

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC
Ministry of Education

National Report on the Educational Development

In the Syrian Arab Republic

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1- An introduction to the requirements of educational development:

To perform its new message, education has to target man on its starting point towards future. Educating man is a requirement of survival and self-fulfillment as a human being. It is the optimal origination of his/ her capacities, knowledge, and skills. It is the driving force of human development. It is a right provided for in the international conventions.

Here, Syria is so keen on disseminating education to all male! female citizens. Further, Syria has been increasingly giving attention to the standard of education in application of the principle of democratic and mandatory education.

Under the legislative framework of education, the Syrian Constitution in the Syrian Arab Republic issued in 1973 pinpointed the general goals of education as follows:

- Article 21-** The system of education and culture aims to create Arab generations having scientific approach of thinking, closely committed to their history and homeland, proud of their heritage, and satiated with the spirit of struggle in realization of the national goals and in contribution and service of humanity as a whole.
- Article 22-** The educational system shall undertake constant progress of people and keep in line with the ceaseless development of their social, economic and cultural needs.
- Article 37-** Education is a state-guaranteed right and it is free of charge in all its stages and mandatory in the elementary stage. The State seeks to extend further mandatory stages. It also supervises and orients education in a way to link education with the requirement of community and production.

Moreover, the law of illiteracy eradication in Syria in 1972 aimed to eradicate illiteracy equally among all illiterate and non-schooled male! female citizens, who are above 8 years old. This law provided that education of illiterate people is a national and free of charge action. It obligated all official and popular administrations, commissions, institutions, organizations, and employers to be involved in the eradication of illiteracy. In addition, the 2nd Educational Conference of Educational Development held in Damascus in 1998 agreed to make available the executive requirements of the national plan of illiteracy final eradication approved by the High Council of Illiteracy Eradication in 1996.

In the constitutional oath speech delivered by President **Bashar AL-ASSAD** before the People's Assembly on 17/07/2001, he determined the prospects of development in the educational system saying:

“Reform and development should inevitably cover our educational, teaching, cultural and informational organizations in service of our national and regional causes, enhancement of our genuine heritage, rejection of negativity and narrow-mindedness, remedy of any social phenomena which adversely affect the unity and integrity of the community. All in all is intended to prepare skilled, qualified and competent social forces to deal and interact with the various developments worldwide”.

II- Streams and objectives of the educational policies in Syria:

- 1- Realization of the principle of educational democracy and allowance of educational opportunities before all citizens both on the quantitative and qualitative dimensions.
- 2- Application of the policy of mandatory education and extension of the mandatory stage to cover the nine classes of the basic education.
- 3- Deepen the national affiliation of youngsters in terms of thought, values, behavior, and strengthened focus on the learning performance standard of Arabic language.
- 4- Attention to today's means using IT and extending instruction of foreign languages starting with the 1st grade of basic education.
- 5- Emphasis on applying the technical and vocational education plan on the quality performance in order to achieve more effective connection between the educational outputs, development plans and renewed requirements of the labor market.
- 6- Enhanced orientation towards the quality education and ameliorated quality performance by renewing substance of the educational process, improving the efficacies of the educational cadres and updating the educational management and technology.
- 7- Building balanced and integrated personality of the citizens, who are capable of positive interaction with the modern parameters and active contribution to the progress and security of their homeland and fulfillment of its national, human and civilized message.
- 8- Attention in building up the educational substance on a solid ground of Arabic heritage and national peculiarity. Enable youngsters to address backwardness, partition and colonialism.
- 9- Provision of citizens with the theoretical and practical efficacies, knowledge and skills that support their ability to contribute to the development of intellectual, social, economic and other outcomes so that the sustainable and comprehensive development is realized.
- 10- Raise the scientific and cultural standards of all citizens and concentration on research as a takeoff, experiment as a means and practical application as a ground of training. Development of scientific tendency in amelioration of the performance and achievement standards so that graduates of the different educational stages may benefit from the scientific yield and technology and so that education can be linked with the comprehensive development.
- 11- Development of self-educational skills in fulfillment of uninterrupted learning.
- 12- Adoption of a universal policy of educational development observing the scientific, cultural and epistemological changes and recent advances worldwide. This policy will handle the enhancement of demographic, environmental and educational conceptions all

over the stages of education provided, however, that the referential framework would involve community policies in their developmental plans.

- 13- Application of material incentives and otherwise that may guarantee instigation and augmentation of efforts, reinvigoration of the tendency towards performance, fulfillment, innovation and creativity.
- 14- Strengthen the use of Arabic language in education and instruction and seek to unify the scientific terminology both in Syria as well as the Arab World.
- 15- Give the necessary attention and care to the pupils with special needs (talented and handicapped).

III- Aspects of the educational strategy in Syria:

The recent decades of the 20th century have witnessed a real breakthrough of technology in general, informatics and communications in particular. The revolution of information and communications has brought about very great changes in all aspects of life, namely the economic, epistemological and social aspects. The knowledge economy is really the economy of today and tomorrow. The tool of expedition as such is IT and communications that largely take part in the economic globalization. This tool has also created social changes reflected in the considerable alteration of our labor styles, means of communication and interaction between individuals of the local community and the international community.

Hence, technology, IT and communications shall have to contribute to the economic and social process of development in all countries of the world. Actually, the developing countries have to avail this historic chance and expedite development in all aspects of life.

Due to the formidable role assumed by education in the process of social and economic development in the Syrian Arab Republic and the copious benefits that can be derived from the educational process as a whole including IT and communications, and due to the necessity of planning in all parts of the educational process in order to introduce such technology with all the required projects, preparation and qualification of cadres, equipment and restrictions, it has been inevitable to set up a specific strategy at the Ministry of Education. This strategy should be designed to utilize such technology for its best benefits. This document shows the features of strategy at the Ministry of Education in terms of IT and communications. It represents the first stage of the strategic setup to be followed by the second stage when detailed strategy will be established ending up in an action plan. This plan will depend on the educational projects that may allow the educational process to move forward towards the key goal, i.e. contribution to the economic and social development through introduction of the best education required for development. This strategy is basically relying on the “aspects of the educational strategy in the Syrian Arab Republic during 2000-2020” established by the Ministry of Education in 2000.

In this report, some of these aspects are drawn up as appropriate with the sought objective represented in the arrangement of strategic features at the Ministry of Education and in relation to IT and communications.

* **Some features of the general educational strategic preview:**

- Knowledge in service of man and community.
- Knowledge for everybody and for lifetime: The multiple and rapid technological and epistemological changes require uninterrupted education to maintain effectiveness in different stages of life. This can be embodied in the application of democracy of education and mandatory education and teaching.
- Quality of education as a permanent end: This can be achieved by providing the best curricula in terms of the contents, arrangement, highly qualified teachers, advanced management and proper infrastructures.
- Knowledge is the pivot of creativity as future economy: Effective production depends on qualitative information and knowledge. The economic power can be measured up by the ability of renovation and creativity. In fact, knowledge economy implies more competitive feature for survival and prosperity.

2-Some features of the general educational strategy:

* Allowance of data access by all individuals of the community on equal basis: The current technological and social development actually allows consideration of making data available to all population in Syria wherever they are. In other words,

- 1) The possible accessibility by all population to all data media (including books, libraries, networks, computers, multimedia..).
- 2) The possibility of using such media.
- 3) Utilization of any modern means of communication and conversation.

* Education for learning sake: The process of education is associated with man all over his/her lifetime. Schools cannot provide students with all knowledge. Therefore, school has to participate in the pupils' open-mindedness and school has to be the place of learning through development of the self-capacities of individuals, namely the methods of obtaining, analyzing, discussing and presenting information. The role of teacher is to supervise, reinvigorate class and students not to spoon-feed them.

* Close connection between school and community:

- On the value aspects: School has to reflect the community values and take part in

inculcating and strengthening such values. Likewise, students have to be closely related to the social and economic issues that their communities as well as the Arab and international communities live up with. Actually, the world has turned out into a small village, whose parts are linked by modern technology in addition to the globalized economy.

- On the functional aspects: School has to qualify students in a way to make them active in all regards of the community. In other words, school has to provide students with all requirements of the labor market and allow them to acquire skills and use the new technology that may be useful in their professional career.

* Connection of the educational personnel with the network of information! experience exchange on the Syrian and Arab World scales:

Knowledge can only be ascertained through discussion and dialogue. Ideas can only be enriched through communications and contacts with the others within the one and the same culture or different cultures. However, the network of information exchange aims to connect the following:

- Students.
- Teachers.
- Teachers/students community.
- Teachers/students community with the sources of information anywhere.
- Teachers/students community with the outside world.

* Development of students' self-initiation for all age categories through the academic research that develops the faculty of analysis and association, intellectualization, imposition and discussion of notions the matter that may enhance the students' standard of commanding skills and knowledge.

* Allowance of in-school / off-school education: School is not the only place of acquiring the desired knowledge and experience. By using modern technology, it would be possible to go off the traditional walls of school and access it anywhere else. This will allow those, who missed education to catch up with. Further, it will allow traditional students to receive education at the proper speed they may uptake. It will be another form of equality of education.

* Adaptation with the contemporary requirements: The world is changeable and dynamic with time and requirements change with the changeability of such world. Topics of study today are not necessarily the topics of tomorrow because changes are sometimes dramatically rapid and require immediate response.

* Constant development and evaluation of the educational curricula and methodology:

Provision of the best and ceaseless improvement is required at all times. This process requires field scientific research that handles most aspects of the educational process and requirements where the scientific measurement would be the fundamental instrument. It requires also participation of the entire community, economic and social activities.

* Serious educational research: About the learning and pedagogy, the curricula and syllabuses, the surrounding and global environments, the influence of the new technology on teaching and education.

3- Executive channels of this strategy:

In consistence with this strategy, the Ministry of Education has carried out a number of projects and measures on several axes including:

- 1- Close connection between education and the requirements of development: Giving special attention to the vocational education and development of this sector on the quantitative and qualitative levels as appropriate with the requirements of labor market. Introduction of vocational education into the basic education and strengthen IT teaching in the vocational education.
- 2- Training of students on the skills of cognitive research: through research and participation in problem-solving that requires team work.
- 3- Reconsideration of the curricula: according to immediate and deferred plans designed to update the contemporary topics and remove any excessive or redundant subjects, thus, consideration of the curricula as an integrated entity.
- 4- Development of human resources under preparation, training, and qualification: through the national platform of educational cadre preparation. Secondment of teachers from different levels and specialties towards the diploma of educational qualification at the faculties of education in the Syrian universities. Application of the constant training and qualification system on teachers using modern technology.
- 5- Variation of the learning sources: like libraries, sources of computer data and networks.
- 6- Development of the educational research: by establishing a center for educational research and allocation of one item in the budget for the educational research.
- 7- Students' care: by introducing the system of psycho-educational advisor and social counselor at schools, vocational orientation at the stage of basic education, expansion of healthcare, attention to early discovery of the talented students and students facing learning difficulties at the standard classes.

- 8- Development of school building patterns: by redesigning patterns of the school building and adoption of multi-purpose halls, library and laboratory halls.
- 9- Care of early childhood: as an important stage of open-mindedness. This stage requires increase of state and private kindergartens, amelioration of KG environment and development of KG curricula, standard improvement of nurses operating in such kindergartens in coordination with the faculties of education.
- 10- Development of the single-teacher-school types and collective classes at the small and remote residential quarters. The number of these schools was /5215/in 2002. This can be done by turning these schools into typical schools and improving the teaching techniques and pedagogies in this type of schools.
- ii- Care of the excelling students: development and extension of the equipment required for the excelling schools including laboratories, libraries, Internet communications so that the principal excelling schools and alternate schools would be available in each province. Establishment of a track system for the graduates of such schools.
- 12- Reconsideration of the computerized examination systems: including standard question banks, introduction of computer-aided result accounts and the “Education Network” for result announcement.
- 13- Utilization of the international expertise and collaboration: in establishing projects with any Arab and international organizations in the areas of vocational education, global education and comparative evaluation. Support the educational decision-making and project establishment of curricular unification, development of early childhood and integration of pupils with special needs in the standard classes, elaboration of the cultural agreements and exchange of experience with different countries of the world.

4- **The role of IT and Communications in fulfillment of strategy:**

IT and communications play a major role in the following fields:

- Enrichment of the educational process: by redesign of lessons and use the computer capabilities like simulation, documentary and scientific films, aids in data analysis and acquisition of new knowledge as well as the self-education.
- Data storage and acquisition of information and knowledge: through databanks and information banks.
- Communication with the others locally and abroad: through LANs and worldwide

webs.

- Development of the curricula, programs, and the necessary qualification as well as the associated operations: using the information network utilities to see the others' syllabuses and dialogue with the relevant parties locally and abroad in addition to the possibility of distant training.
- Contribution to the development of the educational process including all the required regulative and administrative operations, and support of decision-making: due to the capabilities allowed by LANs including prompt communication with the faraway centers as well as the analytical, regulative and calculative capacities that computers and software may provide.
- Dissemination of information and communication culture: through the considerable role assumed by the Ministry under the national platform of informatics dissemination and qualification courses in this respect targeting teachers and personnel of the Ministry of Education and directorates of education at the different provinces.

5- Features of strategy at the Ministry of Education in IT and Communications:

5-1 Strategy at the Ministry of Education is represented in fulfillment of the objectives using IT and communications in:

- * Data access by all individuals of the community on equal basis.
- * Education for learning sake: by changing the traditional educational pattern and adding a fourth dimension embodied in IT and communications that play an auxiliary part for both teachers and learners.
- * Connection of education with the network of information exchange locally and abroad through the "Education Network".
- * Allowance of in-school / off-school learning by using IT and communications and the "Education Network" that will take part in the training of teachers and distant training, as well.
- * Active educational management: in all aspects including dialogue between members of the educational personnel, the community, the educational research, development of the curricula, arrangement of examinations, evaluation and so on using IT and communications.

5-2 Overall procedural actions:

- * Education in different stages: from kindergartens up to the secondary certificate, specialist intermediate technical institutes in addition to all the requirements of book compilation,

printing, trial and appraisal and evaluation of teachers' performance, educational research and international collaboration.

* Management of the educational and learning process:

- Enrollment of students in every school year.
- Examinations of the transitional classes and general certificates all over the stages of education.
- Examination results of the general certificates and result announcements.
- Contests of teachers' admission.
- Foundation of the infrastructure: school buildings – laboratory halls – supply of equipment.
- Planning: statistical operations of education, establishment of schools and sections, supply requirements of the educational process.

All the above operations are generally performed in the traditional ways noting that modern technology has been relatively applied in more than one domain. Nevertheless, the Ministry inclines to create breakthrough of action on two levels: administrative and educational. IT and communications will undertake a remarkable role as shown in the third part of this report.

3-5 infrastructures:

A statistical study shows that the number of students relating to the Ministry of Education represents one quarter of the Syrian population; (4.2) million students. Indeed, it is one of the highest rates in the world, thus, renders the role invested in the Ministry of Education in relation to the social and economic development and good qualification of this large number subject to the requirements of the developmental projects in Syria as one of the most important roles in making future in comparison with any sectors otherwise.

Besides, a statistical study shows that the number of personnel at the Ministry of Education is over 20% of the state employees. This means that the volume of the running administrative tasks are so big.

The number of schools is some /18.000/ combining at least /134.000/ sections. This means that the average number of sections per school is /7.4/ sections in each school. The average number of students is /31/ per each section.

These rates slightly vary between the stages, types of schools like the secondary and vocational schools etc. The first cycle (up to the 4th grade) of basic education constitutes half the number of students, schools and sections and is slightly below half the number of the

personnel.

This statistical study provides the prospective anticipations at /15%/ increase during 2000 in the number of sections, students, and teachers and /5%/ in the number of schools.

5-4 Budget:

Table (1) shows the budget of the Ministry of Education during 2002 and it gives breakdown of the current budget and the investment budget in SYP 1000:

| Ministry's budget | Current budget | Investment budget |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Central administration | 11.546.580 | 4.096.444 |
| Directorates of education | 19.535.436 | 4.112.425 |
| Total | 31.082.016 | 8.208.869 |

The current budget of the central administration includes the payroll of the ministry personnel and teachers of the secondary and basic stages. The current budget of the directorates, on the other hand, includes the payroll of the directorate personnel and tutors.

The investment budget of the ministry covers construction of the vocational schools, educational instruments of all schools in Syria including IT and communications equipment. Yet, the investment budget of the directorates of education is designated to construct the basic and secondary schools, maintain these schools with the vocational schools. The amount of /SYP 220.000.000/ is designated for IT and communications equipment during 2002, i.e. /2.6%/ of the investment budget.

The Ministry of Education spent /SYP 580.000.000/ to purchase the equipment of "Education Network" during 2002 out of the information-oriented budget. This means that the Ministry of Education designated /10%/ of its investment budget for IT and communications during that year. However, this percentage dropped to /5%/ only during 2003, which is quite reasonable.

The budget of the Ministry of Education constitutes /11%/ of the state public budget.

It is worthwhile mentioning that the state provides all material support to the Ministry of Education due to its significance in the process of social and economic growth.

5-5 Circulation of IT & Communications at the Ministry of Education:

Table (2) shows the circulation of IT and communication instruments at schools. In fact, most of these instruments are found in the second cycle of basic education and all

branches of the secondary stage while they are not found in the first cycle of basic education. The detailed figures (Directorate of Informatics .Ministry of Education) show that more than /95%/ of schools of the second cycle as well as the secondary stage possess computers. The average number of computers in such schools is /3.7/ sets. The average number of printers is about /1.4/.

In each school of the second cycle of basic education and secondary stage, there is about one telephone line. Nonetheless, the application of IT and communications in the educational process is still a project underway of consideration.

| <u>Number of schools</u> | <u>Number of computers</u> | <u>Number of printers</u> |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 3514 | 12899 | 4818 |

6- IT and Communications and possible chances in the educational process:

IT and communications lead to extensive alteration in the educational process as far as the following aspects are concerned:

6-1 Change of the educational model: the current model is based on three pillars: curriculum - student - teacher. A fourth pillar can be added to this model, i.e. IT and communications that may play an assisting role for teachers in their pedagogic activity and for students in their learning as follows:

6-2 Assisting teacher in instruction: the least assistance that can be obtained is through preparation of lessons using the information that IT and communication can greatly help in obtaining and analyzing it, presenting the taught subjects in a more effective manner when used as an auxiliary instrument including subjects like:

- Teaching Arabic and foreign languages: listening to the correct pronunciation of words, comparing student's pronunciation of the repeated words, and assisting students in improving their pronunciation in addition to the exercises and texts that may help teachers using IT.
- Teaching Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Ecology: computer may be used in simulations and animations to illustrate some topics and how they are handled including:
The process of Genetics or electric power, light, and mechanics, process of chemical reactions, etc.
- Teaching Mathematics: demonstrating solid shapes, complex curves, and viewing them from different sides using colors, shades, and the process of statistical data.
- Teaching History, Geography and Sociology: presenting illustrations and documentary films in addition to computer applications as a means of documentation.

6-3 Assisting students, particularly in:

- Self-education in all the above-mentioned subjects in terms of the possibility of rapid repetition of subjects as appropriate to the student and doing additional exercises.
- Self-initiation, particularly in search, analysis, documentation and presentation of information in addition to the enriching subjects. In other words, IT and communications can be a means of collecting information and knowledge, gaming, and learning oriented-games, namely in kindergartens.

6-4 Training: Training of teachers by using the video conferencing technology and computer networks (distant qualification).

6-5 Educational research: Computer plays the role of a documentary instrument, data analysis and selection of the learning and pedagogic methodology.

6-6 Development of school textbooks: in content, preparation, direction and student/teacher-oriented drills in addition to the assistance in book evaluation and self-education using multimedia technology.

6-7 Management of the educational process: Preparation, analysis and presentation of results, support of decision-making, personnel affairs and financial matters.

6-8 Dialogue between members of the educational personnel: the administration, teachers and students and dialogue between decision makers concerned with the educational process and the community too.

7- The role assumed by the Ministry of Education in thrusting the use of IT and Communications:

The Ministry of Education has had in the past and still has at present and will have in future a pilot role in thrusting the use of IT and communications. This role is reflected in the following points:

7-1 Dissemination of informatics culture: under the national platform addressed to all citizens in close cooperation with the Syrian Computer Society (SCS), the number of trainees in the centers of the national platform relating to the Ministry of Education is over /240.000/ citizens. It is actually a currently constant platform and will be further developed as appropriate with the international standards in learning the fundamentals of computer use and applications: International Computer Driver License (ICDL). For performance of this platform, more than /200/ computer halls are used all over the Syrian cities combining /1300/ computers.

7-2 Preparation of informatics teachers:

In the /14/ centers of Martyr Bassel AI-Assad for Computer-aided Educational Training, these centers qualify informatics teachers according to the successive nine-month program. The applicable program in these centers is addressed to the university graduate teachers and assisting tutors of scientific subjects.

7-3 Teaching informatics at the public secondary schools, vocational schools and basic education schools. Informatics is taught to students so that they may acquire the essential skills of computer use.

(Part III of this report requires qualifying teachers and tutors in future as appropriate with the IT and communication applications in order that the said standard applications are made).

8- Projects of priority to introduce information and communications into education for the purpose of educational development.

There are several projects under preparation or execution at the Ministry of Education like:

8-1 Transition from the existing educational model into the IT and the communication-based educational model being auxiliary tools in the educational process and utilization of such technology in teachers' qualification and distant learning.

8-2 Support project of the educational decision: through the creation of databanks covering most aspects of the educational process, management and running administration.

- 8-3 Educational interconnection: by constructing “Education Network” that links schools with the directorates of education, the latter with the Ministry of Education, and the latter with the national and worldwide network.
- 8-4 Evaluation project of education: in collaboration with UNESCO as designed to evaluate the educational process including curricula, methodology and management.
- 8-5 School textbooks: using modern technology.
- 8-6 Educational research: that needs be reinvigorated to be able to analyze the educational state-of-facts and foresee future.
- 8-7 Curricular experiment and evaluation: The currently applicable methods involve risks of which a great deal can be avoided by using IT and communications, shortcut the empirical time and furtherance the evaluative objectivity.
- 8-8 Development of the administrative activities: by expediting the procedures of enrollment, examination and result announcement.

IV- Quantitative indices of the educational status:

The principle of applying democracy of education and the policy of mandatory education means preparation of educational opportunities to all the Syrian citizens and use of the proper instrumentality to admit all pupils under mandatory age into different schools in Syria.

The principle of democracy of education is not limited to the quantitative side of education but it comprises amelioration and betterment of education to be more closely interrelated with the student’s life and future career.

The indicative index in this respect is manifested in the high number of pupils and students admitted to schools at different stages of education, prevalence of schools, and the increased number of educational cadres as shown in the following table:

[*OMITTED*]

Despite the urgent need for teaching staff under this extensive expansion in admission of pupils and students, namely after the obligatory stage was extended to the 9th basic grade, the current personnel of the Ministry of Education includes the following jobs:

| | |
|--------------|------------------|
| Class I | : 52.584 |
| ClassII | :211.518 |
| Class III | :1016 |
| ClassLV | :2111 |
| Class V | : 20.042 |
| Total | : 287.871 |

The analytical study on the above figures show expansion of the teaching staff as appropriate with the needs associated with the growth and expansion of the admission rates every year.

V- Qualitative Indices:

1- Educational curricula:

- Training on modern curricular design and utilization of the relevant local and Arab experiences.
- Adoption of the epistemological, skilful and sentimental efficacies in preparation of the new curricula.
- Employment of the contest system in compilation.
- Dependence on the complete team in developing the curriculum of each subject (teachers - tutors - specialist advisors - university specialist instructors).
- Continue to apply the principle of field experiment of each book for one year.
- Continue to strengthen the national thought and affiliation.
- Introduction advancement of the environmental, demographic, health and traffic education as well as the human international law in the contents of all subjects.
- Expansion of the space dedicated for the training and evaluative activities in the schoolbook, conceptual simplification, elimination of redundancy, abandonment of quantity, and solicitation of quality.
- Introduction of Informatics into the secondary stage, the second cycle of basic education and the intermediate institutes.
- Early and gradual introduction of English language starting with the first grade of basic education, and French as a second language starting with the 7th basic grade.
- Collaboration with some Arab states in the field of curricular development. For example, (The unification project of curricula with Egypt has reached the end of basic education throughout the activities of the joint technical committees between the ministries of education in Syria and Egypt).

2- Vocational education:

- Termination of the two-year system in the vocational education.
- Application of the industrial apprenticeship in cooperation with the chamber of industry, the European Training Center, for example (cloth industry - automatic control PLC - die making - vocation of mechanical manufacture).
- Updating some specialties in collaboration with France.
- Curricular development of a large number of vocations and creation of new vocations in consistence with the market/ development requirements, for example (computer technology - electronic technology - electrical technology).
- Cooperation with the state ministries to develop a number of vocations, for example (Ministry of Industry - Ministry of Electricity...)
- Curricular reconsideration of the commercial vocational secondary education - vocational feminine education in order to elevate the graduate standard and bring about more consistency with the labor market requirements.

Due to the importance of this kind of education in preparing the skilled cadres that meet the requirements of global development, there are a number of problems that still hinder the development of vocational education associated with replacement of the machines and equipment subject to the recent advances of technology and assortment of an adequate number of engineers to meet the need of vocational secondary schools in addition to training the specialist cadres for the new disciplines.

3- **Students' Care:**

- Introduction of the system of psycho-educational advice at the schools of the second cycle and secondary stage.
- Introduction of the system of social guidance at the first cycle.
- Inception of the program for people with special needs including handicapped and normal persons in collaboration with UNESCO and UNECEF.
- Study the actual status of excelling schools to develop the educational environment at these schools.

4- **Utilization of IT in Education:**

- Design of lessons (computer-aided education).
- Preparation of E-books for a number of subjects relating to the general certificates (CD) at /12/ books. Input a number of E-books on the website of the Ministry of Education.
- Establishment of the "Education Network" for information linking the ministry with the directorates of education and schools; (1000) schools as a first step in order to support the educational decision through providing a number of services including:

1- Internet and E-mail.

2- Video conferencing system.

- 3- Database and E-books.
- 4- A number of programs that contribute to the administrative updating: (Statistics and personnel software, finance and examinations, etc.).
- 5- Expansion of the national platform for dissemination of informatics in cooperation with the Syrian Computer Society (SCS).
- 6- Inception of applying the system of International Computer Driver License (ICDL).

5- **Qualification of the educational cadres:**

- Expansion of the decentralized method of training.
- Creation of training centers and supply of training technology all over the provinces.
- Concentration in the training plan on the new cultivation courses in the fields of informatics, measurement, evaluation, cultivation of thinking and vocational education.
- Condensation of collaboration with the Arab and international organizations in the field of training and use of the expertise maintained by these organizations.
- Improvement of the standard of educational qualification of the existing teachers on job duty by seconding them to the faculties of education towards the diploma of educational qualification.
- The issue of short-term courses is still unable to meet the requirements of the scientifically and methodologically non-licensed teachers and tutors. Therefore, it would be most feasible to seek application of the rehabilitation project of all teachers and assisting tutors under the open learning and IT in order to raise their efficacies up to the level of degree in education (class teacher). Actually, the Ministry has been initiating this global project as presented within the executive priorities of the future plan at the Ministry. It will be applied during the school year 2004- 2005.

6- **Educational research:**

- Focus on the applied educational research as well as the researches that observe the educational problems. For example, (consideration to list the educational problems, study the status of excelling schools and determination of their problems and requirements).
- Application of the computerized documentation system (CDS/ISIS) and utilization in the Educational Documentation Center at the Ministry.
- Application of the empirical program for pupils with special needs within the standard schools.
- Study the obstacles of administrative performance at the subsidiary and central administrations.
- Holding cultivation courses for teachers and educational pilots in cooperation with the Arab and international organizations in the specific fields of education, learning difficulties, qualification of teachers at the excelling schools and early childhood.

Due to the importance of the educational research in rationalization of the educational

plan, diagnosis of the educational problems and outline the proper alternatives, the need is so urgent for specialized cadres in educational research under the local and foreign secondment.

7- **Examinations and question banks:**

- Computer-aided development of the question banks.
- Concentration in the question banks on the objective questions that probe the superior mental faculties at /30 -40%/.
- Results announcement of the general certificates on the Internet.
- Development of the preparation program of examination results at the computer center. It has been applied since the beginning of 2004 and downloaded on the “Education Network”.

Yet, there are still some existing difficulties in the general examinations in connection with the mechanisms of correction and lack of incentives for operators of examinations. Further, the students’ results depend on the final examination as a criterion for specialization in the secondary or undergraduate studies.

8- **Teaching Techniques:**

- Production of the educational means locally at the five production centers of educational means relating to the Ministry of Education.
- Production of TV advanced educational programs in terms of direction.

9- **Physical Education:**

- Participation in the Arab school championships in Jordan in 2001 and Lebanon in 2002 and winning the golden medal in football, (21) medals in swimming, (3) medals in athletics, and a silver medal in handball.
- Curricular modification and development of the sport institutes, and introduction of new subjects (foreign terminology – Informatics - badminton).
- Modification of the monetary system of the sport activity fund.
- Amendment of the statute of sport institutes.
- Separation of the physical education marks from the musical education marks at the second cycle of the basic education stage.
- Recourse to the holders of diploma in physical education at the schools of basic education as acting teachers.
- Issuance of the teachers’ manual for the subject of physical education for all classes of the basic education stage.
- Re-compilation of some books relating to physical education.

10- **Vanguard education:**

- Modification of the book of vanguard education for the third and fourth years (class teacher) at the Faculty of Education.
- Introduction of the curriculum of vanguard education starting with the 1st grade up to the 6th grade at the basic education stage.
- Participation and winning of the contest of children's drawings during 2003 held by the Council of Arab Ministers.
- Participation and winning of the contest of the Lebanese environmental and developmental magazine by (14) schools.
- Introduction of new disciplines in the contest of vanguard pioneers on the Syrian level (Informatics - music - drama).

11-Cultural relations and existing educational projects with the Arab and international organizations:

- Cultural agreements signed with /54/ brotherly Arab and friendly foreign states.
- Executive programs signed with /33/ brotherly Arab and friendly foreign states.
- There are other forms of cooperation with some Arab and international states and organizations under projects and agreements including:

1- With Malaysia:

Agreement on the school smart applications and setup the necessary time schedule ending in February 2004.

2- With the U.S.A.:

- Twin project of schools in Damascus.
- Cooperation in the training field of teachers and advisors of English language.
- Scholarships of students to the U.S.A. under the cultural exchange service (YES).
- Scholarship of students to study English language in:
 - 1- Amid-East Center.
 - 2- American Language Center (ALC).
- Fellowships for specialists of administration and curricula (program of international visitor).
- Hubert Humphrey fellowships.
- Environmental education project.

3- With Agha Khan Development Institution:

- School training of English language.
- Supply project of computer halls.
- Secondment of learners to the center of educational development in Karachi towards the

MA degree.

VI- Educational recent advances in the field of educational curricula:

The plan of the Directorate of Curricula is based on the plan of the Ministry of Education in connection with the course of development and updating lead by H.E. President **Bashar al-Assad** and embodied in the values and directives of the ever-remembered leader **Hafez al-Assad** on the importance of the educational and scientific research, the importance of technical and vocational education being the essence of the developmental process and development of curricula and schoolbooks in line with the modern educational developments. This is based on the decisions of the national and regional conferences of Al-Baath Arab Socialist Party, the decisions of the educational conferences, namely the development conference of pre-university education in 1998, and decisions of the 2nd conference of the Arab ministers of education, learning and knowledge in the Arab World in 2000.

Since 1999-2000, informatics was introduced as an essential subject within the syllabus of the first secondary grade and second scientific secondary grade, and as empirical subject at the second literary secondary grade, and the 8th grade of basic education. Informatics was also introduced within the syllabus of the 8th grade as of the school year 2002-2003. Educational software is made abreast with the new empirical books in addition to teachers' training and manufacture of techniques. Interest of the educational developments is given to the following:

1- Law No. /32/ was issued in 07/04/2002 in respect of putting into effect the stage of basic education as of the school year 2002-2003. This law is deemed true and universal development in the educational process as far as structure, substance and instrumentality are concerned providing for the following:

The stages of elementary and preparatory shall be deemed as one stage called "Stage of basic education", which is free of charge and mandatory.

The term of study at the stage of basic education shall be nine years.

Study at the schools of basic education shall end with a general examination where successful students are conferred the certificate of basic education.

2- Focus on the quality aspect in developing the educational curricula:

- Continuous care in teaching Arabic language in order to augment the quality performance of its yield by developing the Arabic language curricula and pedagogy using modern technology in qualifying teachers and raising up their efficacies.
- Extensive attention in teaching foreign languages by developing their curricula and learning technology, by early teaching and by introducing French as a second language. The Regional Leadership issued Decision No. 131/31 dated 21/06/2001 in relation to teaching foreign languages. It stipulates teaching English language as of the 1st grade of the basic education stage.

- Under the initiative and contribution of the UN Bureau for Development, the Syrian Ministry of Education took part in the (TIMSS 2003) project. This project aims to measure up the level of achievement in Biology and Mathematics by students of the 8th grade of basic education and compare it with the achievement level at the other countries (24 Arab and foreign states are involved in this project). It is made through reconsideration of the curricula of Biology and Mathematics in conformity with the curricula of the other states and circulation of the project results to the different grades of basic education.
- Attention in making books less condense, more attractive and interesting through the activities, drills, drawings and pictures.
- Attention in the standard of the offered information and appropriateness with the age categories.
- Attention in the teacher's manual where teachers are directed towards the active pedagogies so that the class interactivity and lesson objects are stepped up.
- Attention in developing the evaluative methods and emphasis on constructive evaluation, measurement of the intellectually and practically acquired skills, and reduction of the recollection and memorization questions.
- In compliance with the educational and scientific recent developments, committees of curricular development and book compilation in the subjects of Arabic language, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Natural Science, and Geography were established in cooperation with some specialist teachers from different Syrian universities and some other experts from the Ministry of Education.
- Introduction of the demographic, hygienic, environmental and traffic educational concepts into the different schoolbooks. Continuous attention in introducing Informatics education, Algorithms, systematic speculation, analysis and networks into some books of the basic stage.
- Compliance with the prescribed curriculum, prevalence of dynamic activities and skills over the cognitive information upon curricular performance in accordance with the concepts of global education. Great attention is given to inculcate the thinking skills, namely the up-to-date ones, for example, dexterity of dialogue - skilful cooperation - cleverness in decision-making - mastery of the right expectation.
- Due to the necessary modernization of schoolbook compilation and development in accomplishment of the expertise and skill exchange between the authors, actively sharing every expert from all provinces in compiling schoolbooks, the style of compilation has been updated in groups from which the best could be selected by the appraisal committees.

It follows the recommendations given in the 2nd educational conference for development of education in 1998 concerning schoolbooks and the decision taken by the Higher Commission of Curricular Development dated 03/07/2000 in a way that each subject would have a corresponding committee.

- Establishment of a scrutiny committee of schoolbooks, promotion of printing and

technical direction and completion in due time prior the beginning of the new school year.

- Adoption of the empirical principle, which guarantees compatibility and efficiency of the new books with the outlined objects through evaluation during and after the empirical process using questionnaires to show any shortcomings or errors. These new books and remarks will be considered by the subsidiary empirical committees as well as the central empirical commission. Then, such books will be amended according to the received field remarks to be circulated after training the educational cadres that will teach them and supply the success requirements of the training process.
- Establishment of a committee assigned to outline the compilation of schoolbooks by way of contest and consideration of the necessary requirements from the legal, financial and procedural aspects of optimal completion under the Ministerial Circular No. 4439/4/43 (3/4) dated 27/09/2000.
- Update the evaluative methods in consistence with the rapid steps of educational developments and real reflection of the achievement level of our students away from the traditional approaches of learning by heart under the Ministerial Circular No. 4646/4/43 (3/4) dated 10/10/2000.
- Strengthen interaction between our students and the educational institution by providing students with direct expertise through TV in reply to their inquiries and questions and in promotion of their achievement so that reassurance and convenience are secured for them and for their families. This can be fulfilled by contribution of the Ministry of Education through live transmission of weekly TV programs on Channel 2 in which direct communication is realized between students and the best subject teachers.

3- This system is currently underway of consideration in the light of the empirical application.

4- **About teaching foreign languages:**

Pursuant to the Decision of the Regional Leadership No. 131/31 dated 21/06/2002 on teaching foreign languages, it started in the school year 2002-2003 at the stage of basic education.

5- Attention in educational technology:

The ministry seeks to deepen the productive aspect of technology through:

- A- Technology made by the teacher depending on pre-training or the production manual of such technology.
- B- Technology made by the student or pupil using the local environmental tools with the teacher's assistance.
- C- Technology supplied by the Ministry using the national know-how produced by the relevant units.

6- Attention in TV educational programs:

TV programs are continuously updated using computer that bestows upon TV lessons an interesting and favorable nature on the one hand and solid shapes involving 3-Ds on the other hand. /540/ programs were recorded some of which were recorded by computer-aided techniques.

Programs of each subject cover the entirely prescribed book and are broadcast twice; one time in the morning and another time next day evening. This will help students in their quality achievement, allow them to command the presented subject. and keep them off tutorials. These programs are transmitted around the school year starting in October and ending in May in two periods: morning from 08:30 until 10.00. Again, transmission starts in the evening period from 06:00 until 17.30 o'clock.

The educational program addressed to our students in Golan:

7- To take care of our students and in repulse of the curricula imposed by the occupation authorities on our students in the occupied Golan in terms of humanities, the Ministry of Education developed the TV educational program through the Directorate of Education Technology addressed to our students in Golan on Channel 2. This program is broadcast at one lesson per- day around /180/ days including /90/ lessons on Arabic language and /90/lessons on the National Socialist Education, Geography and History. The episodes are transmitted according to the following table: [OMITTED]

8- Production of Software:

The Ministry has started production of educational software to be aids for students in mastery of the study course and assistance for teachers in possessing the best presentable styles of their subject matter. However, the following software has been produced on CDs:

- Trigonometry for the 3rd scientific secondary grade.

- . Solid Geometry for the 3rd scientific secondary grade.
- . Genetics for the 3rd scientific secondary grade.
- . Dynamics for the 3rd scientific secondary grade.
- . Algebra for the 9th grade of the basic education stage.
- . Geometry for the 9th grade of the basic education stage.
- . English Language for the 9th grade of the basic education stage.
- . Dictation for the 1st and 6th grade of the basic education stage
- . Mathematics for the 1st grade of the basic education stage.
- . Letter abstraction - Part I - Part II for the basic education stage.
- . Financial Mathematics for the 3rd commercial secondary grade.

The following subjects are displayed in the website of the Ministry of Education on the Internet through this educational channel.

- . Algebra and Geometry for the 9th grade of the basic education stage.
- . Arabic Language for the 3rd secondary grade –literary and scientific.
- . Genetics and genetic applications for the 3rd scientific secondary grade.
- . Mathematical Analysis for the 3rd scientific secondary grade.

VII- Educational developments in the field of educational research:

A Decision amending the administrative structure at the Directorate of Curricula and Research was issued as follows:

I- Directorate of Curricula and Guidance.

II- Directorate of Educational Research including the following /6/ divisions:

1- **Division of Studies:** with the following summed up tasks:

- . Studies on the status of the educational system, stages, and schoolbooks in the Syrian Arab Republic.
- . Joint studies with the Arab states.
- . Follow-up the recommendations of the educational conferences in relation to the educational policy in the field of studies. During 2000 — 2001, two studies were carried out:

- A- **Study I:** under title “Status of school laboratories in the basic and secondary stages and prospects of reinvigoration”.
- B- **Study II:** under title “Status of school library in the basic and secondary stages and prospects of reinvigoration”. A manual for library curators was prepared following the proposals given in the study to be distributed to schools and institutes.
- C- **Study III:** “Status of Physics book for the 3rd scientific secondary grade from the point

of view of instructors and students and proposals of development”.

2- **Division of Evaluation:** with the following tasks summed up:

- Evaluation of the examination system in the different stages of education and development as appropriate with the operative educational plans.
- Preparation of the pilot by-laws and evaluation cards of the educational cadres.
- Evaluation of schoolbooks from the educational aspect, the educational books and general books.
- Field evaluative studies including all elements of the educational system.
- Participation with the other directorates in proposing the training courses and subjects and appraisal of the results.
- Follow-up the implementation of the recommendations given by the educational conferences in the field of educational evaluation.

During 2001-2002 the Division of Educational Evaluation performed the following:

- Study under title “Obstacles of the administrative performance and proposals of development and updating at the central administration and subsidiary administrations”. The result was the establishment of the Division of Educational Management and related sections at the directorates of education. It was designed to carry out studies on the educational management and observe the obstacles of the administrative performance at schools.
- In addition, the division has currently studies underway of completion on the leading behavior of the school principal at the first cycle of the basic education stage.
- Participation in studying and observing the educational problems conducted by the Directorate of Research.

3- **Division of Educational Documentation:** with the following summed up tasks:

- Documentation of books, references, bulletins, periodicals, and CDs by indexing, classifying and describing them, stating their elements, analyzing their contents, storing and searching for them, and providing researchers and library visitors with them.
- Supply the documentation library with the educational information media whether printed or electronic under purchase, exchange and gifts.
- Exchange and presentation of the educational printed matters, studies and bulletins.
- Creation, management, development and utilization of bibliographical database.
- Preparation of extracts, translations and booklets of the educational documentation.
- Taking part in the link of bibliographical database in the libraries at the Ministry of Education with the information network. The division has utilized the advanced capabilities provided by computers in computing the available documents.

It was completed by creating the following database within the computerized documentation system ISIS/CDS:

- * Bibliographical database **doc**: for Arabic documents combining about /7000/ entries indexed, placed, content analyzed, extracted and stored in this database.
- * Bibliographical database **doc1**: for the Arabic educational periodical articles combining about /10.000/ article titles published in /30/ Arabic educational periodicals. Contents were analyzed by describers from the Education Thesaurus /Maknaz/.
- * Bibliographical database **Books**: for foreign documents combining records of foreign documents after translation of the title, analysis of the contents by describers from the Education Thesaurus, and preparation of extracts in Arabic language.
- * Bibliographical database **Textb**: for school textbooks combining about /5000/ schoolbook titles used for education in the Syrian Arab Republic as well as the brotherly Arab countries.
- * Bibliographical database **maknaz**: combining about /5000/ describers in Arabic, English and French and links with every describer under the terms: commoner - narrower - associative.

This database is used in preparing bulletins of the specialized educational documentation that provides researchers with the available documents and articles on the subject of interest in an objective order.

4- Division of Early Childhood: taking care of:

- . Outline the future features of the early childhood and kindergarten status in the Syrian Arab Republic in the light of the educational policy and the actually required advances.
- . Proposal of the modern educational grounds on which the educational, scientific and social programs and activities must rely whether in the kindergartens held by state, private or popular organizations.
- . Specialized field studies and research in the domain of early childhood.
- . A study on the actual status of kindergartens in the Syrian Arab Republic was conducted.
- . Presently, the division carries out a study on the effect of teaching foreign language at the KG stage on the mother tongue.
- . Participation in the specialized educational forums and conferences on childhood on the local, Arab and international scales, follow-up the given recommendations in respect of childhood.
- . Arrangement of educational programs in order to increase the awareness of the important stage of early childhood.
- . Evaluation of printed matters and means of education addressed to children during this

stage.

- Participation with the relevant authorities at the Ministry of Education in preparing the KG statute and proposing its development whenever necessary.
- Holding training courses to uplift the standard of professional efficacy of KG operators (educational advisors - delegate principals - KG nurses).
- Participation in compilation of the KG curricula, manuals, and booklets of the childhood stage, preparation of educational leaflets and evaluation cards for such stage whenever necessary.

5- **Division of Private Education**: It functions in developing two programs:

- A- Care program of the excelling and creative students all over the stages of education.
- B- Care program of pupils with special needs and their integration into school and community.

In the care domain of excelling students:

Ministerial Circular was issued on the admission guidelines into the excelling schools for the school year /2002-2003/in amendment of the previous Guidelines.

1- Conditions of admission into the 7th basic grade:

- Applicant should merit /90%/ of the maximum marks in the total marks of the 6th grade.
- Applicant should merit /90%/ of the maximum marks in the following subjects (Arabic language - Mathematics - Science).
- Students are admitted as follows:
 - 25% for (total marks in the 6th grade: (90%) + science + Arabic language + Mathematics marks (90%) and /75%/ for the admission test.

2- Conditions of admission into the 1st secondary grade:

- Applicant should merit /260/ marks (i.e. success average approximately equal to 90% and above in the examination of the basic education certificate).
- Admission mark in the test mark (90) + total marks in the basic education certificate provided that it is not less than 260 marks.
- Circular No. 2336/543 (4/3) dated 13/09/2001 was issued in amendment of the selection guidelines of the teachers of excelling schools and it determined the number of professional and personal characteristics that any excelling school teacher must meet.

In the care domain of students with special needs in the official education:

- Coordination was made with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in respect of taking care of pupils with special needs many years ago. It was sought to materialize many forms of social and educational integration through the national and artistic activities and events exchanged between the schools of the Ministry of Education and institutes relating to the Ministry of Social Affairs. Moreover, the Ministry of Education continued to issue circulars and notes concerning the special anniversaries and days of pupils with special needs as well as the handicapped in which it stresses on the care of their capacities and the requirement of maximum utilization, and the importance of teachers learning about the educational attitudes on how to deal with them.
- The first national training session was held in Damascus on teaching pupils with special educational needs in 01-06/08/1995 under the UNESCO project. It consists of four major units and sub-units and activities.
- Field study was carried out by the Directorate of Curricula under title (category status of pupils with special needs, methods of treatment in the first four grades of basic education and the supporting sections). This study resulted in recommendations and proposals of which the largest part was implemented including:
 - A- Compilation of a training guide for trainers and instructors on: attitudes of dealing with pupils having special needs.
 - B- Issuance of a folder on the dealing attitudes with the pupils having special needs in the

official education, elucidation of the problems facing pupils during the first four grades of basic education whether physical, behavioral or learning difficulties.

- C- Holding central training courses for the advisory staff and administrative personnel first, then the teaching staff second. This had been intended to disseminate the culture of integration and acquisition of positive streams towards admission of pupils with special needs in the regular classroom since 1978. In 2002, educational advisors and previous teachers started giving local courses for teachers in the provinces on the dealing attitudes with pupils having special needs in order to spread awareness among the largest possible number of operators in this domain.
- D- A joint committee was established: from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Faculty of Education in addition to the other relevant authorities including popular organizations, Ministry of Health and others for the first time under Decision No. 960/4/ (4/3) dated 12/02/2000. This committee was amended and reactivated under Decision No. 1847/4/43 (4/3) dated 30/03/2001 when it was merged with the committee of cerebral paralysis and unified as one committee. This committee gave several proposals including stress of the informational role or address of the various authorities to propagate the culture of curricular integration. In fact, drawing up and enactment of the handicapped law were reached in contribution with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.
- E- The admission Guidelines for light cases of special needs into the official education were also issued under No. 2640/543 (3/4) dated 13/10/2001.
- F- A letter was sent to the general commission of school buildings to observe the requirements of pupils with special needs from the physically handicapped in normal schools to make their movement easy within the school buildings to be constructed in future. An engineering code (directory) is being prepared for the new and existing school buildings in order to fit pupils with special needs.
- G- A cultivation course on learning difficulties was held with experts from Jordan in 01-06/09/2001. A specialized course was also held on learning difficulties in 08-28/09/2003.
- H- The national forum on integrating pupils with special needs in the official education was convened with international partners (UNESCO - UNICEF British-Syrian Relief of Children - Karim Reda Said Est.) in 03/06/02/2002. During that meeting some preconceptions of an empirical project of integration were discussed.
- I- Team work was assigned to proceed with the school integration in Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo during the school year 2002-2003. Further, the project was applied during the next year 2003-2004 without any empirical expansion to be more profoundly studied and in coordination with the international partners in order to evaluate such experiment by the end of it and to take the proper decision accordingly.

6- **Division of psychological and social guidance:** consisting of two sections:

A- Section of psychological guidance.

B- Section of social guidance.

Tasks of the Division of psychological and social guidance:

- . Determination of the tasks assumed by the school psycho-educational and social advisors and proposal of any task modification whenever necessary.
- . Follow-up the scientific and educational development and recent advances in the field of psycho-educational and social guidance in cooperation with the psychological associations, faculties of education and sociology to avail their expertise and research in this respect inside and outside Syria.
- . Evaluation of the process of psycho-educational and social guidance in the different stages of education to be developed.
- . Preparation of the periodical and annual reports.
- . Participation in the local and foreign educational workshops and conferences relating to the issue of psychological and social guidance.
- . Proposals that help in developing the process of psycho-educational and social guidance.
- . Set up special plans for the division, follow up their implementation and evaluation.
- . Preparation, evaluation and modification of the advisor's guide.
- . Study the reports received in the division.
- . Compilation of the social guidance curriculum.
- . Set up, executive follow-up and evaluation of special plans for the division.

Tasks of the psycho-educational advisor:

- . The psycho-educational advisor is assigned under the following conditions:
He / she should be holder of a university degree in education, psychology or psychological guidance. Holders of educational qualification diplomas or postgraduate diplomas in education, psychology or psychological are preferable. He/ she will be assigned for the following functions:
 - 1- Planning and development of the program of psychological guidance at school in cooperation with the administrative personnel and teaching staff. This is intended to achieve the sound growth of normal pupils so that they can attain a proper degree of harmony and psychological health.
 - 2- Individual psychological guidance to allow pupils understand their egos, address their problems and take the proper decision to solve such problems using the academic and technical approaches for this purpose.
 - 3- Collective guidance for cases of pupils, who suffer from a certain problem using the academic approach and appropriate technique to remedy what they encounter in this problem like smoking, solitude, offense, etc.
 - 4- Provision of students with information to satisfy their personal, social, educational and professional needs.
 - 5- Conduct psychological tests when necessary to present the personal traits of pupils, their streams and faculties so that they can select the proper type of study or vocation for them or diagnoses what psychological or social problems they have been going through.

- 6- Follow-up the status of pupils in terms of their general behavior, relations with teachers and classmates at school as well as their study course in general.
- 7- Referral of the complicated cases to the competent authorities in coordination with the pupil's family.
- 8- Consolidation of the relation with the school principal and members of the teaching staff for cooperation in the educational and psychological domain to make the educational process at school successful.
- 9- Assistance of pupils, who face cases of adapting difficulties whether within the family or school in cooperation with the parents, the principals and teachers.
- 10- Assistance of pupils, who face some problems in connection with the growing process, namely adolescence and giving them guidelines into the correct attitudes *vis-à-vis* their growing requirements in relation to their current age category.
- 11- Assistance of the administrative personnel and teaching staff at school in solving some problems manifested by some pupils during their educational course whether educational, psychological, social or behavioral problems.
- 12- Collection, coordination and interpretation of data and information to reach the suitable pilot plan for the cases received by the psychological advisor.
- 13- Arrangement of a record for the received guiding cases and organization of a guiding card for each case giving the required essential data.
- 14- Strict observation of the moral rules of the psychological guidance profession as reflected in honesty, objectivity and confidentiality. Referral of any case to the specialist when the advisor realizes that it lies beyond the limits of his/her duties.

Tasks of the social advisor:

The social advisor will help students in building up their normal personalities, correct comprehension and sublimation of the social reality on the basis of the positive interaction between them and the natural and social surroundings through the following tasks:

- 1-Acquaintance to the non-consistent students with school, with the family and in community.
- 2-Observation of the negative phenomena and social diseases at school, environment and in community.
- 3- Identification of the pupils with special needs (handicapped and superior) and coordination of their care programs.
- 4-Determination of the behavioral, educational, social and economic problems and consideration of the psychological effects on the pupils. Assistance of pupils in addressing and solving them and referral of some cases to specialists when necessary.
- 5-Recognition of the economic, social, and cultural conditions and the educational level of the pupils' families (using special questionnaire).
- 6- Identification of the culture at the social milieu brining in pupils to schools.
- 7- Setup and evaluation of the annual action plan and executive programs.
- 8-Formation of remedy plans for the different cases:

- A- Study and analysis of the problem.
 - B- Case diagnosis.
 - C- Definition of the necessary remedial activities.
 - D- Revision and evaluation.
- 9- Development and encouragement of the joint collective work practices, particularly team work.
 - 10- Promotion and coordination of the relation between families, the local surrounding and the school in favor of students.
 - 11- Active contribution to organizing school activities (parties – exhibitions – symposiums - etc.).
 - 12- Contribution to shaping up positive inclinations towards the professional work.
 - 13- Raise the standard of awareness to the important of preserving environment, public properties and rationalization of consumption.
 - 14- Stabilization of the cooperative, harmonic, tolerance values and development of social relations at school on the basis of such values.
 - 15- Taking part in securing a democratic atmosphere at school in support of the pupils' dignity and human rights.
 - 16- Studies and research in favor of work development.
 - 17- Proposal of the financial aid programs.
 - 18- Benefit the available services, expertise and capabilities in the local environment.
 - 19- Increase awareness in the values of discipline, commitment and appreciation of law supremacy.
 - 20- Promotion of the educational attitudes, coordination of the activities suggested by teachers aiming to educate students on how to have self-respect and respect of others, be proud of his culture and affiliation, and how to love his homeland and be keen as an active citizen in the domain of voluntary works.

VIII- Education axis and social integration of the marginal groups:

Challenges facing the issue of social integration:

- Lack of any protective mechanisms for children and any proper care in case either parent dies or family separation.
- Lack of any mechanisms to access children, who are subject to violence or notification of such cases inside and outside the family and children, who live with families that tender no proper care and use them in beggary or apprenticeship.
- Setback in the active enforcement of mandatory education by following the dropout children from schools and taking the actual and deterring measures on behalf of their parents.
- The current status of schools reflected in the shortage of any suitable conditions of education in:
 - Specifications of the school building.
 - Public utilities and supply of potable water.

- Crowded classrooms.

Lack of efficacy in teachers' qualification to be able to deal with all marginal groups and provide them with the proper care at school.

Lack of any guidance service in many schools.

Marginal Groups:

Pupils with special needs.

Children coming from the financially and culturally deprived environments.

Children coming from separated families and apprenticeship under the age of schooling.

Children suffering from behavioral, emotional disorders, etc.

Learning difficulties.

The special educational procedures to access these groups:

From the mandatory education to the end of the basic education.

Ministerial Circular No. 2066/543 (4/5) dated 01/07/2002 providing the appointment of males/females successfully passing the selection contest of social advisors.

Ministerial Circular No. 2559/543 (4/3) dated 17/08/2002 determining the role assumed by the social advisor.

The social advisor will help students in building up their normal personalities, correct comprehension and sublimation of the social reality on the basis of the positive interaction between them and the natural and social surroundings. The Circular itself determined the tasks of social advisor as follows:

- 1- Acquaintance to the non-consistent students with school, family and in community.
- 2- Observation of the negative phenomena and social diseases at school, environment and in community.
- 3- Identification of the pupils with special needs and coordination of their care programs.
- 4- Determination of the behavioral, educational, social and economic problems and consideration of the psychological effects on the pupils. Assistance of pupils in addressing and solving them and referral of some cases to specialists when necessary.
- 5- Recognition of the economic, social, and cultural conditions and the educational level of pupils' families.
- 6- Stabilization of the cooperative, harmonic, tolerance values and development of social relations at school on the basis of such values.

Integration of pupils with special needs in the official education:

The Ministry of Education started integrating male/female pupils with special needs in its schools. The Ministry enrolled all pupils under the age of admission in the stage of basic education including those with special needs in confirmation of their integration in the

structure of the official education. Moreover, the Ministry had held training courses for the guidance and administrative cadres as of 1995 observing introduction of the integrated conceptions and matrices as well as the contemporary concepts on the special needs within the new books recently compiled at the Ministry of Education. A training manual was also prepared for the educational advisors to allow them train teachers on the UNESCO Project (integration of the handicapped).

In unofficial education and uninterrupted education:

The activities of unofficial and uninterrupted education increased to meet the educational, cultural and professional needs of women. Many official, domestic and private parties handled this task.

There is in each ministry an administration for the uninterrupted training and education, training activities for male/female employees more or less subject to the professional needs and available resources. In most popular organizations, there are cultural and training activities and there are many educational and training courses as well as professional qualification held by NGO and private parties. These activities include:

- Teaching illiterate women at the Ministry of Culture in addition to the General Federation of Women.
- Professional qualification of girls at the Federation of Women.
- Teaching people with special needs at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.
- Educational activities at the Vanguard Organization, the Youth Organization and the Students Union.

IX-Introduced recent advances to the processes of qualification and training:

- 1- Rehabilitation project of all teachers graduating from the teachers' colleges, assisting tutors graduating from the intermediate institutes on their job duty. Their number is /165.000/ at the faculties of education /section of class teacher/ towards the university degree through the open education and at the state expense by the beginning of the school year /2004-2005/.
- 2- Increase the number of admitted teachers to study under commitment at the faculties of education /section of class teacher/ in favor of the Ministry to reach /2500/ by the beginning of the school year /2004-2005/.
- 3- Increase the number of teachers on job duty but not holding diploma of educational qualification and sent under scholarships to the four faculties of education to receive the courses of educational qualification diploma.
- 4- Discontinue admission in the teachers colleges and preparation institutes of teachers by the beginning of the school year /2004-2005/ except: Sports -handicraft -drawing where the university qualification will replace them under the directives of the Ministry. Teachers holding university degrees will be employed for all the stages of education instead of the graduates of intermediate institutes.

5- Development of the training methods and techniques and concentration on distant training by the video conferencing network (conference system) whose infrastructure is currently built abreast of the “Education Network” of information.

6- Exchange the training experience and call of academic experts from inside and outside Syria, strengthen cooperation with the relevant authorities of training like: Agha Khan Network, the Malaysian Commissions, the Educational Documentation Center, American and English expert-advice, the Syrian Computer Society (SCS) and others.

7- Focus on the new quality courses and advanced training programs.

X- Decrees and laws issued in the field of education since 2001: [OMITTED]

There are a number of drafts prepared and referred to the competent authorities but are still not issued.

XI- Education and equality of sexes:

1- Introduction:

The equality of opportunities between both sexes is the cornerstone of each democratic society seeking social justice and human rights in all aspects of life and endeavoring to eliminate discrimination between individuals of the society on the basis of masculinity and femininity, namely in relation to the distribution of resources, revenues, provision of services, rights, opportunities and outcome.

Therefore, the cause of woman advancement, enablement and equality emerged as one of the priorities on the agenda of the world states by the end of the past century in preparation of the 21st century.

Hence, if educational investment is best, then investment in teaching girls is also the best kind of educational investments.

Equality of sexes means:

Availability of equal opportunities for both sexes in all aspects of life, particularly in the fields of education, training, qualification, employment and payroll under the framework of free choice enjoyed by both sexes.

2- Equality in the Syrian Constitution:

The Constitution in the Syrian Arab Republic, which was ratified in 12/03/1973 observed

citizenship rights in addition to the nature of direct and indirect participation in making political and economic decisions and control of their implementation.

Article /25/ provided the following:

“Citizens are equal before law in terms of rights and duties. The state shall undertake the principle of equality of opportunities to all citizens”.

Article /45/ reiterated the following:

“The state shall undertake to provide women with all opportunities that allow them to fully and effectually take part in the political, social, cultural and economic life. Further, the state shall eradicate all restrictions that hold back their development and participation in building the Arab socialist society”.

Pursuant to the Syrian Constitution for 1973, the Statute of Al-Baath Arab Socialist Party as well as the statements of the ever-remembered President **Hafez al-Assad** on the cause of women and their role in the building and progress of the society when he said,

“Progress of woman in our country, redemption of her rights, practice of her duties; all form a substantial element in proceeding and expediting our steps in the course of progress and development”.

Out of the applicable laws and regulations in different fields, and out of the rules on which law of the Federation of Women was based, out of inducing the advanced achievements realized by the Syrian Arab women, the national strategy of woman up to 2005 contained several axes including:

Axis of woman and law:

A set of laws, legislations and regulations deals with woman on the basis of complete citizenship and based on equality and nondiscrimination between man and woman.

Axis of woman and access of decision-making:

Furtherance of woman’s participation in the access of decision making and pursuit of raising the sharing percentage to /30%/ by the incoming 2005.

Axis of woman and education:

- Introduction of gender principles in the different curricula of the educational stages.
- Expansion of admission of all children under the age of mandatory education in the stage

of basic education and pursuit to fill the gaps of illiteracy, namely for girls. Enhancement of the rapid orientation pillars towards the awareness of woman's training on untraditional skills like Informatics and modern technology and permanent endeavor to allow her to perform her distinct role in the social development and progress.

3- Streams of education and genders:

Equality of genders under the agreement of combating all forms of discrimination against women:

Under the agreement combating all forms of discrimination against women, accredited by the UN General Assembly under Resolution No. 34/180 dated 28/12/1979 and ratified by President of the Syrian Arab Republic to join it under Decree No. /330/ dated 25/09/2002, the world declaration of human rights stressing that it is illegal to discriminate between man and woman in faith of the basic human rights into dignity and equality and in realization of the principle of equality and justice between both sexes was strengthened.

The Arab philosopher *Ibn Badis* says, "If you teach a body, then an individual is educated; but if you teach a girl, then a nation is educated".

Education receives great priority in the plans of economic and social development pursued in Syria as one of the countries that provide everybody with all stages and kinds of education free of charge irrespective of gender. Further, education is mandatory till the end of the 9th grade /stage of basic education/. This strategy has led to increase family awareness in the importance of education, namely among girls. Consequently, the number of female students in the educational stages including the undergraduate and postgraduates stages increased, as well, Thus, the ratio of female to male teachers rose from /38.5%/ in 1970 to /65.2%/in 1998 in the /formerly elementary education/. However, in the preparatory and secondary stages, the ratio of female to male teachers rose from /28.1%/in 1970 to /47.1%/in 1998. This is indicative that the participating rate of female teachers is just close to that of male teachers. Again, this confirms state orientation towards termination of this disparity.

4- The applicable procedures in support of the process of equality between sexes in admission of education, curricular development and equity between sexes:

Girls' official and unofficial education and uninterrupted education:

The quality development of education and its utilization by girls:

During the past three decades of the 20th century, the Ministry of Education developed the different inputs of educational system, objectives, structures, curricula, books, teachers, administration, buildings, technology, examinations, learning and teaching processes. This

development intensified and accelerated within the last two years. The said inputs were updated and upgraded. Moreover, useful novelties were introduced to the educational system like the social and psycho-educational advisors, community schools, health curricula, and basic education. Male and female students could benefit from these reforms. Besides, the Ministry of Education carried out woman educational reforms when woman's image in the curricula and schoolbooks were developed. The Ministry also remedied the dropout problem by continuing to educate girls dropping out from schools. Hereunder is a brief on a number of the above-mentioned novelties:

In the field of mandatory basic education:

Law No. /32/ dated 07/04/2002 was issued to integrate the stages of elementary and preparatory education in a single stage: the mandatory and free basic education stage. Actually, this important achievement gave equitable educational opportunities for male/ female students and supported the experiment of educational democracy.

Education of dropout girls from the basic education:

By the beginning of the school year /2001-2002/, the Ministry of Education in collaboration with UNICEF implemented the educational project of girls in the northern and eastern provinces (Deir-Ezor – Raqqa - Hassake - Idleb - Aleppo) to control dropout, bring girls back to schools, and admit girls, who have not joined school to let them acquire essential life skills that may guarantee their qualification for a better life, namely in the rural and needy areas.

This can be done by opening special classroom sections where the number of pupils ranges between (10-20) pupils within and without the official hours “**unofficial education**”. This project was initiated under the provisions of Clause /C/ of Article /2/ thereof Act No. /35/ of 1981 relating to the mandatory education and its executive Guidelines. The duration of this project was specified at five years.

Itinerant nomad schools:

This is a pilot standard experiment where Bedouin girls will be able to join education after they were not allowed to do so because of the wandering nature of tribal life. According to statistics of the Ministry of Education, the total number of nomad schools is /408/ distributed as follows:

- Fixed nomad schools : /344/
- Itinerant nomad schools: /43/
- Caravan schools : /21/ tents

These schools apply coeducation for both sexes where only one teacher resides in a

caravan or a tent moving around wherever the tribe wanders. There is an internal school that allows students, who face difficulty in moving around with the itinerant schools, to stay. This system confirms that the Ministry of Education is so keen on applying democracy of education and teaching all male/ female children despite of the variation of their life patterns and daily life affairs.

5- **Priorities:**

The consolidation of the educational quality performance and development of quality education as one of the essential future streams in the educational strategy require executive priorities of such prospects. This requirement is inevitable because of the accelerating scientific, technological, and economic changes as a characteristic of the new century. This viewpoint would be affirmed when we learn that the educational development is an uninterrupted community process. Therefore, urgent plan priorities have been specified for the next five years as follows:

1. Disposition of the semi-attendance system.
- 2- Extension of kindergartens.
- 3- Introduction of the second foreign language.
- 4- Continuous development of the vocational education prospects.
- 5- Introduction of vocational education into the basic education.
- 6- Introduction of the informatics plan under the national strategy.
- 7- Development of human resources and approaches of active training.
- 8- Development of the labor patterns at the General Establishment of Printed Matters and School Textbooks.
- 9- Continued follow-up in producing the educational means using national expertise.
- 10- Development of the status of private education.

6- **Education and equality between sexes:**

The educational course of woman in the Syrian Arab Republic reflects extreme attention given by the political leadership to provide the educational opportunities and realize the equitable availability for everybody irrespective of gender, language, or religion all over Syria (cities, countryside, and semi-deserts).

This stream was enhanced in the different classes of educational legislations starting with the Constitution, the laws handling educational affairs and ending with the applicable regulations, guidelines and rules.

The variable and numerous educational opportunities and prevalence all over Syria for both sexes on equal footing have lead to high female enrollment rates in the different stages of education, even higher than the male enrollment rates in some of them.

7- **The applicable procedures in support of the equality process in between both sexes:**

Pursuit of changing woman's image in the educational curricula, thus, making her an active and sharing human being in building and originating life in the Arab society.

Education of woman being the first teacher and raiser of children. Unless woman is educated and raised up, the results could be bad not only on the child level alone but on the family and homeland as a whole.

Alternate woman's actual contribution and participation in the economic growth, penetration of the labor market and effective participation in politics and decision-making on all levels.

This requires our future policies to enable and qualify woman, particularly in the field of IT, communications and proper skills towards knowledge economy in contribution of merging her well in all aspects of the economic and political development. This can be done under a complete and overall plan implemented in coordination between the different official and private sectors.

8- **Development of curricula and schoolbooks and updating of woman's image:**

The Ministry of Education revises, evaluates, develops and updates the curricula. During the last two years, the Ministry introduced the following novelties:

Update the educational curricula and insertion of the concepts involved in the agreement of women rights into the schoolbooks.

Development of the dimensions of vocational education in terms of selecting new standard vocations that respond to the technological development and the requirements of labor market (men and women) so that the optimal implementation of the decision taken by the Regional Leadership No. /15/ dated 3 0/04/2000 is reached.

Further introduction of Informatics into the second cycle of basic education as a separate subject and continued empirical introduction into the first cycle of basic education at all schools (males and females).

Fulfillment of integration between pre-university and undergraduate education by involving university representatives in the preparation committees of curricula for the pre-university stages of education.

Introduction of the demographic education and environmental education into the curricula.

Preparation of publications and posters on the education of girls.

Compilation of books for education of the dropped out girls.

Update woman's image in the curricula and schoolbooks.

9- **Prospects:**

- 1- Since Law No. /32/ of 2002 was issued to integrate the stages of elementary and preparatory education in a single stage called "basic stage of education", and to allow opportunities for all girls to continue their study and complete the stage of basic

education, the Ministry initiates the intensive curriculum for the 7th and 8th grades under the unofficial education and to allow them for admission in the 9th grade at schools of the official education.

- 2- Receipt of training courses by section female teachers on how to deal with pupils having special needs since there are handicapped girls in these sections.
- 3- Circulation of the empirical project of girls' education all over the Syrian provinces.
- 4- Allow girls to acquire practical and manual skills beside the training course so that they are well prepared for practical life.
- 5- Enrichment of the educational sections of girls with the supplementary educational technology and means to reach a good standard of education.
- 6- Launch informational campaigns aiming to spread awareness on the importance of knowledge, namely education of girls through the publishing and mass media, religious houses, folders and posters.

XII- Projects of executive priority in the future plan:

1- Rehabilitation of the educational cadres:

- Grounds:

Inability of teachers and assisting tutors to meet the requirements of quality education and keep in line with the curricular recent advances due to the setback of their academic and educational efficacies.

- Targeted group:

/164.000/ teachers and assisting tutors on job duty.

- Approaches:

Open education – E-learning on the “Education Network” of information at the Ministry – application of video conferencing.

- The required procedure:

Coordination with the Ministry of High Education – supply of financial sources and designation of the necessary credits.

- Outputs:

Licensed teacher holding a degree in education (class teacher).

2- Replacement of adobe schools:

- Grounds:

- Lack of the required minimum conditions for the educational environment in these schools.
- The large number of these schools: (1044) schools including (90) rented schools.

- The required procedures:

- Establishment of a specific time schedule.
- Supply the necessary credit in addition to those supplied under the program of illiteracy eradication in coordination between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Local Administration and the State Planning Commission.

3- Disposition of the semi--attendance system:

- Grounds:

- Endurance of pupils and families from the semi-attendance system, especially at the faraway schools and the consequential social and education effects.
- High rate of the semi-attendance system after the obligatory stage was extended and the variation between the provinces.

- The required procedures:

- Classification of provinces according to priority and subject to the inherent rate of the semi-attendance system.
- Specification of time schedule for gradual reduction of the rate of semi-attendance system and designation of the necessary credits for the construction plan in cooperation and coordination between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Local Administration and the State Planning Commission.
- Search for international organizations to find out some other financial sources in support of this project.
- Application and erection of the community school style at the city suburbs where land appropriation is not possible in favor of school buildings.

4- Increase personnel number of the teaching staff:

- Grounds:

- Urgent field requirements of teachers because of the growth and extension of the mandatory stage up to the 9th grade and discontinuation of admission in the teachers' colleges and preparation institutes of teachers in the next year.
- The deputized teachers of /21.772/ or the assigned and unqualified teachers currently meet the needs of teachers by the directorates of education. This situation forced the Ministry to pay the same payroll but with weaker educational yield.

- Procedures:

- Preparation of decree drafts to increase the personnel number of the first class every other

year around the next five years.

5- Search for a mechanism to achieve the printing plan of schoolbooks during the next school year /2004-2005/ prior the onset of the school year meeting the required editing quality of these books and making up for the delay that might arise from any breakdown of some printing presses at the public sector.

6- Grant teachers and tutors operating at the schools of remote and arduous areas the appropriate allowance with their endurance subject to specific rules to be prepared in cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance and as incentive and appreciation for their endurance (Decree No. 24 dated 25/04/2004 was issued).

7- Areas of administrative development: The administrative development may cover the following areas:

- A- The administrative structure of the central administration and directorates of education through the new project of the organizational structure at the Ministry. Eventually, the new project of the organizational structure added the following /7/ new directorates:
 - 1- Directorate of Students' care.
 - 2- Directorate of Orientation.
 - 3- Directorate of Kindergartens.
 - 4- Directorate of the School Theatre.
 - 5- Directorate of Oral Medicine.
 - 6- Directorate of Off-class Activities.
 - 7- Directorate of Follow-up.
- B- A number of laws and decrees were issued and gave great influence on the development of the administrative action, and they were positively reflected on the standard of educational performance.
- C- Creation of administrative compounds at the educational areas to link field operators with the directorates of education in the provinces.
- D- Empowerment of the governors with a number of decisions in the field of administrative, accounting and legal affairs.
- E- Transition of some projects from the central administration at the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Local Administration.
- F- Nonetheless, the administrative reform at the Ministry of Education is still in need for further studies in connection with the regulating plans and labor at the central administration, creation of more effective mechanism to communicate with the directorates of education in the provinces, termination of the traditional routine, extension of the decentralized basis, and elimination of any difficulties concerning IT application in the educational administration. This is what the Ministry has been seeking in its plan of administrative reform.