

Education System In Tunisia

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TUNISIA is a republic (official name: Tunisian Republic). It is located in Northern Africa, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Algeria and Libya. The total area of Tunisia is 163,610 sq km (slightly bigger than Bangladesh) and it harbors slightly over 10 million (10,276,158) people (about 1/14th of Bangladesh). Tunisia was a French colony from 1881 and gained independence in 1956. The country's first president, Habib Bourguiba, established a strict one-party rule and by repressing Islamic fundamentalism for 31 years, established rights for women unmatched by any other Arab nation. Tunisia has long taken a moderate, non-aligned stance in its foreign relations.

Population growth rate is below 1% (0.989%; about 2/5th of Bangladesh's 2%). The per capita income in Tunisia is about US \$ 7,500 (estimated in 2007) and the rank is slightly over the median in the world, much higher than of Bangladesh. The literacy rate is about 74.3% (male: 83.4%, female: 65.3%; 2004 estimate). The literacy figure is a representative of the Arab states and reminds one of a sheer gender discrimination that Bangladesh could surpass about two decades ago. However, Tunisia spends about 6.6% of its GDP in education. The figure is about three times of Bangladesh (being 2.4% according to UNESCO data).

Education is the established way of enriching the people with required knowledge, skills and values in any country. Requirements for these qualities change over time and curriculum needs time to time revision. Bangladesh completed the third cycle of revising the primary curriculum during 1998-2001 and such a revision is overdue on the lower secondary. The middle secondary and the higher secondary levels should follow that successively. Therefore we can have a look into the education system of this African country influenced by European system (like us) to find something good for us. The description follows the usual format having Education Policy & Administration, the Structure, Program of Studies, Assessment System and lastly Lessons for Bangladesh.

I-Education Policy & Administration

Since gaining independence from France in 1956, Tunisian education officials have been working to develop an education system that is responsive to the needs of a rapidly developing country, while also emphasizing the need to develop a distinct national and regional identity. Building on the French model left behind, the focus of education reformers has been to "Arabianize" curriculum and faculty at the nation's schools and universities while producing a skilled Tunisian workforce that is able to build and manage a mod-

ern economy. The Education Reform Law of 1958, therefore, emphasized technical and vocational education, and the training of a corps of Tunisian educators, qualified to teach a new uniform school curriculum emphasizing Arabic language and literature, Islamic thought, and the history and geography.

In the academic year, 1990-91, the New Education Act introduced a reformed educational structure which increased the length of instruction at the primary and secondary levels from 12 years to a total of 13, and mandated that the first nine years of education be compulsory.

The Ministry of Education supervises basic and secondary education, and the Ministry of Higher Education is responsible for the supervision and regulation of tertiary education. Responsibility for the supervision and administration of education at technical institutions falls under the portfolio of the most relevant ministry.

II-The Structure

Tunisia follows the usual pattern of education system consisting of the primary, secondary and higher. Primary education lasts for 6 years and the next 3-years' study at lower secondary level is tagged with the primary making a 9-year study basic and compulsory by law. This basic education cycle is followed by a 4-year (Grades 10-13) secondary education: general or vocational. Including the higher education, the structure becomes (6+ (3) + 4) + (2+2+2).

Vocational education

Students pursuing vocational studies may enroll in 2-year programs leading to the award of the *Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle* (CAP) after completing the basic education cycle or after having completed a requisite number of foundation courses. Students who have completed the first two years of secondary education, or who have scored 12/20 or better on the CAP, may enroll in 2-year programs leading to the award of the *Brevet de Technicien Professionnel*, which in turn gives access to 2-year *Brevet de Technicien Supérieur* programs (open also to baccalaureate holders).

In the field of agriculture, the ministry has established agricultural secondary schools that run 3- and 4-year programs leading to the *Brevet de Technicien Professionnel* and the *Diplôme de Fin d'Etudes Techniques Agricoles*. The latter of the two awards grants access to tertiary-level programs at agricultural schools.

Higher Education

The university level higher education in Tunisia has three cycles. The first one they call "Premier Cycle" which is equivalent to our graduation (degree) level. This course lasts for 2 years. Apparently this is shorter, but if we add this to the 13th Grade secondary education, graduation completes at

Grade 15. The second cycle is Masters that they call *Maîtrise* or *Licence* is also a 2-year course in general education. The third cycle is also usually a 2-year one which is the doctoral course. Since 1993, there are two main types of doctorates in Tunisia: *Doctorat de 3ème* and the *Doctorat d'Etat*.

Teacher Education

Primary school teachers are trained in higher institutes (*Instituts supérieurs de Formation des Maîtres*) where they study for two years. They must hold the *Baccalauréat*.

Secondary school teachers are usually university graduates in the arts and sciences. On-site training and formal retraining through continued education are also provided. A *Doctorat en Sciences de l'Education*, a *Certificat d'Enseignement supérieur en Sciences de l'Education et en Pédagogie* and a *Maîtrise d'Education civique* have been created for the teachers of the second cycle of basic education and secondary education.

The *Maîtres-Assistants* must hold the new Doctorate. Assistants must hold the *Diplôme d'Etudes approfondies* and have started work on their doctoral thesis. *Maîtres de conférence* must hold a university research degree. In some disciplines, there exists a Tunisian form of *Agrégation* which is awarded after taking a competitive examination.

III- Program of Studies

The primary level curriculum has provision for studying somewhat different subjects in different grades, gradually adding some subjects in upper grades. Grade 1 study begins with Arabic, Islamic studies, Mathematics, Science, Music, Art, Technical education and Physical education. In Grade 2, Civics is added and in Grade 3, children start studying French and Geography as well. History is added at Grade 4.

During the lower secondary (Grades 7-9) that is a part of Basic & Compulsory education, the subjects studied are Arabic, French, English, Islamic studies, Mathematics, Natural sciences, Technical education, Civics, History, Geography, Physical education, Music and Art.

At general secondary (at Grades 10-13) level, students study some common subjects (Arabic, French, English, Islamic studies, Civics, History, Geography, Mathematics, Natural sciences, Physical sciences, Technical science and Physical education) during Grade 10-11. But at Grades 12-13, the study becomes more specialized in Languages, Economics/Management, Mathematics, Experimental science and Technical science streams. Philosophy is studied by all students during Grades 12 or 13 or in both. But students of all streams leave out Civics and Technical science at the upper grades.

IV-Assessment System

At the end of Grade-9, students

are assessed on their performance through *Diplôme de Fin d'Etudes de l'Enseignement de Base* examination. Based on the results of Grade-9 assessments, students are streamed into either the general, technical/professional secondary tracks. At the end of the fourth year of secondary studies students take the *Examen National du Baccalauréat* (baccalaureate exam). Students are examined in an average of six subjects, each of which is assigned a coefficient (weighting) depending on the stream. Students who complete the secondary cycle, but fail the *baccalauréat* are awarded a certificate of completion that can be used for entry into the workforce or for entry to further studies at a private school.

Grading scale

Grading is done over a 20-point scale. There are 4 grades for the successful candidates. These are: *Très Bien* (Very Good; obtaining 16-20 points), *Bien* (Good; 14-15 points), *Assez Bien* (Quite Good; 12-13), and *Passable* (Satisfactory; 10-11). The pass/fail line is point 10; candidates getting less than 10 points are unsuccessful.

V-Lessons for Bangladesh

The major characters of Tunisian education system that Bangladesh can follow or adapt can be as follows:

Tunisia spends about 6.6% of its GDP in education while Bangladesh spends at best 2.4%. Bangladesh can try to reach the Tunisian level of educational spending, if she finds it difficult to reach the UNESCO standard of 7%.

Tunisia has two major education ministries: Ministry of Education supervises basic and secondary education, while Ministry of Higher Education supervises tertiary education. Even a third Ministry (Ministry of Employment) has been established that administers Professional/vocational programs.

The duration of primary education in Tunisia is 6 years, but compulsory basic education is up to grade 9 (keeping grades 7-9 in lower secondary). So we can just follow the Tunisian system that is also the most prevalent world pattern.

In Tunisia the group-based study is only 2-year long at Grades 12-13. Bangladesh has still 4-year long stream-based pre-university education. I suggest the period to be curtailed to 3 years (entire higher secondary consisting of Grades 10-12 in the proposed plan) having no public examination within that period.

In Tunisia, the two major public examinations are held at completion of Basic education (Grade 9) and at the end of secondary education (Grade 13). We can adapt this system for the proposed Basic education (Grade 9) and at completion of higher secondary at Grade 12.

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