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Are Transnational NGOs changing norms in the vocational 'education and training' of Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Internally Displaced People in the Middle East?

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Declaration

I, Maria Doyle, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

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Acknowledgement

Abstract

In the field of International Relations (hereafter referred to as IR), the role of Transnational Non Governmental Organisations (hereafter TNGOs) has changed; as the field of IR has traditionally been dominated by state-centric approaches, the role of NGOs was once considered insignificant, but is now considered to play an important role because of their ability to contribute to changing international norms, principles and agendas in local contexts (Joachim, 2020, pp. 349-50). TNGOs and International Organisations have developed various multi-agency, multi-sectoral frameworks, policies and programmes, all aimed at enabling refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people (hereafter RASIDPs) to access quality education and training regardless of gender, age, race or asylum status. Several international frameworks now recommend including Youth in creating sustainable, durable solutions for their futures (IASC 2020, INEE 2021, UNGA 2015, UNHCR 2017, 2019, 2020) so their voices are imperative in the creation of policies and strategies involving their education, training and future livelihoods.

Having said this, these policies and strategies are not necessarily accepted or implemented across all education and training institutions in the countries where TNGOs are operating; therefore local education and training norms may or may not be affected. Given the role of TNGOs in humanitarian settings, how much power does an organisation like the NRC have in terms of changing norms within those countries and institutions? Are local beliefs changeable by international influence and if so, how much? Can TNGOs like the NRC shape the way a nationality or nation of foreign residents thinks about what is needed for Youth RASIDPs need for success, and what best practice education and training looks like?

Based on data gathered from a survey administered across several NRC vocational education and training centres in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, this paper is a norms based exploration into the role of TNGOs as providers of normative change in a case study of RASIDPs engaged in TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) in the Middle East. The survey was administered to 171 youth learners (aged 15 plus) and 65 trainers of six Arabic speaking nationalities, and the data shows which norms are changing and which norms have not yet been affected, when compared with traditional approaches to TVET in the Middle East. This data also contributes to the lack of academic data that exists on perceived needs of learners in education in emergency contexts.

Are Transnational NGOs changing norms in RASIDP vocational 'education and training' in the Middle East?

A norms based exploration: the role of transnational NGOs as providers of normative change in a case study of Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Internally Displaced People (RASIDPs) engaged in TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) in the Middle East.

1. Topic and problem statement

In the field of International Relations (hereafter referred to as IR), the role of Non Governmental Organisations (hereafter NGOs) has changed; as the field of IR has traditionally been dominated by state-centric approaches, the role of NGOs was once considered insignificant, but is now considered to play an important role because of their ability to contribute to changing international norms, principles, agendas and policies (Joachim, 2020, pp. 349-50). The drivers of global politics are constantly developing and it is now widely recognised that there are actors beyond the states themselves that can affect global politics. The Norwegian Refugee Council (hereafter NRC) cooperates with other Transnational NGOs (hereafter TNGOs) including but not limited to INEE[1], UNHCR[2], UNICEF[3], UNDP[4], OCHA[5], and WFP[6], and receives financial support from government organisations such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and aid and development agencies in Australia, Belgium, Denmark, France , Germany, Iceland, Luxembourg, Spain, Switzerland, the United States and the Principality of Liechtenstein. These organisations have developed various multi-agency, multi-sectoral frameworks, policies and programmes, all aimed at enabling refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people (hereafter RASIDPs) to access quality education and training regardless of gender, age, race or asylum status.

This marks a distinct change in international norms over the past 70 years, since the 1951 Refugee Convention (and its 1967 Protocol) was introduced, the signatories of which agreed to protect, respect and uphold the rights of asylum seekers. The UNHCR (2020b, p.5) who is the guardian of the Convention and protocol, states that the international standards that signatories are to abide by include:

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[1] Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)
[2] The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)
[3] United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
[4] United Nations Development Fund (UNDP)
[5] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
[6] United Nations World Food Programme (WFP)

"5. The right to minimum, acceptable conditions of stay, which would include: freedom of movement, the right to education and to gainful employment or self employment, access to public relief and assistance including health facilities, the possibility of acquiring and disposing of property and the right to obtain travel and identity documents."

To make this kind of work possible takes the cooperation of TNGOs in collaboration with host country governments and donor funding. In a liberal internationalist world, it's less about what is in the 'national interest', and more about what can be achieved with collaboration and cooperation between states. Owens et al, (2020, p. 9) describes humanitarianism as involving 'positive duty' to help those who need it, regardless of where or why; *'The idea of a positive duty underlies the doctrine of the international responsibility to protect'.* Dunne (2020, p 113) elaborates on this idea, admitting that although the concept of liberal internationalism may be in decline, it is the responsibility of international institutions like TNGOs to be more effective, and that *'good governance requires transparency and fairness, that rights are irrelevant unless responsibilities are taken seriously, and that economic and social justice is critical to peaceful change on a global scale.'*

How can international organisations and TNGOs be more effective? Several international frameworks now recommend including Youth in creating sustainable, durable solutions for their futures (IASC 2020, INEE 2021, UNGA 2015, UNHCR 2017. 2019, 2020) so their voices are imperative in the creation of policies and strategies involving their education, training and future livelihoods. These Youth form the foundation of the next generation which will move into employment, entrepreneurship and advocacy so their opinions and preferences are essentially going to shape the nations that they are resident within.

Given the role of TNGOs in humanitarian settings, how much power does an organisation like the NRC have in terms of changing norms within those countries and

nationalities? As Holzscheiter (2018) would question, who are the change agents? Is it the TNGO or the Youth who they educate? As Archaya (2004) would question, are local beliefs actually changeable by international influence and if so, how much? Can TNGOs like the NRC shape the way a nationality or nation of foreign residents thinks about what is needed for Youth RASIDPs to work towards successful livelihoods?

Post structuralist scholars (Hansen 2021, Milliken 2009, Diez 1999) would argue that yes, NGOs use language and as language has the power to change norms, that they are indeed capable of normative change when it comes to perceptions about what Youth RASIDPs need for success. Constructivists (Beaumont 2021, Checkel 1999, Finnemore 1996, Finnemore 1993, Grigorescu 2002, Park 2006) would agree with this notion, in so far as international organisations being able to diffuse or change norms due to the work they do in foreign countries.

So is there academic data on the extent to which TNGOs can change norms in regards to educating, training and preparing RASIDP Youth for livelihood success? Unfortunately there is not. Is there a wealth of academic data available on what Youth or their trainers say they need? Again, unfortunately there is not - due to the above mentioned quite recent 'shift' towards involving Youth directly when planning for their futures, most of the literature around what is best practice education and training for RASIDPs focuses on what global education and training organisations suggest is best practice, or what smaller studies have found to be successful for assimilation and integration purposes.

Although there is a wealth of literature on trauma-induced mental and physical health problems faced by asylum seekers, refugees and IDPs, most research to date focuses backwards (Hugelius et al., 2020b, p. 2-3). There is not an abundance of literature on

the perceived needs of RASIDPs; what they believe they need to be successful and improve their quality of life. Even fewer studies have focused on "Youth"[7], which appears to be a gap in the literature given that nearly half of the 80 million displaced people globally are under 18 (UNHCR 2021). The availability of such data would be invaluable to humanitarian, educational, health or political organisations working with RASIDPs to help them integrate, assimilate or thrive in countries of origin, transit or new host countries.

As an intern with the NRC Head Office in the Global Education section, I worked on a project that gathered data from RASIDP Youth in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. The NRC Global Education Manager voiced interest in gathering data from Youth, as recommended by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) which recently partnered with NRC to produce guidelines called *'With us & for us: Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises'* (2020); these guidelines were produced with a task force of 13 humanitarian organisations and offices[8], and recommends creating policies and guidelines based on the voice of Youth.

This thesis explores some of the answers that the survey collected, which answers the following research questions.

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[7] Youth is defined by the NRC (2021, p. 5) and UNDESA (2007, p. 2) as being aged 15-24.
[8] ActionAid; CARE; Inter-Agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crises (IAWG); International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC); Mercy Corps; United Nations Office of the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth (OSGEY); Plan International; RET International; United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); and the Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY).

2. Research question

- Is the involvement of TNGOs in TVET in the Middle East changing norms?
  - What do RASIDP Youth Learners and Trainers in Vocational Training (currently enrolled or teaching in NRC education programmes in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, who also have appropriate digital literacy and access to the internet) report that they need for success, and what do they report prevents it?
  - Are the words used by learners and trainers to describe their needs, the same as the words that NRC and global education/training providers are using?
  - How is what the trainers report, different from what the learners report? Does this constitute a shift in norms?
  - How do trainer and learner responses correlate with traditional education and training methods in the Middle East?
    - What may be the cause of these differences? Could the differences be due to
      - influence from local politics or culture in the countries they're now residing in?
      - influence from their involvement with NRC?

3. Literature review

To be able to comment on whether a TNGO like the NRC has the ability to change norms, it's first important to understand what norms existed before, and what norms are theoretically being 'diffused'; in this case therefore, it's imperative to understand what norms exist in the Middle East when it comes to TVET education and training, and what norms exist in the literature that forms the framework of the language and culture used by international TNGOs to deliver education, training and livelihood support for RASIDPs. It's also important to understand what the IR literature says on how TNGOs like the NRC can be involved in the changing of norms.

Therefore, this literature review will focus firstly on traditional approaches to vocational education and training in the Middle East, so as to compare what the respondents have reported against traditional and global international approaches.

Secondly, on the Post-structuralist and Constructivist IR theories that discuss changing norms, particularly focusing on international organisations and their capacity to influence a host country.

Thirdly, on the global international approaches to RASIDP's Education and Training leading to successful educational outcomes, assimilation and/or integration, so as to ascertain how closely what the learners and trainers reported as being necessary for success, match what the global frameworks are recommending.

Whilst performing the review on Middle Eastern and International TVET, key word terms used in the search included:
- Vocational / education / training
- refugee / asylum seeker / internally displaced
- blended learning / inclusive education / integration / assimilation

- Middle East, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq

Papers selected for international approaches included those that had:
- 2016 - 2021 publications only (previous 6 years)
- Focus on education and training
- Inclusive of any age of RASIDP including children, teens and adults

The reason for the last point, is that according to IASC 2020, the needs of Youth (which by their terminology can be those aged 15-24) can mirror any of these broad age ranges, depending on how their displacement has affected their needs.

After examining the principles, frameworks and strategies adopted by the major TNGOs (including NRC, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNHCR, INEE and IASC), this literature review component summarises the data from countries considered to be 'transit' or 'resettlement' countries for asylum seekers and refugees; the findings are split into lower GDP countries in the Middle East, Africa, the Americas, and Asia, and higher GDP resettlement countries such as Canada, Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Scandinavia and Europe. Also included are studies that have global application. This part of the literature review summarises information regarding what the main, current international recommendations are for the education and training of RASIDPs that lead to success when it comes to assimilation and integration; so as to compare with what learners and trainers reported in the survey, and therefore comment on whether their attendance at an NRC training centre could be influencing the way they experience education and training, and what they interpret to be 'success'.

3.1 What are the traditional approaches to vocational education and training in the Middle East region?

To be able to discuss whether norms have changed as a result of TNGO involvement in vocational education and training, there must first be an understanding of the baseline traditional approaches to vocational education and training in the Middle East Region. One does not have to dig far into the literature to find that traditional approaches in the region have been very much characterised by rote learning, low quality education, inexperienced and unqualified trainers, a lack of engagement of the learners or acquisition of higher order thinking skills, and a prevalence of low levels of safety on physical, emotional and mental levels.

Rugh (2002) reported that traditional Middle Eastern approaches to education and training included a distinct lack of problem solving and instead a focus on rote learning; the data provided showed that in a study of leaving exams, apart from Egypt in all other Middle Eastern countries studied that 0% had 'investigating and problem solving' questions as opposed to 57% of French examinations (p. 409). The report also outlines the lack of quality in education resulting in a lack of skilled graduates being produced by the system (p. 414).

Nasser (2018), in her article 'The State of Education in the Arab World' for the Arab Center Washington DC, reported similar findings regarding a lack of learner centred approaches which engaged or retained learners in the educational process - which includes all countries that participated in the NRC survey being analysed in this paper;

> *'Arab countries are behind others in similar levels of development, such as those in Latin America and South Asia…. UNESCO's World Education Forum (2015), suggest dividing and grouping the Arab world into "least developed countries" (LDCs) that include Mauritania, Sudan, and Yemen; the Mashreq, including Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine'.*

In the study she mentions in this article, learners reported that teachers used 'harsh practices' and although she suggests that educators are aware of how to 'talk the talk', they don't necessarily 'walk the walk', and this is due to inadequate teacher training around learner centred pedagogy, an 'entrenched' culture of rote learning and in some cases corporal punishment. She also notes a lack of safe, stimulating or project based learning environments, and that there is little demonstrable evidence in traditional learning approaches across the Middle East, of the five tenets described by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development that constitute a whole learner approach (which include a safe, engaging, practical learning environment that caters to individual needs and prepares learners for livelihood or continuing education success.

Faour (2012) echoed these sentiments in his breakdown of the Arab World Education Report Card[9], summarising the paper by saying that evidence gathered in three separate international studies that measured the learning environments in 14 Middle Eastern countries, did not represent an educational environment that was physically, socially or emotionally 'safe'. The reasons for this were stated as being various; factors included inadequate teacher training or professional development opportunities, the reliance on rote learning, and having limited resources.

An article by Al-Fanar Media, which covers education, research and culture in the Arab region (2020), pointed out that when COVID started to affect TVET education and training programs, many programs had to go online which exposed *'an increase in the gender digital divide (which) adversely affects gender gaps in education, violence and higher risk of female drop-outs'*, the result being that *'girls are left behind and cultural norms dictate that online learning remains in the male domain.'* This article also points

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[9] Available at: https://carnegieendowment.org/files/school_climate.pdf

out the distinct lack of emphasis on practical skills, due to the emphasis on theory, which *'leaves many graduates ill-prepared for the jobs sector'.*

An article by the World Bank which discusses the reforms needed for TVET in the Middle East and North Africa regions (2005), outlines how there are two major approaches to TVET training in the region: traditional, and those provided by NGOs. The article describes traditional approaches as being considered as *'low quality, second choice vocational streams ...synonymous with academic failure'* (p.7) and describes traditional TVET teaching methods as focusing on rote learning, as opposed to providing high level cognitive skills like problem solving. This is reported as being the result of an abundance of under qualified and inexperienced trainers which is exacerbated by experienced professionals not being encouraged to become trainers because of low salary offerings (p.9). Traditional TVET usually also is characterised by 'kinship' or personal connections as opposed to formalised work contracts, and can take 4-8 years for an 'apprentice' to graduate through the stages of helper right through to skilled worker. No certification or formal recognition is given to this training, apart from the offer of a paid job at some point when the worker is deemed fully skilled (p.9). The learning in these traditional apprenticeships is described as 'passive and non-experimental' (p.11). The report also comments that the *'Learning and teaching methods are old-fashioned and inadequate for knowledge-based skills ... Teachers' qualifications are more academic than practical, and there are inadequate training and retraining mechanisms, a lack of professional career prospects.'* (p. 40).

3.2 Context: TNGOs as international providers of education and training for RASIDPs

As mentioned, the role of NGOs has changed; the NRC, in collaboration with other TNGOs, has developed various inter-agency, cross-sectoral frameworks, policies and programmes aimed at providing quality education and training to RASIDPs regardless of gender, age, ethnicity or asylum status. There is a wealth of literature that shows the magnitude of the RASIDP crisis, such as: *'Left Behind: Refugee Education in Crisis'* (UNHCR, nd). Many TNGO strategies are based on principles endorsed by UNHCR and INEE. In this section, 13 TNGO documents are selected, compared and summarised.

The goals of the UNHCR's *'Global Compact on Refugees'* (2018) is the basis on which the UNHCR's '*Refugee Education 2030 Strategy for Refugee Inclusion'* (2019) is created; these goals focus on reducing pressure on host countries, increasing refugee self-reliance, and supporting safe and dignified return home for refugees. The vision is that all policies related to RASIDPs should include access to equitable, quality education for children and youth, which helps build resilience and prepares youth to be active parts of strong societies. Their rationale is based on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) (2015), which aims to provide quality and free education and training for all Youth and children; the strategic approach that embeds this goal includes *'partnership, collaborative learning, capacity development, innovation, evidence and growth'*, which focuses on actions that are sustainable, equitable, safe, inclusive and concerned with future livelihoods (UNHCR 2019).

These approaches mirror the recommendations in the joint Save the Children, UNHCR and Pearson report, which studied 20 learning programmes in refugee camps in the Middle East, Africa and Europe (Bergin, 2017). The identified 'Promising Practices' were categorised under a variety of themes: equity, access, well-being, learning, technology and system strengthening. There were also ten recommendations for improving

refugee education and policy which included: strengthening national systems and fostering partnerships; improving overall outcomes through teacher training; generating inclusive, context-driven solutions; prioritising learning and well-being; using IT; and collecting on the ground data and evidence so as to advise program development. Other successful examples can be found in documents such as UNHCR's *'Coming Together For Refugee Education'* (2020), and UNHCR Cyprus *'Protecting Refugees'* (2017), in which the successes of 16 partner organisations are outlined, including sports and educational institutions, NGOs and other organisations united in support of the education and training of RASIDPs.

The INEE is a global network which has over 18,000 members belonging to over 4,000 organisations in over 190 countries. This organisation has published an 'Indicator Framework' (IINE 2021a) that addresses minimum standards in the fields of: '*community participation and resources, coordination, monitoring and evaluation; safe and equitable access to education; curriculum, teacher support, outcomes and assessment practices; human resource management; education policies, law, planning and implementation strategies'.* If those working in crisis situations are to achieve the best outcomes for RASIDP learners, INEE also recommends cooperation and shared values between humanitarian and development work; also recommended is the use of shared frameworks and coordination systems to build local capacity, understanding between sectors and national resilience in the event of a disaster or crisis (2021b).

As Joachim (2020, pp. 350-353) points out, NGOs have the ability to transcend state capacity by being closer to the people; because of this, they are more likely to understand the root causes of the problems in their societies, conduct their own research and be able to build needs-based, customer-centric solutions. This can be seen in reports such as: *"A Year of Covid-19: A Review of the NRC's Educational Response,"* which examines how the global pandemic has affected the educational centers that

the NRC operates in over 20 countries. Reports like this gather information on key challenges and initiatives that have been put in place to enable countries to learn from the successes and challenges they face at a global level.

TNGOs like the NRC are able to contribute to a more globally democratic world for various reasons: they are able to give a voice to sectors of society that are underrepresented, like RASIDPs; they can make transparent information available that may otherwise not be available (such as the Covid-19 Report as mentioned above); they can also bring ethics into systems traditionally based on state sovereignty, by focusing on principles, the well being of individuals, and being *'guided by moral values including voluntarism, solidarity.... which help create a global civil society'* (Joachim 2020, p.354). As Epstein (2012, p. 121) points out, norms bring states together; outside of cooperating for the sake of their own national interests, it encourages the spread of cooperative liberal values, encouraging seemingly 'better' behaviour at a regional or international level.

The NRC is a TNGO which can be described as both a 'delivery organisation' providing humanitarian services, and also focused on advocacy, and *'committed to raising awareness and campaigning... focusing on cross-boundary problems'* (Joachim 2020, p.351). A good example of cross-sectoral guidelines is the *'Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action' (IASC, 2020)*, developed by UNICEF and the NRC with input from 60 other organizations. This set of guidelines is a global movement to empower youth to lead and become the guides for their senior working partners so that youth voices can be heard and part of solutions that create solutions for their futures which are lasting, sustainable, and durable. The campaign to roll out these guidelines was executed in late 2021, reaching over 30 countries where the NRC is working; this is a perfect example of how TNGOs can be catalysts for normative change at the

international level.

Academics such as Holzscheiter (2018) confirm this sentiment, exploring how children and young people can be social agents in international politics;

> *'it is clear that the greater visibility and more balanced representation of children as affected persons in international debates and standard-setting initiatives has inspired a reconsideration of conservative abolitionist agendas and led to a growing recognition of children as political and economic agents in advocacy and programming'. (p. 658)*

Although her article centres around children as social agents in fields such as child labour, there are many parallels between this and the world of RASIDPs; as she points out, organisations are intensifying their cooperation with children and Youth in advocacy, policy making, policy implementation and generally speaking have acknowledged *'the changed status of the child in international law'* (p.658). As she so accurately points out, this change requires us to reconsider who has the legitimate power and agency when it comes to defining affectedness in international politics?

Archarya (2004) also echoes this concept, in his article around how ideas spread, whose norms matter, and how that impacts norm localisation and institutional change. As Archaya points out, norm diffusion in world politics is not just about *'whether and how ideas matter, but also which and whose ideas matter'*; how local beliefs impact on whether international norms are accepted (p. 239). Acharya goes so far as to assert that:

> *'Local actors do not remain passive targets and learners as transnational agents, acting out of a universal moral script to produce and direct norm diffusion in world politics. Local agents also promote norm diffusion by actively borrowing and modifying transnational norms in accordance with their preconstructed normative beliefs and practices. (p. 269).*

Acharya goes on to offer a theory of localisation where local actors select, borrow and

modify norms so as to fit in with pre-existing norms which in turn, builds a stronger and more widely accepted practical application of the foreign norms. In a later article (2011) Acharya proposes a new norm dynamics in world politics tool, called 'norm subsidiarity' where local actors construct rules so as to *'preserve their autonomy from dominance, neglect, violation, or abuse by more powerful central actors'* (p.95); they do this by resisting or rejecting those norms, localising them or displacing them all together. In terms of Constructivist IR theories, these concepts remind us of the need to consider norm construction as a 'bottom up process' (p. 98).

Further to this, scholars of the Stanford School such as Buhari-Gulmez (2010) challenge the dominant Realism and Liberalism IR approaches which purport that states diverge rather than converge when it comes to world society influencing norms creation; instead of focusing on the influence that international norms has on domestic norms, the Stanford School focuses on the processes that underlie construction of norms from a local perspective.

Having said this, as Meyer et al point out (1997, p. 171), there is still a strong argument based on a large body of evidence, that world society has the potential to shape national and local identity:

> *'As creatures of exogenous world culture, states are ritualized actors marked by extensive internal decoupling and a good deal more structuration than would occur if they were responsive only to local cultural, functional, or power processes.'*

What all this boils down to, is a question of what Youth are saying, what 'ears' are open to receiving that discourse, and what change it can affect at a local level moving forward.

What power is there in words?

Post-structuralist scholars assert that discourse can change norms. According to Hansen (2021) from the University of Copenhagen, language can also *'enable and disable, being a set of power relations',* therefore critically engaging with language is of upmost importance. This would indicate that there is a certain power in the language or discourse used in the aforementioned guidelines and frameworks used by TNGOs to assist RASIDPs; that language having the power to change norms over time.

Extending this idea, Milliken (2009, p. 227-9) makes three foundational claims about what discourse is, and what it does. Firstly, that discourse is a system of signifying meaning, always involves more than one actor and has the ability to construct social reality. Secondly, that discourse is always attempting to do something, and thirdly, there is no stability: meaning is constantly changing, work is needed to 'articulate and rearticulate' knowledge and identity, and meaning is contingent on history. Milliken also states (2009, p. 229) that norms are changeable, as can be the discourse that helps create the norms in the first place. Again, this would indicate that the language used within these policies and frameworks has the power to change norms.

Diez (1999) also asserts that separating institutions from the discourse they are embedded in is not possible, but as Milliken suggests (1999), they can theoretically alter or influence that discourse, thereby altering cultural norms. Again, it would seem that TNGOs working with RASIDPs potentially have a great deal of power in terms of how the language they use can affect norms; especially considering the fact that most RASIDPs are displaced, working and living in a completely different cultural landscape to what they are accustomed to.

Beaumont (2021) goes a step further, asserting that discourses are never innocent ,

and always political. *'Discourse refers to a specific series of representations and practices through which meanings are produced, identities constituted, social relations established and political and ethical outcomes made more or less possible.'* (Campbell 2010, p234., cited in Beaumont 2021). Representation and interpretation form the basis of world politics, and from a post structuralist stance it is clear that discourse, including that which is used by TNGOs is capable of creating meaning, helping to form identity and cultural norms.

This notion is backed up by constructivist academics such as Park (2006); in her article 'Theorising Norm Diffusion Within International Organisations', she details the roles of international organisations (here after IOs): '*IOs are seen to be norm diffusers, transmitters and norm makers, spreading international norm throughout the international system via teaching states their interests'*. Her research indicates (p. 343), that many other academics agree with this assertion (Finnemore 1993, Finnemore 1996, Checkel 1999, Grigorescu 2002), Finnemore (1996, pg 23) specifically indicating that both IOs and NGOs help diffuse norms by directly teaching states, norms being defined as *'collectively held ideas about behaviour' such that '[U]nlike ideas which may be held privately, norms are shared and social; they are not just subjective but intersubjective'*. She also indicates how IOs can instigate change across various different areas including *'development, human rights, gender equality, and scientific practice'* (p.342).

3.3 How do TNGOs apply these principles in practice?

The principles summarised above provide the foundation, while practical guidelines enable organisations and agencies to implement measures that can achieve these goals in practice. Following three years of discussions with global stakeholders, in November 2020 the cross-sectoral guidelines *'Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action'* were published which reflected a large proportion of these

principles. Launched by UNICEF and the NRC, but written with input from over 60 other organisations (see page 207 of the Compact for the full membership list), this global movement is based on empowering young people to work with senior working partners in a guiding and leading role. The aim being to empower the voices of youth to be heard and to become part of the solution, creating lasting, sustainable solutions for their future. The campaign was launched in the 30 countries where the NRC is working late 2021, and is a perfect example of how TNGOs can be catalysts for normative change at the international level (as discussed earlier in this paper).

The key principles contained in these guidelines form the basis for the training that was rolled out in late 2021, in more than 300 education and training offices around the world; those principles include the recognition that young people hold rights and are positive assets; that youth have the right and deserve to participate in these programs in ways that are deliberate and meaningful; that Youth are seen as more than just beneficiaries, in fact as partners; that we can cater in ways that are non-discriminatory, inclusive, safe and equitable, to a wide range of needs regardless of disability, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender or age; and that at all phases of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC), there is long-term commitment and accountability to these principles.

Reiterating the aforementioned principles recommended by UNHCR and INEE, are the *'Framing Paper: NRC Youth Education and Training Programmes'* (NRC, 2021) and their *'Global Education Strategy 2018-2020'* (NRC 2018) which are at the very heart of the education and training programmes delivered by the NRC for Youth across all their country offices.

Safe and inclusive learning is at the core of this Global Strategy, as are three other core inclusions: the professional development of trainers, facilitators and teachers;

the way policy must influence practice; also, how education professionals must be trained and retained in the system. The Youth Framing Paper recommends a 'Positive Youth Development' approach so as to ensure a more practical application of the goals; this framework views Youth as an asset - an asset that can provide positive contributions to their community. This approach includes the 'Youth Life Skills Framework', which is based on the creation of different learning pathways which depend on the learner's environment and needs including whether they're preparing for continuing education, social engagement and/or work or livelihood opportunities.

This approach is recommended to be at the heart of all programs, and regardless of which pathway a learner may take, all programmes should be designed with the following 6 principles in mind: a clear focus on well-being; the ability to create opportunities for meaningful participation; partnerships providing diverse opportunities; the hiring of staff based on their capacity for friendliness and connection to Youth; a priority for evidence collection that assists in accountability and programme development; and finally, coordination and advocacy with the aim of being able to *positively influence and change policy and practice through giving a voice to youth and being the voice for youth'* (NRC, 2021a, p. 11).

Of course there are challenges to this approach, considering that the cultures and learning environments within which these frameworks and approaches are destined to be implemented, often are top down and patriarchal in nature, and especially in the RASIDP context there is a lack of qualified staff and/or resources available in a local sense to implement the recommended strategies. Add to this the traditional education and training culture in the Middle East having a lack of learner centred approaches, a focus on rote learning, corporal punishment and learning environments that are not physically, emotionally or socially 'safe' or inclusive.

However, due to the fact that NGOs are closer to the people, they have abilities to do things above and beyond what the state is capable of doing (as discussed previously in this paper, referencing Joachim 2020). Therefore, there's a higher probability that they are able to diagnose and act on the root causes of issues that affect the community where they are operating, by collecting evidence and thereby constructing needs based, client centred solutions. There are several examples of how the NRC has done exactly this, two of which being: the review of how the COVID pandemic affected NRC education centres in 20+ countries: *'A Year with Covid-19: A Review of NRC's Education Response'* (NRC 2021b), and the pilot program *After Action Review Report* (NRC 2021c) which was an Arizona State University (ASU) and NRC joint initiative, which synthesised the core learnings gained from the implementation of programs for Youth in Uganda, Kenya, Iran and Jordan (blended learning focus).

Both of these reports arrived at similar findings; that for blended or online learning experiences to be effective, there was a distinct need for experienced and competent IT facilitator support, access to suitable devices and stable internet connection. The report also found that even for countries without the level of IT or internet available, learning packages could be implemented on radio programming but again required competent, willing and available facilitators (oftentimes, simply adults in the community who could be responsive to learner needs).

Save the Children published similar findings about education and ICT, in the report '*The Future Of Learning and Technology In Deprived Contexts* (Unwin et al., 2018) which analysed data from various locations including Colombia, Grenada, Jordan, Pakistan, the Solomon Islands, Somalia, and the UK. In addition to the findings published by the NRC in the above reports, there were additional findings which included: the increase in use of mobile devices; the absence of (and need for) ICT resources in local languages; the realisation that ICT was not the solution, but only a part of the solution;

that the full solution also includes trained facilitators, teaching a structured, standardised, national curriculum. It is through reports like these that data and evidence can be gathered about core challenges and initiatives that have been successful - allowing TNGOs, states and IOs to learn from each other on a global scale.

The Bangkok Desk Review (UNESCO 2020) outlines the challenges that are faced when trying to implement the strategies and approaches recommended by leading TNGOs, which are also found in the summary of the literature in the next section of this paper that outlines challenges faced in lower GDP resettlement or transit countries. These challenges include but are not limited to a distinct lack of: education before displacement, language skills, training of teachers and facilitators, support to parents and guardians of the RASIDP learners, and finally programs that focus on well-being and /or are aligned to the national curriculum.

This UNESCO (2020) report, also mirrors many of the findings in the next section (non TNGO Findings and Recommendations). These include but are not limited to: catering to learners who have slipped outside the formal system with equivalent albethey non-formal programs; generating alternative education pathways which include blended or home based learning solutions; or partnering with private sector organisations who can offer programs such as 'The Learning Passport' - an initiative which Microsoft funded, developed and partnered with Cambridge University so as to provide UNICEF with an online learning platform that could be accessed internationally.

3.4 Findings from organisations that are not NGOs

While much of the work in educating and training RASIDPs in crisis or emergency contexts falls within the scope of services delivered by TNGOs, universities, local governments and the private sector also provide these services. The following section is dedicated to literature regarding the education and training of RASIDPs not explicitly published or funded by TNGOs as this international data also features in the literature that supports the frameworks and policies created by TNGOs; the findings are presented in three subsections: studies that have global relevance; studies in low-GDP transit or host countries; and those studies in countries with higher GDP where resettlement and permanent migration is the focus. These three categories have been selected because the issues found in each tend to form certain themes: global studies are heavily focused on literacy and the use of IT; studies from transit countries tend to focus on social integration and pathways to employment; and data from resettlement countries with higher GDP is heavily focused on integration and assimilation - and the psychosocial / learning support needed for success in this regard.

3.4.1 Global studies

Literacy development, technology and the use of facilitators were the main focus for the 8 articles or chapters that were found to be relevant globally.

One study was based on 15 higher education programs in Jesuit Worldwide Learning Centres specifically targeting refugees (Gladwell et al., 2016); these programs were delivered in 7 different countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East and concluded with 9 recommendations that mirror those of the TNGOs previously outlined; in summary: there being a need for programs that are needs based, agile, inclusive, and 'safe'; adequate access to IT hardware and software; blended learning being only part of a much larger solution to adequate training; one of the highest priorities needing to

be on ensuring availability of trained and qualified facilitators; success of the programs meaning employability of the learners; collaboration, partnerships and evidence gathering being core to the overall success of the programs.

Many studies reported that success of their online or blended learning programs was dependent on the availability of qualified facilitators. Studies centred around online higher education programs from refugee camps in Jordan (Azraq) and Kenya (Kakuma), shared that with the addition of online tutoring by qualified facilitators, completion rates increased (O'Keefe 2020) and is therefore recommended if completion of these courses is key to success for the learners in terms of employment or integration. Another study (Smyser 2019) also recommended the same based on their findings, and also how technology is key to building first and second language literacy skills.

A third study (Thomas et al., 2019) backs up these literacy development findings, and extends the recommendations to include the preservation of a learners first language, whilst simultaneously encouraging the acquisition of a second language so as to assist in the search for employment or further work-ready training. The study also extols the virtues of learning second and third languages, not only to assist them with integration into their host countries, but also having the valuable skill of being able to learn another language more easily should they need to relocate again. At a baseline level, this would constitute a shift in norms; the push for online literacy, native language literacy and the need for additional languages to facilitate ease of movement between countries due to displacement; as constructivists like Park (2006) point out, international organisations can be seen in this regard as being norm diffusers and transmitters.

Another study suggests homeschooling as a viable option because in many scenarios

it is neither possible nor practical to attend a learning centre (Bunn 2018); the reasons for non attendance at a learning centre are various, and include but are not limited to the lack of qualified facilitators, the necessity to work at paid employment during class times, or a variety of safety concerns including racism or sexual abuse. This study suggests homeschooling as a viable option because of the abundance of free online education options now available, the fact that IT is getting more accessible, and that home is theoretically a place where a supportive learning environment can be nurtured. There are also challenges that come with a home schooling environment as compared to a school environment that include: whether the adults in the home environment have the language and digital literacy required to facilitate the learning journey; whether there is access to not only the IT required but also the data or wifi required to run the learning programs; access to recognised training; practical components and applications of the learning; and importantly, the lack of the psycho-social support that the school environment would usually provide.

There is widespread support for RASIDPs trans-nationally recognised qualifications due to the nature of how often these learners need to relocate; the advantages of such a concept include the fact that with qualifications recognised internationally, RASIDPs can become an active member of whatever community they relocate to, and '*provides the necessary skills and competencies required to self-sufficiency and live a normal life no matter if they remain in their host countries, voluntarily repatriated back to their home countries, or transferred to a third country*' (Skjerven & Chao, 2019, p. 90). Again, this could be seen as evidence of constructivist theories that see international organisations as norm makers and diffusers; the provision and availability of international qualifications being seen as a marker for 'success' in the pursuit of the livelihoods of RASIDPs.

3.4.2 Findings from resettlement or transit countries (lower GDP)

The themes from the following 13 articles and chapters, include the benefits of blended learning and IT, getting learners on a pathway to 'livelihood' and host countries benefiting from 'integrative' approaches. These studies included learners from a wide range of countries including Cyprus, France, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kenya, Kurdistan, Laos, Lebanon, Myanmar, Syria, Serbia, Thailand and Turkey.

What's the connection between IT, blended learning, collaborative learning & social skills development?

Blended and collaborative learning experiences were heralded as being advantageous over traditional learning experiences, especially in terms of the ease of access and opportunity for the development of social skills. Most of the literature reviewed outlined challenges that mirror those found by TNGOs: lack of power, connectivity, or access to IT hardware and qualified facilitators (qualified in language or IT skills).

Although 'connectivity issues' was repeatedly found to disrupt online learning experiences, one study found that allowing collaborative face to face sessions with qualified facilitators as part of those online learning experiences, encouraged rapport building and the creation of collaborative, targeted solutions (Dridi et al., 2020).

These blended, collaborative and targeted solutions demonstrate a shift away from traditional norms of TVET in the Middle East which has been described as rote learning based and 'unsafe' as discussed previously in this paper.

Many of the articles reviewed, showed that there was support from learners for a blended learning approach; one study in particular of 93 Syrian refugees (Al-Husban and Shorman, 2020) reported that most learners agreed that blended learning experiences allowed them a good work-life balance that allowed them to achieve their

academic and financial goals. This study showed there was not a difference in responses according to gender, but that the younger the learner, the less support there was for online or blended learning solutions.

Another concern reported by various studies was around inclusivity; providing solutions for learners with diverse needs, disabilities or other challenges. A study that specifically focused on challenges faced by Arabic speaking learners (Banes et al., 2019) recommended integrating Arabic accessibility tools into the learning platforms, ensuring content appealed to different learning styles, providing online and offline versions of learning materials, and *'tools and techniques such as remote support, AI and machine learning, on-demand learning, and micro certification all offer new opportunities to engage refugees in teaching and learning'* (Ibid, p. 122). This study, like many others reviewed for this paper, highlighted how important it is for facilitators to be well trained in how to deal with diverse needs, and the importance of designing programs with the help of the stakeholders - those who are undertaking the study - so that their needs can be taken into account.

Having access to digital and social space has also been reported to allow learners to develop skills (digital, communication, advocacy); a study from a French refugee camp (O'Hare 2019) reported that allowing learners to create a community radio station delivered much more than just basic education, allowing them to *'have editorial control to create their own narratives, thus directly challenging mainstream media.'*

The benefits of having access to technology are far more than simply allowing access to basic education; this point was echoed throughout much of the literature in this section.

Blended learning pathways to employment - do they work?
As was evidenced in the literature from transit or resettlement countries with lower

GDP, much of the literature from TNGOs saw the use of IT as a positive because of the alternative pathways it can create into vocational or higher education opportunities, and ultimately to employment (Al-Husban and Shorman, 2020; Burkardt et al., 2019; Dridi et al., 2020; O'Hare, 2019; Sengupta 2019).

The 'University of the People' (hereafer UoP) is a non profit organisation that provides tuition free 'distance education' opportunities for refugees anywhere in the world; it is funded by donors and provides scholarships for selected accredited American degree programs. They also use volunteer facilitators and a range of open source learning resources and according to Sengupta (p. 187, 2019) the university has worked with hundreds of refugees from countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, providing them with qualifications and skills that are recognised in global labour markets. Such programs offering pathways that lead to employment, are fully funded and accessible world wide, cater to a wide range of RASIDPs and most importantly, those that are the most vulnerable who cannot afford financially, physically or for safety reasons, to attend face to face classes.

Burkardt et al., (2019) reported similar success in a report based on research performed in the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya; in this case, the program targeted the training of new junior health care workers using a blended learning approach. The program resulted in an influx in qualified health workers and the success of the program was attributed to the target group having IT literacy, access to mentoring and peer support. The challenges for the program were mainly due to restrictions because of the location (in a refugee camp) which included environmental and legislative related issues (ibid, p. 98).

The above mentioned literature that focuses specifically on blended learning pathways to employment, mirror the previous findings regarding the use of IT in

RASIDP education and training; that success boils down to having qualified facilitators, stable connectivity, access to hardware and the provision of needs based programs that focus on skills development alongside language development.

Social integration: what are the benefits for the RASIDP and host country?
There are mutual benefits when it comes to RASIDPs integrating into their host countries, via mainstream education or making a livelihood (running businesses or working).

A study on RASIDPs in Israel (Ody 2017) documented how RASIDPs bring 'richness' to a host country whilst also having a positive impact on their mental health and future life success. The report outlines strategies for ensuring effective social integration which include: working at a government level to ensure equal rights for refugees and asylum seekers; removing practices that segregate or discriminate the target group against the local community; and funding education programs that target those refugees and asylum seekers whose education was interrupted and can not enter mainstream vocational or higher education programs.

This notion of livelihood success through integration into a host country is ideal, but not always the reality. A report from the Kenyan Kakuma Refugee Camp (Bellino and Dryden-Peterson 2018), interviewed learners and trainers, and made classroom observations; through this process they found that integration was indeed not as simple or successful when learners are educated in a refugee camp as they are stigmatised as having a lower quality of education which goes on to affect their social status and ability to gain employment in the host country.

Wanjiru (2018) published a study with similar findings, that focused on internally displaced children in Kenya; that integrating the children into mainstream education rather than RASIDP specific education assisted with their acceptance into the wider

community. Similar findings were published by Jovanovic (2019) in a study on Serbia, which also recommended for ultimate success with integration into a host community, intercultural education was also necessary.

Ultimately, there are benefits for both the host communities and RASIDPs if integration can start as early as possible; not providing education or training that segregates or discriminates. According to Bellino and Dryden-Peterson (2018) this recommendation includes working with local host communities to create needs based strategies and approaches that are focused on long term integration and social inclusion (for example targeting local labour shortages); this sentiment is backed up by Sengupta and Kapur (p. 247, 2018) who recommend similar approaches in their study based on the provision of entrepreneurial training in the refugee camps of Kurdistan; this training needing to focus on 'win-win' scenarios for both the RASIDPs and the host communities which boost the local economy, encourage communication and cooperation for mutual financial and social benefit.

3.4.3 Findings from resettlement countries (higher GDP)

Common higher GDP countries that are popular for resettlement are Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Norway, Sweden, the UK and the US; 20 articles were found that included research conducted in these countries from the past five years. Not surprisingly, there were common themes that were found in terms of what was found to lead to livelihood 'success' for RASIDPs; these included but were not limited to: the need for psychosocial support; learning support including language development and strategies for successful learning; and for successful integration and assimilation in the resettlement country, higher education as the preferred pathway.

Common to most of the articles reviewed for this section, was the recommendation that a holistic, partnership focused approach works best for long term integration and

livelihood success. In a study by Reddick and Sadler (2019, p. 71-72) focusing on the Karen people resettling in Canada, their recommendations were broken down into a series of needs based stages including initial settlement needs, to longer term planning around education with the goal of economic stability and social integration; they also recommended ongoing intercultural training and support. Shiekh and Anderson (2018) agree with this notion, citing education as being the key factor to success with integration into the host community; their study shows clear correlation between livelihood success, levels of education and identifying with the host culture.

Psycho-social support for successful integration into host country
Of the 20 articles focusing on refugees and asylum seekers resettling in higher GDP countries, six focused on the importance of psychological and social support needed for effective integration into a host community.

A study focusing on perceived needs of refugees and asylum seekers in Sweden (Hugelis et al., 2020) found their perceived needs to be relating to physical safety and well being: the need for a stable life; access to healthcare; psychosocial support for being indefinitely separated from loved ones. These needs stem from a large number of the respondents in the survey being 'in limbo' awaiting pending refugee status, and therefore being dependent on the state, and without any indication of when their 'status' would be resolved which takes its toll on mental health and resilience. An Australian study (Sheikh et al., 2019) had similar findings; barriers to success including their own relationships, state of mental and emotional well being, financial hardship and lack of knowledge or ability to engage with education opportunities.

The article by Bang (2016) mirrored these conclusions, citing the challenges posed to integration by levels of post traumatic and acculturation stresses for Iraqui refugees in the United States. Recommendations for reducing these challenges included providing immediate access to education and training regardless of 'status' including

specific psychosocial support for conditions such as PTSD.

Clark and Lenette (2020) took this recommendation one step further and suggest that staff working in education and training should receive specific training on how to cater to the psychosocial needs of refugees and asylum seekers including the differences that gender presents; also that if the educational organisations are unable to provide this sort of training, that they should partner with organisations who can provide this and other support services including healthcare and financial assistance. The 2019 article by Sheikh et al., takes this recommendation one step further again, recommending that these sorts of initiatives need to be embedded at the national education policy level so that funding and these recommended practices are automatically part of the education process as opposed to an optional add-on.

One way of providing psycho-social support was recommended by Halkic and Arnold (2019) to be enrolling learners in online, blended learning experiences with a learning community that is known to be engaged, inclusive and supportive; their recommendations also included that success with this type of support was higher if there was a regular face to face element to the learning experience.

Learning support

Psycho-social support is closely related to the need for support in how to adjust to the local culture and language.

In a study focused on the Thai-Burma refugee population at Australian Catholic University (ACU), it was found that learners had higher success rates in their studies after having completed a program which developed critical thinking skills (as opposed to rote learning) which is an adaptation in learning styles required for success studying at an Australian institution (Cranitch and MacLaren 2018). This study concluded that the higher rates of success were attributable not only to the change in

learning styles, but the course also gave learners the change to improve their academic English skills and self confidence. The learners that graduated from these degrees found employment that would not have been possible without the degrees obtained.

Another program mirrors these findings (Fejes 2019), which provided Swedish culture and language training to refugees and asylum seekers who had recently arrived in Sweden. This training was provided in small groups and run by Swedish locals and helped learners: be introduced to, and bond with members of the community; perform basic administrative or health based appointments; and gain employment. The study also noted that not only did it help refugees and asylum seekers integrate, but also changed perceptions of them as 'not yet full citizens' due to the locals forming bonds with and getting to know them and their stories. "Start ins Deutsche" (German language kick-off) by Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany was reported to find similar conclusions (Gereke and Nijhawan 2019); immediate language and cultural training on arrival being seen as paramount to societal integration and being treated as equals by the locals. In fact it was reported that the facilitators in these programs transgressed the student/teacher relationship and created strong friendships as a result of working together on the program, which only strengthened their integration into their new community.

Higher education as pathways to employment and integration
The research indicates that refugees and asylum seekers believe higher education is paramount to successful integration both socially and financially, and also offers the added benefit of being able to return to their home countries with skills and knowledge that could assist in the rebuilding of their states, or migrating to a new country in pursuit of better work opportunities (Arar et al., 2020).

Streitwieser et al. (2018) also recommend that to ensure the livelihood success of

refugees, policy makers need to create long term solutions based on what the evidence shows is and isn't working; their suggestions include transnational agreements based on evidence gathering think tanks which involve a range of stakeholders at all levels of society and government administration.

These sentiments were backed up by Russel and Weaver (2019) in their initiative: the Southern New Hampshire University 'Global Education Movement' which reported that successful education outcomes for refugees and asylum seekers needed to include flexible delivery and assessment options, blended learning options involving regular face to face support, and programs that could adapt to specific populations depending on their needs.

3.5 What does the literature say is required for livelihood success?

There are common themes found in the literature for what constitutes success for RASIDPs regardless of whether the training is being delivered by TNGOs or not, in refugee camps or in host communities, for those transiting or resettling. What appears to be the most important is looking holistically as the RASIDPs as individuals, working with them directly to ascertain their specific needs, thereby providing an opportunity for a needs based, client centred, evidence based solution - in cooperation with appropriate partners or stakeholders who are qualified to provide the support required.

On the whole, it doesn't appear to matter whether the end goal is successful livelihoods, integration or assimilation, the themes are the same: strengthening high level policies so that inclusive, equitable, safe strategies are standard, so as to foster personal well being, cooperation and mutual benefits for all stakeholders involved. Globally, the approaches that are recommended include but are not limited to:

making IT part of the solution (but not the entire solution); ensuring facilitators are appropriately qualified in all arenas (content, IT, language); creating flexible, needs based education pathways which include psychosocial and learning support; and working with policy makers and high level government stakeholders so that sustainable, long term changes can be planned that are mutually beneficial to those integrating, and the communities into which they are assimilating.

It would seem that there is an abundance of evidence that demonstrates the differences between traditional approaches to TVET education and that of TNGO approaches. So has the involvement of TNGOs in TVET education and training in the Middle East changed norms? This is what this thesis will explore.

4. Methodology

4.1. Survey Design

4.1.1 How was the survey designed?

The original survey was made up of 40 questions, divided into 4 sections; this thesis analyses some of the data retrieved from the survey results but only covers questions that directly relate to whether TNGOs can be seen to be changing norms in education and training environments for RASIDPs, within this cohort of survey respondents in the Middle East. The sections were broken down as follow:

1. **Section 1:** asked questions as to the respondents' demographics (both Learners and Trainers)
2. **Section 2:** asked specific questions ONLY to Learners, regarding employment status, how often and for how long training is attended and what barriers prevent attendance.
3. **Section 3:** asked specific questions ONLY to Trainers, designed to ascertain currency in workplace skills, qualifications, experience, perceived ability to provide adequate assistance for learners with disabilities, and the extent to which workplaces and external professionals are included in training programs.
4. **Section 4:** a comprehensive set of questions for Learners and Trainers regarding how they and their roles are perceived in vocational training programs, what success after a program looks like, how well the training prepares learners for work, the best place and frequency to access training, what Trainers need in terms of professional development, how and where Youth learn best, the best way to assess Youth, and the ratios of theory to practice, and Learners to equipment.

Note the responses to the survey have been arranged thematically and do not reflect the order of the questions in the survey. The full set of survey questions is available in Appendix 1: Original Survey Questions.

4.1.2 What wording was used and why?

There are some terms that were explained to ensure the Learners and Trainers understood the questions being asked. Below were the explanations given.

"When we talk about 'your skilled workplace', we are referring to for example, if you're teaching

- *Carpentry = carpentry business*
- *Hairdressing = hair salon*
- *Agribusiness = farm*

So the PLACES where you would USE the SKILLS you're teaching, working or running a business.

When we talk about PROFESSIONALS, we are referring to the people who have the skills in those workplaces - for example, if you're teaching

- *Carpentry = carpenters*
- *Hairdressing = hairdressers*
- *Agribusiness = farmers*

'Learners' and 'Youth' are used interchangeably, as are the terms 'trainer', 'facilitator' and 'teacher'."

4.1.3 How was translation of the responses dealt with?

The whole survey was translated into Arabic before distribution to the survey respondents.

Before analysing the responses, the closed and open ended questions were translated back into English from Arabic by a native Arabic speaker from NRC MERO (NRC Middle East Regional Office). The NRC MERO team analysed the data for their own purposes soon after the responses were collected.

4.1.4 How were the responses analysed?

For the purposes of this thesis, the thesis writer then categorised the open questions into generalised themes, which the NRC Arabic translator kindly checked over to ensure categorisation of the translated items was correct.

The data from both the open and closed questions was analysed through simple formulas in excel, from which visuals were created to show the relationship between the variables. In terms of representing the data, CLOSED questions are represented as GRAPHS and the OPEN ended questions in WORD CLOUDS. The WORD CLOUDS represent the themes that were identified in the open responses, rather than the original answers as translated. Samples of the two types of visual representations of the data are below, in Figure 1.

WORD CLOUD EXAMPLE

GRAPH EXAMPLE
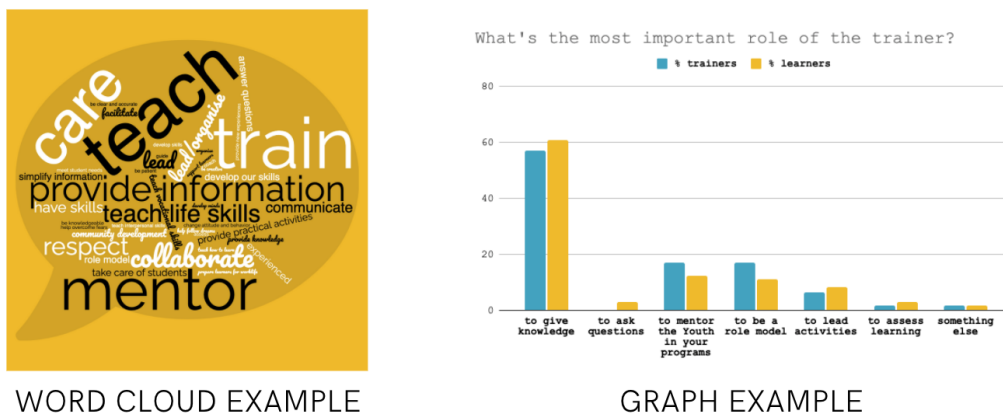
Figure 1. Samples of graphics

4.2 Limitations of the survey design

As stated previously, the limitations of this data is that it is a relatively small sample, from a single NGO across four countries and due to the current geopolitical situation the majority of respondents were of a single nationality (Syrian). Although the data is useful in demonstrating whether norms are changing in a single TNGO such as the NRC, a similar survey would need to be conducted across multiple NGOs, in multiple countries to ascertain whether there were similar trends in the data outside of this one TNGO. To make the data even more reliable, a similar study could also be conducted with stakeholders engaged in non-NGO, traditional vocational training in each of the surveyed countries, to ascertain baseline perceptions of learners and trainers in traditional TVET environments. Other limitations include but are not limited

to:

- **Translation:** The survey was conducted in Arabic, however due consideration was not given to the various dialects of Arabic that would appear in the open responses. As there was only one bi-lingual Jordanian translator able to assist with the translations, and the responses were anonymous, it was not possible to separate the answers into the various dialects or translate all responses with 100% accuracy.

- **Question specific limitations:**
  - **Question 3:** asked *'What is your displacement status? '* and had four possible answers: *'Displaced within your country (IDP)', 'Refugee', 'Asylum Seeker'* or *'Other'*. Due to the high number of 'Other' responses, there is not a valid set of data surrounding the status of the respondents.
  - **Question 5:** asked respondents to answer the 'Washington Group (WG) Short Set on Functioning (WG-SS)' questions[10]; the WG

      'promotes and coordinates international cooperation in the area of health statistics focusing on the development of disability measures suitable for census and national surveys. The major objective of the WG is to provide information on disability that is comparable throughout the world.'

    This set of 6 questions is frequently used in the humanitarian sector to gather data regarding difficulties people may have with basic daily functioning activities including seeing, hearing, mobility, remembering, self care and communicating. There was refusal by some centres to take part in the survey because for their nationality it is culturally not appropriate to discuss disability; this may have impacted the honesty of the responses from other nationals displaced in other countries. There is more on this data set further in the paper.
  - **Question 23:** asked an open question to the Trainers about their qualifications; due to this question being 'open' (instead of a

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[10] The Washington Group Short Set on Functioning Questions

standardised set of 'closed' options to choose from) there was a vast array of responses and therefore it was not possible to make valid or meaningful representation of this data.

○ **Question 31:** This question asked *'Explain in your own words how the program helps or doesn't help You* (for Learners) *or Youth* (for Trainers) *to become employed or start your/their own business.'* Again, the data would have been more meaningful if the question had been split into two questions - one focusing on how it helps, and the other focusing on how it doesn't help. It was not possible in all instances to distinguish between whether the open responses were positive or negative in nature and therefore this data set was also rendered invalid.

○ **Question 32:** This question asked Learners: *'If you could ask for anything (apart from money, a job or education), what would you ask for that would help you have a successful life?* (Open ended question) There were virtually no answers apart from 'money', 'job' and 'education', therefore the question was either misunderstood or the Learners did not have any meaningful responses for this question. The Trainers were asked a similar question: *'Apart from money, a job or education, what do you think Youth need to have a successful life?* (Open ended question) and provided an array of meaningful responses to the same question. More about the difference in responses between Learners and Trainers is covered in the sections to follow.

4.3 Sampling, Data Collection and Analysis

4.3.1 Sampling

As the study was performed only in NRC educational facilities, the sampling in this survey would be considered 'convenience cluster sampling'. According to Bryman (p. 187) the results would not then be generalisable to all RASIDPs, rather only indicative of Youth Learners and Trainers from NRC centres in the Middle East region. Further information regarding the demographics of the sample is included in the following sections.

To select a sample that was generalisable to Youth RASIDPs globally, the respondents would have to include a global range of nationalities, who were randomly selected from cohorts who were and were not enrolled in education or training programs. Considering there are over 30 million Youth that fall into this category and are often in environments that are unstable, gathering a set of data from this isolated niche at least provides data about RASIDP Youth who are privileged to be enrolled at the NRC education centres in the Middle East region.

4.3.2 Data Collection

The survey was 'self-administered' through Google Forms, and therefore 'web based' (according to Bryman, 2016, p. 173). For Learners, it was supervised by Trainers in case of any language barrier or content issues, and therefore as reliable as possible in terms of respondents being able to answer questions without comprehension issues.

    a. **Quantitative data** - there were a series of closed questions where respondents chose from a drop down menu of choices; closed questions formed the majority of the questions asked.

    b. **Qualitative data** - there were also a series of open ended questions which allows, as Bryman (2016, p.244) suggests, the respondents to answer 'in their own terms', and avoiding 'certain kinds of answers' to be suggested for them.

4.3.3 Triangulation

With 40 base questions, and two sets of respondents (Trainers and Learners), from 6 nationalities across 4 Middle Eastern countries, from a variety of age ranges and genders, there are literally endless ways the data can be triangulated.

Considering the IR focus of this paper, discussing norms and whether they can be changed by TNGOs, certain questions have been chosen for deep analysis that showcase responses that indicate there either has or has not been a change in norms, and whether these differences could be large enough to constitute influence from the TNGO they are studying or working at - the NRC.

The data that is analysed for these purposes includes questions that provide data on:

- Subject areas and gender (Section 6.1)
- Identification with disability (Section 6.2)
- Barriers to attendance (Section 6.3)
- Trainer and learner employment statistics (Section 6.4)
- Links to industry (Section 6.5)
- Role of Facilitators in training (Section 7.1)
- Role of Youth in training (Section 7.2)
- How trainers and learners describe each other (Section 7.3)
- What success looks like, including how well training prepares Youth for livelihoods (Section 7.4)
- Where is best for Youth to learn and be assessed on vocational skills (Section 7.5)
- What professional development facilitators or trainers need (Section 7.6)

4.4 Ethical aspects and epistemological positioning

Trainers involved with overseeing the Learners while they responded to the surveys were given basic training by their regional offices, and provided with documentation that explained the purpose of the survey, and how the data collected would help NRC improve the programs based on what they indicated they needed; the core documentation provided can be found in Appendix 2. Part of this training was about how to prepare the learners for the survey, so they were well aware of why they were taking part and also that their responses were anonymous. As suggested in Bryman (2016, p. 125) this is standard ethical practice so as to reduce any foreseeable risk of harm (mental, physical or emotional) and to ensure that they are participating voluntarily. This pre-survey training resulted in some country offices pulling out of the survey because of the question types surrounding disability, which will be explained in further sections; to this end, the pre-survey training had the desired effect.

There were mechanisms in place to ensure the anonymity of the respondents and security of the data. The NRC also has documented their ethical considerations of working with Youth which includes anonymity and voluntary participation (NRC Framing Paper for Youth Education and Training Programmes, 2021, p. 5); the Survey questions and pre-Survey training documentation was passed by the Manager of Education Programmes, Middle East Regional Office, before being deployed.

This survey not only provides valuable data on the perceived needs of Youth RASIDPs (which academically is in short supply), but also provides important insight into how TNGOs like the NRC may be involved in the adaptation of norms. According to the literature mentioned in above sections like the Youth Framing Paper and Guidelines (NRC 2021), if searching for information on how to construct a future for Youth, the best source of information is from Youth themselves; a generation who despite their

nationality or the trauma they have encountered during their displacement, deserve the best of what life can offer. As suggested by Kuhn (1962), before a 'Paradigm Change' is a 'Model Revolution'; the data from this survey could contribute to such a change where we start living in a world that is led by Youth, instead of by 'senior leaders'.

4.5 Potential Value and Applicability

This evidence has potential value in terms of demonstrating to the NRC and their country offices in the Middle East, what their learners and trainers report as priorities which would support the international push for Youth to be involved as leaders and guides for policy making; this data also demonstrates to potential donors the perceived needs within the region and the commitment to accessing the voice of Youth. The data also contributes to the literature on perceived needs of learners and trainers in a refugee education context (of which there is very little available academically on a global scale), and also provides insight into the role of TNGOs on normative change within the TVET sector in the Middle East region.

The applicability of a study like this, when ascertaining the potential influence of TNGOs when it comes to normative change, is widespread. Surveys of this nature, as stated previously, could be extended to different countries and contexts within the region to ascertain whether the same trends are seen region wide; it could also be extended to other regions which include transit countries and/or resettlement countries, which would create a much more robust data set that could then be used to compare and contrast results globally, or could even be used in higher education contexts for Youth. The survey could also be used in a longitudinal sense, collecting data from the same regions over an extended period which would provide evidence as to how the needs are changing over time, and how norms are changing over time.

5. Overview of the respondent demographics

Overall, 236 vocational training respondents currently residing in and working or training in NRC Education Centres in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq responded to the survey. Of the 236, 171 were Learners, and 65 were Trainers; 40% of Learners and 44% of Trainer respondents were female.

What colour system is used when presenting the data and why?

The same colouring system is used in all the tables, charts and graphs presented in this paper so as to facilitate ease when comparing and contrasting the data. The colours were randomly selected and are demonstrated in Table 1 below.

Iraq = orange	Lebanon = green	Learners = yellow
Jordan = red	Syria = purple	Trainers = blue

Table 1. Colour coding system used for all tables and figures

5.1 Who were the respondents?

The following pages will summarise the data from Section 1 of the survey, which tells us about the demographics of the respondents.

COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE

Almost half of the respondents were resident in Syria. Although there was a fairly even distribution of Trainers from the four different country offices, over half of the Learner responses were from those in Syria. Numbers of respondents can be found inside each section of the pie graphs below in Figure 2.

Country of Residence All Respondents
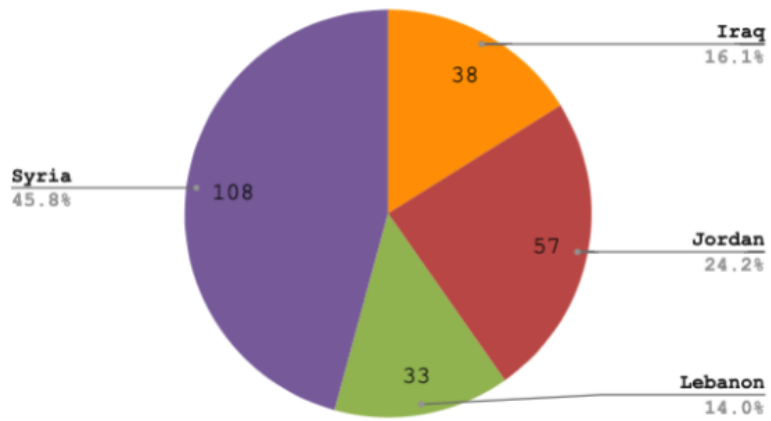
Learners by Country of Residence
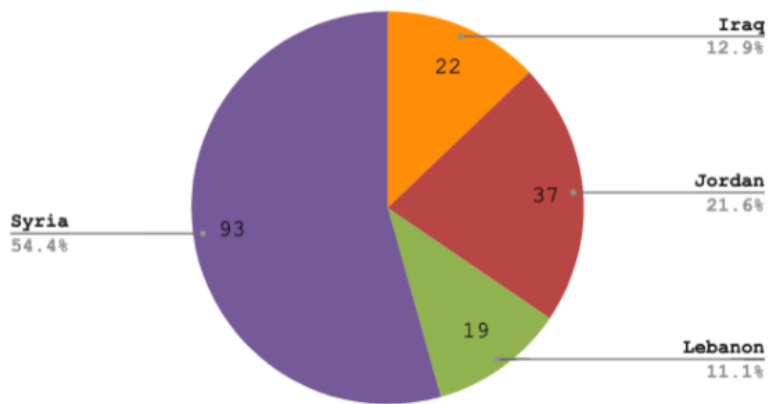
Trainers by Country of Residence
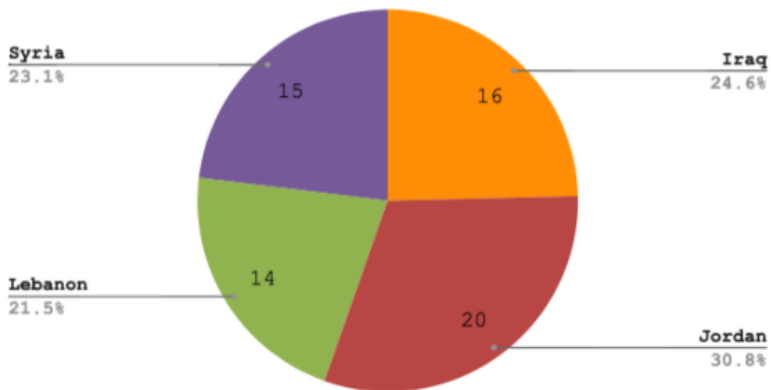
Figure 2. Countries of residence: all respondents, learners and trainers

AGE RANGE

Youth Learners participating in these training programs are 15-32 years old. Although the NRC global youth definition is 15-24, in a number of contexts the age range has been expanded to respond to contextual definitions of youth. 64% of Learner respondents were 15-17 years old, and the majority of Trainer respondents (61 out of 65) were over 25 years old. The distribution of learner respondents by age range can be seen below in Figure 3.
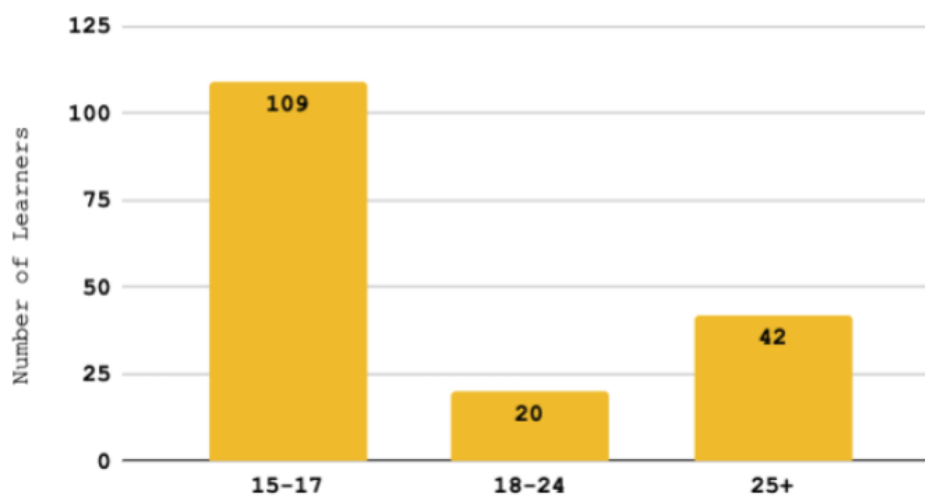
Figure 3. Learner respondent by age range

SUBJECT AREA

Only those offering programmes in: mobile maintenance, welding, jewellery making, HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air conditioning), computer maintenance, tailoring, barbering, hairdressing, carpentry, beauty, electrical, small appliance maintenance, bakery, agriculture were invited to the survey. The survey did not target Life Skills, English, Computer or Business Skills. There were 30 different subjects listed by Trainers and Learners. Figure 4 below, shows the ratio of Learners and Trainers who responded from each subject area: only the top 10 are listed below, and represent 70% of the Trainers and 90% of the Learners who responded.
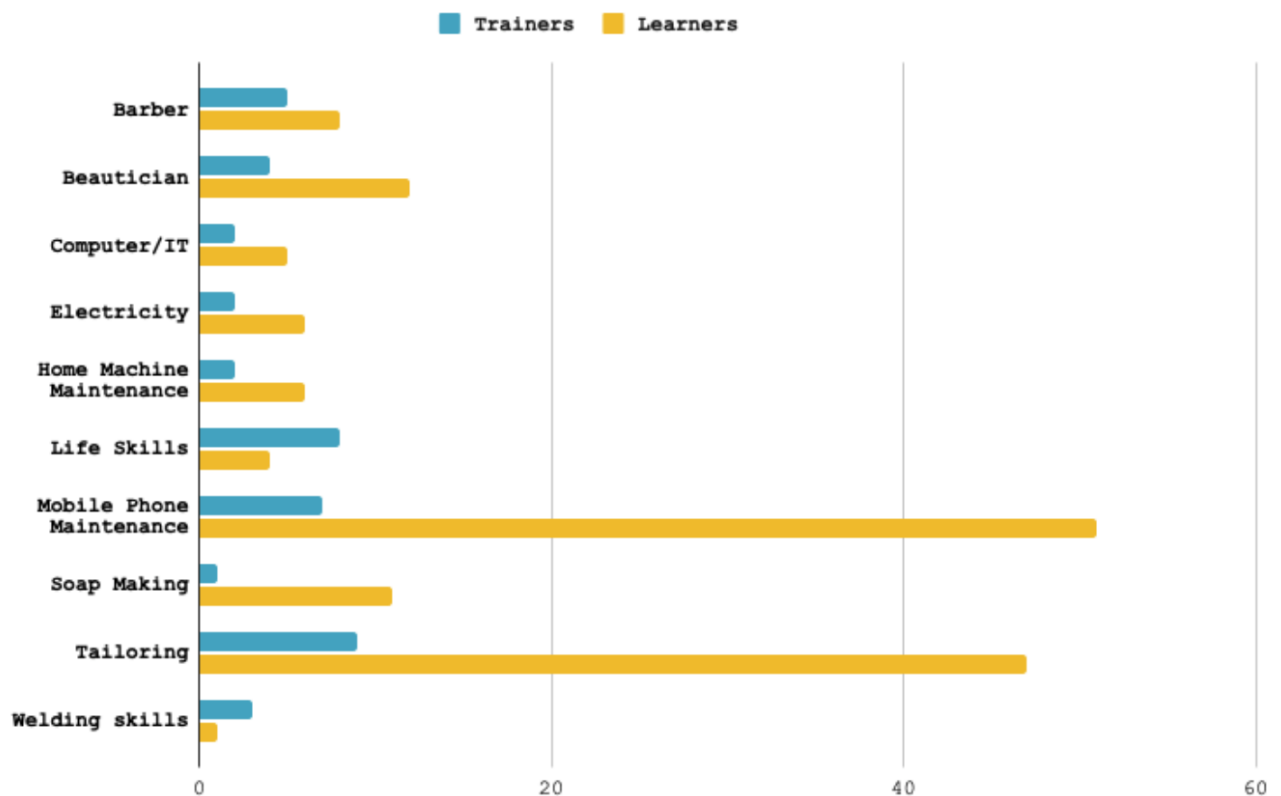
Figure 4. Top 10 subjects studied or taught by respondents

49

5.2 Who are the learners?

NATIONALITY

Of the 171 Learners who responded to the survey, 81% are Syrian (33% of whom are living outside of Syria), 12% Iraqi, 6% Lebanese and 2% Palestinian, as can be seen in Figure 5 below.
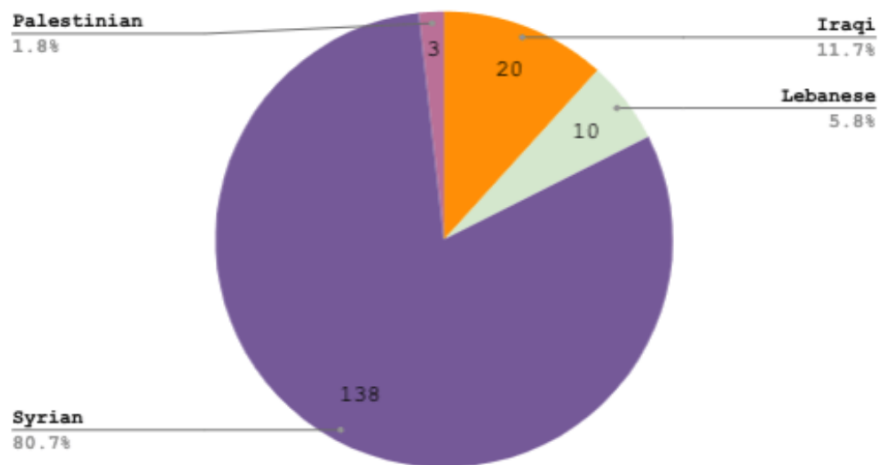
Figure 5. Nationality of learner respondents

DISPLACEMENT STATUS

Question 3 asked respondents whether they considered themselves IDPs, Refugees, Asylum Seekers or 'Other'. As over 35% of the responses were 'Other', this data was not considered valid.

50

DWELLING

60% of Learners who responded live in the community, and less than 40% live in a camp, as can be seen from Figure 6 below.
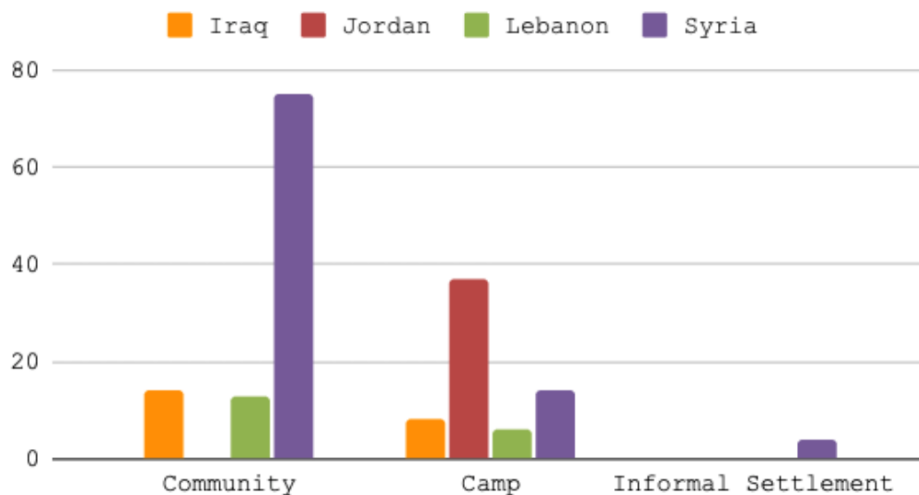
Figure 6. Dwelling types of learner respondents

DISABILITY

Question 5 asked the 6 Washington Group short set questions.

The six Washington Group short set Questions are:

1. *Do you have difficulty seeing, even if wearing glasses?*
2. *Do you have difficulty hearing, even if using a hearing aid?*
3. *Do you have difficulty walking or climbing steps?*
4. *Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating?*
5. *Do you have difficulty with self-care such as washing all over or dressing?*
6. *Using your usual (customary) language, do you have difficulty communicating, for example understanding or being understood?*

The multiple choice answers to these questions are: *'No, No - no difficulty', 'Yes – some difficulty', 'Yes – a lot of difficulty',* or *'Cannot do at all'.*

As can be seen in Figure 7 below, over 95% of all Learners responded *'No, no difficulty'* for hearing, self care and communicating, and on average 85% the same response for seeing, walking/climbing steps and remembering/concentrating.

Approximately 15% of learners reported *'Yes, some difficulty'*, for seeing and remembering/concentrating. Other responses were negligible.
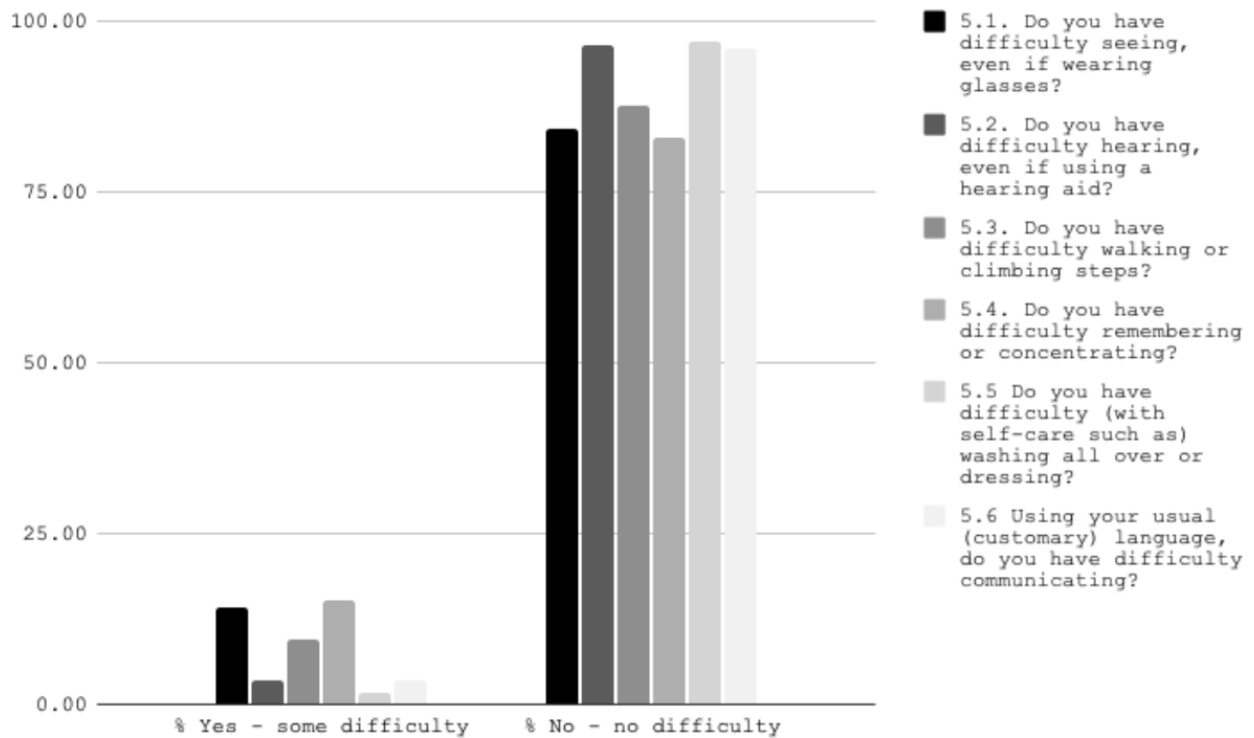
Figure 7. Learner responses to Washington Group questions on identifying with disability

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Over 80% of Learners were NOT WORKING as is demonstrated in Figure 8 below.

Figure 9 shows that half of the learners that do work, are performing DAILY (CASUAL) WORK, .
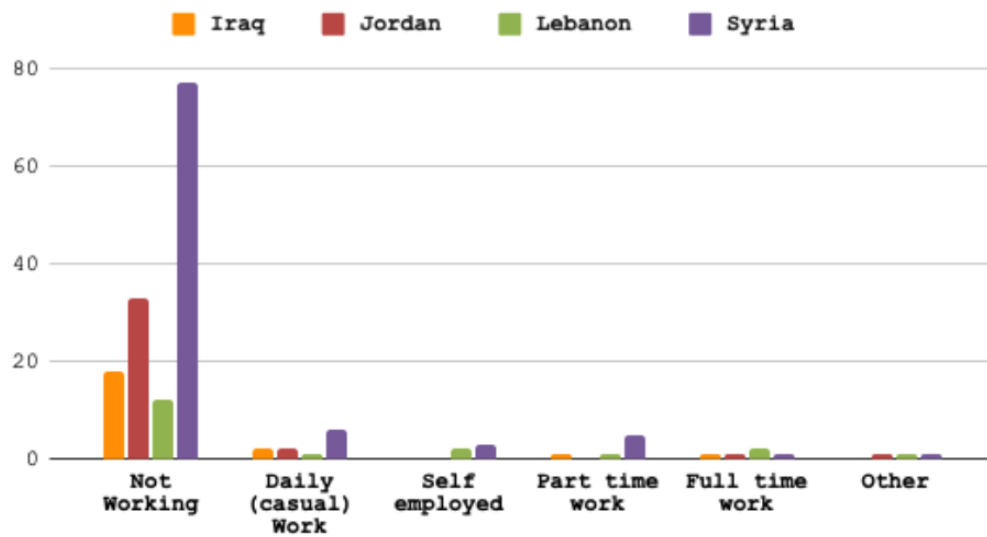
Figure 8. Employment status of learner respondents, by country office
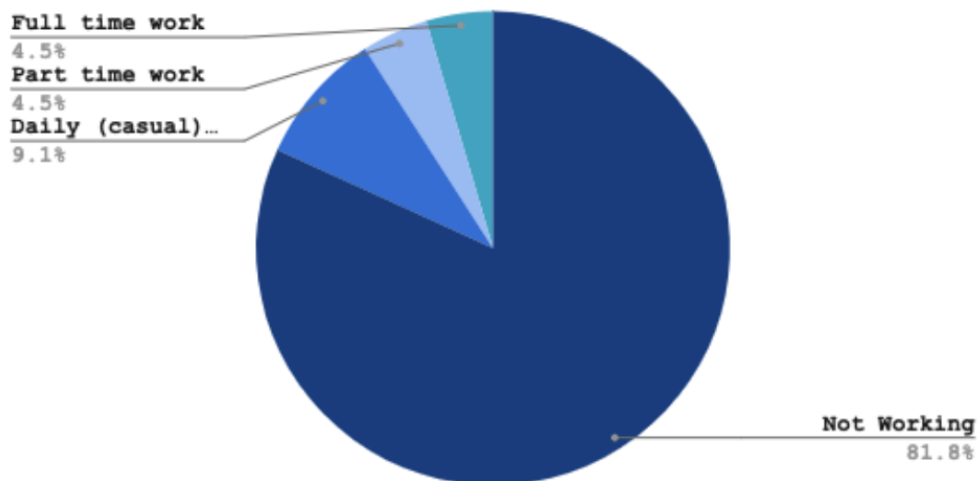
Figure 9. Type or work engaged in by learner respondents

TRAINING ATTENDANCE

As can be seen in Figure 10 below, 64% of Learners attend classes 5 DAYS PER WEEK, and as Figure 11 shows, 46% spend MORE THAN 4 HOURS PER DAY attending training on the days they attend. The majority of those learners are based in Syria.
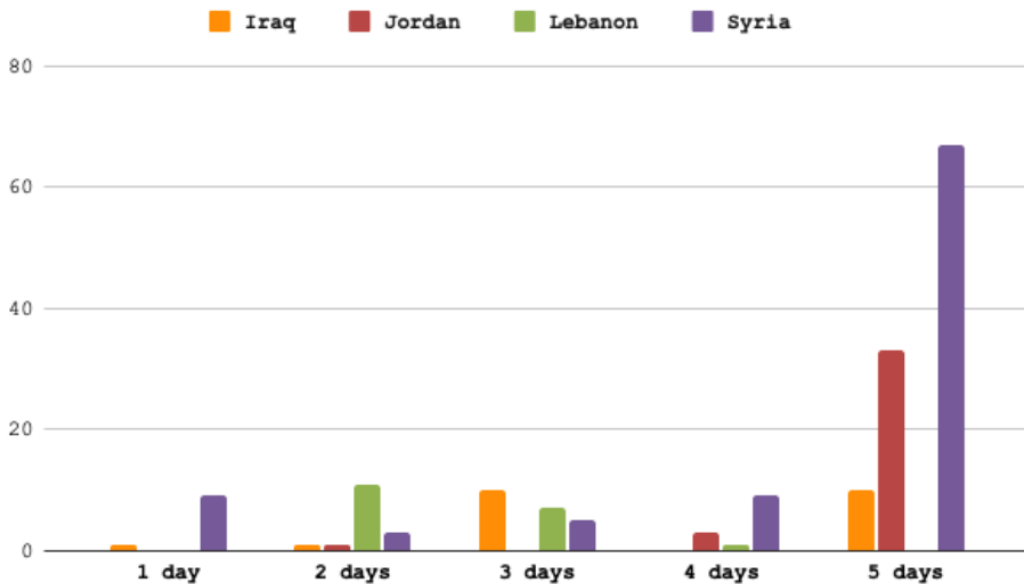
Figure 10. Number of days learner respondents attend training at an NRC training centre
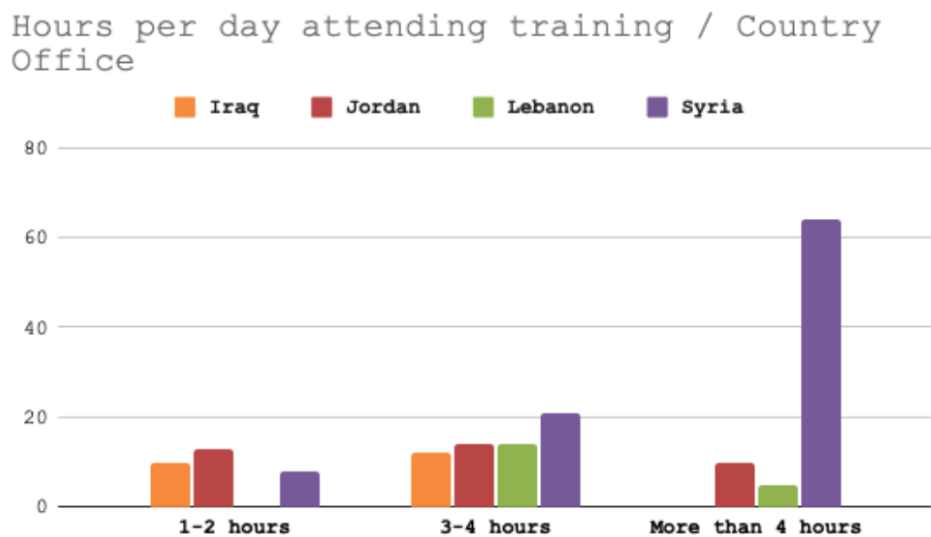
Figure 11. Number of hours per day learner respondents attend training at an NRC training centre

BARRIERS TO ATTENDANCE

Learners could select as many barriers as were true for their situation. The most significant barriers, as can be seen in Figure 12, were 'FAMILY DUTIES' and the 'COST OR LACK OF TRANSPORT'.

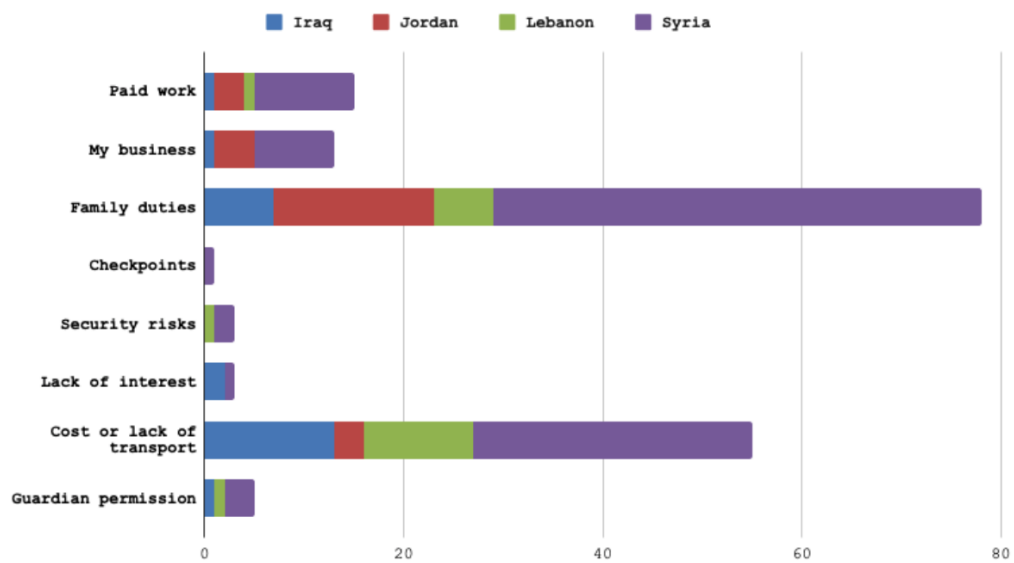The other two notable responses were 'PAID WORK' and 'MY BUSINESS'.

Figure 12. Barriers to attending training for learner respondents

5.3 Who are the trainers?

CURRENCY

Over 70% of trainers are STILL WORKING as a skilled professional in their field.

8% were working as a skilled professional LESS THAN A YEAR AGO, 8% MORE THAN A YEAR AGO, and 8% MORE THAN 5 YEARS AGO. Three of the 65 trainers (5%) HAVE NOT WORKED as a skilled professional.

EMPLOYMENT TYPES

Trainers were asked: *'In addition to being a trainer at NRC, are you also working as a professional in a skilled workplace, in the industry you teach about?'* As can be seen in Figure 13, almost half of the trainers are running their own BUSINESS; less than 30% are NOT EMPLOYED OUTSIDE of their training role with NRC.
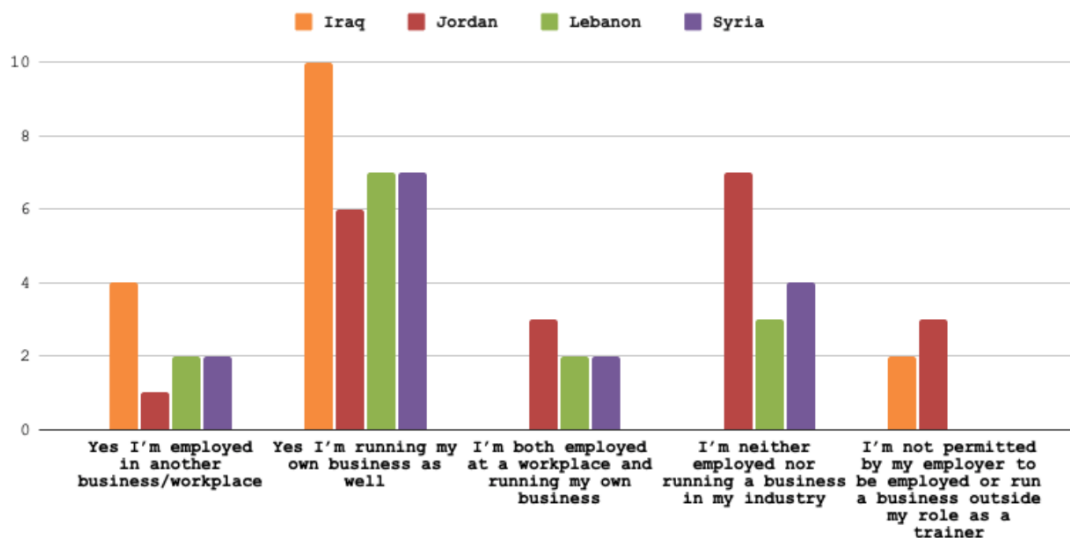

Figure 13. Trainer respondents working as a professional in a skilled workplace in the industry they are teaching about

TIME SPENT IN EXTERNAL EMPLOYMENT

Trainers were also asked *'How many hours a week do you spend working in a skilled workplace outside NRC (as an employee or running your own business) in the industry you teach about?'* As can be seen from Figure 14 below, 30% of trainers work MORE THAN 10 hours per week outside NRC, 40% work LESS THAN 10 hours, and 30% DO NOT WORK outside NRC at all.
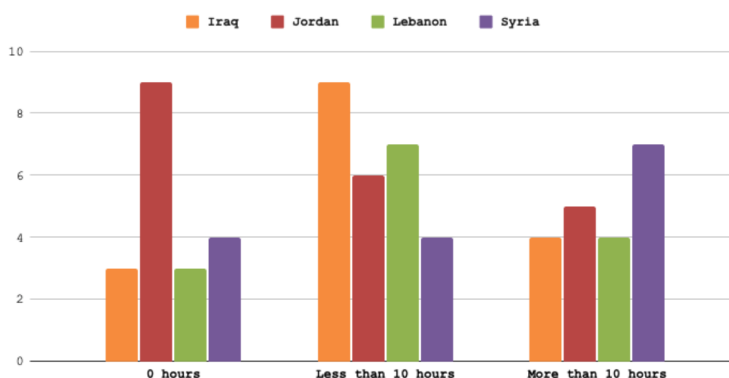

Figure 14. Number of trainer respondents working as a skilled professional in the industry they teach about

QUALIFICATIONS

The question to ascertain qualifications (Question 23) was open ended and the data was not sufficiently clear to be analysed or considered valid.

TRAINING EXPERIENCE

As can be seen in Figure 15, 40% of trainers have more than 5 years experience, and 50% have 1-5 years experience. Less than 14% have less than a year's experience.
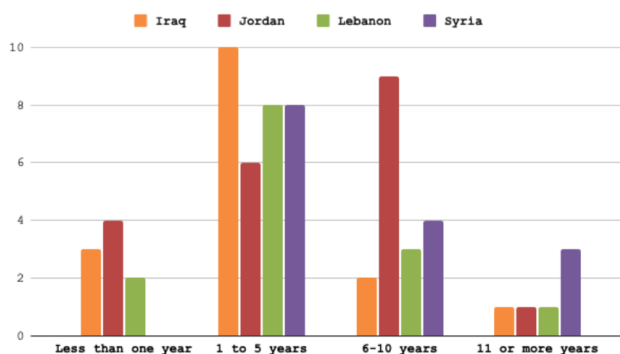

Figure 15. Years of experience trainers have training learners

WORKING WITH LEARNERS WITH DISABILITY

Interestingly, trainers identified different disabilities to those identified by the learners. Whereas approximately 15% of learners reported *'Yes, some difficulty'*, for SEEING and REMEMBERING/CONCENTRATING, as can be seen in Figure 16 below, trainers identified different responses: 30% of the responses indicated learners had difficulty COMMUNICATING, and another 30% with REMEMBERING and CONCENTRATING. All 6 disabilities were identified as being present in their learners to a much larger extent to what the Learners self identified.
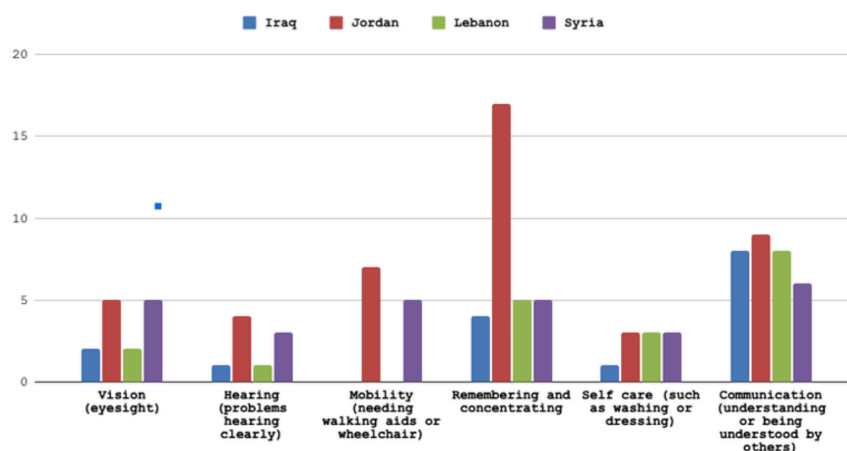

Figure 16. Trainers identifying all disabilities they identify their learners to have

Trainers overwhelmingly indicated (92%) they had the skills and knowledge to help their learners living with disability, as can be seen from Figure 17 below.
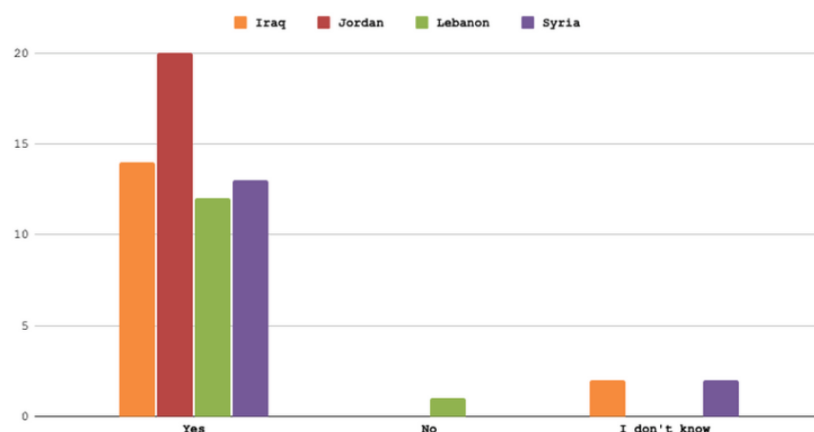

Figure 17. Trainers perceptions of whether they have the skills and knowledge to help learners with disability

LINKING WITH INDUSTRY

For the following questions regarding linking with industry, nearly 50% of Trainers responded that they are living in a camp, however 'NEVER' responses for all 'linking with industry' questions were split evenly between those living in camps and the host community.

WORKPLACE VISITS

When asked *'How often do you take your Youth vocational learners to visit relevant skilled workplaces/businesses',* 50% of trainers reported that they never take their learners to visit workplaces in their industry, as can be seen in Figure 18.
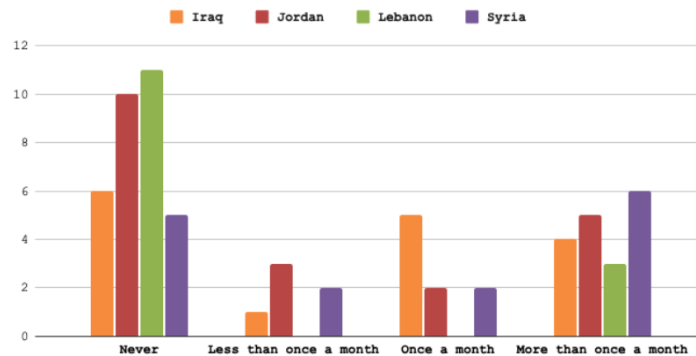

Figure 18. How often trainer respondents take their learners to visit skilled workplaces

GRADUATE GUEST SPEAKERS

The results are very similar for bringing graduates back to speak to Learners - 45% of trainers never do this.
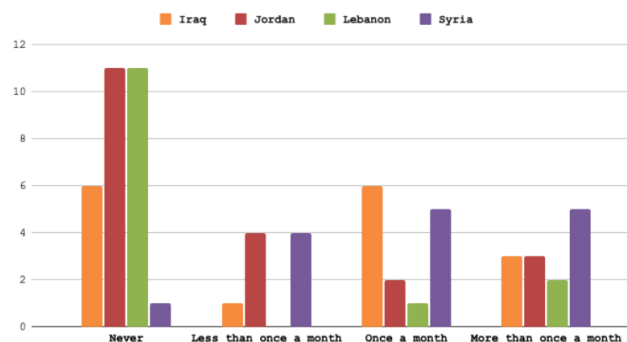

Figure 19. How often trainer respondents bring graduates to speak to Youth

INDUSTRY GUEST SPEAKERS

As can be seen in Figure 20, nearly 60% of trainers responded that they never invite industry guest speakers into their classrooms.
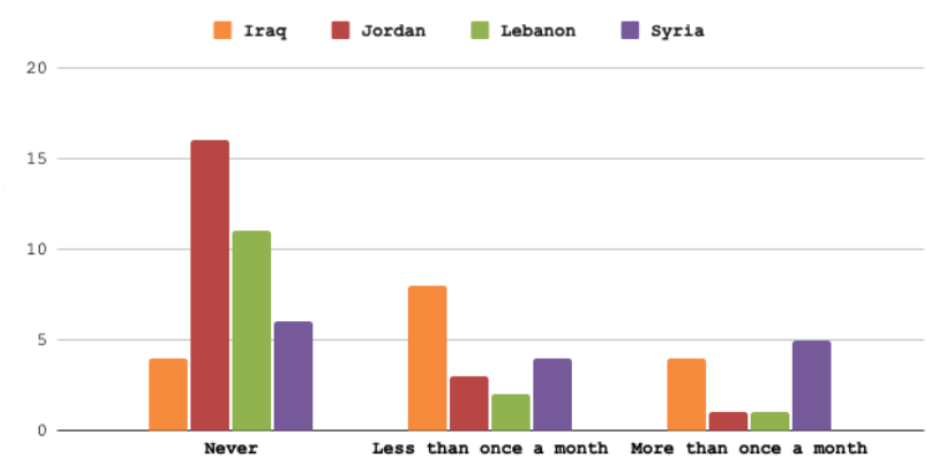

Figure 20. How often trainer respondents invite industry guest speakers into their classrooms

WHY NO ENGAGEMENT WITH INDUSTRY OR GRADUATES?

Question 22 asked trainers if they had answered 'Never', to any of the three previous questions (taking Youth to workplaces, inviting graduates or professionals to speak to your Youth), to explain why. From 35 responses, the most common response (11) was that there was 'NO OPPORTUNITY, closely followed by 'NOT ALLOWED' as can be seen in Figure 21 below.
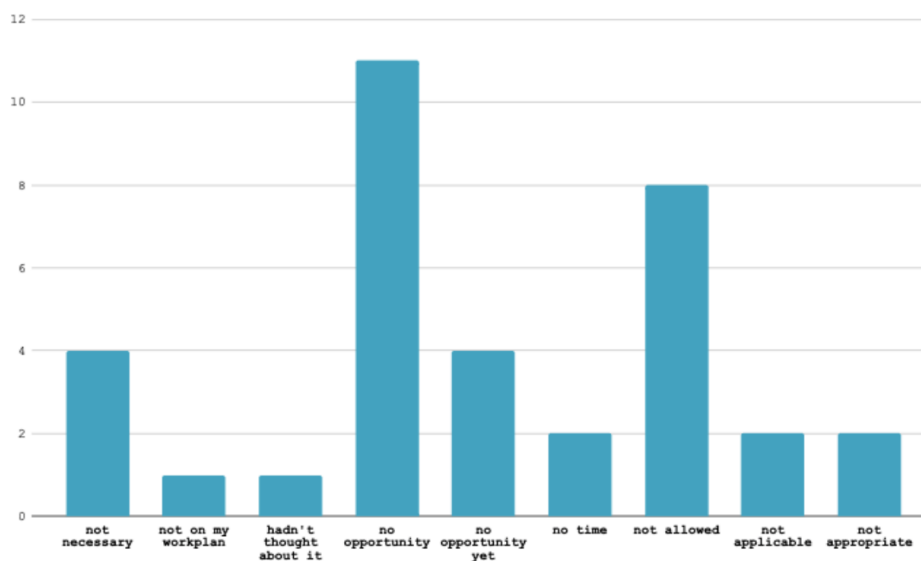

Figure 21. Why trainer respondents do not engage with industry workplaces, professionals or graduates

6. What does the demographic overview tell us about whether TNGOs are changing norms?

The following sections analyse data from the demographic questions asked in Section 1 of the survey; this data gives us an insight into gender roles, identification with having a disability, barriers to attending training, employment status and how closely vocational training at the NRC is linked to industry.

6.1 Traditional gender role norms

The survey asked respondents what subject they were studying or teaching; the top 10 subjects were *'barber', 'beautician', 'computer/IT', 'electricity', 'home machine (appliances) maintenance', 'soap making', 'tailoring'* and *'welding skills'.*

If we look at the top 10 subjects more closely and split the data into genders for both trainers and learners (Figure 22), the results show that traditional Middle Eastern gender roles when it comes to employment fields are being maintained; as can be seen from the tables below, only female learners are studying to be Beauticians and Soap Makers, and only male learners are studying to be Barbers, Electricians, Appliance and Mobile Phone Technicians, and Welders. The same trends are seen in the gender split of the trainers; traditional male professions being taught by males, and traditional female professions being taught by female trainers.
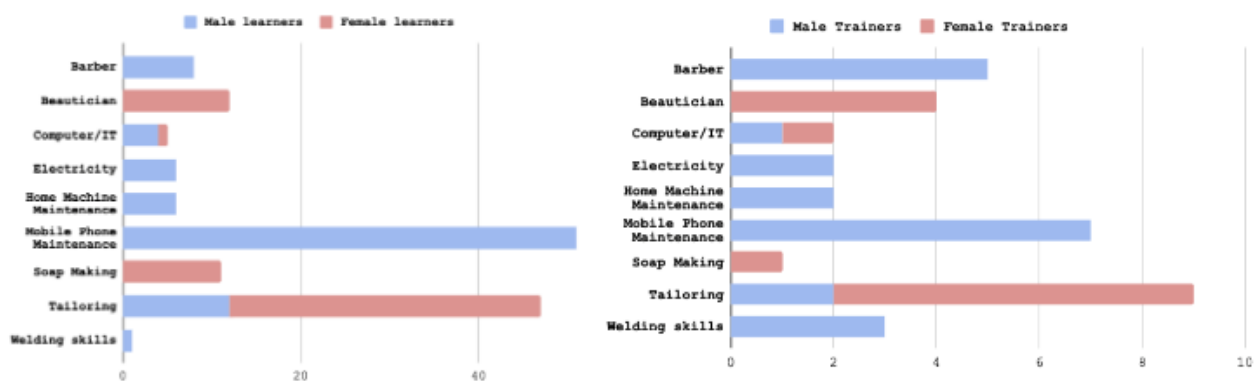

Figure 22. Genders that are studying and training in different subject areas

Having said that, the gender split of survey respondents indicates that 44% of learner respondents and 40% of trainer respondents were female. If traditional Middle Eastern education and training is seen to be male dominated, and neither safe emotionally, physically or socially (Faour 2012), this almost even split between male and female learners could be considered a shift in norms; it may indicate a change in regards to the equity, quality and inclusiveness of training options provided by the NRC in vocational contexts, which aligns with the goals of the UNHCR's "Refugee Education 2030 Strategy for Refugee Inclusion" (2019), and also the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 (2015) which aims to provide quality education for all Youth male and female.

This dichotomy between there being an apparent equitability of access to training, but a clear division between which training is taken up by males and females could be considered an example of Acharya's theory of localisation (2004) where local stakeholders select, borrow and modify transnational norms so as to fit in with their pre-existing norms which creates a stronger, more widely accepted practical application of foreign norms. As Meyer etal point out (1997, p. 171) world society has the potential to shape national and local identity; equal access to training for both females and males could be considered one way a TNGO like the NRC has the potential to help shape the way females in the Middle East are treated - equally, when it comes to access to quality education and training. The work of constructivist scholars such as Park (2006), Finnemore (1993), Finnemore (1996), Checkel (1999), Grigorescu (2002) aligns with this notion that international organisations and NGOs help diffuse norms such as these - equal access to training regardless of gender - although as can be seen in this case, this equal access to training may still invoke gender stereotypes.

6.2 Disability norms

As mentioned previously, trainers identified a different level of disabilities among their learners, to what the learners identified as having themselves.

While the majority of learners responded that they had little to no difficulty with any of the Washington Group Disability questions, trainers reported a very different prevalence of disability among their learners: 30% of the trainer responses indicated that their learners had difficulty COMMUNICATING, and another 30% with REMEMBERING and CONCENTRATING. All 6 disabilities were identified by trainers as being present in their learners to a much larger extent to what the learners self identified.

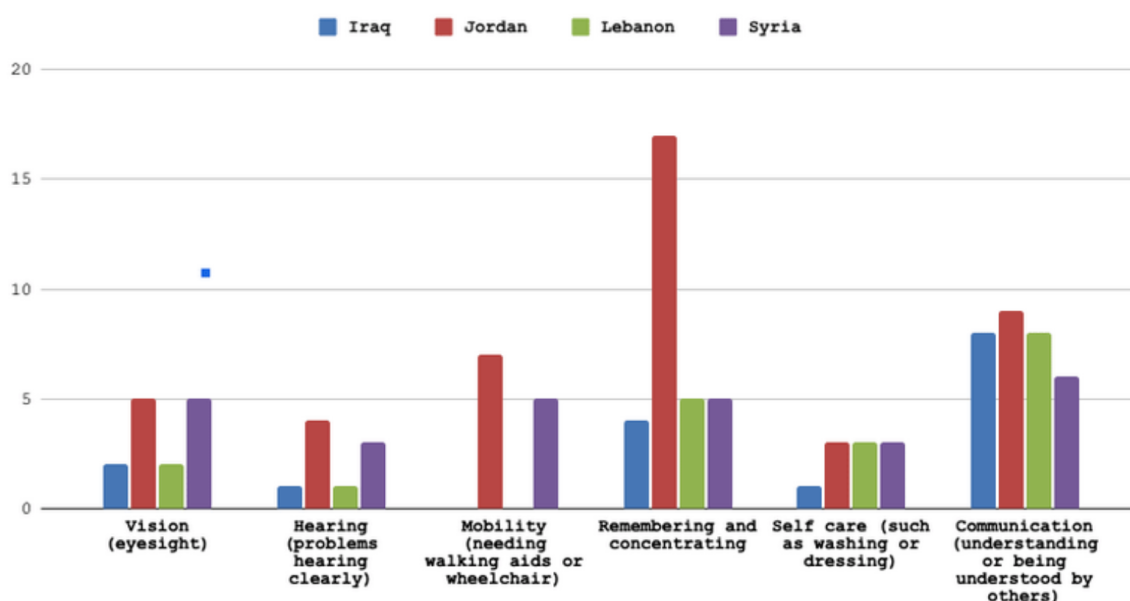Figure 23 is the trainer responses regarding their learners and Figure 24 is the learner responses.

Figure 23. Trainer responses as to whether they identify disabilities amongst their learners
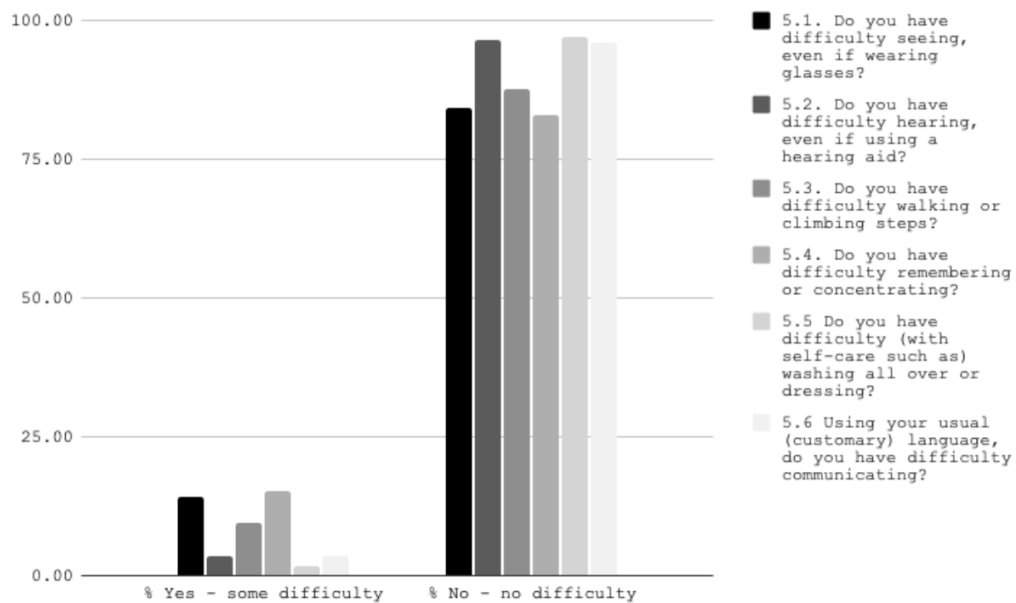
Figure 24. Learner responses to identifying with disabilities.

What could be the reason for this disparity? Several country offices in Syria refused to take part in the original survey because of the inclusion of this set of Washington group questions; the reasoning for this decision to boycott the survey being that in Syrian culture it is shameful to talk about, or admit to having a disability; therefore on that basis they would not ask their learners or trainers to take part in any of the survey questions. No other country offices refused to be involved in the survey on this or any other basis. Having said this, some Syrian offices did take part in the survey and the responses from these offices make up 46% of the survey data. This may explain why learners self reported much lower levels of disability than their trainers reported them to have; learners of Syrian nationality comprised 80% of learner responses (whose responses may have been influenced by the cultural norms surrounding admitting to or discussing disability, or even knowledge of what can be considered a disability is). Only 54% of trainers surveyed were of Syrian nationality however, which is another reason why the responses from trainers regarding disability levels among their learners may have been closer to reality.

When the data is further broken down into nationalities (Table 2), it is clear that regardless of whether the learners were Syrian or not, in Syria or outside of Syria, the percentage of learners identifying with at least one disability was on average around 38% only, meaning that over 63% of all learners did not identify with any disability on any level. If there had been a dramatic difference between what Syrians were reporting inside and outside of Syria, this could have indicated a norm shift around discussing and identifying with having a disability but it appears the data from this cohort does not show any evidence of this.

Number of disabilities identified with on any level	Syrians in Iraq	Syrians in Jordan	Syrians in Syria	All other nationalities	
0	2	22	59	21	
1 or more	0	15	34	12	
Total responses	**2**	**37**	**93**	**33**	
% identifying with at least one disability	**0.0**	**40.5**	**36.6**	**36.4**	
% not identifying any disability					**63.03**

Table 2. Percentage of learners identifying with disability

Similar to what the data on gender revealed in the previous section, this could be considered an example of what Acharya (2004) terms localisation theory where local stakeholders select, borrow and modify norms due to the notion that:

> ‘Local actors do not remain passive targets and learners as transnational agents, acting out of a universal moral script to produce and direct norm diffusion in world politics. Local agents also promote norm diffusion by actively borrowing and modifying transnational norms in accordance with their preconstructed normative beliefs and practices. (p. 269).’

Certain Syrian offices choosing not to engage with the survey could be considered ‘selecting’ the norms that fit in with their existing culture, and dismissing those that do not, as explained in Acharya’s more recent article (2011) which discusses ‘norm subsidiarity’ where local actors construct rules so as to *preserve their autonomy from dominance, neglect, violation, or abuse by more powerful central actors’* (p.95). The

Syrian offices that **did** choose to participate in the survey could also be examples of how these norms are changing; if not, all Syrian offices and Syrian nationals across all 4 countries surveyed could have refused to take part in the survey on the grounds of cultural inappropriateness.

Again, as Meyer et al (1997) point out, world society has the potential to shape both national and local identity; in this case, Syrians participating in a survey that discussed a topic that traditionally would be shameful to be involved in.

6.3 Barriers to attendance

The data regarding 'family duties' being a barrier to attending training is interesting to analyse from a norms perspective; as can be seen from the data below in Table 3, male learners responded much more often to family duties being a barrier to attending training rather than female learners which is surprising given that globally, often traditional 'family duties' roles fall to females. This could be considered evidence to support the fact that norms regarding gender roles within this cohort are changing.

Identifying 'family duties' as a barrier to attend training	Female	Male
Yes	28	49
No	45	46
Total responses per gender	73	95
% of responses identifying with family duties as being a barrier to attending training	**38.4**	**51.6**

Table 3. Identifying 'family duties' as a barrier to attend training

The reasons for this apparent shift in norms could be due to a number of reasons.

'Family duties' could have been interpreted in many different ways including child care, or working in paid employment to provide income for the family. This called for further exploration into the data: of the 49 male learners citing 'family duties' as a barrier to attendance, none reported that they had paid work, and only one reported he was self employed although he did not report that this was a barrier to attendance at classes. By contrast, four of the 28 female learners that reported 'family duties' to be a barrier to attendance, indicated that they had paid employment, but similarly, the paid employment did not constitute a barrier to attending classes.

So in this case, the question must be raised as to how a higher percentage of male learners report family duties being a barrier to attending classes than do female

learners. Could this be an example of the NRC changing norms around equity for both genders attending training? As Joachim (2020, p. 351) points out, NGOs can be described as both 'delivery organisations' that provide humanitarian services, and also organisations that are focused on advocacy, and *'committed to raising awareness and campaigning… focusing on cross-boundary problems'*; one of these problems being equity for both genders to access quality education and training opportunities, which is mirrored in both the UNHCR's 'Refugee Education 2030 Strategy for Refugee Inclusion' (2019) and the UN's SDG4 (2015). Considering the advocacy work that the NRC does in promoting access to quality education and training for all Youth, this may be another example of what Joachim (2020) describes as NGOs having the ability to transcend state capacity because they are close to the people, and therefore able to create needs based, customer centric solutions: in this case, providing opportunities for female learners to engage in training that will allow them to earn an income for their families, which is enough of an incentive for the families to release them from family duties so as to attend this training.

Considering the cohort is made up of RASIDPs however, to fully realise the reasons as to which such a high percentage of males responded that family duties were a barrier to attendance, the survey would also need to include questions such as *'are you the primary caregiver for any children in your household?'* as the Youth males may have had to take on these types of 'head of the household' responsibilities in the absence of their fathers or uncles who traditionally would have held that role but may not have made it along with the rest of the family due to their displacement.

6.4 Trainer and Learner employment statistics

Traditionally, as discussed previously in the review of literature, vocational training happens in the workplace, where the trainers mentor apprentices whilst working on the job. The employment types shown in the data indicate that over 70% of trainers surveyed are employed outside of NRC, meaning they are still working in the vocations they are teaching, but 80% of learners are not working at all and further, that only 64% attend training 5 days a week.

What would indicate a change in norms of traditional Middle Eastern vocational training, would be that formal vocational training centres are now running separate to the traditional vocational training that happens in workplaces. This change has various knock on effects including but not limited to the facts that: firstly, now there is a large percentage (just under 30% of the trainers surveyed) who are not at all employed in the industry they are training learners for - traditionally vocational trainers are running businesses whilst training learners in their profession; secondly that a large percentage of learners (80% of learners surveyed) are not working when traditionally they would be employed in the workplace as an apprentice; and thirdly that whereas traditionally learners would be full time apprentices, a large percentage of learners surveyed (64%) are not studying full time.

Although the NRC can be seen as a change agent when it comes to norms in traditional offerings for TVET training and education, these changes may or may not be seen as positive for the industry; having said this, the subject of this paper is not concerned with whether these norms are changing for the better or worse, only that they are changing. As Joachim (2020) points out, NGOs being closer to the people are more likely to be able to understand the root causes of the problems in their societies, conduct their own research and be able to build needs-based, customer-centric solutions. This could be a possible explanation for why there has been a decision to

remove trainers and learners from the workplace full time, and transition to classroom based learning opportunities. As Faour (2012), Nasser (2018), Rough (2002) and the World Bank (2005) point out, traditional approaches to education and training in this region have many less than desirable characteristics including a lack of problem solving or critical thinking skills due to the focus on rote learning, a lack of learner based approaches coupled with corporal punishment and a learning environment that is not considered safe, equitable or inclusive. The changing norms instigated by NGOs such as the NRC of taking training out of the workplace and into the classroom may be a catalyst to changing what is considered a normal training environment even though it may disconnect the training from the workplace to some extent.

6.5 Linking with industry

Extending the previous point, whereas traditional vocational training in the Middle East happens inside the workplace, 50% of trainers surveyed indicate that they never take their learners to visit workplaces in the industry, and 60% indicate that they never invite industry guest speakers into their classrooms. This most definitely indicates a change in norms regarding where and how learners are trained in traditional vocational settings (the workplace).

The reasons given by the trainers for there being no engagement with industry, was most commonly that there was 'no opportunity' which would appear to present an opportunity for upskilling of the trainers in this respect. Adding to this, 22% of the trainers that replied 'Never' to the question of whether they engaged their learners with professionals or workplaces in the industry; these trainers also indicated that the reason for this was that it was either not necessary, not in their job description, it hadn't occurred to them, or there was no time. Again, this would indicate a change in norms regarding traditional methods of training vocational learners on the job, in the workplace, but also an opportunity for professional development of the trainers.

Professional development for trainers, including the benefits of closely linking training to the workplace is at the heart of the best practice principles espoused by the UNHCR, the INEE, and the NRC in their framing paper and global strategy: 'NRC Youth Education and Training Programmes' (NRC, 2021) and 'Global Education Strategy 2018-2020' (NRC 2018). One of the three core inclusions in these papers being the professional development of trainers, facilitators and teachers, the way policy must influence practice and also, how education professionals must be trained and retained in the system.

The disparity between quality education being offered, and the distinct lack of

industry involvement may be explained by there being a gap between changing norms associated with quality education and training, and providing adequate professional development for the trainers employed by that system. As the constructivist academics previously mentioned (Park 2006, Finnemore 1993, Finnemore 1996, Checkel 1999, Grigorescu 2002), might suggest, whilst NGOs and international organisations may help diffuse international norms, these norms are shared, social and intersubjective and therefore the way strategies are interpreted and implemented by country offices on the ground, may differ to what was originally intended. With further input from these international organisations over time, norms regarding professional development of trainers and closely including industry may develop further depending on the needs presented by local stakeholders.

7. What do the key findings tell us about how TNGOs are changing norms?

Key findings from the survey that help to answer the question regarding what RASIDP Vocational Learners require for success, are summarised below, the details of which are expanded on in respect to the extent to which they could be considered a change in norms in Middle Eastern vocational education and training.

1. **What learners and trainers agree on:** Responses in the surveys suggest that the trainers and learners agree on how and where to access training, and their roles in a Vocational Training environment, and mostly agree about the best way to learn and be assessed.

2. **What trainers and learners disagree on:** What the responses indicated that they didn't entirely agree on, was what 'success' looks like for Youth after a training program finishes, how well the training prepares Youth for the job market, where trainers could improve, and what was more important in a classroom - listening to the trainer, or having discussions with the trainer.

3. **Overwhelmingly positive responses:** The survey indicated that there was a very high level of respect, collaboration and positive sentiment towards and between trainers and learners. Perceptions of their roles in a Vocational Training environment, what is needed for success and the general attitudes around what learning and training involves were overwhelmingly positive, enthusiastic, future focused and compassionate.

The findings are broken down into six sections including the roles of trainers and Youth in the training environment, perceptions of Youth and trainers, what success looks like after training, how well the training prepares Youth for a successful livelihood, perceptions around how and where is best to train and assess Youth in vocational training and what professional development trainers need.

7.1 Perceptions of the role of a trainer in TVET

Respondents were asked *'What's the most important role of a facilitator/teacher/ trainer?'* and were given a closed, multiple choice version of the question, and an open ended question.

CLOSED QUESTION:

The responses from both learners and trainers were fairly similar - TO GIVE KNOWLEDGE - being by far the most popular response as can be seen in Figure 25 below. MENTORING, BEING A ROLE MODEL and LEADING also featured, but to a much lesser degree. ASKING QUESTIONS was the least popular response. This would indicate that there has not been a significant shift in norms of traditional Middle Eastern teaching which is defined as teacher centred, didactic style classrooms.
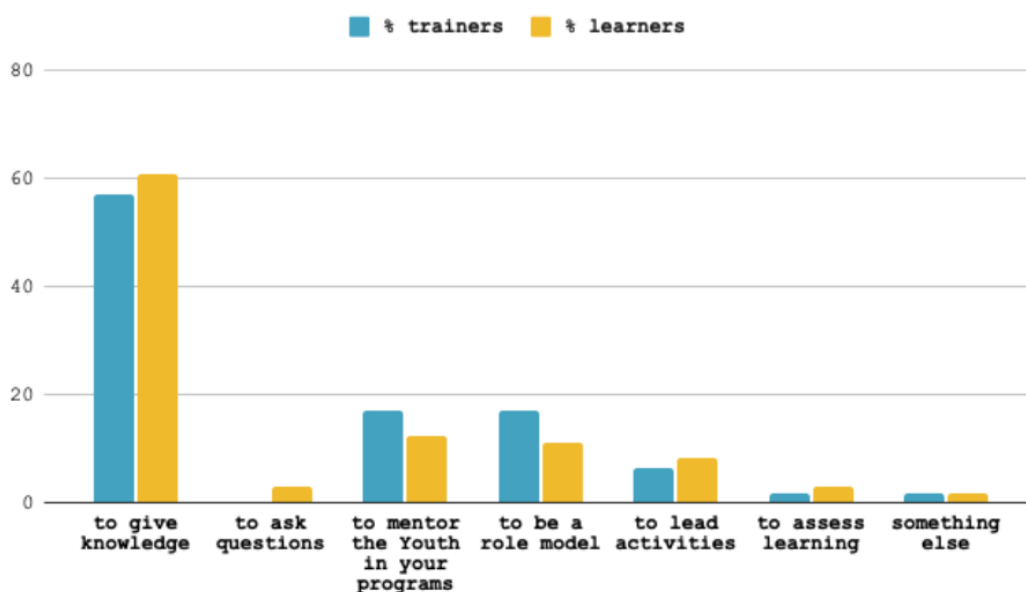
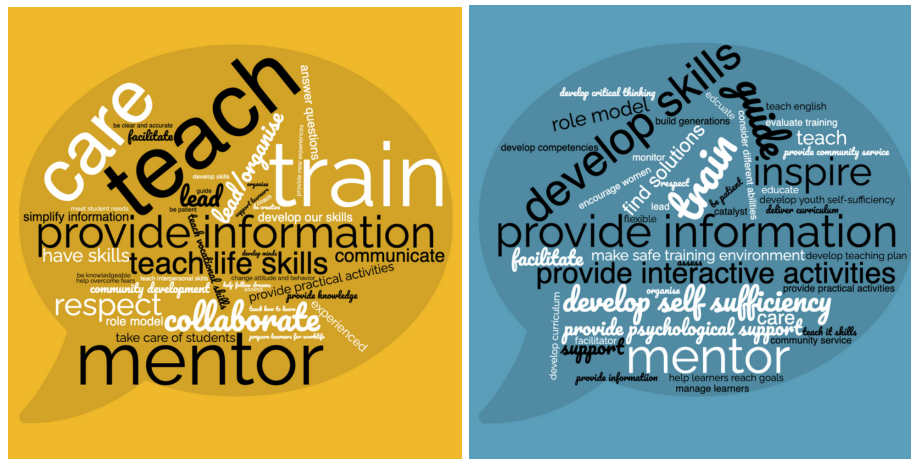*Figure 25. What's the most important role of a trainer?*

Figure 27.

OPEN QUESTION: As can be seen in the above images in Figure 27, popular responses from both Trainers (blue background) and Learners (yellow background) for the open ended version of this question: (*Describe in your own words - what is the role of the facilitator/teacher/trainer?*) were PROVIDING INFORMATION, TEACHING, and TRAINING. Learners (yellow box) gave more emphasis to LEADING, COLLABORATING and RESPECT, whereas trainers (blue box) focused more on GUIDING, DEVELOPING SKILLS and PROVIDING INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES.

Although the core role of a trainer was described as 'giving information', the way that both trainers and learners describe the role of a trainer in their own words, would indicate some change in norms; whereas traditional methods of training in the Middle East are characterised by rote learning, corporal punishment, harsh approaches, a lack of engagement, safe, stimulating, project based learning environments or the acquisition of higher order thinking skills, (Rugh 2002, Nasser 2018, Faour 2012), the responses indicate in many cases the opposite of those terms: collaboration, respect, leading and guiding with interactive activities.

7.2 Perceptions of the role of a learner in TVET

Respondents were asked: *'What's the most important role of Youth in the programs?'*
Following in a very similar manner to the section above, there appears to not be an
extensive change in norms regarding the role of Youth in TVET when looking at the
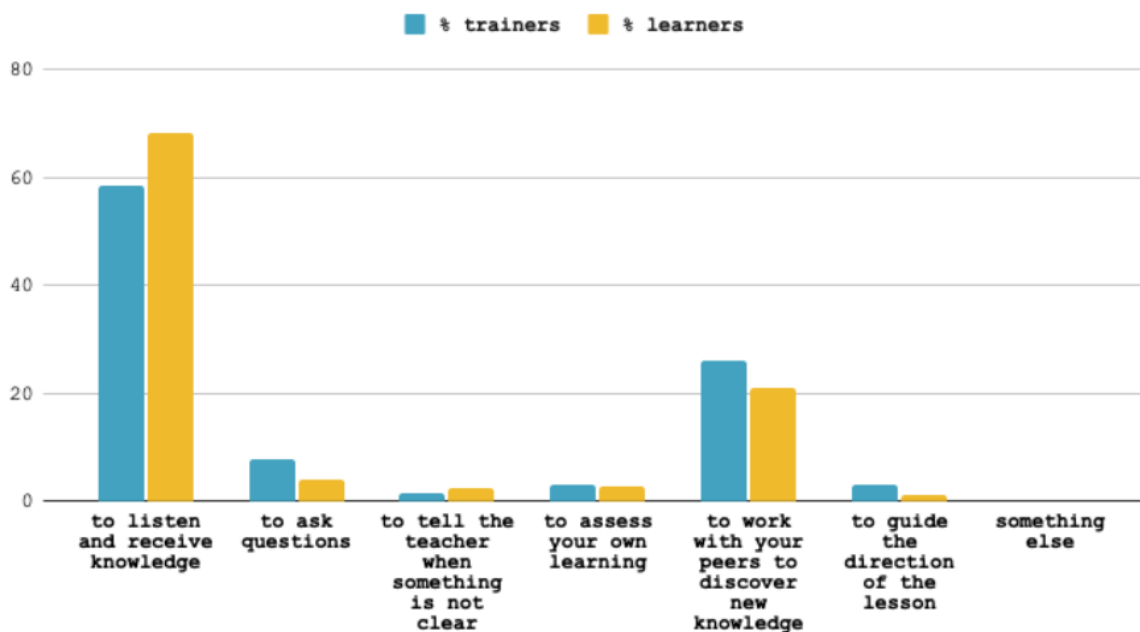answers given by both learners and trainers.

Figure 28. What's the most important role of Youth in the programs? (closed question)

CLOSED QUESTION: As can be seen from Figure 28, the responses were fairly similar -
TO LISTEN AND RECEIVE KNOWLEDGE - being by far the most popular response,
followed by WORKING WITH PEERS TO DISCOVER NEW KNOWLEDGE. ASKING
QUESTIONS featured more highly than TELLING THE TEACHER WHEN SOMETHING IS
NOT CLEAR. This data indicates that from a norms perspective, the role of the learner
has not changed that much compared to traditional Middle Eastern approaches to
vocational education and training; that *asking questions*, *telling the teacher when
something is not clear*, *assessing your own learning* or *guiding the lesson* is very low on
the list of things that learners or trainers consider the role of the learner. Having said
that, the second most popular response *'working with peers to discover new knowledge'*

would indicate that there is a change in norms, away from the lack of project based learning environments that characterise traditional Middle Eastern vocational education and training.

OPEN QUESTION: As can be seen on the following images in Figure 30, popular responses from both trainers (blue background) and learners (yellow background) for the open ended version of this question were DEVELOPING SKILLS, LEARNING, COMMITMENT, PARTICIPATION and RECEIVING INFORMATION OR KNOWLEDGE.

Figure 30. What's the most important role of Youth in the programs? (open question)

Learners gave more emphasis to LEARNING, DEVELOPING KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & EXPERIENCE, whereas trainers focused more on DEVELOPING SKILLS and COMMITMENT to the program. This would not indicate a significant change in traditional Middle Eastern norms considering the role of a learner in vocational training.

If, as post structuralist scholars such as Hansen (2021), Milliken (2009) and Diez (1999) would assert, discourse can change norms; there is a certain power in the language or discourse used in the aforementioned guidelines and frameworks used by TNGOs to assist RASIDPs, and that language has the power to change norms over time. Considering that many of the recent frameworks (IASC 2020, NRC 2021, NRC 2018) have only been rolled out within the last few years, the themes of empowering young people to work with senior working partners in a guiding and leading role may not

have yet trickled down and become embedded into everyday discourse and therefore accepted as or implemented as 'normal' in this Middle Eastern TVET context.

Norms can take substantial time to change and just because an NGO is creating opportunities for learning environments that are different to what is considered 'the norm', it doesn't necessarily mean that learner or trainers will immediately change what their perceptions of the roles of learners and training in the TVET system are - as evidenced by the words used to describe their answers to these questions regarding the roles of learners and trainers in TVET in this survey.

7.3 Perceptions of learners and trainers

How did learners and trainers describe each other, and how is this important in assessing whether norms are changing? Generally speaking, traditional education and training in the Middle East is characterised by harsh approaches, corporal punishment, and learning environments that are not safe emotionally, physically or socially (Faour 2012, Nasser 2018). The World Bank (2015) describes traditional TVET approaches as long, non experimental and passive in nature. Considering the responses to the open ended questions as can be seen in Figure 32, there appears to be a shift.

Figure 32. Open question responses regarding 'how do you describe your trainers (yellow background) and 'how do you describe your learners' (blue background)

When surveyed, the trainers described their learners in a very positive light. The most common responses included: PASSIONATE ABOUT LEARNING, and AMBITIOUS. Other popular answers included ACTIVE, COMMITTED, HARD WORKERS and THE FUTURE.

Youth learners had a similarly positive attitude towards their trainers; the most common responses included: COLLABORATIVE, KIND and SKILLED. Other popular answers included RESPECTFUL, EXPERIENCED and CARING.

Considering that much of the literature on traditional Middle Eastern teaching involves the teaching environment being neither physically, emotionally or socially 'safe', nor 'inclusive', using 'harsh practices' including corporal punishment, it would appear that the above responses indicate a clear shift in the norms surrounding a learning environments from traditional classrooms to what is provided at the NRC; to confirm this, a survey of similar questions would need to be delivered to workplaces where traditional apprenticeships and vocational training is administered, however that is not within the scope of this paper.

As Milliken (2009) points out, norms are changeable, as can be the discourse that helps create the norms in the first place. The language used in the frameworks and policies around best practice approaches from international organisations such as UNHCR, IINE and NRC, which have driven global movements like the *'Compact for Young People in Humantiarian Action'* which was launched in 2021 across over 30 countries where the NRC is providing education and training, supports this notion; these policies and strategies include words such as 'safe', 'inclusive', and programs have rolled out that explicitly teach about recognising that young people hold rights and are positive assets; that youth have the right and deserve to participate in these programs in ways that are deliberate and meaningful; that Youth are seen as more than just beneficiaries, in fact as partners; that learners can be catered for in ways that are non-discriminatory, inclusive, safe and equitable. These policies also include factors including but not limited to: the hiring of staff based on their capacity for friendliness and connection to Youth; and coordination and advocacy with the aim of being able to 'positively influence and change policy and practice through giving a voice to youth and being the voice for youth' (NRC, 2021a, p. 11).

Words, as discussed previously, have the power to change norms; as Diez (1999)

points out, separating institutions from the discourse in which they are embedded is not possible; because of this reason, they can theoretically alter or influence the discourse, thereby altering cultural norms in the process (Milliken 1999). In this case, the way learners and trainers describe each other would indicate that the learning environments at the NRC training centres appear to be safe, inclusive and collaborative - which would indicate that the language used within these policies and frameworks does have the power to change norms - in this case, the traditional vocational training environment and relationship between learner and trainer - although as pointed out in previous sections, how learners and trainers perceive their roles in the classroom may not have changed so much yet.

7.4 Perceptions of success

Respondents were asked: *'At the end of your program, what will success look like?'*
As can be seen in Figure 33 below, although the 2 top answers were the same for both Trainers and Learners TO HELP FAMILY/COMMUNITY, TO HAVE A STABLE ENJOYABLE JOB, the third and fourth strongest answers differed.

The trainers' third answer was TO USE THEIR SKILLS WHEN THEY RETURN HOME, whereas learners' was TO HAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO LIVE AND SAVE - which was low down on the trainer's response list. Trainers believed HAVING AN INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED CERTIFICATE was more important.
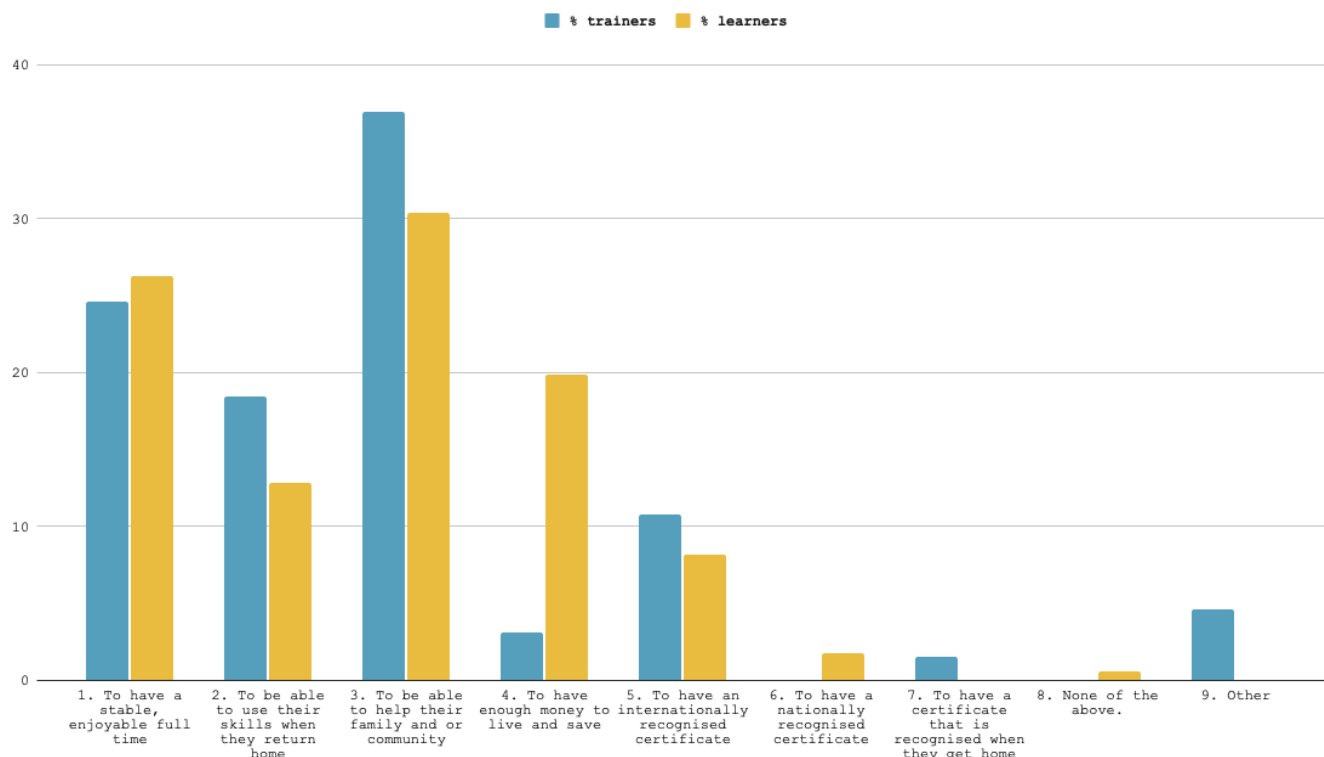
Figure 33. At the end of the program, what does success look like?

Considering that traditional vocational training in the Middle East was designed to train local Youth to take on jobs within their own community, this data does not entirely represent a shift in what trainers and learners first and foremost believe success to be for their learners - helping their community and family. The second, third and fourth top responses however may indicate some shift, in that traditionally, '*having an internationally recognised certificate'* would more than likely not have ranked at all, let alone higher than '*having enough money to live and save'*. Is this a change in norms or simply a change in circumstances considering the fact that the target cohort is primarily RASIDPs who may or may not return 'home', as opposed to local Youth in their hometowns?

When looking into what 'success' looks like globally for RASIDPs, the literature overwhelmingly suggests that employability is the key marker (Gladwell et al., 2016, O'Keefe 2020, Smyser 2019, UNHCR, NRC, INEE). Bellino and Dryden-Peterson (2018) take this one step further in their report from the Kenyan Refugee Camp saying that

successful assimilation and integration into the host country is made easier when qualifications lead to employment which is sometimes harder when the qualifications come from what has traditionally been regarded as lower quality standards of training in refugee camps. Livelihood success according to many other sources (Sengupta and Kapur 2018, Arar et al., 2020, Streitwieser et al., 2018, Russel and Weaver 2019) is internationally recognised qualifications which lead to employment; either to help with integration into a host country or employment opportunities on return to home countries.

Trainers at the NRC are exposed to these notions, being part of their professional development around best practice teaching and learning methodologies and the roll out of international frameworks. This may be one of the reasons trainers rated *'having an internationally recognised qualification'* so highly, and learners did not. Trainers may also have more insight having more years experience in the TVET system, seeing graduates gain employment and move back to their home country, or could have come through the RASIDP TVET system themselves. All in all, this data could be considered evidence for TNGOs like the NRC changing norms in TVET in this region.

Another question that was asked around 'success' was an open ended question: '*Apart from money, a job or education, what do youth need to have a successful life?*' and the difference between learner and trainer responses could be explained by the factors mentioned above for the closed question regarding 'success'.

There were very few answers to this question from the learners that were not 'YES' or 'OF COURSE YES PLEASE' so the question was either not interpreted correctly or learners didn't have any insight into what 'success' could mean outside of having a job, qualifications and money. Of the remaining responses from the learners, there were only 11 answers, which broadly fitted into these three categories: job opportunities (4), to own a business (7), to live in a house not a tent (1).

Trainers had a lot more to share on this topic. Most common responses included those that could be categorised into the following concepts: STABILITY, TRUST IN SOCIETY, MENTORING, SAFETY, SECURITY and RESPECT.

Figure 34. Trainer responses to the question: Apart from money, a job or education, what do youth need to have a successful life?

Considering the traditional role of vocational trainers has been to work with the learner, doing on the job training in the workplace, and that these workplaces are often cited as being neither emotionally, socially or physically 'safe', it would appear that the attitudes of the surveyed trainers has changed considerably compared to trainers in traditional vocational workplaces; to be certain, this would need to be verified with a survey of traditional workplace trainers however on the surface this would appear to indicate a shift in the norms of vocational trainers in this region (in NRC centres at least).

7.5 Perceptions of best practice teaching, learning and assessment.

Respondents were also asked about the best ways and places to teach and assess youth. Considering traditional methods of training in the Middle East are characterised by rote learning, corporal punishment, harsh approaches, and a lack of engagement, safe, stimulating, project based learning environments or the acquisition of higher order thinking skills (Rugh 2002, Nasser 2018, Faour 2012), the responses to the following questions overall indicate a shift away from these traditional norms.

Also interesting to note before looking at the results of these questions, is that traditionally, a learner only 'graduated' when the 'trainer' believed that they had demonstrated the skills required to gain paid employment - traditionally this 'apprenticeship' could have taken years, has taken place exclusively in the workplace, and the 'assessment' was at the employer's discretion (World Bank 2005). Education and training at the NRC is a finite process whereby learners 'graduate' with a certificate that allows them to seek employment - as opposed to already being employed by the employer that trained them in-house for their position. These facts alone indicate that there has been a change in norms as to how learners are classified 'qualified', where they are trained, and how employment is gained.

Respondents were first asked about which was the best way for Youth to access training: full time, flexible or casual.
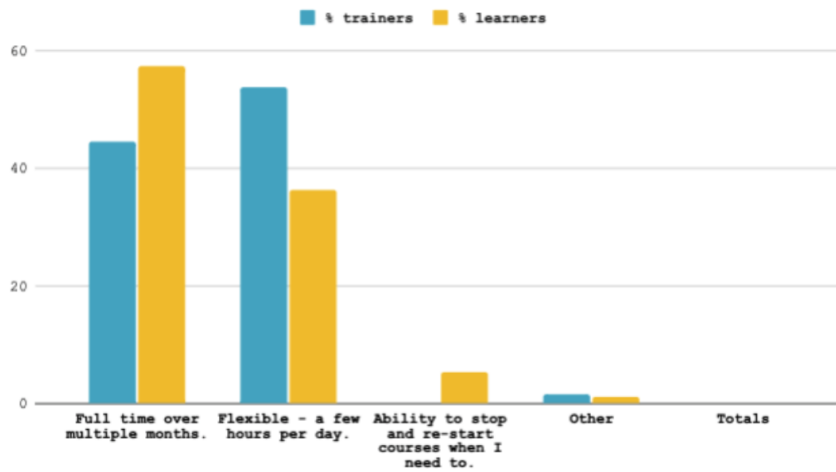
Figure 35. Responses to the question: 'What is the best way for youth to access training?'

As Figure 35 indicates, 98% of Trainers and 95% of Learners believed that either FULL TIME or FLEXIBLE (PART TIME) was the best way for Youth to access training, as opposed to casual classes. More Trainers (54%) thought FLEXIBLE was the better option, whereas 57% of Learners thought that FULL TIME was the better option.
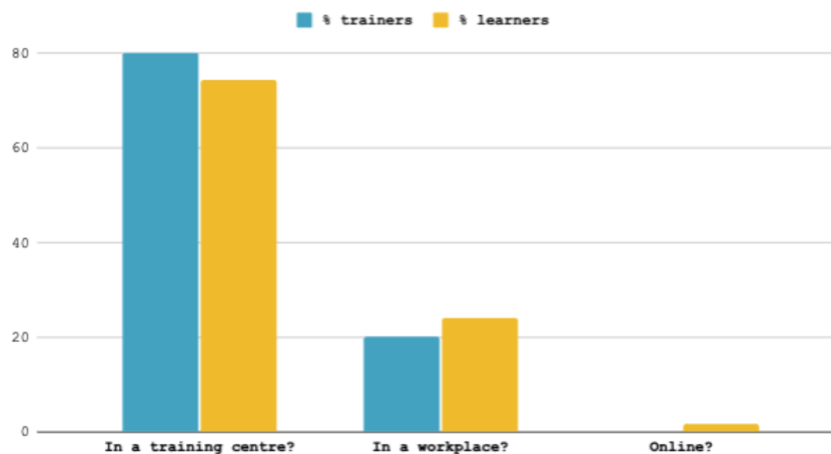
Another question asked respondents where Youth learn best.

Figure 36. Responses to the question: 'Where do Youth learn best?'

As can be seen in Figure 36, 80% of trainers and 74% of learners believed that a TRAINING CENTRE was the best place for Youth to learn; less trainers (20%) thought a WORKPLACE was the better option, compared to 24% of learners.

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Considering the fact that traditional vocational training in the Middle East has been full time in the workplace, this data indicates a large shift by both learners and trainers, as to where and how is the best way for vocational training to take place.

Respondents could choose their top three responses for this question - *'How do youth prefer to learn?'*
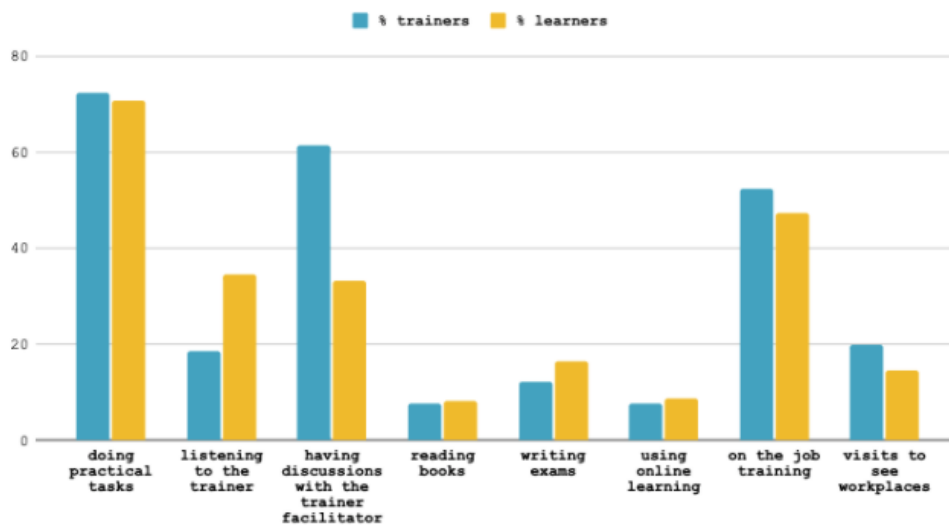

Figure 37. Responses to the question: 'How do Youth prefer to learn?'

As can be seen in Figure 37, 72% of trainers and 71% of learners believe that Youth prefer to learn by DOING PRACTICAL TASKS. 50% of all respondents also chose ON THE JOB TRAINING. Many of the answers had similar rate of responses between Trainers and Learners; the exception was LISTENING TO THE TRAINER which 35% of Learners chose compared to 18% of Trainers, and HAVING DISCUSSIONS WITH THE TRAINER which 62% of Trainers chose as opposed to only 33% of Learners.

In terms of norms, it would appear that the data indicates that trainers' attitudes to how best to teach and assess Youth has changed from the traditional approaches of rote learning and a lack of project or problem solving based learning environments, although learners still rate *'listening'* to the trainer over *'having discussions with the*

trainers' which is the opposite of what the trainers reported. As previously mentioned, the difference between learner and trainer responses here could be attributed to the professional development that trainers receive at the NRC that promotes learner centred, communicative, problem based learning environments.

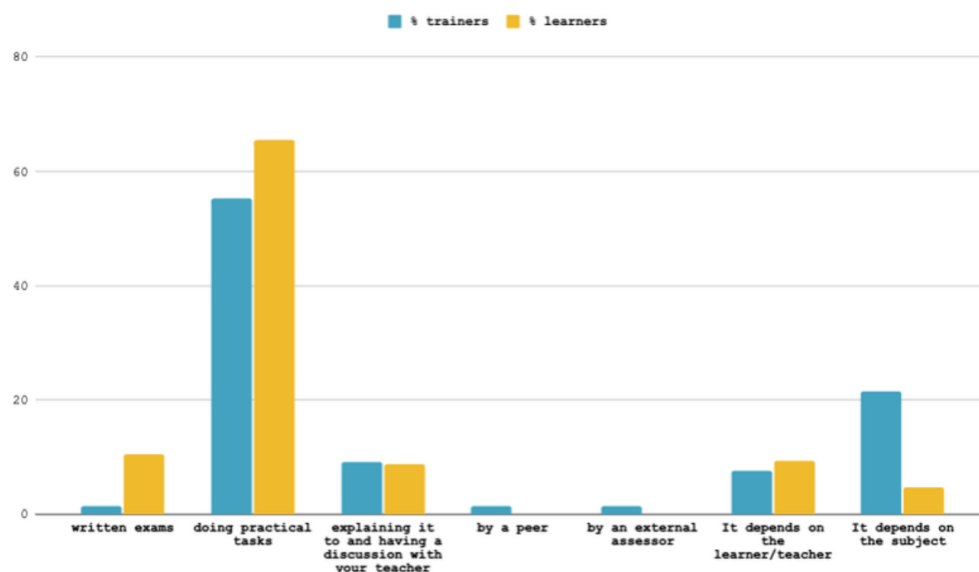These trends were mirrored in the question that asked *'What's the best way to assess a learner?'*.

Figure 38. Responses to the question: 'What's the best way to assess a learner?'

Respondents could only choose ONE answer for this question and the overwhelming majority (55% of Trainers and 64% of Learners) chose DOING PRACTICAL TASKS. These results indicate that concepts like adjusting assessments to fit the learner or subject which are core to NRC best practice teaching and learning strategies, have not yet filtered down to the learner or trainer perceptions of what constitutes best practice assessment. Having said that, the fact that more learners believed *'written exams'* were a better way of assessing knowledge rather than '*explaining it to or having a discussion with your teacher'* is another indication that the norms surrounding the acceptance of rote learning are still stronger than those of discussion or problem solving based approaches to assessment.

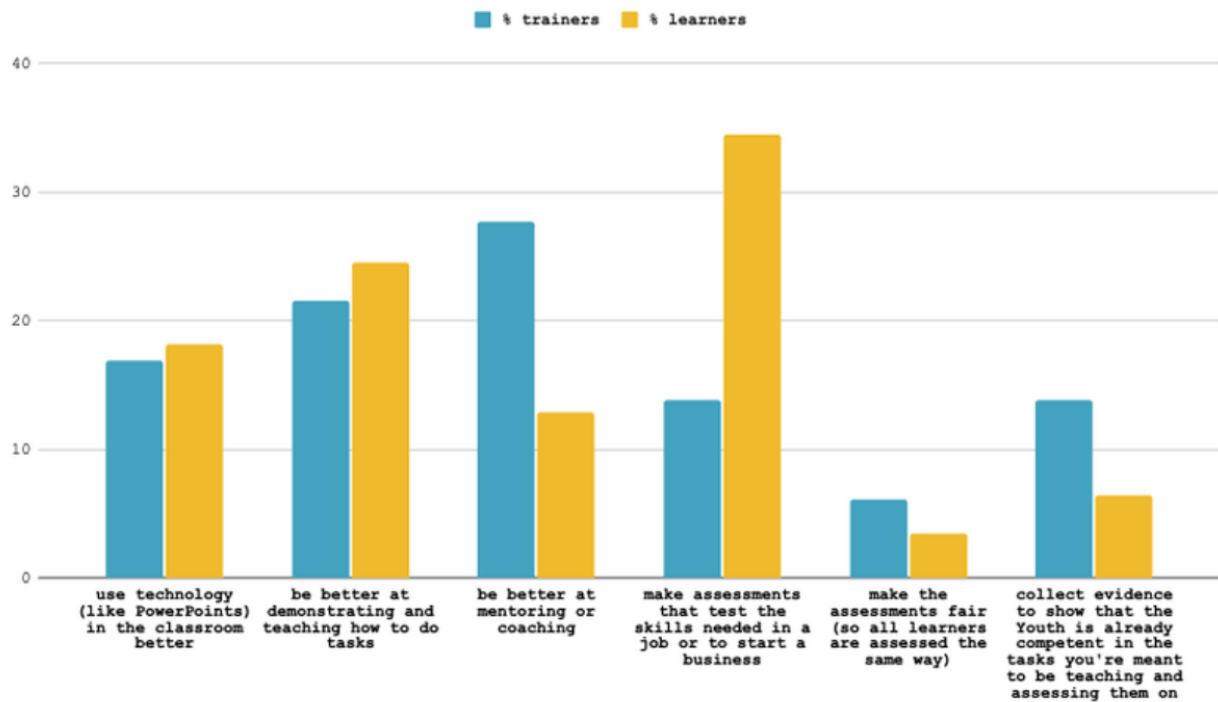## 7.6 Perceptions of trainer professional development needs

Figure 39. Responses to the question: 'How could trainers improve?'

Respondents were asked: *'How can trainers improve?'* As demonstrated in Figure 39, Trainers and learners did not agree on what Trainers needed to improve on the most. The top area for improvement chosen by the Trainers (28%) was MENTORING - while only 13% of Learners agreed. The top response from Learners (35%) was needing to be better at MAKING ASSESSMENTS THAT TEST WORK SKILLS - only 14% of trainers believed they needed to improve on this element. Being better at how to DEMONSTRATE TASKS was also high on both the lists of the Trainers and Learners.

Considering the fact that traditional Middle Eastern vocational training is delivered on the job, with a focus on rote learning and without 'assessments' as such, this would indicate a change in norms regarding what trainers think the role of a vocational trainer involves - whereas traditionally their role has been to prepare learners for the workplace, the learners believe they are lacking in these core skills whereas trainers

on the whole do not believe that to be true. Learners' responses would indicate that they have a more traditional notion of what skills a TVET trainer should have. Much of the literature on what constitutes success for RASIDP learners involves ensuring the availability of trained and qualified facilitators (Gladwell et al., 2016, O'Keefe 2020, Smyser 2019); the fact that both learners and trainers did not rate highly either *'collecting competency based evidence'* or *'making assessments fair and equitable'* would indicate that these internationally accepted norms around what constitutes best practice competency based TVET has not yet filtered down to affect the trainer and learners perceptions around what professional development is needed for trainers at the NRC.

Conclusion

What does the data tell us about whether TNGOs are changing norms in RASIDP education and training in the Middle East? In the field of IR, the role of NGOs has changed and is now considered to play an important role because of their ability to contribute to changing international norms, principles, agendas and policies (Joachim, 2020, pp. 349-50). NGOs and International Organisations such as the NRC, IINE, UNHCR, UNICEF, and UNDP among others, have developed various multi-agency, multi-sectoral frameworks, policies and programmes, all aimed at enabling refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people (hereafter RASIDPs) to access quality education and training regardless of gender, age, race or asylum status; several of these international frameworks now recommend including Youth in creating sustainable, durable solutions for their futures (IASC 2020, INEE 2021, UNGA 2015, UNHCR 2017, 2019, 2020) so their voices are imperative in the creation of policies and strategies involving their education, training and future livelihoods. Given the role of TNGOs in humanitarian settings, organisations like the NRC have the power to change norms when it comes to education and training, in aspects such as gender equity in accessing quality education, the roles of learners and trainers and disability awareness and inclusivity.

As Owens et al (2020) describe, humanitarian activities involve an international responsibility - a 'positive duty' to help those in need; and as Dunne (2020) elaborates, although the concept of liberal internationalism may be declining, TNGOs have the power to influence peaceful, equitable change globally. Having said this, are local beliefs actually changeable by international influence and if so, how much? Can TNGOs like the NRC shape the way a nationality or nation of foreign residents thinks about what is needed for Youth RASIDPs need for success, and what best practice

education and training looks like?

As has been demonstrated by the analysis of the data in this paper, based on data gathered from a survey administered across several NRC training centres in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, it would appear that the simple answer to these questions is yes. Norms pertaining to gender equity, the roles of learners and trainers, and disability awareness and inclusion can change, but not entirely 'across the board'.

Whereas the data indicates that there is now equal access to TVET for both male and female learners at the NRC in the Middle East region, traditional professions held by males (welding, appliance maintenance, electricians) are solely taken up by male learners, and those traditionally held by females (beauticians, soap making) are taken up by female learners. This constitutes both a change in norms (equity of access to training), and a retention of norms (gender roles in professions) which could be an example of localisation theory (Acharya 2004).

The questions in the survey that dealt with identifying with disability, demonstrated again a mix of a change in, and retention of norms; the change, being some Syrian offices (and Syrians in offices outside their home country) choosing to take part in the survey, and others refusing on a cultural basis. The latter example may be considered an example of 'norm subsidiarity' (Acharya 2011) where local actors select the norms they wish to retain in order to preserve their autonomy, but the former may be an example of, as Holzscheiter (2018) points out, how Youth can be social agents when it comes to international politics - rejecting the notion of what might traditionally be 'taboo' subjects such as identifying with disability, after being exposed to how positive a concept such as inclusivity and acceptance of disability in a training environment - and therefore agreeing to take part in the survey.

Another case for NGOs like the NRC changing norms, was the data that showed that more male learners reported 'family duties' as being a barrier to attendance; and that those males reporting this, also did not report that paid work, or employment was a barrier to attending training. Traditionally, more often family duties fall to females therefore this could demonstrate a change in norms for this cohort, or it could also constitute a difference in what is considered 'family duties'; especially considering the nature of 'family' in the RASIDP population having the potential to be very different due to their displacement affecting the number of senior family members being 'present' or having joined them during their displacement.

A large change in norms for TVET in the Middle East is the move away from full time on the job apprenticeship style training that can take up to 8-10 years to complete, at the discretion of the employer, to finite, competency based learning taking place at training centres from which learners graduate from in a fraction of the time. The changes that this shift has brought to the norms surrounding TVET are extensive, as demonstrated by the data: 30% of trainers are not employed in industry at all; 80% of learners are not working at all; 64% of learners attend full time training; and over half of the trainers never take their learners to a workplace or invite industry professionals to talk with their learners.

Are these changes positive or negative? That is not a question for this paper to decide, however what is interesting to note, is that by an organisation like the NRC to take training out of the workplace, and put it into training centres has been a catalyst for many logistics based norm changes in TVET such as the training happening in a training centre instead of the workplace, and equity in access to training for both genders. Although these changes have disconnected the training from industry, as the coming sections show, it has also provided an opportunity for the norms surrounding

the relationship between trainers and learners to evolve; once being considered punitive or rote learning based, these roles have transformed into collaborative, inclusive, trusting and safe learning environments.

As mentioned previously, constructivists may suggest that although international organisations can help diffuse international norms, the norms are shared, social and intersubjective - and therefore can morph, change and end up different 'on the ground'. The data that explored perceptions of the roles of trainers and learners did not constitute a large change in norms although terms like 'collaboration', 'respect' and 'providing interactive activities' did demonstrate a move away from traditional methods of training in the Middle East which are characterised by rote learning, corporal punishment, harsh approaches, a lack of engagement, safe, stimulating, project based learning environments or the acquisition of higher order thinking skills, (Rugh 2002, Nasser 2018, Faour 2012). This is backed up by the data that explored how learners and trainers felt about each other, which on the whole, was extremely positive and indicated a training environment that is safe, inclusive and collaborative.

As post structuralist scholars would assert, discourse has the capacity to change norms over time; many of the frameworks rolled out within the past few years that put Youth and the learners at the heart of decision making processes both in the classroom and in policy creation may not yet have had time to trickle down and become embedded into everyday discourse and norms in this Middle Eastern TVET context. Having said this, there does appear to already have been some change in the way learners and trainers work together and acknowledge each other in these new TVET learning environments.

What success looks like for RASIDP Youth after gaining TVET qualifications, is globally acknowledged as integration, assimilation or livelihood success through employability;

whether that is within the host country, on return to their home country, or in subsequent countries. A change in norms for traditional vocational education and training in the Middle East would be trainers, when asked what constitutes success for their learners, placing 'having an international qualification' as more important than 'having enough money to live and save'; even though learners did not share this viewpoint. Also, trainers' sentiments that learners needed safety, stability, respect and trust in society demonstrates a shift away from what traditional TVET has been characterised by in the past (neither emotionally, socially or physically safe).

The data that explored how best to train and assess learners also demonstrated a shift in norms away from the traditional approaches of rote learning and a lack of project or problem solving based learning environments. Surprisingly when it came to defining what professional development was needed by trainers, trainers identified more traditional skills such as mentoring whereas learners singled out more modern skills such as creating assessments that test skills required in the workplace.

All in all, do TNGOs like the NRC have the capacity to change norms in TVET in the Middle East? It would appear that the data indicates that yes, norms are changing in this sector, in so far as the learning and training that is taking place in NRC vocational training centres. Are all norms changing at the same speed and depth? It would appear not, from this limited sample of learners and trainers from 4 countries, engaged in training at a single TNGO. As Post Structuralists and Constructivists would attest: international organisations can help diffuse international norms, by the use of the discourse embedded in their strategies, frameworks and the roll out of their international programs. Are the changes for the better? Only time and more research will tell.

Appendix 1: Original Survey Questions

1.Primary Questions (both Learners and Trainers)

1. **What is your gender?**
   - Male
   - Female
   - Other

2. **What is your age?**
   - 15-17
   - 18-24
   - 25+

3. **What is your displacement status?**
   - Displaced within your country (IDP)
   - Refugee
   - Asylum Seeker
   - Other

4. **Where are you living?**
   - Community
   - Camp
   - Informal settlement

5. **The next questions ask about difficulties you may have doing certain activities because of a HEALTH PROBLEM.**
   - 1. Do you have difficulty seeing, even if wearing glasses?
     - a. No - no difficulty
     - b. Yes – some difficulty
     - c. Yes – a lot of difficulty
     - d. Cannot do at all
   - 2. Do you have difficulty hearing, even if using a hearing aid?
     - a. No- no difficulty
     - b. Yes – some difficulty
     - c. Yes – a lot of difficulty
     - d. Cannot do at all
   - 3. Do you have difficulty walking or climbing steps?
     - a. No- no difficulty
     - b. Yes – some difficulty
     - c. Yes – a lot of difficulty
     - d. Cannot do at all
   - 4. Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating?
     - a. No – no difficulty
     - b. Yes – some difficulty
     - c. Yes – a lot of difficulty
     - d. Cannot do at all
   - 5. Do you have difficulty (with self-care such as) washing all over or dressing?
     - a. No – no difficulty
     - b. Yes – some difficulty

- - - c. Yes – a lot of difficulty
    - d. Cannot do at all
  - 6. Using your usual (customary) language, do you have difficulty communicating, for example understanding or being understood?
    - a. No – no difficulty
    - b. Yes – some difficulty
    - c. Yes – a lot of difficulty
    - d. Cannot do at all

6. **What is your nationality?**
   - Iraqi
   - Lebanese
   - Syrian
   - Jordanian
   - Palestinian
   - Libyan
   - Other

7. **What is your country of residence?**
   - Iraq
   - Lebanon
   - Syria
   - Jordan
   - Palestine
   - Libya

8. **Describe in your own words - what is the role of a facilitator/teacher/trainer?** (Open ended question)

9. **What's the most important role of a facilitator/teacher/trainer?** (Choose ONE)
   - to give knowledge
   - to ask questions
   - to mentor the Youth in your programs
   - to be a role model
   - to lead activities
   - to assess learning
   - something else

10. **In your opinion - what is the role of the Youth (a young person participating in vocational training) when studying in a program?** (Open ended question)

11. **What's the most important role of the Youth (a young person participating in vocational training) when studying in a program?** (Choose one)
    - to listen and receive knowledge
    - to ask questions
    - to tell the teacher when something is not clear
    - to assess your own learning
    - to work with your peers to discover new knowledge
    - to guide the direction of the lesson

2. Learner and Trainer Specific Questions

2a: Learner Specific Questions: (Youth enrolled at NRC)

12. Employment status:
- Not working
- Daily (casual) work
- Self employed
- Part time work
- Full time work
- Other

13. How many days a week do you attend training?
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

14. (On the days that you come to training), how many hours a day do you attend?
- 1-2 hours
- 3-4 hours
- More than 4 hours

15. What barriers stop you from attending training?
- Paid work
- My business
- Family duties
- Lack of civil documentation (checkpoints)
- Security risks
- Lack of interest
- Cost or lack of transport
- Permission from guardians
- Others (please list)

2b: Trainer Specific Questions: (NRC Vocational Trainers)

NB: When we ask about 'your skilled workplace', we are referring to for example, if you're teaching Carpentry = carpentry business, Hairdressing = hair salon, Agribusiness = farm - so the PLACES where you would USE the SKILLS you're teaching, working or running a business.

16. **In addition to being a trainer at NRC, are you also working as a professional in a skilled workplace, in the industry you teach about?**
    ○ Yes I'm employed in another business/workplace
    ○ Yes I'm running my own business as well
    ○ I'm both employed at a workplace **and** running my own business
    ○ I'm neither employed nor running a business in my industry
    ○ I'm not permitted by my employer to be employed or run a business outside my role as a trainer

17. **How many hours a week do you spend working in a skilled workplace outside NRC (as an employee or running your own business) in the industry you teach about?**
    ○ 0
    ○ Less than 10
    ○ More than 10

18. **When was the last time you worked as a skilled professional in a skilled workplace, in the industry you teach about?**
    ○ I am still working as a skilled professional
    ○ Less than 1 year ago
    ○ More than 1 year ago
    ○ More than 5 years ago
    ○ I have not worked as a skilled professional

19. **How often do you take your Youth vocational learners to visit relevant skilled workplaces/businesses (where they can see their skills in action)?**
    ○ Never
    ○ Less than once a month
    ○ Once a month
    ○ More than once a month

20. How often do you bring graduates from previous programs back to speak to the Youth in your Programs?
- ○ Never
- ○ Less than once a month
- ○ Once a month
- ○ More than once a month

21. How often do you invite business owners and other skilled professionals to come and speak in your classroom?
- ○ Never
- ○ Less than once a month
- ○ More than once a month

22. If you've answered 'Never', to any of the three previous questions (taking Youth to workplaces, inviting graduates or professionals to speak to your Youth), please explain why. (Short answer)

23. What training or qualifications have you received to be a teacher or trainer?
- ○ (open response)

24. How many years have you been training learners?
- ○ Less than one year
- ○ 1 to 5 years
- ○ 6-10 years
- ○ 11 or more years

25. Do any of the Youth you're training have disabilities? If yes, check all that apply:
- ○ Vision (eyesight)
- ○ Hearing (problems hearing clearly)
- ○ Mobility (needing walking aids or wheelchair)
- ○ Remembering and concentrating
- ○ Self care (such as washing or dressing)
- ○ Communication (understanding or being understood by others)

26. Do you feel that you have the skills and knowledge to help Youth with disability participate effectively in your classroom?
- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ I don't know

3. Comparative Questions

	For Vocational Trainers:	**For the Youth in NRC programs:**
27	**What subject are you teaching?** _____	**What subject are you learning?** _____
28	**What are 3 words you would use to describe the Youth in your programs?**	**What are 3 words you would use to describe the teachers/facilitators in NRC programs?**
29	**At the end of your program, what will success look like for the youth in your program?** (Choose the most important) 1. To have a stable full time job that they enjoy 2. To be able to use their skills when they return home 3. To be able to help their family and or community 4. To have enough money to live and save 5. To have an internationally recognised certificate 6. To have a nationally recognised certificate 7. To have a certificate that is recognised when they get home 8. None of the above. 9. Other (please specify)	**At the end of your program, what will success look like for you?** (Choose the most important) 1. To have a stable full time job that I enjoy 2. To be able to use my skills when I return home 3. To be able to help myfamily and or community 4. To have enough money to live and save 5. To have an internationally recognised certificate 6. To have a nationally recognised certificate 7. To have a certificate that is recognised when I get home 8. None of the above. 9. Other (please specify)
30	**How well do you think your training prepares the Youth in your programs to be employed/start their own business? (the next question will ask you WHY you answered this way)** ○ Not very well ○ Not well ○ It's ok ○ Well ○ Very well ○ Other	**How well do you think your training prepares you to be employed/start your own business?** ○ Not very well ○ Not well ○ It's ok ○ Well ○ Very well ○ Other

31	**Explain in your own words how the program helps or doesn't help Youth to become employed/start their own business.**	**Explain in your own words how the program helps or doesn't help You to become employed/start your own business.**
32	**Apart from money, a job or education, what do you think Youth need to have a successful life?** (Open ended question)	**If you could ask for anything (apart from money, a job or education), what would you ask for that would help you have a successful life?** (Open ended question)
33	**What is the best way for Youth to access training?** ● Full time over multiple months. ● Flexible - a few hours per day. ● Ability to stop and re-start courses when I need to. ● Other	**How do you prefer to access learning?** ● Full time over multiple months. ● Flexible - a few hours per day. ● Ability to stop and re-start courses when I need to. ● Other
34	**If you had the opportunity to get more training in any of these areas, would you be interested in signing up? (The training would be during working hours and free): how to:** 1. create engaging, interesting and fun PowerPoints 2. be more effective when demonstrating and teaching tasks 3. be a better mentor, and create a mentoring plan 4. make sure that your assessments test the skills that the Youth in your program need (for success) in small business or employment 5. make sure that you're assessing the Youth in your programs in the same way as other trainers (so every the Youth in your programs is treated fairly) 6. collect evidence to show that a the Youth in your programs already is competent in the tasks you're meant to be teaching and assessing them on	**How do you think your trainers could improve? How to:** 1. use technology (like PowerPoints) in the classroom better 2. be better at demonstrating and teaching us how to do tasks 3. be better at mentoring or coaching us 4. make assessments that test the skills we need in a job or to start a business 5. make the assessments fair (so we're all assessed the same way) 6. find out what we already CAN do (so they don't have to teach us how to do things we already know how to do)

35	How do you think the Youth in your program prefer to learn? (Choose the top 3) 1. doing practical tasks 2. listening to you (their teacher/trainer/facilitator) 3. having discussions with you (their teacher/trainer/facilitator) 4. reading books 5. writing exams 6. using online learning 7. on the job training 8. visits to see workplaces	How do you prefer to learn? (Choose your top 3) 1. doing practical tasks 2. listening to my teacher/trainer/facilitator 3. having discussions with my teacher/trainer/facilitator 4. reading books 5. writing exams 6. using online learning 7. on the job training 8. visits to see workplaces
36	What is the 'best' way to assess a learner'? Choose ONE only. 1. written exams? 2. doing practical tasks? 3. explaining it to and having a discussion with your teacher? 4. by a peer? 5. by an external assessor? 6. It depends on the learner 7. It depends on the subject 8. Other (open ended response?)	How do you prefer to be assessed? Choose ONE only. 1. written exams? 2. doing practical tasks? 3. explaining it to and having a discussion with your teacher? 4. by a peer? 5. by an external assessor? 6. It depends on the teacher/trainer 7. It depends on the subject 8. Other (open ended response?)
37	Where do you think the Youth in your program learn best? (Choose one only) 1. In a training centre? 2. In a workplace? 3. Online?	Where do you think you learn best? (Choose one only) 1. In a training centre? 2. In a workplace? 3. Online?
38	What's the percentage of theory to practice? (how much time do you	What's the percentage of theory to practice? (how much time do you

	spend on practical tasks vs learning theory) ● 30% learning theory 70% doing practical tasks ● 50% learning theory 50% doing practical tasks ● 70% learning theory 30% doing practical tasks	**spend on practical tasks vs learning theory)** ● 30% learning theory 70% doing practical tasks ● 50% learning theory 50% doing practical tasks ● 70% learning theory 30% doing practical tasks
39	**If your learners share their equipment, how many learners do they have to share with?** ● 1 set of equipment for 1 learner ● 1 set of equipment for 3 learners ● 1 set of equipment for 5 or more learners	**Do you share your equipment or do you have your own set to practice with?** ● There is always a set of equipment for me to use in the centre - we don't need to share ● I need to share equipment with 2, 3 or 4 other learners ● I need to share equipment with 5 or more learners
40	**Do you have any final comments? What do you really need (to be a successful trainer) that we haven't already covered in this survey?** (Short answer)	**Do you have any final comments? What do you really need (to be successful in your vocational training) that we haven't already covered in this survey?** (Short answer)

Appendix 2: Instructions for Survey Facilitators

These instructions were given to survey facilitators prior to the survey being undertaken and a brief training session provided by each of the MERO Regional Offices.

Purpose: It has been identified by MERO (Middle East Regional Office) that there is a need for teacher training of vocational teachers in the region. This survey is designed to collect data that will serve a variety of purposes:
- Provide evidence of what the learners and trainers want and need
- Compare and contrast how these views differ between
  - Learners and trainers
  - Country offices

Sample: vocational trainers and Youth learners in NRC training centres offering programmes in: mobile maintenance, welding, jewellery making, HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air conditioning), computer maintenance, tailoring, barbering, hairdressing, carpentry, beauty, electrical, small appliance maintenance, bakery, agriculture.

The survey would not be targeting LifeSkills, English, Computer or Business Skills at this stage.

Youth participating in these training programs are 15-32 years old.

According to ethics requirements, parental consent will be required for 15-17 year olds.

Language note: learners and Youth are used interchangeably, as are the terms trainer, facilitator and teacher. Terms used will need to be standardised and possibly adapted for different regions depending on the context of the question being asked.

Number of participants sought: as many as possible.
- Youth - Minimum of 20 current learners per CO. 50% male and 50% female. Aged 15 - 32 years old (consent forms required for any learner under 18 years old).
- Trainers - current vocational subject trainers only. Minimum of 6 per CO. 50% male and 50% female where possible.

If less than 20 learners or 6 trainers reply from on CO, the responses will not be included in the regional analysis.

Potential Value: This evidence has potential value in terms of:
- Demonstrating to each country office what their learners and trainers have reported as needing and wanting
- Demonstrating to potential donors the perceived needs within the region
- Contributing to the literature on **perceived needs of learners and trainers** in a refugee education context (of which there is very little available academically on a global scale)

Range and Purpose of Survey Questions

There are three sets of questions that will be collected:

1. **Primary Questions**
2. **Learner and Trainer Specific Questions**
3. **Comparative Questions**

There are two different surveys - one for trainers and one for Youth learners.
- Trainer version - questions 1-11, 16-40 ONLY (does not include questions 12-15)
- Learner version - questions 1-15, 27-40 ONLY (does not include questions 16-26)

Instructions for NRC Staff/enumerators/trainers overseeing their learners completing the survey:
- It is recommended that enumerators assist learners to complete the survey with technical or comprehension issues ONLY. The enumerators should NOT help the learners decide their answers or 'lead' them to answer in a certain way.
- Learners with disabilities may need additional support in answering the survey from trainers.
- It is recommended that trainers wait to discuss the survey with learners until after they've completed the survey (so as to ensure that learners' responses are individual and not influenced by the opinions of their trainers or other learners).
- The results of the survey will be used to enhance and improve the quality of Youth Programming.
- Responses are anonymous and results will be shared with trainers and Youth once the data has been analysed.

Context:

These questions are to help us understand what YOU the trainers and learners WANT and NEED from your training programmes.

When we ask about **'your skilled workplace'**, we are referring to for example, if you're teaching
- Carpentry = carpentry business
- Hairdressing = hair salon
- Agribusiness = farm

So the PLACES where you would USE the SKILLS you're teaching, working or running a business.

When we talk about **PROFESSIONALS**, we are referring to the people who have the skills in those workplaces - for example, if you're teaching
- Carpentry = carpenters
- Hairdressing = hairdressers
- Agribusiness = farmers

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