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The Difficulty of Applying Distance Education at Secondary Schools in Light of the Syrian Crisis
(An empirical Study on Secondary School Teachers and Learners in Damascus)

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Abstract
The study aimed to reveal the difficulties of applying distance education at secondary schools in light of the Syrian crisis in Damascus from the point of view of students and teachers. The study used a descriptive-analytical method, and the research sample consisted of (249) male and female students of secondary schools, and (129) teachers were chosen randomly. The researchers found a set of difficulties that hinder the application of distance education in secondary schools in Damascus from the point of view of students and teachers: Weak interaction and communication between the teacher and the learner, while the student in the current crisis needs someone to pat him on the shoulder. And at the same time, online education ignores the social and recreational activities that give the teaching process a lot of energy and enthusiasm. Also, distance education consumes a lot of the Internet, which increases the costs of the student and teacher, while these people need bread and basic living necessities with a lack of government support. In addition to the fact that distance education does not take into account the individual differences among the learners either, the students are facing some difficulties due to the ongoing crisis there, which has made many of them need special care from the teacher.
Keywords: Online education, Syrian crisis, Secondary School, Education difficulties.
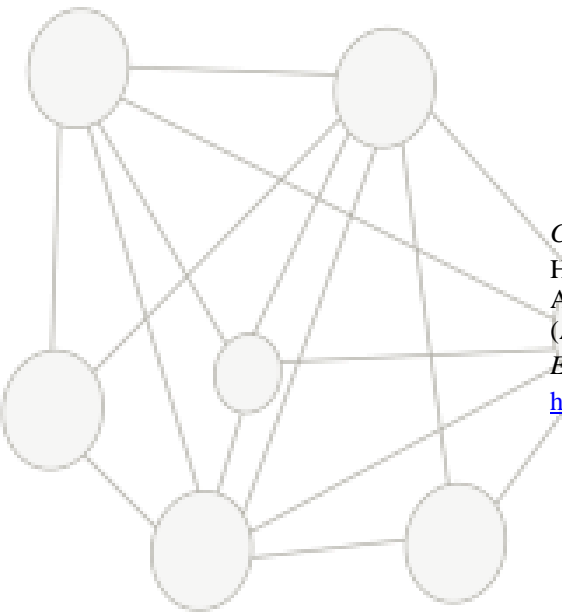
INTRODUCTION

In light of the political, economic, cultural and social crises that the world is experiencing today, with the measures taken by different countries to protect their citizens, including teachers and students of schools and universities, and with some restrictions, a lot of educational institutions moved toward replacing regular education with distance education. This rapid and sudden transformation has placed the responsibility on teachers at the different subjects in general, and it has become imperative for everyone to employ distance education platforms and the various software programs necessary to teach their course (Abdullah Hassan, 2020).

In light of the many changes we are experiencing in the areas of life, that accompanied by a group of developments and recent challenges. Where crises are important and influential events in societies and constitute a worrying source for leaders, officials and individuals, it is also accompanied by a fear of how to control them. In addition, the sudden successive changes of their occurrence and the extent of their impact on the individual and society, and the extent of their future impact (Shdifat, 2020). In light of the political crisis that Syria has been experiencing for years, we need to search for a type of education that can coexist with the data and conditions of this crisis by knowledge the reality of distance education and specifying the difficulties that hinder the implementation distance education in light of the political crisis (Ramadan, 2020). Distance education contributes to solving the problems of small classes and increasing student density in universities. It also contributes to reducing costs and time, eliminating the problem of the geographic dimension, and effectively contributing to the development of workers' skills through professional training for remote employees (Crossley, 2009).

The affected schools should resort to Distance education to reduce the disruption that students and the educational process as a whole will be exposed to. Also, distance education and the use of online education will help overcome difficulties and challenges and ensure the continuity of basic services in the field of education. The organization also advised all those concerned with the educational process to stay in contact with students and provide psychological support to them and avoid them falling into isolation, as well as ensure the continuation of research according to the curricula and facilitate education by providing additional materials to teaching the students (Al-Dahshan, 2020). In her study, Al-Qahtani focused on the importance of using virtual classrooms in the distance education program, as faculty members expressed positive approval at a high rate (Al-Qahtani, 2010).

Distance education is a way in which students receive their knowledge by using a specific equipment, where they are in a city or perhaps another country, and students benefit from these facilities and receive their lessons using various means of communication. These means may include, in their simple form, printed materials sent by mail, or they may include, in their advanced form, lessons sent by computer via the global internet. Distance education requires that the student exert more effort than that required by traditional education. The teacher in distance education is more of a mentor than a regular teacher (Al-Najm, 2019). Distance education provides a learning environment that enhances the educational process in higher education, and that knowledge is the best key to the effective implementation of e-learning (Hisman oglu, 2011). Today, distance

education has become dependent on modern technology such as computers, tablets and smartphones. There are Distance education methods that provide direct communication between the teacher and the learner at the same time, such as telephone communications and social media. The means of distance education are available to individuals everywhere, regardless of the time, and they are what websites specialized in distance education or universities use, such as videos that teachers record and then students watch in their spare time, or programs shown on television that broadcast educational materials or correspondences through the Internet, such as social media, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or e-mail (Amira et al., 2019). According to Abdullah (2009), remote education faces difficulties, including the rejection of societies in developing countries because they are not aware of its quality and their inability to self-educate. The increase in the population, the costs of traditional education and the awareness of societies of the importance of education have called on governments to expand the application of distance education to ensure education for all. The number of students of distance education exceeded the number of students of traditional education in some universities that offer dual education. Distance education has democratized education for all strata of society in addition to fulfilling the needs of the labor market. Also, distance education contributed to the eradication of illiteracy (Abdullah, 2009).

Problem of the Study:

Due to the seriousness of the current situation in light of the crisis in the country, some schools were closed in the Directorate of education. To maintain the continuity of the educational process, the Syrian Ministry of Education has tried to implement the distance education system, which will provide educational content to students in addition to displaying educational materials on television and through electronic educational platforms. Where students learn remotely at any time they want, and therefore the use of the distance education method is considered one of the successful means of dealing with the problems resulting from the crisis that Syria is experiencing now. But it was not able to implement it due to the severe shortage of infrastructure capabilities (computers, electricity, the Internet...). There must be special requirements for teachers and students to use the Internet in education (Nashwan et al, 2011). As distance education is the process of separating the learner and the teacher in the educational environment, and transferring the traditional environment of education from a university or school and others to a multiple and geographically separate environment, and it is a modern phenomenon of education with the rapid technological development in the world. And we can summarize the research problem in the following main questions:

- What is the reality of distance education at secondary schools in Damascus in light of the Syrian crisis and its difficulties from the point of view of teachers and learners?
- What are the difficulties facing the application of distance education at secondary schools in Damascus in light of the Syrian crisis from the point of view of teachers and learners?

Purpose of the study:

- Identifying the difficult faced by distance education at secondary schools in light of the Syrian crisis from the point of view of teachers and students.
- Suggesting a set of recommendations that could benefit the educational process and work to develop it in light of the findings of the research.

Importance of the Study:

The importance of the research stems from the importance of distance education at secondary schools in light of the Syrian crisis that swept Syria and affected it negatively in all fields, including education, which forced the Directorate of Education in Damascus to close some schools to preserve the health of students and teachers and try to resort to distance education for its occasion In maintaining the safety and health of students and teachers from this crisis, as well as the continuation of the educational process.

Terms of the Study:

Distance education: Here the learner is away from his teacher, where he bears the responsibility for his learning by using educational materials through electronic educational means, including the Internet, in a way that suits the nature of self-education and the varying abilities of learners and their different speed, and everyone who desires to follow him regardless of age and qualification (Taysir and Rania, 2011).

The Syrian Crisis: According to the study procedures, the Syrian crisis has been defined as the deterioration of the security, economic and educational situation as a result of the war in Syria.

Difficulties: The difficulty has been defined procedurally as security difficulties and the lack of infrastructure for the continuation of the education process in light of the current crisis in Syria.

METHOD AND PROCEDURES

Method of the Study:

The researchers relied on the descriptive-analytical approach, which attempts to describe the phenomenon in question, analyze its data, and clarify the relationship between its components, the opinions raised about it, the processes it contains, and the effects it causes.

Population and Sample of the Study:

The research community consisted of high school students in government schools in Damascus, and the research sample consisted of (150) male and female students from the third grade of secondary school because they are the most age group aware of dealing with modern technologies in schools. The number of male and female teachers in the sample was (75) male and female

teachers who were selected randomly and applied in the second semester of the 2021/2022 school year.

Table (3) Sample Description:

Category	Number	%
Students	249	66.7
Teachers	129	33.3
Total	**378**	**100**

Instruments

After reviewing the educational literature in the field of distance education and education in the political crisis and previous studies, a questionnaire was built according to the following steps: Determine the main dimensions of the questionnaire and formulate the questionnaire's paragraphs according to its affiliation to each dimension.

The validity of The Questionnaire: The current research is based on two methods to verify the validity of the questionnaire:

Validity of content: In order to verify the validity of the content, the questionnaire was presented in its initial form to a number of arbitrators, members of the teaching staff in the field of educational principles.

Internal consistency validity: The questionnaire was applied to an experimental sample of (50) people. After monitoring the results, they were statistically processed and the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated between (axes - and the total score) for the two questionnaires, and they were all significant at the 0.01 level, which indicates the internal consistency of the two scales' expressions and allows to researchers to use them in their current research. Look to a table (1).

Table (1) correlation coefficients for search tools N = 50

Axes of questionnaire	Correlation coefficient
Difficulties of applying distance education from the students' point of view.	0.911**
Difficulties of applying distance education from the point of view of teachers.	0.830**

** A function at the level (0.01).

The Reliability of The Study Tool: The study used Alpha Cronbach and split-half method. Look to Table (2).

Table (2) reliability coefficients of the axes of the search tools N = (50).

Axes of questionnaire	Number	Alpha Cronbach	Spearman factor
Difficult of applying distance education from the students' point of view.	12	**468.0	**149.0
Difficult of applying distance education from the point of view of teachers.	14	**678.0	**598.0

From Table (2), the values of the stability coefficients (alpha - which include Spearman's coefficient) for the dimensions and the scale as a whole are a function at the level (0.01), which confirms the stability of the two scales and their validity for application in the current study.

RESULTS

The results of the first question: Difficulties of applying distance education at secondary schools from the students' point of view.

Table (4) the frequencies, percentages, the value of χ^2 and its statistical significance on the difficulties to applying Distance education from the students' point of view.

Indications	Verification degree						χ^2	Degree of approval	SMA	Relative weight
	Agree		Average		Not agree					
	N	%	N	%	N	%				
Distance education requires more effort and time than traditional education.	86	34.8	148	59.2	15	6	106.38	Average	2.888	76.27
Internet service is available at home.	22	9.2	50	20.4	176	70.4	65.82	not agree	2.112	70.40
Technical malfunctions frequently occur.	144	58	77	30.8	28	11.2	82.86	Agree	1.532	51.07
Communication networks hinder the learning process.	133	53.6	70	28	46	18.4	49.67	Agree	1.904	63.47
The student possesses advanced computer skills to deal with distance education.	86	34.4	120	48.4	43	17.2	36.63	Average	1.828	60.93
Distance education has reduced communication between teacher and student.	69	28	137	54.8	43	17.2	56.22	Average	1.624	54.13

It is difficult to find alternative sources in the event of a power outage.	150	60	73	29.2	27	11.0	89.77	not agree	2.18	72.67
Distance education has reduced opportunities for communication and sharing among learners.	159	63.6	90	36.6	0	0	152.75	Agree	2.636	87.87
Distance education does not take into account the individual differences between learners.	73	29.6	142	56.8	34	13.6	71.55	Average	2.16	72.00
I feel dissatisfied with the use of educational platforms and their consumption of the Internet.	154	58.4	65	26	39	15.6	74.75	Agree	2.104	70.13
Distance education has led to dependence on private lessons and increased burdens on the family.	161	64.4	75	30	13	5.6	130.91	Agree	2.588	86.27
I find it difficult to enter the educational platforms because of the crowding of students.	96	38.4	152	61.2	1	0.4	141.52	Average	2.608	86.93

The results of the previous table indicate that one of the most difficulties of applying distance education in light of the current political crisis, as it falls from most to least, as the following difficulty ranked first "Distance education led to dependence on private lessons and increased burdens on the shoulders of Family " (161) Number of repetitions(Agree). It was followed by the item "Distance education reduced the opportunity for communication and participation among learners" with several repetitions (159) (Agree). "I feel dissatisfied when using educational platforms and consuming the Internet" with a number of repetitions (154) (Agree). "It is difficult to find alternative sources in the event of a power outage," with a frequency of (150). (Agree). "Technical malfunctions recur" number of frequency (144) (Agree). "Communication networks impede the education process." Repetitions (133) (Agree). The researchers note through the previous results that there are difficulties related to the use of distance education technology in education under the current circumstances. Thus, the option (Agree) obtained the highest percentage of the number of repetitions, with average of (111) repetitions. While the option (Average) received (100) repetitions, and disagree (38) repetitions. Thus, all these results indicate the existence of difficulties in the application of Distance education from the point of view of learners in secondary schools.

Table (5) the frequencies, percentages, the value of χ^2 and its statistical significance for the difficulties of applying distance education at secondary schools from the students' point of view.

Indications	Verification degree						χ^2	Degree of approval	SMA	Relative weight
	Agree		Average		not agree					
	N	%	N	%	N	%				
Difficulties and difficulties of applying Distance education at secondary schools.	111	44.4	100	40.1	38	15.5	88.24	Agree	2.175	71.01

From the previous table, the average for these options was in favor of the option (Agree), with an SMA (2.175), and a relative weight (71.01). Thus, these results indicate that there are difficulties in the application of distance education from the point of view of learners in secondary schools.

Second: Difficulties of applying Distance education at secondary schools from the point of view of teachers.

Table (6) frequencies, percentages, χ^2 and its statistical significance on the difficulties of applying distance education from the point of view of teachers.

Indications	Verification degree						χ^2	Degree of approval	SMA	Relative weight
	Agree		Average		Not agree					
	K	%	K	%	K	%				
Lack of training programs dedicated to the Distance education system for teachers.	68	52.31	33	26.15	28	21.54	21.48	Agree	2.05	68.21
Technical malfunctions frequently occur.	77	53.85	32	24.62	27	21.54	24.80	Agree	1.97	65.64
The availability of highly qualified people to use the Internet is rare.	27	20.77	40	30.77	62	48.46	15.34	Average	2.10	70.00
Some teachers have a negative attitude towards the use of the Internet in teaching.	0	0.00	48	37.69	81	62.31	76.82	Disagree	2.62	87.44
Internet subscription fees are high.	60	46.15	37	29.23	32	24.62	10.03	Agree	1.95	65.13
Poor knowledge of the learner using the Internet	25	20.00	51	39.23	53	40.77	15.45	Disagree	1.79	59.74
Distance education helps in promoting Western culture.	25	20.00	33	25.38	71	54.62	27.06	Disagree	2.05	86.46

The use of the Internet in Distance education negatively affects the behavior of learners.	39	30.00	59	46.15	31	23.85	10.35	Average	1.94	64.62
Distance education requires proficiency in the English language.	26	20.00	44	33.85	59	46.15	13.35	Disagree	2.14	71.28
Distance education increases students' introversion and social isolation.	74	57.69	33	25.38	22	16.92	36.11	Average	2.08	69.49
Society looks down on Distance education graduates.	129	100.00	0	0.00	0	00.00	260.00	Agree	3.00	100.00
It is difficult to follow students in distance education.	68	52.31	34	26.15	27	21.54	21.48	Average	2.31	76.92
The Distance education system lacks interaction and direct communication between the teacher and the learner.	75	57.69	32	25.38	22	16.92	36.11	Agree	1.59	53.08
Distance education neglects social and recreational activities in the educational institution.	95	73.08	33	26.15	1	0.77	104.98	Agree	1.28	42.56

The results of the previous table indicate that there are difficulties of the application of distance education in light of the current crisis from the teachers' point of view, as they range from the most difficult to the least difficult. Where the item "Society looks down on Distance education graduates" came with a number of recurrences (129) (Agree). "Distance education neglects social and recreational activities at the educational institutions" with a frequency of (95) (Agree). "The Distance education system lacks interaction and direct communication between the teacher and the learner" with a frequency of (75) (Agree). "Distance education develops introverted and socially isolated learners" with a frequency of (74) (Agree). "Technical failures frequently occur" with a frequency of (70) (Agree). "Lack of training programs dedicated to the Distance education system for teachers" with a frequency of (68) (Agree). While the item "Some teachers tend to have a negative trend towards using the Internet in teaching" came in the last place in terms of difficulty, with a frequency of (0) (Agree). The results of the table indicated that the (Agree) option had the largest percentage of recurrences in terms of difficulties related to the application of distance education from the point of view of teachers in secondary schools.

Table (7) the frequencies, percentages, the value of K2 and its statistical significance for the difficulties and difficulties of applying distance education at the secondary education from the teachers' point of view.

Indications	Verification degree						χ^2	Degree of approval	SMA	Relative weight
	Agree		Average		Not agree					
	N	%	N	%	N	%				
Difficulties of applying Distance education at secondary schools.	57	43.13	35	28.3	37	28.6	50.24	Agree	2.1	70.00

Difficulties of applying distance education in light of the current crisis from the point of view of teachers at the Directorate of Education in Damascus. The largest percentage of repetitions was in favor of an option (agree) with a frequency (57), (disagree) with a frequency (37), and in the last place was an option (Average) with a frequency (35).

To verify the validity of this hypothesis, the researchers used the "t-test" to determine the significance of the differences, and the following table illustrates this. Table (8) the significance of the differences between the average difficulties of the application of distance education from the point of view of students and teachers.

Difficulties to distance education.	SMA	Relative weight	Degree of freedom	Value(t)	Indication level
Students	2.3	71.01	15	1.11	not significant
Teachers	2.1	70.00	15	1.11	not significant

From the previous table, there is no statistically significant difference between the average difficulties in the application of distance education at general secondary schools from the point of view of students and teachers. Where the value of (T) was a non-statistically significant value at the level (0.05) and the researchers explain that the students and teachers agree that there are difficulties facing distance education during its application, which leads to the failure to achieve the desired benefit and to be achieved.

DISCUSSION

Through the previous results, it was found that there are difficulties in applying Distance education in secondary schools from the point of view of teachers and learners together. These difficulties include the infrastructure in terms of providing electricity and the Internet permanently. However, in light of the Syrian crisis, Syria suffers greatly in terms of electricity and the internet; in addition to that, it is difficult to provide a computer or digital device in every home due to the difficult economic conditions experienced by the people. In addition, many schools lack the infrastructure that helps implement distance education in terms of the lack of computers or the Internet that help explain and clarify how to benefit from this technology positively; not to mention the severe shortage of teachers and learners on how to take advantage of this technology. The researchers

believe that the difficulties of applying distance education are represented by electricity, the internet, computers and educational courses on how to use this technology positively. Especially today, Syria is living under a political, economic, cultural and social crisis since the impact of eleven years, as these crises drained the strength of the country in all economic, political, cultural and social aspects in general. Consequently, the shortage in these areas harmed education in terms of lack of funding for educational institutions in general, in addition to the high prices that imposed an additional burden on the parents. This study agrees with the study of (Murat.2011) that there are difficulties of applying distance education. Therefore, these difficulties must be taken advantage of to find solutions in proportion to the country's economic, cultural and social strength.

Recommendations:

- The state should encourage its teachers and students to use Online teaching, despite the weaknesses in this type of education, it includes many positive strengths.
- Encouraging and training teachers to communicate with students through electronic pages and e-mail.
- Providing an appropriate infrastructure for the implementation of online teaching, removing all human, material and technical difficulties, and providing trained human cadres.
- Ensuring that there is sufficient support for students for the most vulnerable families during the implementation of the distance education plan.
- Designing a professional development mechanism for teachers and parents so that they can support learners in distance education.
- Develop a clear plan for the distance education system that includes: Defining the system, its objectives, the means of its application and its applied stages.
- Continuously developing the Distance education system, keeping pace with modern technological developments, and benefiting from the experiences of other countries.

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