



Stagnation or Growth? Algeria's development pathway to 2040

Education

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Education

After independence from France in 1962, Algeria embarked on a concerted effort at Arabisation and Islamisation that sought to displace the dominant role of French and French culture in the country.[1] Compulsory basic education was introduced in the 1970s, and the country's enrolment levels have improved significantly since then.

The government invested heavily in expanding access to education. In 1990, for example, the education sector received almost 30% of the national budget. [2] As a result, the country's literacy rate currently stands at about 78%, compared to under 50% in the 1980s.

Algeria is also considered to have achieved universal primary education with a 97% net enrolment rate in 2015. [3] Today Arabic is the language of instruction from primary to secondary school. At tertiary level, hard sciences are taught in French.

The average years of education in the adult population is a good first indicator of the stock of knowledge in society. Improvements in the average years of education slowed down in Algeria from 1995 at the height of the civil war and only began an upward trajectory again after 2005.

The average years of education for adults aged 15 and over is currently 7.6 years and will improve to 9.2 years by 2040. This is almost a year above the average for OLMICs and 1.6 years below the average for UMICs.

Education can be conceptualised as a pipeline. The more learners a country can enrol in primary school, the more learners will complete that level and so become eligible for secondary and tertiary education. Bottlenecks or leakages at any stage in the system hamper efforts to grow the overall stock of education, with negative implications for improvements in human capital.

Although Algeria has achieved universal primary education and generally records good educational outcomes, there are significant leakages in its secondary system, particularly in upper secondary. Here completion rates are 11 percentage points below the average for OLMICs (see Chart 8). The continuous but flawed reforms in the education sector are behind some of these leaks.[3]

Chart 8: Education stock and flow rates (2018–19 data)



Geography	Primary			Lower secondary			Upper secondary		Tertiary	
	Enrol (gross)	Survival	Completion	Enrol (gross)	Completion	Transition	Enrol (gross)	Completion	Enrol (gross)	Graduation
Algeria	109.9%	96.3%	110.5%	120.2%	91.4%	89.8%	72.2%	34.9%	51.4%	29.2%
Tunisia	115.4%	94.2%	100.6%	107.7%	73.8%	98.6%	79.7%	33.9%	32.2%	22.5%
Lower middle-income countries	75.3%	82.0%	79.1%	58.7%	66.3%	83.5%	43.2%	36.9%	25.2%	25.3%
Upper middle-income countries	106.0%	96.5%	98.2%	98.2%	87.1%	98.6%	82.6%	50.6%	42.3%	23.9%

Source: IFs version 7.53, historical data from UNESCO Institute for Statistics and Barro & Lee data

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Chart 9: Definitions in Education

Analysis in this section is done according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics classification of primary, lower and upper secondary education schooling. UNESCO does not currently include/gather data on pre-primary education.[4]

Gross enrolment rate: The number of learners enrolled at a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education. Rates can therefore be above 100%.

Completion rate: The number of people in the relevant age group who have completed the last grade of the given level of education, as a percentage of the population at the theoretical graduation age for the given level of education.

Like many African countries, greater access to education in terms of number of learners enrolled has come at the cost of quality and relevance. Educational reforms stalled under Bouteflika, and education modernisation appears to have halted as rote learning predominates.[5]

The quality of education in Algeria lags behind that in UMICs, including in Africa, but is above the averages for OLMICs. The challenges include shortages in educational resources such as teachers, issues with the language of instruction and poor

infrastructure.

Reforms to improve quality of education were introduced in 2003, and included new teaching methods, restructuring of the curriculum and an ongoing switch in the language of instruction from French to Arabic. Despite these reforms, the UN special rapporteur reported in 2015 that the quality of education in Algeria was low, citing inadequate teacher training and overcrowding in classrooms as key factors.[6]

In 2008, private higher institutions were authorised to operate. [7] There has been a significant shift towards and greater support for these institutions since 2018 in an effort to alleviate some of the pressure on the free government-sponsored public education system.

The language of instruction at various educational levels also plays a big role in the 'quality' of graduates. In September 2019, Algeria's higher education minister introduced a proposal to switch from French to English in teaching and research. This reform aims to increase the visibility of research in higher education institutions and to open it up to the international environment in the belief that English is the language of the 'knowledge economy'. [8]

There is also a disconnect between the current demands of the job market, future prospects for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and the education system. [9]

Algeria has not fully achieved gender parity, with female gross enrolment below that of males. However, it does better than most sub-Saharan countries. The situation is significantly worse in rural areas and the obstacles often cited include socio-cultural limitations on girls' potential, remote schools and domestic chores. [10]

Trends do show that beyond age 16, which is the age up to which education is compulsory, girls stay in school longer than boys and do better in getting high school diplomas and proceeding on to higher education. As a result, at higher levels of education Algeria has seen an inversion of the gender imbalance in favour of women. [11] The ratio of females to males is more than 1.5 to 1 at the tertiary level.

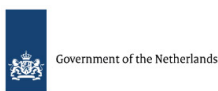
To prepare for the 4IR, countries need to invest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and commit to life-long learning and education that encourages entrepreneurship. An encouraging trend in Algeria is that the number of learners enrolling in vocational training has risen in the recent past. [12]

In addition, the per cent of learners studying STEM fields in tertiary school is higher in Algeria (9.1%) than what would be expected for its level of development (2.6%). [13] In 2018, for example, women accounted for 41% of STEM graduates. [14] This mismatch between the skills of the labour force and the needs of the market is one of the reasons for high unemployment rates in the country. [15]

Endnotes

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3. World Bank, [Algeria: Country overview](#)
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5. H Saleh, [State education: Bias towards rote learning stifles critical thinking](#), *Financial Times*, 20 October 2013
6. Oxford Business Group, [Algeria overhauls teaching methods and increases funding](#)
7. Lois, [Journal Officiel De La République Algérienne](#), February 2008
8. E Fox and R Mazzouzi, [Algeria's higher education minister encourages switch from French to English](#), *Al-Fanar Media*, 3 September 2019
9. A Nagazi, [Reading the shortcomings of the Tunisian educational system](#), *World Bank blog*, 30 October 2017
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11. O-B Zahia, [Gender Inequity in Algeria: When Inequalities are Reversed](#), *Journal of Education and Social Policy*, 5:2, June 2018
12. The 2015/16 enrolment was estimated to have increased by 14%. See Oxford Business Group, [Efforts to improve educational infrastructure and technical skills in Algeria](#)
13. Expert workshop, Tunis, September 2019.
14. O Khazan, [The more gender equality, the fewer women in STEM](#), *The Atlantic*, 18 February 2018
15. Tin Hinane El Kadi, Peer reviewer, London School of Economics, 15 June 2020.

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