



World Data on Education

Données mondiales de l'éducation

Datos Mundiales de Educación

VII Ed. 2010/11



Syrian Arab Republic

Revised version, August 2011.

Principles and general objectives of education

Article 37 of the Decree Law No. 208 of 13 March 1973, which embodies the Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic, stipulates that education is a right guaranteed by the State. Elementary education is compulsory and all education is free. The State undertakes to extend compulsory education to other levels and to supervise and guide education in a manner consistent with the requirements of society and of production.

Articles 22 and 23 specify that the education system has to guarantee the people's continuous progress and adapt itself to the ever-developing social, economic, and cultural requirements of the people. The nationalist socialist education is the basis for building the unified socialist Arab society. It seeks to strengthen moral values, to achieve the higher ideals of the Arab nation, to develop the society, and to serve the causes of humanity. The State undertakes to encourage and to protect this education. The encouragement of artistic talents and abilities is one of the bases of the progress and development of society, artistic creation is based on close contact with the people's life. The State fosters the artistic talents and abilities of all citizens. Physical education is a foundation for the building of society. The State encourages physical education to form a physically, mentally, and morally strong generation.

The main general objectives of education are the following:

- Bringing up citizens rooted in their Arab homeland, having deep faith in their Arab nationalism and its objectives of unity and liberation and building the socialist society, committed to the causes of their nation and land and believing in revolutionary behaviour as a means and practice, in a spirit of socialist-based responsibility.
- Perpetuating the science-based socialist values in the minds of the youth, values which underlie the cohesion of the national and socialist struggle, and ruling out all sorts of dissension or family, sectarian, tribal and regional fanatic allegiances so that all members of the Arab society shall dissolve in the mould of Pan-Arab unity.
- Preparing citizens to perform their role in a democratic society.
- Underscoring the postulate that work is a honour and glorifying productive and collective work as the way to an exploitation-free society.
- Bringing up citizens with objective thought, enjoying a lucid science-oriented mind, and believing in the scientific approach to which they will resort in their endeavours to address the social and individual issues devoid of all sorts of pre-conceived notions or superstitious and metaphysical modes of thinking.
- Developing citizens with a mature integrated character in all ethical, mental and social dimensions, able to establish positive, useful and happy relations with their family and society, to appreciate arts and culture, and to respect ethical and spiritual values and human rights.

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The **Decree Law No. 208** of 1973, which embodies the Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic, defines the principles and objectives of education in the country.

Law No. 35 on Compulsory Education, endorsed by the People's Assembly on 12 August 1981, stipulates the age (6 years) at which children are obligated to enter primary school (six-year programme), the competent enforcement authorities, and the sanctions imposed on families failing to send their children to school. This law also provides for incentives to be granted to both children and staff.

The **Decree Law No. 7** of 1972 on the Elimination of Illiteracy, endorsed by the People's Assembly on 20 February 1972, established the Higher Council for Literacy in Syria under the presidency of the Prime Minister and the membership of a number of ministers and chiefs of popular organizations. Sub-councils have been created at the Governorate level under the chairmanship of the mayor and the membership of a number of directors of popular organizations within the Governorate.

Ministerial **Resolutions No. 1697/543** of 1989 and **No. 3013/443** of 1991 contain further regulations concerning pre-school education (kindergartens). Private education is regulated by the **Law No. 160** of 1958. This Law has been amended to allow for more freedom in opening private kindergartens, and to allow for opening kindergarten classes for 5-year-old children in public elementary schools.

The **Decision No. 967** of 12 March 1997 issued by the Regional Leadership of the Baath Socialist Party determines that the training of teachers and teacher assistants will be provided in faculties of education instead of teacher-training institutes. The **Decree No. 290** of 1997 established faculties of education in Aleppo, Tichreen and Al-Ba'ath universities, in addition to the faculty of education at Damascus University, to implement this decision. The four faculties were entrusted with the task of training teachers, including those at kindergarten and elementary education levels, by virtue of **Decree No. 61** of 1999.

The **Decision No. 15** of 2000 issued by the Regional Leadership concerns the development of vocational education. This decision emphasized the need to merge vocational and technical education into a unified vocational education system at the secondary level with a duration of three years, after which successful students are awarded the vocational secondary certificate.

The Syrian Commission of Family Affairs (SCFA) was created by the **Act No. 42** of 2003 to work for the advancement and empowerment of the family to better contribute to the development process.

Legislative Decree No. 55 dated 2 September 2004 and its executive instructions amended on 5 June 2006 regulate private education institutions for pre-university education.

The **Universities Regulation Law** was issued in 2006.



According to **Law No. 32** of 7 April 2002, basic education is being implemented starting from the school year 2002/03. Free and compulsory basic education includes the primary and intermediate stages. At the end of basic education, students who pass the general examination are awarded the basic education certificate.

Administration and management of the education system

The administration of the education system tends to be decentralized. However, centralized management is still prevalent with regard to planning and general orientation with the assistance of local authorities, i.e. directors of education, specialists and educational inspectors, school headmasters, popular organizations, youth and student federations, economic and relevant governmental authorities.

The **Ministry of Education** is responsible for pre-university education (excluding agricultural secondary schools which are under the Ministry of Agriculture). The Ministry defines the educational policy on the basis of resolutions of the Party's Congress and the general plan of the State, and is also responsible for translating the educational plans into reality. Five deputy ministers assist the Minister of Education and each one supervises a number of directorates and technical offices.

The general **Establishment for School Books** is financially and administratively independent, and prints and distributes school textbooks. The Minister of Education chairs the meetings of the board of directors. The same occurs for the general **Establishment for School Buildings**.

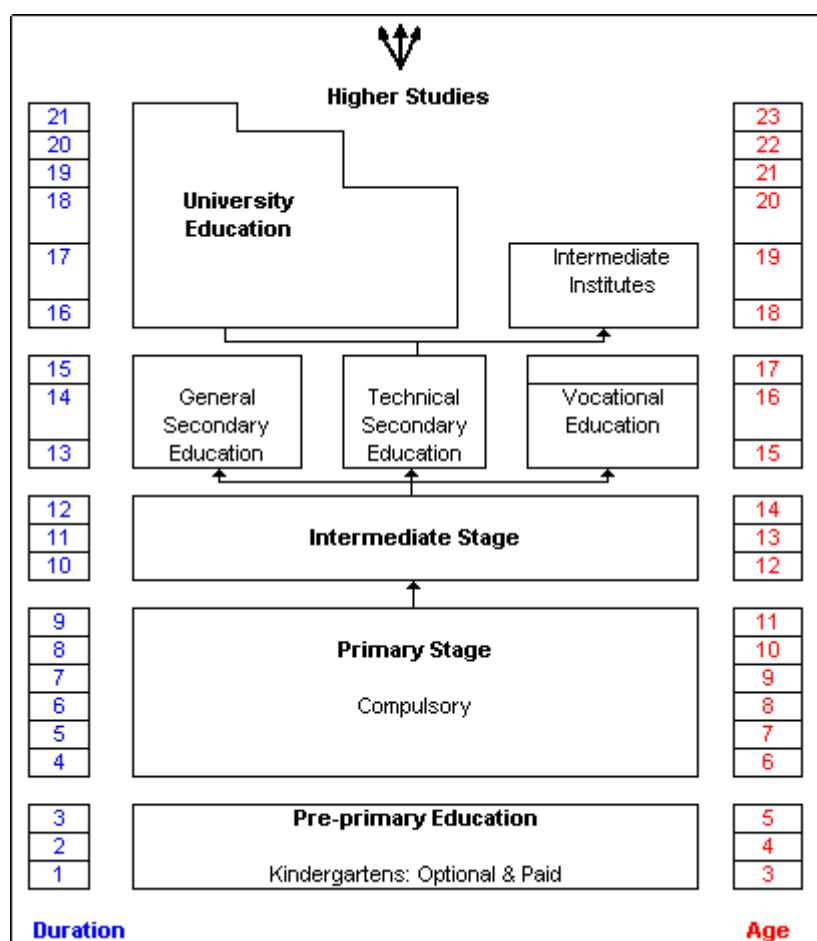
In the context of deepening the decentralization process, some authority has been delegated to the 14 **Directorates of Education** in the governorates (or provinces) and to the **Governorate Councils** with their different bodies. The Governorate Councils and their executive bureaus are entitled to: open new primary, intermediate general and technical secondary schools, nurseries, kindergartens and summer school clubs. They are also authorized to apply the plan of compulsory education, provide school health care, implement training courses and seminars, and grant licences to open private primary and intermediate schools, kindergartens and evening classes. They also supervise the management and running of vanguard camps.

The **Ministry of Higher Education** is responsible for universities, some intermediate and higher education institutes, and post-graduate studies. The process of planning and definition of academic programmes is centralized, while implementation is decentralized. Coordination is ensured by the **Council of Higher Education**, chaired by the Minister of Higher Education; there are eight permanent committees within the Council. In addition, the Ministry of Higher Education supervises all intermediate institutes through the **Supreme Council of Intermediate Institutes**.

The **Ministry of Culture** and several grass-root organizations are responsible for literacy activities. The **Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour** takes care of the disabled and supervises day-care centers.

Structure and organization of the education system

Syrian Arab Republic: structure of the education system (2001)



Pre-school education

Pre-primary education (kindergarten) caters to children aged 3-5 and lasts three years. Pre-primary education is not compulsory and is provided on a fee-paying basis.

Primary education

Primary education is compulsory for all children aged 6 and lasts six years. Pupils are awarded a certificate after completing primary education.

Secondary education

Intermediate education is free and lasts three years (grades 7 to 9). At the end of this stage, successful students are awarded an intermediate education diploma according to the option chosen (general or religious studies). According to Law No. 32 of 2002, basic education is being implemented starting from the school year 2002/03. Free and compulsory basic education includes the primary and intermediate stages. At the end of basic education, students who pass the general examination are awarded the basic education certificate. General secondary education is free and lasts three years (grades



10 to 12). The first year is general study and as from the second year students may opt for the literary or the scientific section. Vocational secondary education (lasting two to three years according to the nature of vocation and training requirements) and technical secondary education (lasting three years) follow the intermediate stage. Technical secondary education comprises the following branches: technical industrial, commercial, and technical education for girls. Vocational secondary education comprises industrial and vocational education for girls. Vocational education programmes lasting two years have been phased out in 2000.

Higher education

Students who pass the baccalaureate exam (general or technical) can attend post-secondary intermediate institutes. Intermediate Teacher Institutes train assistant teachers and physical education teachers. Intermediate Technological Institutes comprise: industrial intermediate institutes, for students who have passed the technical industrial baccalaureate exam; banking commercial intermediate institutes, for students who have passed the commercial baccalaureate exam; and girls' technical intermediate institutes, for girls who have passed the girls' technical secondary education exam. The duration of studies is two years. Admission to the two-year higher institutes under the Ministry of Higher Education is limited to graduates of general secondary education. Holders of the general secondary diploma may enter universities according to their marks and within the quotas specified by the Council of Higher Education. The duration of undergraduate programmes leading to the award of the license (bachelor's degree) is between four and five years (six years in the case of medicine), depending on the field of study in the different faculties. A diploma of qualification and specialization is awarded after one year of study following the bachelor's degree, and a postgraduate diploma is awarded after one to two years of study (postgraduate certificate after three to four years of study in the case of medicine). A master's degree requires one year of study after the postgraduate diploma, and a doctorate two years of study after the master's degree.

The school year consists of thirty-two working weeks (not including examination periods), divided into two equal terms at all stages.

The educational process

The Higher Committee for Curricular Development, chaired by the Minister of Education, supervises the development of curricula. The Committee consists of representatives from the People's Assembly, popular organizations and university professors in addition to specialists from the Ministry of Education. Changes and innovations are introduced taking into account the general objectives and principles of education as well as the general educational plans. Several committees set up the new curricular projects which are then circulated among branch committees in the governorates for consideration and comments.

A corporate committee discusses the reports received from the governorates and presents a report to the Higher Committee for approval. The curricula are then referred to the political leadership for consideration and final approval. The textbooks prepared according to the new curricula are tested during one year. Branch committees



in the governorates supervise this process and a trial committee at the central level reports on the comments received for each subject. Once the experimental application is completed, meetings are organized with the participation of teachers where their remarks and observations are taken into consideration before the final approval of the new curricula and textbooks.

Pre-primary education

Pre-primary education (kindergarten) caters to children aged 3-5 and lasts three years. Preschool education is not compulsory and is provided on a fee-paying basis. Pre-primary education (kindergarten) aims at:

- ensuring children's personality development (regarding their psyche, body, intellect, and language);
- helping children to interact with their mates and respect social and moral values;
- preparing children to live in a society that believes in public productive teamwork;
- training children to channel their emotions, and direct and express them in a good way;
- developing children's self-confidence, initiative and their ability to express themselves freely;
- developing children's love for order and discipline, their family and land, and respect for collective ownership.

The Ministry of Education has introduced educational curricula for kindergartens. The latest effort was the Upgrading Education Curricula Project that started in 2004, which defines the philosophy and standards of the curricula and lays out the instructions that govern the writing of curricula textbooks. Defining the instructions on writing textbooks was initiated in the light of the approved curricula. These curricula incorporate children's educational development needs more than the previous curricula. (Syrian Commission for Family Affairs & UNICEF, 2008).

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (MOSAL) authorizes public (government) agencies to establish daycares for working mothers if they meet certain criteria stated in MOSAL's executive orders numbers 231 of 1990 and 81 of 1994. Provisions cover building and furniture specifications, staffing, child nutrition, transportation, healthcare, clothing and games. Provisions also cover the existence of effective daycare charters that detail regulations, education, nutrition, health plans, daily routines, services, staff numbers, supervisory boards and monthly contributions paid by beneficiary female workers. Public daycares are found throughout Syria's governorates; however, they are too few to satisfy the rapidly growing needs of an increasing female public servant workforce. In the governorates, governors issue licenses to the private sector to set up daycares. (*Ibid.*).

In 2001/02, there were 1,322 kindergartens with 4,077 sections. The number of children enrolled was 127,094, supervised by 5,436 nurses. The Ministry of Education encourages grass-root organizations to establish new kindergartens in order to increase the offer of pre-elementary education, and prepared new curricula (implemented since 1998/99), manuals and guidelines to support the development of



pre-primary education. In 2003/04 there were 1,431 kindergartens with 138,537 children enrolled and 6,365 teachers. (MOE, 2004).

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) carried out in 2005/06 found that only 7.5% of children aged 36-59 months were attending preschool. Urban-rural and regional differentials were significant: the figure was as high as 9.7% in urban areas, compared to 5.4% in rural areas. Differentials by socioeconomic status were significant; 18.1% of children living in rich households attended preschool, while the figure drops to 3.6% among poor households. Overall 33.6% of children who were at age 6 and attending the first grade of primary school were attending preschool the previous year. The proportion among boys was slightly higher than girls; 40% of children in urban areas had attended preschool the previous year compared to 25.8% among children living in rural area. Regional differentials by governorate were also very significant; while 52.4% of first graders have attended preschool in Damascus, only 22.8% of their counterparts in Aleppo had. Socioeconomic status appears to have a positive correlation with school readiness; while the indicator was only 18.8% among the poorest households, it increases to 49.5% among those children living in the richest households. Besides, a significant differential was evident by the mother's education level; with 21.2% among children whose mothers have no education rising to 57.2% among children whose mothers have university education. (Central Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF, 2008).

According to MOE statistics, in 2006/07 there were 1,637 kindergartens (KGs) with 5,519 classrooms; 242 kindergartens were affiliated with the MOE, 974 were private, 196 belonged to teachers' syndication, 185 were under the Women General Union (WGU), and 40 were affiliated with other entities. Thus 59% of KGs were private, 15% belonged to MOE, and 23% belonged to public (people's) organizations. The number of KGs varies by governorate and by region. Apparently, this variation is correlated with the number of inhabitants, the level of community awareness regarding the importance of KGs, private sector and WGU activities, and the presence of affluent population groups that can afford KG fees. The total enrolment in 2006/07 was 145,781 children, representing 12% of the eligible age group (3-5 years). Enrolment rates differ by region: in urban areas, south, central, and coastal governorates, rates are higher than in other governorates and regions. In the same year, the total number of people working in KGs was 7,769 teachers and administrative staff, of which 7,404 were females and 365 were males. The majority of males served as administrative staff in private KGs with females working both as teachers and administrative staff in different KGs. The majority of KG teachers and directors are not university or college trained in KG education, although, many joined training courses before or after they started working. The Faculty of Education at Damascus University took over KG teacher qualification courses and in 2003/04, under the umbrella of the Open University, launched its four-year KG degree programme. At the end of this programme, graduates obtain a university degree in education, majoring in KG teaching. The first class graduated in 2006/07. (Syrian Commission for Family Affairs & UNICEF, 2008).

Primary education

The six-year primary education stage aims at:

- providing pupils with basic knowledge and developing pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic, in order to prepare them to interact with their environment positively and to continue their studies;
- spreading the spirit of love, justice, equity and co-operation among pupils;
- forming a strong moral conscience and basic moral values such as faithfulness, loyalty, courage and sincerity;
- bringing up citizens who believe in their Arab nationality and understand its liberal characteristics, human dimensions and social content.

The curriculum is developed at the central level and is applied nationwide. The table below shows the weekly lesson timetable for primary education in 2001:

Primary education: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Religious education	2	2	3	3	3	3
Arabic language	11	11	10	10	8	8
Foreign language	–	–	–	–	3	3
Mathematics	5	5	5	5	5	5
Social studies	1	1	1	2	4	4
Science and health education	2	2	3	3	3	3
Music education	2	2	2	2	1	1
Physical education	3	3	3	3	2	2
Art education	2	2	3	2	1	1
Sub-total	28	28	30	30	30	30
Vanguard activities	2	2	2	2	2	2
Educational activities	2	2	–	–	–	–
Total weekly periods	32	32	32	32	32	32

Source: Ministry of Education, 2001. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

The introduction of basic education in 2002 necessitated curriculum amendments. Although this is a repeated process that is linked to ministerial changes in Syria, the most recent amendments followed a more scientific, logical, and modern methodology. Several educational, psychological, functional, and social standards were set for these curricula. Curriculum objectives and individual topics were selected based on these standards and later, guidelines for authoring textbooks production were approved. The Curriculum Upgrading Project started in 2004 and school textbooks were expected to be completed by 2012. Several studies and reports reveal that teaching methods differ from one discipline to another; however, common to most subjects is the utilization of didactics, alone or with questions. Student responses are usually limited to understanding and memorizing. Sometimes, these responses include using higher intellectual operations such as application, analysis, composition, evaluation, inference, deduction, exploration, problem solving and self learning. The widespread use of such intellectual operations is, however, limited, with minimal

efforts to improve or expand it. Teaching remains of limited value in developing students' mental skills. Moreover, didactics restrict communication and do not consider students' individual differences, thus preventing some students from absorbing the information delivered during the lesson. New curricula and textbooks are expected to pose a challenge because they require teachers to use methods differing from those currently used. This challenge requires training teachers in the use of new methods, and monitoring that use. (Syrian Commission for Family Affairs & UNICEF, 2008).

The school year is divided into two terms and at the end of each term the pupils are exposed to: (a) oral tests; (b) exercises and homework; (c) written tests; (d) terminal exam. The average score obtained by pupils in (a)-(c) and in the terminal exam (d), constitutes their results. The final, end-of-year score corresponds to the average of the two terminal scores. Certificates are awarded upon completion of grade 6. UNICEF reports that evaluation is continuous and is repeated a few times each school year. The school year ends with almost automatic graduation.

In 1995/96, the gross enrolment ratio was 98.9% and the average drop-out rate was 1.09%. The average number of pupils per section was 30 and the average pupil-teacher ratio was 22.6:1.

As mentioned, according to Law No. 32 of 2002 basic education is being implemented starting from the school year 2002/03. Free and compulsory basic education includes the primary and intermediate stages. At the end of basic education, students who pass the general examination are awarded the basic education certificate. In 2006/07, the failure rate at the examinations was 28.7% for girls and 36.8% for boys. (Syrian Commission for Family Affairs & UNICEF, 2008).

In 2006/07, basic education schools and buildings amounted to 16,190 schools. These were 12,424 full time and 3,766 two-shift schools; 415 schools were only for boys, 428 were only for girls, and 11,248 were co-educational. The number of two-shift schools represented 30% of full time schools and 23% of total schools. The number of co-educational schools has increased. In 2005/06, the total enrolment at the basic education level (primary and intermediate education) was 3,898,272 students (2,036,934 boys and 1,861,338 girls), representing a net enrolment ratio of 91.5% for boys and 88.9% for girls. The average drop-out rate in basic education was 2.9% for boys and 2.2% for girls in 2005/06. (*Ibid.*).

Intermediate and secondary education

Intermediate and secondary education aim at:

- helping the students in achieving their physical, psychological, social, moral, national and human growth;
- offering a suitable climate for completing students' emotional maturity;
- developing students' aesthetical appreciation, creative imagination, and respect for human rights;
- developing students love for co-operative work, and establishing a school environment which can strengthen national loyalty to the Arab nation;

- helping students to take care of the national heritage and study it critically, discarding fanaticism and racial discrimination;
- helping the students to understand their society, its values, its relations with other societies and its position among them;
- developing students abilities of abstract reasoning and generalization, logical and objective thinking and comprehension, their intellectual freedom and positive criticism skills.

The intermediate stage lasts three years, and in the past at the end of this level successful students were awarded the intermediate education diploma (after the introduction of basic education in 2002, the basic education certificate). They may proceed to general secondary schools (three-year course, comprising the scientific and the literary sections starting from the second year), at the end of which they sit the baccalaureate examination, or enrol into technical and vocational schools. At the end of the three-year technical education course, students sit the technical secondary diploma (baccalaureate) examination. Religious education is not administered by the Ministry of Education and is organized as a six-year course, including the intermediate and secondary stages.

The tables below show the weekly lesson timetables for intermediate and general secondary education in 2001:

Preparatory education (lower secondary): weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each form		
	I	II	III
Religious education	2	2	2
Arabic language (including handwriting)	6	6	6
Foreign language	5	5	5
Mathematics	4	4	5
Social studies (history, geography and national socialist education)	4	4	4
General science	3	4	4
Drawing	1	1	1
Practical subjects (manual works)	2	2	1
Music and anthems	1	2	–
Agriculture (boys) or needlework and home economics (girls)	2	2	2
Military training	2	2	2
Total weekly periods	32	34	32
Physical education (boys)	2	2	2
Physical education (girls)	2	2	1

Source: Ministry of Education, 2001. Each teaching period lasts 50 minutes.

General secondary education: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each form				
	I	II		III	
		Scient.	Liter.	Scient.	Liter.
Religious education	2	2	2	2	2
Arabic language	6	4	7	4	8
Foreign language	5	5	8	5	7
Principles of philosophy and sociology	1	–	–	–	–
Logic and humanities	–	2	–	–	–
Arab society, principles of economics and general philosophy	–	–	3	–	–
Philosophy	–	–	–	–	5
History	2	1	3	–	3
Geography	2	–	3	–	3
Mathematics	4	6	–	8	–
Computer science	2	2	–	–	–
Statistics and science	–	–	2	–	–
Physics	2	4	–	5	–
Chemistry	2	2	–	2	–
Biology	2	3	–	3	–
Art education	1	–	1	–	–
Physical education	1	1	1	–	1
National socialist education	1	1	1	1	1
Military training	2	2	2	2	2
Total weekly periods	35	35	33	32	32

Source: Ministry of Education, 2001. Each teaching period lasts 50 minutes.

Secondary education curricula vary according to the branch and field of study, however, there are some common materials such as Arabic and foreign languages. Curricula were developed several times, but the foundations were just recently amended. Amended curricula have not been implemented yet, and textbooks are currently being written and prepared. A problem with the general secondary education curriculum is the challenge in determining the objectives and content as it is supposed to qualify the student for multidisciplinary higher education, life as well as work. This is difficult to achieve and makes the curriculum both extensive and intensive. A problem with the secondary vocational education curricula is that they are developed in the same way as the general secondary curricula. Accordingly, they may not include professional competences and skills necessary to work in the student's chosen field. Simply presenting the information contained in textbooks is the most widely used method in teaching, and relying on the instructors' and students' explanations of professional skills and performance is a common technique in training. The presentation is complemented with educational materials and aids available in the school. (Syrian Commission for Family Affairs & UNICEF, 2008).

In 2003/04, there were 14,910 basic education schools (covering the previous primary and intermediate stages) with some 3.89 million students enrolled and 205,942 teachers. There were 1,171 general secondary schools with 270,878 students enrolled and 27,402 teachers. The number of vocational secondary schools was 563, with a total enrolment of 121,744 students and 17,164 teachers. Finally, there were 96



postsecondary intermediate institutes, with 40,039 students enrolled and 5,034 teachers. (MOE, 2004).

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) carried out in 2005/06 found that the percentage of secondary school participation (net attendance ratio) was 54.2%. The percentage differs between urban areas (57.4%) and rural areas (50.8%). There was also a differential by governorate; with the highest in Sweida (83.6%) and the lowest in Aleppo (39.9%). (Central Bureau of Statistics & UNICEF, 2008).

The number of students in all branches of secondary education was 465,318 during the 2006/07 school year, of whom 22.3% enrolled in vocational education. The number of students enrolled amounts to 34.6% of the population in the 15 to 17 age group. The average success rate on the general secondary certificate was 69% during the period 2001–2006, with 73% in scientific branch and 65% in the humanities branch. Secondary vocational certificate success rates vary from one jurisdiction to another, ranging from 69% in domestic sciences to 64% in the commercial branch. This rate is similar to success rates for the general secondary examinations. Secondary education dropout rates vary from one grade to another and from one region to another, but overall amount to about 9% in general secondary and 12% in vocational secondary education. The number of teachers in government schools was 63,348 in 2006/07, of which 53% were male and 47% female teachers, and 90% were staff and 10% were substitutes. Secondary school teachers hold bachelor's degrees and about 60% of them obtained educational diplomas from the Faculty of Education. The Ministry of Education encourages teachers' to upgrade their education qualifications by sending some of them to faculties of education and directing others to virtual education institutions to obtain diplomas in education, and by organizing training courses for teachers to develop their knowledge and skills, and improve their performance. (Syrian Commission for Family Affairs & UNICEF, 2008).

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

Information is not available.

Teaching staff

The Ministry of Education considers pre-service and in-service staff training as a priority. A special directorate for teachers' education and training within the Ministry is entrusted with training the cadres necessary for the educational process.

Pre-service training of teachers for primary and intermediate education is ensured by the teacher training schools, intermediate teacher training institutes, and sports institutes. In 1994/95, there were 14 teacher training schools, 16 intermediate teacher training institutes and six sports institutes.

Training for secondary education teachers is provided at the university level in their respective fields of specialization (faculties of sciences, letters, mechanical and electrical engineering; the duration of studies is four years). Students who have obtained their university degree may also attend a one-year course at the faculty of



education, in order to be qualified to teach both at the intermediate and secondary levels. The qualifications required for teaching at the different levels are as follows:

- Primary stage: primary teaching certificate (teacher training schools), intermediate teaching certificate (teacher training institutes).
- Intermediate stage: intermediate teaching certificate (B.A. or B.Sc. with a diploma of education).
- General secondary stage: B.A. or B.Sc. with a diploma of education.
- Vocational and technical secondary stage: intermediate institute certificate; B.Sc. in electrical and mechanical engineering with a diploma of education.
- Intermediate and higher institutes: university degree.
- University: M.A. or Ph.D.

According to the decision of the regional leadership of the Baath Socialist Party No. 967 of March 1997, the training of teachers and teacher assistants is to be provided in faculties of education instead of teacher training institutes. Four faculties of education were entrusted with the task of training teachers, including those at kindergarten and elementary education levels, by virtue of Decree No. 61 of 1999.

In 2005/06 the following categories of teachers were working at the basic education level (primary and intermediate education):

- Graduates of Teacher Preparation Institutes: individuals who have completed a two-year preparation course after graduating from secondary school that trains them as primary school teachers.
- Graduates of Education Institutes: secondary school graduates who have been prepared to teach one or two materials in preparatory schools. These individuals can be appointed to the post of assistant teacher upon completion of these programmes.
- Graduates of the Faculty of Education-Grade School Teacher Programme: individuals who are trained to teach the first four grades of basic education and can be assigned to grade school teacher positions.
- Graduates of Education Colleges, with an educational qualification diploma: individuals who have graduated from university that complete a one year training programme that prepares them to teach one or more subjects in preparatory and secondary schools.
- Graduates of Colleges of Arts and Sciences who had not received a specialized education qualification.
- Graduates of secondary education who have not received a specialized educational qualification in an institute or a university, and whose preparation was limited to targeted training courses. (Syrian Commission for Family Affairs & UNICEF, 2008).

The MOE is aiming to improve teachers' competencies and performance by organizing different training courses within the continuing education centers set up for this purpose in the governorates. The Ministry keeps teachers informed of all implemented upgrades and requires them to improve their performance. It has expanded teacher training courses by implementing, in cooperation with different



Faculties of Education, a programme to complete their qualifications by enrolling in a two-year course with the Open University. These two years are added to the previously completed two-year qualification courses in Teacher Preparation Institutes. This way, teachers are as qualified as the Faculty of Education's Grade Teacher Programme graduates. Education directorates in the governorates monitor and guide teachers' performance in the schools by sending educational specialists and advisors to visit the teachers in their classrooms, observe classes, and provide advice and guidance to improve teachers' performance as well as by requesting them to share their remarks regarding positive and negative aspects of teacher performance. Educational advisors' visits are criticized because they are very infrequent, no more than once or twice a year, and they often do not provide objective remarks. (*Ibid.*).

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For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>