

## EDUCATION IN TERRITORIES UNDER FRENCH MANDATE

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**B**EFORE the Great War, the territory under French Mandate was a Turkish Province extending from the Taurus Mountains on the north to the Sinai Peninsula on the south and from the Mediterranean in the west to the desert and Iraqiian boundary to the east—a total area of about 90,000 square miles.

The Treaty of Versailles separated the country from Turkey on the north, from Iraq on the east, stripped Palestine off its southern boundary, and placed it under the Mandate of France.

Politically the country is divided into five units or territories each with its own government and laws: the Republic of Syria, the Sanjak of Alexandretta, the Government of Jabal Druze, the Government of Latakia, and the Lebanese Republic—with population estimated at about three million. The people of each of these territories are granted self-government to the extent to which, in the opinion of the French authorities, they have evolved and matured politically.

The constitution of each of these governments makes full provision for the freedom and encouragement of public education, its aim being: “to raise the moral and intellectual level of the population, to develop their national spirit, and to instill in them a love for peace and a sense of solidarity.”

*Public Education.* With France assuming responsibility over these territories, it is only natural that the system of public education here bears a very close resemblance to the French system and only varies from it in completeness and in the fact that Arabic replaces certain other languages of instruction in the curriculum.

To the casual observer public education in the territories under French Mandate appears to be rather decentralized, with each of the five territories assuming full responsibility over its education. But a deeper scrutiny of the five systems found here reveals a high degree of centralization in the system as a whole. With the program at each stage modelled after the French, with external examinations controlling the process of education in every stage, and with a central

body—the division of public instruction of the High Commissioner's Offices—deeply concerned over the educational policy in each of the five governments uniformity in standards and output prevails. A description of public education in one state, therefore, applies to the systems in each of the other states. The essential differences are in the relative importance of Arabic and French in the program and in the relative degree of development of the system in actual practice.

*Primary Education.* In France primary education is oriented to different ends from those which secondary education seeks to attain. In the Mandate, however, children who enter the primary course often aspire to join the secondary school and ultimately attend the university. In the minds of many people the primary school is a preparation to the secondary school; it is free but not compulsory.

There are a few pre-primary schools (kindergartens) for children between two and six years of age. Sometimes this education is in separate schools but more often in special classes attached to the primary schools. The program consists mostly of games, singing, manual exercises, and stories with moral import. According to the official program pre-primary education aims to give to children who are below school age the care necessary for their physical, intellectual, and moral development. Due to the dearth of teachers especially trained for the care of children, pre-primary education is not yet very effective. It resolves itself to a miniature elementary school, and there is a tendency to emphasize bookish education.

The primary schools in a six-year course train children from six to fourteen years old. Most of the schools include only the elementary education; the more advanced stage, however, is found in the larger primary schools located usually in cities.

The program of primary education is uniform all over the country. In the Lebanese Republic and in the Government of Latakia there is more emphasis on French than in the other three territories. The program of primary studies covers the following subjects: Arabic, French, Arithmetic, History, Geography, Drawing, Physical Education, General Science, Object Lessons, Morals, Hygiene, Religious Instruction and Sewing. Some of these subjects are taught in French, some in Arabic.

At the age of twelve, or on the completion of the middle course, there is held in each of the states an official public examination

which sanctions primary education. This examination marks the end of study for the majority of children attending the elementary school. It is composed of a written and an oral examination. The children are examined by a jury consisting of the head of public instruction in each state or his representative, the French counsellor, government inspectors of primary education, and teachers chosen from both private and public schools.

It is possible for a limited number of children who have completed the middle course of the primary school and who have passed the examination for the elementary primary certificate to continue their primary education one step further. Many of them, of course, enter the secondary school, but those who do not choose or cannot afford secondary education may enter the superior course of the primary school or may join a complementary course for two years. The aim of this stage of the primary course is to prepare the children for certain jobs such as foremen or skilled artisans, and to give them a more rounded education than is possible to receive in the earlier stages.

To sanction the studies of this stage the Government has organized another public examination: the examination for the elementary brevet of primary studies. To be admitted to this examination the candidate should have completed his fourteenth year.

In its organization and administration this examination is very similar to the examination for the elementary primary certificate, but it is held only in a few centers. The examination consists of two parts, written and oral; there is a government jury to conduct the examination and its membership is usually the same as the membership of the jury conducting the lower examination.

The subjects of this examination are the same as those required for the certificate of primary elementary studies only higher in standard.

*Public Secondary Education.* In the organization and development of public secondary education, the Mandatory Government is confronted with a number of serious difficulties. Foremost among them is the financial difficulty. The funds at its disposal are meager. Public secondary schools, therefore, charge fees and scholarships are limited. Secondary education is highly selective socially.

The existence of a considerable number of private secondary schools both native and foreign has retarded the development of

public secondary education. This is especially true of the Lebanese Republic where the Government has deemed it unnecessary to open secondary schools at its own expense. The official secondary schools are called *lycées*. Their curriculum, organization, and methods are very similar to the French *lycées* and colleges.

The program covers a period of seven years and is devoted to the study of Language, (French, Arabic, and another modern language), Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, Psychology, Philosophy, Religion, and Ethics. The aim of secondary education is to cultivate in the individual appreciation of culture, and to equip him with those methods which render him capable of effective thought and mature judgment. There is a special emphasis upon the appreciation of French literature, language, and civilization, and the rôle of France in the Orient.

The public secondary schools, however, had inherited from the Turkish régime certain characteristics and methods which the French Administration tried to reform. In the first place the curriculum was overloaded with superfluous material which was poorly taught and not comprehended by the pupils. Memory work and cramming were the main method of learning, and the school examinations at the end of the course encouraged this by stressing the ability to reproduce verbally the contents of courses covered without testing comprehension and assimilation.

In trying to reform the situation the authorities appointed French masters to take charge of the French classes in the schools. These teachers, besides trying to improve the quality of the teaching of French, were to serve as models for the masters of other subjects and help them in raising the level of their instruction.

The second reform which was attempted was the reorganization of the curriculum. This was done by a process of elimination and simplification.

The third step was the introduction of the official public examination sanctioning secondary education—the Syrian and Lebanese Baccalaureates. These measures had a vitalizing effect on the whole process of secondary education, and the output of secondary education has been perceptibly raised. The examination for the baccalaureate is divided into two parts. The students who have normally completed the courses of the first class (sixth year of the secondary

course) are admitted to the first part of this examination, and its completion is essential for admission to the examination of the second part. Both parts consist of written and oral examinations, and in each case the written examinations must be passed before the oral may be taken. One year should lapse between the two parts. The language in which the examinations may be taken is either Arabic or French. The examining jury consists of the Minister of Public Instruction, the French Counsellor, professors from the government or private universities, and teachers from official and private, recognized secondary schools.

The baccalaureate of secondary studies admits students to the university and professional schools. Recently the Lebanese Government promulgated a law which in effect debars any candidate from undertaking the study of law, medicine, pharmacy, and engineering without having previously obtained the Government baccalaureate diploma. The subjects of the examination are Arabic (History and Literature), French (History and Literature), a third modern language, Philosophy, Psychology, Ethics, Mathematics, Cosmography, History, Geography, Chemistry, Biology, Physics and Hygiene.

*Higher Education.* The only governmental institution of higher education is the Syrian University in Damascus situated in the old Mosque of Sultan Salim. The University comprises three faculties: Faculty of Medicine, including schools of Pharmacy, Dentistry, and Midwifery, Faculty of Law, and Faculty of Letters. The medical course extends over a period of five years; the dental course over four; the pharmacy course over four, and the midwifery course over three. The law course extends over three years, with one additional year of training required of candidates aspiring for governmental jobs. Likewise the course in the Faculty of Letters consists of three years. The total enrollment for 1933 averaged about 500 students. The University charges tuition fees to the extent of sixty dollars per year. Needy students are helped by a reduction of one-half the tuition fee.

The program of studies is based mainly on the French program. The medium of instruction is Arabic. There are a number of French professors, however, who have the right to conduct their lectures in their own language. Owing to the great lack of scientific material in Arabic, the teachers and students of the Syrian University are

struggling against severe odds in order to maintain reasonable standards. Considering this difficulty the quality of work in this institution does not come up to the standards set by the other two private universities.

*Teacher Training.* In the Lebanese Republic teacher training has been undergoing considerable reorganization in recent years. After experimenting with many plans, the Government has finally approved of a system whereby two normal courses, one for boys and one for girls, each extending over two years, were attached to the two higher primary schools in Beirut. Admission to the normal course is made after a severe competitive examination of those students who hold the elementary brevet of primary studies. Each of these normal sections comprises two years of training. The first year consists of a general education: Applied Psychology, Civics, Literature (Arabic and French), History, Geography, Mathematics and Science. The second year is devoted to theoretical and practical work in education together with Drawing, Handwork, and Music.

Until 1931 the teachers of the official elementary schools of Latakia and Jabal Druze were prepared in Lebanon or Syria. In 1931 the Government of Latakia opened a normal section in the higher primary school of Latakia. In Jabal Druze the Government has attached a normal course to the public elementary school of Soueida.

In the district of Alexandretta, the Lycée of Antioch has two normal sections attached to it—one in Turkish and one in Arabic. Besides these there are evening courses for teachers in service. In the Republic of Syria, there are four normal sections attached to the Lycées of Damascus and Aleppo. Two of these are for boys and two for girls. At the end of three years of secondary training a rigorous competitive examination is held to select the candidates for admission. The course covers three years and consists of general academic courses together with theoretical and practical educational courses.

There is no special governmental course established as yet for the training of teachers for the public government secondary schools. Such teachers are trained either in France or in the Syrian University, by means of government scholarships. Students who are thus trained are required to receive their Master's degree "Licence."

*Vocational Education.* Vocational education is but slightly developed in the country. The chief reasons are the financial limita-

tions and an unfavorable attitude toward manual work on the part of the people. Well-equipped vocational schools with a good staff cost considerably more than the ordinary type of school, and naturally the Government, in trying to make full use of its limited resources, is more likely to undertake a less expensive type of education. Furthermore, the people of the country seem to have acquired a disdain for manual work, and they look upon the school as a means to "lift" them from the toil of the farm or workshop.

Notwithstanding all this there have been attempts to introduce vocational education on the part of the government. There are two orphanages supported by the government in Damascus, one for boys and one for girls, which, besides giving the orphans the rudiments of elementary education, make an attempt at acquainting them with such crafts as carpentry, mechanical work, blacksmithing, shoe making, and tailoring. The girls are taught needlework, dressmaking, and tapistry.

In Aleppo there is a trade school which receives students of fifteen and gives them the elements of blacksmithing, woodwork, and machine-shop work. The school is rather small and poorly kept. Its three-year course consists both of theoretical and practical work. In 1933 the enrollment was forty-three boys. It had five teachers on its staff.

By far the best in the territory is the trade school in Beirut. It is well located and has an admirable plant and equipment with a teaching staff of six professors (engineers) and twelve assistants. The course extends over a period of four years. The first two deal with general instruction, mathematics, science, and general shop work. During the last two years the student specializes in foundry, forge, machinist, or electrical work. The graduates are in demand and are assisted in finding employment by the employment committee of the school which consists of prominent Beirut business men.

Agricultural schools have not flourished or even met with favorable response from the people. The government was obliged to close the best one because the majority of its graduates did not go into agriculture but tried to find employment in government service. Another government school of agriculture was sold to the Benedictine Ollivetan Brothers, but it still receives a subsidy from the government. Its program is simple, under the direction of a French specialist. It aims to foster agricultural experiments, to prepare intelligent

farmers, and to encourage the introduction of modern agricultural methods and tools.

*Financing Public Education.* The individual states bear the expenses of education in their territory. Each community in which an elementary school is established is made to bear the cost of the school plant unless exempted by special order from the government on account of the poverty of the district. The central government of the state pays the salaries of the teachers. There is no special school tax, the appropriation to education being a division of the central budget.

The country is poor and heavily taxed. At the same time, administrative government machinery is complicated and expensive. Hence the allotment for education is rather meager. In 1933, the Republic of Syria spent 13.6% of its budget on education, while the Lebanese Republic spent 5.2%. The Syrian Government spends annually an average of 73 Syrian Piasters (93c) on every school child while the Government of Lebanon spends 28.5 Syrian Piasters on each (37.5c). The difference between the two goes back mainly to the fact that private education is much more widely disseminated in Lebanon than in Syria. Hence, the government does not feel such an urgent need to open up and maintain public schools.

*Private Education.* For many generations this territory was governed by the Turks who followed a policy of "divide and rule." This they did by playing up the religious differences of the people. Western government interfered under the pretext of protecting the Christian minorities and accentuated the hostility and division among the various religious sects. In order to maintain its identity each sect, therefore, established its schools in connection with its Church, Mosque, or Synagogue. Western missionaries in their efforts to propagate Christianity opened up schools also. These two factors, inter-religious conflict leading to the founding of sectarian schools and the efforts of foreign missionaries combined with an indifference to education on the part of the Turkish Government were responsible for the extensiveness of private education in these territories. It is estimated that 70% of all schools are non-governmental and their enrollment includes 65% of the children attending school.

One of the most important facts to be noted about private schools is their great diversity, diversity in aim, method, type of organization, and standards.



Of the foreign private schools, those organized under the French auspices are by far in the majority with approximately two-thirds the number of public schools. In their methods and organization these schools are exact copies of schools found in France.

The American schools rank next in number and importance to the private schools operating on the French program. Although founded, in the main, as a part of American missionary endeavor, American schools are giving secular education to pupils of many sects. Most of them operate on the American program, the course extending over twelve years. According to recent statistics there were 64 American schools in the country including the American University of Beirut and the American Junior College for Women. Ten of these schools are secondary, 47 elementary. Their total enrollment in 1933 was 2,576 students including Christians and non-Christians in equal proportions.

As there is an increasing demand for Government certificates and diplomas and for a greater knowledge of French on the part of the public, American schools in this country are at present faced with a momentous decision: will they abandon their American program and adopt the Lebanese or Syrian which in turn is patterned after the French, or will they permit their clientele to diminish and their influence to dwindle. Some of the American teachers seem to feel that by abandoning the American program their schools forsake their *raison d'être* in this part of the world.

The writer differs radically with this point of view. The salvation of American education in the Near East lies in coöperating with the Government, by adapting itself to governmental requirements. The ideals which American education is seeking to instill in the youth of the land such as respect for their own culture, self-reliance, independence of judgment, combined with good character, can be effectively instilled through either the American or the Government system. The land is in great need of a unified system of education and the American schools should help in its adoption. They can do so without sacrificing their peculiar contributions.

The American University of Beirut has already taken the lead in this regard by inaugurating a preparatory school modelled after a French *lycée* and preparing students for the Lebanese and French Government Baccalaureate examinations. It has also modified the program of its high school to meet the needs of students coming from

territories under British mandate. A final step taken by the University in coöperating with the Government is the recognition which it gives to the official government certificates by admitting to its classes holders of these certificates.

Private education whether native or public is not interfered with or directly supervised by the French authorities. Foreign private schools enjoy a privileged status, and no restriction is placed on their activity aside from the requirement that their teachers should be of good moral status and that teaching and activities which interfere with public order be avoided. The native private schools are responsible to the education department of the state in which each is found. Foreign educational institutions are responsible to the Bureau of Public Instruction of the High Commissioner's Office.

While private education includes schools of all levels of instruction its efforts are more extensive in the fields of secondary and higher education. The private schools are financed in a variety of ways. Practically all charge tuition fees. In some instances these tuition fees are sufficient to cover the expenses of operating the school plus a small sum which goes as a net profit to the director or owners of the school. In most cases, however, the school receives a subsidy from the supporting organization. Foreign schools receive subsidies from their home organization. The native private schools are supported by their respective communities in addition to charging fees. The Moslem schools usually receive support from an endowment known as *wakf*, a form of endowment for religious purposes.

Private vocational education is not popular or extensively carried out. There are a few vocational courses in certain primary and secondary schools such as carpentry, shopwork, sewing, bookkeeping, typewriting, stenography, elements of agriculture. There are two institutions for agriculture. The Institute of Rural Life under the auspices of the Near East Foundation is an American institution which aims to give the farmers some knowledge of scientific agriculture and to give the sons of farmers knowledge of principles of agriculture. Its activities are similar to those of experimental stations in America. The enrollment in the school has scarcely exceeded 25 pupils at any time. The French University of Saint Joseph owns a large farm in the plains of Lebanon in which the inmates of an orphanage under Jesuit auspices are trained in practical agriculture. The training is under the direction of skilled workmen.

Vocational education is on the whole carried through the apprentice system, and in a number of crafts the skill is preserved in the family as a family secret or tradition.

There are two private institutions of higher learning in this country of about 3,000,000 inhabitants: The University of St. Joseph and the American University of Beirut, and students from all over the Near East are enrolled in them.

The University of Saint Joseph, under the direction and control of the Lyons Province of the Society of Jesus, comprises a Faculty of Medicine, an Engineering School, a Faculty of Law, and an Oriental Seminary. Besides these four divisions of the University which are concerned with higher education proper, the University of Saint Joseph has a secondary school with a lower section of the Oriental Seminary.

The Faculty of Medicine includes a medical course and schools of pharmacy, dentistry, and midwifery. Its program is patterned on the official French Government program. The degree granted at the end of the medical course proper is a French State degree permitting the holder to practise the medical profession in France.

The Faculty of Law also follows the official program of the French Government and awards the French State diploma. The School of Engineering and the Seminary offer, on the termination of the courses, the degree of a University. The enrollment of the University in the Faculties and higher schools varies between 600 and 650. In the secondary school and lower section of the Oriental Seminary the enrollment is around 800 students. The students come mainly from territories under French mandate. A considerable number, however, come from outside countries. The graduate of the University usually finds employment in these territories, very few emigrate.

The plant, equipment, and teaching personnel of the University are of a high order and in its standards compare favorably with those of institutions of its size in Europe and America.

The other private institution for higher learning, the American University of Beirut, was chartered under the laws of the Board of Regents of the State of New York in 1864. The University consists of a Faculty of Medicine under which are organized a School of Medicine, Pharmacy, Dentistry, Nursing, and a Graduate course in Midwifery, 2) a Faculty of Arts and Sciences under which are or-

ganized courses in Commerce, Engineering, Education, and Liberal Arts, 3) a School of Music. Besides these divisions the University maintains a Preparatory School organized according to the American elementary and high school program and a French *Lycée* organized on the Government program and preparing for the Government examinations.

The American University has a cosmopolitan student group and, thus, has a great opportunity for establishing understanding and real coöperation among the many countries of the Near East and the West. The enrollment for last year was about thirteen hundred.

The diplomas of the University are recognized by the countries of the Near East and America. Since its students are drawn from a wide territory, its influence is quite extensive. The aim of the Institution is to train leaders with technical skill to help them build up the life of their countries, to blend scientific progress of the West with the culture of the East, to exemplify Christian idealism so as to kindle the spiritual life of the students.

The graduates of the University are found all over the countries of the Near East. They hold positions of leadership and responsibility. The standards of the University and its influences are a credit to American ideals of education for it has really contributed to the Renaissance which is at present going on in the Near East.

*Women's Education.* The education of women although impeded by tradition and conservatism on the part of the people has been slowly moving forward during the past years.

This fact is proved by the great increase in the number of women's educational institutions on all levels, by the relatively greater number of women in attendance, by the toleration of coeducation especially on the higher levels, and by the admission of women into the ranks of such professions as Law, Pharmacy, Medicine, Dentistry.

Socially the woman of this territory, especially in the cities and larger centers, is moving rapidly towards full emancipation and sharing with men the responsibilities of public life. That there is yet a great deal of inertia to overcome need not be emphasized, but the movement has been gaining momentum every year, not among Christians only, but also among other sects, notably Moslems.

There are a number of primary, secondary, and even higher schools for women. The British Syrian Training College prepares

women teachers for posts both in the elementary and secondary schools. It has a normal course which may be considered equivalent to the completion of sophomore standing of a regular American Teachers College. The American Junior College for Women is a standard junior college and its program is approved by the American University of Beirut, for admission to junior year of the School of Arts and Sciences and to some of the professional schools.

The chief limitations of women's education at present are the lack of adaptation to the special needs of women and inadequacy. The courses offered and their contents are oriented in most of the schools to give a cultural education such as the ordinary young man would need. Considering the fact that the vast majority of women are still chiefly occupied with family concerns this education does not seem to be particularly well suited to their needs.

*Some thoughts on the educational situation.* In closing a few lines evaluating the contributions of education to the people and the educational policy should be written. The writer recognizes the difficulty of the task owing to the fact that the attitude of any individual evaluating a program of education is very much colored by his own educational philosophy which in turn is the product of his early schooling.

There are certain drawbacks and limitations in the educational situation which in the opinion of the writer decrease its effectiveness and which it seems necessary to improve.

The great diversity of private schools, the lack of central control and supervision over their activities is a shortcoming that should be reformed. Diversity in education is commendable under certain conditions. When the school is sincere in its efforts to serve the community, when it has a teaching staff which is well trained and endowed with a sense of professional responsibility, then it is safe to give this school freedom in working out its program. Unfortunately only few of the private schools in this land come up to this standard. Instead of serving the public they are mindful of the interests of one sect only or are conducted for private gain. They breed sectarianism in the country and actually hinder inter-religious understanding and coöperation. They compete with one another and oftentimes resort to underhanded methods in trying to undermine schools of different sects. Many of them are exceedingly poorly equipped. It is not to be gathered that all private schools are of this

order. A few of the private schools are of a very high standard and may well be taken as models to grade the schools of the Government.

There is an excessive emphasis on foreign language in both the program of the elementary and secondary schools. In Latakia and Lebanon half of the elementary school program is taught in French and half in Arabic. Through this excessive emphasis on foreign language, the pupils are rather retarded and elementary education rendered superficial and limited. Pupils are required to solve problems in arithmetic in French, to grasp some of the principles of science in French; subjects which are rather difficult in themselves without the added task of comprehending them in a foreign language. The ability to speak and read a foreign tongue is taken as the main criterion for judging the success of elementary education. This emphasis on language is seen more vividly in the secondary schools. The examinations for the Baccalaureate demand almost an equal knowledge of two languages and literature—the Arabic and the French. The standards of examinations are not low. This has rendered the Syrian and Lebanese Baccalaureate diploma rather more difficult to obtain than the French Baccalaureate. Recently the situation has been slightly ameliorated but more can and should be done.

The excessive importance given to the examinations leads to a proportional diminishing of the real worth of primary and secondary education. The writer recognizes the fact that there are two sides to this question. Some argue that an external examination stimulates both pupil and teacher to put greater effort into their work, defines the aims of education more concretely and helps to establish an *esprit de corps* between teacher and pupil since both of them are working for the attainment of a common goal—the passing of the examination. While not minimizing the value of the examination the writer believes that in this country the examinations control the education to a great extent, they encourage cramming and they do not help education in the attainment of its real aim, namely enrichment of living.

Then there is little or no differentiation between the program of the rural and urban elementary schools. The children of twelve whether they come from a small village school or from a large urban one must take the same Government examinations. Education under

these conditions ceases to be an adjustment to and appreciation of the environment, but limits itself to the acquisition of certain facts.

Vocational education is sadly lacking. There is an overabundance of maladjusted persons who are anxious to fill white-collar jobs but a lack of skilled artisans and workmen. The farmer is conservative and has very little acquaintance with some of the fundamental developments in agriculture.

Finally education, especially foreign private education, is responsible for the creation of an educated class widely separated in sympathies and ideas from the masses. They cannot lead the people because they do not understand their needs. They are more foreign than native and they pride themselves in this fact. In this respect the majority of the private schools are harmful to the country because they are weaning its best minds away from it.

Notwithstanding all these drawbacks and limitations, there is no doubt but that the mandatory authorities are sincere in introducing into the country the best aspects of French education. It is also well established fact that since the French Administration assumed responsibility over the country, public education has been improving gradually and definitely. New schools have been opened, teachers of higher caliber have been engaged and better paid; school buildings are in a better physical condition, and the curricula are being gradually organized. There is a program and a policy guiding public education.