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Principles and general objectives of education

According to the document approved by the Supreme Council of Education in 1998, national development is the primary aim of education in order to increase productivity, achieve social and national integration, and cultivate social, moral and spiritual values with great emphasis placed on strengthening and encouraging the faith of Islam. The goals approved by the Council also emphasize the role of education in developing manpower for different levels of economy and thus education is viewed as an investment in the future. (MOE, 2003).

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The **Constitution** of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Second Five-year Development Plan (1995-1999) put a special emphasis on the provision of free education and facilities for compulsory education. According to Article 30 of the Constitution, the government is obliged to provide free education for all.

According to **Note No. 62** of the Second Development Plan, the State is obliged to provide the necessary facilities to make it compulsory for school age children and illiterates aged less than 40 years to attend school and literacy courses, respectively.

According to Article 11 of the Executive Regulation of the above Note, approved by the Cabinet on 16 June 1996, the Ministry of Education, with the assistance of the Literacy Movement Organization, is obliged to announce in March the list of the regions which will be covered the following year by compulsory education of school-age children as well as the illiterate group.

On the basis of Articles 10 and 11 of the principles governing the education system, general education up to the end of lower secondary is compulsory and free of charge for all. The duration of compulsory was five years and according to the Second Five-year Development Plan, compulsory education will last eight years for the age group 6-13 (primary and lower secondary education).

The **Act Regarding the Establishment of Non-profit Schools** was approved by the Islamic Parliament on 25 May 1988. Non-profit schools are established and managed through people's participation. Non-profit schools follow the objectives, criteria, curriculum, textbooks, exams and regulations of the Ministry of Education and are under its supervision.

In addition to what is presented in the Constitution, the rules and decrees relating to the Ministry of Education are approved by the Islamic Parliament, the Cabinet and the Supreme Education Council. The **Act of Co-operation** (1992) of the Ministry of Education with other ministries and organizations provided for the extension of responsibility for education to other ministries and in this way using the



facilities of other organizations became possible. The Note No. 8 of the Budget Act (1996) granted more financial resources to the Ministry of Education. The **Act of Establishing Adult Schools and Exemplary Public Schools** (1993) have facilitated education for all and made it possible for people to participate in education. The **Bill on Education Council Formation**, approved on 24 December 1993, not only encourages public participation but also decentralizes the educational administration to some extent.

In 2004, the **Statute regarding the pre-school level** was approved and adopted by the Supreme Council of Education.

As per **Law on Compulsory Education**, approved on 28 July 1943, and its amendment of 19 June 1971, the Ministry of Education has been assigned with the task to make necessary provision of compulsory and free-of-charge educational services for all school-aged children at the primary and lower secondary levels. As per paragraph (b) of Article 52 of the Fourth Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plan, and its By-law (approved by the Cabinet meeting on 25 August 2005) education is compulsory up to the end of lower secondary. (MOE, 2008).

Administration and management of the education system

The **Ministry of Education** administers and finances schools at the primary and secondary levels. The **Supreme Council of Education**, as the highest legislative body, approves all policies and regulations related to non-university education.

The **Ministry of Science, Research and Technology** (formerly the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education) is responsible for universities of science, art and technology. The **Ministry of Health and Medical Education** supervises medical schools/universities and organizes the training of medical assistants. The **Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs** is responsible for non-formal training; non-formal vocational education courses are conducted by the **Technical and Vocational Training Organization** (TVTO) under this ministry. Other ministries involved in educational activities include Culture and Islamic Guidance, Agriculture, and the Welfare Organization. Basic non-formal education and literacy programmes are coordinated by **Literacy Movement Organization**.

Specialized higher education institutions are under the control of various ministries, such as Agriculture, Petroleum, Industry, etc. They organize courses and award diplomas in various specializations in agreement with the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology. The Applied Scientific University is responsible for co-ordination between these ministries to train manpower as required.

The Ministry of Education performs its duties mainly through the **Provincial Organizations** and the **District Offices**. The head of the Provincial Organization is appointed by the Minister in coordination with the governor of the province. The main duties of the Provincial Organizations of Education are the following: supervising the design and fulfillment of educational programmes in the framework of proved plans and confirming the subordinate districts programmes; supervising training programmes for teachers and administrative personnel throughout the province;



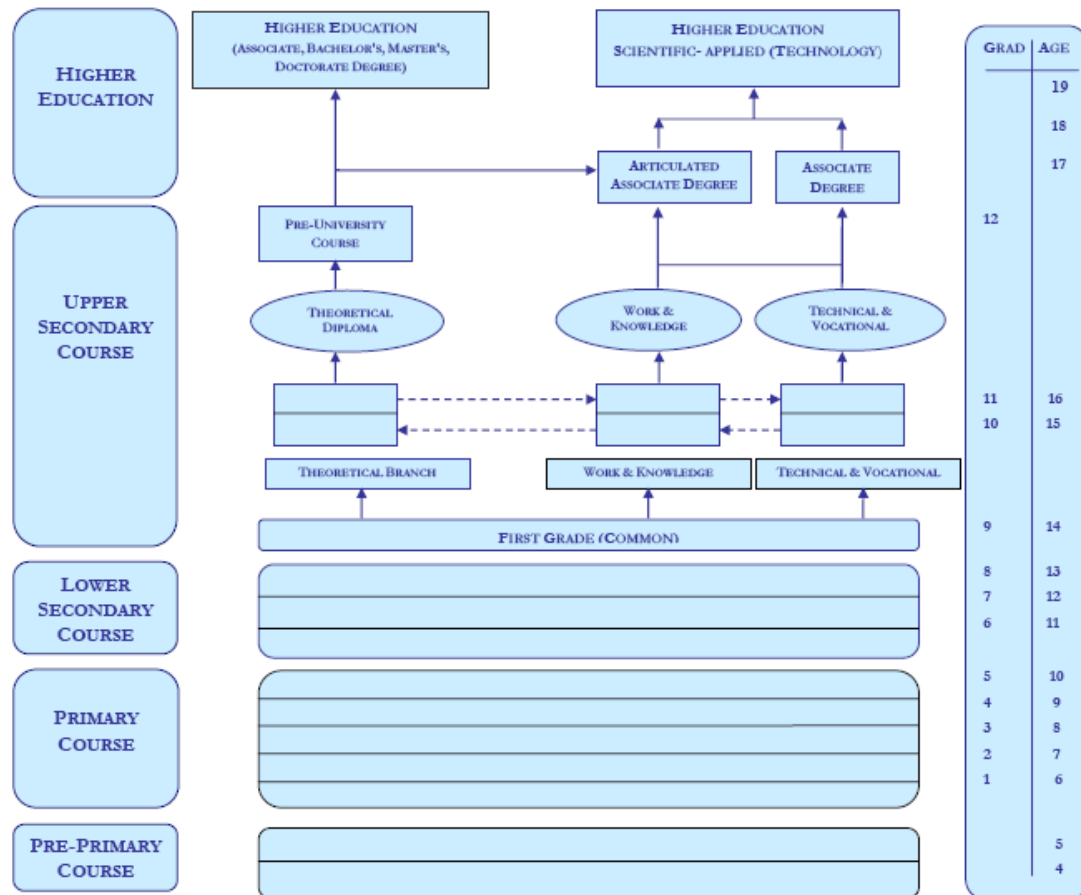
supervising non-public schools and providing required facilities; providing suitable measures for organizing provincial and district councils of education in the province and subordinated districts according to the existing instructions; and implementing educational programmes and curricula in accordance with the special needs of each region in the framework of approved plans of the Ministry of Education.

District Offices act under the supervision of the Provincial Organizations. Each office is headed by a director appointed by the head of the Provincial Organization. District Councils of Education play a fundamental role in facilitating the participation of various governmental and non-governmental organizations in education. In 2003 there were 707 District Offices throughout the country.

Each school is headed by a principal who is appointed by the head of the District Office. The principal is responsible for implementing all educational, financial and administrative activities in the school. Other management bodies at the school level include the school council, the teachers' council, the students' council and Parents-Teachers Association. Efforts are being made to transfer some significant responsibilities to individual schools and to involve parents in the decision-making process. (MOE, 2003).

Structure and organization of the education system

Islamic Republic of Iran: structure of the education system



Pre-school education

Pre-primary education caters to children aged 4 and 5 years. Pre-primary education is not compulsory.

Primary education

Primary education is the first stage of formal education and lasts five years (grades 1-5); it is compulsory and the entry age is 6. Pupils sit the final examination at the end of grade 5, and if successful they are awarded the certificate of completed primary level studies.



Secondary education

Secondary education consists of two cycles. Lower secondary education lasts three years and is compulsory. The eight years of schooling encompassing primary and lower secondary education are considered as basic education. The three-year upper secondary education programme is for students graduating from junior high schools. The courses offered in secondary schools are organized in three branches: academic, technical and vocational, and *Kar-o-Danesh* (work and knowledge, a flexible vocational branch). A one-year pre-university course is available for those who have successfully completed (academic) upper secondary education. In the case of the technical and vocational education branch, students having completed the upper secondary cycle can enrol in a two-year course leading to the associate degree of technician.

Higher education

Higher education institutions include universities, colleges and higher education centres. Access to higher education is for high school graduates who have been successful in the entrance examination. Universities include general and specialized universities, the Comprehensive Technology University, the *Paym-e-nour* University (distance university), Azad Islamic University, and medical universities. Associate degree courses generally take two years to complete. Bachelor's degree programmes normally last four years (five years in the case of architecture; six years in the case of veterinary and dentistry; seven years in the case of medicine). Master's degree programmes generally require two years of study after the bachelor's degree. Doctoral programmes normally take four to five years to complete after the master's degree.

The school year at pre-university level is divided into two semesters and generally lasts nine months. It consists of 35 (six-day) working weeks.

The educational process

Pre-primary education

Pre-primary education is a one-year programme aimed at preparing 5-year-olds for the primary stage. The main objectives of pre-primary education (kindergarten) are to: contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and social growth of young children, based on religious and ethical principles; develop the abilities and talents of children in order to prepare them for future studies; prepare children to easily comprehend scientific concepts; promote the Persian language, particularly in the provinces where different languages are spoken; prepare children to adapt themselves to Islamic principles in their personal and social life; creating in them the sense of cooperation and partnership in social activities and imbibing in them a respect for laws and regulations and to be responsive; help low-income families by creating a safe educational atmosphere to train their young children.



Two teacher guidebooks entitled *Content and methods of instruction in pre-primary centres* (volumes 1 and 2) are used for instruction. In the first volume, general teaching techniques at the pre-primary level are explained to the instructor. In each work unit the objectives are indicated first, then the basic activities are described. These activities include visits and observations, discussions, language learning, introduction to mathematics and science concepts as well as religious values and beliefs. Each work unit also includes some additional activities such as handicrafts, playing with dough, cutting and pasting, printing, painting, plays, story-telling, songs and physical exercises. The rest of the book contains work units related to the first three months of pre-primary courses.

In 1995/96, the average number of pupils per class was 23.2. According to national estimates, in 1998 the gross enrolment ratio (GER) was 14.9% (MOE, 1999). In 2000/01, there were 7,382 pre-schools in the country with a total of 286,903 children enrolled. (MOE, 2001).

In 2002/03 there were 12,456 pre-school centres (of which 11,173 in the public sector) with 403,654 children enrolled. In the same year, it is estimated that some 26% of the pupils at the primary level have had some previous preschool experience (MOE, 2003); this percentage was 43.5% in 2006/07 (MOE, 2008). According to government statistics, in 2003/04 the GER was estimated at 35.5% for centres affiliated to the Ministry of Education and 10.5% for other non-related organizations. In 2006, the GER at the pre-primary level (MOE-affiliated centers only) was estimated at 49.7% (47% for boys and 52.6% for girls; 37.7% in rural areas). (MOE, 2008).

Primary education

Primary education lasts five years and is compulsory. The main objectives of primary education are to: create a favourable atmosphere for the moral and religious development of pupils; develop pupils' talents and creative abilities; develop pupils' physical strength; enable the pupils to read and write, improving their numeracy skills, and providing necessary training on proper social behaviour.

The focus of the curriculum at the primary level is on the development of basic skills of literacy and numeracy, the study of the environment in terms of physical and social phenomena, and religious teaching. The weekly lesson timetable for primary education is shown in the table below:

Primary education: weekly lesson timetable

| Subject | Number of weekly periods in each grade | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | I | II | III | IV | V |
| The Holy Quran | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Religious teaching | – | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Persian composition | – | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Persian dictation | – | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Persian reading | 11 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Social studies | – | – | 2 | 3-2 | 3-2 |
| Art | 2 | 2 | 1-2 | 1-2 | 1-2 |
| Science and health | 3 | 3 | 3-2 | 3 | 3 |
| Mathematics | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Physical education | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Total weekly periods | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 |

Source: Ministry of Education, 2003. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes in Grades I-II and 50 minutes in Grades III-V.

All subjects and textbooks for primary education are prepared and approved at central level. It is compulsory to pass all the subjects to be admitted to the next grade. There is a final examination at the end of grade 5, administered at regional and provincial levels. Successful pupils are awarded the certificate of completed primary level studies.

The average drop-out rate for the primary level in 1993/94 was 1.9% (the same figure in 2002/03). In the same year, the repetition rate was as follows: 9.5% in grade 1; 6.9% in grade 2; 4.1% in grade 3; 6.5% in grade 4; and 8.7% in grade 5. In 1999/2000, the rate of transition from primary to lower secondary education was 95.2%.

In 2000/01, the average number of pupils per class was 25 and the average pupil-teacher ratio was 24.8:1 (MOE, 2001). In 2002/03, there were 68,632 primary schools (of which 66,073 in the public sector) with some 7 million pupils enrolled. The transition rate from primary to lower secondary was 95.4%. (MOE, 2003).

The gross enrolment ratio was estimated at 104% in 2006/07, and the net enrolment ratio at 97.8%. The average pupil-teacher ratio was 21.8:1. The average survival rate to grade 5 was estimated at 91.8% (92.1% for boys and 91.4% for girls; 80.4% in rural areas); the transition rate to lower secondary was estimated at 97.4% (98.2% for boys and 96.6% for girls; 78.8% in rural areas). The percentage of teachers holding a university degree and having the required teaching qualifications was 61.3% (67.9% for male teachers and 56.1% for females). A total of 42,013 children were enrolled in special needs education. In 2005, the average repetition rate was 4.1% in grade 1 (7.7% in rural areas), 2.3% in grade 2 (4.5% in rural areas), 1.5% in grade 3 (2.8% rural), 1.2% in grade 4 (2.7% rural), and less than 1% in grade 5 (1.5% rural). (MOE, 2008).

Secondary education

The main aims of lower secondary (guidance) education are to: develop the students' moral and intellectual abilities; increase the students' experiences and general knowledge; help students strengthening the habits of discipline and scientific imagination which have been taught in primary school; recognize individual preferences and talents in students so that they may be directed towards suitable studies and professions.

The weekly lesson timetable is shown in the table below:

Lower secondary education: weekly lesson timetable

| Subject | Number of weekly periods in each form | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| | I | II | III |
| Persian literature | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Mathematics | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Science | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Religious teaching | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Arabic language | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Social studies | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Art | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Introduction to techniques and vocations | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Foreign language | 2 | 4 | 4 |
| Defence preparation | – | – | 1-0 |
| The Holy Quran | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Physical education | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| 'Fostering affairs' | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Compensatory courses | 2 | 3 | 2-3 |
| Total weekly periods | 36 | 36 | 36 |

Source: Ministry of Education. *Education in the Islamic Republic of Iran 2003*. Each teaching period lasts 50 minutes.

Religious minority groups have their own specific teaching and there is a special appendix for the Sunnite. It is compulsory to pass all the subjects in the different lower secondary forms. Teaching is done in Persian at all levels. In bilingual regions, a one-month course is held to teach key concepts of the language to beginners, before the school year starts. There is a final examination at the end of Form 3 administered at regional and provincial levels. Successful students are awarded the certificate of completed lower secondary level studies.

The average repetition rate for the lower secondary level in 2002/03 was 6.1% in Form 1, 5.6% in Form 2, and 8.2% in Form 3. In 2000/01, the transition rate from lower secondary to upper secondary education was about 98%. The average number of pupils per class in 1999/2000 was 30.4, and the average pupil-teacher ratio was 26.6:1. In 2002/03, there were 30,634 lower secondary schools (of which 28,048 in the public sector) with about 4.86 million students enrolled. In 2006, the gross enrolment ratio at the lower secondary level was 99% (103% for boys and 95% for girls; 84% in rural areas). The net enrolment ratio was estimated at 84.9%. The



percentage of teachers holding a bachelor's degree and having the required teaching qualifications was 48.5% (51.6% for males and 45.5% for females). A total of 3,658 students were enrolled in special needs education at the lower secondary level. The transition rate to upper secondary education was 93% (92.4% for boys and 93.7% for girls; 54.5% in rural areas). (MOE, 2008).

Upper secondary education is for lower secondary school graduates who enter the three-year secondary school according to their aptitude and potential. The courses offered at the upper secondary level are organized in the following branches:

- *Academic branch*: the aim of this course is to promote general and cultural knowledge, to identify students' aptitudes and attitudes, and to provide a proper basis to guide them into one of the many areas of secondary education and prepare them for university studies. Students have 66 units (1 unit = 30 hours) in common while the remaining units vary depending on the course of study: humanities and literature, 27 units; mathematics and physics, 26 units; experimental sciences, 24 units. There is a final examination administered nationwide and successful students are awarded a diploma. Graduates can take a one-year pre-university course.
- *Technical and vocational education branch*: this branch consists of three main fields (technical, agricultural and vocational). There are currently thirty fields in technical and vocational education (TVE). The aim of the course, in addition to promoting general knowledge and culture and identifying aptitudes and attitudes of students, is to prepare them to continue their studies in applied science courses. About 58 of the 96 units are common in different areas, and the other units vary among industry, agriculture and service courses. Qualified students of TVE courses can also enter the institutions offering technician degree programmes or pre-university courses, and others receive first- or second-grade skill certificates according to their fields of study.
- *Kar-o-Danesh (work and knowledge) branch*: each *Kar-Danesh* has its own syllabus which is developed and is available at the Under-secretary of Secondary Education. The educational process in the *Kar-Danesh* branch, which covers 400 skills, is different from the other branches. It is competence-based, education is rather individual, and a modular education method is applied. The aim of this course is to train semi-skilled and skilled workers, foremen and supervisors. Successful students are awarded a second-degree skill certificate (i.e. National Skill Standard II), a first-degree skill certificate (i.e. National Skill Standard I), or a diploma.

The pre-university course aims at preparing students to enter the universities. Students must complete 24 units according to their fields of study (mathematics, experimental sciences, humanities, art, and Islamic culture). The programme lasts one academic year. The curriculum is based on the secondary school curriculum and takes into account the requirements at the higher education level. It is prepared and approved by the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology and the Ministry of Health and Medical Education. The Ministry of Education is responsible for administering the pre-university programme. Upon completion of the pre-university programme, graduates are eligible to sit the university entrance examination. The secondary school graduates who are interested in entering a two-year associate degree

course do not have to pass the pre-university programme, provided they meet the other requirements.

At the upper secondary level, the curriculum consists of three types of subjects and courses: general/common subjects which are common for all fields and branches; elective subjects; and special subjects which are specific for each field or branch.

Foreign language teaching includes English, French, or German. All upper secondary students should pass four elective units. Girls are exempted from the general required subject called defence preparation; however, they have to replace it by passing one of the elective or special required units of other branches. Students belonging to religious minority groups are exempted from passing exams regarding the Quran, which is a general required subject; however, they have to pass the same number of other elective or special required units of other branches. The tables below show the required number of units:

Upper secondary education: number of units required in common courses by branch

| Subject | Number of units by branch | | |
|--|---------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| | Academic | Techn./Voc. | Skills |
| The Holy Qu'ran | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Religious education | 6 | 6 | 4 |
| Persian literature and dictation | 6 | 4 | 4 |
| Grammar and writing | 6 | 4 | 4 |
| Arabic | 6 | 6 | 4 |
| Foreign language (English, French or German) | 6 | 6 | 4 |
| Social science | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Economics | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Physics | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Chemistry | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Physics laboratory | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Chemistry laboratory | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Mathematics | 8 | 8 | 4 |
| History of Iran | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Geography of Iran | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Biology, hygiene and environment | 4 | – | – |
| Physical education | 3 | 3 | 1 |
| Defence preparation | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Total number of units | 66 | 58 | 45 |

Note: In principle, one unit is equivalent to 30 academic hours (50 minutes' long). The total number of units refers to the three-year programme.

Upper secondary education, academic branch: number of units required in specialized courses

| Subject | Number of units by specialization | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Humanities and literature | Mathematics and physics | Experimental sciences |
| Persian literature and dictation | 2 | – | – |
| Literary essays | 2 | – | – |
| History of Persian literature | 3 | – | – |
| Geography | 2 | – | – |
| Economical and political geography | 2 | – | – |
| History of Iran | 2 | – | – |
| History of Islamic and Iranian culture and civilization | 2 | – | – |
| Economics | 2 | – | – |
| Arabic | 3 | – | – |
| Logic | 1 | – | – |
| Philosophy | 1 | – | – |
| Sociology | 3 | – | – |
| Psychology | 2 | – | – |
| Physics | – | 6 | 4 |
| Physics laboratory | – | 1 | 1 |
| Chemistry | – | 4 | 4 |
| Chemistry laboratory | – | 1 | 1 |
| Geometry | – | 5 | 2 |
| Arithmetic | – | 4 | – |
| Algebra and probability | – | 2 | – |
| Mathematics | – | – | 2 |
| Computer science | – | 3 | – |
| Biology | – | – | 2 |
| Botanical biology | – | – | 2 |
| Animal biology | – | – | 3 |
| Biology laboratory | – | – | 1 |
| Geology | – | – | 2 |
| Total number of units | 27 | 26 | 24 |

Note: In principle, one unit is equivalent to 30 academic hours (50 minutes' long). The total number of units refers to the three-year programme.

Pre-university one-year programme: number of units by branch

| Subject | Number of units by branch | | | | |
|--|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | M. | E.S. | H. | A. | I.C. |
| Islamic culture | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | – |
| Persian language | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Persian literature | – | – | 3 | – | – |
| Foreign language | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Physics | 4 | 3 | – | – | – |
| Chemistry | 4 | 4 | – | – | – |
| Differential and integral calculus | 4 | – | – | – | – |
| Analytical geometry and linear algebra | 4 | – | – | – | – |
| General mathematics | – | 3 | 2 | – | – |
| Biology | – | 4 | – | – | – |
| Geology | – | 2 | – | – | – |
| Arabic | – | – | 3 | – | – |
| Arabic literature | – | – | – | – | 5 |
| History | – | – | 2 | – | – |
| Geography | – | – | 2 | – | – |
| Social science | – | – | 2 | – | – |
| Philosophy | – | – | 2 | – | 2 |
| Introduction to the arts | – | – | – | 2 | – |
| Persian art and literature | – | – | – | 2 | – |
| History of art | – | – | – | 4 | – |
| Art workshop | – | – | – | 4 | – |
| Human space and design | – | – | – | 2 | – |
| Iranian arts and culture | – | – | – | 2 | – |
| Ethics | – | – | – | – | 2 |
| Principles of ideas | – | – | – | – | 3 |
| Logic | – | – | – | – | 4 |
| Religious jurisprudence | – | – | – | – | 4 |
| Total number of units | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 26 |

Note: In principle, one unit is equivalent to 30 academic hours (45-50 minutes' long).

M. = Mathematics; E.S. = Experimental sciences; H. = Humanities; A. = Art; I.C. = Islamic culture.

Upon successful completion of the upper secondary level, students in academic, technical and vocational, or *Kar-o-Danesh* education are awarded the high school diploma. The transition rate from upper secondary to post-secondary level or universities (private and public) was estimated at 40% in 1994/95.

In 1999/2000, the average number of students per class at the upper secondary level (including the pre-university course) was 30.9 and the average student-teacher ratio was 27.6:1. In 2002/03 there were 3,828,600 students enrolled at the upper secondary level and 455,157 students enrolled in the pre-university course. (MOE, 2003). In 2006, the gross enrolment ratio at the upper secondary level was estimated at 60.9% (59.7% for boys and 62.2% for girls; 26.4% in rural areas); 92.8% of upper secondary and pre-university education teachers had the required academic qualifications. In the same year, it was estimated that enrolments in the technical and vocational and *Kar-o-Danesh* streams represented 22.9% of the total enrolment at the upper secondary level; in addition, some 699,000 trainees were trained in non-formal technical and vocational education programmes and some 1.8 million (of whom

70.5% were women) were in non-governmental technical and vocational schools. A total of 2,440 students were enrolled in special needs education at the upper secondary level and 11,304 were in vocational skills education. (MOE, 2008).

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

Information is not available.

Teaching staff

The qualifications required to teach at the different levels of education are the following:

- An associate degree in primary teaching for teaching at the primary level. Based upon the Act of Service of 1990, primary school teachers are either high school diploma holders who have passed the nationwide university entrance exams, have been admitted to teacher training centres and have received a post-secondary certificate in primary education teaching; or lower secondary school graduates or holders of the certifications of second grade of upper secondary schools in experimental science or physics/mathematics fields who have passed an entrance exam, and after selection have been admitted to two-year or four-year teacher-training centres (TTCs). In addition, those upper secondary school diploma holders who have five years of teaching experience in the teaching staff of the Literacy Movement Organization are employed for teaching in primary schools in accordance with the Act approved by the Islamic Parliament (1984) and they are recruited officially as primary school teachers.
- An associate degree in one of the ten specialized subjects for teaching at the lower secondary level. The required manpower for lower secondary education is constituted of certificate holders of upper secondary schools admitted to TTCs through the nationwide university entrance exam in the following courses: literature and humanities; mathematics; experimental science; and physical education. Having received their associate degrees, they are prepared to teach in lower secondary schools. Their recruitment is done in accordance with the Act of Service and they are officially recruited after graduation.
- A bachelor's degree in one of the fourteen specialized subjects for teaching at the upper secondary level. The required manpower for upper secondary education are either college students in teaching fields who become obliged to give service in accordance with the approved Act of the Islamic Parliament (1990), or bachelor's degree holders recruited through advertising, interview and selection.

The curriculum of the pre-service teacher training programmes leading to an associate degree and a bachelor's degree consists of three components:

- Subjects related to the main field of study, representing 55% and 65% of the credit units of associate degree and bachelor's degree courses, respectively.



- Subjects related to behavioural sciences, teaching methods and techniques, which form 25% and 20% of the credit units of associate degree and bachelor's degree courses, respectively.
- General subjects including religious beliefs and values, Persian language and literature, health, environment, and foreign languages, which is 20% and 15% of the credit units of associate degrees and bachelor's degree courses, respectively.

TTCs are responsible for training manpower to teach at the primary and lower secondary levels, and also at special schools. The number of students admitted at these centres was 8,000 in 1995. In 2002/03 there were 69 TTCs in the country with 9,729 students enrolled. (MOE, 2003).

In 2002/03 there were 143 Technical-Vocational Colleges (TVCs) with about 130,000 students enrolled. TVCs are affiliated to the Ministry of Education and train qualified technicians required for technical and vocational schools. TVCs offer two-year courses in about 40 fields of study and the graduates are awarded the associate degree.

Higher education centres for in-service training offer courses to teachers to further their studies. In 1995 there were 296 such centres to improve the qualifications of the employees of the Ministry of Education who meet the requirement of the different educational levels.

Short-term in-service training courses aim at improving specific competencies of teachers and other educational staff. These courses do not lead to the award of academic degrees, but the participants are awarded certificates that are required for their further promotion. In 2002/03 nearly 11,000 short-term courses were offered and about 970,000 employees had the opportunity to attend these courses. (MOE, 2003).

About 6,000 students were admitted to teacher training programmes offered by universities in 1996. These are to be employed in the Ministry of Education after graduation. According to the agreement made by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science, some of the applicants of the nationwide university entrance examination can also apply for special courses required by the Ministry of Education every year. These students are employed by the Ministry of Education as they start their university studies. Their teaching career starts after graduation. Statistics show that the number of teachers with a high school diploma has decreased, while the number of teachers who are holders of a bachelor's degree or a master's degree has increased.

Teachers working at public schools are local public employees and their status is guaranteed by law. In addition, their working conditions are protected by the Act of State Employment. There is no noticeable difference between men and women's employment in the Act except that women can enjoy being half-time employees for almost four years after giving birth to a child.

Teachers are highly respected in the country. During the Teachers' Week teachers are evaluated according to special regulations and 136 men and 136 women are selected as exemplary teachers and principals. They attend special ceremonies



which are held in Tehran at the beginning of May every year and gifts and letters of appreciation are presented to them by the State authorities.

To procure the best personnel for teaching and to enable teachers to concentrate their efforts on education, the salaries of teachers assigned to schools are the same as those of public employees. Their salaries are provided for and given special treatment under the Act of Coordinated Payment to State Employees of 1990. Teachers are promoted to the next salary grade every four years. They also get an annual raise every year, based on their performance evaluation, which is between 3% and 5% of their salary (not including allowances). In addition, a teaching allowance is added to their monthly salaries as follows: 25% to teachers of primary, lower and theoretical upper high schools; 35% to technical teachers, and 45% to the instructors of TTCs and TTTCs.

Teachers' holidays are the same as those given to regular public employees, which include weekends, national holidays, holidays at the beginning of each year, and annual holidays with pay. The long-term holidays given to pupils in schools are not holidays received by teachers. However, teachers are released from their main obligation to be engaged in teaching duties, and are instead often authorized to be absent from school for training purposes. The teacher's weekly workload is 28 hours at the primary level, 24 hours at the lower secondary level, and 24 hours at the upper secondary level.

Short-term in-service training courses aim to improve specific competencies of the teachers and educational staff. It is optional for the employees to take part in in-service educational courses, but it is compulsory in some cases such as pre-employment training, training at the beginning of employment, teaching in special courses (such as reformed programmes and pre-university courses). Nearly all teachers participate in short-term in-service training programmes almost every seven years. It is obligatory to have some of the certificates of short-term in-service training courses in order to be promoted in salary grade.

There are compact courses in the summer time, regular courses during the academic year, seminars, educational meetings, etc. About 10% of teachers and other educational staff take part in these courses annually. The in-service training office has admitted more than 100,000 employees in the last few years and has established and operated higher education in-service centres (at least one in each province). All the participants in short-term training courses enjoy lodging and boarding facilities as well as assignment allowances. At the end of the course, they are awarded a certificate. The implementation of the new structure at the secondary level since 1991 has necessitated that a considerable number of principals, counsellors, teachers, and other employees take part in short-term courses in order to get familiar with the philosophy, objectives, and content of reformed secondary education.



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Web resources

Ministry of Education Portal: <http://www.medu.ir/> [In Farsi. Last checked: July 2011.]

Iranian National Schools Network: <http://www.roshd.ir/> [In Farsi. Last checked: July 2011.]

Ministry of Science, Research and Technology: <http://www.msrt.ir/> [In Farsi. Last checked: July 2011.]

Technical and Vocational Training Organization: <http://www.irantvto.ir/> [In Farsi and English. The site is down. Last checked: July 2011.]

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