

Education in Algeria during the colonial era, between colonial intentions and Algerian attitudes

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Abstract :

Colonial education was a very important means of subjugating colonised peoples, complementing military invasion. The French were well aware of this fact, and from the outset they emphasised the establishment of colonial educational institutions, which began to spread throughout most of Algeria.

The apparent purpose of these institutions was to educate a backward people, while the real goal was to eliminate national identity and achieve colonial domination.

In this study, we have discussed the stages defined by colonial education and the French attitude towards Arab-Muslim education. We have also mentioned the most important colonial educational institutions that our country has known since 1830 and the issue of restrictions imposed on the education of Algerians through laws and conferences organised for this purpose.

Keywords: education; Algerians; colonialism; institutions; Algeria.

Introduction:

French colonialism was aware of the importance of education in establishing its roots in Algeria since its occupation in 1830 AD. It was keen to instil its language and spread its culture among the population to facilitate their subjugation, and therefore paid

close attention to this alongside the use of military force, where cadres carried European ideas and achieved its objectives. This research paper attempts, within this framework, to clarify colonial interest in the issue of education and the spread of educational institutions throughout the national territory, with a focus on the Algerian individual's share of this education, in order to assess the credibility of colonial intentions in transferring urbanisation and civilisation to Algerian society. We have attempted to analyse the phenomenon within a set of elements, starting with the colonial position on Islamic education in Algeria and ending with the laws and conferences organised for this education.

1-The colonial stance on Islamic education in Algeria

Despite everything that has been written about the Ottoman era in Algeria by colonial pens, describing it as a dark era, an era of backwardness, and other characteristics that they use to justify their colonisation of our country, attempting to convey the idea that France brought civilisation to Algeria, some French, led by Dumas, acknowledge that primary education was more widespread in Algeria before the French invasion, that most of the population knew how to read and write, and that all tribes had a schoolteacher before the occupation.(1)

Aware of the threat that Islamic education posed to his future presence in Algeria and to his plans to destroy national identity, he targeted the educational system first, destroying schools and institutions associated with this education, such as mosques, zawiyas and kuttab, and exiled many scholars outside the country, converting some mosques into churches, such as the Katchawa Mosque, which became St. Philip's Church in 1831 and others into barracks, stables or warehouses, in an effort to spread illiteracy and ignorance. He also established French as the official language of education and administration.

For the colonists, education was the most effective means of dissolving the Algerians into the French entity, stripping them of their religion and language, and their Arab-Islamic civilisation, and eradicating them as had happened to the Muslims of Andalusia centuries earlier. In other words, his aim behind education, as Abdul Aziz Shihab said, is to bind Algeria politically and administratively to France and digest it spiritually, culturally and linguistically (2).

With the confiscation of endowments, French colonialism destroyed Islamic educational institutions, as these institutions obtained the resources they needed to continue their religious mission from these endowments, in addition to the donations for which Algerians were known.(3)

The colonial administration sought to establish French schools to compete with Islamic institutions—if any remained—ostensibly to educate an underdeveloped people and bring them civilisation and culture, and to eliminate their fanaticism, but its real objective was to destroy the national character and integrate Algerian society into French society in order to serve the colonial presence. (4)

-2 The most important stages of French education in Algeria:

French education in Algeria since 1830 has gone through several stages, which we will summarise in the following points:

2-1 The period of military rule 1830-1870:

Initially, a dual education system was adopted: French and Arabic, with the aim of achieving

the integration we mentioned earlier. The first school opened in

1833 in the capital, the École de l'Éducation Mutuelle, was dedicated to the education of European and Jewish children, followed by the emergence of what was known "public Education", which taught French, writing, arithmetic, and Arabic. The first school opened in this hierarchical style was the French-Arabic School in Algiers in 1836, which was exclusively for boys. Another school opened in Annaba in 1837 to compete with Arabic education in Algiers, by the way the first school for girls in Algiers was opened in 1845, and the number of Algerian pupils in these schools reached seven compared to 100 European pupils in 1844 (5), which reflects the aversion of Algerians to these schools, which they considered a threat to their children and their beliefs, especially when the colonialists gave supervision of many of these schools to missionaries who were seeking to implement proselytising schemes.

All French schools in Algeria focused on teaching the greatness of France, the greatness of its military power and wealth, in the sense that the locals should feel that the French were powerful, and that a spirit of defeatism should prevail among them so that they would consider the French to be their superior masters under whom they lived in safety (6). However, this main objective failed and was not achieved because only a few enrolled in these schools, and the Algerians remained loyal to their Islamic education, even if they had to move to remote areas, far from the control of the colonialists and their pressures.

Throughout the period of military rule in Algeria, mixed schools continued to open in most Algerian cities, especially in the major cities of Oran, Algiers, Annaba, and Constantine. (7)

The decree of 6 August 1850 stipulated the establishment of six Arabic/French schools in each of the following cities: Algiers, Oran, Constantine, Annaba, Blida, and Mostaganem, supervised by holders of certificates of competence in teaching Arabic with the assistance of some Algerians, bringing the number of these schools in 1850 to 223,

supported by the colonial administration. Then came the decree of 30/09/1852, which stipulated the establishment of three government schools: Tlemcen, Constantine, and Medea, which were later transferred to the capital in 1859 to keep Algerians away from Islamic education and the danger it posed to colonialism and its plans, which was confirmed by Doutouville himself in his report, in which he stated, "We left the schools to decay, and the lectures scattered us, so the lights around us went out... This means that we left the Muslim community in a state of ignorance and barbarism, worse than it was before they knew us." (8)

Under the decree of 14/07/1850, 40 primary schools were built in approximately 24 years (1850-1873) at a rate of two schools per year, most of which were closed after the Mokrani uprising in 1871, then it was finally closed in 1883 under pressure from the colonists, who saw education as a weapon against colonialism. They used this revolution as a pretext to express their dissatisfaction with education policy and burned down the Institute of Arts and Crafts and the French-Arabic school in Tizi Ouzou. (9)

We are talking about the danger of this education and the danger of these institutions, which the colonial administration was racing to establish more of in Algeria. Some may think that our raising of this issue is far from the truth, believing that colonialism came really with civilising intentions.

To clarify these colonial intentions, we quote what was said by 'Filman', head of the Political Affairs Office in Paris in 1846, who said: "The reason for all these efforts is to prepare men who will help us, through their activities with their fellow countrymen, to change Arab society in accordance with the requirements of our civilisation. (10)

2-2- The period of civil rule since 1871:

With the advent of civil rule, mixed (French/Arabic) schools were abolished, and interest in secular government schools began, especially since Jules Ferry played a key role in establishing this new educational system starting in 1882. After this experience, the joint schools, which met with fierce opposition from

the colonists, before considering the establishment of these new secular schools, an idea was confirmed that we can summarise in three basic points : (11)

- The natives (Algerians) are incapable of any growth or progress, and any effort to educate them is doomed to failure.
- Vocational education is the only type of education that can be adapted to the nature of Algerians.
- Education provided to the natives in the same way as French academic schools leads to form rebels and revolutionaries.

- The colonialists developed a vision of the nature of the lessons that could be offered to the natives, even though some of this content was also given to previous mixed schools.

- The basis of this perception is that the locals believe that Islam will rule the world and that the 'man of the hour' will come one day to put an end to

their temporary existence. Therefore, as they imagine, this 'mistake' must be corrected and the nature of France must be explained to them as it is: rich in agriculture, prosperous in industry and trade, and strong in its armies and fleets. (12)

2-3 Law of 28/03/1882 and the establishment of compulsory education:

To organise education in this new phase under civil rule, a law was passed on 12/06/1881 relating to free education, followed by a law on 28 March 1882 relating to compulsory education, the articles of which organised primary education as follows: (13)

- Article 1: Primary education includes: moral and civic education, reading, writing, French language, French history and geography, and some concepts of law, economics, politics, physics and mathematics.

- Article 2: Day of rest: Sunday, on which religious education may be given to children outside the school setting.

- Article 4: Primary education is compulsory for children over the age of six of both sexes.

- Article 6: A primary education certificate is awarded after a public examination starting at the age of 11.

Thus, the education received by Algerians became French in nature, supervised by French teachers, ignoring Algerian history and

focusing only, as mentioned above, on the greatness and glory of France. What we understand from Article 4 of this law, relating to compulsory education for both sexes, boys and girls over the age of six, is that the colonial administration was keen to provide school places for all Algerians who had reached the legal school age, but the reality is that even if Algerians accepted these schools and were convinced of their importance, they will not find places waiting for them. In this context, Mohamed Al-Arabi Al-Zoubiri All French children of school age were accepted into schools and studied the same curriculum as in France itself, while Algerian children were allocated one place for every five boys and one place for every 46 girls, meaning that only 7% had the opportunity to study, in addition to those who were unable to continue their studies due to poverty. (14)

If we add to this restriction on the education of Algerians in these schools the phenomenon of tightening control over Islamic education in zawiyas, mosques and kuttabs, we can be certain of the objective that the colonial administration was seeking to achieve, which was to turn Algerians into illiterates, and our surprise disappears in light of this reality, knowing that the illiteracy rate at the beginning of the 20th century exceeded 20% among the population.

Even in these difficult circumstances that characterised the schooling of Algerian children, we note the renewed discontent of the settlers and the municipal elders with this educational system, and their refusal to build schools for what they called the 'beggars' among the population, citing the high costs involved and the population's desire to achieve an Arab Algeria.(15)

In early February 1885, a decree was issued to establish what were called main schools and preparatory schools, supported by another decree on October 30th 1886, which classified primary schools into the following categories: (16)

- preparatory schools and nursery schools -
- main primary schools - vocational training schools. All of these categories had the same objective:

integration to ensure complete assimilation into French society and exploitation to keep Algerians in the service of the colonisers, by providing labour in various trades they needed, through vocational education institutions established by the colonialists in many regions, which we will discuss in detail along with official schools later on.

These institutions accepted students ranging between 15 and 16 years old, while the age of enrolment in primary schools ranges between 11 and 12 and 13 years old. After this age, they return to their families to help them with their work, because children rarely exceed.

Algerian children go beyond primary school and continue their studies at higher levels. To clarify further, we provide examples of the results of Algerian pupils' enrolment in primary education in some of the provinces we have selected in western Algeria up to 1896. (17)

Mazouna: Of the 105 pupils who completed their studies at the school since its foundation, the results were as follows:

- 47 farmers (gardeners, day labourers, farmhands)
- 36 animal herders
- 3 café workers
- 9 traders
- 7 snipers (soldiers), three of whom were non-commissioned officers
- 3 teachers

Mostaganem: Of the 236 pupils who completed their primary education, the results were as follows:

- 133 farmers
- 31 animal herders
- 29 snipers or riflemen, including 11 non-commissioned officers
- 39 Islamic judges
- 04 teachers

To give a clear overview of the development of French education, we have decided to provide a brief summary of the most important institutions established in Algeria, where so-called secular education emerged.

3- French schools in Algeria since 1830:

3-1 Schools in the province of Algiers: (18)

- Algiers School for Boys:

Established on 10/10/1836 as a preparatory school for boys, it offered Arabic language lessons taught by Louis Brignier. This preparatory school became a secondary school in October 1848 and was later renamed the Beigou Secondary School in 1857.

It was affiliated with the Ministry of War until 1871, when it became the Algiers Secondary School, supervised by Nicolas Perron (from 1857 to 1863). Its teaching staff consisted of three teachers: Auguste François Macouil, Jacques Leroy, and Eugène Vaisat. An Arabic language department was established in 1863, which was supervised until 1867 by Octave Houdas.

- Girls' secondary school in Algiers:

It was inaugurated in 1903 and renamed in 1941 as the Descartes Secondary School, then renamed after independence as the Omar Rasem Secondary School. It was administered by:

- Jeanne Desrayaux from 1911 to 1914
- Halima Abed in 1929
- Mme Durand in 1941
- Alice Parmentier from 1941 to 1943
- Alice Parmentier from 1947 to 1953

- The French Islamic Secondary School for Girls in Algiers:

Founded in 1956 on the site of the Medersa d'Alger school, it was then moved to La Coupole, where it is currently known as the Hassiba Ben Bouali Secondary School. In 1960, it was managed by Halima Ben Abed, wife of Ashour.

- Teacher Training School in the Province of Algiers: (Ecole normale d'instituteurs du département d'Alger)

It was opened in 1856 in the suburb of Mustapha Al-Alya, with an applied annex that included only French sections. The first batch in the first year included 10 students, including three Muslims. From 1882 onwards, classes were allocated for the training of local teachers, after they had passed a special examination, until 1928. Following a landslide, the school was moved to Bouzareah in 1888, and the course lasted three years. In 1891, a fourth year was added to train teachers in French to teach the local population.

Teacher Training School in the Province of Algiers: (Ecole normale d'institutrices du département d'Alger)

It was opened in 1876 in Miliana and did not include any Muslim women. Then, in 1946, it was moved from Miliana to Ben Aknoun in the city of Algiers, near the boys' secondary school.

School of the city of Blida: Opened in 1879, in 1942 it was converted into a secondary school named Duveyrier Secondary School, and after independence it took the name 'Ibn Rushd' Preparatory School.

Girls' Preparatory School: Opened in 1925, it was later converted into a secondary school named Jean de la Fontaine Secondary School. After independence, it was renamed Al-Fath.

Boufarik School: This was a preparatory school for boys that was later converted into a secondary school. It is currently known as Ibn-Toumert Secondary School

Medea School: Founded in 1879, it was renamed Mohammed Ben Chenab Preparatory School in 1942.

Melliana School: Founded in 1878.

Tizi Ouzou School: A boys' school, it was established in 1943.

3-2 Schools in the Constantine region (19):

Among the most prominent schools:

Constantine School: Opened near the Sidi al-Kettani Mosque in 1851, it was supervised by Shadli bin Isa. In 1884, Saïd bin Daoud was appointed to teach grammar and Arabic, Mahmoud bin Shadli was appointed to teach jurisprudence, and Louis Arrib was appointed to teach French. The military translator Constantine Sonneck (1888-1882) to teach algebra, history, and geography. When Ben Shadli died, he was succeeded by Adolphe Duclasatni Motilensky (1888-1907).

Among the most prominent students during this period, from its founding until the beginning of the 20th century, were :

- Roumieux: for French language, with a salary of 1,000 francs.
- Al-Amoushi: for reviewing French lessons, with a salary of 500 francs.
- Motylinski: for teaching French, history, geography and algebra.

- Mahmoud Ben Shadli: for teaching Islamic sciences, with a salary of 3,000 francs.
- Al-Medjaoui: for teaching Arabic, with a salary of 2,200 francs.
- Louis Arrib: for teaching administrative organisation.

At the end of the 19th century, other teachers were appointed, including Ibn al-Mawhub, Charles Saint-Calbert, and Antoine François Perrier. After Motilensky's death in 1907, Charles Saint-Calbert was appointed director of the school until 1914.

In May 1914, Alfred Dournon succeeded him as head of the administration until 1938, and the school had 50 students. In December 1938, after Dournon retired, Maurice Fondin-Heden was appointed director until 1950, when the school became a French-Muslim secondary school. After independence, it was renamed the Hayhi Al-Maki Secondary School.

Constantine Municipal Preparatory School: It was opened in 1858 in the city centre and was managed by Jacques Auguste Charbonneau until 1863, when he was succeeded by Gustave Riché (1870-1863). This preparatory school also offered classes in Arabic, and in 1867 it was supported by the opening of another school called the Arab-French Preparatory School, to which some of the students from the first one were transferred.

This preparatory school was managed by a military officer, Maximilien Aubin, until 1870, when he was succeeded by Emile Niran.

In 1871, a section for Arabic was added under the supervision of Louis Macouil, and it became a secondary school in 1876.

Girls' secondary school: It was opened in 1911 in front of the new school, and in 1942 it was named Lycée Laveran. After independence, it became known as the Lycée de la Liberté.

Teacher Training School: Established in 1878, it admitted local students after they passed a special entrance exam. It offered Arabic language classes and It was run by Mohamed Majdoub Ben Kalfat until 1921, then by Paul Raimbault until 1937, and then by Haim Aboulkhir until 1953.

Batna School: This primary school was opened in 1929 and later converted into a

preparatory school. Its first headmaster was Joseph Tkaouane.

Annaba Preparatory School: Established in 1873, it was later converted into a secondary school named Saint-Augustin.

Year 1942.

Bejaia Preparatory School: Established in 1928.

Philippe Ville Preparatory School (now Skikda): This was a preparatory school for boys, established in 1880, which became a secondary school in 1887 and was named Dominique Luciani Secondary School.

Setif Preparatory School: Established in 1873, it became exclusively for settlers in 1924, and in 1942 it took the name Eugène Albertini. After independence, its name was changed to Amhamed El Kirouani Secondary School.

3-3 Schools in the Oran region: (20)

Oran Preparatory School: This preparatory school was established in 1846 and became a secondary school in 1887. It took the name Lamorisse in 1942

. It is currently known as Pasteur High School. All of its teachers were European until 1906, when Algerians were appointed, including: Mohamed Ben Abd Al-Rahman (1906-1937), Youssef Beljraba (1911-1912), Ahmed Al-Aimash (1912-1913), Belkacem Tajini (1937-1938), Abdelkader Mahdad 1926-1946, then (1947-1956), then (1960 (1961), Sheikh Bouamran (1957-1959) Tahar Zitouni (1959-1960) Ben Ali Saghir (1959-1960) then Yahya Samash (1960-1961) .

- **Petit Lycée:** Established in 1922.

-Girls' Preparatory School: Established in 1909, it became the Stéphane Ghazal Secondary School in 1942 and is currently known as the 'Al-Hayat' Secondary School.

Teacher Training School: Established in 1933.

Female Teacher Training School: Established in 1909.

Tlemcen Preparatory School: Established in 1902, with a department dedicated to Arabic language. In 1942, it was renamed De-Slane.

Boys' Preparatory School in Mascara: Established in 1927, it was successively administered by:

- Pierre Counillon (1927-1928)
 - Henriette Teboul (1929), original rank: professor.
 - Safir Al-Boudali (1939-1940), Original rank: Deputy teacher.
 - Abdelkader Qarmala (1958) Deputy teacher
- Girls' school in Mascara:** Founded in 1919, its most prominent teachers included:
- Yamina Laarab: Arabic language and literature teacher (1919–1939)
 - Mme Boex: Deputy Teacher (1940–1939).
 - Mme Abarkan (1950).
 - Ahmed Bouchekhi (1956–1951)

Mostaganem Preparatory School: Opened in 1879, it was converted into a secondary school named René Basset in 1942 and is now known as Zarrouki Secondary School. Its first headmaster was:

- Albert Destrées (1884-1979), then Menouiard until 1887, then Hilaire Ignoret (1896-1902), then:
- Doukan 1911.
- Maurice Benchemoul (1911-1915)
- Abdelkader Mahdad 1922.
- Albert Gateau (1926–1927)
- Fernand Riv (1928–1932)
- Ahmed Taher - 1939-1944

Mostaganem Boys' School: Founded in 1913, Ahmed Taher also oversaw its administration between 1943 and 1944.

Girls' School in Mostaganem: Also established in 1913, it was supervised by Maurice Ben Chmoul (1913-1915), then by Miss Grigore in 1927, and then by Mrs. Boudan (1956-1927).

Sidi Bel Abbès Preparatory School: It was opened in 1922, and in 1942 it became a secondary school named La Perrine, supervised by Louise Laboutier (1922-1923), then Eugène Richert (1929-1928) then Abdelkader Azza (1929), then Chassaing (1930-1938), then Safir Al-Boudali (1939), then Ahmed Bouchikhi from January 1943 to the end of 1951.

The boys' school in Sidi Bel Abbès: established in 1919, with Jeanne Bel appointed as its headmistress, then: Pierre Conion (1923-1927), followed by Jean Marcel and then Marfaing Gasinier until 1941.

The girls' school in Sidi Bel Abbès: Opened in 1914, it was initially supervised by Miss Goguenheim, then by Jean Bal (1919-1920), who supervised both the boys' and girls' schools at the same time.

Despite this huge number of schools and vocational training institutions, Algerians benefited little from them, and the number of pupils enrolled in them until 1890 did not exceed 1.9% of the total number of school-age children. The same was true for secondary education, where the number of pupils did not exceed 84 before 1900. (21)

With the advent of the 20th century, restrictions on Algerians' education in French schools increased under pressure from the colonisers, who resisted the teaching of the Arabic language and put pressure on its speakers by issuing laws, including the law of 24 December 1904, which set harsh conditions for the opening of Islamic schools, and the provisions of the Colon Conference of 21 March 1908, which included:

- The abolition of primary education for the local population
- Allocation of loans for practical agricultural education and appointment of French teachers to supervise it.

One of the results of this restriction on Algerian education during this period was a significant decline in the number of Algerians attending French schools.

For this reason, after the First World War, Algerians took the initiative to fight for the reform of the education system and to enable Algerians to attend school.

They demanded licences to open schools to educate their children and took an interest in establishing these educational institutions and reviving the zawiyas in villages and cities, so that they could resume their activities in providing Arabic Islamic education, preserving their identity and personality and maintaining their religion and language.

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