



**Arab American University**  
**Faculty of Graduate Studies**

**The Challenges Facing Second-Generation Return  
Migrants from The US to Palestine: Palestinian Schools  
2022/2023**

By

**Dima Khaled Jarrar**

Supervisor

**Lana Shehadeh**

**This thesis was submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Master's degree in**

**Literature and Intercultural Communication**

**2023/October**

©Arab American University - 2023. All rights reserved.


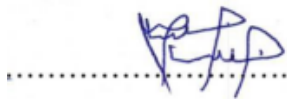
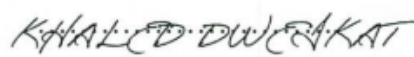
**Thesis Approval**

**The Challenges Facing Second-Generation Return Migrants from The US  
to Palestine: Palestinian Schools 2022/2023**

By

**Dima Khaled Jarrar**

This thesis was successfully defended on 14<sup>th</sup> October, 2023 and approved by:

Committee members		Signature
1. Lana Shehadeh	Supervisor Name	
2. Ayman Yousef	Internal Examiner Name	
3. Khaled Dweikat	External Examiner Name	

## Declaration

I declare that this thesis was composed by myself, and that the work contained herein is my own, except where it states otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

Student's name: Dima Khaled Jarrar

Students ID: 202020325

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2024

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dima Jarrar". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'D' and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

### III

## **Dedication**

I wholeheartedly dedicate this thesis to my constant source of love, encouragement and inspiration. To my mother, Laila and father, Khaled, thank you for your motivation that has been my anchor. You have always encouraged education and believed in me to pursue my academic goals.

Thank you to my friends for standing by my side. The moments of joy, laughter and support were much needed during this journey.

## **Abstract**

This study is an exploration of the multifaceted challenges that second-generation returning migrants from the United States encounter in the Palestinian schools during the school year (2022/2023). It delves into the experiences of 25 different school students, who lived in the United States, returned with their parents to Palestine and enrolled in the Modern English School (MES) in Ramallah city. The study investigates the returnees' transition to new educational and cultural environments at school. For this qualitative case study, a triangulation of research methods was applied. The tool kit included observations of the participating students, semi-structured interviews with the students, their teachers and parents, beside two focus groups. Results reveal several key difficulties, including cultural adjustment, language barriers and identity formation in the context of Palestinian schools. Contextualizing the strategies that students employ to overcome these challenges within the broader framework of acculturation theory illuminates the use of integration and assimilation techniques. Returning migrant students appear to assimilate into the Palestinian school system rules in terms of discipline, attendance and examination criterion. Whereas they preserve American cultural features, they integrate with the surrounding Palestinian one. Living in Palestine and attending school expands their knowledge about its culture, which is the main goal for parents to return to their homeland. However, they need their parents', teachers' and the local community's support to make their transition process a successful one.

Keywords: Return-migrants, Palestine, acculturation, school system, culture.

## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Page</b>
Thesis Approval.....	I
Declaration.....	II
Dedication.....	III
Abstract .....	IV
Table of Contents .....	V
List of Tables .....	VI
List of Figures.....	VII
List of Abbreviations.....	VIII
List of Appendices .....	XI
Acknowledgment .....	X
<b>Chapter One: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1. Scholarly Contribution.....	6
2. Research Objectives.....	8
3. Research Questions.....	9
4. Limitations of The Study.....	10
5. Obstacles of The Study.....	10
6. Summary .....	11
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review.....</b>	<b>12</b>
1. The Development of Return Migration Studies.....	12
2. Migration and The Palestinian Identity.....	13
3. Return Migration to Palestine.....	15
<b>Chapter Three: Methodology and Procedures .....</b>	<b>19</b>
1. Study Design.....	19
2. Participants.....	21

3. Data Collection.....	22
3.1 Observation.....	24
3.2. Semi-structured Interviews.....	25
3.3. Focus-Group.....	27
4. Ethical Considerations.....	28
<b>Chapter Four: Results.....</b>	<b>30</b>
1. Introduction.....	30
2. Results of observation of the participating students.....	32
3. Results of semi-structured interviews with students .....	35
3.1. The Language Barrier.....	35
3.2. The School System .....	36
3.2.1. Route to School.....	36
3.2.2. Pedagogy and Learning Styles.....	37
3.2.3. School Size.....	40
3.2.4. Subjects Taught in Schools.....	41
3.2.5. Enrollment at The MES School.....	44
3.3. Cultural Differences .....	44
3.4. Improvements for The Future.....	47
3.5. The Decision to Leave School.....	49
4. Results of interviews with the teachers in the MES school.....	49
4.1. Adaptation to The New School System.....	50
4.2. Curriculum and Teaching Techniques.....	51

4.3. Social Interaction and Relationship with Peers .....	53
4.4. Teachers' Strategies for Students' Involvement .....	54
5. Results of interviews with the parents of participating students .....	56
6. Results of the focus groups' discussion.....	59
6.1. Older Students Need Longer time to adapt.....	59
6.2. Princess Treatment of Girls .....	59
6.3. Girls Through the Lens of Palestinian Culture.....	60
<b>Chapter Five: Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations.....</b>	<b>61</b>
1. Introduction .....	61
2. Discussion.....	61
2.1. The Challenges That Returning Migrants From The United States Encounter in Palestinian Schools.....	63
2.2. Returning Migrants and Palestinian Schools Meeting Together.....	69
2.3. The Terminology of The MES school teachers to Facilitate Returning Migrants' Integration.....	72
3. Conclusion .....	73
4. Recommendations .....	75
<b>References.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>84</b>
Appendix A (Interviews' Questions ).....	85
Appendix B ( Letters of Informed Consent ).....	88
Appendix C (Focus Group Questions).....	92
Appendix D (Documents of Admission in Palestinian Schools from Foreign Educational Systems).....	94

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1: Sources of Data.....

Table 2: Key Participants of Students.....

Table 3: Background of The Students.....

Table 4: Key Participants of The MES Teachers .....

Table 5: Key Participants of the student’s parents.....

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1: The tool kit of data collection.....21

**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

US	The United States
MES	The Modern English School
PCBS	The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
UNICEF	The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
AP	Advanced Placement

**LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix A: Interviews' Questions

Appendix B: Letters of Informed Consent

Appendix C: Focus-Group Questions

Appendix D: Documents of Admission in Palestinian Schools from Foreign Educational  
Systems

## **Acknowledgment**

The completion of this humble work would not have been possible without the help of my supervisor Dr. Lana Shehadeh. Her cooperation and advice have helped me during the writing stages of my study.

I would also like to give special thanks to the Faculty of Graduate Studies at the Arab American University and all the instructors in the Literature and International Communication Department.

Lastly, while the completion of this work signifies the end of a challenging period, it also marks the start of the next stage of my professional and academic pursuits.



## Chapter One

### Introduction

In today's interconnected globe, migration has emerged as a social, cultural and economic feature. The phenomenon of migration entails the movement of individuals or families from their country of origin to other countries, either voluntarily or by force (Dingle & Drake, 2007). Beyond the simple act of movement outside one's homeland, migration has an impact on the lives of migrants, their families in addition to the sending and receiving communities by creating multilingual, multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-racial states (Taran, 2001). In relation to Palestine, migration is a cornerstone in the establishment of Palestinian history. The Palestinian political, literary and social narratives are infused by the migration theme (Hilal, 2007). Several challenges have confronted the Palestinian people such as, occupation, political conflict, unemployment, Israeli confiscation of agricultural lands and the division of their society. All of these factors have led to a fragmented diasporas spread in various parts of the world, as the enormous waves of migration after the Palestinian-Israeli wars in 1948<sup>1</sup> and 1967<sup>2</sup> when people had to flee their homes and escape to more safe countries (Khawaja & Tiltnes, 2010).

Despite the extreme fragmentation of Palestinians in distinct parts of the globe, they all feel connected to one another and to their original homeland. Many of them decide to return to Palestine after a period of time, which is referred to as return migration. International Organization for Migration (2019) defines return migration as people moving back to their original countries after their residence in a different country. Return migration process can

---

<sup>1</sup> Nakbah: النكبة is an Arabic word that means "catastrophe". It is used to refer to the "Israeli" ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948 and the mass exodus of about 750,000 Palestinian by making them into refugees.

<sup>2</sup> Naksah: النكسة is an Arabic term that means "defeat". It is used to refer to the year when Israel controlled the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip in 1967.

open up new opportunities for professional and personal development, intercultural communication and knowledge transferring. However, it also brings difficulties with regard to integration, adaptation and maintaining cultural identity and heritage. Depending on factors like legal status, socioeconomic background and the cultural differences, the relationships between the host societies and the new migrants will vary subsequently.

Given that migration is frequently temporary, it is uncommon to find an emigrant who can completely cut ties with the people, culture and society of his or her native country. Once emigrants settle down in the hosting country, the migrating parents and their kids start to blend in with their surroundings. These young children will be more integrated with the hosting society, and their actual “return is more symbolic than real” (Hammer, 2005, p.115). With a great number of migrants staying in the hosting countries, many of them decide to return to their original homeland. In general, return migration might be fueled by the need to reconnect with one’s roots, to support the growth of the home country or to gratify the sense of identity and belonging. Alamaliki & Shalabi (2000), Palestinian argued that parents are keen to implement the Palestinian heritage, culture, traditions and habits in their children. They are against the acculturation of their kids to the American norms, Serhan (2009). Hence, another crucial motive that drives parents to go back to their original country is to directly connect their children with their parents’ culture, religion, tradition and social norms. This is explained by King & Christou (2010) as the movement of second-generation children of first-generation immigrants by returning to their parents’ country of origin.

The process of moving back to the original homeland is often accompanied by many difficulties for the parents –first generation- and their second-generation returnees. It is a process in which returnees start to rebuild their lives after return (Ruben, et. al., 2009). Return



migration is a very personal and emotional journey. On one hand, It gives individuals the chance to use the information, abilities and experiences to benefit their countries. On the other hand, it normally accompanies many difficulties for the returning individuals. Reintegrating into their native community can be challenging especially for those who may have trouble confronting new cultural norms. This is mostly experienced by the second-generation returning migrants, who were raised in a different culture from their original one, like Palestinian children who were raised in the United States. Previous literature (Mokadi & Yousef, 2020; Christison, 1989; Leonard, 2003) contends that the second generation of Palestinian migrants is strongly attached to their original homeland and many of them return with parents to live in Palestine ,nevertheless, this movement is not an easy process especially for young individuals.

In this study, a qualitative approach was utilized to investigate the experience of second-generation returned migrants from the United States (US) to Palestine. The study focused on the challenges that encountered these returnees in the Palestinian school system. Moving between countries that are distinct in language, culture and education systems may cause returning migrants to encounter difficulties in their integration with the surroundings of their homeland, ( Al-Ali and Koser, 2002).This may ultimately lead to disconnection and isolation from the education system in the receiving country if not properly treated. So, there is a need to understand these difficulties and to work towards finding solutions in order to enhance the returning students' journey of integration with new school educational systems. The Modern English School (herein "MES"), located in Ramallah city, was taken as an explanatory case study, that intended to investigate and understand the experiences of 25 returning students from the US who studied at this school during the school year (2022/2023). The collection of data relied on three different tools including observations, semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

Returning migrants, in particular, face a range of challenges when it comes to accessing education in Palestine. Language barrier is a common challenge for second-generation returning migrants. As stated by a report of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), "Many return migrants struggle with Arabic language proficiency, which can affect their ability to learn and communicate effectively in the classroom" (PCBS, 2019, p. 24). The report noted that this is particularly true for children who grew up in diasporas communities where Arabic was not the primary language of instruction. Moreover, the children of the returning migrants may find it difficult to adapt to a new school system and different curricula (Mixed Migration Centre, 2019). A report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) asserted that education in "Palestine has been negatively affected by the "Israeli" occupation and political instability" (UNICEF, 2021, p. 1). The report illustrated that such factors have caused limited access to education and lack of school resources.

In the Palestinian context, the returnees from the United States are usually referred to as "Americans", so the term will be frequently used throughout this study. According to Hammer (2005), almost thirty thousand Palestinian Americans live in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Although there are no detailed statistics, it is estimated that most of these returning migrants center in the area of Ramallah city.

The Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS, 2010) analyzed migration in Palestine between (2000-2010) and revealed that 6.7% of Palestinian households have one member as an emigrant at least. Out of all emigrants, the youth (5-29 years- old) represent 33%. The report also added that the US was a major destination for migrants reaching 21.6%. While 9.5 % migrants returned from the United States, 21.7% of them came back for education purposes,



which is the highlight of this study. The Palestinian and American schooling systems, culture, language and social norms are massively distinct. Generally, as soon as the returnees from America settle down in Palestine, the young returnees might be surprised by the cultural and social variations between the two countries. However, this experience of being a bicultural human carries many good advantages. In fact, when immigrants travel to live in new countries, they are exposed to various cultural habits, social norms, as well as different ideologies, and this knowledge is transferred when they return to the country of origin, which might benefit it (Tuccio & Wahba, 2020). That is to say, the children of international migrants are expected to witness various traditions across countries, so they become global citizens. They become more aware, embracing and accepting individuals of others' differences. Nevertheless, these returned migrants "Americans" face many challenges when it comes to education, including language barriers and cultural differences.

John Berry, a Canadian psychologist, first proposed the concept of acculturation as a framework for explaining how people and groups from various cultural origins interact and adapt to one another in ways such as dress, food preferences and social interactions (Berry, 2005). At its core, acculturation theory investigates the methods and procedures of cultural transformation that take place when individuals from various cultures interact. According to the theory, people and groups can choose from a number of acculturation strategies, such as assimilation, which refers to the process when individuals adopt the dominant culture they live in with its all attributes. In integration, they preserve elements of both the original and dominant cultures. Moreover, the preservation of the original culture while avoiding the dominant one or disengaging from both cultures were called by Berry as separation and marginalization strategies respectively. The theory acknowledges that these strategies are affected by personal choices and societal influence (Berry, 1992). Understanding the



dynamics of migration and multicultural societies are possible by this theory. In the context of this thesis, the theory is pertinent as it gives more insights into the experiences of second-generation returned migrants “American students” and how they adjust to the Palestinian schools’ system after spending time in a different cultural context in the US.

## **1. Scholarly Contribution**

This study contributes to the pool of literature with its exploration of returned migrants’ experiences at Palestinian schools. The initial impetus for undertaking this research is the phenomenon of second-generation returned migrants from the United States to Palestine and more specifically in Palestinian schools. In this study, the researcher investigates second-generation returned migrants’ narratives and their experience of integration in Palestinian schools (2022/2023). This is done as an attempt to provide a unique chance to look at the discursive contexts and what the returning migrants employ to make sense of the new reality they are experiencing. Due to the fact that school is the place where kids spend most of their time, socialize with others and exchange ideas, it was necessary to highlight these experiences.

Return migration has been studied vigorously and rigorously over the years. Studies have traced this phenomenon since its initial existence (Bovenkerk,2012). More specifically, the beginning of the 1990s had witnessed a considerable growth in the interest of return migration studies (Klinthäll, 2006) ;however, not all fields have been covered. On one hand, several academic aspects of return migration, including economics, anthropology, sociology, geography and psychology have caught the attention of many scholars (Cassarino, 2004). On the other hand, there are still several research fields that need to be unveiled. To narrow this



down, Palestine is one the most common countries that are sending and receiving migrants. However, research is not giving enough attention to the issues related to return migration and circular migration, such as economics, labor and education , Lubbad (2008).

In this study, the researcher focuses on the return migration from the United States and more specifically the experience of second-generation returnees at the Palestinian school system. The aim is to explore the experiences and challenges that these students face during the school year (2022/2023) in one of the privately owned schools in Ramallah city, the Modern English School (MES).

Pisarevskaya et. al. (2019) traced the development of migration studies for three decades and found that there is a gap in previous research. The writers confirmed the volume growth of migration studies ;nevertheless, there are still topics that need to be further investigated like cultural diversity and education. Therefore, the current study is a response to the lack of knowledge in the previous literature about the lived experience of returned migrants to Palestine. To be more specific, there is not enough information about the educational experience of second-generation returnees at Palestinian schools. The authors also concluded that the themes of families and gender have thrived in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The current research goes under the same category and expands the knowledge about the new realities for returning families to Palestine.

The need to comprehend the difficulties second-generation returned migrants to Palestine face in Palestinian schools serves as the foundation for this study. The transmission of important skills and knowledge as well as the development of social ties and relationships within communities are just a few of the numerous advantages that return migration may provide for both individuals and communities. Still, return migration can also present a



number of difficulties, particularly for second-generation returnees who might experience particular social, cultural, and language integration impediments.

By conducting this research, I aim at raising awareness about the experiences of returning migrants from the United States to Palestinian schools, and highlight the complex interplay between return migration, identity formation and education. Additionally, the study contributes to the broader literature about education and return migration from the United States to Palestine and how students navigate and deal with the challenges they encounter. The study's contribution also relies on its capacity to inform policy and practice in the education system in Palestine that takes into consideration the needs of all students with different backgrounds.

To complement the literature, the current study adds to and builds upon the studies concerned with returning migrants, specifically the issue of education at schools and educational achievement. As none of the previous scholars contributed at building the knowledge about the current topic, this thesis will be placed in a position to fill the lacuna in the previous studies and become possible literature for future research in the field of returning migrants' education in Palestine. I further contribute to this literature by identifying potential areas of policy and programmatic interventions that can help address the challenges.

## **2. Research objectives**

This body of writing seeks to enrich the general knowledge by gaining understanding about the difficulties that second-generation returnees from the US experience in the context of Palestinian schools. This can be achieved by conducting case studies. A case study is usually about theory generating based on the understanding of a phenomenon, and it is less concerned with theory testing (Perry, 1998). The first objective of the current case study is to

find out if the second-generation returning students from the US face any difficulties in accessing and integrating into Palestinian schools, especially in the MES school during the year (2022/2023). This will entail exploring the numerous cultural, social and linguistic barriers that return migrants face, along with how their experience at the Palestinian schools is affected by the broader social and educational contexts. The second objective is to investigate how these challenges affect second-generation return migrants' educational experience and outcomes in Palestinian schools. In order to do this, it will be necessary to look at the attendance rates, the academic performance and involvement at school. Promoting successful integration of second-generation return migrants into Palestinian schools is the third and last objective of the study. That will be accomplished after exploring available programmatic and policy initiatives. As part of this, existing policy frameworks will be examined, as well as considerations of new interventions that might be successful will also be taken into consideration.

### **3. Research questions**

In this thesis, I investigate the experience of second-generation returning migrants from the US in Palestinian schools for the school year (2022/2023). When Palestinian children are raised in America for a certain period of time and come back to live in Palestine, the differences between the two countries become crystal clear for them. With this in mind, the differences could range from the culture itself, traditions, habits, social norms and most notably by the students is the school system. Both countries' schooling systems are majorly distinct in relation to the relationship between the teachers and students, the curriculum, the learning styles and the school's regulations. Most literature has failed to examine the experience of returning migrants of school students to Palestine from the US (see chapter two for more details). As a result, the current thesis is dedicated for this specific purpose. This section illustrates the study's main questions. Addressing these questions will add to the

broader literature about return migration and education. Hence, in my study I unearth the potential challenges that school students returning migrants from the United States encounter in the Palestinian school system. Furthermore, I question the methods that this group of students adapt in the process of their assimilation and integration within the Palestinian schools' environment, more specifically in the MES school. The last question investigates the terminology of the school teachers to facilitate the integration of returning migrant students with the Arab students and the school system.

#### **4. Limitations**

The study considers a number of limitations. First, the human limitation, in which the sample of the study was limited to returned-migrant school students from America, between the fifth to the ninth grades. Second, the locative limitation since the sample was chosen from the (MES) Middle English School private school in Ramallah city. Third, the temporal limitation that extended over the school year of (2022/2023). The topical limitation was the last limitation, by focusing on the challenges that second-generation returned migrants face in the Palestinian school system, more specifically in the MES school in Ramallah city.

#### **5. Obstacles of The Study**

Conducting this study was encountered by various obstacles. Firstly, the limited free time during the school day to conduct interviews with the participating students. Secondly, the difficulty of arranging free time between the researcher and other teachers in the school to conduct the interviews. Thirdly, the lack of cooperation of most students' parents to be interviewed.

## **6. Summary**

This chapter highlighted the main elements of the research. It presented an introduction about the study, the statement of the problem, the scholarly contribution of the study, the objectives of the study, in addition to the research questions and limitations.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

Return migration as a phenomenon has become an increasingly interesting topic of research in the field of migration studies. In Palestine, more specifically, the number of returned migrants coming back from other countries has significantly increased throughout the years. Return migration is not an easy process, as it is accompanied with a range of new experiences and challenges, especially with regards to education. This literature review will look at the body of knowledge already available on return migration and education in Palestine.

#### **1. The Development of Return Migration Studies**

In recent years, migration studies have rapidly increased (Massey, et. al. , 1998) and there has been a growth in the amount of research in the migration field (Brettell & Hollifield, 2014). Definitely, second-generation return migration is an important phenomenon (Brocket, 2020), ;nevertheless, there is a lack of knowledge on the current size of return migration and of who returns and who does not, especially in Palestine (Wahba, J, 2021).

In 2019, Pisarevskaya et. al., mapped out the development of general research studies in the migration field in terms of research volume and focus topics for a period of 30 years and came out with interesting conclusions. In the light of internationalism and the rapid growth of migration studies, it was expected that the topics of research would be more fragmented and diverse. However, the authors found the past literature was found to be stable and centered around the same topics. This included topics like cultural diversity, identity and community development. Little attention was given to education issues and not deeply studied. After



reviewing the previous literature, Pisarevskaya et. al. revealed that several important shifts in relation to the dominance of topics in migration studies. In other words, the field had witnessed a change from focusing on demographics, governance and statistics to a growing focus on motilities, health and gender. To be further illustrated, the writers argued that the publication from the 1980s- 1990s showed interest in culture, education and language training, identity narratives, intercultural communication and cultural diversity. Also, since the 2000s, transnationalism shifted the attention from geographies and nation-states and gave way to identity narratives, migrants and their children's dual identities, and the themes of gender and family. Another interesting conclusion the writers discovered was that the top five dominant topics during the last century were "black studies", "intra-EU studies", "ICT, media and migration", "motilities", and "migration in/from Israel and Palestine", which continued to be one of the dominant topics in the twenty first century.

## **2. Migration and The Palestinian Identity**

A good amount of literature looked over the second-generation migrants in the United States (Brocket,2020). According to Hanafi (2006), when individuals move to live in other countries, they preserve special bonds with their original place. This harmonizes with the thoughts illustrated in a book by Portes & Rumbaut (2001). In their book, the authors have stated that immigrants always have a reference left from their homelands, which they can go back to. On the contrary, the US-born children, who are born and raised as Americans, do not have the same reference to their original country as their parents. As such, a gap between the parents and their kids in terms of the interaction with the cultural, educational and religious backgrounds is established. This book viewed a study conducted in 1997 which estimated in that year about 10.8 million US-born children under 18 years of age living with foreign-born parents, in addition to 3 million foreign-born children under 18 who immigrated with their

parents to the US. Growing up in the United States entails that a large number of people have to adapt to an environment that might be foreign for their parents and themselves. Portes & Rumbaut (2001), believed that the outcomes of this adaptation process mainly depended on the language knowledge and use, school performance, the degree of parent-child generational gap and the level of interaction with peers across the ethnic circle boundaries.

The available literature on migrant transnationalism and integration proved that it is possible for individuals to belong to more than one place, Erdal (2014). In 1989, Christison published a study entitled as (The American Experience: Palestinians in the United States), in which the writer recalled that the second-generation of Palestinians in the United States are strongly attached to Palestine, at the same time, they have a sense that the US is the main home as they have lived there. Similarly, Mokadi & Yousef (2020) wrote that immigrants born in the US usually get acquainted with the idea that they are full Americans and reject their parents' origin, but this does not apply to Palestinians. They balance the two identities by keeping the Palestinian consciousness, as both authors believed. The Palestinian parental generation may resist the naturalization and acculturation of their children in America, but these children share citizenship and socialize in the context of a shared school environment with their American counterparts (Serhan, 2009).

The Palestinian master-narrative is the vehicle through which the Palestinians articulate their identities outside the geographical space of Palestine Almarhabi (2020). The notion of Palestine stayed the focal point for Palestinians in different states in America (Leonard, 2003). Despite the emotional and material bonds with their homelands, migrant groups will be shaped by the norms of the new country (Kivisto, 2001). In the same study of Christison (1989), the author wrote that there is no connection between being a patriotic Palestinian and

his/her integration within American culture. In other words, more integration does not necessarily mean less nationalism to the country of origin.

Seward & Khan (2016) investigated the experience of Muslim American school students at the American high schools. The authors found that this group of students face challenges at school solely for being Muslims, and usually deal with “the other” and not belonging to the place. School counselors should understand the religious beliefs and work with these students to elevate their self-honor (Sink & Devlin 2011). This is because the way Palestinian-American students view themselves and how they are portrayed in American high schools are usually accompanied by tension and injustice (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Erkat, 2020). This tension caused a sense of “in-betweenness” among second-generation migrants. The mix of American and Palestinian aspects entailed the emergence of “hybrid” children, and witnessed multiple exclusions from both countries. Yet, they learnt how to respond to these experiences in “positioned belonging” (Brocket, 2020). As a result, the Palestinian Americans have had fluid identities and created dynamic relationships with both the hostland and homeland (Mason, 2007).

### **3. Return Migration to Palestine**

In 2010, the Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) conducted the first migration survey that shed light on migration in Palestine between (2000-2010) titled “*Migration’s Survey in the Palestinian Territory*”. The survey was conducted to fulfill the urgent need for migration statistics in light of the severe shortage of data on international migration statistics in Palestine. It provided detailed statistics about the size of migration, factors that affect the decision of emigration, characteristics of returnees and reasons behind their return. The survey found that one out of 6.7% Palestinian households have at least one immigrant member. In addition to their Palestinian citizenship, 5.9% of the total Palestinians have another citizenship, 9.2%

in the West Bank and 0.1% in Gaza Strip. With regard to the year of emigration, 51.2% left Palestine before 2000, while 28.4% left after 2005. The report stated that 5-7 thousand migrants returned to the country between (2005-2010), with the highest percentage of 9.5% coming back from the United States. Out of all returnees, 33.2% came back for family reunions, 21.7% for studying and education purposes and about 15.0% were seeking improving life conditions. The same survey found that governmental schools constituted 74.4% of schools in 2010/2011, while 13.0% were privately owned, and 12.6% were UNRWA-run schools. It also showed an increasing development on educational technologies and school facilities in Palestine. For instance, the number of rooms designed for laboratory science increased from 39.6% in 1994/1995 to 61.8% in 2010/2011. Regarding the crowdedness of classrooms, in 2010/2011 the classroom density in the basic schooling stage was 36.0 in UNRWA schools, 30.8 at governmental schools and 23.7 at private schools (PCBS, 2010).

The (PCBS) published the “*Child Statistics Series*” in (2012) that tackled the status of Palestinian children’s rights. It discussed the realities of Palestinian children from various areas, such as, health, labor and demographic reality. The environment of schools is a key factor influencing the successfulness of academic achievement, so schools’ policies should take into account the students’ varying backgrounds and personalities, according to the “*Palestinian Children –Issues and Statistics*” (2012) report in the same series.

Hammer (2005) published a book that dealt with topics related to migration, return migration and identity formation. Mainly, the book argued that protecting children from the “American life” was a main force for returning to Palestine. Hammer found that both Muslim and Christian children, who were born in America, were raised upon religious values and had a traditional upbringing. In her study, the author focused on the Friends Boys School (FBS) on

Al-Bireh in Ramallah, where returned students from the US were almost 30% of all students. The private school has a program for English-speaking students of parents who went back after migrating to the US, and another separate program for Arabic speakers. The different cultural backgrounds, the different tastes in fashion and music, the returned migrants' weak knowledge about the political conditions and the two groups' different pasts all created an atmosphere of tension inside the school. According to Hammer, the number of enrolling students at the FBS grew over the years, even though many English instruction schools were established in the same area, such as Al-Urduniyya, Al-Jenan School and Bridge Academy. The author also found that language was the major distinction between students at the FBS school. The "American" students, who returned from the U.S, form groups during the break and between classes. Also, in classroom discussions they would mention "us" and "them" as if "them not accepting us" (Hammer, 2005. p.155). The writer added, the school was a place to meet and connect. It was a place where "Americans" or "returnees" shared daily struggles and stories, which helped at forming a group identity for returned migrants from the US to Palestine, as Hammer Believed.

Brocket (2020) Palestinian second-generation returning migrants are highly influenced by the American norms, while their visits to Palestine show the extent to which these children have been affected by their raising in the US. Brocket asserted that attending school in Palestinian villages is not as luxurious as taking a turkey and cheese sandwich, rather zeit wa za'atar<sup>3</sup> sandwich. Another difference found by Weizman (2007) illustrated that having a long shower empties the water tank of the family, they do not have experience about the daily life struggles under occupation.

---

<sup>3</sup> zeit wa za'atar: زيت و زعتر Arabic words referring to a sandwich of olive oil, thyme and bread.

Through reviewing previous literature, it is found that there is a dearth of studies that deeply tackled the phenomenon of returning second-generation migrants to Palestine. There is a deficiency of knowledge about the experiences, adaptation and assimilation of Palestinian second-generation returning migrants from the US in the Palestinian schools. Based on this, the current study attempted to fill this gap by understanding the experiences of 25 different students coming back from America and studying at the MES school in Ramallah city. By exploring this group of students' experiences, this study aimed at highlighting the potential challenges they encounter at this school during the school year (2022/2023).

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology and Procedures**

#### **1. Study Design**

The main purpose of this study is to explore the challenges that face returned school students from the US to Palestine, hence, a qualitative case study is applied. Through qualitative research, the voice of the participants is heard (Gibson, et. al., 2004), which ensured more reliability to the narratives of returned school students and their reflection upon settling down in Palestine and getting education at Palestinian schools. To properly study the subjects, the method of case study was used because “it is known as the most efficient qualitative research method as it focuses on the practical knowledge of the real-life situations and careful attention to the influence of social, political and other factors on the situation” (Baklashova & Kazakov, 2016, p. 1823). A case study captures “how do?” problems to describe phenomena of the real world rather than generating normative models (Perry, 1998). The case in hand is concerned with the returning “American” students, who study at the Modern English School (MES) in Ramallah city, in the school year (2022/2023). This specific school was purposefully chosen for a number of reasons. First, it has the Tawjihi<sup>4</sup> and the Advanced Placement (AP)<sup>5</sup> programs. Usually, the returning parents from the United States look for schools that have both programs, where education is in the English language, besides the Arabic language improvement classes. Students are more likely to get education in their native English language, and socialize with other Arab students to know more about

---

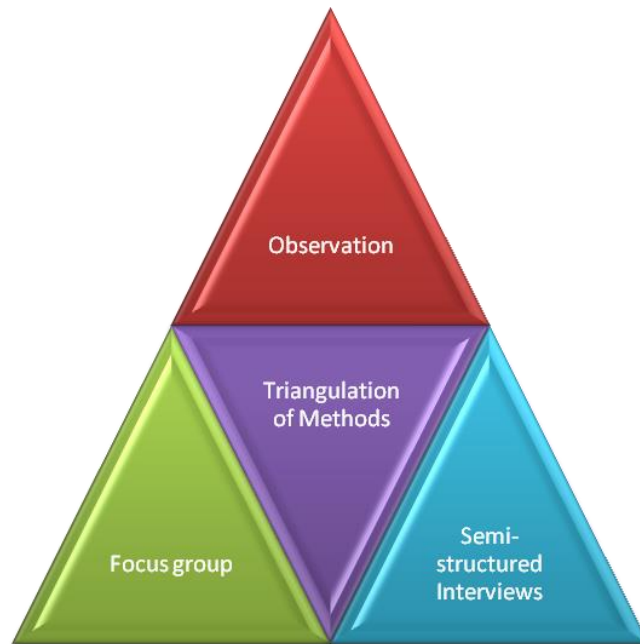
<sup>4</sup> Tawjihi: توجيحي : The General Secondary Education Certification Examination in Palestine. It determines which subjects students are allowed to study at the Palestinian universities depending on their percentage out of 100.

<sup>5</sup> AP: An abbreviation of Advanced Placement. It is a program of education in the USA and Canada, offering college-level courses for students while still at school.

the Arabic language and culture. However, this interaction among students coming from diverse cultural backgrounds may cause challenges that need to be investigated. Second, the MES school is one of the biggest schools in Ramallah city. Its estimated number of students in the school year (2022/2023) was around 1150 students, according to the school's statistics. The same statistics also revealed that the returned migrant students from America constituted about 6% of the total number of students at school. Moreover, next year this number is expected to increase as new AP classes will be opened because school's good reputation for its qualified staff and modern technological learning tools, encourage students to come from villages outside Ramallah city to attend school every day. Third, in order to collect the most authentic and reliable data in ethnographic research, the ethics of trust and honesty should be established between the researcher and the participants. For the past two years, I have taught most of the selected participants in the study, which strengthened the bond between the two parties and encouraged students to participate and share their personal stories.

The type of case study used in this study was “explanatory” to adequately answer the question of “how” were the experiences of returned school students (Chopard & Przybylski, 2021 ; Rowley, 2002) in addition to illustrating the potential challenges that encounter them. The specific methods used for primary data collection were semi-structured interviews (Available in appendix A) with the 25 participating students, five parents and five teachers working in the school, in addition to two focus groups comprising 5 male and 5 female students. Besides, – as a teacher at the school - I adopted the observation of the students' social interactions in their natural settings. To sum up, the triangulation of the multiple use of investigation methods – as shown in figure 1- aimed to enrich the research as it offered different datasets and aspects for the phenomenon of interest, as indicated by Noble & Heale (2019). The methodological triangulation was also a great effort to explain complex human behavior to provide more truthful results (Bashir, et.al., 2008). Due to the large amount of

data gathered by the three tools, the results of each method were put in a separate section in chapter four.



**Figure 1: The tool kit of data collection**

## **2. Participants**

The current research shed light on the Modern English School (MES) in Ramallah city as a case study during the school year (2022/2023). The MES school is a newly-established private school that opened its doors in 2016. The school has the Palestinian Tawjihi system of education from the first to the twelfth grades. It also has the AP program – Twjihi equivalent – from the seventh to the ninth grades. One of the reasons for choosing this particular school was because I work there as a teacher, so I noticed that this group of students had different experiences that needed to be explored. So, in general when the researcher has a direct previous relation with the participants, it makes the individuals more engaging and enthusiastic to share information. Being a teacher of some of the participating students had built trust-based relations and ultimately made them more comfortable at sharing their personal experiences and feelings. Building a bond of trust between the researcher and the

interviewee is very important (Meyer, 2001). In addition, the school was a place of embracement for many returned students from the US, who are originally from the city of Ramallah or from the countryside. The total number of the participants was 25, with 5 students from each grade from the fifth to the ninth grades. The selection of cases in case study methodology is usually purposeful by selecting information-rich participants who are worthy of in-depth study (Patton,1990 ; Perry,1998). They spanned in age from 11 to 15 years old. It is worth mentioning here that the fifth and sixth grade participants were in the ordinary Twjihi school system, using the Palestinian school textbooks in Arabic Language in addition to other textbooks in English, including, Science, Math and the English language. The school had not yet opened an AP section for these grades. The other remaining participants from the seventh to the ninth grades were enrolled in the AP section. The main language of teaching the second group of students was the English language with only the Arabic language textbook and Islamic Studies class using the Arabic language. The students were selected based on the following criteria. (1) They have lived and got school education in the US. (2) They have moved and settled in Palestine and had been a student at the MES school for one year, at least. The duration of the student enrolment in the school influences the adaptation and integration processes. (3) The participants had to be between the fifth and ninth grades. In addition to the students themselves, five of their parents approved to be interviewed on a phone call. Moreover, it was necessary to talk to one teacher for each one of the five grades. Therefore, five teachers were interviewed in the school's library to understand their insights about the experiences of the returned-migrant students at the school.

### **3. Data Collection**

The current study collected data based on a triangulation of research methods, including participants' observation, semi-structured interviews with the students, their parents

and teachers, in addition to two focus groups based on gender. The triangulation of methods aims to “strengthen research credibility” (Jiang, 2008, p.71). The triangulation in qualitative research enhances the completeness and confirmation of the collected data (Thurmond, 2001). Hence, the use of a variety of methods fosters the exploration and explanation of complex human behavior and gives a balanced view about it (Heale & Noble, 2019). First of all, observation of the returned students and social engagement with their peers at school was a crucial step towards understanding if they had problems in integration with the new school system. This tool was an enriching data collecting tool for the researcher and provided a multifaceted understanding of the phenomenon (Erasmus+, 2019). A case study that entails observation enables the researcher to examine many aspects, draw the relation between them and with the total environment (Gummesson, 1988). The second data collection tool was semi-structured interviews that allowed for getting more detailed information about the experiences of returned migrant students depending on their responses. Indeed, semi-structured interview is considered as a reciprocal engagement, where the researcher has the structure and the interviewee provides experience. That way, the discussion between the researcher and the respondent will lead to understanding the experiences and not shaping them (Husband, 2020). As a result, I interviewed the teachers and parents of the students, which gave a clearer image from different angles about the experience of coming back to Palestine and enrolling in Palestinian schools. Overall, semi-structured interviews allow the interviewee to modify the pace, the style and ordering of questions, which evokes the fullest answers from them (Qu & Dumay, 2011). I also interviewed five teachers, who work at the school. They had direct contact with the students and were well-informed about the students’ experiences. Talking to the teachers was important to understand their point of views about the challenges that the students encounter and their strategies at facilitating student's integration. The parents’ point of views about this experience is also important, so five parents were interviewed via phone calls.

I have also used the focus groups technique for data accumulation. Usually, focus groups “add richness and depth to a project” (Wilkinson, 1998, p.185), so it was necessary to apply this technique. Hence, after finishing up with the semi-structured interviews I have formed two focus groups based on gender from the same 25 participants, in order to investigate the variation of experiences among female and male returnees.

**Table 1: Sources of data**

<b>Method</b>	<b>Data Accumulation Instrument</b>	<b>Description of Participants</b>	<b>Number</b>
Qualitative	Observation	Returned migrant students at the MES school.	25
	Semi-structured Interviews	Participants: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Returned migrant students.</li> <li>2. School teachers.</li> <li>3. Students’ parents.</li> </ol>	35
	Focus-group	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Five male students.</li> <li>2. Five female students.</li> </ol>	10

### **3.1. Observation**

It is common in research to use interviews accompanied by other methods like observation (Cowie, 2009). This tool for data collection is usually used in case study research to get a deeper understanding about a phenomenon, such as when teachers want to observe their own students’ behavior. Therefore, as a Science and Conversation teacher at the MES school since 2021, I have observed the performance of the “American” students at the school. During the last year, I did not have direct contact with all “American” students, but I have witnessed how they socialized with other students inside and outside the classroom. Therefore, for the school year (2022/2023) I have decided to give attention to this group of

students in my thesis to deeply understand their experience of integration within the Palestinian school system, particularly in the MES school. As soon as I received the initial confirmation for this topic, greater attention was given to these students' behavior whether in their classrooms, the hallways, the cafeteria or during the lunch break. I have witnessed their gatherings between the classes in the school's hallways, in addition to how they act and interact with others during the lunch break. Out of all participating individuals in this study, I taught the fifth and seventh graders, so I had the opportunity to closely observe their social interaction with their Arab and "American" classmates. As for the sixth, eighth and ninth grades I observed them outside the classroom in the natural settings of school.

### **3.2. Semi-structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were used with the students, their parents and teachers throughout the month of May 2023. Due to the short period of free time at school for the 25 participating students, they were interviewed in five groups based on their grade level. All students were enthusiastic to participate and talk about their experience of coming back to Palestine from America.

Students were not able to be met outside school, so all interviews with them were conducted at the school's library. This provided a more relaxed and quiet atmosphere that made students more cooperative at answering the questions. However, it was possible to meet them only at the school's lunch break and sometimes the following class. So, each interview was completed in two stages due to the shortness of this period that equals about an hour and a half. The two interviews with each group took a total of around three hours. I was keen to do this, keeping in mind that each of the five participants had to fully express him/herself.

The English language was the first language of participants; therefore, it was the language used during all interviews. The semi-structured interview questions (Available in

Appendix A) were direct and mainly related to the experience of going back to Palestine, and more particularly the experience at the MES Palestinian school system of education. Prior to each interview, I offered the students some snacks, then started with an introduction about the content of the research and showed them pictures of the Arab American University. After that, all interviewed participants signed a letter of consent (Available in Appendix B) that was already signed by the school's principal, which gave detailed background about the research and asked for the subject's permission to record the interviews. I also clarified to the participants their rights before the initiation of each interview, including their right to withdraw at any time of the interview and to refuse answering any research question.

The selected teachers for interviewing preferred meeting inside the school, which also took place at the school's library. Their selection process was based on the grades they teach. One teacher for each of the five classes was interviewed, in order to get more authentic information about the students' behavior inside the classroom. It was also important to collect data about the strategies that teachers used to embrace "American" students, whether in AP or Tawjihi sections. Gathering the teachers in one group was purposeful. Firstly, the interaction between them would result in more detailed data about the experiences of the returned-migrant students. Moreover, the teachers benefited from each other's' strategies on how to embrace and help "American" students, whether in the Tawjihi or AP sections. It was not easy for the five teachers to share one free time, so it was decided to make it during the final exams period. Usually during final exams the students finish their tests and leave school at 10 a.m. On May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023 the participating teachers met inside the library for the interview. I distributed the informed consent (Available in Appendix B) for their participation and started the interviews that lasted for about 90 minutes.

As for the parents of students, they were not easy to access as fathers stay in the US for work and not all mothers were cooperative enough to participate. Therefore, interviews were conducted with five parents. After the mothers' initial agreement to participate, I sent a soft copy of the informed consent (Available in Appendix B), explained it to them and they gave their approval verbally. In most cases, it is enough to get a verbal agreement from the participants, as it does not always have to be written (Zahle, 2017). Then, I interviewed them via WhatsApp and Messenger phone calls that lasted for 10-25 minutes during the months of May and June 2023. It was pivotal to talk to the students' parents to get insights into the main reasons behind moving to America and coming back to Palestine. Their points of view about the kids' experiences in Palestine also needed to be unraveled.

### **3.3. Focus Group**

The focus-group was a valuable component of this research tool kit, which is known as an informal discussion among groups' members and directed by a moderator (Morgan et al., 1998). In general, members of each focus group should share similar characteristics like age-range and gender (Krueger, 1994). In order to ensure a comfortable atmosphere of the discussion, the group members should feel relaxed with each other and encouraged to exchange thoughts, ideas and feelings (Rabiee, 2004). In this study, the two focus groups were formed based on gender, the first group had male participants while the other (group) had female participants. To accurately fulfill the purpose of the smooth interaction and discussion between participants, I have selected five members for each group. Consequently, this number of students in each group was large enough to produce diverse opinions and small enough for everyone to speak (Freeman, 2006). Each group consisted of members from the eighth and ninth grades because they were in the same age-range and they were the most thoughtful and talkative students. The discussion between the two groups took place at the

school's library and lasted for one hour, including the lunch break time and fifteen minutes from the following class. At first, students sat as two groups. Then, they were provided with some snacks, I introduced the process of discussion and informed the two groups that the interview will be tape-recorded. After that, I raised questions and the students discussed, argued and answered them.

#### **4. Ethical considerations**

It is rigorous to take into account many ethical considerations when conducting any research. Adhering to ethical norms in the research field is important because they help in gaining public support and people usually tend to trust research with integrity and quality. Moreover, in research that needs collaboration among different people, values like mutual respect, trust and fairness should be considered to achieve a successful collaborative work (Gajjar, 2013). The ethical norms are more important in qualitative research, especially when the researcher works with vulnerable participants (Ketefian, 2015). Therefore, the researcher should inform the participants about their rights.

The first of ethical considerations was informed consent (Available in Appendix B of this thesis). A researcher should never force anyone to participate in research. It is the individuals' right to be fully informed about the study before deciding whether to participate or not. Therefore, before conducting each interview, the subjects were given a letter of informed consent, which clarified the purpose of the study and gave them the freedom to participate or withdraw at any time. It assured that the observation and interview data is safeguarded and the participants are not deceived or manipulated (Zahle, 2017).

Second, confidentiality was a crucial issue while conducting this research. Privacy and confidentiality are not the same. Privacy is about people, while confidentiality is more concerned with the data itself (Ethicist, 2015). From the beginning of the study, I clarified to

all participants including the students, their parents and the teachers that the school's administration is not responsible for the study. Prior to each interview, they were informed that the collected data will be kept solely for the purpose of the study and it will not be published elsewhere. Additionally, the informants were asked whether they prefer their actual names to be written or not. The adult participants including teachers and parents expressed their consent to the writing of their names in this thesis. However, young students are vulnerable individuals, so pseudonyms are used instead of their real names.

Thirdly, I was acquainted with the idea that building a rapport with the interviewees is essential in this type of qualitative research. That was done by keeping a respectful and non-judgmental attitude with participants (McGarr, 2010). This task was not hard to achieve as I was teaching some of the students and had a close relationship with them. I also found that humor and providing snacks were good facilitators of this process of bonding.

Finally, the participants were repeatedly reminded that they can withdraw from the interview at any time. They were also conscious that they were not obliged to answer every single question.

## Chapter Four

### Results

#### 1. Introduction

The results of this qualitative case study are presented in this chapter. The form of case studies in research is usually used either to test an already established theory or to explore a phenomenon, answer its questions and generalize a theory, (Yin, 2013). Hence, the current study was mostly inductive to find answers for questions revolving around the experience of returning migrants from the US to Palestine.

During the analysis process, great attention was given to the data collected by the unitized qualitative research tools. The data collected from observation, semi-structured interviews and focus groups were written on a Microsoft Word document to make the analysis processes easier. After that, codes were generated by focusing on the recurring themes and patterns in the participants' answers in each data collection tool. On the word document, sentences that talked about the same theme were highlighted with the same color. This technique facilitated drawing conclusions across the three separate data collection methods. It also fostered the deep analysis of the research results (Davies, 2016).

**Table 2: Key participants of students**

Groups number	Grade	Members	Males	Females
1	Fifth	5	2	3
2	Sixth	5	4	1
3	Seventh	5	2	3

4	Eighth	5	3	2
5	Ninth	5	3	2

**Table 3: Background of the students**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Previous school</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Years of enrollment at the MES school</b>	<b>Current grade</b>
Laith	Kenansville Middle School	North Carolina	1	Ninth
Sima	Lusher Charter School	Louisiana	1	Ninth
Tala	North Middle School	Missouri	1	Ninth
Omar	Ag COX Middle school	North Carolina	1	Ninth
Ali	Crestview Middle School	Missouri	2	Ninth
Taleen	North Middle School	Missouri	1	Eighth
Fadel	Washington Middle School	Missouri	1	Eighth
Rayan	The Islamic Education School	Florida	1	Eighth
Ghena	Worth Elementary School	Illinois	6	Eighth
Yasmeen	Brame Middle School	Louisiana	1	Eighth
Adam	Kher's Mill Elementry	Missouri	2	Seventh
Yasal	A.G Cox Middle School	North Carolina	1	Seventh
Mirna	Brame Middle School	Louisiana	1	Seventh
Hasan	Washington Middle School	Missouri	1	Seventh
Mahdi	Nohl Conyon School	California	2	Seventh
Awni	Ernest Gallet Elementary School	Louisiana	2	Sixth
Amr	Ace Athens Elementary School	Kentucky	1	Sixth
Sileen	Millenia Gardens	Florida	1	Sixth

	Elementary School			
Nasir	Cherokee Elementary School	Louisiana	1	Sixth
Leen	Lua Elementary School	Kentucky	1	Sixth
Nisreen	Worth Elementary School	Illinois	1	Fifth
Bisan	Worth Elementary School	Illinois	1	Fifth
Waseem	Prien Lake Elementary School	Louisiana	3	Fifth
Lamar	Lua Elementary School	Kentucky	1	Fifth
Ayham	Millenia School	Florida	1	Fifth

The tool kit of the study consisted of three different tools. The results of each data collection tool have been presented separately.

## **2. Results of observation of the participating students**

Observation is a research tool can be applied in multiple contexts including the classroom, playgrounds, playing fields, corridors and cafeteria of the school. Observing the participants in their natural settings supports and enriches the database gathered via the other instruments applied in this study (Simpson & Tuson 2003).

I have worked at the MES school for the past two years. It was the first time working at a school combining the Tawjihi and AP sections. During the school year (2021/2022), which was the first year at the school, I have witnessed the different social gatherings and peer interactions among the students themselves and their teachers. I had the opportunity to observe the kind of relationships that connect the students with each other and how they interact whether inside the classroom, in the schools' hallways, in the cafeteria or in the playground. Throughout the same year, there was always something that caught my attention.

The students who spoke native English talked only to each other and had little interaction with the other Arabic native students. Inside the classroom, they had interacted with their teacher, and with other good English-speaking students. Outside the classroom they usually formed social circles where they shared conversations with other native English students. I noticed that these students isolated themselves from other students. This group of students were mostly returned migrants from the US. For this specific reason, in (2022/2023) when I had the chance to conduct the current thesis I grasped the opportunity to spot the light on the experiences of returning migrants from the United States and the possible challenges they face at the Palestinian schools. During the school year (2022/2023), more attention was given to these students. In this year, I have been a teacher for ten participants in the fifth and seventh grades involved in the study.

According to my observations, their communication during the class with their peers has varied degrees of integration depending on their personalities and the time they spent in the MES school. Those who have been in the school for more than one year had shown stronger social connections with their classmates than the newly-registered ones. Most “American” students understand Arabic very well but cannot communicate using this language. So, language was the only barrier between them and other Arab students in the classroom and they communicated with students who were able to express themselves in English. However, during the lunch break, all “American” students sat, talked and played with each other most of the time while creating a group identity. As for their academic achievement, it also improved throughout the year. The students who were new to the Palestinian curriculum and teaching system, had bad results at the start of the year. However, with their teachers’ assistance and with more practice they started to do well in their tests and assimilated with the school rules.

The observations of the other sixth, eighth and ninth graders were basically carried out between their classes in the school's hallways and during the lunch break in the playground. This group of "American" English-speaking students mostly limited their social interaction with each other. They talk, play, joke, study, have lunch and sit together, separating themselves from Arab students. In the corridors, they stand in small circles talking to each other or with their teachers between the classes. In the playground, they are always playing basketball together, where you can rarely see an Arab student playing with them. At the same token, they never play football with the Arab students. Another thing I have observed was that during the lunch break, the females tend to sit in marginalized areas in the playground where they eat lunch, study for tests and talk to each other. By the end of the school year, "American" students started to show more social engagement and integration with their Arab peers by talking to them and joking with them more frequently.

Overall, this qualitative study belongs to the ethnographic and naturalistic approach of research. Using this type of research entailed the observation of the investigated individuals in their naturalistic social settings (Simpson & Tuson 2003). This unstructured observation entailed entering the field without predetermined notions in respect to the participants' behavior (Mulhall,2003). Gold (1958) illustrated that a researcher can take the complete observer role subordinated with other roles and in conjunction with tools of data collection. In this study, I have played the role of the complete observer of students' behaviors outside the classroom. This allowed more understanding of how individuals behave in certain contexts and how they interact with others. However, as their teacher, I have been a participant-as-observer or active participant as Gold (1958) and Spradly (1980) called respectively. All of this have helped at getting a closer view of the kind of social challenges that "American" students face at the school.

### **3. Results of semi-structured interviews with students**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three groups of participants: the returned-migrant students in the MES school, their teachers and parents. Several distinct themes that emerged throughout the course of the interviews with these students are listed below.

#### **3.1. The Language Barrier**

For all 25 “American” students, language barriers play an important part in their integration process within the MES school. Before delving deeper into the emerging themes from interviews, it must be noted that the school does not have an AP section for the fifth and sixth grades. This means that fifth and sixth graders returning-migrants from America have to enroll in the Tawjihi section, with only Science, Math and English language textbooks using the English language. The AP section starts from the seventh to the ninth grade. The seventh, eighth and ninth American graders enroll in the AP section, where classes are mostly in English. Thus, the language barrier has always been there, with varying degrees across the different grades. The “American” students in the Tawjihi section encounter language barriers both in the curriculum and in the interaction with other Arab peers. A fifth-grade student whose name is Lamar expresses her inability to write in Arabic and how her communication skills in Arabic have improved:

*“it’s harder here because everything is Arabi and sometimes I forget Arabic words so I have to write them down on a paper but teachers think that I’m cheating .. so language is the only barrier.. I know how to speak Arabic now ..”* (Lamar).

However, American AP students are learning using the American English curriculum. Most of their classmates are also returned-migrant students from America or Palestinian students with excellent English- speaking skills. All interviewed students express their ability to

understand Arabic, but they cannot speak the language fluently. Another eighth -grade student whose name is Fadel links between Arabic speaking ability and accents:

*“The main problems are speaking and writing Arabic. Also, when I speak Arabi my accent is different so I need to change it”* (Fadel).

Generally, “American” students find it difficult to interact with other Palestinian Arabic speaking students. Nasir from the sixth- grade points out to the idea that no one gave them help to improve their communication skills:

*“The language barrier here is not good. Arabs do not help. My Arabic is so kind and helpful”* (Nasir).

Out of all interviewees, one student believes that language is not a barrier between “American” and Arab students. Also, he says that the fact of being able to speak English does not make him any less Palestinian. His mother is American and his father is Palestinian, so he has Palestinian roots. The student is desperate about how he is perceived by Palestinians as fully American, while neglecting his Palestinian national roots:

*Language is definitely not a barrier. It is national mode. I’m American but I have Palestinian roots. But they perceive us as fully Americans. As an American, they think I’m directly going to hell. But I have a Palestinian birth certificate and other Palestinian certificates; I am not fully American. I’m from here. They do not seem to understand that. They act as it is something not existing”* (Awni).

### **3.2. The School System**

All of the students involved in the study emphasized the enormous differences between the American and Palestinian school systems, particularly at the MES private school in Ramallah. These differences are put into many categories.

#### **3.2.1. Route to School**

Of all interviewees, 23 talk about the difficulty of arriving at school on time in the morning, because most of these students live in villages outside Ramallah city. A twin sister from the

fifth grade mentioned that in America the school usually starts at 9 a.m. They used to leave their home half an hour before that time. Nevertheless, when they came back to Palestine, it took them one hour every day to go to school, since they live in a village near Ramallah:

*“In America classes start at 9 and we have to go out at 8:30. My house was close, but here we live very far from the school in Alqebah and it takes us one hour to be here on time. We have to wake up at 6 to get ready, so we come to school tired”* (Bisan & Nisreen).

The school system in America is characterized by more flexibility and freedom, compared to its counterparts in Palestine. Students over there had more freedom in terms of movement between classes and the duration of the class itself as Omar adds:

*“ In America we have more freedom. Here, we have only one lunch break for 45 minutes, and no break between other classes, but in America we walk between classes”* (Omar).

### **3.2.2. Pedagogy and Learning Styles**

The 25 interviewed students agree that the teaching and learning styles are different across the two countries. All of them talked about the teaching styles at the school. Tala believes that school education in America was more fun and interactive than the MES school:

*“Classes in America are more fun, at school here it is just work and work and work, when you go home you study and study and study. When you come back the next day there will be more tests. But in America, the teachers give you stuff to do inside the class, so learning is more over there”* (Tala).

Mirna comments on how biology classes should be taken by inferring that students have to go to the school's laboratory and do experiments over there. The same interviewee also adds that usually in the MES, the students listen to what the teachers deliver during the class and she compares that with the teaching styles in America. Instead of highlighting and studying the whole textbook, they study from simplified versions of their books and she states:

*“ Here the classes are boring, but there (In USA) we have more activities. For example, in biology we have to go to the lab, we have been there only once this year. We just listen to what the teacher says. In America, they simplify the textbook by turning it into a booklet, but here we study the whole book itself. In the school in America we are more free. In America, everyone has his own laptop because we read a lot, we do more reading over there” (Mirna).*

Laith, who is another ninth grader, comments that some teachers teach, by explaining the main concepts and highlighting them in students' textbooks. After experiencing both school systems, this student finds that education was better in America using more activities in the teaching and learning processes:

*“In my opinion, in America they know how to teach better, they do more activities, which fosters learning. Here, it is mostly self-study and we barely highlight. (Laith).*

The 25 students expressed the tension they live with, due to the lack of time they have to finish all tasks for the next day at school. Each of the Tawjihi and AP sections have their own reasons for that. First, the 10 “American ” students in the fifth and sixth grades, who are in the Tawjihi section, need to put in more effort at home than their Arab classmates. Leen is one of the students who works hard at home to keep up with her classmates and do well in her tests. She says that her parents do a great effort to help her in this process of translation and understanding:

*“.. I do everything at home with (the help of) my parents” (Leen ).*

Second, the lack of time accompanied by the great amount of material to study is a big issue for all the 15 AP students. Especially that these students come from villages outside Ramallah city and need no less than 45 half an hour to be at school on time. Ali recalls his experience in his old American school when he had to study for two hours maximum and excel in a hard exam. However, Ali adds that this year he has to study not less than three hours daily to pass the tests. He has to manage his time because he lives in Tormosaya and his home is 45 minutes away from school:

*“I used to take honor classes which were considered hard, and used to cry sometimes. But here we are crying blood! In America I would study for one or 2 hours and get an A. If you pay attention to the teacher during the class, you do not even need to study. Here, I need to study all day long and I have no time, especially since I live in Tormosaya , which is 45 minutes away from school” (Ali).*

Two interviewees talked about their free time plans, other than studying. The seventh grader Hasan maintains that they have so many tests in a week and he stresses that as children they have to have more free time to relax and think about other things in life like making Palestine free:

*“The tests are so hard. Every week we have three tests. We are children, we need free time. I wanna make Falasteen free. How would I do that with just mukh<sup>6</sup>?” (Hasan).*

Laith also wants to achieve other goals in life, such as going to the gym and going out with friends:

*“From the first to the sixth grade I did not open one book to study, and my mum would yell at me; however, I got lower than 85%. In the seventh grade it dropped because it was online. I don’t want to study all day. I have got a life to live. I go home, I go to the gym, I go out sometimes. Especially that I live in Al-Mazara’a Alsharqieh, which is 45 minutes away from school.” (Laith).*

Out of all the interviewed participants, two students talked about meeting teachers’ expectations. Tala and Omar are the best committed students in their class. Tala is engined by her teachers’ high expectation of her and her dad’s obsession with full marks. Ali does not want to disappoint his teachers and his parents, who pay a lot of money to make him at the MES school. Tala and Omar further say:

*“The problem is that the teachers always expect more from us. They want us to spend all day studying. My dad is crazy about my grades” (Tala).*

*“My teachers know that I am a good student and they alway (always) encourage me.. my parents paid 13,000 shekel <sup>7</sup>for me to be here so I have to work hard to make them proud” (Omar).*

---

<sup>6</sup> Mukh مخ: The Arabic term for the English word “mind”.

### 3.2.3. School size

All “American” interviewees confess that the school is bigger than their previous schools in America. This is one of the problems they encounter in their adaptation process to the new Palestinian school system. New students will not find it easy to reach his/her own class, especially at the beginning of the year. That is because the school’s architectural design combines both the basic and secondary levels in one building, with each section on one side of this building. Besides, the school consists of three floors. New students may ask about the directions to reach their classes; however, it is more challenging for young “American” new students due to the language barrier, according to Bisan:

*“The school is so big! I got lost at first and I had to follow every student I know to the classroom” ( Bisan ).*

The large space of the school and the big number of students cause a problem for the 25 participants. Rayan is not satisfied with the size of the school that has grades from the fifth grade to Tawjihi. Despite that, he looks at the bright side of the experience and recalls:

*“The school here is harder because I used to go to a small private school over there, so I’m not used to big schools [pause] but, it is a nice challenge” (Rayan ).*

On the other hand, Adam correlates the big school involving all grades with the issue of bullying. This student states that there are higher chances of getting bullied by older students in big schools. Meanwhile, in America the situation is different where each level has its own independent school building:

*“In America, there are elementary schools, middle school and high school. Here all grades are at one school, and I do not think this is a good idea, because you could get bullied by any grade up to the twelfth grade. In America, when they divide the school into different levels, they make the lives of everyone easier” (Adam).*

---

<sup>7</sup>Shekel الشيكال: the currency of “Israel” and Palestine.

The MES school was established 6 years ago. For 5 years, all grades had one lunch break after the third class at 10:15 a.m. However, with the rising number of students registered at the school this year (2022/2023) there are two lunch breaks. The first one at 10:15 for the fifth, sixth and seventh grades. The second lunch break is for the rest of the grades to Tawjihi, at 11 a.m. The big number of students at the school in the school year (2022/2023) allows each grade to have one PE class in a week, instead of two. Ghena is an “American” student who enrolled at the school 6 years ago. This year she is in the eighth grade. She has witnessed how school got bigger over the years and its consequences on the school system. Ghena expresses her thoughts with an angry tone:

*“ The challenges I face in school have changed over the years, because we have to share lunch and classes. This year we only have one PE class a week, last year we had two. Also, last year we used to go out for lunch after the third class, but this year it’s after the fourth class” (Ghena).*

### **3.2.4. Subjects Taught in Schools**

The interviewed individuals in the Tawjihi section, including five students from each of the fifth and sixth grades, confirmed that school subjects are harder in the MES than in America. In view of the fact that the school does not have AP levels for these grades, “American” students have to enroll in the Tawjihi section. Therefore, the main challenge for this group of students is the language itself. The reason behind this is that all classes are usually in Arabic, not including English, science and Math classes. Waseem from the fifth grade says that language is a problem he encounters. He believes that teachers should make it easier with “American” students, because of the language difference:

*“The main challenge is reading Arabi .. I think the school should be easier for us because everything is in Arabi” (Waseem ).*

The students expect teachers to help them with the language. For example, Amr from the sixth- grade asserts that he has expected that the situation at school will be better:

*“I thought the school would be easier and the teachers would help me more” (Amr).*

On the contrary, the AP students have had difficulties with the language. The ten students from the eighth and ninth grades agree that since all classes are in the English language, it is a good advantage for them. Adam has been a student for two years in this school. In (2021/2022) he was in the Tawjihi section in the sixth grade, but at the start of the school year (2022/2023) he was able to join the AP section in the seventh grade. Adam recalls:

*“Last year I was in the ordinary Tawjihi section, where most classes were in Arabic, but now I’m in the SAT section and it’s all English” (Adam).*

In relation to the number of subjects that AP students take, they have nine mandatory classes. The subjects include Social Science, Physics, Math, Chemistry, Biology, English Language, Islamic Studies, Arabic Language and Computer. The ten AP students are not satisfied with this big number of mandatory classes. Especially that in America they could have taken only four subjects each semester that they choose. Yasal is surprised by this fact of taking all these mandatory subjects in one year. She expected the system to be the same as in America. Meaning that starting from the ninth grade students will have a number of mandatory subjects to select like Chemistry and Biology, in addition to other elective subjects like PE, art and computer:

*“Last summer when I came to Palestine, I was very excited, I wanted to come back to America, but people told me the school is good and fun here. But when I came to the school it was harder than what I expected, because we took chemistry, biology and physics. In America we have electives, we can choose only one of these classes in addition to other classes like PE, computer and art” (Yasal).*

Laith was another excited teenager to come back to Palestine with his Palestinian parents. Adapting to the new school system is his only problem here, and he likes everything about living in Palestine. Laith also compares between the countries’ school systems in terms of number of subjects to study in high school and says:

*“I came here in 2021, before that I was crying to come back to Palestine, I thought it would be so nice. I still like it here, but school is the only problem here. First of all, in America in high school we take 4 subjects, and we get to choose what we want to take, but here we have 9 classes” (Laith ).*

Ali was a brilliant student in his class in America. He talks about the difficulty of the material they study in the MES school. For instance, the textbook material is two levels above their grade:

*“.. I’ve been in hard classes in America; however, here it was much harder. It is not our age level. We are in the ninth grade and we are taking things for the eleventh or even college level material. My cousin studies biology at college and my textbooks’ material is the same as hers” (Ali ).*

### **3.2.5. Enrollment at The MES School**

Four interviewees stated that they joined the MES school mainly because they did not find vacancies in other schools. Sima is one of these students who registered very late, so she had to register at this school:

*“This was the only school with spots left, because we signed up very late” (Sima ).*

One student did not care much about the school she registers in, as she argues::

*“ I had no choice and I didn’t really care..” (Yasmeen).*

The remaining 20 students were recommended by family and friends to join the MES school. For many reasons, first the school has the AP program, which is fully taught in English. Second, it provides Arabic lessons, where students learn how to read and write in Arabic. Third, the teaching methods and the school’s infrastructure are better than other schools.

*“I was forced to come here by my parents, because I was born and raised in America. We decided to join a school with English subjects (AP)” (Sileen).*

*“My parents made me join the school to learn Arabic and how to read Arabic” (Mahdi).*

*“It was my parents' decision because it's all English. Also, because it's a private school and they teach better according to my parents” (Ayham).*

### **3.3. Cultural Differences**

Three interviewees talked about the Palestinian perception towards returning migrants. They mention the idea of how Palestinians make fun of people who are different from them. According to Adam, returned migrant “Americans” are not treated respectfully in Palestine. On one hand, if he/she makes an Arabic linguistic mistake while communicating with others, Arabs will make fun of that. On the other hand, if an Arab makes a mistake in the English language, Americans or returned-migrants will not make fun of them. Overall, in any spoken language, everyone's' accent of speaking is different from others:

*“ You are American, you are a joke. If I spell a word incorrectly they make fun of it. But everyone has his own accent when speaking in English or Arabic so it's normal .. when Arabs who don't speak English make a mistake in the language, It's okay, aadi. But if an American made a mistake in Arabic, they would make fun of it” (Adam).*

Adam uses the Arabic term “aadi”, which means normal to ensure the idea that he would never mock anyone's way of speaking. Moreover, Lamar confesses that at the beginning of the school this year, which was her first year at the MES school, she was too shy to speak in Arabic. That was because other people would make fun of her:

*At first it was weird because I didn't know how to speak Arabic .. I'm too shy to speak it .. and I understand a little. But , people started making fun of me” ( Lamar).*

From Rayan's point of view, some teachers make fun of Americans and the way they speak. He also believes that some Arab students mock the “Americans” because they are jealous:

*“Some teachers would make fun of us because we are Americans .. I think some students think they are better, and others are jealous” (Rayan).*

All participants mentioned the idea that Palestinians consider returning migrants from America as full American citizens forgetting that they have Palestinian roots, as Nisreen asserts:

*“they think because I lived in America that I’m fully American, although I’ve been in Palestine many times” (Nisreen).*

Her twin sister also feels the same and says:

*“ .. it feels weird, I am not American. America is not my formal country, Palestine is my formal country . I just speak a different language of a different country” (Bisan).*

Four interviewees brought up a shared experience by all returned-migrants, which is when Arabs recognize this group of people just by looking at them or hearing them speaking with a native English accent. This usually happens in villages where all people know each other. All of the returned-migrants in the study are from villages near Ramallah city, so they share this experience. For example, when Nasir walks in the streets of Beirnabla - a village near Ramallah city - other kids recognize him and identify him as “American”. He continues to say that usually the kids take the negative side of coming from America and knowing how to speak fluent English. They ask him about the meanings of curse words in English. Notably, Nasir’s tone of voice, his facial expressions and words express that he has never liked being treated that way. The same student further talks about another incident when he was praying Taraweeh <sup>8</sup> in Ramadan with his father, he did not get close to other kids as he was not familiar with what they might do:

*“ I live in Beirnabala, when I walk in the street, kids come and ask shaklak amreki? and I feel annoyed. They start talking to me in English, and asking me about curse words in English. they see amreki as a bad thing .. In Ramadan, I went to pray*

---

<sup>8</sup> Taraweeh: التراويح A special prayer in Ramadan’s nights that Muslims perform in the mosque after breaking their fast.

*“taraweeh” with my dad. There were lots of kids but I did not stand or talk to them because I did not know them and did not know what they might do. So they asked me “shaklak Ameriki? I answered Yes”. (Nasir ).*

On the contrary, one girl participant describes confidently and proudly how lucky she feels to experience living in two countries and knowing two languages:

*“I see myself as a different, smart, bilingual individual” (Taleen).*

Five participants discussed how Arabs act differently with returning migrants from America. When Arabs recognize someone returning back from America, they start correlating him/her with the American culture, hairstyle and clothing. When Amr once went to the barber’s shop, the barber heard him speaking English so he presupposed that Amr wanted to have an American haircut; however, he wanted a usual simple haircut:

*“In the barber’s shop, when he heard me speaking English, he kept asking if I wanted to do one of the stupid American haircuts” (Amr ).*

Also, Leen mentions that Arabs think that people coming back from America are extremely wealthy:

*“One time, my mum and my little brother went out to buy some shoes and my brother kept talking in English. So, when the guy there found out he is an American, he asked him if he wanted to pay with a visa card. People here think that Americans pay with visas” (Leen ).*

*“The nature of being an Arab is something else”, according to Awni. He believes that school students at his school are totally different from his American classmates in America. He argues that they do certain “crazy” acts that he does not understand. Similarly, Nasir argues that “everyone in the class is a fighter. They always push each other. That way, they think they are men, but they are actually childish”. At the same token, Mirna compares the behavior of her classmates in America and in the MES school “In America, if the teacher goes out of class to bring something, the whole class would stay seated, but here is the complete opposite, they get so loud and noisy”. The twin sisters, Bisan and Nisreen were*

mentally prepared for these differences before they came here, they said” *we were scared when we decided to come to Palestine and my mum said people are mean over there, in America this is not allowed so you have to defend yourself*”. Hasan and Ali’s parents encouraged them to come back to Palestine by describing it as heaven “.. *before we came here, our parents told us good things about the life in Palestine, like the life there is nice, the school is a little bit hard but you’ll get used to it. It is just a nice place to live in, they made it like heaven. When we came here, it was not completely the opposite, but we wish it was better*”. Laith likes living in Palestine, his only problem is the school itself. “*I came here in 2021, before that I was crying to come to Palestine, I thought it would be so nice. I still like it here, but school is the only problem here*”.

#### **3.4. Improvements for The Future**

In the semi-structured interviews with the “American” students in the MES school, they shared certain themes for the challenges they encounter and the changes they wish to apply at school. First, out of the 25 interviewees from the MES school, the 10 “American” students enrolled in the Tawjihi section wish there is more help for them as they do not fully master reading and speaking Arabic. Those kids understand everything said in Arabic, but they want more help in writing and reading. Lamar says“ *I think the school should be easier for us because everything is in arabi*”. Leen also mentions that “*When I was in pre-school in America, the teachers used to take me and other students speaking other languages to help understand more*”. However, the 5 sixth graders agree that the Arabic language teacher always supports them. She prepares different tests for the “American” students containing simpler terms and questions to suit their levels.

Second, the 15 students in the AP section want education to be more fun and interactive. They do not prefer highlighting textbooks and self-study methods. In their chemistry class, they ask to go more often to the school's laboratory, for instance.

Third, all participating students compare the freedom they have in the MES school with the freedom in their American previous schools. Omar states "*In America, we walk between classes*", but they cannot do this here. And, "*In America, you go to the teacher's class*", according to Tala, in Palestine the teacher goes to the students in their own class.

Fourth, some students are used to wearing the uniform in their previous American schools, but the majority of them went to schools without the restriction of wearing uniforms. So, 19 students hope that the system in Palestine and in the MES school does not entail wearing a uniform. Bisan , for instance, does not like wearing the same outfit everyday "*In summer we cannot wash them every day so we wash them once a week, and I don't like going to school with dirty clothes, it feels weird. The teachers are lucky they get to wear whatever they want*".

The last change "American" students want to apply in the school is related to food. The cafeteria in the MES school - like all other schools - usually offers different kinds of snacks on a daily basis, in addition to freshly baked pastries every day. Instead of waiting for the extra amounts of baked pastries, "American" students suggest that the school ask students what kinds of food they want to be provided. That way everyone will get what they want without wasting any extra food.

### **3.5. The Decision to Leave School**

Four interviewees indicate that they will not attend this school next year for three different reasons. One of them is decided to leave by the school’s principal because of his uncontrolled behavior inside the classroom. As this student claims:

*“Next year I will not be here, because the principal Mr. Hasan does not want me here” (Laith ).*

The second student will leave the MES school to join an online school in California next year:

*“I like my experience here, and my parents will not go back to America soon, so I will be joining an online school in California. It is all online” ( Omar ).*

Ali and Adam’s parents will probably move back to the U.S. this summer. So, their two kids will automatically withdraw from the MES:

*“My dad has to go to America for his work. So we won’t be here next year”*  
(Ali ).

#### **4. Results of interviews with the teachers in the MES school**

I carried out five semi-structured interviews with five teachers. Each one of them teaches at least one grade out of the five selected grades from the fifth to the ninth. Some details about the interviewed teachers are listed in table 4 below:

**Table 4: Key participants of the MES teachers**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Years of working in the MES school</b>	<b>Grades</b>
Haneen Hussain	Math & Physics	4	AP section & Tawjihi section(7-9)

Noor Qasem	Biology, Chemistry	2	AP section (7-9)
Amani Ismael	English Language	5	AP section (7) & Tawjihi section(7-8)
Haya	English Language	1	Tawjihi section (6)
Amira Ismael	English Language	4	Tawjihi section (5)

#### 4.1. Adaptation to The New School System

All interviewees agree that (the) newly - returned “American” students find it difficult to integrate with the Palestinian educational system that is new for them. The teachers also confirm that the American and Palestinian school systems are distinct from each other in many aspects. The freedom that students have at the American school does not exist in their Palestinian counterparts. Not only in the MES school, but (the ) roles of Palestinian schools enforce that students cannot go out of class with no permission. One teacher comments:

*“ .. the main challenge is the different school system and rules from the American school system. When they first came here, they thought that anyone could go out during the class time with no permission” (Mrs. Haneen).*

The other four teachers argue that one of the main challenges facing returning migrants from the US is the surrounding environment. When individuals go out of a certain country to live in another, they are confronted with a new environment and lifestyle, while missing their old friends, relatives and school teachers. Ms. Ameera believes that *“These students find it difficult to adapt to the new situation because they miss their old relatives, friends, environment and school teachers...the lack of appropriate learning environment is one of the main problems that may arise in the new school”* . She links the environment with people and the learning system. Meanwhile, Ms. Noor connects the issue of the new environment with the “American” students’ ways of thinking. As these students come from another country and

culture, they try to show that using their words and actions, according to Ms. Noor. They moved from an open-minded culture to an Islamic strict society and school rules, as Ms. Noor says *“I see that these students face many challenges like the different culture and environment. They came from an open-minded environment to a strict school with Islamic vibes. So this is their biggest challenge here”*. This group of students had difficulty navigating the new environment around them and had problems communicating with others. But throughout time they became fully aware of this environment and acculturated themselves to its norms:

*“They deal with the environment around them. At the beginning they faced difficulty communicating with their classmates”* (Mrs. Amani).

*“.. being fully aware of the class environment around them, and the methods of teaching in English class”* (Ms. Haya).

#### **4.2. Curriculum and Teaching Strategies**

For all teachers, the subjects that “American” students take at the school in Palestine are different from what they are used to in America for many reasons. Firstly, teachers of the AP grades illustrate that the material they take is higher than their level. In other words, the material that AP students take, need more effort at explaining and digesting to grasp it fully. However, it will be useful for them when they get back to America, as Ms Noor talks about this she mentions the story of an “American’ girl who withdrew from the MES school in the second semester in (2022/2023) to go back to America. Ms. Noor says *“ The books they take have higher material than what they would be taking in America. This has an advantage for (them) when they go back to America, they will use it. One of my American students went back there in the middle of this year, she sent me messages to thank me for the courses she took here, they are now much easier for her when she takes them in America”*. The second difference is the teaching system. According to Mrs. Amani, students in America are used to

practical learning “*Here in Palestine education is totally different from the states. There, they depend on practical studying more than here*”. In America,” *it is more about expressing personalities by doing presentations, research papers and projects. But here, we provide a certain section from the book with a worksheet, they have to memorize it and have a test on it*”, said Ms. Noor. Four teachers agree that these two reasons caused the students’ grades to drop. One teacher believes that their averages depend on how much effort they put in, no matter what the system is. Mrs. Haneen argues that “*In fact, it varies across them. Good students didn’t feel any change in the quality of teaching they are getting in our school and their grades are average*”.

The fact that the school does not have an AP section for the fifth and sixth grades might make their experiences more challenging. Ms. Ameera illustrates that the adaptation process is more difficult for the younger students. She states:

*“ It can be a traumatic experience that affects children, their sense of well-being, reduces self-confidence and can be compounded further by instances of racism and bullying”* ( Ms. Ameera).

Academically, Ms. Haya - as an English language teacher - thinks that the returning-migrant students in the Tawjihi section usually do not get the maximum advantage of education. This is because the kids are already familiar with the content of the books. Also, the textbooks in the American schools were different and included more literature and critical thinking content:

*“ .. now they are taking language as a second language, which differs from taking literature and critical thinking lessons”* (Ms. Haya).

### **4.3. Social Interaction and Relationship with Peers**

One teacher notes that the returning-migrant students are aware of the cultural environment around them that is different from the American one. They realize the fact that they have to act in a different way in Palestine generally and inside the school particularly. This group of students “ .. are engaging well in the school, from students to teachers. But I am not pretty sure that sometimes they detach themselves from the surroundings just to take a breath and remember that they are now in Palestine and they need to act in a certain way”,said Ms. Haya. As a teacher for the sixth grade, Ms. Haya continues to say that her students do not seem to experience a cultural shock as they are socially active by making friendships with teachers and other Arab students, besides their improving Arabic speaking skills:

*“They have many friends, they share thoughts, ideas and even feelings. They speak better Arabic now. So, I guess their comprehension of things around them is improving. I hope they keep up like that and to have that awkward culture shock when they are older, I do love them”* (Ms. Haya).

This meets Mrs. Amani’s thoughts about the students’ increasing confidence and social relations that developed during their first year at school:

*“Now since we’re at the end of the year, the students got used to everything. They even know how to communicate in Arabic. They have more confidence now”* (Mrs. Amani).

On the contrary, Ms. Ameera argues that the younger generation in the fifth grade find it hard to adapt to a new culture and system. “*The efforts of these children to express themselves with words that can be extremely limited while trying to communicate also cause a limitation of expression and meaning*” according to Ms. Ameera. She further believes that the difficulty of adaptation to the new system is due to the complex nature of culture that contains many elements, such as the language, traditions and habits that someone is accustomed to. Speaking about this issue she says, “*Culture by its nature contains a wide variety of elements and colors. People tend to maintain the folkway, customs and traditions they have acquired in advance. According to this, it is extremely difficult for immigrant students to easily adapt*

*to an environment where a different language is spoken and where there are different traditions and habits”.*

The other two teachers of the upper grades revealed that the students in the seventh, eighth and ninth grades found it difficult at first to merge and interact with Arab students. However, within the first month of the school year, they became friends with all students in their classes. As Ms. Noor confirms, “ *..at first, this group of students had problems in interacting with other Arab students, but within one month they became more social. They are friends now with their Arab classmates*”. The same teacher connects the “America” students’ interaction and their Arab peers with bullying. The fact that Arab students sometimes bully people who are different from them makes “American” students hesitate talking to students who are not in their class. According to Ms. Haneen, “ *.. outside the classroom they still stand in small circles separating themselves from others. I think this is because Arabs are bullies so Americans try to avoid that*”.

#### **4.4. Teachers’ Strategies for Students’ Involvement**

The main challenges that encounter returning-migrant students are mostly academic and cultural. The school teachers have an integral part in reducing these obstacles and minimizing them to make it a successful experience. One teacher did not share her experience of engaging students, while the four interviewees of teachers working in the MES appear to share the same techniques to facilitate “American” students’ engagement within the school’s environment. Ensuring an inclusive atmosphere of all students in the classroom, ultimately leads to academic success. As a result, both issues are considered and treated wisely in many ways. First, treating students as friends and only as learners. All teachers confirmed that they form friendship bonds with their students. For instance, Ms. Noor narrates that her students are close to her that they ask for her advice about problems they encounter:

*“ They now come to my office, they trust me, they talk to me about problems they encounter and ask for advice” (Ms. Noor).*

Second, the creation of a friendly environment inside the classroom fosters the students’ adaptation to the new system and strengthens their relations with other students. To do this, Ms. Haya engages this group of students in the activities during her English language class by forming groups and making them the leaders. That way, it will be easier for them to connect with their peers, as she believes:

*“ I engage them in the classroom, for example to put students in groups and make them be the leaders of the groups to make it easier for them to make friends with all other students” (Haya).*

Third, applying the previously mentioned techniques leads to the building of trustful relationships. It is important for the teachers to motivate students to narrate their stories about migration and movement from America to Palestine. Ms. Ameera says, *“I invite students to share their stories of movement and migration with each other to create a shared understanding and to listen to them. We have to be aware of the specific needs of every child in our class”*. When the teacher spots the light on a student, that boosts his/her confidence. Mrs. Haneen tends to ask returning-migrant students about their life in America to make their voices more heard by everyone in the class:

*“Giving them attention. For me I talk with them about America, school and about life in general”*. (Mrs. Haneen).

Fourth, encouraging students to cooperate and work with their classmates to get the maximum benefit of the class. By doing this, “American” and Arab students know more about each other’s learning styles and eventually it creates a harmonized atmosphere among students. Ms. Ameera says: *“We can encourage students to collaborate and cooperate with their classmates. As our students start experiencing the benefits of being part of a classroom community, they are more likely to participate and will become more involved in learning the course content”*.

## 5. Results of interviews with the parents of participating students

Collecting data from the students' parents is an enriching source of information. They give information about the main reasons for migrating to the States and coming back, in addition to their point of views about their kids' experiences of returning to Palestine. However, talking to the parents was not an easy task to complete. While most students returned to Palestine with their mothers, their fathers still live and work in the US. As a result, not all parents were not cooperative enough to participate either due to their busy schedules or their lack of interest. Consequently, five mothers were interviewed via WhatsApp and Messenger phone calls.

Results of the interviews are presented in Table 5 below:

**Table 5: Key participants of the students' parents**

Parent	Name	Number of kids in the MES school	Year of returning from the US	Years of enrollment in the MES
Mother	Mariam	5	2022	1 year
Mother	Samaher	2	2022	1 year
Mother	Rana	3	2022	1 year
Mother	Amal	2	2021	2 years
Mother	Samar	1	2021	2 years

The five interviewees share similar answers that emerge into general themes. The major motive that led many Palestinian families to migrate to the US were financial purposes, such as building a business and having a job over there. According to Samaher, *“The main reason that encouraged me and my husband to immigrate to America was the economic condition. We tried to build a business in Palestine, but it was not successful. So, we decided to move to*

*the US to start our business there*". This harmonizes with all other answers like when Rana says "we went to the US when the kids were still young because my husband works there".

Nevertheless, as the kids grew older, they started to acknowledge their surroundings and get influenced by them, which was not approved by the parents. Mariam claimed that "Their dad and I started noticing that our kids are being Americanized and we did not want that. Our girls started questioning why we should cover our hair and why we cannot go out whenever we want, for example. They have even registered in an Islamic school. But, the American cultural surroundings were stronger than all of this. That was when their dad and I decided that it was the time to come back here". As part of the culture, the American school curriculum has recently normalized issues that are considered taboos in other cultures. "The American curriculum in public schools gives freedom to lesbian, queer, transgender, gay and bisexual students. They even have school celebrations for these groups" (Amal). In order to avoid this effect, the parents decide that their children need to live within the Palestinian culture. "When the kids were older, we wanted to come back to Palestine. We wanted to educate them about religion, traditions and habits. The American lifestyle is different from the Palestinian one. So, we moved back here to make them live with Palestinians and interact with them and learn about the culture" (Rana).

One of their main goals for returning to Palestine is to make the kids more fluent speakers of the Arabic language, as they did not know reading and speaking Arabic although their parents have always talked to them in Arabic. As a result, choosing a good school was an important issue. Samar expresses that they wanted a school that has both the Tawjihi and AP sections. Therefore, they have chosen the MES school to be the school where their kids will get education. "When we came back here, we wanted to register the kids in a school that teaches

*in Arabic and English. So, we registered in the MES school” (Samar). All other mothers have positive feedback on their kids’ experience at the school:*

*“Returning to Palestine and joining the MES school were good experiences. The girls found it hard to study the Palestinian curriculum, but they integrated really fast with the system and made many friends” (Samaher).*

*“I think my kid’s Arabic speaking skills are improving” (Mariam).*

*“The school was amazing. My kids all enjoyed going to this school. Their Arabic speaking and writing skills have improved during the year they spent there. I like the school and the teachers are very nice and cooperative” (Rana).*

*“During the past two years Mahdi’s Arabic speaking skills and integrating with other Arabs have developed significantly” (Samar).*

The parents have different techniques to support and facilitate their kids’ adjustment to the Palestinian cultural and educational environment. Two interviewees talk about educating the kids about the different lifestyle they will live in Palestine. Amal and Samaher have plainly explained to their kids prior to returning that they will experience things differently here and how they should behave in certain contexts. Samar and Rana assert that transferring between two countries is not an easy process. However, they say that it was important for them to raise the kids as bicultural individuals who balance two identities and are proud of both of them. So, *“they come back and they can experience it all by themselves”* as Mariam states.

## **6. Results of the focus groups’ discussion**

From the 25 participating students in the study, I have formed two focus groups. The first group was made of five male students while the second one consisted of another five female students from different grades. Three major themes emerged from the groups’ discussion and answers to the interview questions ( Available in Appendix B of this thesis)..

### **6.1. Older Students Need Longer Time to Adapt**

The ten boys and girls agree that although they share the same experience of returning to Palestine from America, the time they spend there, affects their adaptation and integration within the new school system. The more years studied in American schools, makes it harder to get used to the other different systems. In general, transferring between different school systems is challenging for students due to the distinct learning styles, curriculum, uniform roles and cultural symbols. For example, Tala says that relying on self-study in Palestine is a hard task that she is trying to adapt:

*“ .. because we stayed in America until middle school. Fitting in here took me a lot of time, especially that we depend on self-study” (Tala).*

## **6.2. Princess Treatment of Girls**

The two groups of boys and girls agree that the integration process in the school is different, because teachers are more strict with boys. They both believe that teachers are easier with the girls in terms of freedom of movement, punishments and coming late for class. For example, Ali says:

*“Teachers are sexiest and I feel bad about it. In PE classes, the teacher always lets the boys play, while the girls are chatting with the teacher or watching us playing .. the school treats the girls here better than America. They would not get this princess treatment in America” (Ali).*

While talking about how the boys are treated, Laith gives another example:

*“If one of the boys is late to class, he will be kicked out of class. but if it is a girl the teacher would simply say it's ok habibty” (Laith).*

## **6.3. Girls Through the Lens of Palestinian Culture**

The interviewed girls agree that certain behaviors that are normal in the American culture may not confront the Palestinian one. Their movement between the two cultures makes

individuals more aware of the cultural differences and norms. They get the chance to experience and know what is right and wrong in each and every culture they live in. Throughout the discussion, the girls recall how the Palestinian and Arab culture require girls to behave in certain manners to meet societal expectations. According to the girls,

*“ In America, you can walk down the street and do whatever you want and you can speak normally. But here, you have to whisper in each other’s’ ear”.*

They also bring up the issue of gossiping in the Palestinian community.

*“Here, you have to be careful about everything you say or do, because it is going to be reported back to your parents and it is annoying”*

## **Chapter Five**

### **Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations**

#### **1. Introduction**

This chapter presents detailed discussion of the results of this qualitative study. In particular, the chapter seeks to answer the questions of the study as well as providing an informative conclusion that leads to offering some relevant recommendations.

#### **2. Discussion**

The research results bring out into open that the young generations are mindful of the experiences of international migration and return migration movements. They are aware that each of the two processes has its own opportunities and challenges. The main indicator of the results of the study is that the participants in the research are second-generation returning migrants from the United States to Palestine, who lived the experience by themselves. In addition to the fact that all participating students in the study, who are between 11 and 15 years old, are mature enough and capable of reflecting on their experiences of transferring between the two countries which answering the interview questions and their social behavior. Moreover, most of the participants have been in Palestinian schools since almost a year, which helps at evaluating their experiences. Consequently, the study's results prove that returning migrants face many difficulties during their acculturation process in the Palestinian schools. These difficulties mostly relate to the differences in language, cultural symbols and the massively distinct school systems in America and Palestine. This study meets the previous literature in the sense that the migrant Palestinian parental generation resists their kids' adaptation to the American norms. Therefore, when kids are at a certain age and

become aware of the surrounding cultural norms, parents decide to go back to their homeland in Palestine. Notably, the Palestinian parents are keen to raise their children according to the Islamic religion, Arab culture and Palestinian traditions. Moreover, the results of this study add to the pool of research the idea that returning migrant school students from America do not consider themselves as different from their Arab peers. They consider themselves similar because they are raised as Palestinians, even though they lived in a foreign country. According to the acculturation theory, they may integrate, assimilate, separate or marginalize themselves from the dominant surrounding culture. The results reveal that they tend to integrate with the Palestinian culture by keeping elements from American culture, such as their English language proficiency and dress style. They also assimilate with the Palestinian school system by following its rules that are different from their previous American one.

The Palestinian uprising stands on the attachment to the land, embracing culture, abiding to religion and keeping family connections. So, when parents decide to move to Palestine, they ensure that all these values are deeply rooted in their children's minds. This creates bicultural and bilingual individuals who embrace values from their ancestral and hosting countries, because the participating students in the study lived most of their lives in the American culture. However, hearing about the Palestinian culture and coming for short visits to Palestine are insufficient to educate them about the common cultural norms, signs and symbols. As a result, they are expected to encounter a number of challenges while transferring between the two countries and attending schools with totally different systems that they have to follow. The clash between the two Palestinian and American cultures would cause confusion for them. Therefore, those individuals need to be taken care of to minimize the potential problems they may encounter.

## **2.1. The Challenges That Returning Migrants from The United States Encounter in Palestinian Schools**

According to the results of the study, there are many challenges that encounter returning migrant students from America in the Palestinian schools.

Firstly, when the “American” participating students in the study were asked about the challenges they encounter in the school, they always started with the language barriers. For those kids, language constituted a major obstacle in their integration process with the other Arabic-speaking students. It is worth mentioning here that one of the main reasons for the enrollment of these students in the MES school was because their parents have planned to improve their Arabic speaking skills by interacting with other Arab students. This was neither easy to do in America nor in other Palestinian private schools that provided only the AP section, where English is the main instruction language. “American” students appeared to understand everything said in Arabic ;however, they seemed to lack the confidence to express themselves and communicate using the Arabic language. This was caused by two main reasons, the first was the limited vocabulary storage they had. The second reason -as they expressed- was due to the other Palestinians who would make fun and mock their Arabic accents. Therefore, language was considered the first challenge for them. Nevertheless, I believe that with more time spent at the school, and with more interaction with Arabic speakers, the language barriers will be erased, allowing more intercultural communication and interaction to occur. This was proved by many students who were able to improve their abilities of speaking Arabic by the end of the school year, after spending time with Arabic speakers and reading Arabic books. The Arabic speaking skills improved for the younger students in the Tawjihi section because their classmates are native Arabic speakers and Arabic is the language of instruction in most classes. Meanwhile, the students in the AP

section were all English speakers, which did not allow much progress in their learning of Arabic. In fact, learning a new language requires social contexts, in which interaction with other partners fosters the learning process, as indicated by Verga & Kotz (2013).

Secondly, the distinct learning styles in the Palestinian and American schools constituted another problem for newly-returned migrants. In America, education at schools is more practical than Palestine. According to the students, it involves a more interactive and fun atmosphere like more frequent visits to the laboratory, class discussions, presentations and projects. However, the Palestinian system of schooling depends on more memorizing, more annual tests, reading and highlighting the material. It is teacher-centered instead of being student-centered. The interviewed teachers agreed that the Palestinian and American schooling systems are different and how challenging that could be for transferring students between them. But, I believe that the recent years have witnessed more flexibility in the Palestinian education at schools, involving presentations, projects and more interactive strategies of learning. I assume that adaptation of this group of students to the new system might be challenging at first, but with more time spent in the school, hard work and consistency, students get used to it and achieve better results. Also, as a working teacher for four years, I believe that the schooling system in Palestine is improving technologically and it is paving its way to create more student-centered classes. For example, the Modern English School (MES) is equipped with the latest technologies needed for better quality of learning, including smart boards, science labs, a computer lab, projectors and sound systems in each class of the school. All these resources create a sense of continuity for students who return from America and are familiar with technology-rich educational environments.

Thirdly, the size of school and number of students registered at the school were found to be another challenge for returned migrants from America. Over there, they have elementary

schools, middle schools and high schools, separating each level at a different institution. In Palestine, we have the elementary school and high school, but sometimes all levels are gathered in one big school like the MES school. The elementary one is separated from the middle and high levels. It has a different administration, different entrance and exit and a separate playground. Students in the middle and high school share the same building, playground, computer lab, science lab and the cafeteria. This caused problems for both Arab and “American” students, such as bullying and over crowdedness in the cafeteria during the lunch break. According to the school’s principal, the total number of students during the school year (2022/2023) was around 1150, including the elementary, middle and high levels. Next year, this number is expected to increase as more students will register and a new class will be opened in the AP section. The principal added that each class had a maximum number of 25 students in the Tawjihi section classes, and 20 students in AP classes. Students in the middle and high schools shared the same playground and cafeteria, but they had two separate lunch breaks. The crowdedness would occur in the morning before the start of classes and when the students leave at the end of school day.

Fourthly, the next challenge was related to time, school subjects and freedom of movement. The newly returned migrant students were surprised by the fact that all school classes in Palestine are mandatory. For instance, the ninth graders in the AP section in Palestine take nine mandatory subjects. Nevertheless, in America and after the ninth grade, they take four subjects each semester. So, attending nine mandatory subjects and seven classes in the same classroom each day at school was a great shift for the returned migrants. These students are used to walking between classes and going to the teachers’ class instead of the teacher coming to the class, as in Palestine. Here, students go out of class either to go to the bathroom or for lunch break. So, they did not have the same freedom of movement inside the school as it was in their American schools. In the MES school, the seven classes start at 8

a.m. and finish at 2:50 p.m. Given that all participating students in the study came from villages outside Ramallah city, arriving at school on time was not easy. Some students took 45 minutes each day to arrive at school and go home. On one hand, going to school from nearby villages everyday needs time and effort. Students need every hour either to relax or to prepare for next day's homework and tests. On the other hand, getting a good quality education always requires working hard to achieve it. The remarkable staff of teachers working in the MES and the quality of education are worthy of all the efforts they do. The transition between two totally different systems is not a simple process, and adapting to the new system might be hard at first, but with time it becomes easier.

The fifth challenge is subordinated to the cultural variations between the returned migrants from America and Palestinians inside school and outside. The American and Palestinian cultures are distinct in many ways, each has its own symbols, signs and meanings. This may cause misunderstanding and miscommunication if not properly interpreted. For kids who were raised in America and not familiar with the Arab culture, interpreting it might be challenging as they are not familiar with the cultural codes. First, returning migrants love everything about the Palestinian lifestyle, narratives, culture, traditions, food and historical places. The Palestinian parental generation has always been keen to implement the love of the land in their kids' mentality and raise them according to the Palestinian culture. Nevertheless, learning about a specific culture without living in it is inadequate. Therefore, the parents take the decision of returning to their native country in order to give their kids the chance to live within the Palestinian culture to experience its habits, costumes and traditions. Furthermore, to practice speaking the Arabic language, that way, their acculturation process to the Palestinian culture will be smooth and successful. Surprisingly, "American" kids neither like being identified as "Americans" nor being correlated with the American culture, clothing style or music. For them, speaking the American English accent does not make them

American people. Still, they refer to themselves as full Palestinians who lived in a different country and their movement between the two cultures and the contact that occurs between them. As long as there are intercultural interactions between people from different cultural backgrounds, the acculturation process will continue (Berry, 2005). This mostly entails learning each other's food preferences, language and social interactions. Therefore, "American" migrants are bicultural individuals, who carry characteristics from their hostland and homeland that cannot be neglected.

In Palestine, returned migrants are positioned as "Americans", which involves many cultural differences such as language and style. While Palestinians compare life in the United States and its privileges like wealth and peace with life in Palestine under occupation, they are not aware that this does not make them less patriotic to their homeland. The participating students in the study desire to get involved into the Palestinian community and not as "the other". This leads to the second cultural issue that is respect for individual differences. The returning migrants believe that they should be treated with more respect from their Arab peers, as they sometimes mock how they speak or dress. Third, some cultural aspects and terms are completely vague for these kids, such as "al jaish"<sup>9</sup>, that became part of the Palestinian national narrative and culture. As an occupied land, newcomers from outside of Palestine assume the Israeli military spread in the streets are Palestinian police not knowing that they are a threatening danger for them. The short annual visits to Palestine during summer vacations are insufficient to fully equip them with all cultural terms, one needs to live for a certain period of time in culture to know everything about it.

The discussion between boys and girls to assess whether there are gender differences in their integration and assimilation processes in Palestine came out with an interesting result.

---

<sup>9</sup> "Al Jaish" الجيش: An Arabic word referring to the Israeli military forces that usually exist in the streets of Palestine, threatening Palestinian citizens.

Spending a longer time in America makes it harder to adapt and integrate with a new system and culture. So, the younger generation finds it easier to integrate with the new surroundings more than the older generation, regardless of their gender. This means that the younger generation's assimilation process by giving up some of the previous cultural habits and their adaptation to the new one takes less time and effort. I argue that is because the longer time returning school students spend in any host country, makes their adaptation to its culture and school system deep and strong. Students who came back from America and lived there for an extended period of time, have become familiar with the school system there. So, when they come back to their country of origin in Palestine, they need an adjustment period. In addition to assimilating to the Palestinian educational system, language proficiency plays a significant role in their transition experience. Many returning migrants have high levels of English proficiency, therefore, those who enroll in the Tawjihi section in Palestinian schools, might have communication difficulties since Arabic is the primary language of instruction. For that reason, most parents take the decision to come back to Palestine, in order to improve their children's Arabic language communication skills.

Nonetheless, the participating students in the study believe that the societal judgments and the cultural guidelines are strict on girls. That includes rules about modesty, dress code, gender roles and authority, in addition to emphasis on education, because the Palestinian culture values academic achievement for males and females. At the same time, the students argued that inside school, teachers are more tolerant with girls and do not punish them for not abiding by the rules. For them, even though the school rules do not discriminate between the two genders, they believe that teachers treat girls in a more tolerable manner than boys. It is important to note, regardless of gender, Palestinian schools have unique roles and regulations that govern students' behavior, attendance, disciplinary actions and academic achievement. All students are expected to adhere to these guidelines to create a welcoming and inclusive

environment for everyone. As a teacher, I disagree with the students' views about the discriminatory treatment between males and females at school. The rules and punishments are the same for everyone regardless of their gender. However, boys usually get more negative attention than girls as they are "inclined to break rules" ( Cullingford,1988, p.8).

## **2.2. Returning Migrants and Palestinian Schools Meeting Together**

The results of this study on 25 different students who returned back to Palestine from the United States and enrolled in the Palestinian schools showed that they face many challenges. These challenges are generally due to living in different countries, systems and cultures. While it is necessary for this group of students to assimilate with the local educational system, it is equally important to understand their unique needs as returnees and to acknowledge any changes that could promote their transition. So, the school administration and the agency of students have to collaborate to achieve their effective integration and adaptation.

Systems are made of rules that are created to be followed. Each country's schooling system has its own unique rules and restrictions that all students have to abide by them. When students with Palestinian origins come from other countries, there are various factors that affect the degree of their commitment to the system. The study shows that this would include their previous educational experience, the time they spend outside Palestine, and their Arabic language proficiency. In this study, younger students are found to be faster in their Arabic language learning process and more flexible in assimilating to the new system. On the other hand, older students ,who had spent a greater portion of their education in American schools, find it harder to catch up with the system and need extra support, regardless of their gender. Efforts should be made by the students themselves and the school administration to ensure their smooth integration and assimilation. Recently returned migrants appear to follow the

standard rules that are related to the school's punctuality, classes and examination. In the lens of the acculturation theory, they assimilate with the new system by giving up what they are used to in their previous American schools. The participants in the study gradually abandon the old rules they are used to, and get more acquainted with the new rules in Palestinian schools. This may include rules about uniform, movement between classes, school subject choices and discipline. Palestinian schools are more restricted in these rules compared to its American counterparts.

Meanwhile, this group of students challenge common cultural terms, concepts and habits. They put some effort into understanding the common cultural norms inside school and outside to integrate with it and avoid any misinterpretations or misunderstandings. For example, , the students need to earn the nature of relationship between teachers, students and the kind of food the Arab students bring to school and rules about using their phones during school time.

At the same time, schools ought to provide a balanced approach that ensures a harmonized mixture between the existing Palestinian schools' system and the returning migrants' needs. After looking into schools' admission documents for students from other foreign educational systems published by the Palestinian Ministry of Education (Available in Appendix D), it was found that they only illustrated the procedures of accepting returning students. The documents did not address the returnees' psychological or educational needs. The Ministry of Education in any country ought to develop initiatives and policies that ensure the assimilation and integration of returning students from varying educational systems.

The participants in the study proposed a few changes to be applied in the Palestinian schools. First, providing language support classes. The MES school provides special Arabic language lessons for native English speakers. Some students have difficulty in reading Arabic words,

while others little know how to properly form sentences. So, these lessons, which are taught by Arabic language teachers in the school, are about the Alphabets, grammar, reading and writing. Teachers teach each skill depending on the students' language proficiency. Second, the returned migrant students ask for less tests in a semester and a more interactive and fun environment of learning. Generally, the Palestinian education is shifting from a teacher-centered into student-centered approach, in which students are given the lead of the class, in addition to preparing presentations, interactive educational games and projects. At the same token, the grading system is mostly based on traditional or formal evaluation. In the Palestinian schools, the total average of each student depends mainly on tests. All subjects in Palestinian schools should have a daily, midterm, final test and pop quizzes, which tends to be exhausting for the teacher and the student.

Third, returned migrants of school students from America to Palestine are nostalgic for the freedom they had there. The American school system varies across the Palestinian one in many ways, like the movement between classes. Here, students take the first three or four classes -each lasts for 45 minutes - with no breaks between them. For students who are not used to this system, sitting on the same chair in the same class might be exhausting.

Fourth, wearing the same uniform everyday was another problem for some students, so they wished they could wear anything to school. Returned students from the States felt that the system here is so strict in many things, such as the uniform, movement, tests and freedom of using their mobile phones. The fact that they ask for these rules to be changed, is something that all kids wish to be available. The school system for each country reflects its degree of openness. Arab cultures are more conservative, so that school rules are more restrictive to students. Adapting these students to the system might be challenging at first, so I believe that schools should offer orientation sessions at the beginning of the year to familiarize the new

students with the rules. Fifth, in order to keep food in the school's cafeteria from spoiling or being wasted, the students suggest that they should be asked about what they want to eat the next day. Some students were used to this in their old schools in America and wanted to apply it here.

Overall, the students have followed the Palestinian school rules, while asking for some changes and improvements to be made. These changes that "American" students ask for function as an attempt to merge the Palestinian and American systems together. When it comes to the Palestinian culture, they generally seem to like it with all its attributes and try to understand it to avoid misinterpretations. Integrating with a culture requires someone to live with its community, to experience its foods and drinks, rituals, celebrations, traditions and costumes. The Palestinian culture has a long history that is rich in priceless meanings for Palestinians. Therefore, the parental generation of Palestinian migrants in all parts of the world never give up their original roots and educate their kids about them. This study meets the previous literature in this sense Meaning that the main reason for families returning to Palestine is to protect their children from the American norms by giving them the opportunity to live and experience the Palestinian culture by themselves. Communicating and socializing with kids at school and relatives facilitates their integration with the culture. When the returning migrants experience this, they begin to navigate their identities and well-being between the hostland and homeland.

### **2.3. The Terminology of The MES school teachers to Facilitate Returning Migrants' Integration**

Teachers play an important role in providing a welcoming, supportive and inclusive atmosphere for returned migrant students from other countries. Students need to feel that they are valued and empowered to achieve their educational goals. Teachers create a friendly

environment inside the classroom and outside to strengthen the relationships between all students. Keeping close relationships with the teacher is also a good thing, since students can talk freely about how they feel and ask for advice to overcome any challenges they may face. Friendly environment is not enough to make “American” students feel as part of the whole group. So, teachers also tend to spot light on this group of students and introduce the whole class to concepts like “cultural exchange” and “cross-cultural diversity”. Doing so, they will have the chance to narrate their experience of transferring between two different countries and experiencing two various cultures. Applying this inside the classroom makes them more confident and empowered, because confidence is the key to success. Indeed, teachers provide transition support for returned migrants through giving them the help and assistance they need to smoothly assimilate and integrate with the system. It has to be illustrated here that these efforts done by teachers are personal initiatives since the Ministry of Education does not have official procedures to deal with this particular group of students. From my experience, having returned migrants in the class is an advantage for the student himself/herself and for his/her peers. In English classes, these students’ are more heard and they can read terms that other Arab students cannot. They can help the teacher review new concepts that may not be familiar to their classmates. Therefore, the best strategy a teacher can do is to make these students as part of the whole group to validate their confidence and reduce any potential challenges.

### **3. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study has provided insights into the multifaceted challenges that second-generation returning migrants from the US encounter as they navigate the Palestinian school landscape. The study has illuminated the complex dynamics of transferring between two different countries in terms of assimilation to school systems, integration with cultural norms,

identity development and language proficiency. It is evident that these students face a number of hurdles, such as, acculturation dilemmas, language barriers, cultural differences and different teaching styles. Therefore, there is a need for specialized assistance in filling the gaps between their previous American experience and the Palestinian school educational system.

It is important to acknowledge that the returnees have a variety of adaptation tactics to these difficulties. In general, they tend to assimilate into the school system in discipline, attendance and examination criteria by separating what they are used to in American schools and adjusting to the new Palestinian ones. Culturally, they integrate with the surrounding dominant culture by keeping a balance between their American and Palestinian identities. This comes as a result of the mixture between the American cultural attributes, such as English language proficiency and dress style with the Palestinian culture and lifestyle. These acculturation techniques of adaptation take some time to be fully achieved, Berry (2005). Therefore, the students showed more interaction and involvement with their cultural and educational environments at the end of the school year, supported by their parents and teachers.

From a policy perspective, the results of the study underscore the value of tailored support and assistance mechanisms in Palestinian schools. Cultural awareness and sensitivity programs, Arabic language supporting training and mentorship initiatives can play a pivotal role in easing newly returning migrants' integration process. There is an urge that all stakeholders from the students' families to the Ministry of Education including teachers and Arabic speaking students work together to make the returnees' experience a successful one.

The challenges that second-generation returning migrants face in Palestinian schools are not insurmountable. These students can be equipped to overcome them and contribute

significantly to the Palestinian society. The educational system's inclusion of people from diverse cultural backgrounds strengthens the tapestry of the Palestinian society and adheres to its values of equity and inclusivity. As we go forward, let us continue to work toward a learning environment that embraces and nurtures all students regardless of their backgrounds.

#### **4. Recommendations**

The following recommendations are not listed in order to stop the challenges that face returning migrants from any part of the world to Palestine. It is likely that the returning school students and adults will always encounter some difficulties while transferring between countries and trying to fit in new cultures, systems and lifestyles. These suggestions focus on recommending more future research, as there is an urge to fill the gap of knowledge about the experience of returning migrants to Palestine.

There are several areas in the Palestinian return migration field of research that require more exploration and investigation. First, it would be valuable to learn more about the experiences and perspectives of the second generation by conducting ethnographic research or in-depth qualitative research with larger samples of students and schools. Second, it is crucial to look into how different stakeholders such as parents, teachers and policy makers can support the integration of returning migrants from other countries to Palestine. Understanding their practices and perceptions helps at ensuring the successful cultural transition and enhancing the educational achievement of these students. Third, beyond the immediate school experiences of returning migrants, longitudinal studies that track the educational attainment, career paths and these individuals' contributions to the society, assess the long-term influence of return migration on individuals and the broader Palestinian community. Lastly, investigating the possible role of technology, online platforms and digital resources is an area that merits further attention. Exploring the ways technology can bridge educational gaps,

promote cross-cultural interaction and support language learning may lead to creative solutions that improve these kids' educational experiences.

## References

- Abu El-Haj, T. R. (2007). " I was born here, but my home, it's not here": Educating for democratic citizenship in an era of transnational migration and global conflict. *Harvard Educational Review*, 77(3), 285-316.
- Almarhabi, M. (2020). *Cultural Trauma and the Formation of Palestinian National Identity in Palestinian-American Writing* (Doctoral dissertation, Kent State University).
- Baklashova, T. A., & Kazakov, A. V. (2016). Challenges of International Students' Adjustment to a Higher Education Institution. *International Journal of Environmental and Science Education*, 11(8), 1821-1832.
- Bashir, M., Afzal, M. T., & Azeem, M. (2008). Reliability and validity of qualitative and operational research paradigm. *Pakistan journal of statistics and operation research*, 35-45.
- Berry, J. W. (1992). Acculturation and adaptation in a new society. *International migration*, 30, 69-69.
- Berry, J. W. (2005). Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. *International journal of intercultural relations*, 29(6), 697-712.
- Bovenkerk, F. (2012). *The sociology of return migration: A bibliographic essay (Vol.20)*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Brettell, C. B. and Hollifield, J. F. (2014) *Migration Theory: Talking across Disciplines*. London: Routledge.
- Brocket, T. (2020). From “in-betweenness” to “positioned belongings”: Second-generation Palestinian-Americans negotiate the tensions of assimilation and transnationalism. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 43(16), 135-154.
- Cassarino, J. P. (2004). Theorising return migration: The conceptual approach to return migrants revisited. *International Journal on Multicultural Societies*, 6(2), 253-279.
- Chopard, K., & Przybylski, R. (2021). *Methods Brief: Case Studies*. Justice Research and Statistics Association.

- Christison, K. (1989). The American experience: Palestinians in the US. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 18(4), 18-36
- Cowie, N. (2009). Observation. *Qualitative research in applied linguistics: A practical introduction*, 165-181.
- Cullingford, C. (1988). School rules and children's attitudes to discipline. *Educational Research*, 30(1), 3-8.
- Davies, M. (2016). A case study of parent, teacher and student attitudes towards disability and peer social interactions in a Year 2 primary school classroom. *US Library*.
- Dingle, H., & Drake, V. A. (2007). What is migration?. *Bioscience*, 57(2), 113-121.
- Erakat, N. (2020). Geographies of intimacy: Contemporary renewals of Black–Palestinian solidarity. *American Quarterly*, 72(2), 471-496.
- Erasmus+. (2019). *Transforming Assessment Practices in Large Enrollment First Year Education/TAP Palestine*. TAP project Palestine.
- Erdal, B.M. (2014). This is My Home. *Springer Open. CMS 2*, 361–383.
- Ethicist, P. (2015). Simplifying the complexity of confidentiality in research. *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics*, 10(1), 100-102.
- Freeman, T. (2006). ‘Best practice in focus group research: making sense of different views. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 56(5), 491-497.
- Gajjar, D. (2013). Ethical consideration in research. *Education*, 2(7), 8-15.
- Ketefian, S. (2015). Ethical considerations in research. Focus on vulnerable groups. *Investigación y Educación en enfermería*, 33(1), 164-172.
- Gibson, G., Timlin, A., Curran, S., & Wattis, J. (2004). The scope for qualitative methods in research and clinical trials in dementia. *Age and aging*, 33(4), 422-426.
- Gold, R. L. (1958). Roles in sociological field observations. *Social Forces*, 36(3), 217–223
- Gummesson, E. (1988). *Qualitative methods in management research*. Lund, Norway: Studentlitteratur, Chartwell-Bratt.

- Hammer, J. (2005). *Palestinians Born in Exile: Diaspora and The Search For A Homeland*. (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). University of Texas Press.
- Hanafi, S. (2006). Palestinian return migration: Lessons from the international refugee regime. In *Palestinian Refugee Repatriation* (pp. 273-286). Routledge.
- Hilal, J. (2007). Assessing the Impact of Migration on Palestinian Society in the West Bank and Gaza. <https://doi.org/10.5117/CMS2014.3.ERDA>
- Husband, G. (2020). Ethical data collection and recognizing the impact of semi-structured interviews on research respondents. *Education Sciences*, 10(8), 206.
- International Organization for Migration. (2019). *Glossary on Migration*. Retrieved from [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml\\_34\\_glossary.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf)
- Jiang, J. (2008). *Evaluation of the potential of ecotourism to contribute to local sustainable development: a case study of Tengtou Village, China: a thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Development Studies at Massey University, New Zealand* (Doctoral dissertation, Massey University).
- Khawaja, M., & Tiltne, A. A. (Eds.). (2002). On the margins: migration and living conditions of Palestinian camp refugees in Jordan. *Institute for Applied Social Science*.
- King, R., & Christou, A. (2010). *Diaspora, migration and transnationalism: Insights from the study of second-generation 'returnees.'* In R. Bauböck & T. Faist (Eds.), *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods* (pp. 167–184). Amsterdam University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46mz31.12>
- Kivisto, P. (2001). Theorizing transnational immigration: a critical review of current efforts. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 24(4), 549-577.
- Klinthäll, M. (2006, June). Immigration, integration and return migration. In *International symposium on international migration and development, Turin* (pp.28-30).
- Krueger RA (1994) *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Leonard, K. I. (2003). *Muslims in the United States: The state of research*. Russell Sage Foundation.

- Lubbad, I. (2008). Palestinian migration: any circularity? Demographic and economic perspectives. *BestereFinansiering*.
- Mason, V. (2007). Children of the “idea of Palestine”: Negotiating identity, belonging and home in the Palestinian diaspora. *Journal of intercultural studies*, 28(3),271-285.
- McGarr, J. (2010). Early school leaving: an exploration of the factors contributing to school non-completion. *Technological University*.
- Meyer, C. B. (2001). A case in case study methodology. *Field methods*, 13(4), 329-352.
- Mixed Migration Centre (2019). *Distant Dreams Understanding the aspirations of Afghan returnees*. Mixed Migration Centre Asia.
- Mokadi, T., & Yousef, A. (2020). The Palestinian American “Transnational Identity”. *An-Najah University Journal for Research-B (Humanities)*, 36(1),216-246.
- Morgan, D. L., Krueger, R. A., & King, J. A. (1998). *The focus group guidebook*. Sage.
- Mulhall, A. (2003). In the field: notes on observation in qualitative research. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 41(3), 306-313.
- Noble, H., & Heale, R. (2019). Triangulation in research, with examples. *Evidence-based nursing*, 22(3), 67-68.
- Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). (2010, December). *Migration’s Survey in the Palestinian Territory*. Retrieved from [https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/\\_pcbs/PressRelease/Migration\\_e.pdf](https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Migration_e.pdf)
- Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). (2019). Palestinian education system: Facts and figures 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/post.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=3456>
- Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). (April, 2012). Annual Report. *Palestinian Children –Issues and Statistics*. (Report No. 15). Ramallah–Palestine. [https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/\\_PCBS/Downloads/book1863.pdf](https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_PCBS/Downloads/book1863.pdf)
- Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, Sage, Newbury Park, CA.
- Perry, C. (1998). Processes of a case study methodology for postgraduate research in marketing. *European journal of marketing*, 32(9/10), 785-802.

- Pisarevskaya, A., Levy, N., Scholten, P., Jansen, J., (2019). Mapping migration studies: An empirical analysis of the coming of age of a research field, *Migration Studies*, 8(3), 455–481. <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnz031>
- Portes, A. (1997) ‘Immigration Theory for a New Century: Some Problems and Opportunities,’ *International Migration Review*, 31/4: 799–825.
- Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R.G. (2001). *Legacies: The story of the immigrant second generation*. Univ of California Press.
- Qu, S. Q., & Dumay, J. (2011). The qualitative research interview. *Qualitative research in accounting & management*, 8(3), 238-264.
- Rabiee, F. (2004). Focus-group interview and data analysis. *Proceedings of the nutrition society*, 63(4), 655-660
- Rowley, J. (2002). Using case studies in research. *Management research news*, 25(1),16-27.
- Ruben, R., Van Houte, M., & Davids, T. (2009). What determines the embeddedness of forced-return migrants? Rethinking the role of pre-and post-return assistance. *International Migration Review*, 43(4), 908-937.
- Serhan, R. B. (2009). *Suspended Community: An Ethnographic Study of Palestinian-Americans in New York and New Jersey*. Columbia University.
- Seward, D. X., & Khan, S. (2016). Towards an understanding of Muslim American adolescent high school experiences. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counseling*,38, 1-11.
- Simpson, M., & Tuson, J. (2003). *Using Observations in Small-Scale Research: A Beginner's Guide. Revised Edition. Using Research*. University of Glasgow, SCRE Centre, 16 Dublin Street, Edinburgh, EH3 6NL Scotland (SCRE Publication no. 130).
- Sink, C. A., & Devlin, J. M. (2011). Student spirituality and school counseling: issues, opportunities, and challenges. *Counseling and Values*, 55, 130–148. doi:10.1002/j.2161-007X.2011.tb00027.x.
- Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

- Taran, P. A. (2001). Human rights of migrants: Challenges of the new decade. *International Migration*, 38(6), 7-51.
- Thurmond, V. A. (2001). The point of triangulation. *Journal of nursing scholarship*, 33(3), 253-258.
- Tuccio, M., Wahba, J.(2020). *Social Remittances*. (Report No. 609). Global Labor Organization (GLO), Essen. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10419/222445>
- UNICEF. (2021). *Education in the occupied Palestinian territory*. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/oPt/education>
- Verga, L., & Kotz, S. A. (2013). How relevant is social interaction in second language learning?. *Frontiers in human neuroscience*, 7, 550.
- Wahba, J. (2021). Who benefits from return migration to developing countries?. *IZA World of Labor*.
- Weizman, E. (2007). *Hollow land: Israel's architecture of occupation*. Verso books.
- Wilkinson, S. (1998). Focus group methodology: a review. *International journal of social research methodology*, 1(3), 181-203.
- Yin, R. K. (2013). Validity and generalization in future case study evaluations. *Evaluation*, 19(3), 321-332.
- Zahle, J. (2017). Privacy, informed consent, and participant observation. *Perspectives on Science*, 25(4), 465-487.

#### Arabic References:

واقع الطفل ضمن أهداف التنمية المستدامة في فلسطين. (2021) الجهاز المركزي للإحصاء الفلسطيني

<https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2600.pdf>

المالكي، مجدي، & شلبي، ياسر. (2000). الهجرة الداخلية و العائدة في الضفة الغربية و قطاع غزة. معهد أبحاث السياسات الاقتصادية الفلسطيني (ماس).

## **Appendix A**

### **Interviews' Questions**

## Students' Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me about your experience returning to Palestine to attend school?
2. What challenges have you faced as a return migrant “American” in this school system?
3. Can you describe any specific incidents or interactions that have made your experience in the MES school different compared to other students?
4. How do you deal with the problems you encounter?
5. How do you perceive the attitudes and treatment of the schools' administrators, teachers, and other students towards you?
6. In your opinion, what improvements could be made to better support the academic and social success of returning migrants?
7. Can you share any positive experiences you have had in Palestinian schools as a return migrant?
8. How have your parents or family members supported your educational experience in Palestine?
9. Do you have any recommendations or advice for other second-generation return migrants who are navigating the Palestinian school system?

## **Teachers' Interview Questions**

1. What are the most significant challenges that second-generation return migrants face in Palestinian schools?
2. How do these challenges affect the students' academic and social experiences in the classroom?
3. How can teachers help to foster a more inclusive and welcoming classroom environment for second-generation return migrants?

## **Parents' Interview Questions**

1. What were the reasons behind migrating to the US?
2. Why did you decide to go back to Palestine?
3. In what ways do you think the MES school has supported your child's academic and social development?
4. How do you support the kids as they return to Palestine?

## **Appendix B**

### **Letters of Informed Consent**

## Students' Letter of Informed Consent

As a master student at the Arab American University (AAUP), I'm currently involved in the thesis segment of my program. I am investigating the challenges that face second-generation returning migrants from the US to Palestine, who are enrolled in the MES School 2022/2023. The means for collecting data will be observation and semi-structured interviews with the selected students. The study will take place at the MES school.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw your participation at any point. The interviews will be recorded via tape and transcribed. All information gathered by the interviews and observation will be only used in the writing of this research.

The benefit of this study will be to examine the challenges that face the second-generation return migrants, how they cope with it and its effects on social interaction and academic achievement.

This form does hereby declare that ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) on the date of \_\_\_\_\_ agrees to the interview by (Dima Jarrar).

In advance, I thank you for your cooperation with my research and support.

Sincerely,

Dima Jarrar

## Teachers' Letter of Informed Consent

As a master student at the Arab American University (AAUP), I'm currently involved in the thesis segment of my program. I am investigating the challenges that face second-generation returning migrants from the US to Palestine, who are enrolled in the MES School 2022/2023. It is required to conduct interviews with the teachers and parents of the selected participating students.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw your participation at any point. The interviews will be recorded via tape and transcribed. All information gathered by the interviews will be only used in the writing of this research.

The benefit of this study will be to examine the challenges that face the second-generation return migrants, how they cope with it and its effects on social interaction and academic achievement.

This form does hereby declare that (\_\_\_\_\_) on the date of \_\_\_\_\_ agrees to the interview by (Dima Jarrar).

In advance, I thank you for your cooperation with my research and support.

Sincerely,

Dima Jarrar

## Parents' Letter of Informed Consent

As a master student at the Arab American University (AAUP), I'm currently involved in the thesis segment of my program. I am investigating the challenges that face second-generation returning migrants from the US to Palestine, who are enrolled in the MES School 2022/2023. It is required to conduct interviews with the teachers and parents of the selected participating students.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw your participation at any point. All information gathered by the interviews will be only used in the writing of this research.

The benefit of this study will be to examine the challenges that face the second-generation return migrants, how they cope with it and its effects on social interaction and academic achievement.

This form does hereby declare that (\_\_\_\_\_) on the date of \_\_\_\_\_ agrees to the interview by (Dima Jarrar).

In advance, I thank you for your cooperation with my research and support.

Sincerely,

Dima Jarrar

**Appendix C**  
**Focus Group Questions**

## **Focus Group Questions**

1. In your opinion, what are some of the challenges that female and male returnees face in terms of reintegration into the Palestinian society?
2. How do you think female returnees' experiences differ from male returnees' experiences at the school? What are the biggest challenges?
3. What are some of the cultural or societal expectations placed on female and male returnees and how do you navigate those expectations?

**Appendix D**  
**Documents of Admission in Palestinian Schools from Foreign Educational**  
**Systems**





اللجنة الخاصة: لجنة مكونة من النائب الفني في المديرية وعضوية كم من رئيس قسم التعليم العام، ورئيس قسم الإشراف ومشرفي المباحث الأساسية، تكون مهمتها تقيّم الطالب القادم من نظام تعليمي غير فلسطيني، وتحديد مستوى الصف الذي سيلحق به؛ في حالة عدم تمكن الطالب من إحضار شهادته المطلوبة. أو كان الطالب منقولاً من مدارس سخنين. للتصديق حسب الأصول؛ أن تكون شهادة وورقة نقل الطالب مصدقة من قبل المدرسة الناقلة ووزارة التربية والتعليم أو ما يناظرها في الدولة القادم منها الطالب. ومن السفارة أو ممثلية فلسطين في تلك الدولة في حالة وجودها، ومن وزارة خارجية تلك الدولة. ومن وزارة خارجية فلسطين.

المباحث الأساسية: هي اللغة العربية واللغة الإنجليزية والرياضيات والعلوم و(التربية الإسلامية للطالب المسلم، والتربية المسيحية للطالب المسيحي) والعلوم الاجتماعية.

قرار معادلة شهادة مدرسية: هو وثيقة تقرر من قبل القسم المختص في الوزارة أو المديرية معادلة شهادة الطالب القادم من نظام تعليمي غير فلسطيني حسب أسس المعادلة والقبول وحسب السلم التعليمي المقارن المعتمد، ومن ثم قبول الطالب في صف دراسي مناسب.

#### تعليمات عامة:

1. يكون تقديم الطلب للمديرية مقدم من قبل ولي أمر الطالب. وليس المدرسة.
2. كل طالب لا يحصل على موافقة من مديرية التربية والتعليم أو الوزارة على التحاقه في مدرسة ما، يعتبر طالباً غير نظامي، ولا يتم تسجيله في جداول العلامات.

#### أسس المعادلة والقبول

أولاً: تتم معادلة شهادة وقبول الطالب المنقول من نظام تعليمي غير فلسطيني بناء على أوراقهم الثبوتية الأصلية الرسمية المصدقة حسب الأصول.

ثانياً: يتسلم قسم التعليم العام في المديرية الأوراق الثبوتية الأصلية من الطالب إذا كانت باللغة العربية أو الإنجليزية، ويقوم بتحقيقتها، وبعد التأكد من استيفائها للشروط اللازمة يتم تصويرها، وكتابة عبارة (طبق الأصل) والتوقيع عليها، وكذلك تدوين تاريخ استلامها. وتعاد النسخ الأصلية إلى الطالب ليسلمها بدوره إلى المدرسة؛ لتكون جزءاً من ملفه.

ثالثاً: إذا كانت شهادة وورقة نقل الطالب بلغة أجنبية أخرى غير اللغة الإنجليزية يُطلب من الطالب ترجمتها إلى اللغة العربية لدى مترجم قانوني مرخص لدى وزارة العدل الفلسطينية.

رابعاً: تحدد المدرسة الذي يُلحق بها الطالب حسب مكان إقامة الطالب في فلسطين، وحسب رغبة الطالب إذا رغب بالالتحاق في مدرسة خاصة.

خامساً: يتم تحديد الصف الذي سيلحق به الطالب بناء على تحديد مستوى الشهادة التي يحملها، ومن ثم معادلة شهادته حسب السلم التعليمي المرفق.



سادساً: يتم قبول الطالب في الصف الثاني عشر في الفرع الأكاديمي أو المهني الذي تعلمه الطالب في الصف الأول الثانوي أو ما يوازيه في النظام التعليمي القادم منه، وفي حالة عدم وجود هذا الفرع في النظام التعليمي الفلسطيني يتم تحويل الحالة للوزارة لتتم دراستها واتخاذ قرار بشأنها.

سابعاً: يزود الطالب بوثيقة قرار معادلة شهادة مدرسية موقعة ومختومة حسب الأصول، ( مرفق)  
ثامناً: إذا تم النقل خلال العام الدراسي فإنه:

- 1) يقبل الطالب في الصف الأول أساسي، وكان عمره ينسجم مع العمر المعتمد في أسس التسجيل في الصف الأول أساسي في النظام التعليمي الفلسطيني. وإذا كان عمره أقل من العمر المعتمد فلا يتم قبوله.
  - 2) يتم قبول معاملة الطالب في أي وقت من العام الدراسي، ويتم احتساب علاماته في المباحث المماثلة للمباحث في النظام التعليمي الفلسطيني.
  - 3) يتم احتساب علامات الطالب في بعض المباحث القريبة والتي لها علاقة بمباحث في النظام التعليمي الفلسطيني. مثل: الهندسة، الجبر، فيما قربينان من الرياضيات، كذلك الفيزياء والكيمياء والأحياء فهما فروع لمباحث العلوم في المرحلة الأساسية.
  - 4) يتم غض الطرف عن كل علامات المباحث التي لا يوجد لها مسمى مماثل في النظام التعليمي الفلسطيني، ولا يتم تدوينها في جداول العلامات.
  - 5) يتم تقدير مستوى الطالب في الاختبارات التي لم يحضرها في المدرسة بناءً على مستواه فيها في الاختبارات التي تقدم فيها بقية العام الدراسي، وذلك في المباحث التي يتعلمها في النظام التعليمي الفلسطيني، ولم يكن قد تعلمها في المدرسة الناقلة، مثل: التربية الإسلامية.
- تاسعاً: إذا تعذر على الطالب المنقول من نظام تعليمي آخر إحضار وثائقه أو أحضرها وكانت غير مصدقة حسب الأصول يتبع الإجراءات الآتية لحين اتخاذ القرار المناسب:-

- 1) يكتب ولي أمر الطالب تعهداً خطياً بإحضار وثائق الطالب مصدقة حسب الأصول. مرفق
  - 2) يقبل الطالب مؤقتاً في الصفوف (1 - 11) بموجب ما تشير إليه وثائقه غير المصدقة، وكذلك بموجب عمره، بحيث يكون منسجماً مع قانون التربية والتعليم، ولا يتم تسجيله في قيود المدرسة إلا بعد إحضار وثائقه مصدقة حسب الأصول، ويعطى مهلة (4) أسابيع لإحضار الوثائق وتصديقها حسب الأصول.
  - 3) لا يتم قبول أي طالب في الصف الثاني الثانوي إذا لم يحضر أوراقه الثبوتية الأصلية مصدقة حسب الأصول، وفي حالة عدم تمكنه من ذلك يتم قبوله في الصف الأول الثانوي.
- عاشراً: إذا تعذر تماماً على الطالب المنقول من نظام تعليمي آخر إحضار وثائقه لسبب قاهر، لأنه قادم من نظام تعليمي في دولة تعاني من اضطرابات أمنية أو أحضرها وكانت غير مصدقة حسب الأصول، ولن يتمكن من تصديقها خلال العدة المحددة حسب البند (2) من الأساس العاشر، عندها يتم عقد امتحان مستوى له في أساسيات المباحث الأساسية،

السلطة الوطنية للتأمين لادول فامات الامريكين فامسوميا

المصروف الدراسي

الرقم	الدولة	صلا التعليم العالي
1	الولايات المتحدة	12
2	الولايات المتحدة	12
3	الولايات المتحدة	12
4	الولايات المتحدة	12
5	الولايات المتحدة	12
6	الولايات المتحدة	12
7	الولايات المتحدة	12
8	الولايات المتحدة	12
9	الولايات المتحدة	13
10	روسيا	11
11	السويد	13-12
12	فنلندا	12
13	المملكة المتحدة	11
14	النمسا	12
15	هولندا	12



TO: JININ

MOEH

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Palestinian National Authority

Ministry of Education &amp; Higher Education

Directorate General Of General Education

السلطة الوطنية الفلسطينية  
وزارة التربية والتعليم العالي  
الإدارة العامة للتعليمالرقم: ٥٤٤ / ٢ / ١٢  
التاريخ: 2011/5/23  
الموافق: ١٤٣٢ / ٦ / ١٤السادة مديري التربية والتعليم المحترمين  
تحية طيبة وبعد،،،

الموضوع: القيمة العددية للرموز التقديرية للمباحث في الشهادات الأصلية

نهديكم أطيب التحيات، وبالإشارة للموضوع أعلاه، فإن القيمة العددية للرموز التقديرية للمباحث في شهادات الطلبة القادمين من أي نظام تعليمي غير فلسطيني تكون حسب القيم الرقمية الواردة في مفتاح الشهادة ذاتها، وفي حالة عدم وجود مفتاح يبين القيم الرقمية لهذه الرموز، فإن القيم الرقمية المعتمدة تكون حسب الجدول الآتي:

الرمز	القيمة الرقمية
A+	100-96
A	95-90
B+	89-86
B	85-80
C+	79-76
C	75-70
D+	69-60
D	59-50
F	أقل من 50

يرجى تصميم تلك على مدارسكم للصقل وقتها.

مع الاحترام،،،

أ. عمر عتير

مدير عام التعليم العام



نسخة/ السيد الوكيل المحترم.

نسخة/ السيد الوكيل المساعد للشؤون التعليمية المحترم.

نسخة/ الملف.

١٠/٥

## الملخص

تكشف هذه الدراسة عن التحديات التي تواجه الطلبة العائدين من الولايات المتحدة والتحاقهم بالمدارس الفلسطينية خلال العام الدراسي (2022/2023).  
تركز الدراسة على تجربة 25 طالبًا مختلفًا، عاشوا فترةً من حياتهم في الولايات المتحدة ثم عادوا مع عائلاتهم إلى فلسطين ، والتحقوا بمقاعد الدراسة في المدارس الإنجليزية الحديثة في مدينة رام الله .  
ومن أجل البحث في الجوانب العملية لانتقال العائدين إلى بيئات تعليمية وثقافية جديدة في المدرسة ، تم استخدام ثلاثة من الأساليب البحثية في هذه الدراسة النوعية. حيث كشفت النتائج عن العديد من الصعوبات الرئيسية التي تواجه هذه الفئة من الطلاب بما في ذلك التكيف الثقافي، و حاجز اللغة، بالإضافة الى قضية تكوين الهوية في سياق المدارس الفلسطينية. للتغلب على هذه التحديات يميل الطلاب لتطبيق تقنيات الاندماج والاستيعاب التي تدرج تحت اطار نظرية التكيف الثقافي. كما تظهر الدراسة أن الطلاب العائدين يستيعبون قواعد نظام المدرسة الفلسطيني فيما يتعلق بالانضباط والحضور ومعايير الامتحان. في حين يحتفظون بسمات الثقافة الأمريكية، يتفاعلون مع الثقافة الفلسطينية المحيطة بهم، الأمر الذي يعزز العيش في فلسطين والالتحاق بالمدارس الفلسطينية و معرفتهم بثقافتها، وهو الهدف الرئيسي للأباء في العودة إلى وطنهم. ومع ذلك، هم بحاجة إلى دعم آبائهم ومعلميهم والمجتمع المحلي لتحقيق نجاح عملية انتقالهم بين البيئات الثقافية المختلفة.