



JORDAN by Mahasen M. Aljaghoub

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Overview

Jordan was established in 1921 with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire under the rule of Prince Abdullah I, who established what was then called the Emirate of Transjordan. It is bounded to the north by Syria, to the east by Iraq, to the southeast and south by Saudi Arabia, and to the west by Palestine. Jordan is a crossroads connecting Asia, Africa, and Europe. Jordan's constitution stipulates that the country is a hereditary monarchy with a parliamentary system, and specifically guarantees the rights of Jordanian citizens, including the freedoms of speech and press, association, academic freedom, political parties and freedom of religion.

Due to the lack of natural resources, Jordan relies to a great extent on its human resources. The population of Jordan is largely young as people under the age of fifteen constitute the largest component of the population. The growth of population constitutes a major challenge to the educational system, and the government has a great concern about the pressure of refugees on the country's limited resources and in particular on its educational systems.¹ Jordan has an excellent reputation in the region for education, boasting an adult literacy rate above 92 percent and a 95.7 percent gross enrolment rate.²

The general objectives of education stem from the philosophy of education which is (in accordance with Article 3 of the 1994 Education Law) based upon the Jordanian Constitution, the Islamic Arab civilization, the principles of the Great Arab Revolt and the national experience of the country. The basic philosophy of education is to develop responsible citizens who believe in the basic principles of the constitution; the rights and the responsibilities of citizens; honesty and dedication to work; responsible behavior; and fruitful cooperation with others based on democratic relationship and to develop an understanding of the natural, social, and cultural environment starting with the home and ending with the world as a whole and to develop pupils physically, socially, mentally, and emotionally, taking individual differences into consideration.

According to its National Agenda, Jordan aims to boost its educational reform and gender equality. One of the impressive reforms with regards to education is the national strategy which known as “Education Reform for a Knowledge Economy,” aiming at creating an educational system where the students are producers of knowledge and leave the educational system with the skills necessary to be a productive part of a knowledge economy. The other national project is the Jordan Education Initiative (JEI), which aims at equipping students with skills and knowledge to participate effectively in the new era.

The legal framework

The 1952 Jordanian constitution provides for freedom of religion, provided that religious practices are consistent with “public order and morality;” According to the Constitution, Islam is the state’s religion. Since Jordan believes in the right of education for all, the Constitution has guaranteed this right.

Article (2/6) stipulates that “The government shall ensure work and education within the limits of its possibilities and it shall ensure a state of tranquility and equal opportunities to all Jordanians.”

Article (19) provides that “Congregations shall have the right to establish and maintain their own schools for the education of their own members provided that they comply with the general provisions of the law and be subject to the control of the of Government in matters relating to their curricula and orientation”.

Moreover, Article 20 guarantees the right of education by stating that primary education was to be compulsory for Jordanians and free of charge in government schools and to this end the government shall ensure work and education within the limits of its possibilities and shall ensure equal opportunities to all Jordanians.

It is important to note that before the independence of Jordan, in 1946, education was only available to people who were able to afford it, however, after independence, Act No.20 made education compulsory for all children up to grade six. In 1964 the Jordanian Parliament passed the Education Act No.16, which made education compulsory up to grade nine (six years of primary and three years of secondary education). A 1994 Education Act expanded basic compulsory education to ten years and introduced comprehensive and applied secondary education streams lasting two years to be provided free of charge.

To sum up, the most important laws and regulations which regulate education in Jordan are:

The Education Law of 1994 which regulates kindergarten, basic and secondary education. This Act enunciates the philosophy and objectives of education, the educational policy, the functions of the Ministry of Education, and the tasks of the Boards of Education. It contains also some elements regulating curricula and textbooks, general examinations, the structure of the Ministry, as well as the functioning of private and foreign educational institutions.

Regulation No. 1 of 1995 on the organization of the Ministry of Education which defines the administrative structure of the Ministry and its basic units and committees at all levels (central level, governorates and districts), as well as their main tasks.

Regulation No. 41 of 1997 on scientific research for the development of the educational process establishes the objectives of educational research at the Ministry, and it defines the tasks of the Research Committee for developing the educational process.

Regulation No. 59 of 1993 on educational certification and training concerns the establishment of the Educational Certification and Training Committee at the Ministry of Education. And lastly Regulation No. 42 of 1992 on the equivalence of certificates concerns the establishment of the Committee on the equivalence of certificates and its main tasks and functions.

The structure of schooling

Jordan has traditionally placed great emphasis on education and relied heavily on its human resources for its economic and social development. According to Article 7 of the 1994 Law, the education system consists of a two-year cycle of pre-school education, ten years of compulsory basic education, and two years of secondary

academic or vocational education, after which students sit for a General Certificate of Secondary Education Exam (*Tawjihi*).

Education is free and obligatory from grades one to ten, and thereafter is free for another two years. The Ministry of Education is now making it mandatory for students to be computer literate and to be able to apply their computer studies to their regular studies, especially in scientific and mathematical courses.

The educational system is centralized with the Ministry of Education being represented by regional directorates of education who have the role of disseminating policy statements and initiatives from the upper levels of the educational system to individual schools and overseeing the performance and practices of schools.

In accordance with the Regulation No.1 of 1995, the MOE is constituted of the central administration, which is responsible for designing educational policies and plans for the implementation of policies, and then from the General Directorates of Education in the twelve governorates (or provinces) who supervise educational policy and lastly from the District Directorates of Education in the governorates who are responsible for supervising educational policy at the directorate level in the governorate or district. Each District Directorate is headed by the director of education assisted by directors for technical and administrative affairs.

Pre-school education

According to Article 8 of the 1994 law, children at the age of 4 years (or at least 3 years and 8 months) are allowed to enter kindergartens, which are institutions offering non-compulsory preschool education. Kindergartens are mainly operated by private and non-governmental organizations.

In accordance with the above-mentioned provision, Preschool education, aims at providing an adequate educational environment and care for well-balanced growth on a non-compulsory basis. The Ministry of Education (MOE) supervises all preschool institutions according to its policy and legislation, along with the Ministry of Health which is a strong partner in empowering families in caring for their children during these early stages.

Performance of children at this level is evaluated through the follow-up of their participation in the diversified activities and parents are continuously informed on the progress and growth of their children. The school year at the preschool level consists of 28 weeks and kindergartens run 28 hours per week; most public

kindergartens start at 8:00 and finish at 12:30.³ The Ministry of Education reports that in 2007/08 there were 1,262 kindergartens, of which two under MOE, 103 under other governmental authorities and 1,157 in the private sector. The total enrolment was 90,613 children (48,266 boys and 42,347 girls).⁴

Primary education

According to Article 10 of the 1994 Law, Primary education comprises ten years of compulsory schooling starting at the age of 5 years and 8 months. According to this law primary education offers a well-balanced education in the social, emotional, intellectual, physical and spiritual aspects of the student's personality growth for lifelong learning. According to Article 9 of the mentioned Law, primary education aims at preparing the learners to:

- be consciously acquainted with the history, principles, rules and values of Islam, incorporating them into their character and behaviour;
- master the basic skills of Arabic language to be able to use it easily;
- know the basic facts and events related to the history of the Islamic and Arab nation and of the Jordanian people in its Arab and Islamic profundity, in particular, and its humanity in general;
- follow social behaviour rules and take into account commendable social traditions, habits and values;
- love, be proud of, and shoulder responsibilities towards their homeland;
- love their family and society and shoulder responsibilities towards them;
- master the basic skills of at least one foreign language; deal with numerical systems, basic mathematical processes and geometrical figures, and use them in everyday life;
- absorb basic scientific facts and generalizations and their experimental bases, and use them to explain natural phenomena;
- think scientifically, using the process of observation, data collection, organization, analysis, deduction and making decisions and judgments based on them;

- comprehend the scientific basis of the forms of technology and use them properly;
- be keen on the safety, cleanliness, beauty and wealth of their environment;
- be aware of the importance of their physical fitness and health, and practice suitable sport and health activities;
- have aesthetic taste in the various arts, and express their own artistic interests;
- be able to perform handicraft skills matching their abilities and interests, make an effort to develop them, and have respect for manual work owing to its basic function in social life;
- assimilate diligence, work, persistence and self-dependence values in achievement, realization of self-capability, earning a living and self-sufficiency;
- express their talents, special abilities and creative aspects;
- accept themselves, respect others, consider their feelings and appreciate their merits and achievements;
- appreciate the value of time and made good use of their leisure time;
- strive for self-instruction and the development of their competencies.

The Ministry of Education reports that in 2007/08 there were 3,053 basic education schools, of which 2,137 were under MOE, 16 under other governmental authorities (such as the Ministry of Defense), 176 run by UNRWA and 724 in the private sector. A total of 1,904 schools were co-educational, 782 were schools for boys and 367 were girls' schools. The total enrolment was 1,297,905 students (664,174 boys and 633,731 girls), of whom 914,937 students were in schools administered by MOE, 246,545 in the private sector, 122,068 under UNRWA, and 14,355 students in schools run by other governmental authorities.⁵ In 2008/09, the net enrolment ratio at the basic education level (age group 6-15 years) was estimated at 97.6 percent (97.5 percent for boys and 97.7 percent for girls).

The survival rate to grade 5 was 99 percent (98.8 percent for boys and 99.2 percent for girls) in 2007/08. Basic education drop-out rates are minimal (an average of about 0.4 percent).⁶ According to the World Bank, the transition rate to secondary education was 79 percent in 2005/06.

Secondary education

Secondary education is free but not compulsory and consists of two years of study for students who completed the basic education cycle. It is designed to prepare students for higher education or for entry into the labour market. Secondary education comprises two streams: comprehensive secondary (academic and vocational) and applied secondary (Article 12 of the 1994 Law). The two-year comprehensive secondary education programme concludes with the General Secondary Education Certificate examination in the following specializations: academic (scientific, literary and Shari'a or Islamic law) and vocational (industrial, commercial, agricultural, nursing, hotel and home economics). The certificate qualifies students to enroll in universities. In accordance with Article 11 of the 1994 Law, Secondary education, aims at preparing students to be able to:

- use the Arabic language to increase their ability to communicate, develop their scientific and literary culture, consider the fundamentals of correct language structure, and relish its arts;
- adapt to environmental changes in their country in its natural, demographic, social and cultural dimensions, to exploit and maintain them well, and improve their potentials;
- derive their culture from their nation's past and present heritage, and be aware of the necessity of conscious openness to world civilization and contributions to it;
- interact with the cultural environment of their society and try to develop it;
- be aware of the importance of family, its coherence and role in social life;
- consolidate their self-confidence, appreciation of other human beings, and respect for the dignity and freedom of others;
- exemplify the principles, rules and values of Islamic ideology, adopt them in their behaviour, and understand the values and convictions in other heavenly religions;
- seek the progress, prestige and pride of their country, and be keen to participate in solving its problems and achieving security and stability;
- know the conditions and issues of their nation, be proud of belonging to it and seek its unity and progress;

- work in a team, know the rules and forms of democracy and practise them in dealing with others, and believe in principles of social justice;
- be aware of international issues and problems and of the importance of international understanding and peace built on justice and rightness;
- perform their duties and adhere to their rights;
- master one foreign language at least;
- absorb mathematical and logical concepts and relationships and use them in solving problems;
- look for data sources carefully and have command of collecting, storing, processing and means of benefiting from data;
- absorb new scientific facts and their applications, be able to verify them experimentally, and know their role in human progress;
- protect the environment, keep it clean, and develop its potential and wealth;
- absorb health information and rules pertaining to balanced physical and psychological growth, and practise them;
- relish artistic work and express their artistic interests in works according to their capabilities;
- seek professional qualifications, economic independence and self- sufficiency;
- use their free time for practising useful hobbies and recreation activities and for developing them;
- reflect Arab, Islamic and humanistic values and perfection in their behaviour;
- use common sense in dialogue, tolerance in dealing with others, and courtesy in listening;
- develop themselves through self-learning and lifelong education.

At the end of the secondary cycle, students passing the national examination receive the secondary school certificate. The Ministry of Education reports that in

2007/08 there were 1,230 academic secondary schools (of which 1,038 under MOE and 167 privately owned), 16 vocational secondary schools (all run by MOE), 76 academic and vocational secondary schools (of which 73 administered by MOE), and two applied secondary schools (one under UNRWA and the other run by MOE). The total enrolment in academic secondary education was 153,326 students (70,618 boys and 82,708 girls); 20,816 students (12,123 boys and 8,693 girls) were enrolled in vocational secondary education, and 724 boys (of whom 569 under UNRWA) in applied secondary education.⁷ According to the World Bank the overall completion rate of secondary education is about 70 percent, with almost 30 percent of students dropping out after grade 10.

Freedom to establish non-state schools

According to Act No. 3 of 1994 one of the responsibilities of the Ministry of Education is to establish and administer public schools at all levels and to supervise private ones. Public, or government, schools are under the Ministry of Education or other ministries such as Health, Defense, or Social Welfare. Private schools might be either national or “foreign.” National schools were those established and run by individual citizens or agencies. Foreign schools were those established and administered by non-Jordanians, either individuals or agencies with no clear affiliation to any congregation. There are 4 types of schools in Jordan:

1. Governmental Ministry of Education Schools
2. UNRWA schools
3. Military Schools
4. Private Schools

The Ministry of Education encourages the private sector to invest in education through the establishment of educational institutions at the different educational levels. School plans in private education institutions are established in accordance with MOE regulations, and under its supervision.

Schools at the basic and secondary education levels are usually established by individuals, companies and charitable societies and they apply curricula approved by the Board of Education and abide by admission rules and holiday instructions.

Several institutions other than the MOE but under its supervision participate in the delivery of education services. For instance, the Ministry of Social Development

educates students with special needs and those with learning difficulties. The Directorate of Education and Culture of the Armed Forces administers nineteen specialized schools. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is responsible for the administration of schools for Palestinian refugees. In addition, there are some other non-governmental organizations (such as the Queen Alia Fund for Social and Voluntary Work and the General Union of Charity Societies) assisting educational institutions at the kindergarten level, and those for pupils with special needs. The Noor Al-Hussein Foundation (NHF) administers the Jubilee School, established in 1989, which caters to gifted students beyond the ninth grade of basic education.

All type of schools have to use the national curriculum and follow the regulations of the Ministry of Education. It is important to note that there are many Christian schools in Jordan which educate students from both Christian and Muslim families such as the Rosary Sister's School run by the Catholic Church, the National Orthodox School run by the Orthodox Church in Jordan, Ahliyyah School for Girls, the Bishop's School for Boys, and the Schneller School are run by the Anglican Church in Amman. There are also a school for the blind, a school for the deaf, and a school for physically handicapped students run by the Anglican church.

Decisions about admitting pupils

The basic criterion for admission to public schools is the proximity of one's home to the school, and therefore, priority goes to those closest to the school. This criterion was set by the Ministry and schools cannot come up with different criteria or give priority to students based on academic or non-academic reasons. Private schools, by contrast, may adopt their own admission policies. For instance, most private schools require admission interview exam. Moreover, some of the elite schools might interview the parents as well.

Teaching staff

Teachers in public schools are appointed by the Ministry of Education. The Education Act No. 3 of 1994 stipulates that every teacher in any stage, from kindergarten to secondary cycle, must have a university degree (at least a bachelor's degree), whereas the supervisor hold a postgraduate degree. Basic education teachers must hold a bachelor's degree and secondary school teachers must hold a bachelor's degree and a one-year postgraduate diploma.

The need for teachers is identified at the school level and sent to the central Ministry to appoint teachers as needed from the Civil Service Bureau. Movement of teachers from school to school within the Field Directorates at that level. Public school principals have no hiring or firing authority. Teachers are appointed through competitive measures and on the basis of existing needs, specialization experience and educational qualification. A preference is given to some categories, such as orphans of fathers who served in the Jordanian army, poor families and the handicapped who hold an academic qualification, provided that their percentage does not exceed 5 percent.

Teacher promotion takes place after passing five years in a class or category. It is possible to be promoted earlier if the teacher gets a higher academic degree, or if his/her performance is outstanding.

Salaries and allowances are classified according to academic qualifications, category, grade and nature of work. The Civil Service Regulation applies to all employees, including teachers.

It has been claimed that teachers have become one of the lesser-regarded professions in Jordan in recent years. While the preparation for the teaching profession used to attract the best students, it is now ranked at fifth place in a list of six preferences. It is said that the best students become medical doctors, the second tier becomes engineers, the third tier will enter business, the fourth the law profession and only the fifth aims at becoming teachers, and the sixth tier move on to become English language and literature graduates. It is also said that the treatment of teachers, e.g. low salaries, low social regard, etc., leads to de-motivated teachers and as there is no continuous training for teachers once they leave university, they are often not up to par with the latest developments in both methods and contents of their profession.⁸

In addition to the above-mentioned qualifications, the better private schools will require multilingual teachers with outstanding communication and other skills. As in public schools, teacher selection is not based on religion, belief or political affiliations. Generally speaking hiring and firing teachers are in the hands of school principals.

Evaluation of pupils is one of the responsibilities of the teachers. The school gives students certificates at the end of each academic year, from grade 1 to first year of secondary education.⁹

School choice limited by family income

There are two main categories of schools in Jordan, public and private. Over 70 percent of Jordanians attend public schools.¹⁰ Private schools fees relatively high, However, it should be noted that Jordanians as a community are highly committed to giving their children a decent education, which places a high burden on family budgets.

Even if public education is free in Jordan, families encounter expenses related to uniforms, transportation, and materials. Choice of school depends on various issues, such as place of residence, household economy, and educational aspirations, among others. Choice of private school probably is to a large extent dependent on family income. Families can register their children wherever they want but no transportation is provided if the school is not within walking distance and priority of admitting students goes to those living closer to the school.

For private schools, tuition fees vary greatly depending on the infrastructure, the type of educational programme they adopt, and their affiliation with external accreditation agencies. Some of the programmes that are adopted at private schools are international Baccalaureate IB; IG; SAT, GCSE and others. Those schools are more suitable for high income families. More reasonably priced private schools usually teach the national curriculum without structured extra curricula activities.

As mentioned previously, UNRWA schools are essentially open for Palestinian refugees, but the choice also depends on where the student lives. Closeness to a school is important for most people. To conclude, in families with higher income, parents tend to have higher education than poorer parents, and they are thus in a much better position to help and support their children through school.

School autonomy

The school is considered the central unit of the educational process and it is managed by the principal, assisted by adequate staff to provide the necessary services. Public Schools receive a budget every year from the Field Directorate but they are unable to conduct any revenue generating activities and keep the money to spend on their schools. The school budget line items are set by the Ministry and there is little flexibility or leeway in that regard.¹¹

Each Directorate has a mentoring department which is responsible for evaluating the performance of schools and teachers. Subject mentors are assigned to oversee and evaluate a number of teachers in several schools and to provide them with assistance,

support and follow-up. The visits could be evaluative or supportive for teachers, as each mentor is required to write a report about each teacher's performance by the end of the schooling year, and this report forms part of the overall assessment of teachers' professional performance which has implications for their ranking. In addition, mentors may conduct workshops for teachers when needed, as they are required to support teachers to improve their performance.¹² Curriculum is considered to be the most centralized element of the Ministry. All schools (including private schools) have to use the national curriculum that is developed by Jordanian experts (most of whom are Ministry employees). Books outside the curriculum (supplementary or just resource books to be placed in the library) have to be vetted by the central Ministry of Education. Private schools have to go by the vetting process for any books outside the national curriculum. The curriculum for each subject is detailed by grade level in a formal document issued by the Ministry of Education; it is then translated into curriculum materials which teachers use for planning their instruction.

Teaching of values

The Ministry of Education realizes that education must be responsive to the current and future needs of the learners and reflect the development of the country. A high-quality education system maintains high ethical values. According to Article 3 of the 1994 Law of Education, the aims of Education are: (i) building up citizens who believe in Allah, understand Islamic doctrine, and are committed to Islamic and Arab supreme values, loyal to their country, principles and nation, fully aware of their rights, performing their duties in a way which creates a balanced personality in all aspects and leads to an aware openness on others while maintaining their identity; (ii) preparing citizens who are well-equipped with skills and knowledge required for the knowledge-based economy (knowledge, communication and intercommunication, teamwork, scientific thinking, personal, technology, future career, and scientific research skills) in order to contribute in building up their community; (iii) providing learning opportunities for all, and achieving equality and equity in educational services on the qualitative and quantitative aspects, focusing on quality development of education in line with students' learning levels.¹³

Endnotes

¹ Gavlak, 2007.

² Health and education, Published in The Report: Jordan 2011.

³ UNICEF, 2009.

⁴ MOE, 2008.

⁵ MOE, 2008.

⁶ Ministry of Planning, 2010.

⁷ MOE, 2008.

⁸ Baseline report – RCE Jordan at http://www.ias.unu.edu/resource_centre/RCE_percent20Jordan_1.pdf

⁹ MOE, 2008.

¹⁰ UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2006.

¹¹ World Data on Education VII Ed 2010/11.

¹² Ministry of Education, 2005.

¹³ MOE, 2008.

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Web Resources

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[In Arabic and English. Last checked: October 2007.]