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HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION
OPPORTUNITIES & PERSPECTIVES
FOR SYRIANS

The Educational Challenge: Identifying Barriers and Seizing Opportunities in Higher Education for Syrian Refugees in Jordan. Policy Recommendations and Future Strategies

(Primary Results)

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Background

The Syrian crisis started in 2011 and has lasted to date, which had consequences that affected Jordan socially and economically. In addition, at the same time, it has left many negative consequences on millions of Syrians, which, in turn, has forced most of them to emigrate to neighboring countries (Jordan, Turkey, and Iraq). According to the Census Bureau of year 2015, Jordan hosts 1.3 million Syrians, where 600,000 of them are registered at the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). It was found that 10% of them live in camps that were built for them while the remaining live in urban areas as well as in suburbs.

The Syrian crisis could be one of the most complicated and long-term issues which the Kingdom of Jordan has faced over the last few decades. Whether it was the inevitable human, social, economic, and environmental cost, or the direct effect on the country's capability to maintain its development gains, sustain its economic reforms and adaptation programs, and challenge its capability to respond to possible future crises.

Stemming from Jordan's commitment towards the refugees and immigration issues, the government of Jordan has always pursued an equal, and sometimes granted even better, treatment for the Syrian refugees to get the minimum level of living status until they are able to return to their original country or until they migrate. That includes education, health care, and public services. However, a lengthy crisis has reached with Jordan's capacity to saturation, where it became empty of any adaptation capabilities.

Over the last seven years, Jordan has over-carried heavy burdens represented in accepting the Syrian refugees and providing them with support on behalf of the international community. Jordan has play a principal role in relieving the human, social, and political effects of the crisis and has offered a warm and safe haven for them.

The Municipality of Amman hosts the majority of the refugees, followed by Mafraq, Irbid, and Zarqa. The Syrian refugee's influx to Jordan has made it the country with the biggest percentage

of refugees worldwide, relative to population. At the time of writing this report, Jordan hosts 2.8 million registered refugees at the UNRWA and the UNHCR.

The case of Jordan is special because it represents a case of severe exhaustion for a country of its size. The importance of the Syrian cause is assured by the fact that the majority of the Syrian refugees hosted in Jordan at the youth. Estimations pointed out that 20% of all male Syrian

refugees and 18% of all female Syrian refugees are at ages between 15 and 24 years old, knowing that the a large part of them (28%) are teenagers between the age of 5 and 14 years old.

Estimations also shows that 89% of the youth between the age of 19 and 24 do not participate in any kind of education or training (UNICEF, 2015). In addition, according the Ministry of Higher Education in Jordan, there are 15,944 Syrian students enrolled officially in the Jordanian university for the academic year of 2016 – 2017. Two-third of them (10,665) are registered in private universities, while there are 5,279 students in public universities (Ministry of Higher Education, 2017); where this study comes to understand the investment in opportunity and the burden facing the Syrian students in Jordan.

Study Objectives and Goals

This project aims at providing a comprehensive knowledge about the Syrian refugees in the Jordanian universities, and at analyzing the current state of the Syrian refugees registered at the higher education institutes in Jordan. In addition to search in the main issues, which the students face in further education, and the main challenges that had faced them or that might face them in the future.

The primary analysis shows that there are difference as well as compatibilities in the way the Syrian students are treated and in the procedures of their enrollment in the higher education system in Jordan.

This study will answer the following:

1. The educational, economical, and social features of the Syrian students at Jordan's private and public universities.
2. The issues related to the enrollment process at the Jordanian higher education institutes.

3. The Syrian students perspective and opinion at the education system in the Jordanian universities.
4. The reasons behind enrollments in higher education and the challenges facing the Syrian students.
5. The nature of problems the Syrian students face in the Jordanian universities.
6. A look to the future and assessment for immigration options.

The Study Methodology:

In order to achieve the main goals of the study, multiple methodologies are used (quantitative and qualitative), where the quantitative approach is composed of a survey that targets the Syrian students in the Jordanian universities while the qualitative approach is directed towards focused workgroups and insightful interviews that involved academic individuals in the higher education field and administration individuals at local and international organizations; in addition to decision-makers and subject-matter experts. As follows:

1. Social survey questionnaire, by enrolling a survey to a representative sample of the Syrian students in private and public universities.
2. Insightful interviews with a group of academic individuals and administration staff to understand their opinion in the field of research.
3. Workgroups from the targeted segments, and as follows:
 - a. Workgroup with Syrian students in their universities and in the central and north governorates to understand the opportunities and challenges they face at the daily university life.
 - b. Workgroup with representative from local and international organizations to understand their perspectives on the Syrian students at universities and donors.
 - c. Workgroup with policy-makers and representatives from public and private universities to understand the followed procedures in registering Syrian students at universities: the required documents, the security approvals, and the offered university programs.

The Study population:

The study community is composed from the Syrian students at Jordan's private and public universities, in addition to administrators and professors from these universities. When the numbers of enrolled Syrian students, as listed at the universities records, were compared with the numbers monitored by the Ministry of Higher Education, differences were found. The following table shows the number of Syrian students registered at the universities and in the Ministry of Higher Education.

The Study Sample:

To achieve the goals of the study, represented by measuring the opinion of the Syrian students about specific topics related to the higher education in Jordan, a sample of 1,675 female and male students was taken from 18 public and private universities (6 public universities and 12 private universities). The sample is distributed as follows:

Table (1): Sample Distribution Classified by Type of University and Sex of Respondents

	Number		Total
	Males	Females	
Public Universities	237	270	507
Private Universities	677	491	1168
Total	914	761	1675
Scientific	697	440	1137
Humanities	217	320	537
Total	914	761	1675

The Study's Main Findings:

- Ø The main reason behind the enrollment of the Syrian students at higher education is to get a better career in future, and then self-knowledge formation came. This was clear in the focused workgroups, where the students has asserted their ambition to stand in face of hard conditions to further their education and to develop themselves and their life experiences.
- Ø The majority of the students has chosen their specialization of study based on their personal orientation and well, where they believe that the specialization they have picked satisfy their future ambition.
- Ø The challenges the Syrian students face when submitting their registration forms are summarized in: certify their original Syrian school certificates, acquire the required documents from Syria, that is in addition to acquiring the required security approvals—which the Refugees Affairs Department has made easy in recent years.
- Ø The majority of the students (75%) cover their university expenses through their families or personally through work, while there were also donor who have participated in the study expenses of 25% of the students (international organizations, donors, European organizations, and others).
- Ø Almost half the students face challenges in covering their study expenses (tuition and other expenses), and they have covered these expenses through loans and long-term cheques. Some have gotten financial support from relatives, friends, and families, and

through working or working extra hours. Eight percent of the students were forced to delay some semesters at their universities, while the study shows that 5% of the students have not overcome the challenges related to study expenses to date.

Ø The majority of the students have assured that the university expenses are very high when they are compared to the public free education at Syrian universities. In addition to the bad financial and living conditions of students in Jordan which becomes an additional burden on them and on their families.

Ø The social media platforms are the main source of information for the university grants offered to the Syrian students, followed by the official websites of the donors, and finally, the families and friends and relatives in the third place as the source of information on university grants. It is worth mentioning here that most of the advertisements were published in English, which is not the largely language of use at universities and schools in Syria; which was another challenge to them.

Ø The Syrian students at the Jordanian universities feel an equal treatment from their professors. Most of those students are satisfied about the performance of the registration departments at their designated universities and are satisfied about the performance or the administration staff in dealing with them.

Ø The specialization at universities requires knowing a second language, non-Arabic language, which became a burden for 42% in some or in most of the cases. The different curriculum and instruction language, compared to the Syrian universities, is one of the main academic challenges the Syrian students face. That has pushed many of them to enroll in English language courses, and continuously, in order to overcome this burden.

Ø Training on social and communication skills in campuses was not a topic of concern to most of the students, where only 24% of them participated in workshops. Ironically, the students face challenges in being accepted at practical training, which is considered a prerequisite to graduation at the scientific colleges. Results show hardship in admitting those students and especially those of medical specialization majors.

Ø Integration of the Syrian students and merge with the student's community was one of the main issues this study focuses on. Results show that the interaction of the Syrian students with their Jordanian counterparts was higher than the interaction of the Syrian students with their Syrian counterparts. It is worth mentioning here the feeling of the Syrian students of a different look from their Jordanian counterparts—as stated by one-fourth of the surveyed sample.

Ø Most of the students assured a good relation with the student's community at their designated campuses, and expressed a satisfaction on the way they are being treated by students as well as by administrators. Results also show that there is a mutual interaction from the Syrian students in campuses activities. On the other side, a group of students has expressed their dissatisfaction about prohibiting the Syrian students from participating in students elections.

Ø The students solve their problems with other students personally. They talk with their universities officials if they fail. While the students go to their universities official directly if they face any issue with their professors or administrators. The absence of a special mechanism to receive students complains and to provide guidance accordingly has pushed the students to go to their friends or to their universities officials—which is an additional overhead on universities.

Ø The future of the Syrian students in Jordan is connected with multiple factors that push them to think from various perspectives, most importantly: continue higher education in Jordan, search for a job in Jordan, continue higher education abroad, work in another Arab country, or go back to Syria and work there.

Ø The European countries are the main destination of immigration for the Syrian students in case they get an opportunity to migrate there, following that is the immigration to another Arab country aside from Jordan, and there are 38% of the Syrian students who do not think about migrating or living outside of Jordan.

Ø The prospects of future for most of the Syrian students are full of frustration, where they find it hard to find a job in Jordan in the light or the current economic environment. That pushes them to look forward to migrate outside of Jordan.