

PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND THE GOVERNMENT SYSTEM FOR THE ARAB POPULATION IN PALESTINE

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SCHOOLS in Palestine fall under the three categories of Arab Public Schools, Hebrew Public Schools, and Private Schools. Education in the country has made slow but sure progress in the last fifteen years as is shown by the following table based on figures from the Annual Report of the Department of Education for 1932-33:

School Year	No. of Schools	No. of Teachers	Number of Pupils			Edu- cation Budget in Sterling	Pro- portion of Edu- cational to Total Estimates
			Boys	Girls	Total		
1920-21	542	2,255 (1921-22)	28,826	13,975	42,801	79,950	5.94% (1923-24)
1932-33	1,016	3,024	58,179	33,764	91,943	185,054	6.49%

Since the Hebrew Public School System, and the rural aspects of the schools for Arabs are treated in other articles, this very brief discussion will be confined to the Arab Public System and the private schools intended chiefly for Arab children. While the Government Department of Education supervises schools of all sorts, and makes grants to private schools that meet the necessary requirements, it administers and maintains out of public funds the Arab Public Schools which it has developed since 1920. Hence these are known as government schools.

Private schools, intended chiefly for the Arab population, are maintained either by foreign organizations, mostly missionary societies, or by Palestinian bodies, Moslem and Christian, such as the Supreme Moslem Council, and the Patriarchates of the Eastern Churches and charitable societies of their communities. These two groups of schools are known respectively as Foreign Schools and National Schools and receive grants from the Department of Education. Private schools are slightly more numerous than government schools and accommodate a few more pupils according to the report already cited as follows:

Government Schools299 with 26,691 pupils
Private Schools328 with 27,841 pupils

While the Arabs in Palestine, Moslem and Christian, constitute, according to the census of November 1931, 82% of the population, Arab pupils in government and private schools constitute only 57.6% of the number enrolled in all schools. The relation between educational supply and demand among the Arabs is shown by the fact that government elementary schools are still unable to accommodate more than 62% of the applicants in the towns and 59% in the villages.¹ In other words, about 2/5ths of the applicants have to be turned away owing to shortage of accommodation. The Department of Education is well aware of the situation and is continuously submitting for the consideration of the Government, schemes for further expansion. Meantime, the Arabs, even the impoverished peasants, cooperate by making material contributions. In the last few years, about 150 new school buildings have been erected in the Arab villages; the villagers provided the main part of the cost of buildings, while the Department appoints and pays the teachers.

Elementary Education extends over seven years after kindergarten. Government and private schools alike concern themselves with elementary education, while private schools divide their attention between elementary and secondary education, but the Department of Education pays more attention to the former. No fees are charged for elementary education in government schools. In recent years, it has made great efforts to revolutionize the elementary school curriculum, giving the rural an agricultural and the urban a technical bias.

The problem of the town school is fundamentally not unlike that of the village school. Only a small percentage of the pupils who completed the elementary school were able to seek higher education. This resulted in a marked tendency among the rest to seek government employment. As government positions were at best limited, those largely unemployable youths remained unemployed, and became a burden and even a menace to their communities. Hence the need for technical education which for the town boy serves the same purpose as the agricultural for the village boy. Until 1930, however, no organized technical instruction had been started in government schools. In that year a supervisor of technical education was appointed. His first problem was the training of teachers. The urban

¹*Department of Education Annual Report 1932-33, Appendix table XXV, and p. 19.*

school teacher was less fortunate than his rural colleague who found in the Agricultural School an institution ready for his training. Intensive summer courses were arranged year after year. A good start was made. Gradually manual training work was introduced into all town schools for boys. Scholarship students were sent to Egypt and elsewhere to study different arts and crafts, and before long, Palestine expects to see for the Arab population a government technical school. One of the oldest and most important centers of technical education in the country is the Syrian Orphanage, a private German school founded in 1860. Built largely on its pattern after the war and rapidly making progress, is the Industrial Moslem Orphanage maintained by the Supreme Moslem Council. In both these orphanages there are blind school sections where 16 boys and girls in the former and 14 in the latter receive good training.

There are several teacher-training classes connected with government or private institutions where elementary school teachers, men and women, are trained. A secondary education up to matriculation standard is a condition of admission to training. Teachers who are not college-trained may obtain the status of certified teachers by experience and examination in pedagogy and general subjects.²

The four years following the seven years of elementary classes are reckoned as secondary education. Although there are 13 government secondary schools with 28 secondary classes, only one of them, the Government Arab College in Jerusalem provides a complete secondary course. All the rest have less than four secondary classes. In the government secondary schools, the pupils pay a smaller tuition fee than in private schools. On the other hand, there are 33 private secondary schools with 100 secondary classes, about one-third of which prepare candidates, boys and girls, for the Palestine Matriculation Examination. The oldest and one of the best private boarding schools in the country is an English school, perched on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, founded in 1853, called the Bishop Gobat School.

In the ten years since 1924, an average of 83 students annually, including a large percentage of Arabs, has entered for the matriculation examination. The average percentage of passes has been slightly over 33. The Palestine Matriculation Certificate is recognized by the American University of Beirut and other American

²Ibid. p. 3.

institutions as equivalent to a freshman certificate, and by English Universities, with more or less reservations, as equivalent to an English Matriculation Certificate.

No provision is made in the country for training secondary school teachers. A large proportion of them are graduates of the American University of Beirut. Elementary teachers, by various external examinations of B. A. standard, may obtain a graduate qualification which permits transfer to the secondary scale.³

Post-secondary education follows on the fourth secondary year and takes the form of either law classes, which are fairly well attended or an art course offered by one or two private institutions, but hardly taken now by anyone. The Arab students, therefore, look elsewhere for higher education. A large proportion of them go to the American University of Beirut, which has for the last seven decades, trained leaders for many Near-Eastern countries. In the present year, 1934-35, 152 Palestinian Arab students are registered in the upper departments of this University. A much smaller number goes to the American University of Cairo or to other institutions in Egypt for technical training. An increasing number of the wealthier students seek their higher education in British or other European universities. To Syria, Egypt, and the United Kingdom, the Department of Education continues to send students for advanced training.

In sports and athletics, the Palestinian Arab students are not behind their fellow-students in other parts of the world. Scoutcraft is also making great progress among them, thanks to the Director of Education, its great patron. They form Baden Powell troops and were represented at the World Jamboree held in Hungary in 1933 by a contingent of 14 Scouts and Scouters.

In conclusion, one cannot help agreeing with the statement made by one of the leading Arab Educationalists of Palestine⁴ that "to the government's credit may be placed the dignifying of the Arabic language as a medium of instruction; the sending to Beirut, Cairo, and England of several students for education; the raising of the educational level; the encouragement of wholesome sport; the cultivation of love for flowers among the children, and the arousing of their interest in native arts and crafts."

³Ibid, p. 3.

⁴Dr. Khalil Totah, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, November 1932, p. 165.