



Islamic Republic of Iran

Revised version, October 2006.

Principles and general objectives of education

According to the document approved by the Supreme Council of Education in 1998, national development is the primary aim of education in order to increase productivity, achieve social and national integration and cultivate social, moral and spiritual values with great emphasis placed on strengthening and encouraging the faith of Islam. The goals approved by the Council also emphasize the role of education in developing manpower for different levels of economy and thus education is viewed as an investment in the future. (Ministry of Education, 2003).

Current educational priorities and concerns

According to the 1994 general census, the population of Iran is about 61 million, with a growth rate of about 2.3%. Its population is one of the youngest in the world, with about 46% of the total population under 14 years of age. About 98.5% of the population is Muslim, most of whom belong to the Shi'a sect.

The war with Iraq, which broke out in 1980 and lasted eight years, led to massive destruction, war-disabled persons, spouseless families, economic losses, etc. The country is still in the process of reconstructing its economic, social and cultural infrastructures. Since the war, the quality of life, social justice, economic, social and cultural development have improved in various contexts despite a high population growth rate. These include poverty alleviation, rural living improvement and communication network expansion.

Since 1988, the government has undertaken an economic reform which puts special emphasis on the correction of macro-economic imbalances caused by post-revolutionary, post-war, and post-oil boom circumstances. Through this reform, Iran has been seeking to create a more export-oriented economy and encourage private investments. The economic and educational reforms have helped Iran toward a massive development programme which has resulted in the following progress in the education system:

- increase in the number of total students throughout the country from 8.2 million in 1978 to some 18 million students in 1994 (120% increase);
- increase in the percentage of literates in the society from 42.1% in 1975 to 82.6% in 1994;
- increase in the gross enrolment ratio at the primary, lower and upper secondary levels from 93%, 62%, 27% in 1978 to 107%, 99% and 50%, respectively, in 1994;



- increase in the ratio of female students to total students from 38% in 1978 to 45.8% in 1994;
- increase in the percentage of women's literacy from 35.5% in 1978 to 78% in 1994;
- increase in the percentage of literacy in rural areas from 30.5% in 1978 to 75% in 1994;
- increase in the number of college and university students from 175,000 in 1978 to 1.2 million students in 1995.

Education has always had a special significance in Iranian theology and culture since ancient times. Following the Islamic Revolution, the philosophy, policies, strategies and objectives of the previous education system have been re-examined. The Council for Fundamental Change in Education, established in 1986 as an organization affiliated to the Higher Council of Cultural Revolution, is responsible for reforming the upper secondary education system, studying some alternatives and proposing a system of education based on Islamic doctrine as well as the new social, economic and political needs. Headed by the Minister of Education, the Council, which consists of educators, university professors and a number of deputy ministers, established as its priorities the provision of the conditions and facilities necessary to promote and develop, both qualitatively and quantitatively, upper secondary education (theoretical and technical and vocational) based on the social, economic, and cultural needs of the various regions of the country and also on the basis of the gender and age of the students.

For primary education, the objectives and principal characteristics of current and forthcoming reforms are:

- revising the curriculum with the aim of making its content interdisciplinary; subjects like Farsi, social studies, mathematics, and science are currently being revised;
- reforming the school calendar;
- assessing children's readiness and planning education for primary school pupils with special needs (i.e. slow learners and gifted students);
- applying the monitoring and evaluation system at the primary school level;
- designing computerized databases to record pupils' academic achievement (marks) for experts and school reports;
- applying mass media for the improvement of the quality of primary education;
- reforming the organizational structure of the education system;
- implementing the plan for remedial classes;



- developing research and using research findings for educational decision-making.

To achieve its long-term objectives in the education sector, the Islamic Republic of Iran has designed and implemented five-year plans based on the quantitative extension of education and the qualitative promotion of the education system. Specifically, the future objectives include:

- strengthening ethics, virtue, equity, social justice, democracy and international understanding;
- creating educational programmes to protect against cultural invasion and to strengthen morality;
- eradicating illiteracy, extending education for all, and expanding formal education from pre-school to university level;
- strengthening the research system, organizing research councils (at the national and provincial levels), and establishing research centres in the country;
- strengthening teacher training centres and teacher training universities;
- raising public contribution for education and establishing non-profit schools and institutions throughout the country;
- inviting specialized Iranian manpower living abroad for teaching and research purposes in the country;
- extending Parent-Teacher Associations activities;
- training efficient administrators at all levels of the Ministry of Education;
- establishing boarding schools in order to extend education in disadvantaged areas.

However, a number of crucial problems, obstacles and difficulties face the Ministry of Education, including:

- the increasing numbers of upper secondary students (the annual growth rate of upper secondary education is 16.3%);
- the implementation of the reformed secondary education system, where the main problems are providing facilities and equipment, and the training of teachers;
- research shortages at all educational levels;



- responding to the demands for upper secondary education in underprivileged areas;
- lack of motivation of young people to join the teaching profession;
- low motivation of teachers;
- use of traditional instructional methods;
- immigration to large cities which makes the estimation of manpower distribution difficult;
- inadequate financial support for education;
- insufficient educational premises.

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The **Constitution** of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Second Five-year Development Plan (1995-1999) put a special emphasis on the provision of free education and facilities for compulsory education. According to Article 30 of the Constitution, the government is obliged to provide free education for all.

According to Note No. 62 of the Second Development Plan, the State is obliged to provide the necessary facilities to make it compulsory for school age children and illiterates aged less than 40 years to attend compulsory education and literacy courses, respectively.

According to Article 11 of the executive regulation of the above Note, approved by the Cabinet on 16 June 1996, the Ministry of Education, with the assistance of the Literacy Movement Organization, is obliged to announce in March the list of the regions which will be covered the following year by compulsory education of school-age children as well as the illiterate group. All school age children and illiterate adults should become literate by the end of the Second Five-year Plan.

According to Articles 10 and 11 of the principles governing the education system, general education (up to the end of lower secondary) is compulsory and free of charge for all. Compulsory education currently lasts five years and caters to children aged 6-10. According to the Second Five-year Development Plan, compulsory education will last eight years for the age group 6-13 (primary and lower secondary education).

The **Act Regarding the Establishment of Non-profit Schools** was approved by the Islamic Parliament on 25 May 1988. Non-profit schools are established and managed through people's participation.

In addition to what is presented in the Constitution, the rules and decrees relating to the Ministry of Education are approved by the Islamic Parliament, the



Cabinet and the Supreme Education Council. The **Act of Co-operation** (1992) of the Ministry of Education with other ministries and organizations through which the extension of responsibility for education to other ministries and using the facilities of other organizations became possible. The Note No. 8 of the Budget Act (1996) grants more financial resources to the Ministry of Education. The **Act of Establishing Adult Schools and Exemplary Public Schools** (1993) have facilitated education for all and made people participate in education. The **Bill on Education Council Formation**, approved on 24 December 1993, not only encourages public participation but also decentralizes the educational administration to some extent.

In 2004, the **Statute regarding the pre-school level** was approved and adopted by the Supreme Council of Education.

Administration and management of the education system

The **Ministry of Education** administers and finances schools at the primary and secondary levels. The **Supreme Council of Education**, as the highest legislative body, approves all policies and regulations related to non-university education.

The **Ministry of Science, Research and Technology** (formerly the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education) is responsible for universities of science, art and technology. The **Ministry of Health and Medical Education** deals with medical schools and the training of medical assistants. The **Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs** is responsible for non-formal training; non-formal vocational education courses are conducted by the **Technical and Vocational Training Organization** (TVTO) under this ministry.

Specialized higher education institutions are under the control of various ministries, such as Agriculture, Petroleum, Industry, etc. They organize courses and award diplomas in various specializations in agreement with the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology. The Applied Scientific University is responsible for co-ordination between these ministries to train manpower as required.

The Ministry of Education performs its duties mainly through the **Provincial Organizations** and the **District Offices**. The head of the Provincial Organization is appointed by the Minister in coordination with the governor of the province. The main duties of the twenty-nine Provincial Organizations of Education are as follows:

- supervising the design and fulfillment of educational programmes in the framework of proved plans and confirming the subordinate districts programmes;
- supervising training programmes for teachers and administrative personnel throughout the province;
- supervising non-public schools and providing required facilities;



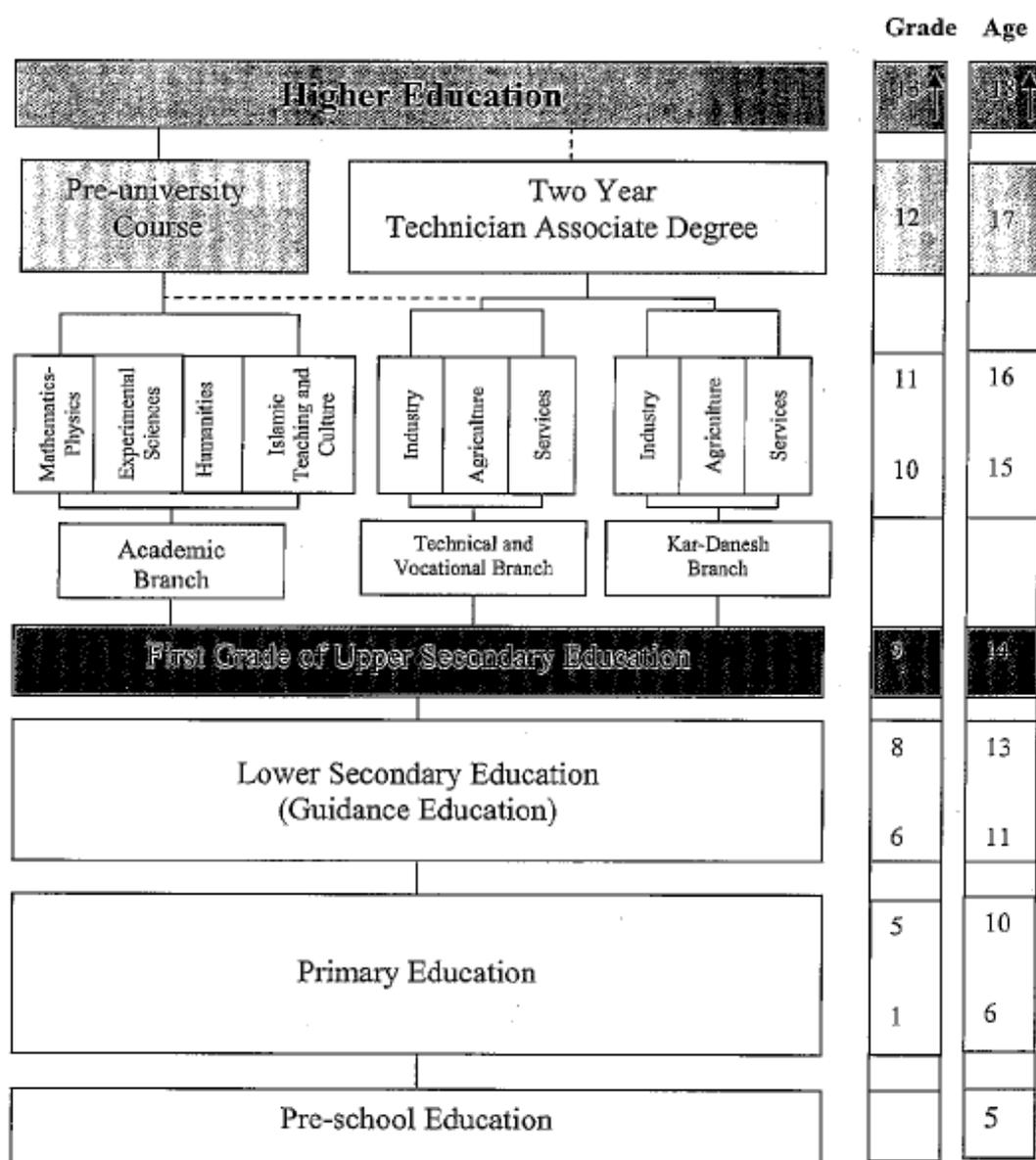
- providing suitable measures for organizing provincial and district councils of education in the province and subordinated districts according to the existing instructions
- implementing educational programmes and curricula in accordance with the special needs of each region in the framework of approved plans of the Ministry of Education;

District Offices act under the supervision of the Provincial Organizations. Each office is headed by a director appointed by the head of the Provincial Organization. District Councils of Education play a fundamental role in facilitating the participation of various governmental and non-governmental organizations in education. In 2003 there were 707 District Offices throughout the country.

Each school is headed by a principal who is appointed by the head of the District Office. The principal is responsible for implementing all educational, financial and administrative activities in the school. Other management bodies at the school level include the school council, the teachers' council, the students' council and Parents-Teachers Association. Efforts are being made to transfer some significant responsibilities to individual schools and to involve parents in the decision-making process. (Ministry of Education, 2003).

Structure and organization of the education system

Islamic Republic of Iran: structure of the education system



Pre-school education

Pre-primary education lasts one year and caters to children aged 5. Pre-primary education is not compulsory.

Primary education

Primary education is the first stage of formal education and it is compulsory. It lasts five years and the admission age is 6 years. Pupils sit the final examination at the end



of Grade V, and if successful they are awarded the certificate of completed primary level studies.

Secondary education

Secondary education consists of two cycles. Lower secondary education lasts three years (age group 11-13). The eight years of schooling consisting of primary and lower secondary education are considered as basic education. The three-year upper secondary education programme is for students graduating from junior high schools. The courses offered in secondary schools are organized in three branches: academic, technical and vocational, and *Kar-Danesh* (knowledge skill, a flexible vocational branch). A one-year pre-university course is available for those who have successfully completed (academic) upper secondary education. In the case of technical and vocational education branch, students having completed the upper secondary cycle can enrol in a two-year course leading to the associate degree of technician.

Higher education institutions include universities, colleges and higher education centres. Access to higher education is for high school graduates who have been successful in the entrance examination. Universities include general and specialized universities, the Comprehensive Technology University, the *Paym-e-nour* University (distance university), Azad Islamic University, and medical universities. Associate degree courses generally take two years to complete. Bachelor's degree programmes normally last four years. Master's degree programmes generally take two years after the bachelor's degree. Doctoral programmes normally take four to five years after the master's degree.

The school year at pre-university level is divided into two semesters and generally lasts nine months. It consists of thirty-five working (six-day) weeks.

The financing of education

The budget of the Ministry of Education in 1996 was 6,130 billion *rial* (RI), which represented 3.8% of the gross national product. The approved budget was R15,455.6 billion, but in order to provide for the financial shortages of the Ministry of Education, some additional funding was allocated and the budget increased to R16,130 billion. In addition to the approved budget, some Acts were approved during the last two years to provide the Ministry of Education with new financial resources.

The budget of the Ministry of Education is divided into current and capital expenditure. The 1996 approved budget was in the amount of R14,646 billion (of which 4,197 billion at the provincial level) and R1809.3 billion (of which 713.43 billion at the provincial level), respectively. The main sections to which the budget was allocated are the following: primary education (1,675 billion), lower secondary (1,023 billion), and upper secondary (933.86 billion).

The budget of all ministries, whether educational or others, is included in the annual Act of Budget which is prepared by the Management and Planning Organization and submitted for approval to the Islamic Legislative Assembly (Parliament).



In 1996, total aid to non-profit schools amounted to R1403 billion (343 billion from bank loan facilities and 60 billion from public expenditures). In addition, these schools received R1300 billion in tuition fees in 1996.

In the annual Budget Act, the budget allocated to public higher education and research is included under a chapter different from that of the Ministry of Education. In the academic year 1995/96, the budget amounted to R11,659 billion (current funds: 1,138 billion; capital funds: 392.09 billion; special income: 129.07 billion), of which R11,519 billion allocated at the national level. Private higher education institutions cover their financial needs through tuition fees.

In 2003, total public expenditure on education (covering primary education to the pre-university course) amounted to R139,880 billion or 12% of total government expenditure. In the same year, public current expenditure on education totaled R136,730 billion or 92% of the total expenditure. In 2001, primary education accounted for 29.4% of the current expenditure, lower secondary for 19.6% and upper secondary for 20.2%. It is estimated that salaries account for about 91% of the total current expenditure on education. About 93% of the cost of education is met by the government and the remaining part is covered by local contributions, parents' aids and student fees in non-profit schools. (Ministry of Education, 2004).

The educational process

Pre-primary education

Pre-primary education is a one-year programme aimed at preparing 5-year-olds for the primary stage. The main objectives of pre-primary education (kindergarten) are as follows:

- to contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and social growth of young children, based on religious and ethical principles;
- to develop the abilities and talents of children in order to prepare them for future studies;
- to prepare children to easily comprehend scientific concepts;
- to promote the Persian language, particularly in the provinces where different languages are spoken;
- to prepare children to adapt themselves to Islamic principles in their personal and social life; creating in them the sense of cooperation and partnership in social activities and imbibing in them a respect for laws and regulations and to be responsive;
- to help low-income families by creating a safe educational atmosphere to train their young children.



Two teacher guidebooks entitled *Content and methods of instruction in pre-primary centres* (Volumes I and II) are used for instruction. In the first volume, general teaching techniques at the pre-primary level are explained to the instructor. In each work unit the objectives are indicated first, then the basic activities are described. These activities include visits and observations, discussions, language learning, introduction to mathematics and science concepts as well as religious values and beliefs. Each work unit also includes some additional activities such as handicrafts, playing with dough, cutting and pasting, printing, painting, plays, story-telling, songs and physical exercises. The rest of the book contains work units related to the first three months of pre-primary courses.

In 1995/96, the average number of pupils per class was 23.2. According to national estimates, in 1998 the gross enrolment ratio (GER) was 14.9% (Ministry of Education, 1999). In 2000/01, there were 7,382 pre-schools in the country with a total of 286,903 children enrolled. (Ministry of Education, 2001).

In 2002/03 there were 12,456 pre-school centres (of which 11,173 in the public sector) with 403,654 children enrolled. In the same year, it is estimated that some 26% of the pupils at the primary level had previous preschool experience. (Ministry of Education, 2003). According to government statistics, in 2003/04 the GER was estimated at 35.5% for centres affiliated to the Ministry of Education and 10.5% for other non-related organizations.

Primary education

Primary education lasts five years and caters to pupils aged 6-10. The main objectives of primary education are as follows:

- creating a favourable atmosphere for the moral and religious development of pupils;
- developing pupils' talents and creative abilities;
- developing pupils' physical strength;
- enabling the pupils to read and write, improving their numeracy skills, and providing necessary training on proper social behaviour.

The focus of the curriculum at the primary level is on the development of basic skills of literacy and numeracy, the study of the environment in terms of physical and social phenomena, and religious teaching. The weekly lesson timetable for primary education is shown in the table below:

Primary education: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade				
	I	II	III	IV	V
The Holy Quran	1	2	2	2	2
Religious teaching	–	2	2	2	2
Persian composition	–	2	2	2	2
Persian dictation	–	3	2	2	2
Persian reading	11	3	4	3	3
Social studies	–	–	2	3-2	3-2
Art	2	2	1-2	1-2	1-2
Science and health	3	3	3-2	3	3
Mathematics	5	5	4	4	4
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2
Total weekly periods	24	24	24	24	24

Source: Ministry of Education, 2003. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes in Grades I-II and 50 minutes in Grades III-V.

All subjects and textbooks for primary education are decided upon and prepared at central level. It is compulsory to pass all the above subjects to be admitted to the next grade. There is a final examination at the end of Grade V, administered at regional and provincial levels. Successful pupils are awarded the certificate of completed primary level studies.

The average drop-out rate for the primary level in 1993/94 was 1.9% (the same figure in 2002/03). In the same year, the repetition rate was as follows: 9.5% in Grade I; 6.9% in Grade II; 4.1% in Grade III; 6.5% in Grade IV; and 8.7% in Grade V. In 1999/2000, the rate of transition from primary to lower secondary education was 95.2%.

In 2000/01, the average number of pupils per class was 25 and the average pupil-teacher ratio was 24.8:1 (Ministry of Education, 2001). In 2002/03, there were 68,632 primary schools (of which 66,073 in the public sector) with some 7 million pupils enrolled. The transition rate from primary to lower secondary was 95.4%. (Ministry of Education, 2003).

Secondary education

The main aims of lower secondary (guidance) education are as follows:

- developing the students moral and intellectual abilities;
- increasing the students experiences and general knowledge;
- helping students to strengthen the habits of discipline and scientific imagination which have been taught in primary school;
- diagnosing individual preferences and talents in students so that they may be directed towards suitable studies and professions.

The weekly lesson timetable is shown in the table below:

Lower secondary education: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each form		
	I	II	III
Persian literature	5	5	5
Mathematics	5	4	4
Science	4	4	4
Religious teaching	2	2	2
Arabic language	2	2	2
Social studies	3	3	3
Art	2	1	1
Introduction to techniques and vocations	3	3	3
Foreign language	2	4	4
Defence preparation	–	–	1-0
The Holy Quran	2	2	2
Physical education	2	2	2
'Fostering affairs'	2	1	1
Compensatory courses	2	3	2-3
Total weekly periods	36	36	36

Source: Ministry of Education. *Education in the Islamic Republic of Iran 2003*. Each teaching period lasts 50 minutes.

Religious minority groups have their own specific teaching and there is a special appendix for the Sunnite. It is compulsory to pass all the above subjects in the different lower secondary forms. Teaching is done in Persian at all levels. In bilingual regions, a one-month course is held to teach key concepts of the language to beginners, before the school year starts. There is a final examination at the end of Form III administered at regional and provincial levels. Successful students receive the certificate of completed lower secondary level studies.

The average repetition rate for the lower secondary level in 2002/03 was 6.1% in Form I, 5.6% in Form II, and 8.2% in Form III. In 2000/01, the transition rate from lower secondary to upper secondary education was about 98%. The average number of pupils per class in 1999/2000 was 30.4, and the average pupil-teacher ratio was 26.6:1.

In 2002/03, there were 30,634 lower secondary schools (of which 28,048 in the public sector) with about 4.86 million students enrolled.

Upper secondary education is for lower secondary school graduates who enter the three-year secondary school according to their aptitude and potential. The courses offered at the upper secondary level are organized in the following branches:

Academic branch: the aim of this course is to promote general and cultural knowledge, to identify students' aptitudes and attitudes, and to provide a proper basis to guide them into one of the many areas of secondary education and prepare them for university studies. Students have 66 units (1 unit = 30 hours) in common while the remaining units vary depending on the course of study: humanities and literature, 27 units; mathematics and physics, 26 units; experimental sciences, 24 units. There is a



final examination administered nationwide and successful students are awarded a diploma. Graduates can take a one-year pre-university course.

Technical and vocational education branch: this branch consists of three fields: technical, agricultural and vocational. There are currently thirty fields in technical and vocational education (TVE). The aim of the course, in addition to promoting general knowledge and culture and identifying aptitudes and attitudes of students, is to prepare them to continue their studies in applied science courses. About 58 of the 96 units are common in different areas, and the other units vary among industry, agriculture and service courses. Qualified students of TVE courses can also enter the institutions offering technician degree programmes or pre-university courses, and others receive first- or second-grade skill certificates according to their fields of study.

Kar-Danesh (knowledge skill) branch: each *Kar-Danesh* has its own syllabus which is developed and is available at the Under-secretary of Secondary Education. The educational process in the *Kar-Danesh* branch, which covers 400 skills, is different from the other branches. It is competence-based, education is rather individual, and a modular education method is applied. The aim of this course is to train semi-skilled and skilled workers, foremen and supervisors. Successful students are awarded a second-degree skill certificate (i.e. National Skill Standard II), a first-degree skill certificate (i.e. National Skill Standard I), or a diploma.

The pre-university course aims at preparing students to enter the universities. Students must complete 24 units according to their fields of study (mathematics, experimental sciences, humanities, art, Islamic culture). The programme lasts one academic year. The curriculum is based on the secondary school curriculum and takes into account the requirements at the higher education level. It is prepared and approved by the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology and the Ministry of Health and Medical Education. The Ministry of Education is responsible for administering the pre-university programme. Upon completion of the pre-university programme, graduates are eligible to sit the university entrance examination. The secondary school graduates who are interested in entering a two-year associate degree course do not have to pass the pre-university programme, provided they meet the other requirements.

At the upper secondary level, the curriculum consists of three types of subjects and courses: general/common subjects which are common for all fields and branches; elective subjects; and special subjects which are specific for each field or branch.

Foreign language teaching includes English, French, or German. All upper secondary students should pass four elective units. Girls are exempted from the general required subject called defence preparation. They have, however, to replace it by passing one of the elective or special required units of other branches. Students belonging to religious minority groups are exempted from passing exams regarding the Quran, which is a general required subject. They have, however, to pass the same number of other elective or special required units of other branches. The tables below show the required number of units:

Upper secondary education: number of units required in common courses by branch

Subject	Number of units by branch		
	Academic	Techn./Voc.	Skills
The Holy Qu'ran	3	3	2
Religious education	6	6	4
Persian literature and dictation	6	4	4
Grammar and writing	6	4	4
Arabic	6	6	4
Foreign language (English, French or German)	6	6	4
Social science	2	2	2
Economics	1	1	1
Physics	3	3	3
Chemistry	3	3	3
Physics laboratory	1	1	1
Chemistry laboratory	1	1	1
Mathematics	8	8	4
History of Iran	3	3	3
Geography of Iran	3	3	3
Biology, hygiene and environment	4	–	–
Physical education	3	3	1
Defence preparation	1	1	1
Total number of units	66	58	45

Note: In principle, one unit is equivalent to 30 academic hours (50 minutes' long). The total number of units refers to the three-year programme.

Upper secondary education, academic branch: number of units required in specialized courses

Subject	Number of units by specialization		
	Humanities and literature	Mathematics and physics	Experimental sciences
Persian literature and dictation	2	–	–
Literary essays	2	–	–
History of Persian literature	3	–	–
Geography	2	–	–
Economical and political geography	2	–	–
History of Iran	2	–	–
History of Islamic and Iranian culture and civilization	2	–	–
Economics	2	–	–
Arabic	3	–	–
Logic	1	–	–
Philosophy	1	–	–
Sociology	3	–	–
Psychology	2	–	–
Physics	–	6	4
Physics laboratory	–	1	1
Chemistry	–	4	4
Chemistry laboratory	–	1	1
Geometry	–	5	2
Arithmetic	–	4	–
Algebra and probability	–	2	–
Mathematics	–	–	2
Computer science	–	3	–
Biology	–	–	2
Botanical biology	–	–	2
Animal biology	–	–	3
Biology laboratory	–	–	1
Geology	–	–	2
Total number of units	27	26	24

Note: In principle, one unit is equivalent to 30 academic hours (50 minutes' long). The total number of units refers to the three-year programme.

Pre-university one-year programme: number of units by branch

Subject	Number of units by branch				
	M.	E.S.	H.	A.	I.C.
Islamic culture	2	2	2	2	–
Persian language	2	2	2	2	2
Persian literature	–	–	3	–	–
Foreign language	4	4	4	4	4
Physics	4	3	–	–	–
Chemistry	4	4	–	–	–
Differential and integral calculus	4	–	–	–	–
Analytical geometry and linear algebra	4	–	–	–	–
General mathematics	–	3	2	–	–
Biology	–	4	–	–	–
Geology	–	2	–	–	–
Arabic	–	–	3	–	–
Arabic literature	–	–	–	–	5
History	–	–	2	–	–
Geography	–	–	2	–	–
Social science	–	–	2	–	–
Philosophy	–	–	2	–	2
Introduction to the arts	–	–	–	2	–
Persian art and literature	–	–	–	2	–
History of art	–	–	–	4	–
Art workshop	–	–	–	4	–
Human space and design	–	–	–	2	–
Iranian arts and culture	–	–	–	2	–
Ethics	–	–	–	–	2
Principles of ideas	–	–	–	–	3
Logic	–	–	–	–	4
Religious jurisprudence	–	–	–	–	4
Total number of units	24	24	24	24	26

Note: In principle, one unit is equivalent to 30 academic hours (45-50 minutes' long).

M. = Mathematics; E.S. = Experimental sciences; H. = Humanities; A. = Art; I.C. = Islamic culture.

Upon successful completion of the upper secondary level, students in academic, technical and vocational, or *Kar-Danesh* education are awarded the high school diploma. The transition rate from upper secondary to post-secondary level or universities (private and public) was 40% in the school year 1994/95.

In 1999/2000, the average number of students per class at the upper secondary level (including the pre-university course) was 30.9 and the average student-teacher ratio was 27.6:1. In 2002/03 there were 3,828,600 students enrolled at the upper secondary level and 455,157 students enrolled in the pre-university course. (Ministry of Education, 2003).

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

Information is not available.



Higher education

Higher education institutions include universities, colleges and higher education centres, which require a high school diploma in either the general or technical/vocational branch and success in the entrance examination. Universities include:

- General (or comprehensive) universities in which all educational groups are taught.
- Specialized universities in which only one of the following seven fields of study is taught: humanities, basic sciences, applied sciences, medicine, engineering, art, agriculture and veterinary.
- The Comprehensive Technology University, which has been founded for applied sciences studies.
- *Paym-e-nour* University (distance-learning university).
- Azad Islamic University (established in 1984), which offers courses at all levels in sciences, mathematics, medical science, engineering, etc. It is primarily intended to offer courses for adults who want to upgrade their skills. Providing pre- and in-service training for teachers has been a main concern of this university. It has 480,000 students enrolled in 80 branches.
- Medical universities.

The total number of students in public universities and other post-secondary educational institutions in 1994/95 was 478,455, of whom 189,973 students were studying humanities, 67,043 basic sciences, 22,394 agriculture and veterinary science, 92,362 engineering, 98,138 medicine, and 8,545 arts. In 1994/95, the total number of students in the governmental and non-governmental higher education sector was 1,072,207, including Azad University (431,021 students), the associate courses of the State Organization for Administration and Employment Affairs (108,000 students), teacher training centres (51,731), and students studying abroad (3,000).

In the academic year 1998/99, there were 54 universities and institutes of higher education under the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology. There were some additional 33 private institutes of higher education, offering both undergraduate and postgraduate courses with about 23,000 students enrolled. The total enrolment in all institutions was 1,308,150 students (47.6% in the public sector and 52.4% in the private sector). The proportion of female students was 42.3% in the public sector and 44.5% in the private sector.

In all higher education institutions, education is based on the credit system. The number of units necessary for a bachelor's degree ranges from 142 to 146 units on a full-time basis, corresponding to around four years of study. Master's degree programmes generally take two years of study. They are available for bachelor's degree holders and are subject to an entrance examination. The student must pass 13



general and 38 to 45 specific units, and must prepare a thesis (dissertation) and defend it successfully in the advisory committee. The doctoral degree programme is the highest educational level. It is divided into two educational and research phases: master's degree holders who are successful in the entrance examination start the educational phase of this course. They must pass 12-30 units and a comprehensive (or qualification) exam, after which they enter the research phase. In this phase, they prepare a thesis and defend it. It should be mentioned that doctoral degree programmes in medical and specialized fields of study are not included in the above regulations and have their own special regulations.

The Ministry of Science, Research and Technology is responsible for all non-medical programmes. The medical and paramedical programmes (except for the veterinary programme) are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, as required by law. Decision-making at the higher education level involves the Islamic Parliament, the Cabinet, the Higher Council of Cultural Revolution, the Ministry of Science, and the Ministry of Health.

According to law, the administration of universities and other higher education institutions is undertaken by the boards of trustees, whose duties include: the ratification of the official organization; approval of the suggested budget; confirmation of the financial and transactional regulations; suggesting the range for faculty members allowance; determining the range of research fees, teaching fees, wages and authors fees; ratifying employment regulations for faculty members; and attracting private sector's aid and local incomes.

The members of the board of trustees are suggested by one of the mentioned ministries, endorsed by the Higher Council of Cultural Revolution, and appointed by a decree issued by the relevant minister.

The educational council of universities and other higher education institutions is formed by the members of the administrative body and the deans of faculties, junior colleges and research departments and a number of faculty teachers, supervised by the board of trustees. Some of the duties of this council are to define and approve short-term educational and research projects, new courses or fields, and suggesting them to the relevant ministry.

Universities and higher education and research institutions of the Ministry of Science and the Ministry of Health have independent codes in the general budget of the mentioned ministries, and thus are financially independent.

Evaluation of the quality of education and administration in universities and higher education institutions under the above-mentioned ministries is done through a council called the Supervision Council and an Education Department. Evaluation covers management, application of educational laws and regulations, quality of education and research projects, educational groups, faculty members, students, personnel, conditions of institution, educational and research space and facilities, and welfare, sports and cultural facilities. The social, political, scientific and cultural atmosphere dominating the university and the services provided by the institution to other institutions of the region are also taken into account.

In 2002/03 there were 298 public universities and higher education institutions and 30 private higher education institutions with a total enrolment of 1,742,699 students. In the same year, some 905,000 students were enrolled in the different courses of the Azad University. In 2002, the total number of full-time faculty staff members in public universities and higher education institutions was 27,693. In 2003, the number of faculty members in the Azad University was 21,385. (Ministry of Education, 2003).

Special education

Special education includes both the education of disabled students and that of gifted students. The establishments for the disabled include day schools and boarding schools. In addition, some students are educated either in classes held in mainstream schools or in schools using itinerant teachers. In the academic year 1995/96, there were 2,902 handicapped students enrolled in twenty boarding schools, mostly including the blind, the deaf, physically disabled, or multi-handicapped.

At the primary level, different groups of disabled pupils receive different types of education. The curriculum for special education includes: the Holy Quran; religious teaching; Persian composition, dictation, reading (reading comprehension and grammar); social studies; mathematics; natural sciences and hygiene; arts and physical education for all groups. In addition, skill learning is taught to mentally retarded and behaviourally disordered pupils; rehabilitation activities (physiotherapy, speech therapy, counselling, social work and work therapy) involve physically disabled pupils; pronunciation, lip-reading correction, and hearing training are for deaf and hard-of-hearing pupils; Braille learning and mobility and direction finding are for blind and partially-sighted pupils.

Subject matters and working hours in special schools at the lower and upper secondary level (except in specific situations) are exactly the same as in mainstream schools. For mentally retarded students, a two-year vocational training course is offered, the objectives of which are to acquire needed vocational skills and develop competencies in order to prepare students for a relatively independent life and for accepting individual and social responsibilities.

The Special Education Organization has been taking measures to diagnose and place disabled children all over the country.

The following table shows the number of students according to the target group in academic years 1993/94, 1994/95, and 1995/96:

Academic year	Girls		Boys		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	
1993/94	29,233	60.40	19,162	39.60	48,397
1994/95	34,068	60.65	22,101	39.35	56,169
1995/96	36,249	60.40	23,757	39.60	60,009



In 2002/03, there were 1,211 special education schools in the country (of which 1,190 in the public sector) with a total of 72,305 students enrolled. (Ministry of Education, 2003).

The National Organization for the Development Exceptional Talents is responsible for the education of gifted students. The organization is run under the supervision of the board of trustees and associated with the Ministry of Education. A total of 83 centres have been established for the education of the gifted in different cities of the country up to 1995 (a total of 1,441 centres in 2002/03). In addition to the curriculum and textbooks of general education, supplementary textbooks for religious knowledge, mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology have been developed as part of the curriculum. Work-oriented courses are held on special occasions.

Grade V pupils whose average in Grade IV is more than 19/20 can, every year, sit the entrance exam of the junior high schools in the cities where the Organization has junior high schools. Students in Form III of the junior high schools whose average in Form II is more than 18.5/20 can sit the entrance exam of upper secondary schools in the cities in which the Organization has high schools. Related figures are presented below:

Year	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96
Educational centres	68	73	83
Students	16,266	20,121	24,324
Classes	682	834	979

Private education

The Under-secretary of Public Participation in the Ministry of Education is responsible for private education. Non-profit schools work under the supervision of this Under-secretary. The Act regarding the establishment of non-profit schools was approved by the Islamic Parliament on 25 May 1988.

Non-profit schools are based on the objectives, criteria, curriculum, textbooks, exams and regulations of the Ministry of Education and are under its supervision. The founder(s) must have a number of qualifications, including: belief in Islam; Iranian nationality; be married and not associated with the previous regime; be experienced in educational affairs; and have at least an upper secondary diploma (or its equivalent in an Islamic school). The Supervision Council is the authority in charge of the inspection and investigation of the qualifications of the founder(s). The financial resources of the school include tuition fees and contributions received from parents and charitable people and organizations. There are non-profit schools at the primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels. Some of the non-profit schools may include extra-curricular activities in addition to the regular programmes. Tuition fees are determined annually by the Ministry of Education. Admission to some schools is subject to entrance examinations.



The Ministry of Education is authorized to help non-profit schools. The Cabinet approved the regulations about methods of granting government aids or loans to non-profit schools in 1994. Amounts and types of assistance are determined by special regulations and approved by the Cabinet. The non-profit schools are obliged to enrol needy students in return for receiving assistance from the State or charitable organizations. All income and expenditure of these schools are recorded in official books and, if necessary, inspected by the office of education. The banks throughout the country are obliged to provide 50% of the financial needs regarding provision of premises, equipment and other required facilities as free interest loans in the framework of the Act of Free Interest Bank Operations. Full-time teachers and employees who are not State employees enjoy retirement and medical service insurance based upon the Act of Social Security. The above Act was approved in the open session of the Islamic Parliament on 25 May 1986.

In 2000/01, there were 9,437 non-profit schools (including schools for adult education) in the country with a total of 911,721 learners enrolled. (Ministry of Education, 2001). In 2002/03, some 900,000 students were enrolled in about 10,700 non-profit schools.

Means of instruction, equipment and infrastructure

Textbooks for primary, lower and upper secondary education are printed and distributed centrally by the Ministry of Education. The total number of copies needed for all students throughout the country was about 170 million copies in 1996/97, all of which have been printed and distributed. All textbooks are developed by Iranian authors and there are no foreign textbooks in use.

The country is coping with the new demands created by the information age in a number of ways. The number of computers introduced into schools has rapidly increased in recent years. To promote the utilization of information technology (IT) in learning activities, and to foster the learners ability in IT, several initiatives are currently being considered, including the development, storage and dissemination of high-quality software for use in education, and the training of teachers to cope with the introduction of IT into teaching.

The Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IDCYA) is responsible for preparing instructional materials. The activities of the Institute also include the publication of two magazines—*Pooyesh*, dealing with research on children's art, and *Golbank*, investigations for educators); a dictionary with about 10,000 entries for adolescents; and books about the Islamic Revolution and religious knowledge.

Between 1992 and 1995, the number of urban and rural libraries has significantly increased and 27 different types of cultural and artistic activities are being offered. Theatre activities have been added to the art education of the Institute since 1995. About 1,190 villages are covered by the Institute's postal libraries that lend books to about 40,000 rural members by post. Each member receives loaned books free of charge at least twelve times yearly.



The number of schools, laboratories and libraries has increased in recent years. Although there has been a great effort to supply sufficient premises, there are some shortages in this regard. The estimated classroom shortages during the Second Five-year Development Plan were: 46,240 at the primary level, 38,865 at the lower secondary level, 85,491 at the upper secondary level, and 4,690 for special education, for a total amount of 169,286 classrooms. Boarding premises are also needed at the lower and upper secondary levels. In order to put the existing premises and facilities to optimum use and to provide new resources for the development of education, the Cabinet has approved some Acts in recent years which have played an important role in solving the issue of expanding premises and providing new resources.

Adult and non-formal education

Non-formal education attempts to cover all the children and adults who have not had the chance of attending regular classes. To achieve this aim, some Acts and Regulations have been approved. Non-formal education is conducted through the Literacy Movement Organization, adult schools, and technical and vocational education (TVE) programmes.

The Literacy Movement was created to combat illiteracy, provide basic education and promote social and cultural awareness. This movement, according to its legal constitution passed in 1984, is one of the institutes related to the Ministry of Education.

In 1994 and 1995, the Literacy Movement offered courses to a total of 2,748,913 learners, of whom 78.9% were women and 21.1% men (57.3% in rural areas and 42.7% in urban areas). Out of the total learners enrolled in rural classes, 73.8% were women and 26.2% men—85.7% and 14.3%, respectively, among the urban learners. In addition, 11.3 % were eligible children of deprived regions who have been provided with primary education. Statistics show that learners in the age group 10-39 represent 78.7% of the total. The average age of adult learners is around 29 years. It is hoped that illiteracy will reach its minimum among people under 40 years of age by the end of the Second Five-year Development Plan.

In order to reinforce literacy in the learners and to facilitate their further studies, the Literacy Movement has taken the continuity of their studies into consideration by employing suitable instructional methods, conducting higher courses and publishing textbooks. The results of the 1994 activities show that out of the total learners enrolled, 55.2% (54.3% for women and 58.6% for men) have received the certificate and have passed the intended courses.

Adult education programmes are also offered to those students aged 18+ who have not completed their studies. In the school year 1993/94, 126,693 learners attended general education courses in 854 evening classes organized in 818 institutions. Out of this total, 41,694 were girls and 85,047 boys. A total of 209,553 students (72,891 girls and 136,662 boys) attended secondary courses in 5,068 classes in 583 high schools. Technical education had some 1,547 students studying in 90 classes in 27 technical schools, while 1,961 students attended 68 classes in 16 vocational schools in the same year (950 of them were girls and 1,011 were boys).



In 2002/03, about 542,787 learners attended courses (from primary to upper secondary education and pre-university course) in 3,763 institutions. (Ministry of Education, 2003).

In addition to formal technical and vocational programmes run by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science, non-formal vocational courses are conducted by the Technical and Vocational Training Organization of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and also by some other ministries. There are many types of non-formal TVE programmes in Iran. One of the most important is the programme that prepares learners for the job market offering on-the-job training. In-service training and training courses aiming at upgrading or updating the knowledge and skill of the trainees are also offered.

For the industrial sector, the responsibilities of TVE organizations are to train skilled workers, to establish industry training courses, and to offer in-service training and supervision courses. The Ministry of Mines and Metals, the Ministry of Industries, the Ministry of Petroleum, the Ministry of Roads and Transportation and their departments are responsible to train manpower needed for manufacturing companies.

For the agricultural sector, the Agricultural Education Organization and the Ministry of *Jihad-e-Sazendegi* (*Jihad* for Construction) offer training courses for technical and agricultural manpower in rural areas. The Forestry and Pasture Organization is responsible for training technical manpower according to their requirements.

For the administrative and business sector, all ministries and organizations offer preliminary on-the-job training and in-service training to the personnel. The Iranian Handicrafts Organization, the Ministry of *Jihad-e-Sazendegi* and the Red Crescent Association offer training courses in Iranian handicrafts. The Welfare Organization also offers courses to train disabled persons. The Public Management Training Centre and the Organization of Industrial Management offer programmes in administration and management. The Labour and Social Welfare Institute is responsible for courses in labour affairs and social provision.

For the health sector, the Ministry of Health and Medical Education is responsible for the training of technical personnel. The Red Crescent Association is responsible for the First Aid and Medical Aid Training programme.

Most non-formal TVE programmes in the private sector take place in apprenticeship form. Private educational institutes are supervised by TVE organizations. These institutes concentrate mainly on teaching business and administration. Some trade unions offer non-formal TVE courses to train manpower needed for these professions.

The literacy rate of the population in the age group 10 years and over was 75.4% in 1993. The total number of illiterates above 10 years of age was 10.3 million in the same year. In the year 2000, the illiteracy rate was estimated at 15.6% (female: 19.5%; male: 11.3%; urban: 10.7%; rural: 25.6%). (Ministry of Education, 2001).

Teaching staff

The qualifications required to teach at the different levels of education are the following:

- An associate degree in primary teaching for teaching at the primary level. Based upon the Act of Service of 1990, primary school teachers are either high school diploma holders who have passed the nationwide university entrance exams, have been admitted to teacher training centres and have received a post-secondary certificate in primary education teaching; or lower secondary school graduates or holders of the certifications of second grade of upper secondary schools in experimental science or physics/mathematics fields who have passed an entrance exam, and after selection have been admitted to two-year or four-year teacher-training centres (TTCs). In addition, those upper secondary school diploma holders who have five years of teaching experience in the teaching staff of the Literacy Movement Organization are employed for teaching in primary schools in accordance with the Act approved by the Islamic Parliament (1984) and they are recruited officially as primary school teachers.
- An associate degree in one of the ten specialized subjects for teaching at the lower secondary level. The required manpower for lower secondary education is constituted of certificate holders of upper secondary schools admitted to TTCs through the nationwide university entrance exam in the following courses: literature and humanities; mathematics; experimental science; and physical education. Having received their associate degrees, they are prepared to teach in lower secondary schools. Their recruitment is done in accordance with the Act of Service and they are officially recruited after graduation.
- A bachelor's degree in one of the fourteen specialized subjects for teaching at the upper secondary level. The required manpower for upper secondary education are either college students in teaching fields who become obliged to give service in accordance with the approved Act of the Islamic Parliament (1990), or bachelor's degree holders recruited through advertising, interview and selection.

The curriculum of the pre-service teacher training programmes leading to an associate degree and a bachelor's degree consists of three components:

- Subjects related to the main field of study, representing 55% and 65% of the credit units of associate degree and bachelor's degree courses, respectively.
- Subjects related to behavioural sciences, teaching methods and techniques, which form 25% and 20% of the credit units of associate degree and bachelor's degree courses, respectively.
- General subjects including religious beliefs and values, Persian language and literature, health, environment, and foreign languages, which is 20% and 15%



of the credit units of associate degrees and bachelor's degree courses, respectively.

TTCs are responsible for training manpower to teach at the primary and lower secondary levels, and also at special schools. The number of students admitted at these centres was 8,000 in 1995. In 2002/03 there were 69 TTCs in the country with 9,729 students enrolled. (Ministry of Education, 2003).

In 2002/03 there were 143 Technical-Vocational Colleges (TVCs) with about 130,000 students enrolled. TVCs are affiliated to the Ministry of Education and train qualified technicians required for technical and vocational schools. TVCs offer two-year courses in about 40 fields of study and the graduates are awarded the associate degree.

Higher education centres for in-service training offer courses to teachers to further their studies. The number of students enrolled at these centres was 38,000 in 1995. There were 296 such centres to improve the qualifications of the employees of the Ministry of Education who meet the requirement of the different educational levels.

Short-term in-service training courses aim at improving specific competencies of teachers and other educational staff. These courses do not lead to the award of academic degrees, but the participants are awarded certificates that are required for their further promotion. In 2002/03 nearly 11,000 short-term courses were offered and about 970,000 employees had the opportunity to attend these courses. (Ministry of Education, 2003).

About 6,000 students were admitted to teacher training programmes offered by universities in 1996. These are to be employed in the Ministry of Education after graduation. According to the agreement made by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science, some of the applicants of the nationwide university entrance examination can also apply for special courses required by the Ministry of Education every year. These students are employed by the Ministry of Education as they start their university studies. Their teaching career starts after graduation. Statistics show that the number of teachers with a high school diploma has decreased, while the number of teachers holders of a bachelor's degree or a master's degree has increased.

Teachers working at public schools are local public employees and their status is guaranteed by law. In addition, their working conditions are protected by the Act of State Employment. There is no noticeable difference between men and women's employment in the Act except that women can enjoy being half-time employees for almost four years after giving birth to a child.

Teachers are highly respected in the country. During the Teachers' Week teachers are evaluated according to special regulations and 136 men and 136 women are selected as exemplary teachers and principals. They attend special ceremonies which are held in Tehran at the beginning of May every year and gifts and letters of appreciation are presented to them by the State authorities.



To procure the best personnel for teaching and to enable teachers to concentrate their efforts on education, the salaries of teachers assigned to schools are the same as those of public employees. Their salaries are provided for and given special treatment under the Act of Coordinated Payment to State Employees of 1990. Teachers are promoted to the next salary grade every four years. They also get an annual raise every year, based on their performance evaluation, which is between 3% to 5% of their salary (not including allowances). In addition, a teaching allowance is added to their monthly salaries as follows: 25% to teachers of primary, lower and theoretical upper high schools; 35% to technical teachers, and 45% to the instructors of TTCs and TTTCs.

In order to support teachers, some effective measures have been taken in recent years. Between 1994 and 1997, the salary coefficient of teachers increased from 100 to 140 *rial* and a number of incentives have been introduced, e.g. allowances, monthly/annual periods of leave, etc. The Act of Saving Fund of Education Personnel was implemented in 1995 in order to guarantee the financial support of the retired education personnel. According to the Budget Act of 1994, the education personnel who buy houses through bank loans are also given 7% of the related interest as subsidies.

Teachers' holidays are the same as those given to regular public employees, which include weekends, national holidays, holidays at the beginning of each year, and annual holidays with pay. The long-term holidays given to pupils in schools are not holidays received by teachers. However, teachers are released from their main obligation to be engaged in teaching duties, and are instead often authorized to be absent from school for training purposes. According to current rules, the teacher's weekly workload is twenty-eight hours at the primary level, twenty-four hours at the lower secondary level, and twenty-four hours at the upper secondary level.

Short-term in-service training courses aim to improve specific competencies of the teachers and educational staff. It is optional for the employees to take part in in-service educational courses, but it is compulsory in some cases such as pre-employment training, training at the beginning of employment, teaching in special courses (such as reformed programmes and pre-university courses). Nearly all teachers participate in short-term in-service training programmes almost every seven years. It is obligatory to have some of the certificates of short-term in-service training courses in order to be promoted in salary grade.

There are compact courses in the summer time, regular courses during the academic year, seminars, educational meetings, etc. About 10% of teachers and other educational staff take part in these courses annually. The in-service training office has admitted more than 100,000 employees in the last few years and has established and operated higher education in-service centres (at least one in each province). All the participants in short-term training courses enjoy lodging and boarding facilities as well as assignment allowances. At the end of the course, they are awarded a certificate. The implementation of the new structure at the secondary level since 1991 has necessitated that a considerable number of principals, counsellors, teachers, and other employees take part in short-term courses in order to get familiar with the philosophy, objectives, and content of reformed secondary education.



Educational research and information

The general objectives of educational research are as follows:

- identification of the adjustment level of general educational objectives to the social, political, economic and cultural needs;
- study the adjustment of levels, objectives, programmes and methods to the needs of learners;
- identification of facilitating factors and obstacles in achieving long-, mid- and short-term objectives;
- evaluation of the internal and external efficiency of the education system at the different levels and the effectiveness of its management;
- identification and prediction of future trends and suggesting suitable directions for the education system;
- identification of necessary measures in order to apply research findings.

The Institute for Educational Research is responsible for educational research within the Ministry of Education. The Institute trains research manpower and publishes scientific and research books. The following fields have been identified in educational research during recent years: educational problems at various educational levels including objectives, curricula, methodologies, manpower training, organization, management and evaluation; psychological and social problems of children and youth, personality development, social participation and leisure time problems; funding and developing of educational programmes.

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Web resources

Ministry of Education Portal: <http://www.medu.ir/> [In Persian. Last checked: October 2007.]

Iranian National Schools Network: <http://www.roshd.ir/> [In Persian. Last checked: October 2007.]

Ministry of Science, Research and Technology: <http://www.msrt.gov.ir/> [In Persian. Last checked: October 2007.]

Organization of Research and Educational Planning: <http://www.oerp.sch.ir/> [In Persian. Last checked: October 2007.]

Technical and Vocational Training Organization: <http://www.irantvto.ir/> [In Persian and English. Last checked: October 2007.]

For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>