

Counseling Students Through Uncertainty, Conflict and Political/Economic Instability

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REGIONAL INSTITUTE
Middle East and North Africa 2023

Lebanon

- Centralized education system: regional educational bureaus in each province
- 1400 schools (private and public)
- 48 private universities
- 1 public university
- Lebanese Baccalaureate, French Baccalaureate, International Baccalaureate, American System
- Two credit systems in higher education: American and European (ECTS)



1. Political Instability

- Visa restrictions and denials
- Limited or strained partnerships with international institutions
- Communication barriers: access to internet, prospective universities, and application material
- Risk of discrimination or bias
- Uncertain political climate



1. Political Instability in Lebanon

- Awaiting a “third way” in presidential deadlock
- Tension along the UN-designated Blue Line border
- IMF reforms (technical and democratic qualities of government)

- Greatly influences student experiences, perspectives, and educational opportunities



2. Economic/Financial Challenges

- Inflation and currency devaluation: reduced purchasing power; harder for families to save for their children's education
- Increased poverty rate to 82% in 2021, up from 45% in 2019
- Increased unemployment rate to 30% in 2022, up from 11% in 2019
- The “**official**” exchange rate and the **CSS**

Official value: 9,000,000 LBP / **15,000** LBP = **600 USD**

Actual market value: 9,000,000 LBP / **89,000** LBP = **101.12 USD**



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2. Economic/Financial Challenges

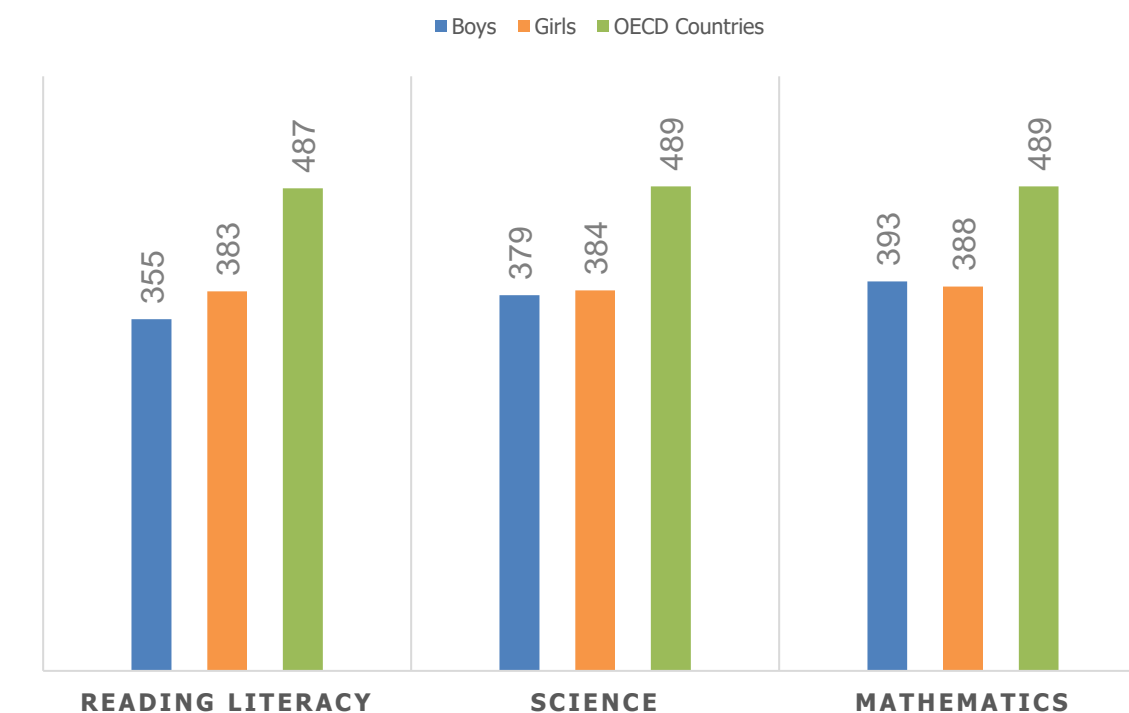
- Restricted access to savings and loans
- Lack of a well established financial system
- Local scholarships to study in Lebanon
- No national governmental scholarships to study abroad
- Scholarships sponsored by foreign governments and academic consortiums



3. Educational Challenges and Disruptions

- Disrupted education system: irregular calendar, school closures
- Curriculum inconsistencies
- Limited extracurricular opportunities: limiting to growth and competitiveness
- Limited research infrastructure
- Limited guidance and counseling
- Limited access to academic resources, updated textbooks, internet

15-YEAR-OLDS AVERAGE PERFORMANCE



4. Societal Stressors

- Social stigma: negative view especially if it challenges prevalent ideologies (Anglo- vs. Franco-)
- Lack of family support: family expectations; preference to stay close to home
- Financial dependence on family
- Gender-related constraints: disproportionately affecting females
- Increased stress about post-graduation employment and career prospects
- Uncertainty about the future



5. Language Proficiency

- Limited access to language learning resources
 - Education in native language
 - Varies based on educational background and academic program
 - Many Lebanese students are proficient in multiple languages (Arabic, English, French)
 - Mean TOEFL iBT score for Lebanon = 91
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- 68% of the variation in reading performance is explained by students' and schools' economic, social and cultural status



6. Documentation Challenges/Refugee status

- Bureaucratic challenge in obtaining timely and accurate academic/personal documentation
- Fluctuations in government policies
- Lack of documentation for refugee students:
- Palestinian Students
 - UNRWA: free of charge + limited support to vocational training
- Syrian students:
 - Second shift Lebanese schools for grades 1-9



Strategies for effective counseling (counselors)

- Understand the student's context
- Create a space for open communication and sharing
- Assess individual needs and goals: academic background, career aspirations, language proficiency, financial situation
- Provide guidance on education systems and language learning opportunities
- Provide information on scholarship opportunities for international students
- Scholarship opportunities to study in U.S.
 - **EducationUSA Opportunity Fund** (Upfront costs)
 - **Amideast MENA Scholarship Support Fund** (Partial)



Strategies for effective counseling (counselors)

- Provide academic support: writing centers, tutoring programs, study groups
- Assist in the application process
- Facilitate networking opportunities: participation in networking events, webinars, online forums
- Encourage cultural awareness and community building initiatives
- Follow-up and continuous support through the application, pre-departure, and during study abroad



Strategies for effective counseling (International HEIs)

- Specialized guidance: academic advisors with expertise in assisting students from unstable countries
- Networking and Collaboration: partner with schools, community organizations, and businesses
- Alumni Engagement: leverage positive experiences of alumni to attract new students
- Scholarships and Financial Aid: increase aid to attract high-achieving students
- Flexibility in evaluating academic transcripts; allow for additional context if needed



Morocco

- 11 909 schools (private and public)
269 015 teachers / 7 931 841 students
- Moroccan Baccalaureate, International, British, American, Spanish, Italian, etc.
Moroccan (public & private): 25% semesters + 25% 11th grade national exam + 50% 12th grade national exam
- 432 higher education institutes (155 public)
1 218 687 students / 21 624 professors
LMD System (License- Master- Doctorat)



Economic/ Financial Challenges

- Inflation post-Covid 6,5%
- Increasing cost of life in Morocco
- High unemployment rate 12,9% in 2023 highest since 2000
- High cost of good quality of education
- Limited scholarships to study abroad
- Competitiveness for foreign scholarships



Educational Challenges and Disruptions

- Inconsistencies in the educational system: Private vs. Public
- Lack of counseling and orientation
- Student/teacher ratio
- Limited pedagogical trainings
- Limited research infrastructure
- Limited access to resources
- Limited extra-curricular activities



Societal Stressors

- Inequality in opportunities (public vs. private vs. other)
- Financial dependence on family
- Increased stress about post-graduation employment and career prospects
- Competitiveness for study abroad scholarships



Strategies for effective counseling (counselors)

- Encourage extra-curricular activities and networking in our American Space
- Organize workshops and seminars
- Partner with schools, community organizations for outreach
- Alumni network to attract engagement



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Strategies for effective counseling (counselors)

- Analyze the student's situation (academic background, language proficiency, financial situation)
- Evaluate the students needs
- Explain the educational system and admission requirements
- Guide students based on their needs and objectives
- Guide students throughout the application process
- Scholarship / Exchange programs opportunities to study in the U.S.

