secondly, I analyse if the *quality of education* may be characterized as limited for the Syrian refugees enrolled in public schools. In accordance with relevant research (UNICEF 2000, 6), the duration of school days and the academic semester will be used as indicators to assess whether the quality of education could be considered limited, in comparison with the national standard. As a third indicator, I assess whether there is a discrepancy in the application of the

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[6] Interviews, NGO 2, 3, 4 & 5

[7] World Bank 2013, REACH 2014, Bankmed 2014, Blominvest Bank 2014, Banque Bemo 2014, MEHE 2011, UNHCR 2014, Government of Lebanon and United Nations 2014

national curriculum for Syrian refugees, in comparison with the national standard. The failure to enable regularized access to curriculum through schools will have a negative impact on the academic achievements of children (UNICEF 2000, 6).

To handle the burden of absorbing large refugee numbers and overcrowding in some schools, a *two-shift system* was introduced; whereby the same classrooms may be used for both morning and afternoon classes (UNICEF 2014, 13). The two-shift system is a means to provide access to a larger number of refugees, but is recognized as having the potential to negatively impact the quality of education if schools are overburdened (UNICEF 2014, 13). Whereas the *morning shift* constitutes the normal running system, where Lebanese and Syrian children are taught together, the *afternoon shift* is predominately accessed by Syrian refugees. To assess whether the quality of education is limited for Syrian refugees, it will be on the primary basis of comparing visible indicators of quality, and how these vary between the morning and afternoon shifts. To do so I employ information gathered from informant interviews.

Henceforth, the term "quality of education" will refer to the quality of the education that is provided for Syrian refugees in Lebanese public schools. Having explored whether access to and quality of education is limited (the premises of the research question), I move on to identify explanatory factors for why this is the case.

3.2 Explanatory analysis

I have chosen to divide possible explanations for lack of access and quality of education into two main categories: "structural limits" and "political limits". This categorization is made based on informant interviews and literature reviews, which indicate that a limited level of access and quality may be caused by a combination of such factors. The various explanatory factors may have relevance for one or both components of the research question, i.e. the level of access and/or the quality of education. In addition, some structural and political factors may have both structural and political dimensions and will thus be inseparable from one another (i.e. SL2 and PL2).

3.2.1 Structural limits

Structural limits, henceforth abbreviated as *SL*, is here defined as the apparent limitations of the education system, in terms of its ability and capacity to accommodate out-of-school children from Syria. I identify three structural limits that may work to limit the level of access

and also impact the quality of education received. These are limits that may have existed prior to the crisis, but which have likely been exacerbated by due to the enrolment of so many Syrian refugees.

3.2.1.1 Capacity in schools (SL1)

In their studies of out-of-camp refugee crises, UNHCR claims that access to education tend to be limited due to the number of children in need, coupled with weak local infrastructure and classrooms in need of rehabilitation (UNHCR 2009, 9).[8] Under this section I explore the hypothesis that lack of access may be due to a lack of capacity in schools. A full mapping of capacity in the public school system is currently unavailable (REACH and UNHCR 2014, 17). I approach the issue of space based on informant interviews and the capacity assessments that are available. To say something about the relative capacity of the public school system, I compare capacity of public versus private schools. I also look at variations across regions, in order to assess whether lack of capacity is an issue in the areas where the majority of refugees have settled.

3.2.1.2 A centralized education system & the process of enrolment (SL2)

Here I examine how mechanisms for enrolment of students and the centralized structure of the education system may impact both components of the research question. Urban refugee crises are commonly characterized by lack of a clear regulatory framework and legal provisions to govern the admission of refugee children into schools (UNHCR 2009, 9). In addition, when refugees are displaced without a formalized legal status, their ability to enrol in national education systems of a host country tends to be a challenge (UNHCR 2009, 9). Here I employ information from both informant interviews and a literature review. I briefly examine how government circulars are understood. Circulars may be defined as letters of instruction from MEHE, which instruct school directors how and when Syrian refugees may access public sector education.[9] In addition, I briefly examine government expenditure on education before moving on to government policies for the process of enrolment. The explanatory factor also has political dimensions, as will be explored under *PL2*.

[8] A report based on case studies from Jordan, Kenya, Syria and Uganda.
[9] Interviews, UN representatives 1 & 2

3.2.1.3 Pressure on educators (SL3)

A third focus will be pressure on educators, which is especially relevant for examining the quality of education that may be received. UNHCR recognizes that the quality of education for refugees in out-of-camp settings may be negatively impacted if teachers are poorly paid and untrained to handle a larger number of students (UNHCR 2009, 11). In addition, educators will likely have little experience with teaching traumatized refugees. When teachers are overburdened by student numbers, they may resort to negative coping mechanisms such as corporal punishment. Physical violence and verbal abuse may also stem from co-students inside classrooms (UNHCR 2009, 10). With these possible outcomes in mind, I observe the number of teachers employed in the public sector and examine the level of teaching qualifications. I employ informant data and a literature review concerning the two-shift system and to see if teachers are resorting to corporal punishment or negative coping mechanisms. If teachers are overburdened it may indicate an education system unable to absorb additional refugees, but also a scenario where the quality of education could be negatively impacted by the current level of Syrian enrolment. As such, SL3 will have relevance for both the level of access, but especially the quality of education component of the research question.

3.2.2 Political limits

Political limits is here defined as decisions by the government and MEHE, in connection with sectarian divisions and refugee policies, which may limit the level of access and the quality of education that Syrian refugees can receive. This may also be understood as government policies, which constrain or restrict the operative environment for UN agencies and NGOs. In the background chapter I provide the necessary context in which to understand the politics of Lebanon and the sectarian divisions that have been exacerbated by the Civil War in Syria. The background chapter also provides a brief look at Lebanon as a refugee hosting country.

The identification and discussion of political limits will primarily be based on information gathered through informant interviews. These limits have been less visible in literature reviews. In order to identify political limits on the level of access and the quality of education for Syrian refugees, it will be crucial to examine the following areas, which in sum will constitute what is understood as political limits.

3.2.2.1 Sectarian nature of MEHE (PL1)

This explanatory factor focuses on how Lebanon's system of sectarianism extends to MEHE. A political context is provided in the background chapter. I examine if sharpened sectarian divisions from the civil war in Syria, have impacted the efficiency of MEHE in responding with education for Syrian refugees. Within this context, I examine whether there is miscommunication stemming from the ministry and a lack of internal cohesion; which could likely impact the overall response. The trajectory of public versus private sector education is particularly useful in understanding the sectarian nature of the education system in Lebanon.

This explanatory factor will have the most relevance for the level of access component of the research question, but could also be indirectly applicable towards explaining why the quality of education may be limited for Syrian refugees.

3.2.2.2 MEHE policy (PL2)

This factor examines the how policies of the MEHE may limit the enrolment process. As mentioned under SL2, in urban refugee crises there tends to be a lack of clear regulatory frameworks and legal provisions to govern the admission of refugees. The regulation of access may thus be prone to ad hoc decisions and policies (UNHCR 2009, 9). When providing education in urban refugee crises, UNHCR has previously documented that refugees may face difficulty in accessing national education systems; they may be subject to discriminatory practice from school directors and teachers aimed at discouraging full participation (UNHCR 2009, 10). In addition, the enrolment of a large number of Syrian children could in itself negatively impact the quality of education that is available.

I examine MEHE policy by observing the different circulars that have been issued and how these have sought to control or restrict enrolment, which may then impact the quality of education that can be received. As defined under SL2, circulars are letters of instruction that are disseminated within the public school system. MEHE's circulars define how and when Syrian refugees may enrol in public schools. They also give instructions to school directors.[10]

MEHEs policies (i.e. their circulars) must be understood within the context of Lebanon's historical experience with being a refugee hosting country. MEHE's circulars are enactments of government policy within a heavily demarcated refugee-hosting regime. The background

[10] Interviews, NGO 2, 3 & 5 and UN representatives 1 & 2

chapter provides relevant information on these aspects, which are important to understand the sensitivities of the Lebanese context and how Syrian refugees have been accorded a “special case” status.

3.2.2.3 Ownership of the education response (PL3)

This explanatory factor will examine the leadership of the education response. Based on the hypothesis that the lack of a clear leadership may inhibit an efficient response, I start by examining the working relationship between MEHE and UN agencies, and the role of NGOs. It is recognized that humanitarian operations may pose a challenge to the sovereignty of a state, which may neither be popular nor accepted by a host-government (Sommers 2004, 26).

Currently the education response is moving from a solely humanitarian operation to a more government-led response, but such a transition is not without its challenges.[11] The result may be a “tug-of-war” with considerable friction between host government and humanitarian actors (Sommers 2004, 42). With MEHE seeking to enhance its control over the education response, I examine how NGO operations may be subject to restrictions. It is not uncommon for a government to exert control over an NGO sector that may be operating without its approval or oversight (Sommers 2004, 41). As such I examine the provision of non-formal education to see if NGOs are subject to restrictions by MEHE. The relevance is that non-formal education constitutes an important provision to facilitate Syrian children into formal education, but also to support them once they have been enrolled.[12]

Finally, I briefly examine the government-led RACE proposal to theorize on the future trajectory of the education response. This explanatory factor will be identified and discussed on the basis of information gathered from informant interviews and will have relevance for both components of the research question.

[11] Interview, NGO 5
[12] Interview, NGO 2, 3 & 4 and UN representatives 1 & 3

4 Background

Here I present relevant information to establish the context in which to approach my research question. To begin with it is important to examine Lebanon within a historical context, but with a focus on its complicated relationship with Syria. In addition, I present necessary information to comprehend the weak and fragmented nature of the Lebanese state. Then I move on to look at the on-going civil war in Syria and how it has affected Lebanon. A primary focus will be the influx of Syrians and why formal refugee camps have not been established. In this context, it is crucial to examine refugee policy in Lebanon and how Syrian refugees are treated within this regime. Then I briefly discuss the humanitarian response to provide refugees with education. I also provide a historical review of the national education system, to highlight the status of public versus private sector education in Lebanon. Finally I briefly discuss the administrative structure of MEHE and the education cycle in Lebanon.

4.1 Historical relations between Lebanon and Syria

Historically, relations between Lebanon and Syria have been complicated. During the Ottoman Empire, *Greater Syria* was composed of the territories that today constitute Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine (Cleveland 2009, 90). With the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1920, the League of Nations accepted a French Mandate over Syria. Under the auspices of the French, Lebanon was to become a separate entity. To safeguard the Christians of Mount Lebanon, several regions were separated from Syria to create *Greater Lebanon* (Cleveland 2004, 255). As such, Sunni and Shiite Muslim populations were incorporated into the modern state. Nationalists in Syria refused to accept the partitioning of Greater Syria and saw Lebanon as an artificial construct by French colonists (Bassil 2012, 136). Although Lebanon became independent in 1943, Syria would continue to reject its national sovereignty (El-Khoury and Jaulin 2012, 6). As a result no diplomatic relations were established with the government of Lebanon, which would remain the case until 2008/09 (Addis 2011, 8). Since its establishment, Syria has continuously sought to dominate or undermine the sovereignty of Lebanon. One consequence is that the border between Syria and Lebanon has never been fully demarcated (Addis 2011, 8).

Lebanon is a consociational democracy, whereby a system of regulated power-sharing between religious communities forms the basis of the state. Leading posts and seats in the cabinet and the parliament are allocated between the 18 recognized sects of Lebanon (Nelson

2013, 349). The division of power is based on the relative demographic weight of each religious community, based on the last official population census having been carried out by the French in 1932 (Knudsen and Kerr 2012, 5). Like the tenants of Lebanese identity, the demographic composition of the country is a highly politicized issue (Frayha 2003, 82). This is especially the case for the larger religious communities, which include Christian Maronites, Sunni Muslims and Shia Muslims (Knudsen and Kerr 2012, 5). As such, the presence of refugees and foreign migrants pose a danger to the sectarian equilibrium of the country (i.e. Palestinian refugees). Lebanon has always been a country of emigration as opposed to immigration or settlement (Haddad 2003, 45-46). The country is not only polarized by religion, but also by class divisions and regional and clan allegiances. These are recognized as cleavages that may reinforce one another (Zahar 2012, 65). Since its inception, the power sharing formula had favoured Christian denominations, but by the 1970s had become unreflective of social and demographic changes (Barak 2010, 93).

Domestic actors sought external backing to maintain or redress the status quo, while the country descended into civil war from 1975-1990. This prompted a Syrian military intervention in 1976, under the pretense of defending Christian communities from Palestinian aggression (Nerguizian 2009, 8). Gradually, Syria would become an occupying force. The war came to an uneasy conclusion with the Taif agreement of 1989. No side had been able to defeat the other militarily, but the power-sharing formula was recalibrated to parity between Christian and Muslim communities (Picard 2012, 84). Instead of vacating, Syria sought to legitimize its continued presence with agreements and pacts signed with Lebanon. This would allow for Syrian interference in Lebanese affairs under the guise of protecting the fragile state (Haddad 2003, 15). Few political decisions were made without Syrian approval, meaning regular interventions in the affairs of government. The occupation was a combination of military and intelligence control, combined with economic penetration, systems of patronage and a significant settlement of Syrian civilians (Haddad 2003, 15, Tabar 2010, 11). Prior to the ongoing civil war in Syria, it was estimated that were some 300 000-400 000 Syrians residing in Lebanon, working primarily in agriculture, construction and the service sector, all lower-income jobs (Salem 2012, 7-8).

The Syrian hegemony ended with the “Cedar Revolution” of 2005. The assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was popularly blamed on Syria. With rising domestic and international pressure, Syria was forced to withdraw from Lebanon (Nelson 2013, 351). In the wake of Syria’s departure, two rival political blocs emerged. These are the *March 8* and

March 14 movements, dominated by Shiite Hizbollah and the Sunni Future movement respectively, with different Christian political parties having allied themselves with one or the other (Nelson 2013, 351-352). During their guardianship, Syria helped Hizbollah to develop its weapons capabilities to become a more powerful force than the national army. For rivals, having a greater monopoly of force than the state translated into an unfair advantage in domestic politics (Knudsen and Kerr 2012, 8). After 2005, Lebanon became subject to the larger Sunni-Shiite divide characterizing conflict the Middle East and North Africa. Both March 8 and March 14 blocs are aligned with external actors, with Iran-Syria and Saudi-Arabia, the Gulf and the U.S. respectively (Knudsen and Kerr 2012, 6-7). The alliances work as means to exert influence in the domestic arena, but it also makes Lebanon a theatre of contestation in the region-wide rivalry. The two-bloc system has left Lebanon practically ungovernable due to sharp internal divisions and external linkages, which are subject to exacerbation in the event of regional conflict (Knudsen and Kerr 2012, 6-7).

4.2 The Syrian Civil War

The uprising in Syria began in March 2011, inspired by popular uprisings against authoritarian regimes in Tunisia and Egypt. What started as peaceful demonstrations became subject to severe suppression from Syrian authorities. The level of violence would escalate so that the opposition was forced to pick up arms. In the course of 2012, the popular uprising had descended into a full-scale civil war (Baczko, Dorronsoro and Quesnay 2013, 3). The proliferation of armed groups was coupled with the internationalization of the conflict, whereby external actors moved to support the regime or the opposition with political, financial or military support (Tokmajyan 2014, 38). It did not take long before the conflict assumed overt sectarian bearings. As such, Syria represents a crucial theatre for the wider Sunni-Shiite struggle to control the future of the region. In the beginning, Lebanon appeared to insulate itself from the war next door with the “Baabda declaration” of June 2012, whereby all parties would adhere to a policy of non-interference (Satik and Mahmoud 2013, 4). It was recognized that to offer direct military support to co-religionists across the border would represent a threat to the stability and security of Lebanon (Satik and Mahmoud 2013, 4)

However, it is recognized that both March 8 and March 14 camps were involved in the war from the very beginning. Hizbollah has intervened militarily on the side of the Syrian regime, whilst the Future Movement has supported co-religionists with volunteers and weapons (Satik and Mahmoud 2013, 6-7). From the perspective of Hizbollah, it would represent an existential

threat if Sunni extremist groups (i.e. Jabhat al Nusra, IS) were to gain a foothold in Lebanon. In addition, Hizbollah seeks to maintain the Syrian regime as a conduit for their supply of Iranian weapons (Diwan and Chaitani 2014, 11). For Sunni Muslims of Lebanon, there has long been a high level of frustration concerning Hizbollah's armed dominance. To bring down the regime in Syria would weaken the influence of the Shiite crescent in Lebanon (Diwan and Chaitani 2014, 11). As the Syrian Civil War mirrors the divisions within Lebanon, it has led to a sharpening of domestic tensions (Salem 2012, 3). Not only does the conflict threaten to engulf Lebanon, but the influx of Syrian refugees is also having a significant impact on the fragile sectarian equilibrium that the state is founded on.

4.3 No refugee camps: an urbanized refugee crisis

The first refugees from Syria began to arrive in Lebanon in May 2011, when the war spread to Syrian areas such as Homs, Hama, Idlib, Aleppo and later Damascus (Salem 2012, 8). The issue of whether to establish refugee camps was proposed as early as November 2011, when only 3 600 refugees had registered with UNHCR (ICG 2013, 16-17). The Future Movement had proposed this, both as an act of solidarity as well as a move to discredit the Syrian regime (ICG 2013, 16-17). For Hizbollah, this would amount to creating safe-havens for opposition fighters inside Lebanon, but also threaten to make permanent the demographic changes caused by the arriving refugees (ICG 2013, 16-17).

In 2013 it was estimated that as many as 95% of all Syrians registered with the UNHCR were Sunni Muslims, whereas 5% constituted other religious minorities (i.e. Christians, Alawites) (ICG 2013, 4). The number of refugees belonging to other sects is likely higher, but it is believed that these refugees will tend to keep a lower profile (ICG 2013, 5). As shown by the "Palestinian experience", camps risk becoming permanent fixtures and are prone to militarization (Hamdan 2013, 21). According to UN estimates, there are more than 400 000 Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon, of which 50% live in twelve camps across the country (Haddad 2003, 43). They have been in Lebanon since 1948, but lack social, economic and political rights that could encourage citizenship in Lebanon (Morris 2004, 473). According to one source, they are marginalized from mainstream society to encourage their departure elsewhere (Haddad 2003, 41). Like Palestinians, Syrian refugees represent a profound threat to the demographic status quo of Lebanon.

It is estimated that in the course of 2015 there will be somewhere between 1,5 and 2 million Syrian refugees residing in Lebanon. Considering that the population of Lebanon is around 4

million, this constitutes a 50% population increase.[13] Although the refugee influx has reached an enormous magnitude, there is still reticence to consider the establishment of formal refugee camps. Syrians have therefore been allowed to settle freely, albeit temporarily across Lebanon.[14] This has led to a proliferation of informal tented-settlements and refugees seeking shelter in overcrowded, empty or unfinished buildings.[15] In addition, the influx of refugees has strained the labour market and the economy of Lebanon, overburdened infrastructure and the provision of public services (World Bank 2013, 2-3). The large presence of refugees has therefore resulted in growing tensions with host communities.[16]

4.4 Refugee policy in Lebanon

Lebanon is not a signatory of the 1951 convention relating to the status of refugees, or its 1967 protocol. As such Lebanon does not subscribe to recognized expectations and standards for hosting refugees. The recognition of refugee status is a deeply politicized issue in Lebanon and is subject to considerable discretion (Government of Lebanon and United Nations 2014, 9). Only Palestinians have a recognized refugee status. Lebanon does not consider itself a country of asylum or a country of resettlement. Instead Lebanon and UNHCR have entered into a formal agreement on the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This is a common practice throughout the Middle East.[17]

For Lebanon, the MoU is an affirmation of its position, that the country is not a signatory of refugee conventions and is already “overburdened” by the presence Palestinian refugees. As such there will be no recognition of refugee status for other displaced persons residing on its territories. This is important, as the classification of status will influence the basic rights and access to services that a person may be entitled to. Therefore Lebanon does not commit itself to provide access to basic services like education, healthcare or employment (Tabar 2010, 13). The MoU also confirms Lebanon’s adherence to the principle of non-refoulement. In other words, to refrain from any forcible eviction of displaced persons unable to return voluntarily (Government of Lebanon and United Nations 2014, 3). Within this understanding, UNHCR is responsible for the registration of refugees. If the UN grants refugee status, then resettlement should take place within six months; otherwise Lebanon reserves the right to take action

[13] Interview, NGO 4
[14] Interview, UN representative 1
[15] Interviews, NGO 2 & 4
[16] Interviews, UN representatives 1 & 2
[17] Interview, UN representative 2

against their illegal presence. This could take the form of deportation or imprisonment (Tabar 2010, 11). As such, government actions may not necessarily conform to other human rights documents and obligations that Lebanon may be beholden to (UNHCR 2014, 1).

Syrian refugees, on the other hand, have been accorded a "special case" status whereby Lebanon recognizes the extraordinary circumstance of their displacement (Shuayb, Makkouk, and Tuttunji 2014, 40). The Syrians who arrived in Lebanon from 2011 are referred to as "displaced", "foreigners" or "migrant workers", but not as refugees (Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 41). Refugees who entered the country illegally however, are subject to a limited legal status compared with those registered with UNHCR (Aranki and Kalis 2014, 17). As a special case, Lebanon is committed to provide Syrians with access to essential services such as healthcare and education. This must be understood in the context of the economic, familial, historical and religious ties between communities in Lebanon and Syria.[18] Every informant I interviewed recognized that Lebanon has shown an extreme generosity towards its neighbor in need.

4.5 The education response

An implication of refugees being out-of-camp and urbanized is that they become subject to local legislation and service provision, as opposed to a UNHCR regime within camps.[19] As such, basic services like education will be provided by national authorities through national structures of service delivery, as opposed to a parallel system inside camps.[20] If a host country has limited capacity to do so, UNHCR and UNICEF will support and enhance the provision of services.[21] During my field research in the fall of 2014, informants recognized that the ability to respond effectively was generally more complicated in out-of-camp settings. One challenge is the fact that refugees are spread across the entirety of the country. In addition, humanitarian agencies must adhere to local sensitivities and sovereignty in forming and implementing their operations.[22]

As is the primary focus of this thesis, Syrian refugees have been allowed to access formal education through Lebanon's public school system. The education response is led by

[18] Interview, NGO 5 & UN representative 1
[19] Interview, UN representative 3
[20] Interviews, NGO 4 & UN representatives 1 & 2
[21] Interview, UN representative 1
[22] Interview, NGO 5 & UN representative 1

UNHCR/UNICEF alongside Lebanon's Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), with international and local NGOs functioning as implementation partners.[23] As will be explored in the empirical review, this coordination has not been without its challenges. Syrian children have been able to access formal education as school fees and transportation costs are covered by UNHCR/UNICEF in cooperation with donors (UNHCR 2014, 36). The long-term strategy of the response is to strengthen the capacity of the public school system to absorb more out-of-school children from Syria. The education response also involves using non-formal education alternatives (UNHCR 2014, 44). To understand the complexity of this challenge, it is necessary to examine the national education system from a historical perspective. This will show the standing of public sector education in the Lebanese context.

4.6 A brief history of education in Lebanon

Under the Ottoman Empire (1516-1918), it was the responsibility of religious leaders to provide their respective communities with basic education, especially for the poor, since the more affluent could afford private tutors (Harrison 2007, 118). As Ottoman authorities were slow to introduce a system of government schools, education remained a sectarian provision. From the 17th century onwards, Lebanon witnessed the arrival of Christian missionaries from Europe and America. They were instrumental in the establishment and dissemination of Christian schools and free primary education, and private teaching institutions (Frayha 2003, 79). It is interesting to note that the provision of education was mainly centred on the urban Christian populations (Nazarian 2013, 13). As many Muslim children did not enrol in these schools, access to quality education was skewed in favour of Christian denominations (Harrison 2007, 118). The presence of foreign missionary schools resulted in a sharpening of social and religious divides, but also a re-orientation of education towards western models (Harrison 2007, 118)

Despite Ottoman efforts to formalize public government schools as of 1869, the private provision of education had become entrenched (Frayha 2003, 79). This marked the beginning of a trend where each sectarian community would assume the primary responsibility for providing education for their co-religionists (Lansing 2014, 17). In the years leading up to World War 1, Lebanon had a patchwork of government, sectarian schools and foreign institutions, providing primary, secondary and higher education (Nazarian 2013, 14). On top of this there was an inherent imbalance in access to education as affluent families could afford

[23] Interviews, UN representatives 1,2 & 3

secondary, or higher education in private institutions. The majority of poor people were limited to basic education through government schools; which were considered to be of lower quality than private institutions (Frayha 2003, 81).

Under the French Mandate from 1920, Lebanon underwent a more formal structuring of its national education system. Foreign, private and public institutions of education would now constitute separate service providers within a more unified system (Frayha 2003, 80). On the one hand, Mandate authorities recognized education as the vehicle in which to develop national cohesion and a shared sense of citizenship, but Muslim and Christian communities differed on the tenants of Lebanese identity (Frayha 2003, 82). Thus French authorities sought to maintain the freedom of education. According to Article eight of the Mandate it is "the right of each community to maintain its own schools for the instruction and education of its own members in its own language, while conforming to such educational requirements of a general nature as the administration may impose, shall not be denied or impaired" (ASIL 1923, 179). In addition, the Lebanese constitution of 1926 has enshrined that,

> Education shall be free insofar as it is not contrary to public order and morals and does not affect the dignity of the religions or sects. There shall be no violation of the right of religious communities to have their own schools provided they follow the general rules issued by the state regulating public institutions (The Lebanese Constitution 1995, 5).

With the freedom of education as an integral component of the modern state, it led to a continued and uncoordinated growth of different educational institutions (LAES 2006, 42). It is interesting to note that by the end of the Mandate in 1943 public schools encompassed only 23,000 students or approximately 16% of the total number of students enrolled in Lebanon (Frayha 2003, 80). The low proportion of public schools, limited progression opportunities and lower quality of education explain why public school enrolment was low during the Mandate period (Frayha 2003, 81).

With independence began efforts to create and implement a shared national curriculum across private and public schools alike (Lansing 2014, 17). Towards this end, private schools were brought under the authority of the Ministry of Education. It was recognized that education could serve as a vehicle in which to create a shared national identity, unconstrained by religious affiliation, thus reducing divisions and increasing social cohesion (Frayha 2003, 82). Although the national education system became more centralized and codified, it was difficult to bring private religious institutions in-line with the adoption of a national curriculum (Harrison 2007, 119). The 1960s may be characterized as the pinnacle of public sector

education, where the quality of education could compete with the likes of private sector institutions (Cummins and Corson 1999, 254). However, education failed to bridge the social and inter-communal divides that eventually culminated in the 1975-1990 Civil War.

The longevity of the Civil War would have a profound effect on the education system in Lebanon, but specifically the provision of public sector education. Many schools were either closed down or destroyed. There came to be a greater prevalence of private institutions, as the provision of public education effectively collapsed (USAID 2009, 12). Schools came to constitute military targets, theatres for the dissemination of propaganda or shelters for the displaced (Zakharia 2004, 109). Because of the war, academic institutions came to operate independently from the supervision of Educational authorities. Whereas public sector education collapsed, private sector education managed to weather the war with minimal damage (Shaaban 2013, 29). Thus, the private sector was in a natural position to fill the vacuum caused by the disruption of government provision in the public sector. As a result, the imbalance between private and public education would remain significant during and after the Civil War.

The end of the civil war was followed by an extensive period of post-war reconstruction. Educational reform was initiated in 1993, and was instrumental in reorganizing the national education system and reforming curriculum at all levels of pre-university education. A national curriculum would now be applied for public and private schools alike, to help foster a shared sense of Lebanese identity (Shaaban 2013, 29). On the other hand, private schools would retain a level of autonomy in adopting the national curriculum, with freedom in application that allowed for additions and alterations to be made (Bahous, Nabhani and Rabo 2013, 65). Despite successive waves to reform the provision and quality of public education vis-à-vis private education, the latter continues to dominate in Lebanon.

4.7 Administrative structure of education system

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) governs both public and private sectors of education in Lebanon. For the public sector, MEHE is responsible for providing education from the pre-primary level to higher education through the Lebanese University (LU) (MEHE 2011, 7). The Directorate of General Education, Directorate of VTE and Directorate General of Higher Education are the branches that administer public education in Lebanon (MEHE 2012, 10). In addition, the centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD) is an administrative body that provides public school curricula and

teacher training, but also carries out evaluations and educational research (TIMSS 2011, 533). In this context, it is important to note that provision of education related services is diverse and divided among several ministries. For instance, the administration of school buildings may fall under the Ministry of Public-Works and Transportation, whereas the ministries of Social Affairs (MoSA) and Agriculture are involved in the provision of both formal and non-formal education (LAES 2006, 39). Thus, there is a degree of overlapping within the sphere of education.

MEHE administers public schools directly though regional departments in each of Lebanon's eight governorates, which is the largest administrative division below the national level (REACH and UNHCR 2014, 4). These regional departments act as conduits for the directives of MEHE, down to the directors at the local school level (TIMSS 2011, 533). When directives or circulars are issued, they apply for the totality of the public school system. In this regard, public sector education is centralized under the authority of MEHE, which governs all decision-making relating to budget allocations, employment, student enrolment and the training of teachers. There is little autonomy for school directors and little involvement in strategic planning that may benefit their individual school or community (Bahous and Nabhani 2008, 130). Private schools are also subject to MEHE authority, but are considerably more autonomous (Lansing 2014, 16, Nazarian 2013, 14)

4.8 General education in Lebanon

In Lebanon there are three types of schools offering general education, public schools, subsidized private schools and tuition-based private schools. In addition, there is the parallel system of UNRWA schools, which caters to the long-residing Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Subsidized private schools are institutions that families with lower economic capacity may access if public schools are not in immediate proximity, where the government subsidizes half of schools fees (USAID 2009, 12). Tuition-based private schools are institutions that are administered by individuals, associations or religious organizations, which are relatively autonomous from MEHE (USAID 2009, 12).

The structure of general education is composed of four successive cycles (UNICEF 2011, 32). To begin with, pre-primary education, or kindergarten, is optional. The provision of pre-primary education in the public sector is limited and the majority of provision is accessed through the private sphere of education. According to the World Bank, the public sector provided only 19% of pre-school provisions compared with 66% by the private sector (World

Bank 2013, 77). Children whom attend pre-primary education are between three to five years of age (Banque Bemo 2014, 8). The first and second cycle – or grades 1 through 6, constitutes the elementary, or primary education cycle in Lebanon (Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 49). It lasts from the age of 6 till the age of 15. Education at this level aims to provide students with basic literacy and numeracy skills. Here it must be mentioned that, in accordance with national curriculum, schools teach mathematics and Sciences in Arabic, French or English until the end of the intermediate level (Banque Bemo 2014, 8, Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 84-85).

Figure 4.1 The education cycle

Stages	Cycles	Years of Study		Official Exams
Kindergarten		2		
Elementary I	Cycle I	3	Basic Education	
Elementary II	Cycle II	3		
Intermediate	Cycle III	3		Baccalaureate I (Brevet)
Secondary	Cycle IV	3		Baccalaureate II (Terminale)

Source: UNICEF 2011, 32

The third cycle, is general education at the intermediate level, which consists of grades 7 till 9 (UNICEF 2011, 6). At this level, Students are between 11 and 14 years of age (Banque Bemo 2014, 8). At the end of the intermediate level, students will take the Brevet exam as a prerequisite for progressing to the next cycle. The fourth cycle is Secondary education and encompasses grades 10 to 12, which is completed by the age of 17/18 (Lansing 2014, 18). Secondary education is divided into three branches: general, technical and mechanical vocational training. The general branch consists of specialities in subjects for humanities, economics and sciences. Towards the end of this cycle, students take the Lebanese baccalaureate exams, which is a prerequisite for progressing to institutions of higher education (Banque Bemo 2014, 8). It may be interesting to note that higher education in the public sector is accessed through the Lebanese University (LU), which encompassed 38% of the total number of students taking higher education in 2011-2012 (Bankmed 2014, 23)

5 Empirical Review and Analysis

In this chapter I begin by providing a descriptive analysis to support the claim that 1) access to public formal education is limited for Syrian refugees in Lebanon and 2) the quality of education for those that have enrolled may be characterized as limited (c.f. the research question). Having validated these claims based on empirical evidence I move on to the explanatory analysis based on the framework presented in chapter three. Here I seek to answer sub-questions one and two by assessing the structural and political limits that may affect the level of access and quality of education for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. I summarize my findings and answer the research question in chapter six.

5.1 Descriptive analysis

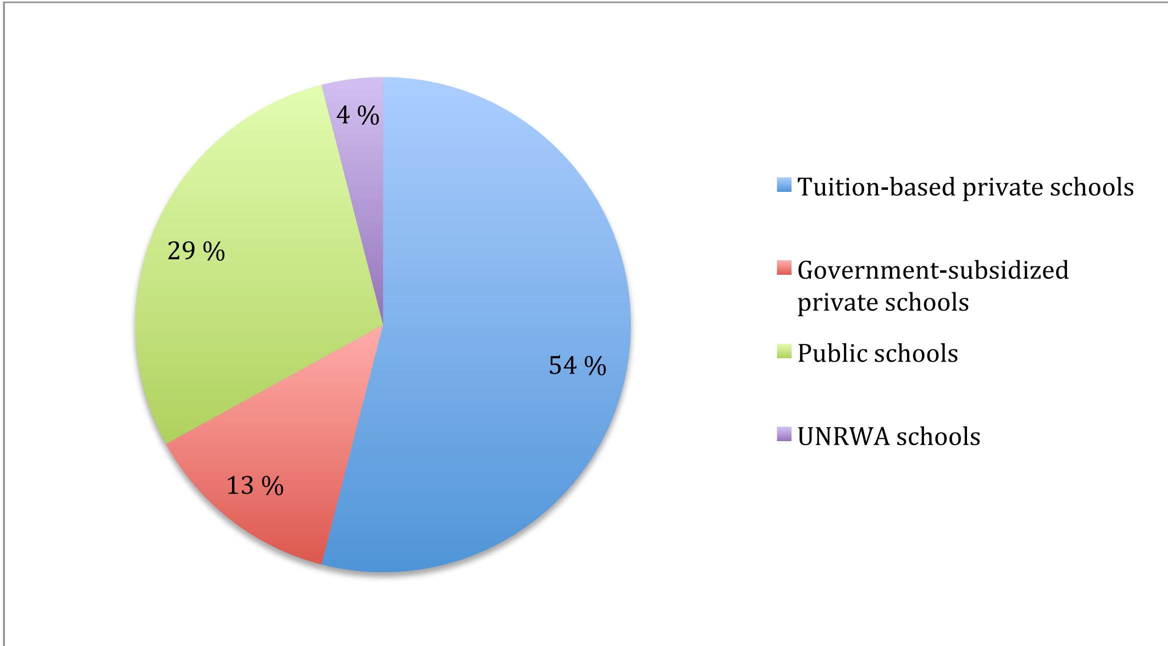
In part one of the descriptive analysis I look at how the level of Syrian enrolment is limited. I start by examining public school enrolment prior to the refugee influx of 2011-2012. On the basis of statistical analyses and a relevant literature review, I show the capacity and limitations of the public school system before the crisis. In this context, it is important to mention that I return to the issue of *capacity* for the explanatory analysis, where I examine whether enrolment is limited due to a lack of space in classrooms (SL1). In highlighting capacity and limitations, I compare the provision of public versus private sector education in Lebanon. Having established the context, I examine the arrival of Syrian refugees and enrolment into public schools. Thus I present statistics on the enrolment and registration of refugees, based on analyses and informant data. To assess whether Syrian refugees have limited access to public formal education, I examine the level of enrolment vis-à-vis Lebanese nationals and the number of out-of-school children. For the second part of the descriptive analysis, I support the claim that the quality of education that may be accessed is limited for Syrian refugees. Here I employ data from informant interviews to assess how the quality of education is low or limited for Syrian refugees enrolling in public schools. Having validated these claims I summarize and move on to the explanatory analysis.

5.1.1 Pre-crisis school enrolment, 2011-2012

For the 2011-2012 school year, 943 763 children were enrolled in general education, from the pre-primary to the secondary level, in both public and private schools (Bankmed 2014, 8). At this point only a trickle of Syrian refugees had arrived in Lebanon and approximately a thousand refugees were enrolled in public schools (Government of Lebanon and United

Nations 2013, 40). In sum 67% of all students enrolled for general education were enrolled in private schools (Bankmed 2014, 9). In contrast 29% of the total, or 275 000 students were enrolled in public schools (Blominvest Bank 2014, 3). In addition, 4% of students were enrolled in Palestinian UNRWA schools. This parallel structure of education will not be examined further.

Figure 5.1 Enrolment for general education 2011-2012



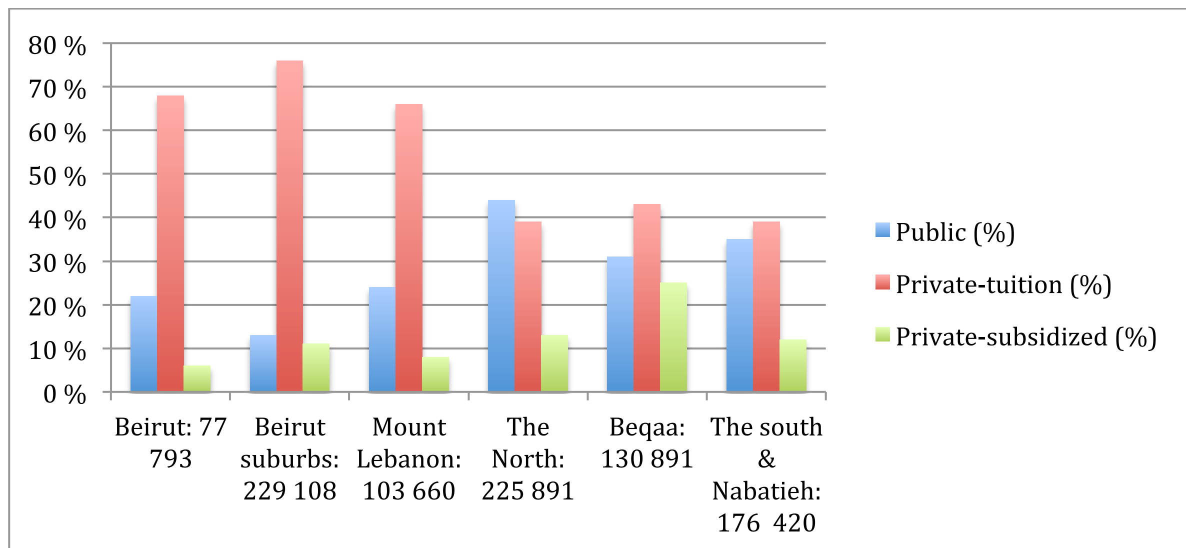
Source: Bankmed 2014, 9, Blominvest Bank 2014, 3

The statistics show that public sector education constituted approximately a third of the general education offer in Lebanon during the 2011-2012 period. In comparison with other countries of the region this constitutes a low share of public sector education. In Jordan and Egypt for example, 75% and 96% of students receive education through the public sector respectively (Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 17). As such, we see that the capacity and provision of *public sector education* was low prior to the crisis.

Regional disparity

The majority of Syrian refugees have settled in the most socio-economically marginalized areas of Lebanon, which is having a profound effect on already vulnerable communities. These are also the areas where the provision of public sector education is generally more prevalent compared to the rest of the country (World Bank 2013, 77). The majority of private schools are located in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, areas that may be characterized as more socio-economically advantaged (World Bank 2013, 77).

Figure 5.2Total student numbers by school type and region 2011-2012



Source: Bankmed 2014, 10

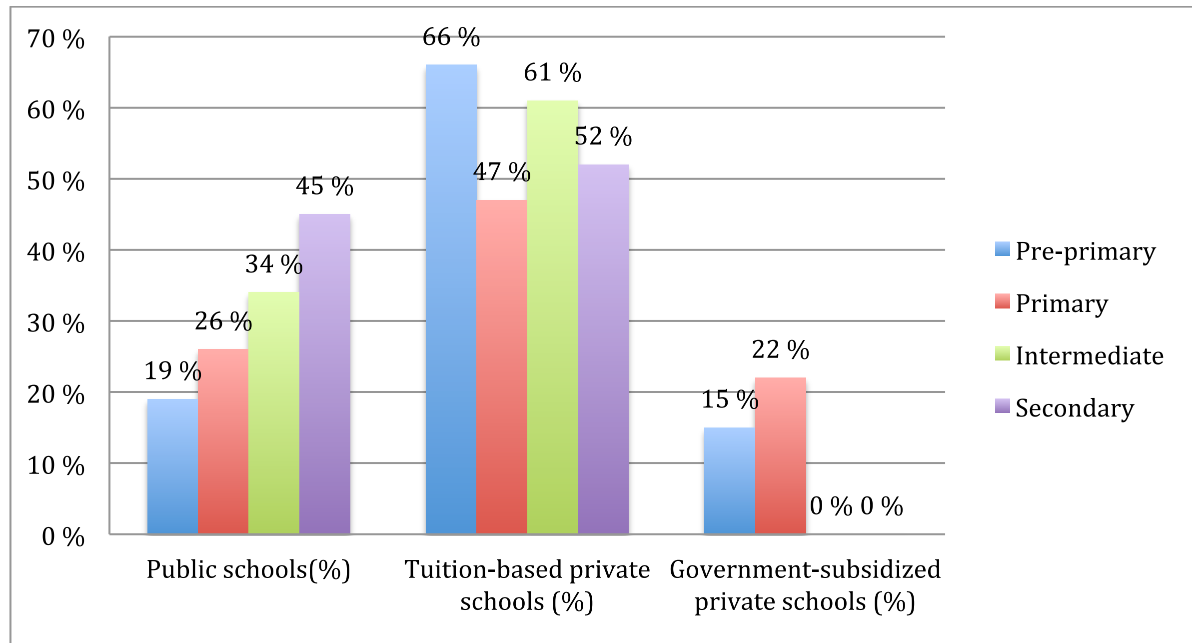
It is estimated that around 30% of all Syrian refugees have settled in the North and an estimated 34% in the Beqaa (MEHE and UNICEF 2014, 3-4). As described in the background chapter, public education has long been the primary source of education for the poor and marginalized communities of Lebanon. The Beqaa, the North and the South are the areas in which poverty rates are the most considerable, reaching 29%, 53% and 42% respectively. These areas also account for a significant portion of Lebanon's extremely poor, with 10-12% for the Beqaa and the South, and 18% in the North (El Laithy, Abu-Ismail and Hamdan 2008, 9, USAID 2009, 10). As illustrated in the figure above, these are also the regions where the provision of public sector education is most considerable, with public school enrolment either surpassing or rivalling that of private sector provision. Thus, these areas might have greater capacity to cater for public school enrolment.

Disparity in levels of education

As mentioned, the total number of students enrolled for general education in the 2011-2012 school year was approximately 943 000 students, in both the public and private sectors. Of these, an estimated 158 000 children were enrolled at the pre-primary level of education, whereas 124 000 children were enrolled in secondary education (Bankmed 2014, 8). In contrast, as many as 660 000 students were enrolled at the primary and intermediate levels of education (Bankmed 2014, 8). As shown in figure 4, there is significant disparity in the provision of the different levels of education across private and public sectors. Compared with the private sector, public provision had a limited capacity for pre-primary, primary and

intermediate education, whereas the provision of secondary education is split more evenly between public and private sectors.

Figure 5.3 Student enrolment by school type and education levels 2009-2010



Source: Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 18

In this context, it is important to mention that more than 50% of public schools provide education up until the intermediate level. In contrast, 40% of all private schools offer education till the intermediate level (Bankmed 2014, 11). The discrepancy is more considerable for secondary education. In the public sector, only 20% of all schools provide access to the secondary level, whereas 50% of all private schools offer education from primary to the secondary levels (Bankmed 2014, 11). As such, Lebanese citizens do not have access to the different levels of education on an equitable basis in that the provision of public sector education is more limited. Many students will drop out of school before completing the general education cycle, usually after the primary or intermediate levels. In Northern Lebanon for instance, as many as 43% of all students dropped out of school following the primary level (Kawar and Tzannatos 2013, 7). This is also coupled with the socio-economic conditions in these areas, where the ability to complete the education cycle may be constrained by access and provision, as well as the cost of education. Tuition-fees have shown a tendency to increase. A higher cost of education coupled with repetition and irregular progression, has resulted in a high dropout rate among students (Bankmed 2014, 16).

In summary, the majority of Syrian refugees have settled in the most socio-economically marginalized areas of Lebanon. These are also the areas where the provision of public formal education is most prevalent. This could indicate that refugees have settled in areas where the provision of public education may have greater capacity or potential to cater for refugees. On the other hand, as will be explored closer, this capacity may be subject to regional disparities (UNHCR 2014, 34). In addition, public sector education was shown to have a limited capacity to provide students with access to the *different levels* of education vis-à-vis the private sector. As such, it may be more difficult for public school students to complete the general education cycle on an equitable basis. These disparities are important to consider in examining the enrolment of Syrian refugees, as it speaks of an education system that was running at low capacity and catered primarily to the poor and marginalized citizens of Lebanon. In this context it may be mentioned that some 20,000 Lebanese children enrolled in private schools, will have switched to public schools as a result of the socio-economic deterioration caused by the refugee influx (UNICEF 2014, 13).

5.1.2 The enrolment of Syrian refugees

Now I present data on the annual enrolment of Syrian refugees since 2011. This will show how many refugees have been allowed to access public schools, but also in which areas and into what levels of education. To assess whether the "level of access" is limited, I examine the level of Syrian enrolment vis-à-vis nationals, but also in comparison with the total number of out-of-school refugee children. This will serve to illustrate that although the expansion of access has been considerable, the public school system will not be able to absorb the majority of Syrian refugees. As will be shown, the total number of children in need far exceeds the total number of children enrolled in public schools before the crisis.

The education response

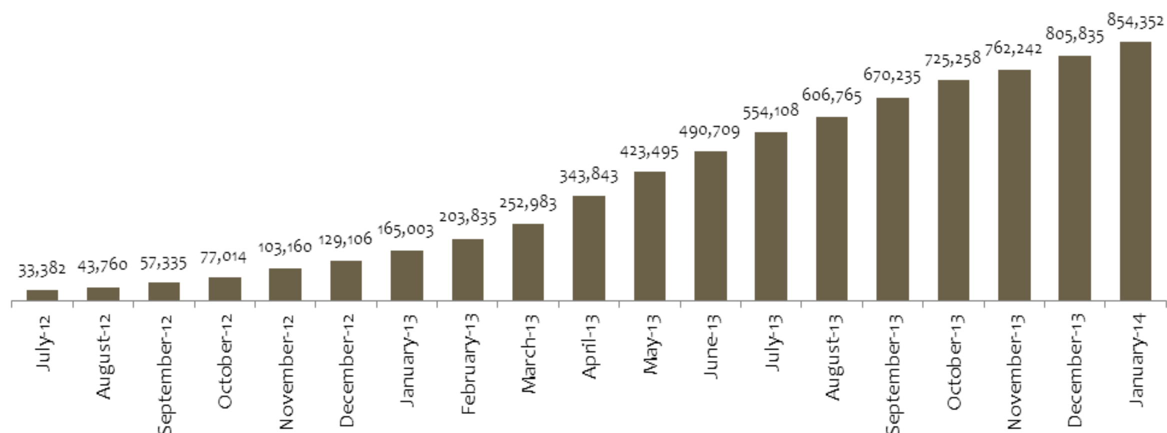
Towards the end of 2011, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) issued a circular instructing all public schools to begin enrolling Syrian students, regardless of their legal status or ability to provide necessary documentation (Watkins 2013, 13). As the scale of the refugee influx was fairly minimal at this point, access to education could be considered relatively free and open (Government of Lebanon and United Nations 2013, 40) For the 2011-2012 school year, there were approximately one thousand Syrian refugees enrolled in Lebanese public schools (ibid. 2013, 40). These were enrolled into the normal running system alongside Lebanese students. Syrian refugees have had little opportunity to access education

in private schools as tuition fees are unaffordable or there is limited provision in their areas of settlement.[24]

In the course of the 2012-2013 school year Lebanon experienced a dramatic growth in the number of refugees entering the country. From October 2012 till June 2013, the number of refugees registered with the UNHCR rose from 77 000 at the start of the semester, to 490 000 by the end of it (see figure 5.4). Signalling a continuing trend, the number of refugees grew to reach 805 000 individuals by the end of the year (ILO 2013, 12). This number does not account for the sizeable number of unregistered refugees.

For the 2012-2013 school year, it was estimated that of the total number of Syrian refugees registered with the UNHCR; only 38% of primary school-aged children had been able to access formal education, with less than 2% of secondary school-aged children able to enrol for secondary education (MEHE and UNICEF 2014, 20). For the 2012-2013 school year, approximately 42 000 Syrian refugees were enrolled in 980 public schools across the country (Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 49, UNHCR 2014, 34). In addition, some 45 000 marginalized Lebanese and Syrian children were helped to access non-formal education opportunities (UNHCR 2014, 34). In comparison with the year before, the level of Syrian enrolment had undergone a dramatic expansion. The majority of refugees who enrolled in public formal education did so in more marginalized areas, with 10 342 in the Beqaa, 9 150 in the north and 6 591 for the south (including Nabatiyeh) (Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 48)

Figure 5.4 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR between July 2012 and January 2014

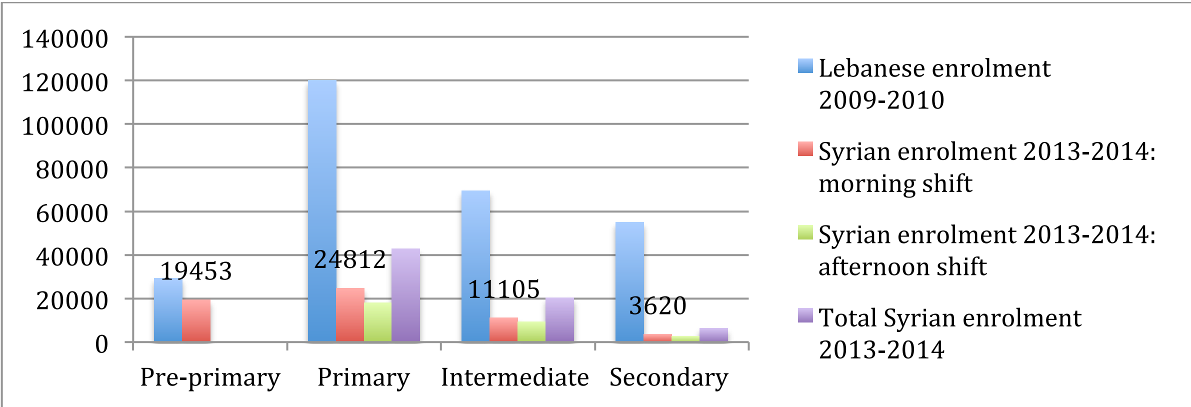


Source: ILO 2013, 12

[24] Interviews, UN representatives 1 & 2

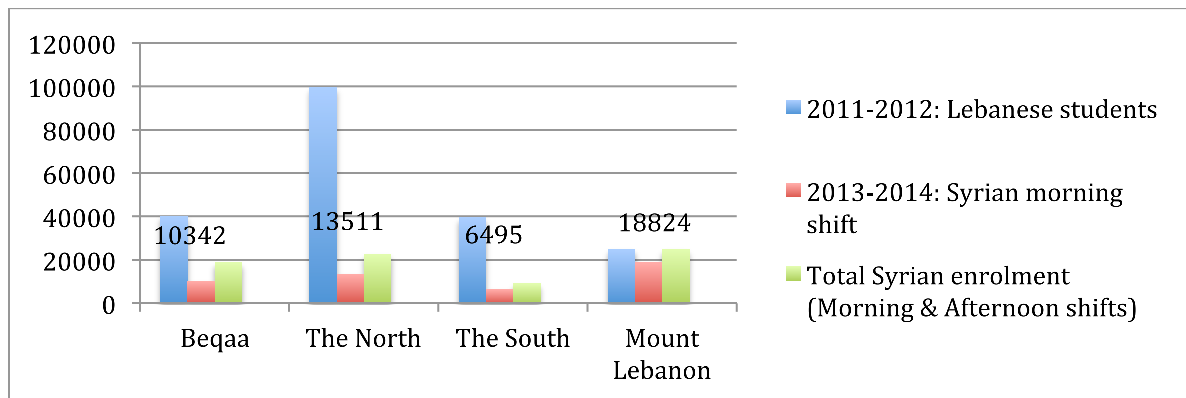
For the 2013-2014 school year, approximately 90 000 refugees were enrolled in public schools across Lebanon. An estimated 32 000 of these were enrolled in the *afternoon-shift* (REACH and UNHCR 2014, 6). As will be examined closer, this marks the beginning of the two-shift system, whereby some schools opened up classrooms for teaching children in morning and afternoon shifts. In addition, some 48 000 children were also provided access to non-formal education alternatives (Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 48). Again, the expansion of access was most considerable in the marginalized areas of the country, for both the morning and afternoon shifts. For the Beqaa, an estimated 18 700 children were enrolled into public schools, with 22 500 in the north, 9500 for the south, as well as 24 000 students in Mount Lebanon (Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 49). At this time, it was estimated that there was 555 000 children from Syria residing in Lebanon. According to this estimate, some 383 000 of these children were of school age, between 5 and 17 years (Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 49). Considering that public school enrolment for Syrian refugees stood at 90 000, it means that less than ¼ of children were able to access formal education. As is confirmed by a humanitarian Education needs assessment, as much as 80% of refugee children do not attend school in Lebanon. For older children this rate of non-attendance reaches somewhere above 90% (UNHCR 2014, 35). The majority of Syrian refugees who enrolled in public schools have done so for the primary and intermediate levels of education, which has been a priority focus for MEHE and UNHCR/UNICEF (Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 50). This is illustrated in figure 5.5, which indicates that Syrian enrolment is especially limited for the secondary level, with only 6300 Syrian refugees enrolled during the 2013-2014 school year (see figure 5.5 below).

Figure 5.5 Syrian public school enrolment by level of education 2013-2014



Source: Shuayb, Makkouk, and Tuttunji 2014, 49

Figure 5.6 Lebanese versus Syrian public school enrolment by region 2011-2014

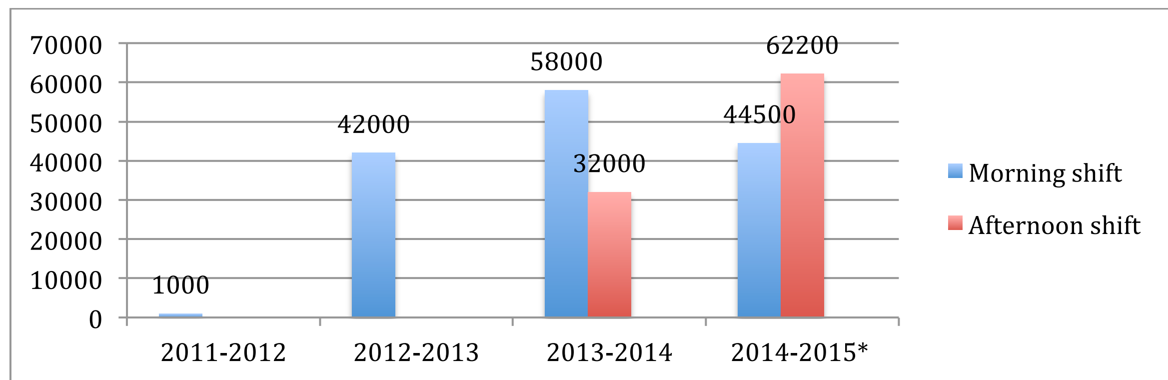


Source: Bankmed 2014, 10, Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 49

For the 2014-2015 school year, statistics are less certain. At the time of my field research in November 2014, the enrolment of Syrian refugees had not yet started. Based on preliminary statistics, approximately 106 000 children have been enrolled so far in 2015, with a seeming majority having done so for the afternoon shift (UNHCR and UNICEF 2015, 1). The majority of informants indicated that MEHE had approved for the enrolment of 100 000 Syrians in the morning shift and 57 000 in the afternoon shift for the 2014-2015 school year. This would amount to 157 000 children in total.[25] As statistics for the 2014-2015 school year are preliminary it is difficult to comment on the expected outcome of the enrolment process. The data does however seem to indicate that more Syrian refugees have been enrolled for the afternoon shift than the morning shift so far (see figure 5.7). By the end of 2014, it was estimated that there would be around 824 000 Syrian children residing in Lebanon. Of these, around 693 000 would be of school age (UNICEF 2014, 13, UNHCR 2014, 34). This rate also includes Lebanese returnees (previously residing in Syria) and Palestinian-Syrian refugees (UNHCR 2014, 34). So even if 157 000 children are ultimately allowed to enrol in public schools for 2014-2015, as was expected by informants, it would still mean that over half a million children would be without access. As mention, in the course of 2015 it is estimated that the number of Syrian refugees residing in Lebanon will reach somewhere between 1,5 and 2 million people. This will constitute a 50% increase from the pre-crisis population of the country.[26]

[25] Interviews, NGO 1, 2, 3 & 5 and UN representative 1
[26] Interviews, NGO 2 & 4

Figure 5.7 Annual Syrian enrolment in public schools 2011-2015



*Final enrolment data for the 2014 - 2015 school year is not yet available; this is preliminary data from March 2015. These statistics also include other non-Lebanese students (Government of Lebanon and United Nations 2013, 40, Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 49, REACH and UNHCR 2014, 6, UNHCR and UNICEF 2015, 1).

As data for the 2014-2015 school year is preliminary, it may be more appropriate to consider Syrian enrolment for the 2013-2014 school year to assess the expansion of public sector provisions. Figure 5.7 shows that there were approximately 90 000 Syrian refugees enrolled in Lebanese public schools. Considering that there were 275 000 public school students in 2011, this represents a 33% increase in the total number of students enrolled. This does not however account for the Lebanese children who have dropped out of public schools due to the influx of Syrians. If as many as 157 000 children are enrolled for 2014-2015, this will constitute a 50% rise in the total number of public school students enrolled before the crisis. In this sense there has been a substantial expansion of Syrian refugees accessing public formal education. On the other hand, the enrolment of refugees may be characterized as being limited in that the majority of school-aged children from Syria are without access to formal education. As such, it is the number of children outside public schools that forms the basis to claim that the level of access is limited for Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

5.1.3 The quality of education for Syrian Refugees

Although Syrian refugees have been allowed to enrol in Lebanese public schools, there are considerable problems in terms of the quality of education that can be accessed. According to the majority of informants, Syrian refugees may be receiving a lower quality of education than Lebanese children, despite being enrolled in the same education system. This is especially the case for schools in areas that are hosting the largest refugee populations. One major finding is that the quality of education might be lower in schools that have been opened up for the so-called *two-shift system*.

The Two-shift system

To augment the capacity of public sector education Lebanon, like Jordan, introduced a two-shift system for overcrowded schools in areas with dense refugee populations.[27] MEHE, along with education partners, initiated the system of "morning" and "afternoon" shifts. This was introduced for the 2013-2014 school year. More Syrian refugee children were able to enrol in public schools as the two-shift system was implemented in 79 schools across the country.[28] The UNHCR/UNICEF in partnership with international and local NGOs, are instrumental in financing Syrian attendance in Lebanese public schools for the morning and afternoon shifts (Government of Lebanon and United Nations 2013, 40). When asked about the two-shift system and its challenges, the majority of informants identified overstretched capacities as a problem affecting the quality of education on offer. Several informants commented that this was especially acute for the afternoon shift, which is predominantly accessed by Syrian refugees.[29]

The morning shift constitutes the *normal running system*. Normally, the school day will begin at 08:00 and last until 14:00, but now there is indication that teachers may be dismissing the students at 13:00 instead. This means that both Lebanese and Syrian students enrolled in the first shift are effectively losing one hour of education every day.[30] In this sense, the overburdening of schools may have a negative effect on Lebanese and Syrian students alike. As stated by two informants, this will reduce the time allocated for the completion of the national curriculum and thus affect the overall quality of the education being provided.[31] The afternoon shift will normally begin at 14:00 and last till 18:00 in the evening. As such, the school day lasts for only four hours, which is two hours below the national standard of a normal running school day.[32] According to several informants however, it has been reported that for some schools the duration of the school day may only be lasting for three hours.[33]

As indicated by several informants, the enrolment process has resulted in the duration of the academic year being cut short for Syrian refugees. This has both structural and political

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[27] Interviews, UN representatives 1 & 2
[28] Interview, UN representative 1
[29] Interviews, NGO 5 and UN representatives 1 & 2
[30] Interviews, NGO 1, 2 & 5
[31] Interviews, NGO 1 & 2
[32] Interview, NGO 1
[33] Interviews, NGO 2 & 5 and UN representative 2

dimensions, as will be discussed later on. For both the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, the enrolment of refugees has been subject to delays, which have resulted in Syrian children starting their semester after their Lebanese counterparts.[34] This was identified as a being a problem for both the morning and the afternoon shifts, but especially the latter. According to several informants, the afternoon shift was supposed to start in October, but did not commence until January for both the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years.[35] For the morning shift this has significant implications whereby Syrian students may fall behind Lebanese peers and not be able to receive the full curriculum. If the start of the academic semester is delayed for 2-3 months, coupled with the shorter duration of schools days, the quality of the education will be impacted.

One informant, went as far as to characterize the afternoon shifts as a sort of "apartheid system", where Syrian refugees have been given access, but to a separate and somewhat substandard provision of education.[36] Three other informants referred to the afternoon shift as constituting something of a "parallel structure", where the provision of education could be considered of a lower quality than the normal running system, the morning shift.[37] In this context, several informants recognized that the Lebanese curriculum taught in the afternoon shift is more condensed compared to the one taught in the morning shift.[38] For the afternoon shift there is evidence that there has been flexibility in adapting the national curriculum to the situation of refugees (Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 50). As such, several informants mentioned that schools might be foregoing the foreign language component of the curriculum.[39] All of the informants recognized that the two-shift system is an important move to enhance public school capacity and enrol more Syrian refugees, especially in areas where the demand for education is more considerable. Through it, more Syrian children have been allowed to enrol in public schools. On the other hand, the two-shift system may have a negative impact on the quality of education that Syrians are receiving.

Foreign Languages

As mentioned in the background chapter, the use of foreign language instruction a significant component of the national curriculum of Lebanon. Public schools teach mathematics and

[34] Interviews, NGO 2, 3, & 5 and UN representative 1
[35] Interviews, NGO 2,3 & 5
[36] Interview, NGO 5
[37] Interviews, NGO 3 & 4 and UN representative 2
[38] Interviews, NGO 1, 2, & 5 and UN representative 2
[39] Interviews, NGO 1 & 5 and UN representative 1

sciences in English or French until grade nine, which constitutes the end of the intermediate level (Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 84-85). In this context, foreign language instruction has been identified as a particular challenge for the accommodation of Syrian refugees. In fact, even before the crisis, the use of foreign languages was identified as a leading cause of dropout and repetition among public school students.[40] It was estimated that only nine out of every 1000 students enrolled in public schools at the primary level, would earn their degree without having to repeat a grade. This stands in contrast to 225 out of every 1000 for students for the private sector (Kawar and Tzannatos 2013, 7). In addition, the dropout rate for public schools was considerable, reaching 21% in 2011 and 25% in 2013 (Blominvest Bank 2013, 4, 14). As such, there were issues linked to the quality of education in Lebanese public schools prior to the enrolment of Syrian refugees.

According to education specialists, the use of foreign language instruction is a significant obstacle for the enrolment and retention of Syrian children in the formal system (REACH and UNHCR 2014, 20). When Syrian refugees were first enrolled in public schools for 2011-2012, the dropout rate was estimated to be as high as 70%, but has subsequently stabilized.[41] On the other hand, there is indication the dropout rate for Syrian refugees is higher in the morning shift than for the afternoon shift, which amounts to 10-15%.[42] According to several informants, this may be due to the fact that the morning shift offers the full Lebanese curriculum, whereas the language component may be less prioritized for the afternoon shift.[43] The afternoon shift could therefore be considered better suited for Syrian refugees, but at the same time if the language component is deprioritized, it may indicate a version of the national curriculum that is of lower quality than for the morning shift. Informants also mentioned that due to time constraints and the lack of resources, students in the afternoon shift would tend to forego extracurricular activities and physical education.[44] Such provisions are recognized as being important to retain children in schools, to allow for socialization in safe environments and to help alleviate trauma.[45]

Refugee status

[40] Interviews, NGO 4 & UN representative 1
[41] Interviews, NGO 2 & UN representative 3
[42] Interviews, NGO 1, 2 & 5 and UN representative 3
[43] Interviews, NGO 3 & 5 and UN representatives 1 & 2
[44] Interviews, NGO 1 & 2
[45] Interviews, NGO 1 & 2

Another factor which impacts the quality of education for Syrian refugees is whether or not the child has formal refugee status with UNHCR and is possession of the necessary documents. Refugees who have proper identification and documentation of previously attained education will likely be allowed to enroll in grades corresponding to the level of education reached back home in Syria. On the other hand, refugees who lack the necessary documentation may be allocated into grades based on placement tests (Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 44). These tests are usually based on the Lebanese curriculum with its foreign language component. As a result, Syrian children have been able to enrol, but are placed several grades below their age and previous academic achievements (Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 74-75). In addition, informants have indicated that teachers may be instrumental in demoting students to lower grades, but especially if the foreign language challenge proves insurmountable.[46] Another issue identified by two informants, was the problem of Syrian refugees not being able to sit for exams if they do not possess the necessary documentation (UNICEF 2014, 13-14). It is recognized as being especially problematic for Syrian refugees enrolled in grades 9 and 12, where documentation is required to take exams (REACH and UNHCR 2014, 19). As suggested by MEHE, one solution would be to acquire relevant documents at the Syrian embassy in Beirut; something many refugees have been reluctant to do (REACH and UNHCR 2014, 19).

In summary, Syrian refugees in Lebanon have a limited “level of access” to public formal education. This claim was validated on the basis of examining statistics on Syrian enrolment alongside that of Lebanese children. This was used to show that although the level of enrolment has increased annually, it remains small compared with nationals, but especially so in comparison with the total number of out-of-school children from Syria. In addition Syrian children may have a limited access to levels beyond the primary and intermediate levels of education. Although Syrian refugees have been allowed to enrol in public schools, information gathered though my interviews indicate that the “quality of education” has been subject to limitations. It was recognized that the two-shift system was instrumental in augmenting public school capacity, but also that it could overburden schools and impact the quality of education being provided. As a result, the duration of school days and the academic semester have been cut short for 2013-2014 and 2014-2015, especially for children in the afternoon shift. Having provided a descriptive analysis to validate my claims that the level of access and the quality of education is limited, I move on to the explanatory analysis, where I

[46] Interviews, NGO 1 & 2

present evidence to answer sub-questions one and two. As outlined in chapter two, this will be on the basis of identifying structural and political limits. Within each section of the explanatory analysis, I summarize my findings and theorize if the data has relevance for the level of access or the quality of education, or both towards answering my research question.

5.2 Explanatory analysis

As outlined in chapter three, I have identified a number of explanatory factors that seem especially relevant to answer (1) why the level of access is limited and (2) why the quality of education that may be received is limited (RQ). I have chosen to group the various explanatory factors into two categories: *Structural limits* (SL) and *political limits* (PL). In this context, it is important to reiterate that some explanatory factors will have the most relevance for "the level of access", some for the "quality of education" and some will have relevance for both.

5.2.1 Structural limits

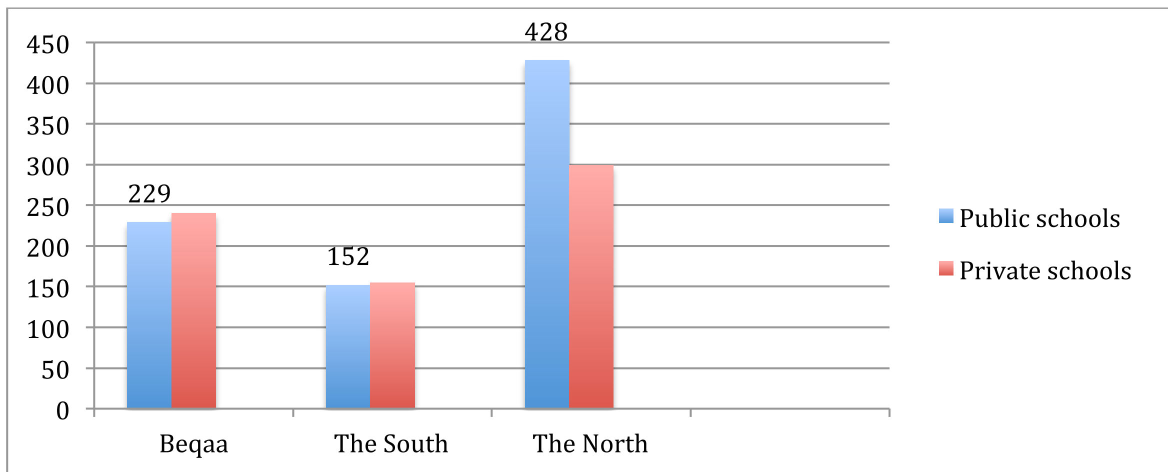
As defined in chapter three, *Structural limits*, refer to limits on the capacity of the education system and the administrative structure to accommodate out-of-school children from Syria. Collectively, these limits speak of the faults or inefficiencies embedded in the education system, which have become exacerbated by the Syrian crisis. To begin with I examine if there is a lack of *capacity in schools* (SL1). I will then move on to examine if the *centralized education system & procedures for enrolment* (SL2) contribute to limit the level of access and/or the quality of education that may be received. Lastly I examine *pressure on educators* (SL3) as a possible explanation for both components of the research question. In sum, these explanatory factors will constitute what is understood as structural limits.

5.2.1.1 Capacity in schools (SL1)

For the 2011-2012 school year, public sector education accommodated 29% of all students enrolled in general education. In comparison, the private sector catered to 67% of the total (Bankmed 2014, 9). The importance of comparing these statistics is that despite public sector provision being small in terms of students enrolled, the *number* of public and private schools were almost equal. As such, there were fewer students enrolled per school in the public sector. In 2011, there were 1442 tuition-based and subsidized private schools, in comparison with 1356 public schools (Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 17). Estimates from 2013 place the number of public schools at 1275, which does not include vocational schools or the

Lebanese University. In comparison, the private sector was composed of 1500 schools (Blominvest Bank 2014, 2). Based on statistics from 2013, the public sector encompassed as much as 47% of the total number of schools in Lebanon (World Bank 2013, 77, Hamdan 2013, 6).

Figure 5.8 Number of public schools by region 2013



Source: Bankmed 2014, 2

To dissect these statistics further let us examine the dispersal of schools across the regions of Lebanon. In the Beqaa there are a total of 469 schools of which 229 are public schools, which constitutes 49% of the total. Similarly, there are 305 schools in the south where as much as 50% are public schools, or 152 in total. For the north are 727 schools of which 428 are public schools, constituting 59% of the total (Bankmed 2014, 12). As mentioned, these are among the areas where the majority of Syrian refugees have settled and enrolled in public schools. Considering that public schools catered to only 29% of students in 2011-2012, in almost half of all schools in Lebanon, it would seem to indicate that there would be capacity for greater Syrian enrolment.

Prior to the crisis, there had been problems connected with the geographical placement and sustainability of public schools. For instance, in 2010 MEHE took steps to merge 78 schools considered unviable, each one containing less than 50 students with other schools (MEHE 2011, 22). This indicates that public school capacity may vary considerably from area to area. This seemed to be confirmed by several informants, who stated that limited access due to capacity was less of an issue in rural areas, where refugee populations may be less densely concentrated.[47] For example, a capacity assessment carried out in Akkar (the north) showed

[47] Interviews, NGO 2 & 4 and UN representative 1

that few schools had enrolled over-capacity. In fact, only 11% of schools seemed to be over capacity, with 55% of schools at capacity and an estimated 34% of schools being under capacity (REACH and UNHCR 2014, 17). On the other hand, schools that located in urban centers, where the density of refugees may be more considerable; have become prone to overcrowding (MEHE and UNICEF 2014, 20). As was confirmed by several informants, the lack of capacity is an issue that may constrain the level of Syrian access in areas where the density of refugees is most considerable.[48]

Although the two-shift system was introduced to augment the capacity of overburdened schools, many children will remain without access.[49] Here the issue of transportation becomes relevant. As capacity has been greater in schools in certain areas, an option has been to transport students to these schools. As was recognized by several informants, the cost of transportation coupled with security concerns associated with such travel, lead to some parents being unable or unwilling to let their children enrol in schools further away from where the family was settled.[50] Especially unregistered refugees would be reluctant to let their children travel through volatile areas or government checkpoints (REACH and UNHCR 2014, 19).

In terms of capacity, several respondents identified *school infrastructure* as another barrier for Syrian enrolment, especially in areas where refugee settlement has been most dense. This is exemplified by the following quote:

> One of the school directors told us that the children ate the chairs, and tables; you know what I mean. So equipment-wise, usage of the school, in some schools they broke everything, no water and the sanitation [...][51]

As was confirmed by three other informants, the state of physical infrastructure had been adversely affected by having to absorb such a sizable number of students.[52] Many school buildings were therefore characterized as being in need of rehabilitation in order to absorb Syrian refugees into acceptable learning environments.[53]

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[48] Interviews, NGO 1 & 4 and UN representatives 1 & 2
[49] Interviews, NGO 5 & UN representative 1
[50] Interviews, NGO 1, 2, 4 & 5
[51] Interview, UN representative 3
[52] Interviews, NGO 3 and UN representatives 1 & 2
[53] Interviews, NGO 1 & 2 and UN representative 2

Information attained through informant interviews indicates that the potential for enhancing school capacity may be contingent on whether the buildings are rented or owned by the government. In 2007 the government owned approximately 39% of all public school buildings, which amounted to 536 schools. In contrast, 567 schools or 41% of the total were rented by MEHE (MEHE 2011, 45). The remaining 20% of schools are owned or rented by municipalities, or consist of private property contributions (MEHE 2011, 45). According to one informant, if a school was rented before 1998, the government is free to rent it permanently.[54] On the other hand if it was rented after 1998, the government must reach an agreement with the landlord on the timeframe for usage.[55] In 2006, as many as 1/5 of all public school buildings were characterized as being in an unacceptable state and in need of rehabilitation (LAES 2006, 17). With the Syrian influx, the rehabilitation of public schools became a crucial factor in meeting the growing demand for education. As indicated by three informants, the issue of whether school buildings are government-owned or rented has had practical implications for the rehabilitation process.[56] According to one source, some donors have been reluctant to rehabilitate schools that are rented by the government, despite the fact that a significant portion of these schools are located in the most vulnerable areas, with the highest density of refugees.[57]

In approaching the issue of capacity in public schools, each informant was asked whether MEHE had set a ceiling for the number of Syrians that could enroll in public schools. If such a limit was clearly delineated it could indicate an absolute capacity of the education system in absorbing refugees. None of my informants were aware of any explicit statement having been made by Lebanese authorities in this regard. To quote one informant on this issue:

> […] Basically they [the MEHE] have never said the actual number, but they always say that if we get funding we will open more spaces. So it's a matter of like…give me the funds and we open more spaces, but in terms of the maximum capacity that the sector can absorb I don't think that it was publicly said that this is our maximum.[58]

When asked about the lack of space in classrooms, it was recognized that this was a more considerable problem in urban areas, where the density of refugees is more considerable. However, most of my informants pointed out that the level of Syrian enrolment, or potential

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[54] Interview, UN representative 3
[55] Interview, UN representative 3
[56] Interviews, NGO 1 and UN representatives 2 & 3
[57] Interview, UN representative 3
[58] Interview, NGO 3

for Syrian enrolment, *was not* limited due to a general lack of capacity. Instead it was indicated that the availability of space in classrooms may be more contingent on the financial resources that UNHCR/UNICEF and donors are willing to commit towards enrolling Syrian refugees.[59] On the other hand, three informants stated that public school capacity to absorb Syrians could be enhanced considerably if the second shift was opened up in more schools across Lebanon.[60] Commenting on the issue, one informant stated that:

> […] This year [2014] I think we will have more people in the first shift than the second shift, because the UN committed only for 55 000 in the second shift. If the UN commits for more we have place for more, we can open all the schools for second shifts […][61]

In summary, the number of private and public schools in Lebanon are almost equal in number. Still, the latter caters to a significantly smaller portion of the student populace. As such, one would expect there to be a level of "un-used" capacity to enrol more Syrian refugees into public schools. Several informants recognized that a lack of capacity constitutes a factor that constrains the level of Syrian enrolment. As was indicated, this is primarily the case in more urban areas where the density of refugees is more considerable, and where schools are prone to overcrowding. Schools in rural areas however, are recognized as having more capacity and potential to enrol Syrian refugees. Furthermore, there is the issue of transportation, coupled with security concerns, which may reduce the willingness of parents to enrol their children in schools outside their immediate area of settlement. Capacity may vary considerably from area to area. In addition, informants indicated that the capacity of physical infrastructure could also represent a barrier for access. The rehabilitation of schools has been crucial towards enhancing school capacity and there are indications that the ownership-status of schools may facilitate or constrain donor willingness to support rehabilitation. Informants spoke of school capacity as something that could be enhanced, but may be contingent on the availability of funds from UNHCR/UNICEF and donors. In addition, there have been no clear limits set by MEHE in terms of the total number of Syrian children that can ultimately be allowed to enrol in public sector education. In conclusion the lack of capacity in schools (SL1) is most relevant towards "the level of access", as opposed to the "quality of education" aspect of the research question. Now I move on to discuss (SL2), which I argue has relevance for *both* the level of access and the quality of education that may be accessed by Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

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[59] Interviews, NGO 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 and UN representatives 1 & 3
[60] Interviews, NGO 4 & 5 and UN representative 3
[61] Interview, UN representative 3

5.2.1.2 A centralized education system & the process of enrolment (SL2)

As discussed in chapter four, public sector education is centralized under the authority of MEHE, which governs all decision-making related to allocations of the educational budget, employment and training of teachers and student enrolment. Public schools are administered through regional departments that serve as conduits for MEHE decisions down to the local school level (TIMSS 2011, 533, REACH and UNHCR 2014, 4). When circulars or directives are issued from MEHE, they apply for the public school system as a whole. School directors have little autonomy and limited scope for involvement in strategic planning, which may benefit their individual school or community (Bahous and Nabhani 2008, 130). With reference to the centralized structure of public sector education, MEHE has recognized that that there is a need to strengthen school management at the local level, as teachers and school directors have been on the frontline in tackling the magnitude of the Syrian influx (MEHE and UNICEF 2014, 27).

To begin with, the majority of my informants identified circulars issued by MEHE as a factor that works to constrain the level of Syrian enrolment. I will return to this issue in more depth for the analysis on political limits. Here I briefly examine how circulars are understood. According to five informants, it is a challenge that school directors have understood the various circulars from MEHE differently across Lebanon. This has led to an uncoordinated response whereby local school directors may follow instructions for enrolment according to their own understanding, or even fail to enrol Syrian children out of confusion.[62] Due to the centralized nature of public sector education, there are indications that school directors may have been slow in providing Syrian refugees with access, or have been unwilling to do so because of unclear instruction from MEHE.[63]

Government expenditure on education

Two informants indicated that school directors might have refused to enrol Syrian children due to concerns over funding/resources.[64] To begin with UNHCR/UNICEF provided funds to NGOs, who then paid the enrolment fees of Syrian children directly to the schools. Now

[62] Interviews, NGO 2,3 & 5 and UN representatives 1 & 2
[63] Interviews, NGO 2 & 3 and UN representative 1
[64] Interviews, NGO 2 & UN representative 2

MEHE has decided that UNHCR/UNICEF should give the money directly to the ministry, which will then be transferred to schools at the local level.[65] One informant had this to say:

> That is one reason why school principals/directors are confused: we are registering Syrians, we don't take the money, but how do we make sure that MEHE will give us the money – it's a money issue and it's a political issue…and children are out-of-school[66]

It is recognized that the public school system is subject to unbalanced funding from the lack of an efficient system to subsidize poorer households and communities (World Bank 2012, 66). This may indicate that different schools will have a varying availability of resources. In addition, there is a resource pool to cover non-salary expenditures with funds provided by parents or the local community, as is customary in Lebanon.[67] According to one informant, this makes the availability of resources unpredictable. There are disparities between public schools in different regions, as there is disparity in personal or community income.[68] If the availability of resources is limited, schools will have limited ability to enrol Syrian refugees. In this context, it is useful to briefly examine government expenditure on public sector education. For 2011 public sector spending on education amounted to 1,6% of Lebanon's GDP (Blominvest Bank 2014, 2). On a regional basis this may be considered low, with states like Egypt and Kuwait spending 3,8% of GDP (Bankmed 2014, 5). For 2012 it is estimated that as much as 87% of MEHE's total budget went towards employee salaries and benefits (World Bank 2012, 66). In addition, 11% of the budget went towards providing access to subsidized private schools for approximately 120 000 Lebanese students (Bankmed 2014, 9, World Bank 2012, 66). This is relevant to highlight because it shows an education system where there has been little ability to invest in the improvement of education and the administrative structure, as government budgets are "eaten up" by employee salaries and benefits. Since the public sector has been instrumental in absorbing Syrian refugees, MEHE has had to sustain additional expenditures in terms of student fees, teaching materials, educators as well as administrative costs, especially during the beginning of the crisis (World Bank 2013, 78). This has negatively impacted long-running efforts to reform public sector education in Lebanon (MEHE and UNICEF 2014, 20).

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[65] Interviews, NGO 2 & 3 and UN representative 1
[66] Interview, NGO 2
[67] Interviews, NGO 1 & 2
[68] Interview, NGO 1

The enrolment process

Nearly all of my informants identified the administrative system of MEHE, with its inefficient oversight, monitoring and strategic planning as a significant structural barrier for greater Syrian enrolment. One challenge, as identified by three informants, is the lack of any computerized system to handle the enrolment process, which makes it difficult to properly monitor and gather information.[69] The enrolment process is manual, whereby the names of children are written down on pieces of paper. These are then collected by school directors and sent to the regional bureaus of general education and are then handed over to MEHE.[70] For the 2011-2012 school year this system was manageable according to one informant, as the number of Syrians enrolled in public schools was minimal. In absorbing a larger amount of refugee children for subsequent years, the system has proved inefficient in handling the numbers involved.[71] This could indicate a structural limit whereby the capacity of the administrative system constrains the potential for access. The lack of an efficient system of enrolment in combination with administrative shortfalls, not only impacts the level of access, but also the quality of education that may be received.[72] Due to the ineffective and time-consuming system of enrolment, the academic semester is cut short for Syrian refugees that enrol in public schools. This means that Syrians may be receiving education of a lower quality than Lebanese counterparts, having lost two months of the semester for both 2013-2014 and 2014-2015.[73]

Another issue, which is recognized as having impacted the level of access, has been the challenges of enrolling refugees without a formalized refugee status or documentation on education previously attained in Syria. Although MEHE instructed schools to enrol Syrian refugees regardless of legal status or necessary documentation, (and donors being committed to finance enrolment fees), there is evidence that school directors in some areas have refused to do so.[74] As mentioned in the descriptive analysis, when refugees are in possession of required documentation, he or she will have the opportunity to enroll in a grade equivalent to the level reached in Syria. Refugees who do not possess this documentation are subject to grade allocation based on placement tests (Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 44). As these

[69] Interviews, NGO 2,3 & 5
[70] Interviews, NGO 2 & 3 and UN representative 1
[71] Interview, NGO 3
[72] Interviews, NGO 3 & 5 and UN representative 1
[73] Interviews, NGO 2, 3 & 5
[74] Interviews, NGO 2 and UN representatives 1 & 2

tests are administered on the basis of the Lebanese curriculum, Syrian children have been placed below their age and academic ability due to the foreign language challenge.[75] In addition, there is evidence that Syrian refugees have faced difficulties in sitting for exams without the proper documentation in order.[76] In sum, these rigid admission policies have resulted in Syrian children dropping out of formal education and enrolling instead in non-formal alternatives (Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 77). Non-formal education for Syrian refugees is not accredited by MEHE, but may be more suitable if a child is able to receive education that is more age-appropriate and builds on previous academic achievements.[77]

In summary, the administrative system of MEHE is recognized as being inefficient in terms of oversight, monitoring and strategic planning. This represents a structural limit whereby the administrative capacity of the education system is hard pressed to accommodate a growing number of Syrian refugees. As the administrative structure of MEHE is highly centralized, it may constrain the response at the local level. As is indicated, school directors have understood government circulars differently. This may result in an uncoordinated response where school directors refuse to enrol Syrian refugees due to unclear instruction from MEHE. In addition, there has been reluctance to enrol Syrians from the lack of clear funding mechanisms. Instead of NGOs paying schools directly, all funds must now be transferred to MEHE who will distribute it among schools at the local level. Prior to the crisis, government expenditure on public education could be characterized as limited and there has been little ability to invest in the improvement of the education system once employee salaries and benefits have been paid. One significant structural limit is the manual enrolment process, which is poorly geared towards handling the increasing numbers involved. The enrolment process is slow and time consuming. As a result of this, Syrian children have started school later than Lebanese children, with the total duration of the semester being reduced. This will invariably affect the quality of education that can be accessed. In addition, there are administrative practices such as placement tests and the requirement of relevant documentation, which constrains the potential for Syrian enrolment, but also the quality of education that may be received. As such (S2) will have explanatory relevance for both the

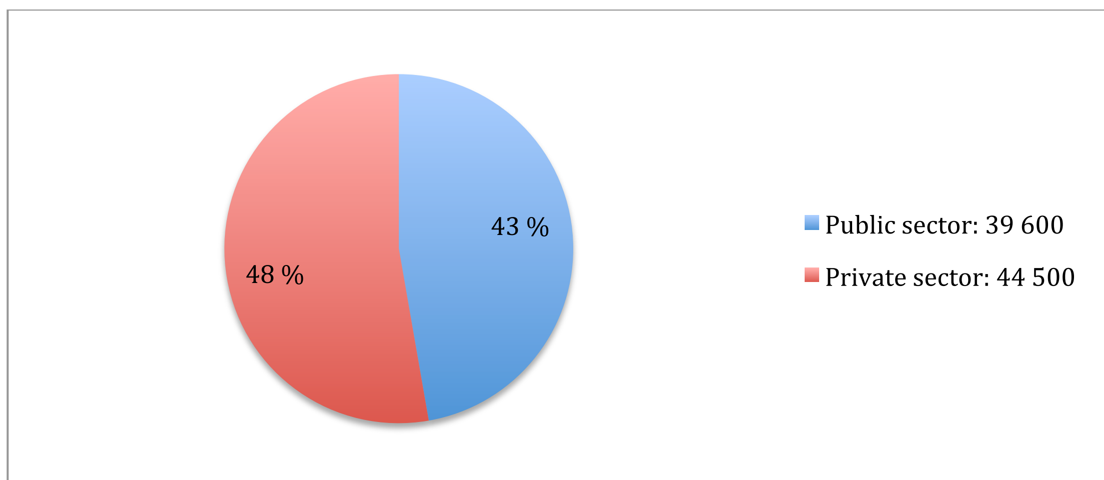
[75] Interview, NGO 3
[76] Interviews, NGO 2 and UN representative 1
[77] Interviews, NGO 1, 2 & 4 and UN representative 1

level of access and the quality of education. Now I move on to examine pressure on educators and how this may be another structural limit.

5.2.1.3 Pressure on educators (SL3)

MEHE is responsible for recruiting teachers to public schools. The Lebanese University serves as a recruitment pool for the ministry. In contrast, private school teachers are hired from private universities. The quality of teacher training is considered to better in private universities, where the focus on foreign languages and practical experience is more rigorous (Bahous and Nabhani 2008, 129). For the 2011-2012 school year, there were 92 522 teachers employed in the general education sector, from the pre-primary to the secondary levels of education, in both public and private schools. An estimated 39 600 teachers, or 43% of the total, were employed in the public sector (Bankmed 2014, 14).

Figure 5.9 Teacher employment for the 2011-2012 school year



Source: Bankmed 2014, 2

When asked about the quality of education and challenges towards enhancing capacity, all of my informants identified the qualifications of the teaching staff as an obstacle. Specifically, these concerns relate to the varying levels of education teachers have in the public sector. For primary and secondary levels of education, in both public and private sectors, approximately 40 000 or 48% of teachers hold a Bachelor's degree, 6% hold a Master's degree and only 1% have a PhD; the rest hold non-university degrees (Bankmed 2014, 15). According to MEHE, as many as 54,5% of all public school teachers have not acquired a university degree (MEHE 2011, 8). The reason why so many teachers do not hold a university degree, and have attained varying levels of education, is due to the absence of necessary systems and laws to ensure the recruitment of qualified teachers (MEHE 2011, 8). Traditionally, teachers have been recruited

from teaching colleges, but in 1985 began a process of hiring contractual teachers after a short period of training. By 2002 the recruitment process was loosened up further, making teaching at the elementary level accessible to persons holding any type of university degree (LAES 2006, 15). Thus, the lack of government supervision coupled with limited investment to assess and train teachers has resulted in an inefficient development of the system and sizable portion of under-qualified personnel (Blominvest Bank 2014, 4).

Another challenge is that there is no performance-based incentive system in the public sector (Kawar and Tzannatos 2013, 9). In other words, there are no mechanisms to encourage educators to perform at the height of their ability. There is no system in place to hold teachers accountable for weak performance or poor results (AUB and Hariri Foundation 2009, 22). Due to these factors, there is a shortage of specialized teachers for certain subjects in the public sector and regional discrepancies in the recruitment of qualified teachers (MEHE 2011, 8). Within the public school sector, it is estimated that as much as 71% of the workforce consists of tenured teachers, whereas the remaining 29% are teachers hired on a contractual basis (Kawar and Tzannatos 2013, 9). In this context, it is important to note that contracted teachers especially, have been instrumental in meeting the increased demand for public education following the Syrian influx, in both first and second shifts (World Bank 2013, 77, MEHE and UNICEF 2014, 25).

According to several informants, as contractual teachers are hired on a temporary basis, many do not have the right or relevant qualifications. This is especially the case considering that refugee children will be in need of specialized instruction to assimilate into the education system. Three of my informants recognized one critical limitation as being a general lack of pedagogical skills as well as psychosocial-support, which may be crucial in providing education for traumatized refugees.[78] This relates to other educators as well, including those providing non-formal education outside of public schools, which are also in need of training to handle larger classes and how to provide refugee children with necessary support, i.e. foreign languages (MEHE and UNICEF 2014, 25).

Several respondents also pointed to the fact that the same teachers are often employed to teach both the first and the second shifts. When teachers have already delivered a full day of work during the first shift, they may be tired by the start of the second shift. As discussed in the descriptive analysis, this has impacted the duration of school days, especially in the

[78] Interviews, NGO 2 & 3 and UN representative 1

afternoon shift. According to three of my informants there is evidence from field surveys indicating that some schools, with a significant enrolment of refugees, are focusing less on instruction in English and French. This is also more considerable for the afternoon shift (MEHE and UNICEF 2014, 22, World Bank 2013, 78). The overburdening of teachers has thus impacted the quality of education, whereby Syrian refugees may be receiving a lower version of the national curriculum.

Respondents also indicated that teachers may be resorting to "negative coping mechanisms" like corporal punishment in classrooms. The practice may be illegal, but its application was considered widespread already prior to the crisis (Hamdan 2013, 11). As one informant put it, violence and discrimination is a "habit for them [the teachers], they do this also with Lebanese children."[79] The widespread use of corporal punishment is identified as a hurdle for enhancing the level of Syrian enrolment, but one that may also impact the quality of education being provided.[80] What is reported is that Syrian refugees have been subject to considerable bullying and mistreatment within public schools. This has taken the form of verbal abuse, neglect and physical violence from teachers as well as from Lebanese students.[81] With teachers feeling overburdened by student numbers, the level of bullying and violence is likely to become exacerbated.

This may be fueled by the perception among Lebanese communities that Syrian enrolment has negatively impacted the quality of education being provided, or that refugees have been prioritized at the expense of nationals.[82] This may be especially severe in volatile areas such as Akkar, Tripoli and Arsal (on the Syrian border), where Syrian refugees are seen to be making the community unsafe.[83] According to a UNICEF report from 2012, the frequency of violence in classrooms stood at 70% for Syrian students interviewed (MEHE and UNICEF 2014, 22). The majority of informants identified corporal punishment and violence in classrooms as a push-out factor for Syrians enrolled in public schools. There are indications that refugees have opted to drop out in favor of non-formal alternatives, outside the public sector. Negative coping mechanisms may suggest that educators are unable to handle the pressures stemming from the large presence of Syrian children.[84] Pressure on educators will

[79] Interviews, NGO 2 & 5 and UN representative 1
[80] Interviews, NGO 4 & 5 and UN representative 1
[81] Interviews, NGO 2 & 5 and UN representative 2
[82] Interviews, NGO 2 & 5 and UN representative 3
[83] Interview, UN representative 1
[84] Interviews, NGO 2 & 5

likely limit the potential for Syrian enrolment, but also negatively impact the quality of education for those that have enrolled.

According to one informant, there is no need to hire more teachers, because Lebanon has a student-teacher ratio of approximately 15 children per teacher, which is average and relatively good.[85] Other sources place the public sector ratio between 7 or 9 students per teacher. Discrepancies are likely the product of regional differences (AUB and Hariri Foundation 2009, 22, Bankmed 2014, 15). Especially now with overcrowding of classrooms in areas dense with refugees, it is reported that for some public schools the student teacher ratio has become 25-30 students per teacher.[86] As discussed under SL1, schools in urban centres have been more prone to overcrowding in comparison with rural areas, where classrooms may be at capacity or under-capacity (AUB and Hariri Foundation 2009, 22). The pressure on educators will vary from community to community, but seems especially severe in areas where refugee populations are the most sizable.

In summary, there is an absence of necessary systems and laws to ensure the recruitment of qualified teachers. More than half of all public school teachers do not hold a university degree. In addition, there is no performance-based incentive system to encourage the performance of educators. As such, there is no system to hold teachers accountable for results. These are all problems that existed within the public school system prior to the influx of refugees. The majority of teachers for the first and second shift have been hired on a contractual basis. As they are not permanent teachers, they may lack the appropriate qualifications. In addition, it is the same educators who will tend to teach both morning and afternoon shifts. The quality of education may therefore suffer as teachers are overworked and the duration of school days are being cut short for both shifts (see descriptive analysis). Informants placed importance on the negative coping mechanisms of teachers. There is indication that bullying, corporal punishment and physical violence is rife in classrooms, but is also emanating from Lebanese peers. As stated by informants, negative coping mechanisms may attest to educators being overburdened and could indicate an inability to absorb more refugee children. This may be the case especially for schools operating with the two-shift system. When teachers are overworked this has been shown to impact the quality of education that students may be receiving. As such, SL3 has relevance to explain both why the level of

[85] Interview, UN representative 2
[86] Interview, NGO 5 & UN representative 1

access and the quality of education is limited. I now move on to identify political limits as explanatory factors for the two components of the research question.

5.2.2 Political limits

Having identified structural limits, I move on to the second part of the explanatory analysis: political limits. Political limits may be defined as the constraints stemming from government decisions and policy. I argue that such limits may work to limit the level of Syrian enrolment in public schools, but also affect the quality of education directly or indirectly. In chapter three, I presented the different explanatory factors that will constitute political limits. To begin with, I examine sectarian structures in the education system (PL1) and how this may impact the process of enrolling more refugees. Secondly, I examine circulars issued by MEHE. This aspect is important because circulars convey MEHE policy (PL2) on how Syrian refugees may enrol in public schools. Finally I examine the "ownership of the education response" (PL3) as another explanatory factor for why Syrian refugee access to education may be limited, but also how this may affect the quality of the education provided.

5.2.2.1 Sectarian structures in the educational system (PL1)

This explanatory factor focuses on how sectarianism within the educational system may work to limit the potential for Syrian enrolment into formal education. Like most aspects of the Lebanese state, the provision of education is subject to sectarian division and friction, (c.f. chapter four). Since the end of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), bureaucratic positions in state institutions have largely been allocated on the basis of sectarian considerations (UNDP 2009, 72). Although article 95 of the Lebanese constitution upholds the primacy of allocation based on competence, bureaucratic posts are divided with sectarian consideration, to maintain the fragile status quo (UNDP 2009, 72). This system is a source of tension, where sectarian leaders seek to enhance their power, attain more privileges and control more institutions of the state (Al-Habbal 2011, 23).

Sectarian tensions may work to paralyze or constrain the public sector provision of education (UNDP 2009, 72). Although schools are characterized as not having a specific confessional identity, employees and students are representative of the community in which the school is located (UNICEF 2011, 36). Politicians offer education services and scholarships to their respective sectarian groups or hire teachers and administrative personnel in different schools as part of this clientelist system (Al-Habbal 2011). As such, it is not uncommon to find

sectarian consideration in the appointment of deans or school directors within higher or general education (Preston 2013, 32). As discussed in the background chapter, the civil war in Syria has further exacerbated sectarian divisions within Lebanon.[87] Domestic actors are divided over the conflict in Syria as well as developments in the wider region (see chapter 4). There is a political stalemate in the Lebanese cabinet and the government is weak (Yacoubian 2014, 3). In addition, politicians have been unable to agree on a consensus candidate for the presidency, a position that has been vacant since May 2014.[88] As a result, state institutions have become paralyzed or ineffective. With these challenges in mind, the government of Lebanon is in a weak position to respond effectively to the refugee influx.[89] Representatives from all different confessions are represented in government, but due to sharpened divisions, it will often be difficult to reach consensus on decisions relating to refugees; a divisive area in itself (Crisp et al. 2013, 12, Herbert 2013, 4).

Sectarian structure of MEHE

Several informants identified the sectarian nature of MEHE as a factor constraining the level of access to education for Syrian refugees. They stated that MEHE is subject to the same political fragmentation that is evident in the rest of Lebanese society. Several informants emphasized that it is important to be wary of the high level of political tension within the ministry itself.[90] As elaborated by one informant, the Minister of Education, the General Director and the staff employed at the ministry are all of opposing political views, further complicating the decision-making process relating to refugees and education.[91] In this context, several respondents indicated that the appointment of a new Minister of Education could change the education response considerably. When a new minister comes in with new personnel, it has resulted in a re-negotiation of agreements or understandings formed with the previous minister.[92] As pointed out by two respondents, the level of Syrian enrolment may be subject to change with the appointment of a new minister. In other words, the level of enrolment may either increase or decrease considerably as a result.[93] According to one informant, this had been the case prior to the formulation of the government-led RACE

[87] Interview, UN representative 1
[88] Interviews, UN representatives 2 & 3
[89] Interviews, NGO 1 & 3 and UN representative 2
[90] Interviews, NGO 5 and UN representatives 1 & 2
[91] Interview, NGO 5
[92] Interviews, NGO 3 & 5 and UN representative 1
[93] Interviews, NGO 3 & UN representative 1

initiative, which has now come to constitute a strategic vision for providing Syrian refugees with education.[94] This will be discussed in greater detail for the next explanatory factor, PL3.

Balancing pressures from external and internal actors

According to one informant, as politicians within MEHE are beholden to constituents and their sensitivities, this could impact the level of Syrian enrolment.[95] For instance, if voters are vocal in their opposition to Syrian enrolment in public schools these politicians must tread a fine line. On the one hand, politicians must be seen as complying with international standards for refugees, but must also not be seen as giving Syrians too much.[96] It was indicated to be a balancing act, whereby MEHE seeks to reassure UNHCR, UNICEF and other donors, but at the same time remain sensitive to popular opinion.[97] Concerning the latter, there has been a degree of high-level political statements against the presence of Syrian refugees. As one informant indicated, politicians may appeal to populist rhetoric to appease the growing antipathy towards the Syrian predicament.[98] Another informant drew a parallel to the harsh rhetoric used against Palestinian refugees and how Syrian refugees have become subject to the same.[99] The ministry is recognized as being in a difficult situation. As one informant put it:

> […] People are saying: "we don't want Syrians settling. They [MEHE] have to be very careful about their message and opening up the education systems for Syrians. So they'll have their opinion for the international community saying, "we're the good guys, we're opening up our schools to Syrians, and then they say to Lebanese, we're not encouraging Syrians to stay.[100]

In this context, several informants identified that there is a degree of miscommunication stemming from the ministry. For instance, when you consult with various people at the ministry about Syrian enrolment, they are saying different and sometimes contradictory things.[101] This could indicate a lack of cohesion within the corridors of MEHE. As such, reaching a consensus on decisions may be a complicated or time-consuming process. One respondent said that many education programs have been delayed due to the requirement of

[94] Interview, UN representative 1
[95] Interview, NGO 5
[96] Interview, NGO 5
[97] Interview, UN representative 1
[98] Interview, NGO 5
[99] Interview, NGO 3
[100] Interview, NGO 5
[101] Interviews, NGO 3 & 5 and UN representative 2

government/MEHE recognition, which is negative in the context of a humanitarian crisis.[102] In addition, two informants commented that humanitarian agencies have to operate carefully as a lot of decisions may be a lot more politically charged in the Lebanese context.[103] This may include everything from the type of contracts given to Syrian volunteers, which areas humanitarian actors operate in, but also which terminology is used to describe Syrian settlement (i.e. what constitutes an informal settlement?).[104] According to one informant, "to violate or cross government policies, even inadvertently, can reflect whether a programme is successful or whether we open ourselves up to huge fines from the ministry."[105] According to two informants, this necessitates in-depth risk assessments for even the smallest operations, creating a challenging climate to work in.[106]

In summary, informants identified that the sectarian nature of MEHE is a factor, which may impact the level of Syrian access to formal education in the public sector. As the distribution of bureaucratic positions in state institutions is subject to sectarian consideration, directly or indirectly, this means that there are different political agendas represented within the ministry. This may work to paralyze the efficient functioning of public sector provision, especially in periods of friction. As sectarian divisions have been sharpened with the Syrian crisis, as well as events in the wider region, efforts to respond effectively with education for Syrian refugees in Lebanon may be further complicated. As was indicated by informants, different people within the ministry have been prone to saying different or contradictory things relating to Syrian refugees. As such there is a degree of miscommunication stemming from MEHE. In addition whenever a new Minister of Education has been appointed, it has resulted in a "re-negotiation" of previous understanding, whereby the planned level of Syrian enrolment may be subject to a considerable increase or reduction. In any event, the sectarian fragmentation within MEHE is making the decision-making process difficult and time-consuming, despite being in the midst of a humanitarian crisis. This explanatory factor has the most relevance to explain the "level of access", as MEHE governs the education system and is the instance in which limits are set or agreed upon. It could also work to impact the "quality of education", where intransigence from the ministry has resulted in education programmes being delayed

[102] Interview, UN representative 1
[103] Interviews, NGO 5 & UN representative 2
[104] Interview, NGO 5
[105] Interview, NGO 5
[106] Interviews, NGO 5 & UN representative 2

pending approval. Now I move on to consider MEHE policy as another explanatory factor to answer my research question.

5.2.2.2 MEHE policy (PL2)

Since 2011, the enrolment of Syrian refugees into public formal education has been based on circulars issued by the ministry. As discussed in chapter three, a circular is a letter of instruction that is distributed among relevant parties. In this context, circulars inform school directors how and when Syrian refugees may be allowed to enrol into the education system. Thus, circulars define the mechanisms for access.[107] They apply for the totality of the public school system in Lebanon. When circulars are issued by MEHE, they are passed down from regional bureaus to the local school level. The majority of informants identified that since 2013-2014, circulars issued by MEHE have increasingly sought to constrain or control the level of Syrian enrolment in public schools. This applies specifically for the morning shift, which constitutes the normal running system.[108] As indicated by respondents, this process of bottlenecking access may be a response to the magnitude of the refugee influx, which began in 2013.

From January 2013 till January 2014, the number of refugees registered with UNHCR rose from an estimated 165 000 to 850 000. This does not include a sizable number of unregistered refugees (ILO 2013, 12). The scale of the influx caught both donors and the Lebanese government by surprise.[109] It did not take long before the number of out-of-school children from Syria surpassed 500 000; twice the number of students enrolled in public education for 2011-2012.[110] As an informant put it:

> The problem was that we were not expecting huge numbers and you start having problems in the schools. Because some of our schools were 70% or 80% Syrians, and the Lebanese started dropping out from the schools – so we started having problems in the level of teaching. We were working on reinforcing the public school system prior to the crisis, but it went backward instead of stepping forward.[111]

Several informants recognized that the growing enrolment of Syrian refugees had overburdened public schools, whereby Lebanese children began dropping out. In addition

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[107] Interviews, NGO 3 & UN representative 1
[108] Interviews, NGO 1,2,3,4 & 5 and UN representatives 1,2 & 3
[109] Interviews, NGO 1 and UN representatives 1 & 3
[110] Interviews, NGO 4 and UN representative 2
[111] Interview, UN representative 3

there was evidence that the overall quality of education had been negatively impacted.[112] In response to the dropout of Lebanese students, MEHE moved to tighten the mechanisms for access. This could be seen as a move to protect the national character of the education system. As such, circulars issued from 2013-2014 onwards have been designed to ensure that Syrian children are not being enrolled in public schools at the expense of nationals.[113] At this point it is important to reiterate, as discussed in chapter two, that information on MEHE circulars stems primarily from informant interviews. When asked about circulars and the potential for Syrian enrolment, all of my informants identified the same policies and conditions as being the most important in constraining the level of access.

One circular issued by MEHE, states that there shall be no more than a 20% increase of Syrian children compared with the level of enrolment from the year before.[114] This applies specifically for the morning shift, or the normal running school system. The potential for Syrian enrolment is constrained in that the level of access is curbed. In addition, several informants said that government circulars build on one another. In other words, there may be several circulars that may work to constrain access simultaneously.[115] In January 2014 MEHE issued another circular, which states that the enrolment of Syrian refugees should not exceed a 50/50 parity with Lebanese children in each classroom.[116] Schools were thus instructed to enroll Syrian refugees, but on the condition that these specific instructions were followed by school directors.[117] Again this condition for access impacts the potential for Syrian enrolment in the morning shift, where the provision of education is characterized as being of higher quality. According to one informant:

> So if you have five Lebanese in this school, you must accommodate only five Syrians. It is the recent circular from MEHE, so our biggest problem is to absorb the largest number of Syrian children, which is not encouraged by MEHE. I can say for education, the new decisions of MEHE are having a negative effect and it is not helping.[118]

Although there was indication that MEHE would absorb 100 000 Syrian children into the first shift for the 2014-2015 school year, as mentioned by several informants, this move is not uniformly positive. The conditions of 1) no more than 20% increase of Syrians from the year

[112] Interviews, NGO 2 & 5 and UN representatives 1 & 2
[113] Interviews, UN representatives 1 & 3
[114] Interviews, NGO 2 & 5 and UN representative 2
[115] Interviews, NGO 2 & 5 and UN representative 2
[116] Interviews, NGO 1 & 5 and UN representatives 1,2 & 3
[117] Interviews, NGO 1 & 3
[118] Interview, NGO 2

before, and 2) no more than 50% Syrian students in the classrooms work to limit the level of Syrian enrolment altogether.[119] The fact that the level of Lebanese enrolment was lower in the 2013-2014 school year also had implications for Syrian enrolment. If the number of Lebanese students in public schools is lower, it consequently reduces the potential for Syrian enrolment in that the 50/50 parity between nationals and foreigners becomes smaller.[120] As one informant put it,

> Lebanese authorities are smart in the regard that they would prefer an immediate departure of Syrian refugees, but are pressured by donors and the international community to refrain from saying as much. But authorities are proficient in building up the framework around access to minimize the inclusion of Syrian refugees.[121]

According to several informants, there were also other conditions set by MEHE that may limit or bottleneck the potential for access. For instance, if a Syrian child is to be enrolled into the first shift, he or she should have been enrolled for the previous year also. In addition, children who will be enrolled into the first shift should be siblings of children already enrolled in the first shift.[122] Another condition set by MEHE was that in order to enrol in the first shift, Syrian children should be registered as refugees with UNHCR.[123] Two respondents stated that there is also a condition that regulates access in accordance with the duration of time that refugees have been in the country. As such, new arrivals are not prioritized for public school enrolment.[124] At the time of research it was still to early to say if, and how, school directors had followed these circulars, in part due to the time-consuming administrative process of gathering information from schools.[125]

A slow process of enrolment

As discussed under SL2, the slow process of enrolment has caused the duration of the academic semester to be cut short. Now I present the political dimension to explain why this is the case. It is difficult to draw a clear distinction between structural and political limits, as we see in this case. SL2 and PL2 are intertwined in explaining the slowness of the enrolment process and how this is limiting the quality of education for Syrian children in public schools.

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[119] Interviews, NGO 5 and UN representatives 1 & 2
[120] Interviews, NGO 5 and UN representatives 1 & 2
[121] Interview, UN representative 2
[122] Interviews, NGO 2 & 5 and UN representative 1
[123] Interview, UN representative 1
[124] Interviews, NGO 4 & 5
[125] Interviews, NGO 3 & UN representative 2

In this context, informants indicated that the new system of prioritized enrolment was having a negative effect on the quality of education.

The process of enrolling children in waves was first introduced for the 2014-2015 school year.[126] MEHE issued circulars instructing schools to prioritize the enrolment of Lebanese children first and foremost. A second circular was then issued to facilitate the enrolment of Syrian children residing in Lebanon prior to the crisis, in addition to other foreigners.[127] According to one informant, this was followed by a third circular, which instructed schools to begin enrolling Syrians for the secondary level of education, but that number of students would likely remain limited.[128] Then finally a circular was issued to facilitate the enrolment of Syrian refugees having entered the country after 2011. According to one informant,

> […] Only recently did they [the MEHE] issue the circular for the Syrians to integrate and the closing date was the first of November. So the school year is running, we're still registering the Syrians and there is still talk about the ministry opening the second shift. So that's a major challenge in terms of what these children are actually going to learn within the remaining time period of this school year.[129]

For Lebanese students, the school year started in October 2014 whereas the enrolment of Syrian refugees was still ongoing.[130] As such, some children will have had a delayed access to education, whereby the national curriculum becomes condensed due to the time constraints of the semester. Syrian refugees enrolled in the first shift may be disadvantaged vis-à-vis Lebanese peers in that they start later and may risk falling behind. At the time of research, all of my informants indicated that MEHE had not yet authorized the second shift for 2014-2015. In fact, it did not commence until January 2015. Syrian children enrolled for the afternoon shift have therefore lost 2-3 months of the academic semester.[131] According to one informant, it is understandable that a sovereign state will choose to prioritize its own citizens, but the slow process of enrolment is having a negative impact on the quality of education that Syrians may receive, especially for the children enrolled in second shifts.[132]

In summary, MEHE policy has been conveyed through circulars, which are issued to facilitate Syrian enrolment into public schools, but also to constrain or control the mechanisms for

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[126] Interview, UN representative 3
[127] Interviews, 1, 2, 4 & 5 and UN representatives 1, 2 & 3
[128] Interview, NGO 4
[129] Interview, NGO 3
[130] Interviews, NGO 1 & 5
[131] Interviews, NGO 5 & UN representative 1
[132] Interview, NGO 5

access. This must be seen in light of the overburdening of the education system, where the enrolment of nationals may have suffered due to the number of refugee children enrolled in public sector education. As such, circulars issued from 2013-2014 have sought to ensure that Syrian enrolment is not happening at the expense of nationals – especially for the first shift. As mentioned by informants, circulars have worked to delineate the potential for Syrian enrolment in that there shall be no more than a 20% increase of Syrians from previous years and no more than 50% of Syrians vis-à-vis Lebanese students in classrooms. In addition, there are other conditions placed on the enrolment of refugees into the first shift, the normal running system. In sum, these circulars work to bottleneck or limit the level of Syrian enrolment. The introduction of prioritized enrolment is identified as a factor that negatively affects the quality of education that Syrian refugees may receive. Syrian refugees are enrolled last. The practical implication is that refugees are losing considerable amounts of the academic semester, especially those enrolled in the second shift. This will adversely impact the quality of education that is ultimately accessed. In sum, PL2 has relevance to answer both components of the research question, why the level of access and quality of education is limited for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Now I move on to examine P3, "ownership of the education response", which constitutes the last explanatory factor for political limits.

5.2.2.3 Ownership of the education response (PL3)

Several respondents indicated that another factor constraining access to education was a "tug-of-war" between MEHE and UN agencies over leadership of the education response. What started as a primarily humanitarian effort is now moving towards a more government-led response. In seeking to assert its authority, MEHE has taken steps to tighten the operative freedom of UN agencies and NGOs. I start with an examination of the relationship between MEHE, UN agencies and the NGOs involved in the education response. The primary focus of this section is to assess the involvement of humanitarian actors in both formal and informal education settings and how operations may be subject to restrictions from MEHE. I start by examining restrictions in regards to the public school system. As will be argued for, these restrictions may have a negative impact on efforts to enhance the level access and the quality of education that is provided in public schools. Then I examine restrictions on the provision of non-formal education as a means to facilitate access into formal education. Towards the end I briefly discuss the RACE proposal by MEHE, which aims to absorb more Syrian children into formal, but especially non-formal education by 2016.

Coordinating the education response

Normally in humanitarian emergencies, there is a cluster system whereby UN agencies and NGOs co-lead the response.[133] In Lebanon, it is the *Education Working Group* (EWG) that is coordinating the response.[134] The EWG is hosted at the ministry and chaired by UNHCR/UNICEF in cooperation with MEHE. It functions as a decision-making body, which also includes representatives from the NGOs involved in provision of education.[135] Two informants indicated that MEHE had not been fully committed to active participation in this working group.[136] The majority of respondents identified that a significant challenge has been a lack of clarity over who is actually in charge of the education response. As one informant put it, “Who is the boss? Is it the UN agencies or the ministry? It should be the ministry, but the ministry doesn’t have the means to be the boss.”[137]

Concerning the relationship between MEHE and UN agencies, it was indicated that the latter had been very straightforward with the ministry and sought to involve them in everything related to education for Syrian refugees.[138] Towards this end, UN agencies and international donors have been instrumental in advocating for the right of Syrian children to access education. UN agencies have thus been pressuring the government and MEHE publicly, but also diplomatically in ways that are less visible.[139] As a result, there has been a degree of friction whereby the relationship between MEHE and the UN has to be “massaged” constantly at the highest levels.[140] This could substantiate the claim by Sommers (2004, 26) that humanitarian efforts may infringe on state sovereignty to the ire of local authorities. In this context, one informant stated that “we upset each other constantly, you know the government took too long to do this and well, you did this without our authorization.”[141]

The majority of NGOs also indicated that the working relationship with MEHE is challenging. One obstacle is that the relationship with MEHE is very much “gate-kept” by the UN. In other words, it is difficult for NGOs to get direct access to ministry officials. However, this is also related to politics whereby ministry officials may insist on speaking

[133] Interviews, NGO 2 & 3 and UN representatives 1 & 2
[134] Interviews, NGO 4 and UN representatives 2 & 3
[135] Interviews, NGO 3, 4 & 5 and UN representative 2
[136] Interviews, NGO 3 & 4
[137] Interview, NGO 4
[138] Interview, UN representative 3
[139] Interviews, NGO 4 and UN representatives 1 & 2
[140] Interviews, NGO 4 & 5 and UN representative 1
[141] Interview, UN representative 1

with UN agencies only.[142] As such there is no NGO involvement at the senior level of coordination, which is perceived as negative since NGOs are involved in the direct provision of education.[143] As one informant put it:

> We are the ones who are with the refugees, we are the ones who know what the real challenges are – because we are there implementing, but we are not able to draw from these lessons because we are not being heard at the other side.[144]

Informants recognized that the education response is currently undergoing a process of transition where it is moving from a completely humanitarian emergency to a more government-led response.[145] As one informant commented, this type of transition does not generally tend to be a smooth process.[146] In addition, there is a lot of misunderstanding between each side in terms of needs and objectives, and what their concerns and priorities are.[147] In seeking to assert its authority and control, MEHE has sought to constrain or restrict the operative freedom of UN agencies and NGOs in the provision of both formal and non-formal education.

NGOs versus MEHE

According to several informants, recent changes enacted by MEHE have had a negative impact on NGOs operating with UNHCR/UNICEF in Lebanon. For one, MEHE has decided that UN agencies may only use *one* NGO for the provision of basic formal education.[148] Previously, UNHCR/UNICEF have employed *five* NGOs to help children access public schools and to do outreach and monitoring.[149] Monitoring is here understood as the ability to observe and influence the delivery of education over a period of time.[150] When asked why these changes had been implemented now, several informants said it was a dual issue of economics and the ministry seeking to "control" the education response.[151]

[142] Interviews, NGO 2, 4 & 5
[143] Interview, NGO 5
[144] Interview, NGO 3
[145] Interviews, NGO 3 and UN representatives 1 & 3
[146] Interview, NGO 5
[147] Interviews, NGO 1, 3 & 5 and UN representative 2
[148] Interview, UN representative 2
[149] Interview, NGO 5
[150] Interview, NGO 2 & 3
[151] Interviews, NGO 2, 4 & 5 and UN representatives 1 & 2

One informant suggested that MEHE is treating the humanitarian process not just as an emergency response, but also as an economic opportunity.[152] "[…] A lot of foreigners are recruited to work with the crisis and the ministry is seeing all these funds going to foreign NGOs."[153] There are indications that MEHE is showing a preference for the use of local NGOs, which is also a means to enhance ministry control and oversight.[154] One informant said that MEHE had discovered some NGOs with financial problems tied to corruption or fraud, and had used this as a pretext to justify their intransigence towards collaborating with NGOs.[155]

Restrictions on formal education

A significant restriction identified by the majority of respondents, is that the ministry does not allow for external actors to enter schools to do monitoring.[156] One informant said the following:

> […] The Government has said these are our schools and we don't want NGOs monitoring our schools. So it's like you're paying for something, but how do you monitor the quality? We can't even check to make sure the teachers are actually there. We don't know the attendance of these kids so that's a challenge. We enrol them and after that we don't know what happens.[157]

As was indicated, it is unclear whether it is a component of national law, but UN agencies and foreign NGOs are not allowed to enter public school classrooms. However, as one informant stated: "If we have good relations with school directors, they might allows us to count the students."[158] On the other hand, as stated by respondent "[…] we don't have authority to go inside public schools and to say, in this classroom we have only ten, you can accommodate 15 more. We don't have this authority, we cannot do this."[159] As such there are curbs on the potential for external interference in the national education system. One implication is that humanitarian actors have limited ability to gather information for strategic planning and to make operations more effective.[160] This was identified as factor that negatively impact the

[152] Interview, NGO 5
[153] Interviews, NGO 5 & UN representative 2
[154] Interview, UN representative 2
[155] Interview, UN representative 2
[156] Interviews, NGO 1,2,3,4 & 5 and UN representatives 1 & 2
[157] Interview, UN representative 1
[158] Interview, NGO 5
[159] Interview, NGO 2
[160] Interviews, NGO 2, 3 & 5

"level of access", because efforts to augment the enrolment of Syrian children is effectively constrained by these restrictions.[161]

Another component of restriction is that NGOs are limited in the type of teacher support they are allowed to provide. As confirmed by three informants, NGOs should not be involved in anything that has to do with teacher training or pedagogy, but should be limited to things like positive discipline and issues of safeguarding refugee children.[162] Similar restrictions also apply to the type of training that may be given to staff at the ministry.[163] The training of teachers and administrative personnel is the prerogative of MEHE and there is reluctance to allow for any external encroachment.[164]UN agencies and NGOs are therefore limited in providing support that could potentially benefit the quality of education and the ability of teachers to handle larger classes. The inability to do monitoring inside public schools, coupled with restrictions on training programs, prevents humanitarian actors from assessing or contributing positively the quality of education that is being provided in public schools.[165]

In addition, MEHE has made it clear that NGOs should not be employing teachers from Syria. In education programmes run by NGOs, Syrian teachers may be hired as volunteers or classroom assistants.[166] As one informant mentioned, "In some cases you have a Syrian volunteer who's a qualified teacher and a Lebanese teacher who just has a degree in non-related subjects, so it's all politics."[167] Syrian teachers may only be allowed to work in informal tented settlements, outside the formal education setting. Drawing on previous experience one informant said that:

> Unlike South Sudan, where the ministry [of education] was so happy to get imported Ugandan and Kenyan teachers and wants to help, here they use all political means to say "no thank you", and the other way around.[168]

As was stated by one respondent, MEHE has been very reticent to acknowledge that there are also needs outside the sphere of formal education.[169]

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[161] Interviews, NGO 3 & 4 and UN representatives 1 & 2
[162] Interviews, NGO 2 & 5 and UN representative 1
[163] Interview, NGO 5
[164] Interview, NGO 3
[165] Interviews, NGO 1,2,3 & 5
[166] Interviews, NGO 2 & 4
[167] Interview, NGO 5
[168] Interview, UN representative 2
[169] Interview, NGO 5

Restrictions on non-formal education

As mentioned in chapter three, non-formal education is provided outside the formal school setting. It is a provision to cater for immediate needs, but is also instrumental towards retaining and facilitating Syrian refugees into the formal education system. Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALPs) have been identified as being especially important in this regard.[170] On the other hand, it is recognized that there is little coordination between schools in the formal and non-formal spheres. As such, this makes it difficult for NGOs to link non-formal programmes with public schools in seeking to transition Syrian children into formal education (Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 62–63). Several informants identified that this constituted a factor, which may constrain the "level of access" to education for Syrian refugees. In part this is due to the centralized authority of MEHE over the public school system, but also from a lack of formal accreditation and agreement on the characteristics of the non-formal education being provided.[171] In especially marginalized areas, non-formal alternatives may constitute the sole provision of education for Syrian refugees and have become permanent due to a lack of opportunity in the public sector.[172] All respondents mentioned that MEHE does not accept any parallel system of service delivery, which the provision of non-formal education may well constitute due to a lack of involvement from the ministry.

MEHE is refusing to recognize any provision of education that is not the national curriculum of Lebanon. In providing for immediate needs, NGOs may not always follow a particular curriculum, least of all the Lebanese one, but have been prone to improvisation according to the context (Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 57). Since the start of the crisis, NGOs have been instrumental in providing education in community and informal settings. As one informant put it, "when they [MEHE] saw we were working in these settings, they were saying this has nothing to do with us, just carry on doing it."[173] Several informants indicated the ministry will now be saying that there should not be education in non-formal settings on the one hand, but also saying that if it is non-formal education we do not want to know.[174]

[170] Interviews, NGO 3 & 5

[171] Interview, NGO 3

[172] Interviews, NGO 3 & 5 and UN representatives 1 & 2

[173] Interview, NGO 5

[174] Interviews, NGO 3 & 5 and UN representative 2

Two informants said that MEHE and the government of Lebanon have become more focused on non-formal education, but lack the capacity to monitor and control this provision.[175]

The ministry has been working on standardizing non-formal education programmes. At the time of research, the standardization of ALPs were under development and had not been disseminated among relevant parties.[176] Considering the duration and severity of the crisis so far, it may indicate that the process of standardization has been slow. One informant characterized this as a "power game", where the ministry is attempting to exert control over the education being provided outside the formal setting.[177] As such, MEHE is resistant to acknowledge NGO schools and education offered in non-formal settings, due to the lack of government approved guidelines, oversight and quality control (Shuayb, Makkouk and Tuttunji 2014, 63). As one informant put it, "we are doing ALPs, we're doing early childhood education, but there is a question mark on the approach because in Lebanon there are no clear guidelines."[178] Another informant commented that:

> There might be ministers at the top one week saying all non-formal schools are illegal, which the ministry actually said, that's not been followed up by any circulars, directives or anything; but it puts all our staff on tender hooks – it's a very insecure operating environment because of that.[179]

According to respondents, these are considered challenges in moving towards a more government-led response. The RACE plan, formulated by MEHE and UNICEF, is the strategic vision that aims to provide 435 000 children with education by the end of 2016.[180] For one, this number includes other foreigners and marginalized Lebanese children. Secondly, the public sector will not be expected to absorb all of these children and many will enrol for non-formal education.[181] Informants recognized however, that RACE is still a sketch without proper implementation mechanisms. As such, the certification of non-formal education and how and where it may be delivered are issues that have been difficult to resolve.[182] Humanitarian actors are thus operating within an uncertain environment that is not conducive to help Syrian children transition into formal education. Neither is this benefitting children

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[175] Interviews, UN representatives 1 & 3
[176] Interview, UN representative 2
[177] Interview, NGO 4
[178] Interview, NGO 4
[179] Interview, NGO 5
[180] Interviews, UN representative 1 & 2
[181] Interviews, NGO 5 & UN representative 3
[182] Interview, UN representative 3

enrolled in public schools where non-formal education is a crucial support structure for retention.

In sum, this explanatory factor has the most relevance for the level of access component of the research question, but is also relevant for the quality of education being provided. I reiterate here that this factor was based on a hypothesis that the lack of clear leadership over the education response may inhibit an efficient response. Respondents indicated that the working relationship with MEHE was complicated, especially now that humanitarian efforts are moving towards a more government-led response. According to informants, this type of transition will entail significant challenges. With MEHE seeking to enhance its oversight and control, the operative environment has become more restricted for UN agencies and international NGOs. In terms of public schools, there should no external interference or monitoring inside classrooms. Humanitarian actors are therefore constrained in their ability to gather information, conduct strategic planning and improve the efficiency of operations. As such efforts to augment the level of access for refugees is negatively impacted. In addition, there are restrictions on the type of training and support programmes that may be offered to teachers and personnel at the ministry. There should be no interference with training programmes offered by MEHE. As a result, schools are not benefitting from programmes that could improve the quality of education or the ability of teachers to handle larger classes. As such, there is little ability to assess or positively influence the quality of education being provided. Another factor limiting the level of access is the lack of established connections between public schools and non-formal education programmes. There is no orderly system to facilitate the transition of Syrian children into formal education. In part, this is due to a lack of accreditation or agreement on the characteristics of the non-formal education being provided. Intransigence and restrictions on non-formal education have created an uncertain operating environment for NGOs, which is not conducive for a provision that aims to prepare children to access formal education and support them once enrolled.

6 Conclusion

In this thesis I have examined the enrolment of Syrian refugees into Lebanon's public school system. Due to the numerical magnitude of children in need, the public school system is unable to provide the majority of refugees with access to formal education. I have sought to identify structural and political limits that directly or indirectly contribute to further bottlenecking the enrolment of Syrian refugees. The aim has been to answer the following research question: *Why is access to quality, formal education limited for Syrian refugees in Lebanon?* I have also sought to answer the following sub questions: (i) What are structural limits? (ii) What are political limits? As argued throughout the thesis, a combination of structural and political factors explains why the level of access to public schools is limited and why the quality of education that can be received is limited.

Descriptive analysis

Before discussing explanations, I provided a **descriptive analysis** to validate the two claims that shape the premise for the research question: (1) The level of access to public schools is limited for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, and (2) the quality of education is limited for the refugees who manage to enrol in public schools.

With regards to the first premise, the large share of out-of-school children show that the access is limited. By the end of 2015, it is estimated that there will be 700 000 Syrian children in need of education. For more than half a million of these children, access to formal education *will not* be available. For the 2014-2015 school year, respondents indicated that there would be a total of 157 000 children absorbed in public schools.[183] Considering that the public sector encompassed 275 000 students prior to the crisis, this represents an enormous increase in the total number of students being catered to. As such it is a testament to the generosity of the people of Lebanon towards its neighbours in need.

The second claim of the research question was that once enrolled, Syrian refugees have been receiving a quality of education that may be characterized as being limited. The empirical evidence to support this claim was largely based on informant interviews. As indicated by respondents and a review of available capacity mappings, schools have been prone to overcrowding in urbanized areas where refugee populations are most dense. For rural areas,

[183] This number includes marginalized Lebanese children and non-Syrian refugees

overcrowding is identified as being less of a problem. To augment capacities, the two-shift system was introduced for schools in crowded areas for the 2013-2014 school year. I have assessed the quality of education on the basis of examining the first versus the second shift. The morning shift constitutes the normal running system, where Syrian refugees are enrolled alongside Lebanese students. The afternoon shift on the other hand, constitutes a provision that is accessed exclusively by Syrian refugees. One the one hand, this has allowed more Syrian children to enrol, but has been indicated to negatively impact the quality of education that is being delivered for both shifts. The introduction of the two-shift system has a positive effect on the *level of access*, but a negative effect on the *quality of education* that can be received. Data indicates that the duration of academic semesters and school days have been cut short, especially for the afternoon shift. Respondents indicated that a lesser version of the national curriculum was offered in the second shift than the one offered in the normal running system. According to the operationalization of quality applied in this analysis, this diminishes the quality of education Syrian refugees can receive. Respondents indicated that this could represent a parallel structure of service delivery whereby Syrian children in the afternoon shift are be receiving a lesser provision than the national standard.

Explanatory analysis

On the basis of informant interviews and literature reviews I have identified a number of factors that can explain why the level of access and the quality of education is limited. I have divided these explanatory factors into three *structural limits* and three *political limits*. I will now summarize which relevance each explanatory factor has had for answering the research question.

Under SL1, *capacity in schools*, I examined whether the limited level of access for Syrian refugees could be accredited to a lack of capacity in public schools. The analysis showed that the level of access for Syrian refugees seemed more contingent on lack of sufficient funds (from the government, UNHCR/UNICEF and donors) than on lack of available capacity. Based on informant interviews and available capacity mappings, I discovered that, the issue of capacity varies across regions. Overall, data indicate that there should be available capacity in the public school system. While Lebanon has an almost equal number of private and public schools, the latter catered for only for 29% of Lebanese students prior to the refugee influx. These proportions indicate that the public school system was running at a low capacity, and one would expect that there would be space to enrol more students. However, lack of capacity

seems to be a restrictive factor in urban areas where refugee settlement is most dense. Here schools are more prone to reach their capacity limit or become overcrowded. On the other hand, there may be more capacity in schools in rural areas. Although schools have more capacity in some areas, many families are unwilling to let their children travel to schools outside their immediate area of settlement, due to safety concerns. Furthermore, the rehabilitation of schools has been important to enhance capacity, but may be restricted by the ownership status of school buildings and the willingness of donors to commit funds.

The *centralized education system & the process of enrolment* (explanatory factor SL2) was shown to be of primary importance for explaining both for the level of access and the quality of education, as was indicated clearly by informants. The public school system is centralized under the authority of MEHE, which is shown to constrain the response at the local level. Informants have indicated that school directors have been refusing the enrolment of Syrian refugees based on a lack of clearly formulated instructions from MEHE. In part this is due to uncertainty over funding. At the start of the crisis, humanitarian actors paid school fees for Syrian refugees directly to the public schools. Now MEHE has requested that all funds should be passing through the ministry to the local level. As a result there is indication that school directors may be refusing to enrol Syrian children due to a lack of clarity over how these funds will be received. One significant research finding was that the inefficient (manual, non-computerized) enrolment process makes it difficult to handle a larger amount of students, which may thus limit the potential for access. In addition, the time consuming nature of this process means that Syrian children may be starting schools later and will thus receive education of a shorter duration than the national standard. For Children who do not possess the necessary documentation, they may enrol but are subject to placement tests based on the Lebanese curriculum. This has resulted in some children being placed far below their previous academic achievements. In addition, not having required documents may result in children not being able to sit for official exams at the end of the intermediate level.

Under SL3, I explored whether *pressure on educators* constituted a limit for the level of access as well as the quality of education. One research finding, as indicated by informants, is that the teaching staff may not be properly qualified to teach refugee children. More than half of all public school teachers do not hold a university degree. Many public school teachers, but especially those hired on a contractual basis do not have proper training in catering to refugees or handling a larger number of students. One important finding was that contractual teachers have been instrumental in providing education in the morning and afternoon shifts

and that it is usually the same educators that teach both. Teachers have therefore been overworked especially where the two-shift system has been implemented. Not only does this indicate that the education system may be limited in its ability to absorb a larger share of out-of-school children from Syria, but also that the quality is negatively affected. According to informants, the duration of schools days are shorter for both shifts as a result of teachers being overworked. In addition, there is a high frequency of bullying and negative coping mechanisms such as corporal punishment being employed in classrooms. My findings indicate that the pressure on teachers is most considerable within the two-shift system, where a large number of refugees have able to enrol.

Under PL1, *the sectarian nature of MEHE*, I argued that polarization within the ministry constitutes a limit for the level of access for Syrian refugees to public formal education. Bureaucratic positions in state institutions are subject to distribution based on sectarian considerations. As such, there are different political agendas represented within the ministry. The ministry is thus reflective of the larger sectarian divisions, which have become sharpened by the conflict in Syria and developments in the wider region. As discovered based on informant interviews, this may work to paralyze the efficient functioning of public sector provisions, including education. There is a considerable degree of miscommunication stemming from the ministry, where officials are saying different or contradictory things. This indicates that there is a lack of unity within MEHE towards the education response. In addition, things are subject to change with the arrival of a new minister. My findings indicate that this may have a considerable impact on the level of access for Syrian refugees. The number of children that may be enrolled becomes subject to an increase or a significant reduction. In any event, the sectarian polarization within MEHE is recognized as having a negative effect by making the decision-making process and the implementation of education programmes slow.

Under PL2 I argued that *MEHE policy* constitutes one of the *most* important factors, alongside SL2, for explaining both why the level of access is limited and why the quality of education is limited. Considering that everything is politicized in Lebanon, it is problematic to separate structural and political limits. PL2 is therefore closely linked with SL2 (*the centralized education system & the process of enrolment)*. PL2 sheds light on the political dimensions that dictate the process of enrolment, which may directly or indirectly impact the quality of education that can be received. MEHE policy has been conveyed through circulars,

which instruct school directors on how and when Syrian refugees may be enrolled into public schools. In light of the intensification of the refugee influx during the course of 2013, MEHE policy has increasingly sought to constrain or control the level of access for Syrian refugees. MEHE circulars define a framework that seeks to minimize the presence of Syrian refugees, especially in the normal running system. For one, there shall be no more than a 20% increase of Syrians compared with the year before and no more than 50% of Syrians vis-à-vis Lebanese students in classrooms. There are also other policies that bottleneck the potential for Syrian enrolment in the morning shift. The introduction of "enrolment in waves", where refugee children are enrolled after the rest of the populace, has shown to negatively impact the quality of education for refugees enrolling in the public school system. Refugee children have not been able to start the school year until very late, effectively losing several months of education. For those enrolled in the first shift, this puts them at significant disadvantage vis-à-vis Lebanese peers and for those enrolled in the afternoon shift, this works to further diminish a form of education that was already condensed vis-à-vis the standard of the national curriculum.

Under PL3 I argued that the *ownership of the education response* is another factor for why the level of access and the quality of education is limited for Syrian refugees. This factor was based on a hypothesis that the lack of clear leadership over the response may work to constrain efforts to provide access to quality education. The education response is currently moving from a response led by humanitarian organizations, to a more government-led response. This transition has been challenging for the working relationship between MEHE, UN agencies and NGOs. The result has been an increasingly restrictive operating environment for humanitarian actors, whereby MEHE is seeking to enhance its control and oversight over the response. In terms of public sector education, UN agencies and NGOs have long been restricted from entering public school classrooms. MEHE does not accept any form of external monitoring inside public schools. The implication is that it becomes difficult to gather information that is crucial for strategic planning, which constrains the efficiency of the response to provide more children with education. In addition, humanitarian actors are restricted in the type of teacher training they can provide, which should not interfere with provision by MEHE. As such, humanitarian actors have limited ability to supplement the training of teachers, which could offer valuable support to educators and contribute positively to the quality of education being provided. Respondents also indicated that government intransigence on non-formal education has created an uncertain operating environment for

NGOs, which is not conducive for a provision that aims to prepare children to access formal education and support them once enrolled. On that note, it was also discovered that there is little linkage between non-formal and formal schools in Lebanon. This means that there is no orderly system to facilitate Syrian children from the non-formal programmes into formal education in public schools. In part, this is due to the centralized nature of the public school system and the lack of accreditation or agreement on the characteristics of the non-formal education being provided.

Here it is important to reiterate that this thesis does not constitute a full evaluation of the education system or the humanitarian response. For one, my research findings are based on a relatively small sample of informants. Secondly, the thesis does not take into consideration the opinions and perspectives of MEHE or the government of Lebanon. The conclusions that I have arrived at in this thesis do not represent infallible empirical evidence. With this study, I have aimed to shed light on aspects of the humanitarian crisis that have been less systematically examined previously. As such, this research represents an important contribution to the field of education in emergencies and specifically the provision of education in out-of-camp refugee crises.

The future trajectory of the education response is outlined in the RACE strategy, developed by MEHE and UNICEF, which is the strategic vision of the government-led response. By the end of 2016 the goal will be to reach 435 000 children with education. The plan recognizes that there is a need to strengthen public sector capacities and the linkages between non-formal education programmes to help facilitate Syrian access into public schools. Nonetheless a majority of these children will likely be accessing non-formal education alternatives, which should be accredited by national authorities. This provision of non-formal education is recognized as having the greatest potential to provide education for children whose needs are currently unmet. In addition, the private sector is recognized as being an "untapped" alternative for absorbing refugee children into formal education. Although the response to provide refugees with education is moving in the right direction, it remains to be seen whether Lebanon can resist becoming engulfed by the civil war next door.

7 Literature

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Appendix 1 List of respondents

Number	Date	Name	Location
1	30.10.2014	UN representative 1	Beirut, Lebanon
2	01.11.2014	UN representative 2	Beirut, Lebanon
3	03.11.204	NGO 3	Beirut, Lebanon
4	06.11.2014	NGO 2	Beirut, Lebanon
5	10.11.2014	NGO 3	Beirut, Lebanon
6	11.11.2014	UN representative 3	Beirut, Lebanon
7	12.11.2014	NGO 1	Beirut, Lebanon
8	13.11.2014	NGO 5	Beirut, Lebanon

Appendix 2 Letter of confirmation for informants

UiO : Faculty of Humanities
Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages

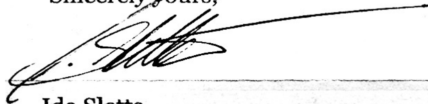
To whom it may concern

Date: 23 October 2014

Confirmation

The University of Oslo, Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages, hereby confirms that Mr Christopher L. Brekke, born on 30. January 1985, is enrolled in the 2 years MA programme in Asian and African studies, programme option Middle East and North Africa studies.

Sincerely yours,



Ida Sletta
Senior executive officer

Email: ida.sletta@ikos.uio.no

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO
Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages
P.A. Munchs hus
P.b. 1010 Blindern
N-0315 Oslo

Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages
Mail addr.:P.O.Box 1010 Blindern, N-0315 OSLO
Visiting addr.: P.A. Munchs building, Niels Henrik Abels vei 36, N-0371 Oslo

Telephone: +47 22 85 59 43
Telefax: +47 22 85 48 28
henvendelser@ikos.uio.no
http://www.hf.uio.no/ikos/english
Org.nr.: 971 035 854

Appendix 3 Interview guides

Opening statements – for all interviews

- I introduced myself and presented the focus of my research.
- Secondly, respondents were asked to approve the use of a recording device. Informants were guaranteed complete anonymity and that the recorded data would be deleted following the completion of the project.
- Following the completion of an interview, informants were asked whether he/she would be willing to answer follow-up questions by e-mail.

Interview guide 1: Representatives of Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

Topic 1: Out of camp, urbanized refugee crisis

1) Lebanon has given preference to the local integration of refugees, as opposed to formal camps. What lessons, from other urban refugee crises, have influenced the education response in Lebanon?

2) How is the case of Lebanon unique in terms of responding to an urbanized refugee crisis?

3) Does local integration, as opposed to camps, carry with it a distinct set of challenges in providing access to formal education? If so, is it possible to generalize?

Topic 2: The enrolment of Syrian refugees

4) Has the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) set a ceiling in terms of how many Syrian refugees the public school system can be expected to absorb?

5) Pressure on Lebanon's institutions and public services: how is this most visible in the sphere of education?

6) What have been the greatest challenges towards enhancing public school capacity for the 2013-2014 school year?

7) How will Syrian refugees be enrolled into the public school system for the 2014/2015 school year? And where will additional space be created?

8) To provide necessary access, Lebanon must double its public school capacity, but how may this affect the national character of the education system in the longer run?

Topic 3: Challenges in coordinating the response

9) What have been challenges in forming and coordinating the education response with the UN agencies and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE)?

Topic 4: Transition to a government led response

10) From providing immediate humanitarian needs to resilience-based development strategies. What is the role of XXXX in resilience/capacity strengthening of public sector education?

11) Today, the humanitarian response in Lebanon is moving towards a government-led response. What have been challenges in this regard?

Interview guide 2: United Nations (UN) representatives

Topic 1: Out of camp, urbanized refugee crisis

1) Lebanon has given preference to local integration of refugees, as opposed to formal camps. What lessons, from other urban refugee crises, have influenced the education response in Lebanon?

2) How is the case of Lebanon unique in terms of responding to refugee crises in an urbanized context?

3) Does local integration, as opposed to camps, carry with it a distinct set of challenges in providing access to formal education? If so, is it possible to generalize?

4) In dealing with urban refugee crises, what are typical considerations that must be taken into account for an effective humanitarian response?

5) The regional response plan 6 (RRP6) – signals a shift from immediate humanitarian provisions to resilience-based development strategies. Why is this important in responding to the Lebanon's urbanized refugee crisis?

Topic 2: The enrolment of Syrian refugees

6) Has the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) set a ceiling in terms of how many Syrian refugees the public school system can be expected to absorb?

7) What have been the greatest challenges towards enhancing the capacity of the public school system in the 2013-2014 school year?

8) How will Syrian refugees be enrolled into the public school system for the 2014 – 2015 school year? And where will additional space be created?

9) Second shifts in Lebanese public schools – could the expansion of the second shift risk becoming a sort-of parallel system, dominated by Syrian refugee children?

Topic 3: Challenges in coordinating the response

10) In responding to the crisis, what sort of estimate does you operate with in terms of the duration of Syrian displacement in Lebanon?

11) What documents/programmes are the most important for coordinating the overall response to the refugee crisis in Lebanon?

12) What have been challenges in forming and coordinating the education response with NGOs the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE)?

13) Today, the humanitarian response in Lebanon is moving towards a government-led response. What have been challenges in this regard?