

## FRENCH AND ALGERIAN EDUCATION

Pierce G.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vancouver University, Canada

**Abstract:** *I choose to discuss the French and the Algerian system of education because I believe the French one is complex, very organized, with many subdivisions. I think it influences a large part of the world's education systems, including the Algerian because of the colonialism. I see the French system of education like an extension of its model of governance. France was a strong colonial empire, a global superpower and now it is still a powerful state which influences the most of the international actors, so its educational system should be as important as the power of its government. Algeria, in French, the Republique Algerienne Democratique et Populaire is an authoritarian regime. Algeria was occupied first by the Phoenicians, then by the Ottomans and in 1830 by the French. Between 1830 and 1962, when Algeria achieved its independence, it was under French occupation. Algeria is currently political unstable, but the state had various unstable moments in its history, an example was in 1954, when it was a war of independence in Algeria, which ended up only in 1962.*

**Keywords:** french education; algerian education; education system.

### I. INTRODUCTION

In the 90's, in Algeria was also a civil war after the intervention of the National Army in the elections, more than a 100.000 of people died then. Algeria is a semi-presidential republic, Arabic and Berber are the official languages but French it is still used in the Administration. Algeria is a unitary state with 48 provinces. The heart of the Algerian economy is represented by the hydrocarbons industry, the state is the second exporter of oil in the world. This industry represents 60% of the incomes in the Budget and 30% of the GDP. The state struggles to develop other industries which are more underdeveloped. Algeria collaborates with the EU, like the other countries from the Mediterranean space. The EU has developed some policies which have the mission to increase the relation between Northern Africa and

Europe. Also, the major partner for Europe in this region is Morocco.

Another problem in Algeria is represented by the disparity among the regions, most of the people live in the North, so the South of the country remains underdeveloped and less populated. Also, most of the territory from the South is represented by desert.<sup>1</sup>

Algeria deals with problems in economy, now that the prices of oil felt down, with political problems, social problems like unemployment and difficult business climate for foreign investors, educational problems and ethnic problems. In Algeria are living various ethnic groups like descendants of Turkish people, Spanish, Berbers, French. The official religion is the Islam, with most of 99% of population.

A major difference between France and Algeria system of education is the centralization of the education system in

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/>

Algeria. In order to reduce the rate of illiteracy, Algeria centralized its education. Although this situation, the literacy rate is among 78% . In Algeria, school is free and compulsory for children up to 16 and the state confronts a several drop-out rate, most of the children give up school before the age of 16.<sup>2</sup>

## II. FRENCH EDUCATIONS VERSUS ALGERIAN EDUCATION

A similarity with the French system is the organization of the education system. In both countries we have preparatory school, primary school, medium school, secondary school and higher education. The teaching language is Arabic, but also, Berber is accepted. French is used to teach in some private schools and, in some cases, in the post-secondary programs. The primary school is for children from the age of 6, at the age of 15, when children pass to the secondary level. A problem for Algeria is that only half of the students that complete their primary level , take their studies to the next level. The secondary school is organized in three categories, general, vocational and technical. From this level of education, students go to the tertiary education, universities and other higher education institutes.<sup>3</sup>

The higher education in Algeria is public and centralized by the state, the government is the institution that implements the education policy. Like in the French system, we have the Bachelor, the Master and the Doctorate level. There are two types of higher education institutions, under the authority of the

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and institutions under the authority of other ministries. So, the entire higher education system is subordinated to the state.<sup>4</sup>

Algeria has 39 universities, one university of continuing education, 18 national tertiary vocational schools, 6 teacher training schools, 2 university annexes, 10 preparatory schools and 2 integrated preparatory classes. All these institutions are financed by the state. To enter, students need to pass the baccalaureat, like in France.<sup>5</sup>

In the French system of education, I will begin with revealing a small of the French educational systems history. France it is well known for its rich educational history, starting with the Roman Empire<sup>6</sup>, when the patricians established the first schools, but the educational system of what we see us today was established later and also was modernized starting with the French Revolution. Later, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, the educational system suffered by strong debates about the role of religion in education<sup>7</sup> and was adapted for the new society.

A key period in the educational history of France is the Middle Ages. Characteristic for this period are the Church Schools controlled by the Catholic Church. All of these schools used the Latin language and the Latin Law. In this period we are talking about the first universities established in France, first of them was the University of Paris, formally established in 1150 then was the University of Toulouse.<sup>8</sup>

2

<http://www.classbase.com/countries/Algeria/Education-System>

<sup>3</sup> Idem

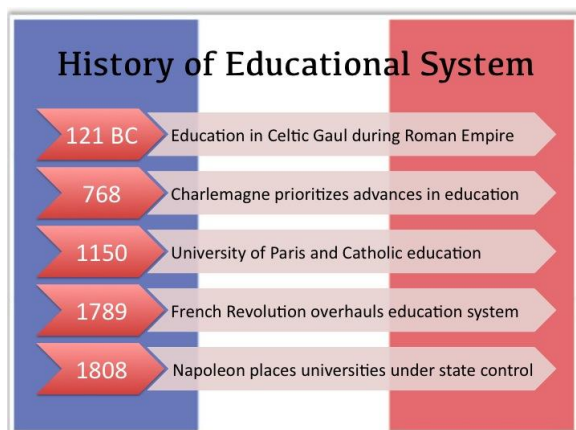
<sup>4</sup> <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/>

<sup>5</sup> Idem

<sup>6</sup> <http://education.stateuniversity.com/>

<sup>7</sup> Idem

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.sorbonne.fr/en/the-sorbonne/history-of-the-sorbonne/la-fondation-de-la-sorbonne-au-moyen-age-par-le-theologien-robert-de-sorbon/>



Source: <http://sites.miiis.edu/compiefrance/history/>

The modern period is another important moment for education. Now are established the colleges and developed more universities. It is important to mention Louis XIV's order, which forced the parents to send their children to school until the age of 14. This decision had very important consequences in the education of the population. The king saw the importance of a well educated population so he tried to lead his people to this way.

Even today, we still talk about the importance of a well-educated society, this subject is a very common one because we know the problem our society has in this area. Romania has problems with the illiterate population, which has a large number and it's still growing. Algeria, also, has a big problem with the illiterate girls, the women are less educated than the man in Algeria.

The French Revolution marked a major moment in France history and, also in France education history. The Revolution changed the old order and gave more power to the government in order to change the education policies. During the Revolution, many schools were closed, priests and teachers were dismissed and the educational system was trying to reborn. So, in order to build a new system, secondary schools were established in the larger cities and, as a novelty, modern studies could be studied.

The government had a key role in organizing the universities and their faculties. Also, Napoleon had a major role because he established the lycee as the principal secondary education. Latin, French, sciences, history, elements of mathematical and physical science were the most important disciplines.<sup>9</sup>

Napoleon fixed the grandes ecoles as higher education schools specialized on engineering and sciences, along the faculties of law, medicine, sciences, humanities. So, Napoleon had an intervention in all State domains. The National Convention named the two types of schools, the Ecole Normale Supérieure and the Ecole Polytechnique, one is specialized in the sciences like law, medicine, humanities and the other is specialized only in technical science.<sup>10</sup>

After the establishment of the new educational system, education has become a major reason for dispute between the parties in France. There were many debates about the implication of the Catholic Church in education and some parties claimed secular education while others wanted a controlled religious education system.<sup>11</sup> A laic education was a major step for the Republic and it was accomplished, France established the free education policy in 1881 and those steps led to the secular state that we see today. Religion was left outside of the educational system in order to produce a future secular society.<sup>12</sup>

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the organization of education in France continues. There were divided three categories of schools, the classical, the technical and the modern lycees, also the primary schools was reformed and were established the

<sup>9</sup> <http://about-france.com/>

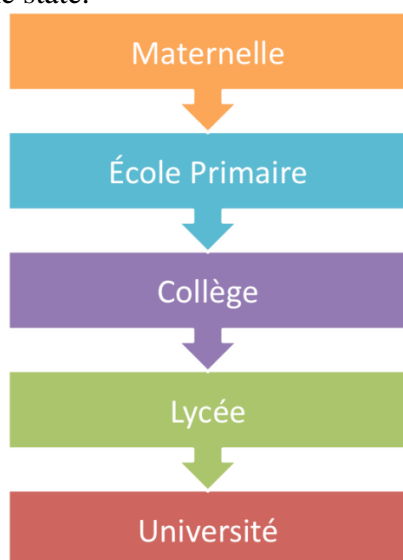
<sup>10</sup> Idem

<sup>11</sup> David Markham, The Revolution, Napoleon, and Education, *International Napoleonic Society*, [http://www.napoleon-series.org/research/society/c\\_education.html](http://www.napoleon-series.org/research/society/c_education.html)

<sup>12</sup> Idem

professional schools in 1985.<sup>13</sup> All these reforms led to the system of education from our days.

Currently, the French system of education is divided in three categories with other subcategories, the main categories are the primary school, the secondary school and the higher education<sup>14</sup> and all of them are subordinated to the Minister of National Education. Also, the teachers are working for the state.



Source: <http://sites.miis.edu/>

The primary school begins at the age of 6, but parents can also send their children to nursery classes starting at the age of 3. Usually, after the nursery classes, children are going to primary school. The primary education assumes to develop reading, writing, listening, speaking skills, this process is led, usually by only one teacher. This category is very similar to the Romanian primary schools.<sup>15</sup>

The secondary school is also divided in two categories, first is the college, here are the first four years after the finishing of the primary school, the second category is called the lycee and it includes the next three years after finishing the college. This education cycle finishes

with the baccalaureat exam, also, another similarity to the Romanian system of examination after finishing the highschool. Children finish the primary school at the age of 11, the College at the age of 15, and the Lycee at the age of 18, so at the moment they graduate, they can be able to begin their lives as adults<sup>16</sup>.

The baccalaureat exam is required in order to enter a university. This is a similarity to the Algerian system. Like in Romania, the exam is divided in three categories, first is for the natural sciences students, then is the one for the economic students, here they have to take the economics, the social sciences and the mathematics exams and is the literary baccalaureat, focused on French, history, geography, foreign languages, arts. Also, there is a technologic baccalaureat, which is preparing the French students for a professional degree and for technological higher studies.<sup>17</sup>

The higher education is organized in a very similar way to many European countries, including Romania. A major difference between the French system and the other European systems of education is the separation of the higher education institutions. In France, we have two types of higher education institutions, universities and grandes-ecoles. In the university, we are talking about three stages of studies, first is the bachelor degree, then is the Master and the Doctorate. Grandes ecoles assume to admit the students who the baccalaureat and who, usually study another two years after the bac.<sup>18</sup>

The bachelor is also called Licence and Licence Professionnelle and is organized in semesters, like in other countries. For this stage are required six semesters of study in a specific domain.

<sup>13</sup>Antoine Leon, Pierre Roche, *Histoire de l'enseignement en France*, Puf, 2012, p 105-120

<sup>14</sup> <http://about-france.com/>

<sup>15</sup> Idem

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.education.gouv.fr/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://about-france.com/>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.education.gouv.fr/>

### III. CONCLUSIONS

The research in France is at a very high level, here I am talking about the scientific research and, usually, this research is made by some organizations which are not a part of the universities, but the main process of research is based inside the major universities of France.<sup>19</sup>

Universities in France are public and also private and they are named after the city where are located and they are following the European standards of studies. Here I refer to the way of teaching and examination, with the exams at the end of the course, specific for the European system of education. There are 83 public universities in France and two categories of Grandes Ecoles. We have Ecoles d'Ingénieurs and Ecoles Supérieure de Commerce, both have the mission of preparing their students for the labor market.<sup>20</sup> Usually the Grandes Ecoles are focused on just a domain, so the students are very good prepared for their specialization. Also, for entering the Grandes Ecoles, as I said earlier, students had to prepare. Those preparatory courses are named Classes préparatoires aux grandes écoles and they require two years after the baccalaureat exam. It is well known the hard work of the students in those Preparatory classes.

In France, the public expenditure on education is 6% with a rate of 51% of enrollment in higher education and 100% in primary and secondary education<sup>21</sup>. In my opinion, these dates do not reflect the actual situation of students in France. We all know that France has a major population of immigrants, most of them muslims with problems of integration in the French society and most of them have education problems. Here I refer to the dropout because of the social issues,

phenomenon more specific for immigrants with troubles of integration.

The muslim community is large, France was a big colonial power so now, the state has to confront the situation of immigrants from the ex-colonies. I believe that the last tragic events from France, including Charlie Hebdo, put in the spotlight the foreign immigrants, as a result of a bad French integration policy and here is included the education system. Those immigrants were not integrated in the community so they radicalized. Of course, we cannot put all the blame on the state and on the education system, but I think that education policies should focus more on integrate foreign students with social problems.

The secular education in France is very important aspect. France is revealing its specific through its education system. Religion is not a discipline in public schools, so education has a very secular characteristic in France. This aspect, in my opinion is a very important one because of the many immigrants with various religions.

In conclusion, the both systems of education have similarities like the organization, the baccalaureat and even the language. They also have strong differences that separate the specific of the systems, France has a secular system and Algeria is still in the process of developing its own specific system. In France we have private schools and in Algeria all the education institutions are subordinated and coordinated by the state. Still, I believe that the French system had influenced the Algerian education policy and even the Algerian life style.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Antoine Leon, Pierre Roche, Histoire de l'enseignement en France, Puf, 2012

---

<sup>19</sup> Idem

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.french-property.com/>

<sup>21</sup> <http://education.stateuniversity.com/>

- David Markham, The Revolution, Napoleon, and Education, International Napoleonic Society,
- [http://www.napoleon-series.org/research/society/c\\_education.html](http://www.napoleon-series.org/research/society/c_education.html)
- <http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/>
- <http://www.classbase.com/countries/Algeria/Education-System>
- <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/>
- 
- <http://education.stateuniversity.com/>
- <http://sites.mii.se/compiefrance/history/>
- <https://www.sorbonne.fr>
- <http://about-france.com/>
- <http://www.education.gouv.fr/>
- <http://www.french-property.com/>