

The Revolutionary Foundations Of The Algerian Educational System And Their Implications

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Abstract:

This article analyzes the content of the revolutionary documents of the Algerian War of Liberation, specifically focusing on the revolutionary foundations of the Algerian national education system derived from this historical period, which spans from 1954 to 1962. These foundational texts are the November 1st, 1954 Declaration, the August 20th, 1956 Soummam Conference, and the Tripoli Charter, issued by the National Council of the Algerian Revolution in June 1962. These documents are seen as future projects and references, expressing the aspirations of the Algerian people for peace, freedom, justice, and progress. The article compares the educational situation at the time these documents were written and then analyzes the extent and nature of their impact on the present and future of the Algerian educational system. The article employs a classical content analysis method, based on verbal analysis as a research unit, to reveal meanings, understand the nature of variables, and define the general goals envisioned by the authors of these documents. As a result, the central issue of this article revolves around showing the strong relationship between the nature of these foundations and the philosophy and strategy of the Algerian educational system, which has undergone various stages of development. The article also explores the impact these foundations had on the present and future of Algeria's educational system.

Key Words: Educational System, Revolutionary Documents, Educational Institutions.

I. Introduction

The educational system is a set of rules, regulations, and procedures governing the organization and management of educational affairs, reflecting the intellectual, social, and political philosophy of a country, whether this philosophy is explicitly declared or not. Educational systems around the world are influenced by several primary factors: cultural, ideological, and natural. Therefore, the educational system is the product of various scientific, political, social, economic, and administrative elements, both local and global, aimed at human development and the construction of individualsⁱ.

This system primarily relies on foundational references, which give it its legal framework. In Algeria, the revolutionary documents provided this framework in the form of a set of national and revolutionary principles. These principles helped transform Algeria's educational system from the period of French colonization to the period of national independence. The Algerian educational system emerged from the revolutionary mindset of a society building itself in a free and independent Algeria, and it continues to develop through history in its revolutionary form, shaping its present and future.

II. Analysis of the Content of the Key Documents of the November 1954 Revolution

The historical and revolutionary content of Algeria's struggle for independence is one of the key stages in the history of the Algerian people. This history is filled with immense sacrifices made by men and women, who fought and died for freedom and independence. The first foundational texts of the Algerian state, which are historically known as the revolutionary documents, cover three pivotal moments in the revolution and the future of the Algerian state. These texts include the November 1st, 1954 Declaration, the 1956 Soummam Conference, and the 1962 Tripoli Conferenceⁱⁱ.

A. Analysis of the November 1st, 1954 Declaration

The historical, literary, and moral significance of November 1st, 1954, lies in two main reasons. First, it marks the beginning of a renewed phase in the history of the Algerian people, representing the continuation of a culture of resistance and rejection that has always characterized the Algerian people, starting from the earliest days of the French occupation. Second, it is the day the first document of the revolution was

issued, which is known as the November 1st Declaration, and it outlined the key goals and principles of the revolutionⁱⁱⁱ.

This declaration was the initial seed in the program and trajectory of the revolution, issued by the National Liberation Front (FLN). It represents the plan that defined the goal and method of action and serves as a fundamental reference for shaping Algeria's present and future. The document focused on two key facts: constitutional democracy and independence as absolute necessities. It was grounded in both national and pan-Arab ideologies, beginning with the phrase "O Algerian people" without any distinction^{iv}.

The Declaration also carried a civilizational dimension, emphasizing the Arab-Islamic identity of the revolution and the need for unity in North Africa within the Arab-Islamic framework. The colonizers' first confrontation with the indigenous population was over religion, which they attempted to manipulate and distort. The document criticized how colonialism used superstition and mysticism to pervert Islam and reduce its revolutionary and social content, thus turning it into a tool of control.

However, the Declaration was devoid of explicit references to science and education.

B. Analysis of the Soummam Conference Document (August 20th, 1956)

The Soummam Conference represented a new roadmap, marking the stage of organizing and institutionalizing the revolution to meet the needs of the era. It also laid the foundations for military organization and the general policy framework of the revolutionary leadership. This conference was held in Ifrir Ouzlaghen, in the Soummam Valley, part of the third military region^v.

Despite the differences in language and terms used in this document compared to the November 1st Declaration, the general vision of the revolution's principles and objectives remained the same^{vi}.

The document did not directly address education but instead discussed the cultural development of peasants and workers.

From this conference, several structures emerged, including:

- The Waqf Affairs Directorate, which consisted of a council with five members at the regional level or state level. Their

main responsibilities included appointing teachers in schools, imams in mosques, and preparing school curricula and textbooks for various educational levels. This directorate also managed schools, and teachers had additional roles in registering civil documents and resolving disputes. The teachers were paid a 100 DZD monthly salary by the FLN^{vii}.

C. Analysis of the Content of the Tripoli Conference Document (June 1962)

The conference was held in the city of Tripoli, Libya, from May 27 to June 4, 1962, to draw the political roadmap for the post-war (struggle) phase in independent Algeria, following the official announcement of the ceasefire on March 19, 1962. The conference was attended by all the prominent leaders of the Algerian Liberation Revolution, both military and political. It was a comprehensive program for the institutional building of the independent Algerian state and the complete eradication of colonial remnants in all its forms. This period coincided with a critical time of profound transformation in Algerian society, marked by tragic social, economic, and cultural conditions, in addition to the crisis within the National Liberation Front (FLN). Therefore, the charter was seen as a serious attempt to develop the ideological project of the Algerian state^{viii}.

The document revolved around two main issues:

1. Evaluating the Current Situation in the country (1980-1962), expressing reservations about the Évian Accords, and highlighting the colonial project that sought to keep Algeria's destiny tied to France in new ways that threatened national independence. The charter focused on the need for the solidification of national thought and the continuity between the ideology of the Algerian revolution and the ideology of the national movement aimed at regaining national sovereignty.
2. The second issue was the provision of realistic solutions for Algeria's social, economic, and cultural conditions.

The document contained the following quote: "*...All of this proves the failure of French colonialism in its attempts to destroy society from its foundation and replace it with an increasing number of European settlers or its attempts to keep our society under ignorance and stagnation...*"^{ix}

Then, instead of using terms like science and education, the charter mentioned the concept of: Revolutionary National and Scientific Culture, where the charter emphasized that the goal was to recover national culture, especially the Arabic language, which represents the language of civilization, and to gradually eliminate the remnants of colonial culture. One of the architects of this document, Mustafa Al-Ashraf, commented on the process of developing educational programs, saying: "*...It should not be burdened with useless subjects, nor should it be poor in terms of its modern educational material. These areas must be courageously modernized, but they should be adapted to ensure that the Algerian revolution does not proceed on foundations prepared by the colonizer...*"

The document then introduced the concept of eradicating illiteracy and developing national culture through the creation of free schools and their maintenance despite colonial opposition. The National Liberation Front (FLN), in collaboration with the administration of the districts during the liberation war, worked to make culture accessible to the people, which required the following:

- Recovering national culture and the gradual Arabization of education based on scientific foundations, which was one of the most difficult tasks of the revolution.
- Preserving the national heritage of popular culture.
- Expanding the school system to include everyone at educational levels.
- "Algerianizing" curricula by adapting them to the country's reality.
- Expanding mass education methods and mobilizing all national organizations to fight illiteracy and teach reading and writing to all citizens as quickly as possible^x.

III. Comparison of the Results of the Analysis of the Revolutionary Documents with the Educational Reality of That Period

The Algerian educational institutions have a long history, having transitioned from primitive schools to large and advanced universities. Several laws and legislations were established to organize education in the country before, during, and after colonization. The stages of development that preceded the revolutionary documents can be summarized as follows:

A. The Educational System before French Colonization of Algeria

There were no specialized ministries for education during this period; education was a collective responsibility, with everyone cooperating to establish mosques and schools. The most important institutions of the time were the mosques, Zawiyas (Islamic schools), and Kuttabs (traditional schools).

During this period, there was no university in Algeria, but the Grand Mosque in Algiers served as the nucleus for higher education, with its central role and numerous study circles. Education during this time did not end with certificates; instead, it was concluded with a verbal endorsement from the teacher and an explicit expression of their satisfaction with the student's learning^{xi}.

Education was widespread among the people of Algeria, regardless of their origins, with Kuttabs and mosques playing a significant role in preserving the Islamic identity of the Algerian people. Students and disciples sat in mosques around scholars, learning various types of knowledge from them, including religious and worldly subjects such as literature, language, mathematics, astronomy, and other sciences^{xii}.

The educational system was divided according to the students' ability to absorb knowledge. Young children were trained in Quran memorization and learning how to write. Older students, who would today be called secondary school students or university students, were affiliated with mosques and Zawiyas, under the guidance of senior scholars. Their programs included not only religious sciences such as the Quran, Hadith, and Arabic language, but also rhetoric, philosophy, history, geography, mathematics, astronomy, and more.

Education in its various forms thrived relatively well before the French occupation due to the substantial "Waqf" (endowment) funds allocated to it.

B. The Educational System During French Colonization of Algeria

One of the first actions taken by the French colonizers was the seizure of waqf properties that funded cultural, religious, and social services for Muslims. Many religious scholars were martyred or dispersed, and most of those who survived emigrated. Thus, France sought to destroy education in Algeria

by relying on ignorance and impoverishment with the aim of Frenchification and Christianization.

The Quranic schools, mosques, and Zawiyas continued their educational roles, and their names became closely associated with the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars, led by Abdelhamid Ibn Badis. This association worked to establish schools to combat illiteracy and ignorance across Algeria^{xiii}.

The educational system in Algeria passed through several phases during this period, as follows:

- From 1830 to 1880: This period was marked by a military approach, reflecting the colonizer's focus on imposing control and dominance over the Algerian people and displacing them from their lands. Education was a key tool in achieving these distorted goals.

In the late 1840s, the French government hesitated to open schools for Algerians and to determine the language of instruction. Schools were established for settlers in cities and remote villages, but the Algerians despised this type of education and did not allow their children, particularly their daughters, to attend these schools. They preferred to send their children to Zawiyas and Kuttabs.

- From 1880 to 1930: A new trend emerged to generalize education in Algeria. The French Ministry of Education established a new program to follow the French education system under the policy of assimilation declared by the French government through the June 12, 1881 Law on free education and the March 28, 1882 Law on compulsory primary education, which was implemented in French-controlled territories. As a result, the number of schools and students increased, but the rate of school enrollment among Algerians did not exceed 8.3%.

Arabic was taught in secondary schools as a foreign language by French teachers, with the Arabic grammar taught in French^{xiv}.

France opened three institutes in Algiers, Constantine, and Tlemcen, aimed at training some Algerians for specific functions, such as clerks for the judicial system, but the total number of students did not exceed 150.

- From 1930 to 1954: After the French celebrated the centenary of their occupation of Algeria, the number of

schools and students increased. However, they began treating Algerians as French Muslims^{xv}.

- From 1954 to 1962: The educational landscape in the cities was different from that in the rural areas during the revolutionary period. In the cities, French institutions of primary and secondary schools, universities, and vocational training centers followed a French educational system that was unfair and only accessible to a certain social class. In addition, Arabic schools that operated under the resistance were persecuted by colonial authorities, such as:
 - The Islamic Life Association Schools: Established in Constantine and officially approved by the French administration in 1951, these schools focused on spreading education and teaching the Quran and Arabic language.
 - The Algerian Educational Institution Schools: Founded in 1954 in Constantine, their goal was to provide primary education in Arabic and French for children and also offer professional education.
 - The Revolutionary School System: Welcoming children from age six and above with full-day schedules (8:00 AM – 12:00 PM, 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM). The books, curricula, and materials were similar to those used in the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars' schools, with a six-year course culminating in an elementary school diploma exam.

These schools preceded others, including those of the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars, which included schools like:

- School of Reform (1931) in Béjaïa,
- School of Youth (1934) in Tizi Ouzou,
- School for Boys' Education (1934) in Tébessa,
- School of Youth Life (1936) in Mila,
- School of Education (1939) in Annaba,
- Ibn Khaldoun School (1944) in Chlef,
- School of Education (1956) in Blida,
- Islamic Literary Youth School (1956) in Sidi Bel Abbès, and many others, most of which were burned by the colonizers and shut down.

Regarding education in rural areas, it was limited to French schools until the Soummam Conference in 1956, after which some leaders found scholarships for outstanding students in Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and other European countries. Some, like the martyr Amirouche, established schools in Tunis, sending more than 200 students from major tribal areas. Members of the National Liberation Army (ALN) also organized free evening classes for men and women, covering literacy in Arabic and special programs to raise political awareness about the history of Algeria and guide the national struggle.

The Waqf Affairs Directorate created at the Soummam Conference supplied around 120 schools per province (rooms 10 meters long, 6 meters wide, and 3 meters high). The National Liberation Army also distributed clothing, books, and school supplies to students. Additionally, Quranic schools developed their curricula by adding subjects like history, geography, and national education.

The school schedules were similar to official schools, with primary students attending 25 hours per week, with 30.16% of time devoted to the Quran, and the rest for language, discussion, history, and memorization. For secondary school students, weekly subjects included six hours of Quran, one and a half hours of religious education, two hours of Prophet's biography, and the remaining time for reading, spelling, grammar, and arithmetic.

Thus, the free Arabic education during the glorious revolution, led by the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars, political parties, associations, and military leaders, significantly contributed to developing the Algerian educational system post-independence and played an essential role in forming intellectual elite that carried the message of science and culture for the generations of independence. The three documents include the key principles of the Algerian educational system from 1954 to 1962, which set the general future framework for education in independent Algeria. The third article of the Algerian constitution in its first section, which outlines the general principles governing Algerian society, states the following:

“Arabic is the national and official language. Arabic remains the official language of the state. The Supreme Council of the Arabic Language is specifically tasked with promoting Arabic and generalizing its use in scientific, technological fields, and encouraging its translation.”

Article 65 of the second section on basic rights, public freedoms, and duties states:

“The right to education is guaranteed. The state continually works to improve its quality. Public education is free under the conditions determined by law. Primary and secondary educations are compulsory. The state organizes the national educational system. The state ensures the neutrality of educational institutions and maintains their pedagogical and scientific character to protect them from any political or ideological influence. The school is the basic foundation for teaching citizenship. The state ensures equal access to education and professional training for all citizens.”^{xvi}

These provisions rely on the following revolutionary references:

- The precise definition of a new concept of culture that these documents termed revolutionary national scientific culture, as follows: As an initial phase, give Arabic the true expression of our country’s cultural values, dignity, and efficacy as a language of civilization. This helps to build the national heritage and introduce its ancient and modern humanity into intellectual life and nurture national consciousness, fighting cultural dominance and the ideological impact of the West, which contributed to teaching Algerians to despise their language and national values^{xvii}.
- Revolutionary culture means contributing to the liberation of the people and purging them of the remnants of feudalism, superstitions, and colonial intellectual habits. It is not exclusive to any group but enlightens political and social struggles in all forms and builds revolutionary awareness, reflecting the victories of the people.
- It is Algerian and scientific in its methods and dimensions, characterized by its rational nature, technical preparation, research spirit, and its general reach, spreading systematically at all levels of society.
- The most important observation is that this educational system, designed to build the Algerian identity and achieve revolutionary goals, first paved the way for the collective advancement of society through rural areas, as farmers and workers were the primary victims of the ignorance imposed by colonization. This was one of the key fruits and reasons for the success of the glorious revolution, and it is

also why education in Algeria was free, as it was fundamentally based on the poor classes for its revitalization.

- Compulsory and free education in Algeria came from the need to link armed struggle with education.
- The ideology of education in Algeria is based on two civilizational pillars: the Arabic language and Islamic religion.

IV. Conclusion:

A precise investigation into the evolution of the stages of the Algerian educational system, compared with the analysis results of the fundamental texts of the Algerian liberation revolution, shows a transition of the Algerian state's identity from an Ottoman heritage under the Islamic Caliphate system, where the Muslim nation exercised its sovereignty, to the French colonial occupation that attempted to erase this identity by cutting Algeria off from its civilizational roots. This was done by replacing it with the colonizer's culture, creating a historical and cognitive break foundational to French Algeria's philosophy. The period of the liberation revolution sought to dismantle this colonial political and civilizational project and return Algeria to its Arab-Islamic cultural environment. Consequently, these foundational texts of the November Revolution enshrined principles that emerged from the heart of this civilizational, revolutionary, and scientific revival, which still constitute the national paradigm of the educational system through different historical phases and accompanying reform processes into the age of globalization up to the present day.

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