A comparison study: Different parties, different ideologies, different educational systems: The war and its effects on schooling in Syria

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Author's Declaration

I, the undersigned … Hiba abou khashabh …… hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-degree program, in English or in any other language.

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ABSTRACT:

The war in Syria had significant negative effects on the education sector. The quality of education has dropped dramatically, threatening Syria's political, economic and social future. The matter did not stop there, but education turned into a tool of conflict between the three dominant forces (the government, the opposition, and the Kurdish forces). All forces worked to ideologize education in accordance with their policy and vision, albeit to varying degrees. This thesis serves to conduct a comparative study of the educational situation in all three regions. The main research question that this thesis seeks to answer is: What is the impact of the different military forces on the educational system in the Syrian context in terms of quality and ideology in the different levels of schooling phases? To answer this question, I relied on a complex methodology, which used quantitative and qualitative tools, as well as secondary sourcing. Moreover, this study targeted three societal groups: children, parents, and key personalities. Despite the dark reality in the educational sector, this thesis developed a set of recommendations that help mitigate these negative effects.

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I am so grateful to my academic supervisor Kata Orosz for always being there and for the great support.

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My journey partner, the unknown soldier Sohaib, was the main engine of everything, and without him, I will do nothing.

My Zaidoun, whom I believe this will enlighten his path in the future.

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1. Introduction:

Syria is witnessing the tenth year of the war, which had destructive effects on all levels and sectors. The educational sector is one of the most affected in Syria (UNICEF 2015). This situation is due to four main reasons. The first one is related to the great collapse of the educational infrastructure and the loss of thousands of teachers. The second reason is associated with the fact that the educational sector turned into a battlefield, which the different conflicting parties use to spread their ideologies. The third reason is the absence of a stable and collective educational governance system, undermining Syria's follow-up, and evaluation processes. The last reason is the financial one, in which families are unable to bear the education costs. Therefore, many families do not consider education a priority (Citizens for Syria 2016; Maisonoya and West, 2016).

Here, it is important to mention that education is the main institution responsible for preparing citizens for the labour market, which shows the meaningful economic impact that education has. Moreover, another task of education is to make the person a good citizen, clarifying the political and social impact of education. Education is essential for preparing people to be good citizens. The person/citizen needs to be aware of his/her rights and duties. Additionally, it is vital to have a general framework that guides the individual's relationship with society and the state. The problem here lies in several points: how can we define the meaning of "good citizen"? Who is responsible for determining the regulatory framework? The problem increases in countries that have witnessed conflicts and civil wars, as is Syria's case.

These facts make us obliged to study the educational sector's state in Syria, considering each conflicting party's effects on the educational system. The impact of the

parties' interventions affects the educational process both in the short term and the long run. The attempt of dominant forces to ideologize children makes us expect the continuation of the conflict. In other words, dominant forces are using the educational system to consolidate the divisions in Syria.

The diversity of actors responsible for education means that the quality of education provided to Syrian children differs across areas controlled by different forces. The absence of a clear and specific educational governance system for all Syrian students in all regions means that the quality of education is linked only to the educational actor itself. This might lead to a different development level in the various Syrian regions, which makes us obliged to question the quality of education to understand what we should do to improve educational services (Hussain 2013).

To understand the effects of the low quality of education, studies in criminology have found a negative relationship between educational attainment and crime (Lochner, 2004, 2007). Studies in education have found that youth delinquent behaviour can be related to early childhood factors, therefore, can be reduced through well-designed early childhood education (Yoshikawa, 1995). Moreover, UNESCO emphasizes education's critical role in stabilizing society after conflict (Justino, 2014; Machel, 1996) (Machel, 1996). Concerning the Syrian crisis, UNICEF indicates that the number of children affected by the war is six million, of whom nearly 2,800,000 are displaced children, and two million children live in hard-to-reach areas, while 133,000 children are under siege in the eastern region of Aleppo. More than two million children are out of school in Syria, and more than 700,000 Syrian refugee children are not enrolled in any form of education in neighbouring countries (UNICEF 2011).

This thesis aims to answer the following question: **What is the impact of the different military forces on the educational system in the Syrian context in terms**

of quality and ideology in the different levels of schooling phases? To answer this question, I conducted a comparative study between three main areas 1.) Areas under the control of the Kurdish forces (SDF) (Al-Haska), 2.) Areas under the control of the opposition forces (FSA) (Idlep), and 3.) Areas under the control of the Syrian government (Daraa). These areas have been selected for two main reasons: 1.) They represent the three main political and geographical categories in the Syrian context, and 2.) These areas are rich in educational actors, which make them good case studies to understand the differences among the different regions in terms of education. The map below (fig. 1) shows the distribution of the dominant forces in
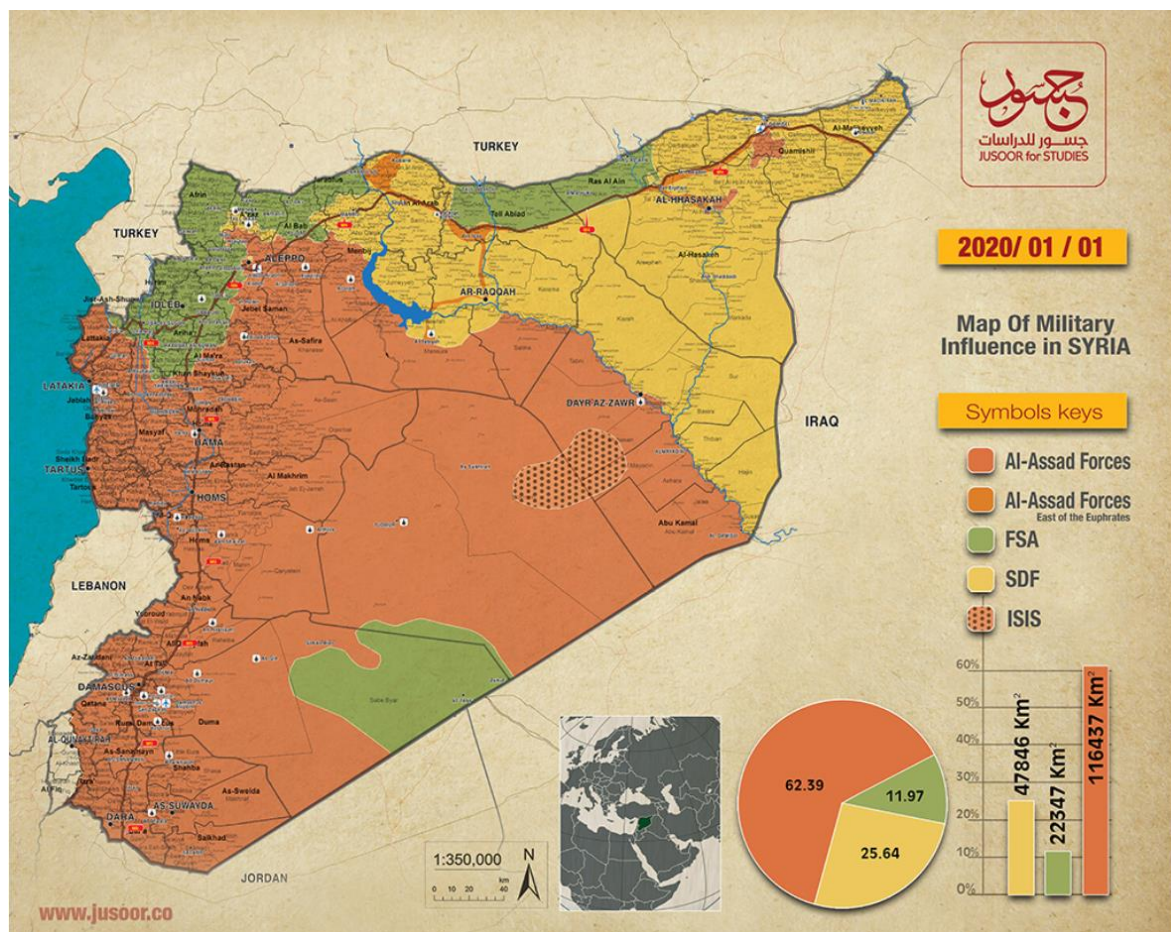
Syria.

Figure 1 Syrian Map Jousoor

This thesis focuses on the during a prolonged period of war to understand its effects on the quality of Syria's educational system, along with the roles of different parties on the educational systems with special attention at the ideology level. This thesis argues that the armed groups instrumentalize education to serve their agenda, which leads to different educational systems in different areas, leading to different perspectives on national identity.

This thesis argues that all conflicting forces seek to impose their political ideology through education, albeit to varying degrees. Both the Self-Administration (the forces responsible for managing the Kurdish regions) and the Syrian government are considered the most extreme in terms of curriculum ideologies. While education in opposition-controlled areas is the worst in terms of quality.

2. Literature review:

The purpose of this literature review is to know the impact of the conflict on education at the levels of quality and ideology. The relationship between education and crises is one of the topics that occupied an important place in the research. This occurs at different levels, whether at the level of reinforcing religious and national divisions/differences, through the reinforcement of violent masculine concepts, or establishing a culture of fear (Davis 2006). The attribution theory of conflict discuss education as a critical tool in producing conflict and crises. This theory argue that conflict/crisis results from a set of data/information about us (we) and others (them). Often the warring parties make the "us" sacred, and so attribute many positive traits to "us", while "they" are responsible for all problems and are often associated with a set of negative traits. "The other" is also linked to being dangerous to "us". This view argues that the conflicting parties reinforce polarization through a combination of tools such as

education, the media, and the social structures to spread this culture (Kimihi 2011). Accordingly, the ideology of education aims to consolidate the state of conflict. It aims to justify the failure of the authority's policies due to the external enemy (Al Nadi 2020). Many authoritarian regimes use the process of ideology and entrenchment of enemy theory as a tool to justify their failure to implement effective and just policies.

The literature is divided into two focus issues when explaining the role of education in reproducing conflict, namely, the quality of education and the ideology of education. Here I briefly review these two factors and how they perform the process of reproducing conflict. On the level of education quality, the literature discusses two main factors: economic and psychological. I begin by explaining the effect of the quality of education on the economic factor.

One of the most important educational goals is to prepare students for the job market by providing them with necessary expertise and skills. Indeed, the poor quality of Education will negatively affect their access to work and will lead to the emergence of an economic crisis (Davies 2005). Additionally, Poor quality of education negatively affects the economy but goes beyond it to be a cause of inadequate governance systems (*Bradbury 2019)*. Here, too, the failure of governance systems is one of the causes of conflict (Goodhand 2001).

Other researchers examine the psychological effects of low-quality educational practices that reinforce aggression in children. One of the points that researchers warn against is the presentation of students' examination results; the psychological impact of this condition on students is terrible as it makes them feel shy, especially considering the competitive atmosphere (Lai 2005). The effect of this practice is greater in countries such as Syria for two main reasons: First, the state of war and its destructive effects on the core significant and, secondly, the general social nature. To illustrate this, societies in Syria are

small and connected, in the sense that the process of spreading news takes place very quickly within the social milieu. This makes children subject to compare relatives and neighbors, which increases the pressure on them. This state of competition, combined with a state of war and a bad psychological situation, makes the child more theme for violence as a tool for confrontation (UN 2009) (Salah 2017).

Another example is related to the prevalence of corporal punishment of students in conflict areas. The idea of corporal punishment makes the child reconcile with the idea that violence is good, therefore, child becomes ready to be violent (Davis 2005). Poor education quality is dependent on many wrong practices that reinforce a culture of violence and extend to the educational a whole. The education system in conflict countries is based on hierarchy. The teacher is the leader who gives the information, while children are the pupils (the soldiers) who receive the information. This teaching mechanism weakens students' dialogue mechanisms and strengthens the command mechanism. The child becomes ready to accept ideas, not debate ideas. Irina Bokova, the Director-General of UNESCO, in 2015 said that "education must be more than transmitting information and knowledge, more than ever, we need a renewed commitment by all to dialogue, to tolerance, reconciliation and understanding.". Here I want to clarify how the flawed educational system contributes to the reproduction of conflict by making children passive recipients of information (Gigol 2019). If the education system does not provide the space to discuss, the students will not be able to change the reality. This problem raises questions about how teachers deal with students' questions related to the crisis. How do they answer? How do they present their analysis to students?

Authoritarian regimes use education to control students from childhood, to force citizens to be obedient to the policies of these regimes by molding generations into the educational curricula that are in line with their political vision and appropriate for their

continued rule. Historically, this approach has been observed in educational curricula in totalitarian, authoritarian countries, in the former Soviet Union, in China and North Korea, as well as in Syria, where education has become a tool for controlling social, cultural, political, and economic aspects (Al Mustafa 2020). Totalitarian regimes seek to exclude any ideas associated with democracy, effective citizenship, and civic activism, but at the same time, they reinforce the process of sanctifying the dominant power and the consolidation of patriarchal ideas (Bîrzéa 2019). According to Al-Kawkbi in his book, "The Natures of Tyranny," Education under tyranny becomes a hijacked tool for fixing the reality of oppression, justifying this reality, and reproducing it (Al-Kawkbi 1902).

According to a set of tools, the ideological process takes place, most notably through 1) the educational curricula, 2) when connecting students to extracurricular activities and 3) the educational mechanisms are used. An educational curriculum is a powerful tool in the ideological process to which students are subjected, so most authoritarian and totalitarian regimes work on reformulating all curricula in line with their vision and political identity (Halawa 2020). Although the authoritarian forces seek to bring about a sweeping change in the educational curricula, the nature of tyranny directs attention focused on some subjects more than others. If the forces are religious, then attention becomes focused on teaching religion, which many fundamentalist forces resort to. The rest of the subjects are linked to religion. For example, reading is taught according to religious texts. The same applies if the authoritarian forces are national. In this case, the authoritarian forces focus on their language while rejecting the languages of "the other(s)". In many countries of the Middle East with an Arab nature, English language education is considered weak. In return, authoritarian forces with a specific political orientation work by designing materials compatible with their political identity (Al Mustafa 2020) (Maaluly 2016).

Moreover, the process of ideologizing the educational curricula often correspond to the personality of the respective "hero" of the region, as highlighted by the interviewees of this research. This mechanism aims at two essential points: First, the hero's character is often associated with a personality of the prominent position of authoritarian powers, thus increasing students' ability to obey this hero and his/her orders. Second, this mechanism reinforces the idea of sacrifice among the students, thus, they are ready to serve the dominant forces. This is especially the case according to what they see in the process of immortalizing some personalities associated with these forces (Davis 2005).

Now I turn to the mechanisms used by totalitarian systems in educational systems. The process of ideology through the educational mechanisms can be summarized into two main factors, the first of which is the mechanism of intimidation/fear and the second is the mechanism of passive recipient. Fear is considered one of the most prominent tools of authoritarian regimes to impose their authority. Therefore, authoritarian regimes seek to establish a culture of fear in all fields, and the educational process is no exception. This is especially so because feelings of fear move very quickly in community circles (Käfer | February 2018).

There are a set of practices that educational systems adopt to instill fear. I mention, for example, the examination system that links the student's future to the results of a group of examinations within a short period. Besides, authoritarian regimes are tolerant of school beatings. These mechanisms create an early relationship between the child and the fear later cemented by another set of tools (Kokorin 2020). Another mechanism that aims to consolidate the process of ideology is the nature of the classroom environment. I referred earlier to this example, but now I want to present this mechanism as a tool for the student to become obedient. This mechanism makes the student obedient, for authoritarian regimes at a later stage. Moreover, this mechanism makes students unable

to penetrate the political system to understand it and achieve political changes since students merely receive information, not analyze it. Consequently, when the authoritarian authority implements a particular policy, the citizen is ready to accept it without understanding its negatives and positives. The absence of analytical mechanisms in education means the inability to criticize, and thus, students will not be able to develop new policies.

Authoritarian regimes often associate students with groups that are under their direct supervision. For example, students at the elementary level are linked to the "Vanguards of the Baath" organization. Here, it is worth noting that joining these organizations are mandatory. Additionally, students in the preparatory and secondary stages are linked to the "Revolutionary Youth Union" (Al Mustafa 2020). These organizations seek to complete control over the student's mind outside the school and make them tied to the ideological system that the tyrannical forces seek to establish. Often these parties carry out activities such as festivals related to special events of the ruling powers. It also prepares students to join the system of corruption, as students enrolled in these institutions often obtain privileges related to their ability to study majors that they cannot study without joining these institutions (Al Mustafa 2020) (Llbath-Ya-Talleaa movie 2020). In general, these institutions aim to implant the "Baath Party" values in the minds of children, to glorify former President Hafez al-Assad and his son Bashar to instill loyalty among these children since they entered school. There they memorize the sayings and slogans of the presidents, just as they learn to read and write, in a way that achieves brainwashing of children with the ideas and goals of the system, in order to ensure a blindly obedient generation (Massoud 2013).

After reviewing the literature on the role of quality education and ideology in reproducing conflict, I found a set of knowledge gaps that I seek to address in this thesis.

Indeed, the Syrian context has not been adequately studied due to the nature of the ongoing crisis. The contribution of this thesis could be summarized in three main points.

Most of the existing literature focuses on ideological education used by the conflicting forces after the end of the crisis. The victorious powers are monopolizing education and providing an educational system compatible with their agenda. Therefore, the process of ideology begins after the end of the conflict. The problem in Syrian case is that the process of ideology began during the conflict. This situation is problematic, especially considering the changing nature of the conflict. Syria's situation is also distinct in that there are at least three conflicting forces in the country. Every force seeks to justify/ideologize children according to its own agenda. But considering the changing military and political conditions, a change in the balance of power is expected, thus changing the geographical locations of control. Thus, how will students who have undergone a different ideological process will be able to harmonize with the new educational system imposed by the new dominant forces? Therefore, the comparison mechanism that I follow in this research will help us understand the most prominent differences and similarities between the various educational actors.

The second point that I noticed when reviewing the literature is that literature focuses on only one of the two factors in reproducing conflict: the focus is either on quality or on ideology. However, in this research, I study the two elements together, which helps us study the interaction of the two factors. For example, literature discussed the problem of the educational system based on indoctrination, not debate (Palmer 1957). This point takes two dimensions. The first is the weakness of educational quality, as this system is not compatible with the educational system based on the production of ideas, but at the same time, it is a mechanism of ideology. The lecturing process is a way to make the student a passive recipient to accept orders presented to him without discussion. Thus,

studying the factors together helps understand the mutual impact of the quality of education on the ideological process and vice versa.

The third point is that the literature discusses the process of ideology either with a broad or narrow perspective. To clarify this, literature either deals with national conflicts, for example, and explains the mechanism of ideology that these national forces subject to education, or it deals with the crisis in its general form and shows how the conflicting forces carry out ideological processes. This research conducts a comparative case study of three fundamental forces. These forces bear differences, whether national (Arab-Kurdish), religious (secular-religious), or political (opposition-loyalist). These doctrinal differences allow us to witness any differences in the ideological processes according to the difference in the conflicting ideology. In other words, are the processes of religious ideology like those of Nationalism at the level of mechanisms and interactions, or not? The same applies to processes of political ideology. Thus, I can say that the comparative model used considering the complex nature of the dispute gives the research an additional dimension.

3.Methodology/Empirical strategy:

What is the impact of the different military forces on the educational system in the Syrian context in terms of quality and ideology in the different schools' phases? Additionally, the thesis aims to answer the following sub-questions: What is educational infrastructure like in each of the three areas? What is the educational curriculum like in each of the three areas? How are teachers selected and trained in each of the three areas? How are they remunerated? What is the perceived quality of education in each of the three areas?

To answer these research questions, I use different types of primary and secondary data and resources. Additionally, I use both quantitative and qualitative tools because the research question relies on three geographical areas and each one has its own peculiarities. Additionally, case study methodologies often rely on multiple sources of, and multiple types of, data, to reveal the complexity of each case. This kind of complexity might not be possible to reconstruct with only qualitative, or only quantitative type of data.

The Figure B below shows the aspects that I study and obtain information about them from parents, students, and educational staff. In general, this study includes two parts: first part: The quality of education: where I am seeking here to know the quality of education based on three main factors, which are the curriculum in terms of its ability to prepare students for the labour market and pursue higher education, as well as the clarity and accuracy of the information contained in the approved curricula. Second factor: is related to the quality of the teaching staff, whether in terms of their mastery of the scientific content, or in terms of their possession of the necessary skills for teaching. The third factor: is the quality of the educational process in general, as it is studied by examining the quality and integrity of exams and the availability of logistical supplies necessary for the educational process such as textbook, fuel, printing paper. Moreover, I study in this research activities parallel to the educational process, such as activities that support the educational process. I mean here psychosocial support activities and extra-curricular activities. 2. The second part is ideological processes, as I try to determine the extent of ideological processes carried out by the ruling authorities on students, whether through the curriculum, teaching mechanisms or extra-curricular activities.

Table 1 below shows the number of respondents in each area:

Table 1 Number of respondents for each area

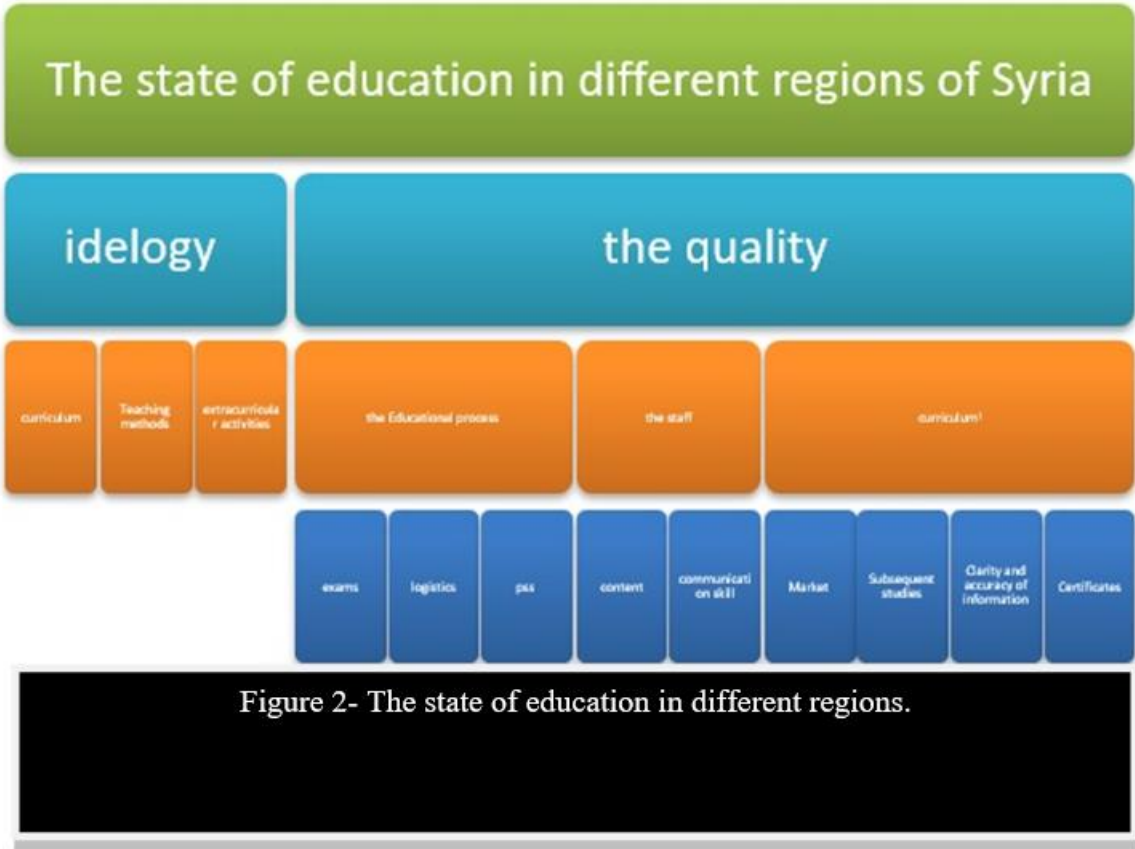| Table 1.- Number of respondents for each area- Focused Group Discussion and Interviews.			
Area	Kurdish	Government	Opposition
Focus groups	0	3	3
Interviews	12	11	15

Figure 2- The state of education in different regions.

Figure 2 The state of education in different region

Table 2 below shows the number of questionnaires conducted in each area. All the questioners were conducted face to face and paper based. We targeted parents, family

and teachers. Regarding the questions, I used the same questions that I used for the qualitative part. However, the design of the question was mainly to get quantitative data, by using a scale from 1 to 10, in which 1 is the lowest and 10 is the highest. It is important to mention that we could not target the official number of responses that I aimed to target due to many difficulties, which will be explained in the limitation part.

Table 2 The number of respondent for the questionaries

Table 2- Table shows the number of respondents for the questionnaires.			
Area	Government	Kurdish	Opposition
Number	14	16	11

- All respondents answer all the questions, so the results below is based on the numbers here in the table.
- Each respondent was rating his/her own area.

To summarize the methodology, the following activities are conducted to answer the research question:

1. I carry out an exhaustive review process **of secondary resources** for research on the educational systems in Syrian, mostly from articles. This is because education research has not dealt broadly with the issue of ideologies. Therefore, I need to know some military forces' ideological effects and link them to the educational mechanisms used to reach some conclusion.

2. **Questionnaires** were administered in Arabic to parents, teachers, key informants, and other educational-related actors to form a primary picture of the educational system and their opinions—twenty questionnaires for each of the three areas. Each questionnaire consists of seventeen questions. The questionnaires were collected by

using one of the following methods, either the questions are answered through the help of one of the Syrian organizations, face to face or online. I have chosen these categories (Parents, teachers and Key informants) because they are directly related to the educational situation or their experience in this sector, making their answer important in answering the research question. It is necessary to note that the sample is small and not representative, but this is due to financial and security difficulties, as it is difficult to reach a more significant number of respondents considering insufficient financial capacity.

3. **In-depth interviews** with educational experts and officials were conducted by me and other data collectors in Arabic to have valuable insight into the education system. Two interviews are conducted for each of the three areas. We summarized the main ideas in each interview. This tool aims to get more profound information and analysis about the educational system regarding quality and ideology.

4.Limitations:

The different and diverse context: although we are dealing with the geography of Syria only, the size of the social, political, and cultural differences in each of the three study areas was huge. These different contexts need experts in these areas to ensure an in-depth study of each area.

Data Size: The data collected for this research was small due to limited human and financial resources. This affects the extent to which we can generalize these results.

The security situation: We faced great difficulties in collecting data in all regions, but especially in the Kurdish regions, where we were unable to hold focused discussion sessions due to the security restrictions imposed by the Self-Administration.

Poor Timing: Mainly, because the data collection process coincided with the month of Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr. Moreover, the timing of data collection coincided with

the exams. These factors affected the volume of data and imposed a delay in the data collection process.

5.Overview of the political, economic, and cultural context of education in Syria

The Global Education Quality Index, released by the World Economic Forum (Davos) for the 2017-2018 ranked Syria last in the level of education. This index is based on solid scientific, educational, and educational foundations. It is of great importance, as it provides accurate information on the educational process's reality in the countries (Sallon-Syria 2018). This situation demonstrates the extent of the poor educational sector in Syria, which reflects the importance of research in this area to reach ideas and proposals that help us as Syrians to alleviate the severity of the educational crisis.

In the following sub-sections, I provide information about the political, economic, and cultural context for each of the three areas in Syria. The motivation for using this method is twofold: the first one is related to the lack of many resources that discuss the educational situation between the three main areas in a comparative method. I found research discussing the educational situation in opposition areas solely, the same applies in Kurdish and regime governed areas. The second reason is related to the research question's nature, which is based on comparison. It is essential to clearly understand each area and its potential educational strategies and problems.

5.1 Education in the Regime held areas:

Under the Ministry of Education's supervision, the educational system in government-controlled areas is entirely subject to the Syrian government. Even private education or education provided by civil society organizations (CSOs) is subject to direct

supervision by the Syrian government, and it is also required to adhere to the Syrian government curriculum (UNICEF 2015). The Syrian regime has worked to invest in the principle of compulsory education and monopolize the educational curricula and policies to form the national, political, and religious identity of individuals according to its vision, within an ideological framework that seeks to harness society to serve this vision and those interests (AL Mustafa 2020). The educational curricula in Syria aimed to reconfigure a one-color society (nationally as part of the Arab nation, and religiously as a Muslim community) by jumping over the class and societal complexities that vary from one province to another, including its ethnic and sectarian diversity (Aql 2020) (Al-Arab 2018).

The Ministry of Education carried out a curriculum change process, which included fifty books on various stages in Syria (Athr 2019). The extensive curriculum change/amendment process, despite its high budget for a country suffering from an acute crisis, the significant curriculum change/amendment process raises many questions about the reason for the Syrian government's desire for this amendment, taking into consideration that these amendments contain many inaccuracies. For example, the geography book for the ninth grade of middle school mentions that youth emigration from the Arab world has decreased because of "improved internal conditions"(Enb-Baldi 2018).

Not only that, but the book also declares that the number of Syrian immigrants reaches one million people. Based on official statistics issued in 2008, the number of Syrian refugees has exceeded seven million after the uprising (Enb-Baladi 2018). Erroneous information such as these makes us suspicious about the accuracy of these curricula, and syndicate that these curricula aim at indoctrinating students what the political power wants.

The political expansion of Russia has had direct repercussions on the educational sector in the regime-held area. For example, the educational ministry adopted the Russian language in the school curricula, which reflects the state of Russian expansion in Syrian society (Al-Jazeera 2020)

5.2 Education in the Opposition areas:

The actors responsible for education varied over time in opposition-held areas. There are four central bodies responsible for providing education in opposition-controlled areas, which are 1.) educational institutions affiliated with opposition forces, such as the interim government, 2.) CSOs, 3.) the military forces, and 4.) the Turkish government (Habib 2017). This diversity makes the process of ideologization blurred or less apparent in comparison with the other two areas. However, there is a set of general observations that can be seen in the education systems in these areas according to what I find in this context analysis.

Educational actors in the opposition-held areas are cutting all ties related to the Syrian authority as educational systems sought to abolish the subject of nationalism. This case may reflect the Syrian government's de-ideology process, but the problem is that these actors have replaced this ideology with various ideological processes. The most prominent problem is the subordination process that these educational institutions exercise to the Turkish authority (The 7th day 2020). For example, official certificates include the Turkish flag and pictures of Recep Tayyip Erdogan (The 7th day 2020).

Moreover, the history class is subject to a straightforward process of revision, whereby the word Ottoman occupation was replaced by the word Ottoman Fateh, which is an attempt to claim that the Ottomans did not occupy the region (Al-Khateeb 2019). On the contrary, they had contributed to the development and the spread of Islam in the

region. Therefore, these curricula aim to facilitate the Turkish expansion in Syria. The issue was not limited to history, but geography is also subject to such amendments that seeks to spread certain political ideas, as the city of Liwa Iskenderun was removed from the Syrian map. This city is the subject of a dispute between the Syrians and the Turks (Zino 2018).

The third feature of the ideological process used in opposition-held areas is spreading the Islamic religion (BBC 2021). This trend was most apparent in all opposition-held areas. The reason for this was that the Islamic groups control most of these areas. The process of spreading the Islamic religion included some extremist doctrines, such as the Ibn-Taymiyyah school, which warns us of the danger of this educational model for Syrian children's future (Ahwal 2017).

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5.3 Education in the Kurdish areas:

The Syrian Democratic Forces (Qasd) controls the area. Qasd is the military arm of the self-administration government (Al-Nahar 2018). The self-administration established unique curricula in all the levels, whether the primary or secondary. The curricula consist of three languages: 1.) Arabic 2.) Kurdish and 3.) Syriac. However, the Syriac curriculum has not been taught so far due to the lack of Syriac students (Ashraq 2021).

The Kurdish Language Institute administers education in the region. However, the educational sector's management in the Kurdish region differs from one geographical sector to another (Harmoon 2017). the Kurdish military forces/Self-Administration are the central controller in the region's educational process, as these forces also seek ideological education to use education to spread their identity and culture in the region.

As a country, Syria is absent from "self-Administration" geography books and replaced by "Rojava" which is presented as part of Greater Kurdistan, as "Rojava (western Kurdistan) borders northern Kurdistan, and from the east southern Kurdistan (Issa 2017). In other words, there is a complete change to the geography and map of Syria. Students learn from these books between the ages of 12 and 15, that is, middle school students, who studied two or three years ago, at the latest, different curricula that depict Syria with its existing natural borders, which means that this process of changing perceptions is sudden and unpaved for (Issa 2017). Accordingly, the "self-Administration" seeks to "impose" the idea of "Greater Kurdistan" on students, which could carry great conflict in the future, by strengthening the desire for the secession of Kurdish regions of Syria. The "Self-Administration" curricula make the leader Abdullah Ocalan a symbol (Enb-Baldi 2018).

6. Perspectives on educational quality and ideology in Syria: Findings and discussion:

In this chapter, I present the results of the interviews and focus groups for each of the three regions/areas (Kurdish, Opposition, Regime). This is to form a complete/comprehensive picture of the educational reality in each region. Additionally, this will help us identify the most prominent negatives and positives in the educational process in each region. After that, I present a comparison between the three regions based on the results of the questionnaires.

6.1 Government Controlled area (Daraa)

6.1.1 The Curricula/At the quality level:

The curriculum of the Ministry of Education of the Syrian government is the only curriculum permitted for use in areas under the control of the Syrian government

according to what the teachers and parents informed us. To clarify this, the government prohibits any other curriculum on its territory. The curriculum is generally considered reasonable by teachers and students in terms of preparing students to pursue their academic life, mainly since the Syrian government supervises many universities. Many countries and educational institutions also recognize the certificates issued by the Ministry of Education.

The problems of this curriculum can be divided into three main points: The first aspect is the density of information, as many students have argued in the interviews: that there is an exaggeration in the amount of information provided by this curriculum. Second, the nature of these curricula is based on the idea of memorization, where the scientific content presented and the nature of the exams require students to memorize information only, which drains students' abilities. To quote one of the students interviewed for the thesis:" I save all the information before the exam to get good grades, after that, I forget them all". These curricula neglect the development of skills such as analysis and argumentation. The third problem is related to the fact that much information is considered outdated and needs updating to keep pace with scientific changes - this is something agreed by most of the teachers interviewed.

This curriculum is not different from the rest of the curricula used in Syria in terms of neglecting to prepare students for the labour market. Nevertheless, the fact that the certificates issued by the Ministry of Education are recognized makes it easier for students to find job opportunities. However, another problem mentioned by the teachers that the students suffer from is that this curriculum neglects the English language, which is an urgent necessity to enter the labour market and continue studying outside Syria.

6.1.2 At the ideology level:

It can be argued, based on the interviews and the Focus Groups discussion, that the curriculum issued by the Ministry of Education is the one that seeks to ideologize the students the most. This is illustrated by the subject of nationalism, which is a course that works to spread the ideas of the Baath Party. Additionally, the curriculum's dense nature and the absence of any mechanisms to help develop analytical and argumentative skills are part of the ideological process carried out by the Syrian government. In other words, students' inability to argue and consuming their ability to memorize data only is essentially a process of preparing students to be mainly receptive. Moreover, the exaggerated density is one of the stages of the Syrian citizen's consumption, so that she/he does not have time to engage in political and cultural activities instead of keeping himself/herself busy with the system. This situation is exacerbated by the methods used by teachers, which are based on indoctrination of students. One of the teachers says "If a student is required to memorize twelve books per year, how can we expect him to engage in social and political activities. This is simply impossible".

Neglecting the English language is part of the ideological Process, as the curricula focus on the Arabic language, Arabic history, and Arabic geography on the one hand, and the absence of practical teaching of the English language, on the other hand, helps to spread the ideas of Arab unity that the Baath Party is working to spread.

6.1.3 The Educational Staff:

The economic situation of teachers in the areas controlled by the Syrian government is the worst according to the quantitative analysis, as teachers suffer from low wages that force them to find other jobs, which affects their performance. This can be due to two main reasons: 1. The failed economic policies of the Syrian government, which led to the collapse of the economy and weakened the state's ability to support the educational

sector, including the salaries of teachers. 2. International economic sanctions, such as the so-called Caesar's Law, target areas under the control of the government and its institutions, which have worsened the economic situation.

Interviewees indicated that there is a gap between the abilities of new teachers compared to the old teachers. New teachers perform poorly due to the poor university education they received during the war. They also lack experience and training. Moreover, the absence of necessary teaching aids and logistical needs negatively impacted teachers' ability to perform their tasks well.

It is worth noting that appointing educational staff is carried out through official competitions supervised by the Ministry of Education. The educational system in areas controlled by the government is subject to centralized governance systems. As one of the teachers explained in the interview:" I cannot take any decision, for anything I must take the ministry permission". However, this system showed many negatives on the level of performance of teachers. To clarify this, the evaluation and monitoring of teachers' performance are carried out through committees from the capital, Damascus. However, the security difficulties, especially the difficulty of movement, rendered this central system useless. On the contrary, it caused an increase in teacher neglect due to the absence of adequate supervision. These committees are responsible for monitoring and evaluating the teacher's performance, but they cannot go to the schools because there is no transportation, this explains the failure of the centralized system in such a situation.

6.1.4 The educational Process:

At the outset, I would like to point out that unlike the other two regions (the Kurdish and the opposition), the Syrian government exercises significant restrictions on CSOs working in the educational sector – this has been confirmed by many teachers

interviewed for the thesis. Therefore, the positive effects of CSOs, especially in providing psychological support and supporting the educational process through capacity building programs or providing logistical requirements, are almost absent. The psychological support process in these schools is limited to the appointment of a psychological counsellor who has no powers or a clear role. As one of the participants said, "The psychological counsellor is present in name only."

As for the extracurricular activities, as I mentioned earlier, they do not exceed celebrations to spread the ideology of the Arab Socialist Baath Party and show loyalty to President Bashar Al-Assad. Therefore, it does not have any positive impact to support the educational Process.

As for the exams, we can divide the examination system into two parts according to what the teachers say. 1. Transitional exams occur inside the school, and questions are put by the schoolteachers. This system is not subject to a strict monitoring process. 2. The main exams: here, I mean the ninth grade and baccalaureate certificate exams. These exams are held at official examination centres outside the school and are subject to strict supervision. Many interviewees confirmed that these exams are tainted by an atmosphere of cheating, especially considering the spread of corruption in government-controlled areas, which makes us doubt the feasibility and effectiveness of these exams.

On the logistical level, the situation is awful where the classrooms witness a situation of large student crowding, which affects the students' understanding of information, without forgetting the severe shortage of logistical supplies, especially the fuel needed for heating. Moreover, the major disruption to the electricity networks has significant repercussions on the educational cycle.

6.2 Opposition Held areas

6.2.1 The Curricula/At the quality level:

According to the interviews and the focus groups discussion, the curriculum used in Idlib governorate and other opposition-controlled areas is the curriculum of the Interim Government (the Syrian opposition coalition). The curriculum, in general, is the same as the curriculum given in government-controlled areas with some modifications. These modifications can be highlighted, as the teachers informed us, in three main points:

1. Deleting the nationalist course/subject.

2. Amendments to some classes/courses/subjects, especially those of history and geography, to suit the political and religious position of the forces controlling the region.

3. Focus heavily on Islamic education.

In general, the curriculum is acceptable from an educational point of view, according to the community's opinions including parents, students, and teaching staff. However, these curricula do not help prepare the students for the labour market, as they are devoid of any lessons or skills that students need to enter the market according to the interviewees. The interviewees told us that the aim of these curricula is only and mainly to enable students to pursue a university education. Even this goal does not seem possible, as many interviewees point out, considering the fewer universities in the opposition areas,

and the fact that the certificates issued in this region are not recognized anywhere except in the region itself and in Turkey. Turkey is the only country that recognizes these degrees/certificates and the region itself. This makes the students obliged to travel to Turkey to pursue their university studies in most cases, as the interviewees claim.

Here, I would emphasize that moving to Turkey seems very difficult for students, for two main reasons. The first reason is related to the high costs of residence in Turkey, which most Syrians cannot afford, according to the parents. The second reason is related to difficulty of getting visas, as many parents confirmed that Turkey imposes a travel restriction on Syrians. Based on this, I say that the role of the curriculum in preparing students to continue their education and prepare them for the labour market is not successful in the opposition-held areas.

In addition to what was mentioned previously, the curriculum includes many errors, such as information, page numbering and linguistic errors. Moreover, many interviewees stressed that the interim government does not have the necessary financial means to print textbooks and distribute them to students. Therefore, people are forced to bear these costs on their own.

6.2.2 At the ideology level:

All interviewees denied any ideological processes in the curricula, some even have said that "these curricula are completely impartial" (Interviewee teacher). These opinions are surprising, especially considering the many observations that prove the opposite. Three main points can explain this discrepancy: First, society compares these curricula with the Syrian government curricula, which they used to study before the uprising in 2011. The Syrian government curriculum is the most ideological for students, especially the course on nationalism, which made the community feel that the curricula

used in opposition areas do not work to indoctrinate students. Second, the role of CSOs in the educational sector in the opposition-controlled areas is huge. These organizations are characterized by a large degree of neutrality, which mitigated the intensity of the ideology in the opposition-controlled areas (Dayoub 2018). Third, is that the ideological processes are compatible with the prevailing societal opinion. To clarify this, most of the society in the opposition-controlled areas is supportive of the Turkish role. Therefore, removing Iskenderun from the Syrian map and considering it part of Turkey is not considered a societal problem. The same applies to raising the Turkish flag in schools, which is not considered problematic in society. The ideological operations that took place in the opposition-controlled areas, to a large extent, correspond to the concepts of society. The same applies to Islamic education, as many inhabitants of these areas have an Islamic orientation, so the increased focus on Islamic education is desirable by society.

6.2.3 The Educational Staff:

The interviewees informed us that the teaching staff is selected according to an oral and written test. Priority is given to the people of the region. According to the teachers, this mechanism is considered a solution to the difficulty of movement, especially considering the lack of security and the high costs of transportation. It is better to hire teachers from the same village even if he/she is less qualified from a person living far from the village. This is because the routes are dangerous without forgetting the lack of fuel and transportation.

Many teachers stress that the teaching staff faces many challenges that affect the quality of their performance. The biggest problem is related to low salaries and the adoption of volunteering as a strategic option to deal with the lack of resources. This dire economic situation has two adverse effects on the performance of educational staff. The

first effect is related to the inability of teachers to devote themselves to the educational process, which makes them forced to find other work to increase their income. Parents also noted that, in some cases, teachers deliberately do not take teaching seriously: either they do not attend classes, or they do not explain the information well. According to the opinion of some parents, the reason for this is that teachers are trying to force parents to contract with these teachers to give private lessons to their children in return for a fee. The second effect: reliance on volunteering and the absence of financial resources weakens the motivation and performance of teachers. Moreover, most volunteers are university students who have not completed their studies, therefore, are not well-prepared to teach. Those who receive low amounts of money feel that their work is a waste of time and energy, affecting their performance.

Despite these problems, there are some bright spots that I would like to highlight. First, CSOs have provided many courses and training for teachers, whether to enable teachers at the level of scientific content or to provide them with skills necessary for teaching. I mention from these training communication skills, psychosocial support, teaching methods.

As for the ideological level: in general, it is possible to say that the teachers are neutral to some extent due to the training provided by CSOs to them (Al Najjar 2020). With the assertion that some teachers use some examples that bear an ideological character, such as mentioning a hero of the opposition or focusing on religious texts.

6.2.4 The educational Process:

In general, chaos and scarcity of resources are the most prominent education features in the opposition-controlled areas. So, there is no clear and organized educational governance system for work in all areas under the control of the opposition, but it is

largely affiliated with the responsible local educational authorities. This has been confirmed by many interviewees.

Regarding resources, there is a significant shortage of logistical needs such as fuel, textbooks, etc in most educational facilities, as many students point out. Regarding exams, the teachers said they are conducted according to the direct supervision of the Directorate of Education of the Interim Government, in exam centres to ensure their integrity. However, many parents stressed that the main problem with this mechanism is the inability of several parents to bear transportation costs to the examination centres, which constitutes an obstacle for many students.

There are very limited psychological support and extra-curricular activities available in the schools located in opposition-controlled areas, except for educational facilities affiliated with CSOs. This is due to the extensive damage to the infrastructure, as most schools do not have a yard for activities.

6.3 Self-administration areas (Kurdish area)

6.3.1 The Curricula/At the quality level:

According to the interviewees, the curriculum in the Kurdish region underwent a process of complete modification so that a completely different curriculum from what is taught in all opposition and regime regions. The change was mainly made by adding new subjects such as ethics and society. Moreover, the Kurdish language was adopted as the primary language of the curriculum.

Among the most prominent materials that have changed are the materials of history and geography. Concerning the curricula of the Syrian government, it was banned in all areas of the Self-Administration, which is proved by all interviewees. Some private schools and churches were only allowed to teach the Syrian government curriculum.

The use of the new curriculum created many problems at the level of quality. These problems can be summarized in three main points. The first point is that these curricula are entirely new. Therefore, there is no expert teaching staff to teach this curriculum. As one teacher asked in the interview:" How can we teach students well if we are currently in the stage of learning the curriculum?". The lack of experience in this curriculum negatively affected the students. Teachers are not fully aware of the ideas presented in the curriculum, which affects their ability to explain them to the student. However, it is necessary to note that the educational authorities of the Self-Administration provide educational staff with continuous training on this curriculum. Despite that, this strategy could not solve the entire problem due to the continuous amendment process that these curricula were put in place for them.

The second problem is related to using the Kurdish language as an official language for the curricula. Many parents, mainly from Arabic background, criticized the curricula. One parent asked:" If my children are deprived to learn their language, what is expected of this education except for everything bad?". This problem seems to be great, especially among Arab families. The imposition of the Kurdish language has many adverse effects: most notably the students' lack of knowledge of the Kurdish language. The student's parents are also unable to help their children educationally due to their lack of knowledge of the Kurdish language. Thus, the role of parents as a supporter of the educational process is no longer possible. Moreover, the imposition of the Kurdish language reduced students' and parents' interest in education in general. Students decide not to accept any knowledge from the school because they feel that imposing onto them the need to learn Kurdish is proof that this educational system is bad. The third problem is related to the fact that these curricula are not recognized outside of the area; therefore, their importance is limited to the Self-Administration areas.

In general, these curricula do not serve the needs of the labour market. These curricula do not include any lessons to help students enter the market. Nevertheless, the biggest problem is that the use of the Kurdish language means that students will not enter the market in the rest of the Arabic-speaking regions, which constitute most of the Syrian geography. Therefore, the only positive is that the Kurdish language makes the students able to work in Kurdish language areas.

In terms of the ability of these curricula to prepare students to continue their university studies, the situation seems more dangerous, as there is no recognition of these curricula and certificates outside of the area. Many parents complained that mandating their students to learn Kurdish and not providing any universities shows the lack of strategy that the Self-administration had. However, Self-Administration has established a university in the Kobani region in 2019 that accepts only students who have received these curricula and created additional technical and vocational institutes. These institutions helped to some extent by enabling students to continue the educational process, but it was certainly not sufficient.

6.3.2 At the ideology level:

According to many interviewees, the entire educational process is under the complete control of the Self-Administration. Here, it should be mentioned that education in the Kurdish regions is undergoing a significant process of ideologization. This is evident through using new educational curricula with a clear political orientation. This is clear based on the interviews that these curricula focus on Kurdish identity and Kurdish history, ignoring other groups in the region. The Kurdish authorities justify that the Syrian regime has eliminated the Kurdish identity, so there is an urgent need to create an educational space that helps support the Kurdish identity. The major problem in this proposition

forgets the size of the Arab presence in the Kurdish self-administered area and the social and national sensitivities it engenders.

The process of ideological descent in the educational sector has adverse effects, not only on the level of indoctrinating children. Instead, the matter goes beyond that to include students joining the educational process. Many interviewees indicated that the families are in a state of constant protest against the Kurdish forces. This was evident through their participation in many demonstrations, in which they rejected the prohibition of learning Arabic in schools. However, the matter did not stop there. Many parents preferred to rely on private sector to educate their children and take exams in government-controlled areas. This explains the extent of the division caused by the absence of the Arabic language from the curricula and the non-recognition of certificates outside of the area. Moreover, it was confirmed that some of the parents decided to stop sending their children to school altogether, due to their refusal of curriculum modification in the schools led by Kurdish powers, and their inability to bear the costs of private education.

6.3.3 The Educational Staff:

In general, it can be said that the quality of educational personnel in the Kurdish region is good and better compared to the opposition-controlled areas. This can be explained by two main points. First, according to the interviewees, the ability of the Self-Administration to build a complete educational system, subject to clear governance mechanisms, supports teacher quality. This was reflected in the process of selecting staff more effectively than in opposition-controlled areas, for example. Many teachers confirmed that they are also subject to monitoring and technical processes. This was done by forming a system of specialists whose task is to support teachers. The second point is related to the continuous capacity-building programs provided by the educational bodies of the Self-Administration to teachers. This training contributed to improving the

performance level of staff. Many teachers confirmed that they received many trainings about the curricula and teaching method.

According to the interviews, appointment of teaching staff is carried out through a competition announced on the official website of the Education Directorate of the Self-Administration. Then, interviews and written examinations are conducted, according to which the staff are selected. However, the interviewees emphasized the use of direct assignments when necessary. This means that in some cases the teachers will be selected without competitions or test.

The financial situation, according to the interviews I conducted, is generally bad, especially with inflation and the continuous change in the exchange rates of the dollar. This problem caused the same problems that occurred in the rest of the Syrian regions. The only positive thing is that teachers receive their salaries on reliable schedule compared to the opposition areas. Self-Administration has also shown greater flexibility than others in the process of adjusting salaries in line with price changes.

One of the negative things mentioned in the interviews is that recruitment processes may have a discriminatory nature related to excluding Arab teachers from teaching. However, the authorities explain that the curricula are Kurdish; therefore, Arab teachers cannot teach subjects/courses in the Kurdish language. Some interviewees also mentioned the prevalence of nepotism regarding a person appointing people from his/her clan. This situation is not exclusively found in the Kurdish regions but is widespread in all Syrian regions. However, I noticed that this accusation increased in the Kurdish areas. I explain that the extent of societal divisions in the region is the reason for this and not the idea that corruption is more prevalent in the Kurdish regions than in other regions.

6.3.4The educational process:

In general, the educational process is an organized process that is subject to a transparent governance system, as I mentioned earlier. This is due to the success of the Self-Administration in establishing a model like government through central institutions subject to a clear procedure, as many interviewees indicate. This helps to organize the educational process. Despite this, many interviewees said that the governance system used is not stable and is subject to continuous changes.

At the level of financial and human resources, according to the interviews, the situation in the Self-Administration areas is relatively better, due to two main reasons. First, the Self-Administration's control of a geographical area is rich in natural resources, especially oil. Thus, this authority has resources that it can sell to support the educational sector. This was demonstrated by providing adequate teaching staff and equipping educational facilities with the necessary supplies. In addition, it is worth noting that the schools affiliated with the Self-Administration are the least crowded, compared to the other areas. This is based on what the interviewees said. Secondly, the international support for the Self-Administration areas is the largest compared to the other two areas. Many interviewees confirmed an influential role for international and CSOs in supporting the educational sector, whether through providing logistical requirements or capacity-building programs.

Concerning psychological support, interviewees confirmed that it is limited to CSOs that provide integrated and sustainable programs such as psychological support and community integration, which had a noticeable positive impact on the educational process.

The most significant problem concerning the educational process is the state of changing policies, as many interviewees point out. The curricula and examination mechanics have changed dramatically, as many teachers informed us. For example, the

educational authorities refrained from administering any exams for three years and were satisfied with an evaluation process based on oral interviews, arguing that exams are not a good evaluation tool and put children under psychological pressure that does not correspond to the experience they lived during the war. However, this mechanism was modified last year, and exams are used as an assessment tool again.

7. Findings from the survey

This section reviews the quantitative results based on a questionnaire conducted in each of the three regions. This section's main objective is to compare the three regions on the level of quality of education and the size of ideological processes carried out by each of the three forces on the educational level. These results are based on the local community's opinion in each of the three regions, represented by three main categories: students, academic staff, and parents.

7.1 The Quality/The curricula:

The average quality of the curriculum in terms of preparation for the labour market, educational follow-up, and clarity in the opposition-controlled areas was rated by survey respondents to be 7.3, while it reached 6.7 in the areas controlled by the government. The average score in the areas under the control of the Self-Administration reached 8.

The score for government-controlled areas is low compared to the other two areas. This is especially surprising because this region is the most successful in preparing students to pursue their university life. Nevertheless, the big problem is that these curricula' intensity and lack of clarity made their results low.

These results surprise us at the level of the Kurdish regions, as they are the region with the highest evaluation, but this is because these curricula from a scientific point of view are the most accurate according to the opinion of many.

7.2 The Educational Staff

The average quality of the teaching staff in the opposition-controlled areas was rated by survey participants to be 5.9, while the average quality of the teaching staff in the areas controlled by the Self-Administration was 7.3. On the other hand, the average quality of the teaching staff in the Syrian government-controlled areas was 6.3.

These results are as expected, especially considering the great interest given by the Autonomous Administration's control areas in capacity building and securing fixed salaries for teachers adjusted according to the dollar's exchange rate. Whereas in the opposition areas, which rely heavily on volunteering, the quality of the educational staff was perceived to be the worst.

7.3 The educational Process:

The average quality of the educational Process in the opposition areas was rated by survey respondents to be 6.7, while the average educational quality in the Autonomous Administration areas was rated 5.3. The percentage in areas controlled by the Syrian government was rated 7.2.

First: It is noted that the performance of the educational authorities in the Kurdish regions is perceived to be the weakest at the level of the educational Process. This is due to the Process of continuous change in policies and procedures, especially in the procedures of the previously mentioned examinations. On the other hand, while the areas under the control of the Syrian government obtained the highest percentage, this might be since the educational authorities in these areas are subject to a clear and stable system of governance.

7.4 The Ideology/The curricula

According to the survey results, the Kurdish curricula were rated by survey respondents as the most biased and the one that ideologizes the students, as the curricula bias average score was 8, while the ratio was 6.5 in the areas under the control of the Syrian government. On the contrary, in opposition-controlled areas, the average score was only 2.2. Here, it is worth noting that each respondent was rating his/her own region, since he/she knew it well.

First, these results are consistent with what I found earlier. The curricula in the Kurdish region are considered the most biased, especially considering the prohibition of the Arabic language in schools. As for the low result in the opposition-controlled areas, I think it is for two reasons: the bias of the curriculum is the lowest in general, and the curricula conform to the nature of the population, which made the society's view of the curricula more acceptable.

Table 3 Precevied quality of various educations dimensions by area

Table 3: Perceived quality of various educational dimensions by area

Educational dimension	Kurdish area (n = 16)	Government area (n = 16)	Opposition area (n = 11)
Curriculum quality	8.0	7.3	6.7
Staff quality	7.3	6.7	5.9
The educational Process quality	5.3	7.2	6.7
The curricula	8.0	5.6	2.2

The numbers in this table represent average scores of perceived quality within each respondent group. For each educational dimension, a scale of 1 to 10 was used, in which 1 was the lowest and 10 is the highest point of the scale. Average scores are grouped by Kurdish respondents (n = 16), government respondents (n=14), and opposition respondents (n= 11). Total sample size: 41.

8.Recommendations:

8.1The Main recommendations and needs in government held areas:

1. <u>The necessity of developing curricula</u> to help students enter the market, and the development of argumentation and discussion mechanisms. It is also necessary to give the English language more importance, especially for its importance in entering the market and to continue studying outside Syria.

2. <u>The need to raise the annual budget</u> provided to the educational sector, as the currently presented budget does not meet the minimum needs for education.

3. <u>The necessity of keeping education away from the clear political ideological processes.</u>

8.2The Main recommendations and needs in opposition held areas:

1. <u>Educational staff</u>: It is necessary to provide salaries for educational staff, and the process of appointing staff must be subject to greater monitoring. Educational staff need greater training, especially technical ones, to enable them to have scientific content to solve the absence of sufficient human expertise.

2. <u>Exams and Certificates:</u> Students must be compensated for commuting during exams. Also, the absence of recognition of certificates is a significant issue, so the educational actors must seek recognition for these certificates. This could be solved if the educational actors negotiate with the regime to recognize the certificates issued at the opposition held areas.

3. <u>The curriculum:</u> The curriculum must be developed to include materials to help students enter the market or supplement the curriculum with additional training.

8.3The Main recommendations and needs in Kurdish areas:

1. 1. <u>The necessity of mitigating the intensity of ideological processes,</u> especially considering the Arab society's rejection of the operations of cancelling the Arabic

language from the curricula. Education in the Kurdish language is a right and a necessity to break the ideological processes that the Syrian authorities had previously followed when they prohibited using the Kurdish language. Nevertheless, this must be done by considering the Arab community and its right to learn in the Arabic language.

2. <u>Finding a clear and strategic work mechanism</u>: the continuous processes of change, whether at the curriculum or exams, have harmful effects; Therefore, the educational process must be based on a long-term vision.

3. <u>Lack of recognition of certificates</u>: This problem carries negative political and economic dimensions, so it is necessary to work on it as soon as possible.

9.Conclusion:

The educational situation in Syria is bad in general in each of the three regions, albeit to varying degrees. Education is the cornerstone of any revival process that Syria may witness. However, the war and the transfer of conflict to the educational level by conflicting parties has significant negative repercussions. This thesis compared the three regions to understand each force's impact on the educational sector.

Among the three regions, the quality of education in the opposition-controlled areas is the worst. This results from weak financial and human capabilities, and the absence of an effective educational governance system. The same applies to the other two areas. This is evidenced by the banning of the Arabic language in the curricula issued by the Kurdish regions and by the Syrian government's efforts to indoctrinate students, primarily through the subject of nationalism that seeks to spread the ideas of the Baath.

Education suffers from many problems that can be summarized in six main points:

1.) <u>Chaos and the absence of a comprehensive governance system</u>: all forces seek to impose their educational system, regardless of its compatibility with the needs of students. This problem will increase with any change in the map of military power. In other words, Syria is witnessing major military transformations, and all forces seek to impose their curriculum and educational mechanism, which exposes students to many problems resulting from changing curricula and policies, which may entail delays in completing their primary and secondary education.

2.) <u>Lack of experience and weakness of human staff</u>: educational staff suffer from a severe shortage in the quantity and quality of teachers. This is caused by the significant emigration that the educational sector witnessed. The new teachers lack experience, especially considering the heavy reliance on university students to meet the needs. These teachers lack technical expertise at the level of scientific content, as well as weak experience and weak communication.

3.) <u>The third problem is related to weak financial resources</u>: the severe shortage of financial resources allocated to support the educational sector is vast. Furthermore, schools suffer from massive overcrowding of students, which reduces the extent to which students absorb the educational curricula, in addition to the actors' inability to secure support for many logistical requirements, such as their inability to provide the necessary fuel for heating, the severe shortage of electricity, and the severe shortage of printed textbooks. This situation results from the war and the destruction that it left on educational facilities. Also, the economic sanctions called "Caesar's Law" increased the economic collapse that affected education. Failed economic policies, especially in government-controlled areas, also have significant negative effects on the educational sector.

4. <u>The fourth problem is related to the bias and diversity of curricula</u>: every force seeks to impose their curriculum to ideologize/indoctrinate students in line with their political, religious, and national vision. This diversity reinforces the state of division in Syria, especially in the future. Furthermore, these curricula reinforce the division between the various components of Syrian society, which will constitute an obstacle in creating a social contract regulating Syrian geography, even if the conflicting parties reached a political settlement. In other words, students have become believers in different concepts, values, and facts, which will make them less ready to accept new value, socials contract or vision.

5. <u>The fifth problem concerns the areas of the Self-Administration and the opposition</u>: The curricula used by educational authorities issue unrecognized certificates, which puts the students' future at significant risk. it also affects the role of education in preparing students to pursue their educational lives.

6. <u>The sixth problem is related to the failure of various educational institutions to prepare students for the labour market</u>: There is almost complete absence of any materials that help students to enter the market. Additionally, neglecting the English language is a significant problem that must be resolved. So is the absence of the Arabic language in the Kurdish regions, which reduces employment opportunities for students in the future.

Here, I would like to point out that three actors play an essential role in alleviating the educational crisis. I mean here, the political authorities, CSOs and the international bodies. Therefore, I recommend to the three authorities (the Kurdish, the opposition, and the government) to build an integrated educational system based on a comprehensive and integrative governance system that contributes to the development of

monitoring and evaluation processes, and also works to find solutions to reduce political polarization and the lack of certificates.

Additionally, CSOs should increase the volume of interventions it undertakes at the level of capacity building for teachers, especially considering the poor performance and the severe shortage of human staff. Concerning international bodies, I recommend increasing the volume of support provided to the educational sector and isolating the educational sector from economic sanctions. International bodies are compelled to play this role for two reasons. The first is that these policies negatively affect the educational process and the future of students. The second reason is that neglecting education helps spread extremism in its various forms, which everyone suffers from.

Further research on the educational situation in Syria should extend the scope to include more groups and more different points of views. The findings of this research cannot be generalized unless a wider research takes a place. However, the findings of this research are indicative of overall trends in the educational situation in Syria, and the conclusions drawn can be used and tested in future research.

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