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SJIE6006 Global Perspectives on Education

Critically discuss barriers to engagement in education for children in one country. Take a global perspective and refer to local and global policies. Compare your findings to the situation for children in the UK.

Syria is an Arab country in Western Asia and is on the border of the Mediterranean Sea. It has many countries surrounding it, Turkey, Iraq and Jordan. (Guardian.com, 2015) This essay will explore the education provision of the country, the barriers the country faces, the reasons for these barriers and the country will be compared to UK in relation to the attainment and provision provided. 57 million children across the world do not have access to education, a third of this amount come from countries that are in conflict. The conflict that is happening in Syria has resulted in Syrian refugees not accessing education. (UNICEF, 2016). At the start of 2012 ninety nine percent of Syrian children were accessing education, this was at the start of the conflict. (UNESCO, 2015) `Today, nearly 250 million children are living in countries and areas affected by conflict. An untold number of children are now living in communities besieged by conflict and often cut off from enough humanitarian aid. And far too many children have been recruited, forced into, or otherwise used by armed groups` (UN.org, 2016)

Syria`s education system is under the same authority for all the country. Children can start their education in a preschool setting at the age of three until they are five, in 2012 only eleven percent of children accessed this compared to in the UK (UNESCOs, 2015). This is not compulsory education and it is a fee-based provision. In Wales all children from the age of three until they start school are entitled to free child care (BBC, 2018). The Goal by the Sustainable Development Agenda is that all children by 2030 will have access to early childhood provision that is of excellent quality in order to prepare them for their primary education. (UN.Org, 2015) Children start school at the age of five and follow a twelve-year education provision which

comprises of nine years of basic education followed by three years of secondary education. Following the secondary education, a higher education provision is offered through universities, higher institutes and technical institutes. (WES,2016).

Engaging children in their education is challenging as several factors can prevent this from happening. Providing an education to children gives them the opportunities to progress academically and socially. It gives them a chance to have a promising future away from poverty, conflict and discrimination. Compared to Syria, the UK has priorities through guidelines in Every child matters policy stating that all children need to attend and enjoy school to achieve the standards expected of them. (A chance for life, 2004). Before the Syrian crisis ninety seven percent of children attended school and in some areas of Syria since the crisis only thirty percent of children attend school. (UNICEF, 2013). Children need to be in education to be taught how to be a global citizen allowing them to learn skills that will enable them to access the rest of the world without confidently. Having a diverse approach to the world and understand themselves as having an important role as a citizen are some of the skills that need to be taught.

The civil war in Syria began in Syria in March 2011. Before this date many Syrian civilians complained about the high rates of unemployment, corruption of their country and they felt there was no freedom with regards to political issues whilst under President Bashar al- Assad. Demonstrations began in the southern city of Deraa in March 2011 resulting in the government using fatal methods in order to stop and prevent the protests from escalating or from happening again. The protests began throughout the world in support of the resignation of the president. These protests developed into a civil war resulting in approximately five thousand Syrian civilians leaving Syria and going to Lebanon which was the starting point of the refugee crisis. (Guardian.com, 2015)

Poverty is a leading factor into children not attending school for a variety of reasons. 66 million school children attend school hungry across the world and the goal by 2030 in the Sustainable development agenda is to end hunger and to ensure that all have access to safe and nutritious food all year round.(UN.Org, 2015) Wales offers a free breakfast club scheme to ensure that children have the opportunity to have a meal before starting their day in school. Syria's economic status has declined

drastically since the conflict started in 2011 by seventy percent (BBC, 2019). The impact the economy has had from the civil war has developed from high inflation, decrease of the Syrian pound and the decrease of production of domestic consumption resulting in an economic loss of twenty billion pounds. In comparison to the United Kingdom who falls in ninth place, Syria falls one hundred and tenth place in the world for gross domestic product. The war has resulted in approximately seventy percent of its civilians are in poverty (BBC,2019). Since the conflict Syrians have lost their jobs resulting in unemployment rates rising from 14.9% in 2011 to 57.4% in 2014 compared to the UK which has rates of 3.9% (Gov.UK, 2019). Over four out of five Syrians live in poverty resulting in families living in absolute poverty meaning families are not able to meet their basic needs to survive.

Maslow (1943) produced a theory of human motivation. He developed a classification system which showed the needs a human need to survive in society. There are five levels of needs that Maslow identified, with the hope that people can meet the top level of self-actualization which includes creativity, problem solving and morality. The bottom level of the triangle is a physiological need of air, food, sleep and water, with the level above being safety which involves an individual having an environment around them that provides security, health services, shelter and employment. The crisis in Syria has had a detrimental effect on Syrians as some are not even meeting the bottom level of the triangle and due to the conflict has resulted in destroyed shelters and buildings. (Learning theories.com, 2019)

Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, one in four schools in Syria have been destroyed, damaged or are being used as temporary shelters for civilians to live in or are being used as medical centres by aid agencies. Schools are being set up in temporary settings ranging from tents, temporary buildings and even in caves or underground. Children must rely on any resources that can be sourced from other countries or again from aid agencies. Some schooling is still taking place in schools that have been damaged from gunshot or missiles and children can be seen on news reports walking along corridors full of rubble, no glass in windows and holes in the walls from gunshots. Before the crisis education was important to the country but with the ongoing crisis the lack of funds, buildings and educators, education levels have fallen resulting in the children not having the opportunities they deserve to succeed. (Children of Syria, 2015)

The crisis has resulted in 3.33 million people leaving to go to other countries with an extra 1.55 million people leaving Syria in order to try to find employment in different countries. 6.8 million people have left their towns or villages in order to move to other parts of Syria which are at less risk of being destroyed. Many Syrians have moved to countries close by such as Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan. By doing this, most children have access to education, but this does come with its challenges. Language barriers and the difference in curriculums can be difficult for children to comprehend whilst they are already going through the trauma of living in a different country and having the psychological or physical effects of things they have witnessed back in Syria. In Lebanon over 69 percent of Syrian children remain out of school as there is not enough educational places for Lebanese children and Syrian. Whereas in Jordan where most of the refugees are children, they have had to adopt a system of splitting the school day, so some children get taught in the morning and the rest get taught in the afternoon. The children refugees in Iraq have not had the opportunities to access schooling at regular times, some not at all. The impact this has on children is harmful to their futures as it does not give them the skills in order to succeed in the future and to have the knowledge to be able to improve their future. The cost of attending school for Syrian refugees for books and transport cost can be a barrier as well as some families may need their child to work. In the UK primary school education is free and the governments have introduced free childcare for children age three and above and also low-income families can get support from the government for their childcare fees for under three-year olds. Children in the UK do not have to pay for the resources they need at school and transport costs are covered by the local government or children live within walking distance to their local school.(UN.Org, 2016)

The education of girls is more of an issue than for boys in Syrian refugee camps, resulting in 91% of girls were not in education that were between the ages of fifteen and eighteen. The education of girls has a vital impact on poverty and family, and the risk of early marriage and sexual exploitation is a much higher risk if the girl is not in education.(migration policy.org, 2015) Goal number five of the Sustainable Development Agenda promises to end all forms of discrimination against females, eliminate all forms of child, and forced marriage and to ensure that females have the

same rights as males when it comes to decisions in their economic and public life. (UN.Org, 2015)

Being a child Soldier is a barrier to a child accessing education. Children are taken into armed groups and are used as suicide bombers, front line soldiers and are used as human shields. These children are placed into government or terrorist organisations. They are encouraged to join due to poverty and often these organisations will target families and promise to pay well to recruit the child. Between 2015 and 2016 the amount of child soldiers in the civil war was 851 which was verified by the United Nations. (Borgen project, 2018) In 1924 the League of Nations developed the Declaration of Geneva, highlighting the rights of the child. It had five main principles which are all linked to a child's education but highlighted that any child that has been a child soldier needs to be reclaimed. (UWTSO, 2019)

The UNCRC was developed following the UN Declaration of the rights of the Child 1959. It was developed in 1989 and was made a legally binding document that all countries had to sign. It states that children all have human rights, and these are placed in fifty-four articles within the document. Article 28 and 29 focus directly on the rights that a child has to a quality education. The articles state that a child has the right to reach their full potential and their mental and physical abilities should be developed. The child needs to be given respect for their values, identity and their language and culture. The education system needs to develop the child's ability to succeed in society by being aware of different cultures, religions and origins. (UNICEF, no date)

A child's development is affected by their social relationship and the world around them. Ecological Systems Theory was developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner as his view was a child's development was determined by the world around them. He developed the theory by dividing a person's environment into five different sections. The first level of this theory was the microsystem. This system is the one that has the most contact with the child such as the home or the school, for Syrian children this is something they may not have had or if they had it may have been destroyed. It also includes the child's family and peers which again a child in Syria may not have had if family have been killed through conflict and as many Syrian children have now moved as refugees then they have lost their peers. This part of the theory is the most

influential to a child's development. The Exosystem is something that does not involve the child but still affects them. This is relatable to many Syrian children as often a parent is forced to go to other countries in order to find employment or is caught up in the conflict resulting in the child not seeing their parent causing their emotional development to suffer. The Macrosystem is the environment that the child lives and as many Syrian Children must leave their homes and enter new countries, this can have a negative effect on the child's development (Pound, 2006).

Article six of the UNCRC states all children has a right to life and it is the Governments role to ensure this in order for the child to survive and to develop to their full potential However on the 19th January 2019 the committee for the rights of the child looked at Syria and its implementation on the of the UNCRC. In the report it concluded that most of the victims of the civil war were children. It was noted that more than half of these deaths were due to Government attacks from the air. It stated in the report that had been torture and brutal treatment of children such as mutilation and death during detention. Water and fuel supplies had been disconnected and supplied of aid to areas had been denied. A response was heard from a representative that all these accusations were untruthful and there was not enough evidence to prove that this was the case. The use of Syrian schools for a military basis, all the attacks on schools resulting in death, injury or a derelict unsafe building, and also that 1.7 million children were not attending school were discussed an the response from the Syrian government was that there was no evidence of who performed the attacks. (Ochr.org, 2019)

The conflict in Syria is ongoing and when the end of it will be is unknown. Until that happens the way forward in helping children to gain the education they rightly deserve is through support from other countries and agencies. UNICEF works to protect Syrian children and it gives them the chance of a successful future. They base themselves in refugee camps ensuring that the children have food, water and healthcare. They also support them with education, psychological help and provide them with a happy safe environment where they can be children again. (UNICEF, 2019)

While agencies such as UNICEF, neighbouring countries and worldwide support help with basic needs, UNESCO works at helping to support the education of young children and aims to help children in crisis for children in Syria. One of UNESCO's programmes in the 2030 Agenda is the Capacity Development for Education. It aims to provide opportunities for children educationally and providing them with psychological support from the effects of the crisis. They work with the education sectors in order to ensure that children all get an education. It focuses on the skills of teachers and provides them with the necessary support n able to deliver an education that is relevant and that they can offer support psychologically to the children. A programme named the Second Chance Programme which is supported by the Capacity Development for Education programme was introduced in 2014. It offers children the opportunity to sit their exams again if they have previously failed allowing them to progress to the next stage. An aim of the programme is to support children who have missed out on vital parts of their education. It also offers psychological support which are designed to help children to recover from any trauma hey have encountered due to the conflict. These sessions which are play and sport related are taken by trained counsellors. Over 100,000 children have benefited from this programme with over half of this amount being girls. (UNESCO. Org, 2019).

The future of Syria is unknown. The children today of Syria are the future of the country. For a successful future for themselves and for their country an education is required in order to succeed and to be part of Syria's economic future. Without an education there is a strong likelihood that the people will depend more on the government for financial support and there will not be any skilled professionals in order to move Syria forward. Access to higher level education such as degrees are limited and the degrees that are available are not widely recognised.

Lebanon's government has taken a positive approach in order to take on the 1.5 million children refugees into their country and in order to be able to give these children a chance of success with an education then the country needs to change their education system but this will only be possible with extra funding from other

sources. Lebanon is under extreme financial burden from taking on the Syrian refugees which has resulted in other services such as health suffer. Aid from charities and agencies have been not been enough and they only received 62.5% of the promised Lebanon £1.87 billion promised through the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan. (Right to education, 2016)

Regardless of the efforts by neighbouring countries and their governments, aid and charity work, still too many Syrian children are out of Education. Regulations prevent them from having residency in the country that they are refugees in preventing them from gaining employment. Strict guidelines in enrolling their child in education is one factor that prevents Syrians from enrolling at a school alongside other reasons such as safety concerns, harassment from other students, no language support if taught in lessons with a different language to what they know. (UNESCO.Org,2019)

The most recent development to promote global development is the Sustainable Development Agenda which has seventeen goals to change the world by 2030. This includes ending poverty, quality education, gender equality and promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies. These goals will enable Syria and the children to hopefully build a successful future. (UNESCO.Org, 2019)

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