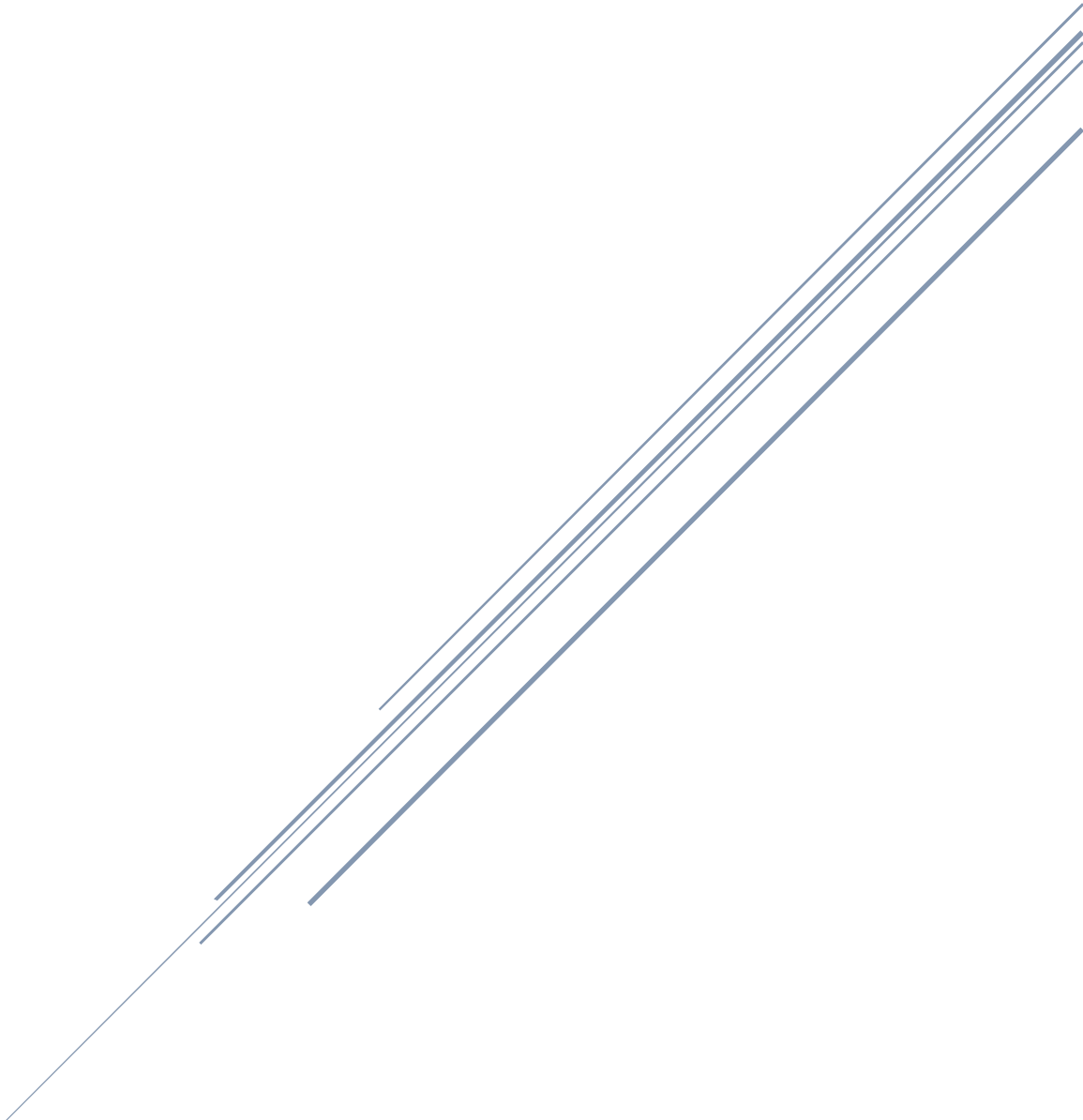


# OVERVIEW CHAPTER

ARAB BAROMETER REPORT ON NONFORMAL EDUCATION IN THE  
MENA REGION



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Learning Systems Institute

## OVERVIEW CHAPTER

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Helen N. Boyle and Flavia Ramos-Mattoussi

*August 18, 2018*

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

CBO	Community-Based Organization
FSU	Florida State University
LSI	Learning Systems Institute
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## Executive Summary

The University of Michigan, in combination with Northwestern University and the Salam Institute for Peace and Justice, are currently working on a research project for USAID on youth non-formal education in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. As part of this project, the consortium added a battery of survey questions concerning Nonformal Education to the annual [Arab Barometer](#) public opinion survey. The purpose of the addition of the NFE questions was to understand the degree to which non-formal education is being used in countries across MENA, gauge populations' views on nonformal education and the importance of promoting critical thinking and emotional intelligence in a curriculum, identify perceived barriers to NFE as well as understand its perceived benefits. This research produced nine reports on NFE, which constitute the primary data sources for an overview chapter on NFE in the MENA region, listed below:

1. Jordanian Views of Education Outside the Formal System (September 2017)
2. Lebanon Views of Youth Non-Formal Education in Lebanon (September 2017)
3. View of Non-Formal education among Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (September 2017)
4. Views of Education Outside the Formal System among Syrian Refugees in Jordan (September 2017)
5. Views of Youth Non-Formal Education in the West Bank and Gaza (September 2017)
6. Views of Non-Formal Education in Algeria (April 2018)
7. Views of Non-Formal Education in Morocco (April 2018)
8. Views of Youth Non-Formal Education in Tunisia (August 2017)
9. Views of Youth Non-Formal Education in Egypt (April 2018)

The University of Michigan contracted Florida State University's Learning Systems Institute (LSI) to develop an overview chapter that synthesizes the findings from the 9 reports above from a regional perspective. In particular, this overview chapter responds to the following research questions:

1. To what degree is nonformal education being used in countries across the MENA region?
2. What are the views of nonformal education across the region?
3. What are the perceived barriers to it?
4. What are the perceived benefits of it?
5. What are the views toward the importance of promoting skills in critical thinking and emotional intelligence in a NFE curriculum across the MENA region?

The report first provides the purpose and methods used in the study, then discusses the study context, providing background on the linguistic, educational and democratic contexts of the region and then moves on to include background information on the roots and purposes of NFE in general and in the region. The overview chapter then synthesizes results from the nine surveys about: 1) respondents' views on government and the formal educational system and 2) attitudes toward NFE and reasons for attending NFE programs; barriers to attending NFE programs; views on benefits of NFE education and, finally, the promotion of critical thinking and emotional intelligence. The former results (#1) are included because each Arab Barometer country report included a section of the same name and this provides valuable context on how NFE fits or might fit into education. The latter (#2) results reported align with the stated research questions above. As this is an executive summary, we move now to sharing the actual results and then the recommendations of the authors.

### Results

**Government and Formal Education System:** Findings from the Arab Barometer public opinion survey reveal there is significant concern about the formal, public education system, particularly in countries of North Africa. By contrast, levels of satisfaction with the formal, public educational systems were fairly high in both Jordan and Lebanon although low in the West Bank and Gaza. (Gazans were more satisfied than those from the West Bank: 58% as compared to 44%). When asked a more specific question about the government's ability to

manage the education system and meet the needs of its constituents, satisfaction levels were fairly low, with the exception of Jordan. Notably, satisfaction levels with the educational systems across the board, while low, seemed higher than with other government-managed or provided services such as the health sector or the economy. Perhaps as a reflection of low rates of satisfaction with the formal school systems across all countries (excepting Jordan and Lebanon), a significant majority of respondents in all countries reported being worried about being able to provide children with a good quality education.

**RQ 1, Degree of NFE Program Usage Across the MENA Region:** Across the Levant and North African Arabic-speaking countries, nonformal education is not widely used. The West Bank and Gaza had the highest usage with 19% of those surveyed availing themselves of NFE programs. On the other end of the spectrum, Syrian refugees in Lebanon had the lowest (2%) usage rate of NFE programs, with Egypt close behind (4%). Those who did avail themselves of NFE tended to be urban dwellers and of average or higher income and/or better educated. This speaks to shifting attitudes about both schooling and nonformal education.

Across the two regions, those who did avail themselves of NFE tended to be urban dwellers and of average or higher income and/or better educated. This speaks to shifting attitudes about both schooling and nonformal education. Regarding the latter, it seems that both participants and others who participated in the survey see NFE as a “get ahead” strategy, rather than a way to “catch up” to others in terms of literacy and job skills. The most popular courses of study according to respondents, were languages and computer skills, both of which were explicitly connected to earning a degree or gaining employable skills. Regarding the former, the NFE courses such as languages and computers, as well as math and science (also somewhat popular) can be used to support and reinforce formal school studies; they are also relevant to the latter (job skills). Typical NFE staples like literacy and life skills were not as popular, except with Syrian refugees in Jordan and some respondents in Lebanon and the West Bank and Gaza. Still, even in these contexts, languages, math and computers were the most in demand subjects.

Across the region, NFE programs are provided by NGOs, public and international agencies and private institutions, with the latter being the most common type of provider. Private institutions constitute three fifths of the services offered and they usually charge a fee. Hence, it is possible, even likely, that enrollment in programs offered by private institutions could be low due to cost issues (cited in all of the NFE reports as a major barrier).

**RQ 2, Attitudes toward NFE Across the MENA Region:** Surprisingly, views of NFE tended to be positive across the region, with the possible exception of Morocco. Traditionally, NFE in its broadest sense, it was not something MENA parents aspired to for their children. Formal public schooling was once a route to employment, but it is longer seen as sufficient (i.e. all a child would need for a bright future) or improving fast enough. Hence, the most popular NFE courses of study according to respondents, were languages (foreign or second) and computer skills, both of which were explicitly connected in the surveys to moving ahead in one’s studies with in-demand, relevant employment skills.

**RQ3, Barriers to NFE Participation Across the MENA Region:** Cost, transportation and time were the most commonly perceived barriers to NFE across all the countries in the study. However, overall, the most salient barrier to participation is cost, meaning any efforts to increase participation must address the affordability of non-formal education programs. Figure 10 aggregates the biggest barriers given for not enrolling in an NFE program across the countries/groups surveyed. Even examining the data by individual country or population, we can see that cost is the single biggest barrier cited across the board. Interestingly, even among respondents who reported that they were able to make ends meet and save money, cost was still cited as a barrier. Predictably, however, it was cited as the biggest barrier among low-income respondents; transportation tended to be cited more as a barrier among rural dwellers than urban dwellers.

**RQ4, Benefits to NFE Across the MENA Region:** Respondents from various countries consider that the most important skills they hope to gain out of participation in non-formal education, are related to career development and advancement. For instance, respondents cite acquiring a new skill for a job as the most important reason, followed by working for a degree or certificate. Less common reasons include working for other qualifications, furthering an interest, acquiring a new skill for a personal interest, making oneself a better person, and meeting people. Acquiring job skills were more important in the North African countries in general, especially Tunisia and Morocco, whereas working for a degree or certificate was generally the primary concern in the Levant countries.

**RQ 5, Views on the Importance of Critical Thinking and Emotional Intelligence Across the MENA Region:**

Given their colonial history, countries of the region tended to value study that was theoretical and academic. Early national educational systems tended to weed students out through failure on rigorous, high-stakes examinations, and to not offer alternative educational paths to those who failed out of school. Globalization and development efforts have hastened an influx of new ideas and practices in education and many formal education systems in the MENA region are moving forward with reform, away from their theoretical and academic orientations, toward a more applied and holistic model. However, this reform has often been (and still continues) at a slow or gradual pace that cannot keep up with demand for improvement.

In this current context, the Arab Barometer survey questions (1A – 5B) that relate to educational values indicate how much perceptions of the purpose of education have changed, along with the profile of what is contained in a quality education. Application and skills are not looked down upon but rather desired and nonformal educational programs are well placed to meet those desires. Survey results show that across all demographic backgrounds respondents prefer an educational system that stresses critical thinking over one emphasizing rote memorization. While there remain several important barriers to consider in designing non-formal education programs focused on teaching these skills, such programs have the potential to successfully address many of the needs of MENA youth.

**Recommendations**

**Learn from what is working in formal education:** While Lebanon and Jordan are relatively small countries compared to the others in this survey, they nonetheless are doing something right with respect to their educational systems and how they are managed. Both countries might have lessons to offer the others whose opinions are much more negative toward their own educational systems.

With regards to why respondents view participation in educational programs outside the formal system as important, the plurality of respondents says it is to receive a degree, certificate or some type of qualification. These responses suggest two important implications for the formal educational system. The first is that formal education should perhaps start to plan for educational offerings that are more relevant to skill building for employability; the second is (or could be) that students are not learning or feel they are not learning or being taught core subjects well enough in school to pass their exams and hence they turn outside the school for reinforcement.

**Advocate for NFE expansion, coordinate the provision of programs and actively engage multiple and underserved stakeholders:** As noted above, with regards to why respondents view participation in educational programs outside the formal system as important, the plurality of respondents says it is to receive a degree, certificate or some type of qualification. While these reasons have implications for the formal sector (discussed above), they also speak loudly to the urgent need for NFE programs precisely because the formal system is not meeting all of the perceived needs of students and their families. Overall, summary MENA data on attitudes towards the formal education sector and NFE program enrollment suggest that there is room to supplement the formal education provided in the countries of this study with nonformal education programs. These programs must respond to perceived issues of quality and equity as well as worries about students'



futures in economies which respondents characterize as poorly managed, unable to provide jobs and narrow the gaps between rich and poor.

Attitudes towards NFE programs were positive across the region, with over 50% of respondents who were either participants or family members of participants, reporting satisfaction in all countries except Morocco. While these sentiments are encouraging, it is also important to note that among households *without* an NFE program participant, a sizable minority hold negative perceptions of NFE. Thus, it appears that participation and the perception of such programs are linked, and perceptions improve from either direct or somewhat indirect contact with a program. This suggests that more advocacy is needed for NFE programs across the regions.

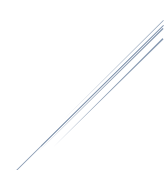
While Ministries of Education might find it strange to advocate for programs that implicitly suggest that the formal educational system is not sufficient in some areas, they might be persuaded to advocate for NFE programs, say in science, math or language, as supplements for students who need extra assistance. They might likewise advocate for NFE programs as forms of career preparation. Thought leaders, NGOs themselves and other agencies that support child/youth welfare (i.e. social service organizations), economic growth (i.e. Chambers of Commerce) and the like might also be enlisted as advocates for NFE programs for youth. Donors might be well placed to fund initial NFE advocacy/enrollment campaigns. This would all further help youth to know what is available to help them; many in these countries surveys reported a lack of information as barrier to NFE program enrollment.

Finally, on the issue of program coordination, this could be done through an NFE provider network, by country, that works with NGO, public and donor providers as well as private providers to document the types of programs offered in various national locales. These networks or a version of them do exist in several countries in the region. Beefing up these local networks, perhaps through donor or private sector funding, would render gaps in provision more apparent and help to ensure that a multiplicity of offerings are available.

**Address access, cost, and relevance issues related to youth non-formal education programs:** NFE programs are less common in rural areas and thus have fewer enrollees. The extension of NFE programs to rural areas is an important equity consideration, as rural populations are often poorer and more underserved by government services than urban populations. Hence, we recommend efforts to expand access into rural areas, while not neglecting urban ones.

Information issues are likewise importance and overlap with both access and cost issues. Across the region, NFE programs are provided by NGOs, public and international agencies and private institutions, with the latter being the most common type of provider. The former (NGOs and international organizations/donors) do not tend to advertise widely, so perhaps in countries where they are providers, youth do not hear about the opportunities they offer for NFE study. Youth need to be aware of the opportunities that exist. Likewise, NGOs and public and international agencies might not have the capacity to enroll large numbers of youth in program or offer the volume of programming demanded, further limiting access. Directing donor funding into local and NGO NFE programming is one way to expand affordable NFE programming options.

By contrast, across the countries surveyed, private institutions are the lead provider of NFE services. Private institutions usually charge a fee and might advertise their services. Hence, it is likely more youth know of these institutions and what they offer, but it is less likely they can afford them. Hence, it is possible, even likely, that enrollment in programs offered by private institutions could be low due to cost issues (cited in all of the NFE reports as a major barrier) but could rapidly increase with financial assistance (from government, NGOs, donors), tuition or fee waivers (from the private sector or donors), provider subsidies (from government or donors), etc. What is clear is that cost issues are paramount and poorer segments of the MENA region populations desiring access to NFE will need some sort of support.



**Consider learners' evolving needs:** The Arab Barometer surveys on NFE indicate demand for second and foreign language education, computer/technology education, as well as math and science and life skills education from NFE providers. RQ 5 also indicated strongly that citizens are open to programs that promote skills in critical thinking and emotional intelligence. There is a clear opportunity to use NFE programs to develop skills in all of these areas, especially critical thinking and emotional intelligence, especially if these programs could be promoted as enhancing employment prospects. It will be important to focus on learner needs/perceived needs in the design of a core NFE program. Critical thinking skills can be taught in a variety of ways and integrating computers, languages, math and science is recommended to make them relevant; likewise, emotional intelligence can be taught through language, writing and communication courses, through social media use and case studies to make the concepts relevant.

Another aspect to consider in designing and managing NFE programs is related to the needs of learners and their connection to the surrounding environment. Children and youth affected by crisis and conflict situations are more vulnerable to disturbances associated to academic learning as well as Social Emotional Learning (SEL). SEL programs are gaining in popularity and should be considered as NFE youth program components in areas with conflict, instability and refugees (West Bank and Gaza, Lebanon, Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan and possibly Egypt and Tunisia). Further, NFE youth programs in MENA could benefit from having teachers and administrators trained to promoting social and emotional learning in any type of learning situation, but particularly in situations involving children and youth in vulnerable situations, refugees, orphans, etc. This could also help to catalyze more rapid formal educational system reform in the MENA region.

# I. Overview Chapter, Introduction

## Project Purpose

The University of Michigan, in combination with Northwestern University and the Salam Institute for Peace and Justice, are currently working on a research project for USAID on youth non-formal education in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The goal of the project is to better understand the degree to which tailoring a short NFE curriculum that promotes critical thinking and emotional intelligence could yield greater benefits to learners than a standard (and more traditional) NFE curriculum, applied across the region. Depending on the results, USAID may consider funding a full program using this short curriculum as a basis.

## Research Methods Data Synthesized and Research Questions for Overview Chapter

As part of this project, the consortium added a battery of survey questions concerning Nonformal Education to the annual [Arab Barometer](#) public opinion survey. The purpose of the addition of the NFE questions was to understand the degree to which non-formal education is being used in countries across MENA, gauge views of nonformal education, identify perceived barriers to it, and understand its perceived benefits. The team also included a number of questions about views toward the importance of promoting skills in critical thinking and emotional intelligence in a curriculum. This research resulted in a set of nine reports on NFE:

**Table 3 - List of Arab Barometer Reports on Nonformal Education in the MENA Region**

<b>1. Jordanian Views of Education Outside the Formal System (September 2017)</b>
<b>2. Lebanon Views of Youth Non-Formal Education in Lebanon (September 2017)</b>
<b>3. View of Non-Formal education among Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (September 2017)</b>
<b>4. Views of Education Outside the Formal System among Syrian Refugees in Jordan (September 2017)</b>
<b>5. Views of Youth Non-Formal Education in the West Bank and Gaza (September 2017)</b>
<b>6. Views of Non-Formal Education in Algeria (April 2018)</b>
<b>7. Views of Non-Formal Education in Morocco (April 2018)</b>
<b>8. Views of Youth Non-Formal Education in Tunisia (August 2017)</b>
<b>9. Views of Youth Non-Formal Education in Egypt (April 2018)</b>

The University of Michigan contracted Florida State University's Learning Systems Institute to develop an overview chapter that synthesizes the findings from the 9 reports above from a regional perspective. In particular, this overview chapter responds to the following research questions:

1. To what degree is nonformal education being used in countries across the MENA region
2. What are the views of nonformal education across the region?
3. What are the perceived barriers to it?
4. What are the perceived benefits of it?
5. What are the views toward the importance of promoting skills in critical thinking and emotional intelligence in a NFAE curriculum across the MENA region?

## Context of Study

This study focused on seven Arabic-speaking countries across the MENA region and also includes data from Syrian refugees in two of these countries, Jordan and Lebanon. The MENA region is made up of countries that span Northern Africa and those that are part of the Levant region of the Middle East. This research did not include Gulf countries, which are sometimes described as part of the overall MENA region. Below is a map of the regions with the countries included:



Figure 1 - Map of North Africa and the Middle East

## Languages of Education and Work in the MENA Region

This study focused on **Arabic-speaking** countries in the Middle East and North Africa. The linguistic context of these countries is important and highly relevant to NFE programming for youth. In all of these countries Arabic is generally the first language of the population, although each country speaks its own particular dialect of Arabic. Likewise, particularly in North Africa, there are many native speakers of Berber languages, although most do learn Arabic as well. Finally, across the MENA region, foreign languages are sometimes used as the language of administration or business—generally English or French, depending on the colonial history of the individual countries; and, in some cases as the language of instruction in formal public schools (i.e. in Lebanon) and often in private schools. In all these countries, learning a foreign language—generally English or French—is emphasized in the formal, public school curricula. The table below lists the countries included in this study, their official language(s) and language(s) of instruction, as well as the commonly used languages for business and administration.

As we discuss below, the NFE survey results show a strong preference for “foreign” language instruction in NFE programming, meaning generally English or French. We also see that those who use NFE programming the most are generally urban and somewhat educated. Hence, rural populations and less educated rural populations in particular, including those whose first language is a Berber language (i.e. in Morocco and Algeria) might face linguistic challenges in accessing NFE programs. Less educated rural poor youth might face difficulties in reading in Arabic; native Berber speakers might face the same challenges; both groups might not speak English or French or be familiar enough with the basics of the languages to pursue NFE courses offered in those languages. Hence,

NFE programmers will need to take language issues into consideration, by country, in curriculum design and program offerings.

**Table 4 - Language Uses of Countries in the Arab Barometer NFE Study**

Levant				North Africa			
	Official Language(s)	Language(s) of instruction	Second language(s) used in business and administration		Official Language(s)	Language(s) of instruction	Second language(s) used in business and administration
<b>Jordan</b>	Arabic	Arabic English	English	<b>Algeria</b>	Arabic Tamazight	Arabic	French
<b>Lebanon</b>	Arabic	French and English (Arabic is taught but not the medium of instruction.)	French and some English	<b>Egypt</b>	Arabic	Arabic	English
<b>Palestine</b>	Arabic	Arabic	English	<b>Morocco</b>	Arabic Amazigh	Arabic Amazigh	French
<b>Syrians in Jordan</b>	Arabic	Arabic English	English	<b>Tunisia</b>	Arabic	Arabic	French
<b>Syrians in Lebanon</b>	Arabic	French or English	French				

## Democracy and Education

The views expressed in the Arab Barometer wave 4 surveys regarding democracy, the role of government, including state institutions and Islam, and civil society are relevant when examining the types of educational programs and who is responsible for implementing them (i.e., proving funding, deciding on content, controlling inputs and outputs, and evaluating outcomes), hence we provide some brief background information below.

The first Arab Human Development Report, published by the United Nations Development Program (2002), revealed that political systems in MENA "have not been opened up to all citizens" and that "political participation is less advanced in the Arab world than in other developing regions."<sup>1</sup> In more recent years, data from the Arab Barometer survey make clear that there is broad support for democracy in the Arab world. Most Arab men and women believe that democracy is the best political system and that it would be a good way for their country to be governed. However, people may understand democracy in different ways. Popular views indicate that most people want to see democracy implemented gradually, and they disagree among themselves about whether it should include an important role for Islam.

Amaney Jamal and Mark Tessler, in their review of Arab Barometer studies before 2011, suggest that "democratic values are present to a significant degree among Muslim Arab citizens, most of whom support

<sup>1</sup> Arab Human Development Report (New York: UN Development Programme, 2002); Ch. 7, [www.undp.org/rbas/ahdr/bychapter.html](http://www.undp.org/rbas/ahdr/bychapter.html) cited in Amaney A. Jamal and Mark A. Tessler's article "Attitudes in the Arab World," Journal of Democracy, Volume 19, Number 1, January 2008, pp. 97-110 (Article) Published by Johns Hopkins University Press DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2008.0004>

democracy, and that this is the case whether an individual believes that his or her country should be governed by a political system that is Islamic as well as democratic” (2008, p. 104). Respondents who favor democracy, either secular or Islamic, express three normative orientations that are identified as necessary to the long-term success of a democratic transition. These values are: 1) respect for political diversity and dissent, measured by the importance that respondents attribute to the presence of political leaders who are open to different political opinions; 2) social tolerance, measured by respondents' stating that they would harbor no objection to having neighbors of a different race; and 3) gender equality, measured by a question asking whether men and women should have equal job opportunities and wages. While these are only some of the values that are important for democracy, responses to questions about them seem to offer insights about the presence or absence of democratic values among Muslim Arab men and women in general.

The pre-2011 Arab Barometer reports shed light on political participation and the process of democratization. Many but not all citizens are politically engaged. There is considerable variation in the way that citizens in the Arab world think about democracy. On the one hand, a solid majority expresses support not only for democracy as an abstract concept but also for many of the institutions and processes associated with democratic governance. On the other hand, when asked to identify the most important factors that define a democracy, about half the respondents emphasized economic considerations rather than political rights and freedoms. Jamal and Tessler commentary on the several waves of the Arab Barometer indicate that “Respondents were much more likely to be critical of their government for poor economic performance than for a lack of freedom. Indeed, slender majorities view their governments favorably on political grounds.” (2008, p. 99). They add, though, that, “across all sectors of the Arab world, as in other Muslim-majority countries, there is a vibrant and nuanced discourse on the compatibility of Islam and democracy” (Jamal & Tessler: 2008, p. 100).

The political changes in the Arabic-speaking world in 2011 brought to the fore a variety of demands from the different sectors of society for governing systems that foster freedom, human rights, accountability and democracy as well as educational and employment opportunities. Indeed, despite the changes after 2011, many countries in the region continue to struggle with challenges impeding development, including the implementation of democratic governance, human rights abuses, slow economic development, poverty, wars and civil strife, corruption as well as lack of adequate education and health care.

In this post-2011 context, conceptions of democracy and citizens’ rights are still evolving, but are definitely on the radar of governments and citizens. NFE programs have a role to play in educating youth to participate in civil society, in preparing youth for economic participation and in aiding youth to better succeed in the formal school system, as well as develop additional skills not taught in the formal system. All of these are/will be instrumental in preparing youth (ideally all youth) to participate in and advocate for democratic governance and respect for human rights.

## Organization of Overview Chapter

After the introduction, section II of this chapter provides some background on Non-Formal Education (different types, its evolution, etc.) to ensure a common understanding of what sorts of NFE are covered in the survey and what types would be appropriate in the region. Section III addresses the research questions, presenting synthesized findings. Section IV contains further discussion of the findings, recommendations and conclusions.



# I. History and Types of Nonformal Education

Educational provision is not limited to formal schooling. Nonformal education (NFE) programs continue to play a critical role in the spread of literacy and civic competence, the achievement of vocational and public health objectives and the promotion of lifelong learning – among both adult and youth populations and in developing as well as industrialized countries.

## Definitions and Types

The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED, 2011), defines Non-formal education as...

“Education that is institutionalized, intentional and planned by an education provider. The defining characteristic of non-formal education is that it is an addition, alternative and/or a complement to formal education within the process of the lifelong learning of individuals. It is often provided to guarantee the right of access to education for all. It caters for people of all ages but does not necessarily apply a continuous pathway-structure; it may be short in duration and/or low intensity, and it is typically provided in the form of short courses, workshops or seminars. Non-formal education mostly leads to qualifications that are not recognized as formal qualifications by the relevant national educational authorities or to no qualifications at all. Non-formal education can cover programs contributing to adult and youth literacy and education for out-of-school children, as well as programs on life skills, work skills, and social or cultural development.”<sup>2</sup>

In his book *‘Non-Formal Education: Flexible Schooling or participatory education,’* Allan Rogers (2004) describes the emergence of the concept in the context of development and educational reform. The debate about non-formal education began in 1968 and continued through the mid-1980s. NFE became part of the international discourse on education policy in the late 1960s as a result of: (1) The concern about the growing “world educational crisis” (Philip Coombs, 1968)<sup>3</sup>; (2) a realization that formal education systems had adapted too slowly to the socio-economic changes around them; and (3) the existing gulf between government provision through the school system and the needs and interests of marginal populations who are most alienated from the system. What emerged from that debate was a tripartite categorization of learning systems that popularized the institutional or bureaucratic categories of informal, formal and non-formal education (Coombs & Ahmed: 1973, 1974). These are generally defined as follows:

The **formal education** system is defined as the hierarchically structured, chronologically graded 'education system', running from primary school through the university and including, in addition to general academic

<sup>2</sup> Source: OECD, European Union, UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2015), ISCED 2011 Operational Manual: Guidelines for Classifying National Education Programmes and Related Qualifications, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264228368-en>. Creative Commons Attribution CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 IGO. Available online at <http://uis.unesco.org/node/334726>

<sup>3</sup> Coombs, P. (1968). The World Educational Crisis, New York, Oxford University Press.

studies, a variety of specialized programs and institutions for full-time technical and professional training.<sup>4</sup> Characteristics of Formal Education usually include: (1) The school or institution controls both the objectives and the means of learning; (2) Compulsory attendance; (3) Admission requirements; (4) Standardized curriculum; (5) Prerequisites; (6) Diplomas or certificates.

In contrast, “**Nonformal education** ... is any organized, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population, adults as well as children” (Coombs and Ahmed 1974: 8).

Lastly, **Informal Education** refers to the truly lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment - from family and neighbors, from work and play, from the market place, the library and the mass media. The Incidental or Informal Learning may occur through learning from everyday experiences. This implies that the learner controls the means but not the objectives; the content of education is not structured, planned or organized. Examples of informal learning includes learning to speak, reading newspapers or magazines, watching TV, engaging with social media, etc.

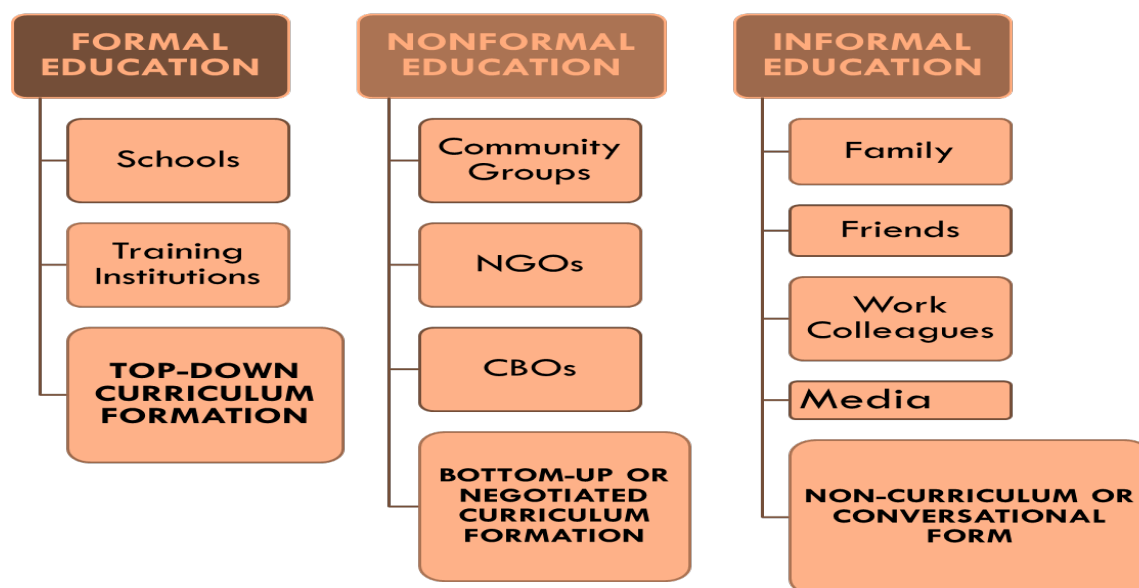


Figure 2 - Characteristics of Formal, Nonformal, and Informal Education

## Nonformal Education: History and Development

Non-formal education programs across the world were largely influenced by the work of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. His revolutionary adult education method, an antidote to government-controlled education system, became known worldwide. In the 1950s Freire developed a new approach to literacy, which linked ‘learning to read the word with learning to read the world’.

The central premise of Freire’s theory is that no education is neutral – it can be used for domination/domestication or liberation. Fundamental to Freire’s educational philosophy is the notion of collective action and continuing struggle on the part of the oppressed to liberate themselves from all forms of domination (Freire 1970, 1972, 1973). The oppressed are active subjects in their own struggle. Condemning the

<sup>4</sup> Smith, M. K. (2001). ‘What is non-formal education?’ The encyclopedia of informal education. Available online at: <http://infed.org/mobi/what-is-non-formal-education>



'banking' concept of education, in which teachers deposit the contents of education into their pupil's heads, Freire sought to provide the analytical framework and skills for people to define, challenge, change and make their own development depending on their specific cultural and historical context. He believed that most non-literate people lived in a 'culture of silence', denied the right to think and speak for themselves (Freire, 1972). 'Conscientization' (the process of learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions – and of acting against the oppressive elements of reality) was needed so that the learners would "perceive the reality of oppression, not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform" (Freire, 1972). Freire's emphasis on dialogue and his opposition to authoritarian forms of education has gained the support of those concerned with NFE and popular education.

The term *nonformal education* was chosen by the international development agencies in the 1970s to refer to local level programs for the adult poor. For the most part, nonformal education has been associated with community-based movements that operate independently from the state-run educational system. Around the world many community-based and non-government organizations provide support for nonformal education programs in basic education, agriculture, health, civic education, etc. In many countries, NFE programs now focus on youth and job skill development; curricula can include computers/IT, languages, math and science education, entrepreneurship, resume development, job-searching skills, etc. Fordham (1993) identified characteristics associated with NFE, which are still accurate for the most part today, including:

- 1. Relevance to the needs of disadvantaged groups.**
  - The content of education is adapted to the unique needs of the learners.
  - Learner-centeredness.
- 2. Concern with specific categories of people.**
  - Those who have been largely neglected (e.g., the urban and rural poor, youth)
- 3. A focus on clearly defined purposes.**
  - Programs are short-term, specific, and aimed at the needs of the learners.
- 4. Flexibility in organization and methods.**
  - Organization and curriculum planning are undertaken by the learners themselves (bottom-up).
  - Maximize learning, minimize formal elements.

Likewise, Simkins (1976) analyzed NFE programs in terms of purposes, timing, content delivery systems and control, and contrasted these with formal educational programs. His resulting ideal-type models of formal and NFE provide a useful framework for distinguishing these categories.

**Table 5- Ideal-type models of formal and nonformal education**

	Formal	Nonformal
<b>purpose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• long-term, general</li> <li>• credential-based</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• short-term, specific</li> <li>• non-credential-based</li> </ul>
<b>timing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• long cycle, preparatory</li> <li>• full-time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• short cycle, recurrent</li> <li>• part-time</li> </ul>
<b>content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• standardized, input centered</li> <li>• academic</li> <li>• entry requirements determine clientele</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• individualized, output centered</li> <li>• practical</li> <li>• clientele determine entry requirements</li> </ul>
<b>delivery system</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• institution-based, isolated from environment</li> <li>• rigidly structured, teacher-centered and resource intensive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• environment-based, community-related</li> <li>• flexible, learner-centered, and resource saving</li> </ul>
<b>control</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• external, hierarchical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• self-governing, democratic</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from Simkins (1977, pp. 12–15, cited in Fordham, 1993)<sup>5</sup>

The design of NFE, Popular Education and education for social change type of programs usually start with participant's knowledge and experience and develop into a collective framework of knowledge that leads into the formation of strategies for action. The methods applied, and materials used in these programs tend to be participatory, creative, and drawn from folk media and cultural traditions. Nonformal education programs have adopted various types of media-based materials (i.e., theater, radio, folk media) and techniques (i.e., games, simulations, photo-literature) to facilitate learning, engage community participation, and disseminate educational content that is relevant to sustainable social development at the grassroots level.

Over the years, the term 'nonformal education' came to mean different things for different people. In the global South: NFE has been associated with community participation, with its emphasis on empowerment of disadvantaged populations. In Latin America, *educación popular* (Popular Education) is the main alternative to formal schooling, involving a process of critical analysis of social issues in the interests of oppressed groups. It is a method of teaching and learning through dialogue that relates curriculum content to people's life experiences. In the global North, NFE has been associated with lifelong learning, adult education, community-based, democratic schooling and learner-centered education. Community education in the tradition of community organization in the USA; *sozial pädagogik* <sup>6</sup>in Germany; *animation* in France; and *socio-cultural work* in Belgium. Around the world, education outside of the formal system, such as community schools, Koranic schools, adult basic education, and some types of vocational training and youth programs have become associated with nonformal education.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, M. K. (2001). 'What is non-formal education?' The encyclopedia of informal education. Available online at: <http://infed.org/mobi/what-is-non-formal-education>

<sup>6</sup> Mark K. Smith 2001. Education for Democracy in Pedagogies for Change. Available online at <http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-dem.htm>

Over the past two decades, the international development community has shown a renewed interest in non-formal education globally (Rogers, 2004). This realization was formally expressed by the Council of Europe (2000).

The Assembly recognizes that formal educational systems alone cannot respond to the challenges of modern society and therefore welcomes its reinforcement by non-formal educational practices. The Assembly recommends that governments and appropriate authorities of member states recognize non-formal education as a de facto partner in the lifelong process and make it accessible for all (Coun Eur 2000).

In conclusion to this section, NFE is rooted in the philosophical critiques of the limits of certain types of formal education, and pragmatic efforts to meet needs beyond the reach of schooling, or beyond the ability of the school system to enact rapid reform. Hence, nonformal education interventions increasingly include enrichment programs that provide opportunities for practical application of acquired knowledge, skills, and life experience, supplemental learning opportunities to build on existing knowledge and skills, and/or interventions to compensate for lack of access to the formal educational system or for subject areas left out of the formal school-based curriculum. Hence, it is important to note that NFE programs today often have characteristics in common with both formal and informal education and borrow from both. Indeed, Rogers (2004) asks whether we should drop the term 'nonformal' altogether or try to reconceptualize it in terms of flexible schooling or participatory education.

## II. Synthesis of Findings across the MENA Region

This section presents data in two formats. First, we synthesize results from the survey about respondents' views on government and the educational system. Each Arab Barometer country report includes a section of the same name. Second, we move to the research questions, which generally follow the individual country report sections of: Attitudes toward NFE and Reasons for attending; Barriers to Attending NFE programs; and Views on education.

### Respondents' views on government and the educational system

Findings from the Arab Barometer public opinion survey reveal there is significant concern about the formal, public education system, particularly in countries of North Africa. By contrast, levels of satisfaction with the formal, public educational systems were fairly high in both Jordan and Lebanon although low in the West Bank and Gaza. (Gazans were more satisfied than those from the West Bank: 58% as compared to 44%).

When asked a more specific question about the government's ability to manage the education system and meet the needs of its constituents, satisfaction levels were fairly low, with the exception of Jordan. Interestingly, satisfaction with government's ability to address educational concerns were higher in Algeria and Tunisia, even though satisfaction with the public school system was low in both countries.

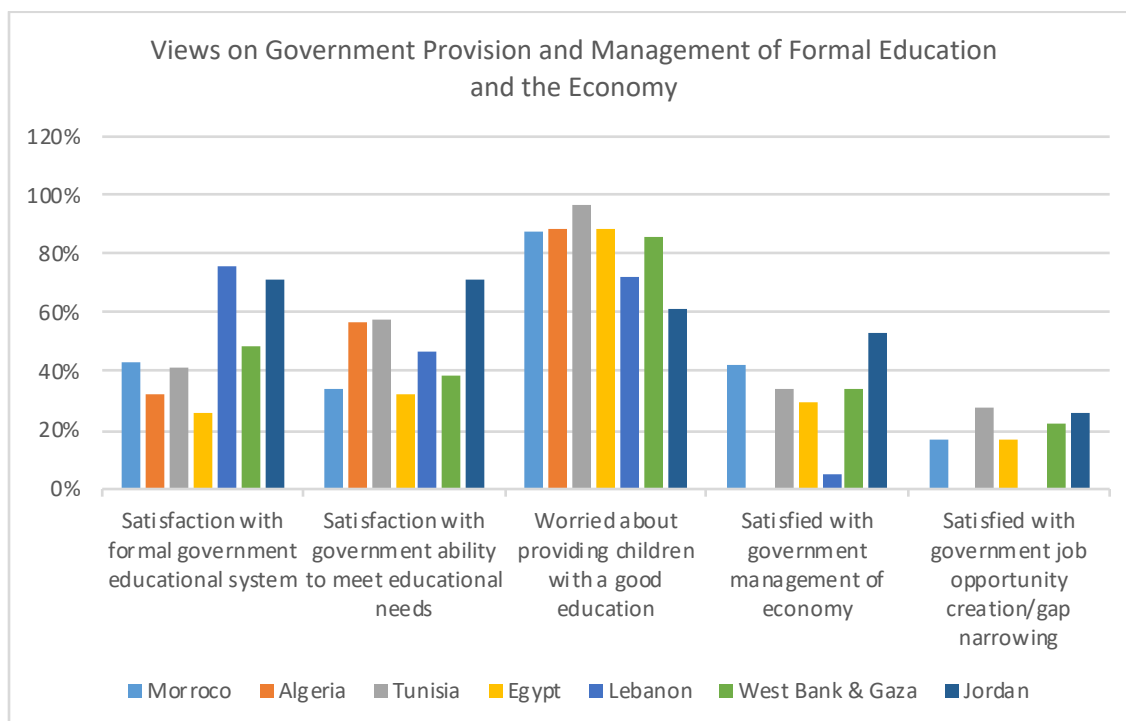
Notably, satisfaction levels with the educational systems across the board, while low, seemed higher than with other government-managed or provided services. In particular, where the question was posed, there were lower levels of satisfaction with governments' management of the national economy and with its efforts to create jobs and narrow gaps between rich and poor.

Perhaps as a reflection of low rates of satisfaction with the formal school systems across all countries (excepting Jordan and Lebanon), a significant majority of respondents in all countries reported being worried about being able to provide children with a good quality education.

**Table 6- Level of satisfaction with government and formal education systems across countries**

	Morocco	Algeria	Tunisia	Egypt	Lebanon	Syrian Refugees in Lebanon	West Bank & Gaza	Syrian Refugees in Jordan	Jordan
Satisfaction with formal government educational system	43%	32%	41%	26%	76%	n/a	49%	n/a	71%
Satisfaction with government ability to meet educational needs	34%	57%	58%	32%	47%	n/a	39%	n/a	71%
Satisfaction with government management of economy	42%	missing	34%	30%	5%	n/a	34%	n/a	53%
Satisfaction with government job opportunity creation/gap narrowing	17%	missing	28%	17%	missing	n/a	22%	n/a	26%
Worried about providing children with a good education	88%	89%	97%	89%	72%	n/a	86%	n/a	61%

Looked at from a more visually comparative perspective, which pulls out the Syrian refugee categories as they are not in their home country, we can see the high levels of worry and the lower levels of satisfaction with government educational provision and management<sup>7</sup>.



**Figure 3- Views on Government Provision and Management of Formal Education and the Economy**

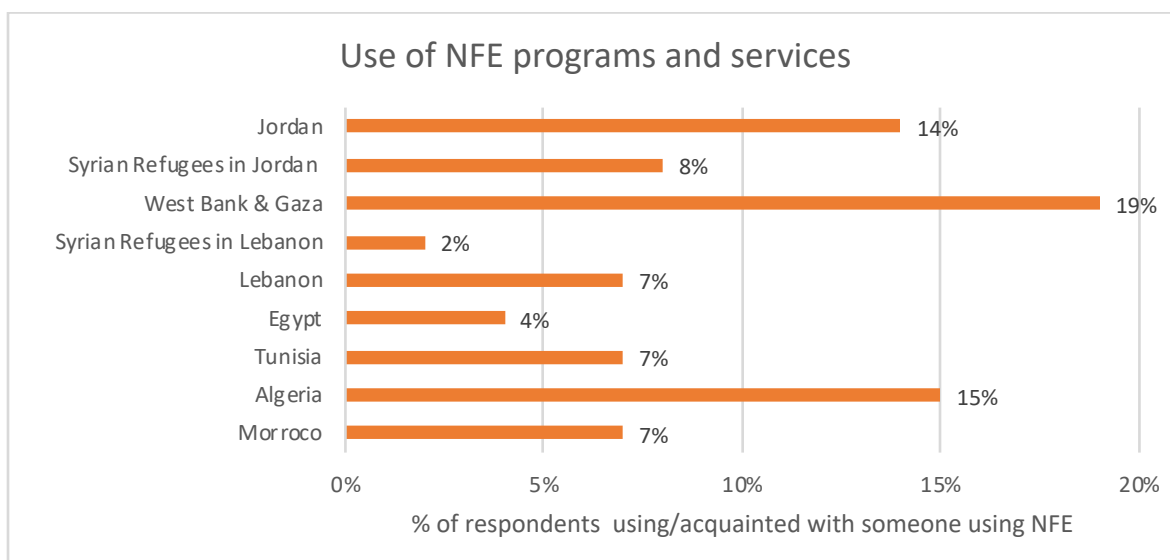
While Lebanon and Jordan are relatively small countries compared to the others in this survey, they nonetheless are doing something right with respect to their educational systems and how they are managed. Both countries might have lessons to offer the others whose opinions are much more negative toward their own educational systems.

Overall, these data suggest that there is room to supplement the formal education provided in the above countries with nonformal education programs that respond to perceived issues of quality and equity as well as worries about students' futures in economies which respondents characterize as poorly managed, unable to provide jobs and narrow the gaps between rich and poor.

### Research Question 1: To what degree is nonformal education being used in countries across the MENA region?

Across the Levant and North African Arabic-speaking countries, nonformal education is not widely used. The West Bank and Gaza had the highest usage with 19% of those surveyed availing themselves of NFE programs. On the other end of the spectrum, Syrian refugees in Lebanon had the lowest (2%) usage rate of NFE programs, with Egypt close behind (4%).

<sup>7</sup> Data were missing for Algeria on the question of satisfaction with government management of economy and were missing for both Algeria and Lebanon on the question of satisfaction with government job opportunity creation/gap narrowing.



**Figure 4- Percentage of respondents participating in NFE program or having a family member in NFE**

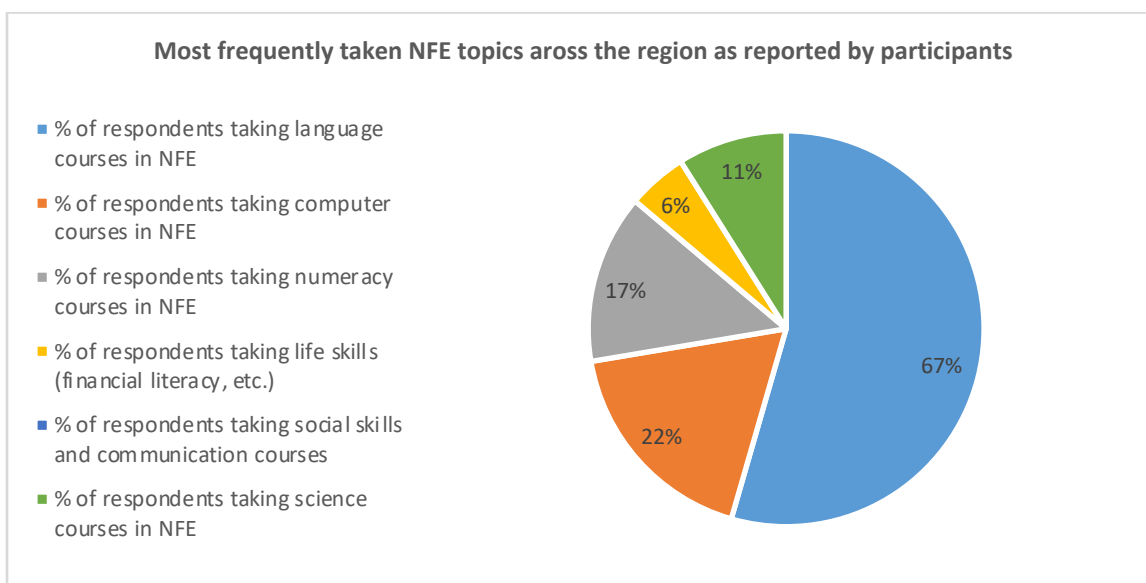
These data suggest that there is ample room to grow and expand NFE programs in all of the countries surveyed (including refugee populations in Lebanon and Jordan). It also begs the question of why participation is so low.

Across the two regions, those who did avail themselves of NFE tended to be urban dwellers and of average or higher income and/or better educated. This speaks to shifting attitudes about both schooling and nonformal education. Regarding the latter, it seems that both participants and others who participated in the survey see NFE as a “get ahead” strategy, rather than a way to “catch up” to others in terms of literacy and job skills. Whereas formal public schooling was once a route to employment—in government, as teachers, administrators, “technocrats” and the like—it is no longer seen as comprehensive (i.e. all a child would need for a bright future). Formal schooling in many of these countries has been increasingly criticized as too theoretical and lacking a focus on skills development, especially for employment. Hence, it appears that youth and families are seeking out ways to supplement youth skills for both work and schooling.

Related to the theme of education for employment, the most popular courses of study according to respondents, were languages and computer skills, both of which were explicitly connected to improving job prospects. Courses like these, as well as math and science (also somewhat popular) can similarly support and reinforce formal school studies. Typical NFE staples like literacy and life skills were not as popular, except with Syrian refugees in Jordan and some respondents in Lebanon and the West Bank and Gaza. Still, even in these contexts, languages, math and computers were the most in demand subjects.

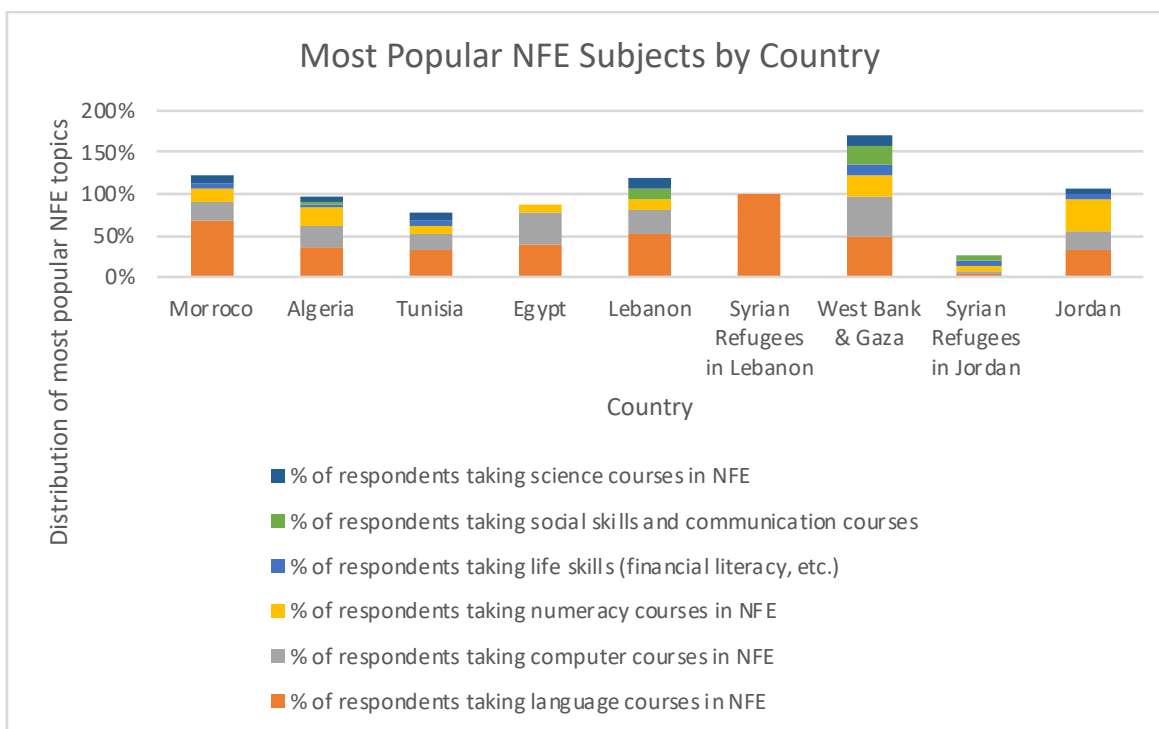
The figure below compiles all of the responses from those actually enrolled in NFE courses across the countries/populations in this study.<sup>8</sup> Based on these replies, we can see that language skills were the most pursued course of study. While this is not clarified in the individual NFE reports, knowledge of the regions suggests that “language” study indicates a foreign or second language; further, it is likely that the most popular language choices for study include English and French, given the regional history.

<sup>8</sup> In two cases, the NFE report did not distinguish whether the data came from the actual participant or a family member; it is included in this figure, but family member reports are not.



**Figure 5 - Most frequently taken NFE topics across the region, as reported by participants**

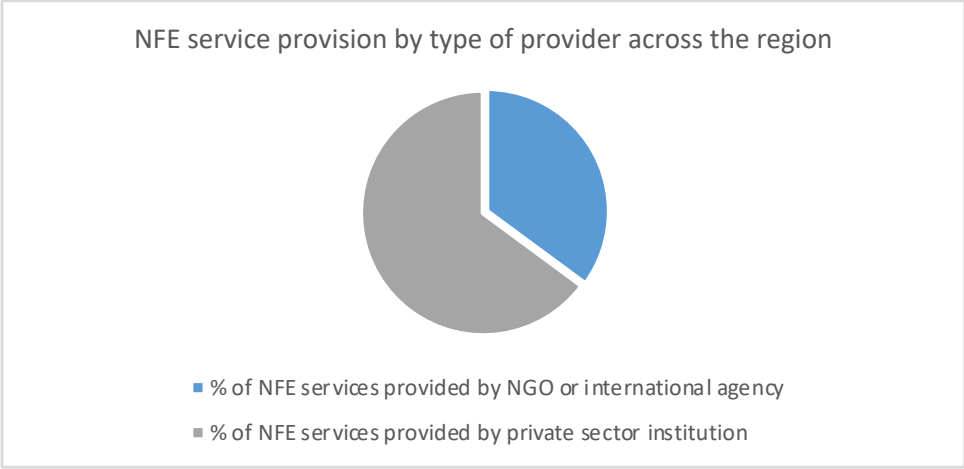
Below is a table that breaks down the distribution of NFE courses of study by country as well. In every country, excepting Syrian refugees in Jordan, language study constituted a substantial portion of youth NFE study. In the Egypt and the West Bank & Gaza, computer study was equally popular.



**Figure 6 - Popular NFE courses by country**

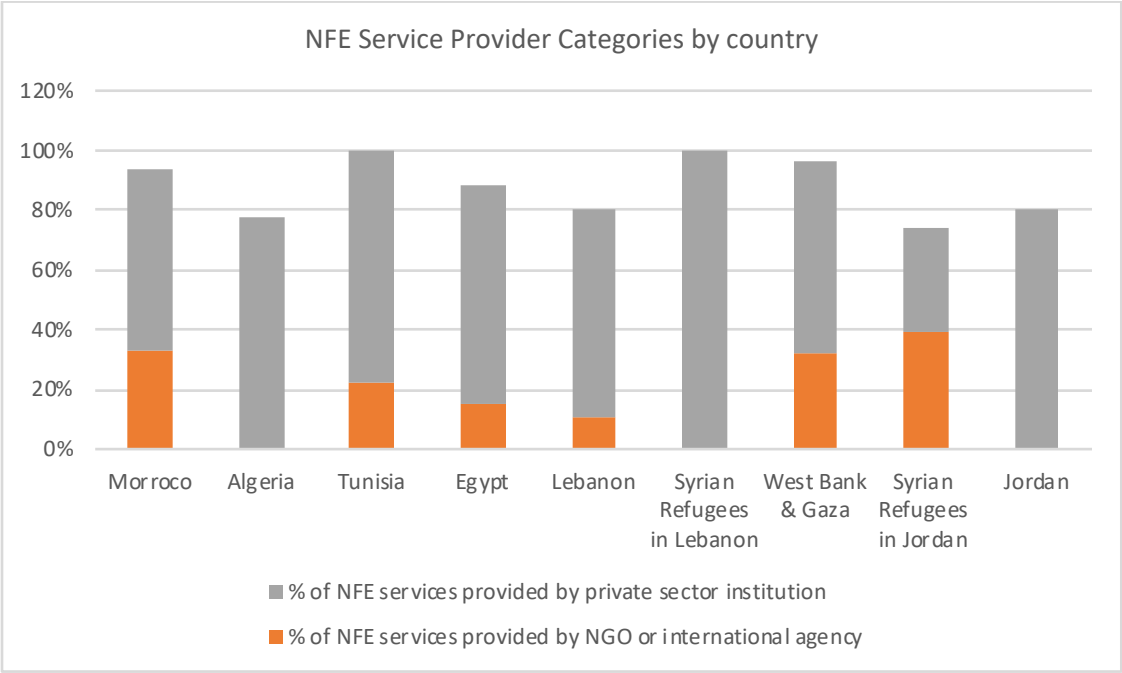
Across the region, NFE programs are provided by NGOs, public and international agencies and private institutions, with the latter being the most common type of provider. The former (NGOs and international organizations/donors) do not tend to advertise widely, so perhaps in countries where they are providers, youth do not hear about the opportunities they offer for NFE study; also, they might not have the capacity to enroll large numbers. In contrast, across the countries surveyed, private institutions are the lead provider of NFE

services. Private institutions usually charge a fee and cost was cited as the biggest barrier to participation by respondents. Hence, it is possible, even likely, that enrollment in programs offered by private institutions could be low due to cost issues (cited in all of the NFE reports as a major barrier). Figure 7 below shows the distribution of private vs NGO and international organization/donor providers.<sup>9</sup>



**Figure 7- NFE service provision by type of provider across MENA region**

Indeed, in some countries, respondents did not even mention NGO/international organizational providers of NFE services. Figure 8 shows the distribution of NFE service providers by type for each country in the survey.



**Figure 8 - NFE Service Provider Categories by Country**

In sum, there is not yet a well-defined ‘nonformal education’ movement emerging in the Middle-East and North Africa; nonetheless there are multiple actors implementing NFE programs in the MENA region. A third of the non-formal youth education programs in which respondents or their family members have participated are

<sup>9</sup> For Syrian refugees in Jordan, most did not know.



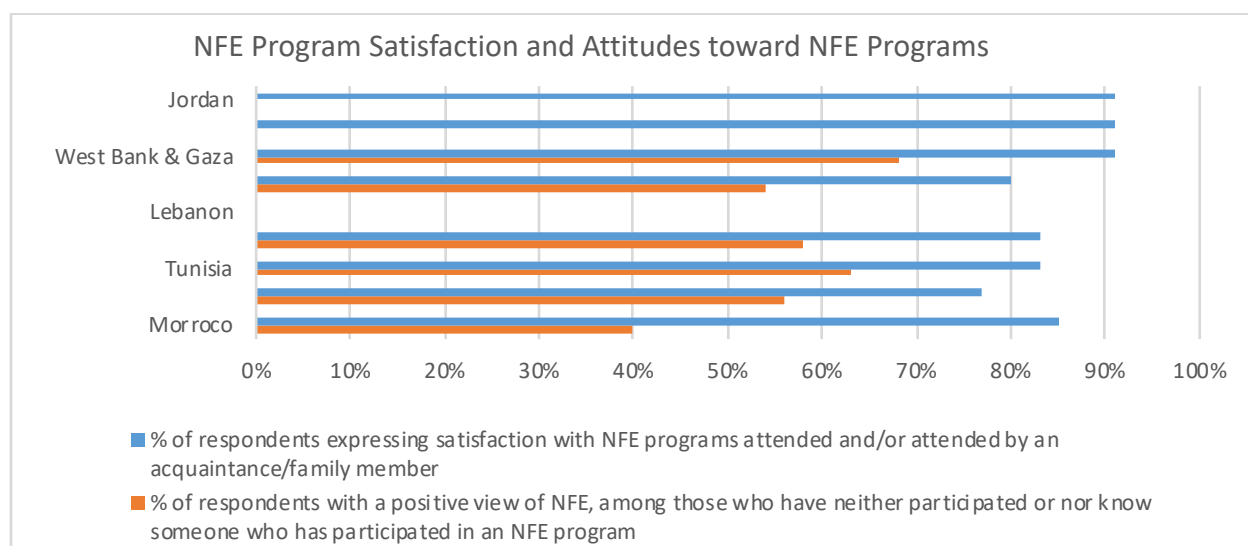
organized by agencies, NGOs or other organizations, while three-fifths are organized by private institutions. If NFE services are to be more widely offered to youth in the MENA region, it would seem that NGOs, governments, donor and international agencies will have to increase their share of the provision of services, or NFE services—over 66% from private institutions—will remain prohibitive for low income families and youth.

## Research Question 2: What are the views of nonformal education across the region?

Surprisingly, views of NFE tended to be positive across the region, with the possible exception of Morocco. Traditionally, NFE was popular in Arabic-speaking countries for basic literacy skills; however, in its broadest sense, it was not something parents aspired to for their children.

Arabic speaking countries generally associated formal education and its attendant credentials with prestige and social mobility. NFE tended to represent more “blue collar” or working-class career opportunities while formal education and its credentials were associated with more “white collar” types of jobs (office-work, administration, government posts, teaching, academia, etc.) As the global economy has shifted and the use of technology—especially computers and the internet—has become much more integral to “white collar” jobs, NFE seems to have undergone a bit of a “makeover” in public perception. NFE is now accessed more readily to support computer proficiency and to bolster foreign language skills, also integral to the global economy, career opportunities and national development across the region.

Even though participation in youth non-formal education (NFE) programs in the MENA countries is very low, levels of satisfaction with those programs tend to be very high among those who participate in them, or live in a households with participant in such a program. Even for those who have neither participated in an NFE program nor know someone who has, attitudes toward NFE were generally positive, with over 50% of respondents in this category saying they are satisfied with such programs. Only in Morocco was there a more pervasive negative attitude toward NFE, with only 40% of respondents who had no household experience with NFE saying they approved of it. See Figure 9 below.<sup>10</sup>



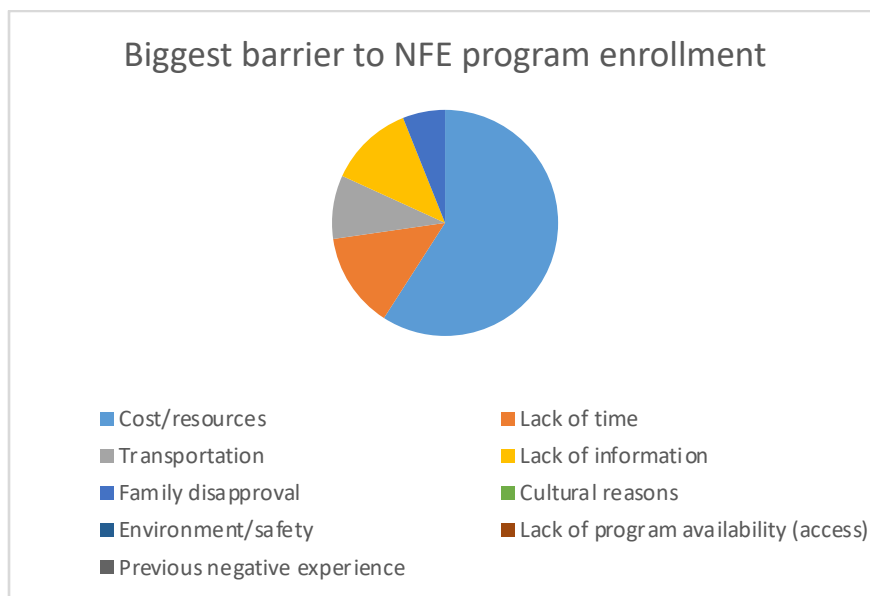
**Figure 9 - NFE Program Satisfaction and Attitudes toward NFE Programs by country**

<sup>10</sup> Data on satisfaction rates in Lebanon were not in the NFE report. In Jordan and Lebanon and with Syrian refugees in Jordan, data were missing for those who had neither participated in nor knew others who had participated in NFE programs.

While these sentiments are encouraging and do suggest that supplementary programs outside the formal system could play a role in improving educational outcomes in the region, it is also important to note that among households without an NFE program participant, a sizable minority hold negative perceptions of these programs. Thus, it appears that participation and the perception of such programs are linked, and perceptions improve from either direct or somewhat indirect contact with a program. This might suggest that more advocacy is needed for NFE programs across the regions. While Ministries of Education might find it strange to advocate for programs that implicitly suggest that the formal educational system is not sufficient in some areas, they might be persuaded to advocate for NFE programs, say in science, math or language, as supplements for students who need extra assistance. They might likewise advocate for NFE programs as forms of career preparation. Thought leaders, NGOs themselves and other agencies that support child/youth welfare (i.e. social service organizations), economic growth (i.e. Chambers of Commerce) and the like might also be enlisted as advocates for NFE programs for youth. Donors might be well placed to fund initial NFE advocacy/enrollment campaigns.

### Research Question 3: What are the perceived barriers to NFE participation?

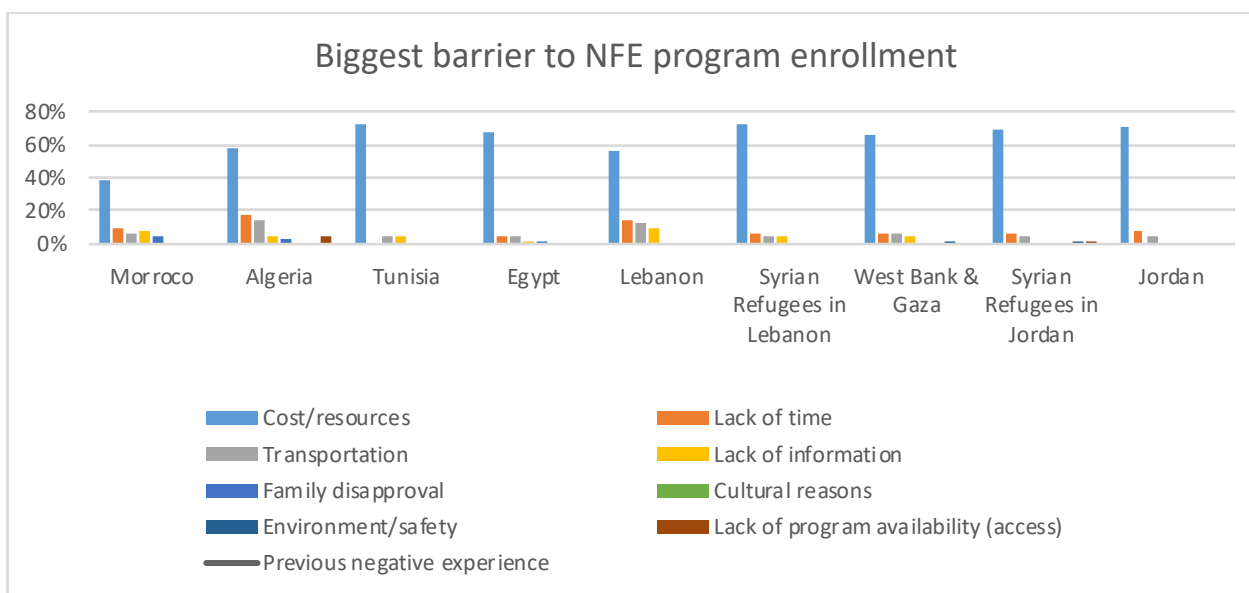
Cost, transportation and time were the most commonly perceived barriers to NFE across all the countries in the study. However, overall, the most salient barrier to participation is cost, meaning any efforts to increase participation must address the affordability of non-formal education programs. Figure 10 aggregates the biggest barriers given for not enrolling in an NFE program across the countries/groups surveyed<sup>11</sup>.



**Figure 10 - Biggest barriers to NFE enrollment across the MENA region.**

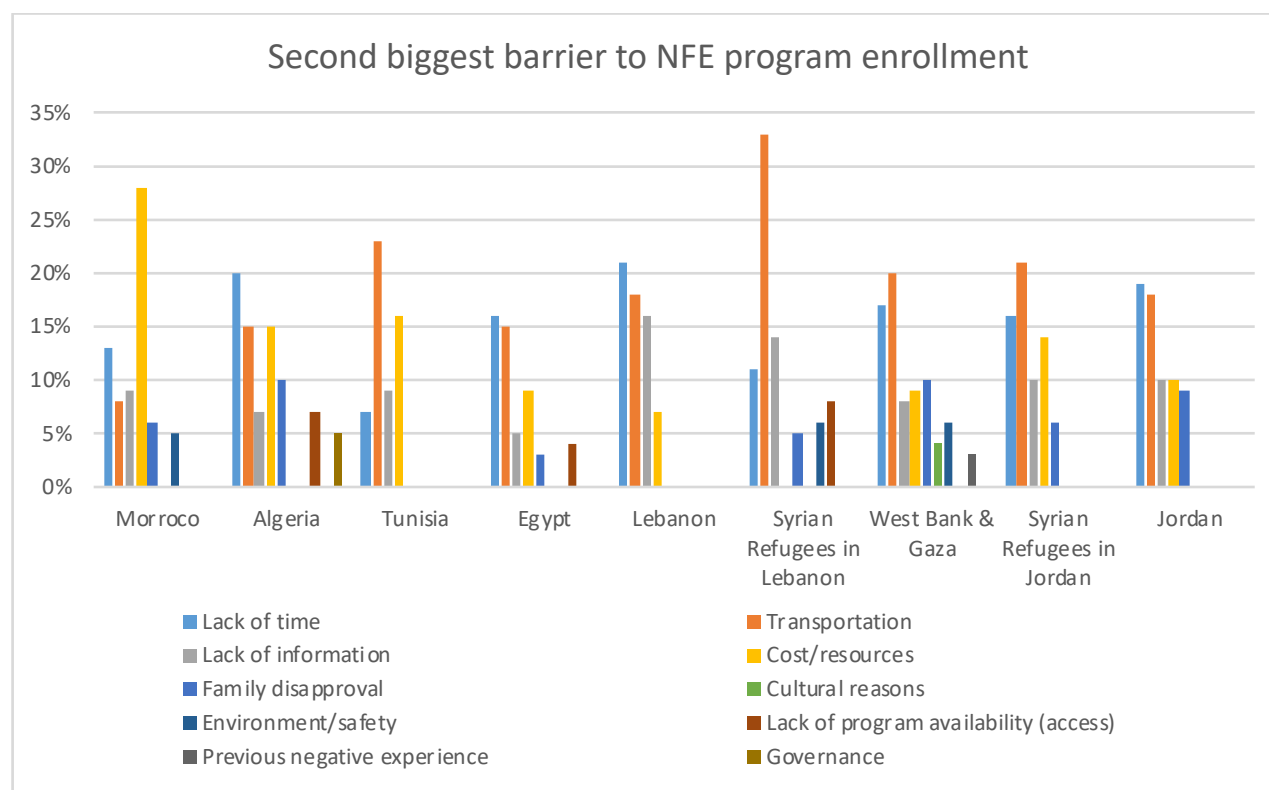
Even examining the data by individual country or population, we can see that cost is the single biggest barrier cited across the board. Interestingly, even among respondents who reported that they were able to make ends meet and save money, cost was still cited as a barrier. Predictably, however, it was cited as the biggest barrier among low-income respondents; transportation tended to be cited more as a barrier among rural dwellers than urban dwellers.

<sup>11</sup> We grouped the responses of “cost” and “resources” together; the reports did not define what was meant by resources and we assumed it might have meant things like workbooks or supplies that would have to be purchased.



**Figure 11 - Biggest barrier to NFE program enrollment by country/group.**

The surveys did query respondents on the second biggest barrier to enrollment. Many said that they did not have a second biggest barrier beyond cost. However, for those who did cite a second biggest barrier, responses were more varied.



**Figure 12 - Second biggest barriers to NFE program enrollment**

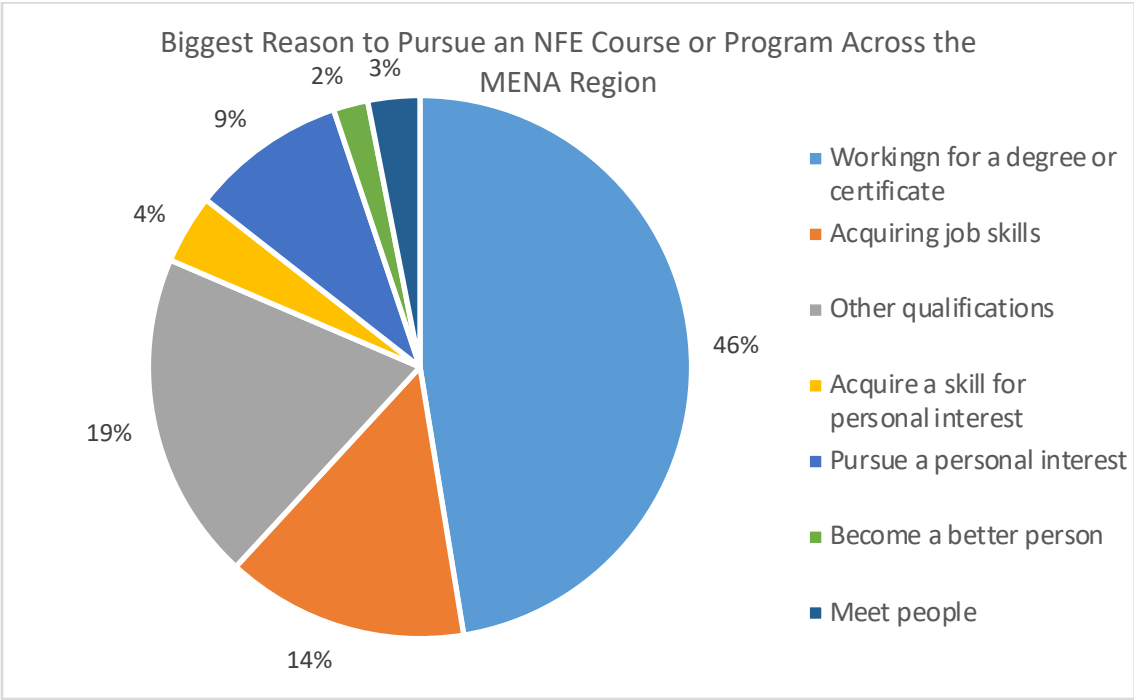
In this figure, cost still stands out as a significant barrier, although transportation and time are also significant. These results seem to confirm the biggest barriers cited in Figure 11. Interestingly, family disapproval and

cultural reasons do not seem to be significant, even in countries where there were some concerns about gender mixing in classrooms.

**Research Question 4: What are the perceived benefits of NFE programs?**

Many households are turning to youth nonformal education programs to meet their educational needs. The most popular types of NFE programs among respondents who participated themselves are those teaching languages (foreign languages, especially languages used widely in the country for business and global languages) , followed by those focused on computer skills, numeracy, science, and life skills.

Respondents from various countries consider that the most important skills they hope to gain out of participation in non-formal education, are related to career development and advancement. For instance, respondents cite acquiring a new skill for a job as the most important reason, followed by working for a degree or certificate. Less common reasons include working for other qualifications, furthering an interest, acquiring a new skill for a personal interest, making oneself a better person, and meeting people. Aggregated, the results break out as illustrated in figure 13<sup>12</sup>.

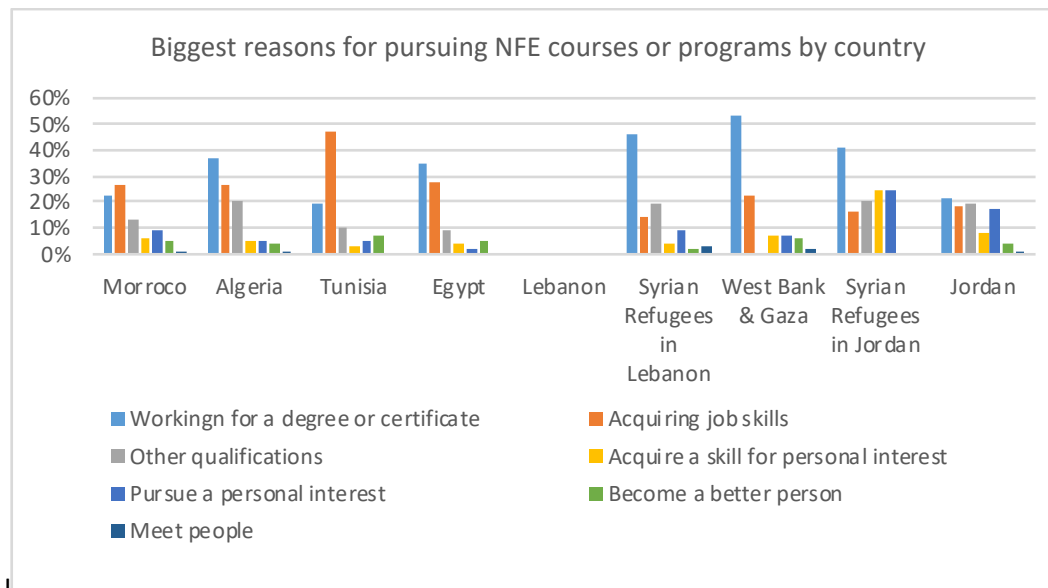


**Figure 13 - Biggest reasons for pursuing an NFE course or program across the MENA region**

The types of NFE programs that are most preferred by Arab Barometer respondents are those that provide youth with assistance in acquiring a degree or a certificate—a credential of some sort—and those that offer practical

<sup>12</sup> Please note that while the executive summary said the following vis à vis Lebanon, there was no actual data within the report, so none are included here. “Additionally, enrollment is likely to increase if youth non-formal education programs focus on developing skills for the labor market or helping students obtain a certificate or qualification, as these are the primary motivations Lebanese cite for attending such programs. Meanwhile, other interests related to self-growth, though still present, tend to be less pronounced.” (2017, p2).

and tangible skills related to career development. Broken down by country, the results differ slightly. See figure 14 below<sup>13</sup>.



**Figure 14 - Biggest reasons for pursuing NFE courses or programs, by country**

We see in this figure that in Morocco and Tunisia, job skills are the primary reason for pursuing nonformal education; in general, in North African countries, job skills seem consistently in more demand than in the Levant and this will be something to take into consideration in NFE program and curriculum design, as well as in NFE program advocacy and marketing.

#### Research Question 5: What are the views toward the importance of promoting skills in critical thinking and emotional intelligence in a NFAE curriculum across the MENA region?

In most Arabic-speaking countries, which were colonized by either Great Britain or France, the roots of the formal, public educational systems reside in the educational epistemologies and ontologies of those countries during the early and mid-1900s. To sum them up, both systems tended to emphasize the importance of rationality, scientific knowledge, and theoretical knowledge.

French systems, based on encyclopaedism, tended to be highly centralized and tightly controlled. The principle of equity within encyclopaedism demanded that all students get exactly the same education, at the same pace. It was based on principles of *rationality* (the study of scientific and rationally ordered subjects), *universality* (a standard curriculum delivered to all students with centrally controlled and standardized examinations) and *utility* (the application of rational knowledge for the improvement of society). While the principle of utility supposedly opened space for the value of applied knowledge and thus vocational education—this never had the same prestige as rationality and the related highly theoretical and rigorous studies it espoused and was thus generally considered on a lower rung of the educational ladder (Holmes and McLean 1989; Watson 1982). The French also emphasized the primacy of the French language and their colonial “mission civilisatrice” was to

<sup>13</sup>Please note that while the executive summary said the following vis à vis Lebanon, there was no actual data within the report, so none are included here. “Additionally, enrollment is likely to increase if youth non-formal education programs focus on developing skills for the labor market or helping students obtain a certificate or qualification, as these are the primary motivations Lebanese cite for attending such programs. Meanwhile, other interests related to self-growth, though still present, tend to be less pronounced.” (2017, p2).

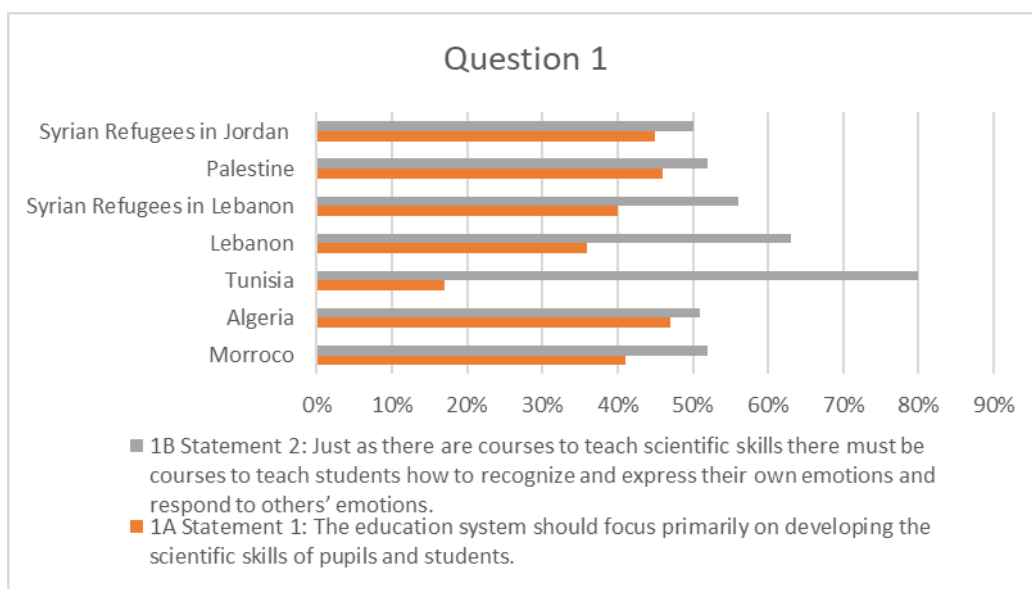
create pseudo-French people in their colonies, who would recognize and embrace the “wisdom” of French education and language. In Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon and Syria, we still see the roots of the French colonial encounter in the formal school systems, in terms of curricular content, examination-based assessment, centralization and, to a certain extent, lack of application (in terms of skill development to work- and life-problems, in terms of problem-solving and critical thinking skills and development of marketable skills).”

The British introduced into British colonies an “essentialist” curriculum, derived from the teachings of Plato and Aristotle: “This philosophy, which came to predominate in the nineteenth century, held that a truly liberal education could best be provided through certain selected subjects” (Holmes and McLean 1989). The essentialist view emphasized specialization, individualism and morality. Morality came to also include the development of aesthetic appreciation and good taste, but this was never broadly interpreted beyond English norms and Greco-Roman art. The purpose of education was in essence to develop future leaders and this came about through the in-depth study of a few subjects (specialization), selected or suited to the individual and imbued with moral grooming for leadership. The notion of specialization also encouraged a theoretical bent to studies. Essentialist education was not intended to apply to the masses and indeed vocational education was poorly regarded (Holmes and McLean 1989).

Given their colonial history, countries of the region tended to value study that was theoretical and academic not applied; educational systems weeded out students with standardized exams, often on topics that had little direct relevance for Moroccan or Egyptian or Jordanian students. These systems also tended not to offer alternatives to students who did fail their exams. Given this climate, the road to educational reform in the formal system has been challenging. However, globalization has hastened an influx of new ideas, through technology and trade, and many formal education systems are moving forward with reform, often at a slow or gradual pace that cannot keep up with demand for improvement.

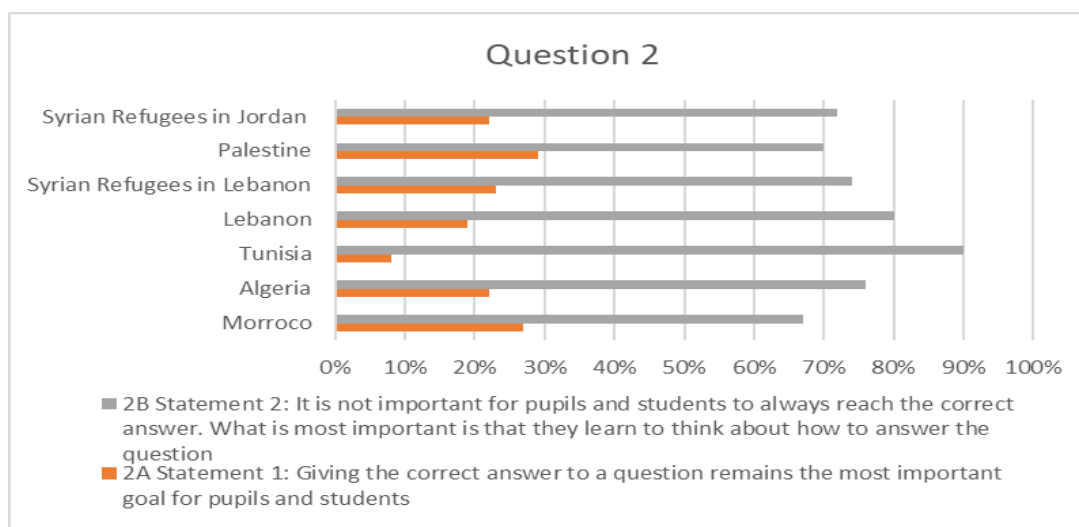
The Arab Barometer survey questions (1A – 5B) that relate to educational values indicate how much perceptions of the purpose of education have changed, along with the profile of what is contained in a quality education. Application and skills are not looked down upon but rather desired and nonformal educational programs are well placed to meet those desires. Survey results show that across all demographic backgrounds respondents prefer an educational system that stresses critical thinking over one emphasizing rote memorization. While there remain several important barriers to consider in designing non-formal education programs focused on teaching these skills, such programs have the potential to successfully address many of the needs of MENA youth.

When asked about the kind of education system they envision, most respondents to the Arab Barometer survey (2016) in MENA tend to prefer a curriculum emphasizing critical thinking; they say that a good education system is one that encourages students to think for themselves; and favor examinations that allow students to demonstrate how well they have made their own sense of what has been taught in class as opposed to tests that allow students to demonstrate how well they have memorized what has been taught. Across all countries a clear majority say it is better for an educational system to prioritize learning to think about how to answer the question rather than simply giving the correct answer to a question.



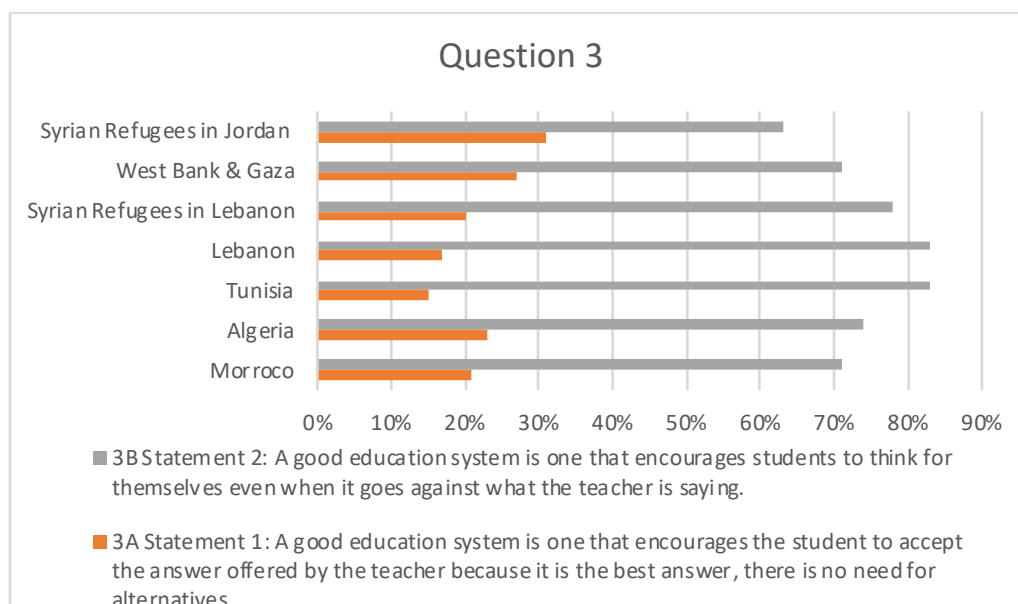
**Figure 15 - Responses to Question #1 regarding views of education**

Overall, the Arab Barometer results make clear that there is a broad acceptance among respondents in MENA, including both men and women, for educational programs that promote skills in critical thinking. There seems to be some balance regarding focusing primarily on developing the scientific skills of students, and teaching skills in emotional intelligence. The survey items include five questions about views on education with two sets of diverging statements; and asks respondents to answer on a scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' with the statement.



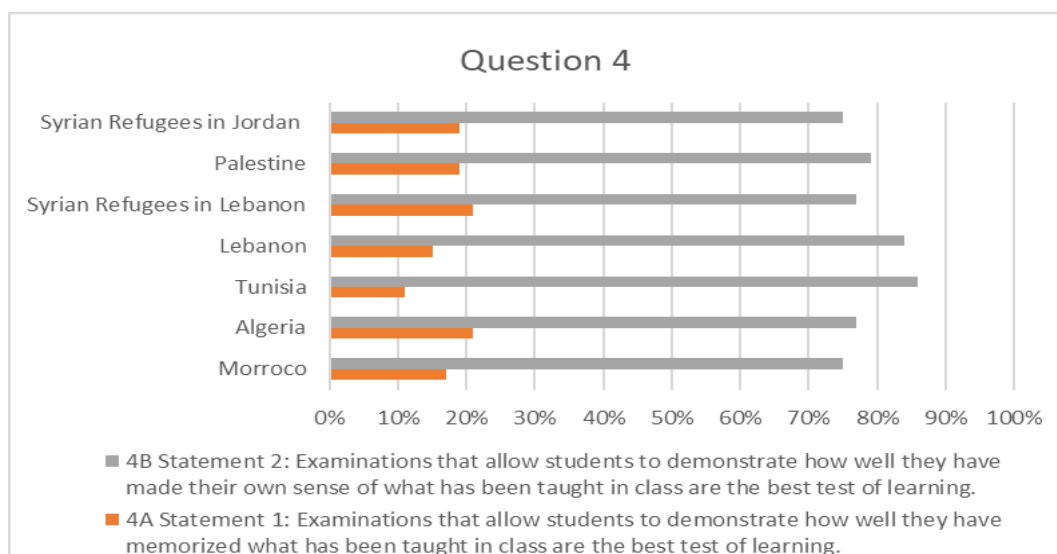
**Figure 16 - Responses to Question #2 regarding views of education**

While exams are still widely used as the primary measure of learning across the regions, a clear majority of respondents in all of the countries indicate that understanding how to figure out and arrive at the correct answer is most important. Since NFE programs are generally not as exam-based, they are a good venue to emphasize and reward thinking skills. The value of thinking skills among MENA populations is also illustrated by the responses to Questions 3A and 3B, show in figure 17 below.



**Figure 17- Responses to Question #3 regarding views of education**

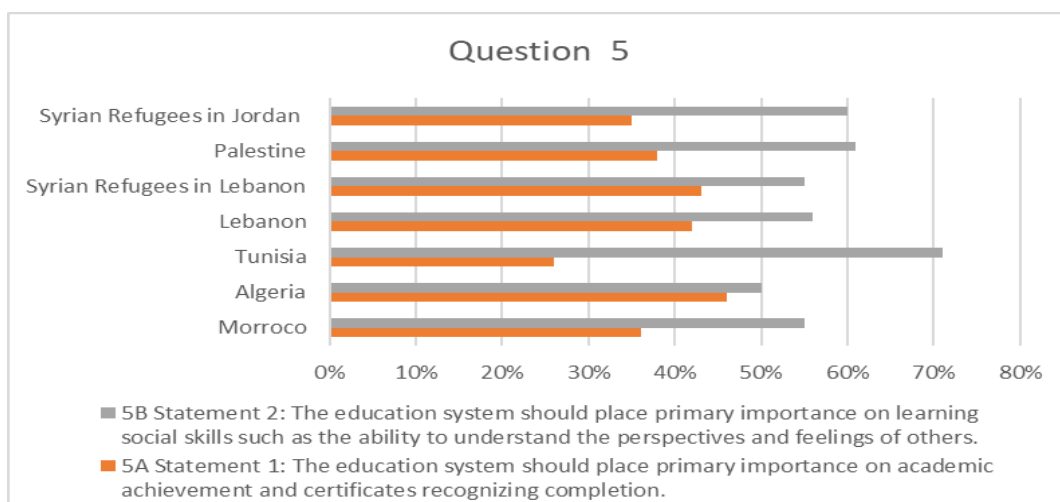
The replies above also indicate changed ideas of the role of the teacher. The teacher was once considered the supreme authority, whose word was to be accepted and never challenged. The above replies reflect a perception of the teacher as a facilitator, who can be wrong, and with whom students can discuss and disagree.



**Figure 18 - Responses to Question #4 regarding views of education**

Exams across the region have tended to emphasize correct answers and have not focused on rewarding the reasoning or thinking process, although this is changing in some countries. The responses above challenge this notion and point to a desire to ensure students know how to think and solve problems, not just memorize answers.





**Figure 19 - Responses to Question #5 regarding views of education**

Finally, figure 19 above shows that citizens are concerned with “soft” skills such as emotional intelligence and tolerance and believe educational systems do have a role to play in developing these skills. Again, as systems change so will educational systems across the region; but, given the slow pace of change, NFE programs are well situated to fill this gap and teach these skills.

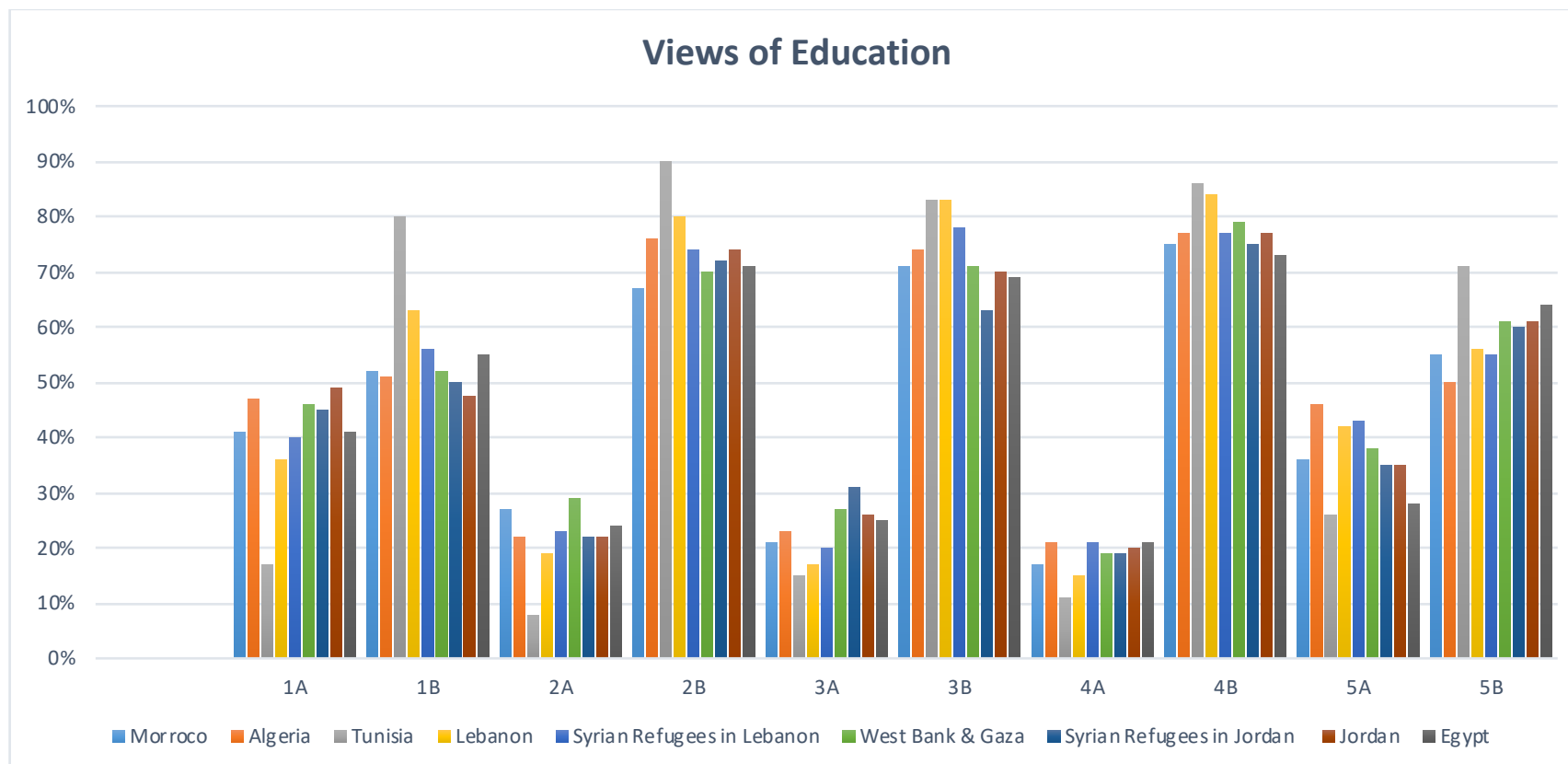
**Table 4** below is a summary of the responses of all of the populations surveyed, side-by-side, to the Arab Barometer Survey Questions Related to Views of Education; it shows the combined total percentage of respondents who ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ with ten statements about education. The numbers were taken from the Arab Barometer Wave 4 reports on “Views of Youth Non-Formal Education” (2016-2018) from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, West Bank & Gaza, Jordan, and Syrian Refugees in Jordan.

**Table 7- Responses to Arab Barometer Survey Questions Related to Views of Education (2016-2018)**

<b>SURVEY STATEMENT</b>		<b>MOROCCO</b>	<b>ALGERIA</b>	<b>TUNISIA</b>	<b>LEBANON</b>	<b>SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON</b>	<b>PALESTINE (WEST BANK &amp; GAZA)</b>	<b>SYRIAN REFUGEES IN JORDAN</b>	<b>JORDAN</b>	<b>EGYPT</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE OF THOSE WHO AGREED OR STRONGLY AGREED WITH THE STATEMENT</b>		Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
<b>1A</b>	Statement 1: The education system should focus primarily on developing the scientific skills of pupils and students.	41%	47%	17%	36%	40%	46%	45%	49%	41%
<b>1B</b>	Statement 2: Just as there are courses to teach scientific skills there must be courses to teach students how to recognize and express their own emotions and respond to others' emotions.	52%	51%	80%	63%	56%	52%	50%	48%	55%
<b>2A</b>	Statement 1: Giving the correct answer to a question remains the most important goal for pupils and students	27%	22%	8%	19%	23%	29%	22%	22%	24%
<b>2B</b>	Statement 2: It is not important for pupils and students to always reach the correct answer. What is most important is that they learn to think about how to answer the question	67%	76%	90%	80%	74%	70%	72%	74%	71%
<b>3A</b>	Statement 1: A good education system is one that encourages the student to accept the answer offered by the teacher because it is the best answer, there is no need for alternatives.	21%	23%	15%	17%	20%	27%	31%	26%	25%
<b>3B</b>	Statement 2: A good education system is one that encourages students to think for themselves even when it goes against what the teacher is saying.	71%	74%	83%	83%	78%	71%	63%	70%	69%
<b>4A</b>	Statement 1: Examinations that allow students to demonstrate how well they have memorized what has been taught in class are the best test of learning.	17%	21%	11%	15%	21%	19%	19%	20%	21%
<b>4B</b>	Statement 2: Examinations that allow students to demonstrate how well they have made their own sense of what has been taught in class are the best test of learning.	75%	77%	86%	84%	77%	79%	75%	77%	73%
<b>5A</b>	Statement 1: The education system should place primary importance on academic achievement and certificates recognizing completion.	36%	46%	26%	42%	43%	38%	35%	35%	28%
<b>5B</b>	Statement 2: The education system should place primary importance on learning social skills such as the ability to understand the perspectives and feelings of others.	55%	50%	71%	56%	55%	61%	60%	61%	64%

Source: The Arab Barometer country reports are available at <http://www.arabbarometer.org>

**Figure 20** below presents a more visually comparative view of the % of respondents by country who agreed with survey statements in the table above.



**Figure 20 - Responses about 'views of education' from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, West Bank & Gaza, Jordan, and Syrian Refugees in Jordan.**

### III. Interpretation and Discussion of Findings and Recommendations

NFE continues to be relevant as a core development alternative that informs and guides responses to development in an ever-changing and complex world. Nonformal education interventions could include enrichment programs that provide opportunities for practical application of acquired knowledge, skills, and life experience, supplemental learning opportunities to build on existing knowledge and skills, and/or interventions to compensate for lack of access to the formal educational system or for subject areas left out of the formal school-based curriculum. The following recommendations are related the potential for NFE programs to address the educational needs of the youth population in MENA including: a) Relevance to the needs of disadvantaged groups; b) Concern with specific categories of people; and c) Flexibility in organization and methods.

#### Coordinating the provision of NFE programs and engaging multiple stakeholders

Findings from the Arab Barometer public opinion survey reveal there is significant concern about the effectiveness of the governments' efforts to address educational needs. Moreover, they have also shown that most respondents worry about the ability to provide children with a quality education. Given these sentiments, supplementary programs outside the formal system could play a role in improving educational outcomes in the region. Given that many households are turning to youth nonformal education programs to meet their educational needs, there are some issues to consider.

There are multiple actors implementing NFE programs in the MENA region, including agencies, NGOs or other organizations, and private institutions. Some programs, like the ones implemented by UNICEF with funding from USAID in Egypt seem to coordinate efforts with the Ministry of Education. However, this is not always the case. Many private organizations provide short-term NFE programs at a high cost and may or may not issue the credentials or results the public expects, such as practical skills and vocational training.

#### Addressing access, cost, and relevance of youth non-formal education programs

Overall, the most salient perceived barrier to participation is cost, followed by time, transportation and information at lower rates. Any efforts to increase participation must address the affordability of non-formal education programs. Understanding the conditions facing the poor, less-educated, and refugees can help develop policy solutions to improve the educational outcomes for this vulnerable community. Any educational program catering to vulnerable populations in MENA would need to account for these barriers, as well as the types of skills they hope to gain, which are primarily related to obtaining employment. However, across all countries, respondents are open to attending non-formal education programs, especially those that develop skills for the labor market or allow them to obtain a certificate or qualification. Promotion of NFE programs should target potential students by highlighting the potential benefits of their curriculum on their future job prospects. Programs that provide learners with what they perceive as tangible benefits with increasing their competitiveness for employment opportunities are the most likely to be valued by the public. Beyond recruitment, it is clear that efforts should be made to minimize the cost and to consider barriers to access for students, particularly in rural areas, as these are the primary barriers to allowing more students to take part in non-formal education programs. An educational program outside the formal system would need to account for some of these perceived barriers.

#### Considering learners' needs

Even though participation in youth non-formal education (NFE) programs in the MENA countries is quite low, levels of satisfaction with those programs tend to be very high among those who participate in those programs

or live in a household that includes a participant in such a program. The types of NFE programs that are most preferred by Arab Barometer respondents are those that provide youth with practical and tangible skills related to career development. With regards to why they view participation in educational programs outside the formal system as important, the plurality of respondents says it is to receive a degree, certificate or some type of qualification. However, citizens also appear open to programs that promote skills in critical thinking. Survey results also show that across all demographic backgrounds respondents prefer an educational system that stresses critical thinking over one emphasizing rote memorization. There is a clear opportunity to use NFE programs to develop skills in critical thinking and emotional intelligence, especially if these programs could be promoted as programs that would make youth more likely to find employment.

Another aspect to consider in designing and managing NFE programs is related to the needs of learners and their connection to the surrounding environment. Children and youth affected by crisis and conflict situations are more vulnerable to disturbances associated to academic learning as well as Social Emotional Learning (SEL).<sup>14</sup>. It is unrealistic to expect that a child will just continue his or her normal learning curve in the face of those events. Maurice Elias (1998), professor of psychology at Rutgers University and member of the leadership team at the Consortium for the Advancement of Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 1998) said:<sup>15</sup>

“One thing a lot of SEL programs encourage in kids is a motivation to positive contributory service. Being an asset to your family or your school in tangible ways can be very self-esteem building. Also, if we truly want kids to gain a multicultural perspective and to be able to take on the perspective of another person, we need to get kids into the position of thinking about it from the earliest grades. Finally, the need for social and emotional learning seems to go beyond childhood.”

NFE youth programs in MENA could benefit from having teachers and administrators trained to promoting social and emotional learning in any type of learning situation, but particularly in situations involving children and youth in vulnerable situations, refugees, orphans, etc. Research shows that a focus on SEL positively impacts school climate, builds citizenship, and improves relationships between students and teachers. “Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.” SEL focuses on knowledge, attitudes, and skills in five competency areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2017).

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<sup>14</sup> Patricia Graczyk , Jennifer Matjasko , Roger Weissberg , Mark Greenberg , Maurice Elias & Joseph Zins (2000) The Role of the Collaborative to Advance Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) in Supporting the Implementation of Quality School-Based Prevention Programs, *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 11:1, 3-6, DOI: 10.1207/s1532768Xjepc1101\_02 To link to this article: [https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532768Xjepc1101\\_02](https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532768Xjepc1101_02)

<sup>15</sup> Research Feature Dialogue: Social and Emotional Learning (November/December 1998) Schools Need to Help Kids Be Emotionally Ready to Learn. An Interview with Maurice Elias at the Consortium for the Advancement of Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL).



- Self-management: The ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations.
- Self-awareness: The ability to accurately recognize one's own emotions and thoughts and how these influence behaviors.
- Social awareness: The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures.
- Relationship skills: The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups.
- Responsible decision-making: The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms.

**Figure 21 - Five Core Competencies Taught Across Diverse Settings. Source: The Consortium for the Advancement of Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) Available online at <https://casel.org/what-is-sel/>**

The figure above could provide a framework for international organizations and donors to use in developing and NFE core curriculum to be used across the region while still being adaptable to individual country concerns.

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