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Education In Jordan

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Introduction

Education stands as a cornerstone of societal progress, a powerful engine driving individual empowerment and national development. In the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, this truth resonates deeply. For decades, Jordan has placed immense value on cultivating an educated populace, recognizing it as the most valuable resource in a region often characterized by geopolitical complexities and limited natural resources. This commitment has fostered a dynamic and evolving educational landscape, one that is both rooted in rich cultural heritage and continually adapting to global advancements and contemporary challenges.

This book, "Education In Jordan: A Comprehensive Overview from Early Childhood to Higher Education," embarks on an in-depth exploration of this vital sector. Our aim is to provide readers with a holistic and nuanced understanding of the Jordanian educational system, tracing its journey from foundational early childhood experiences to the highest echelons of academic and vocational training. We delve into the intricate structures, the guiding philosophies, and the practical implementations that define learning in Jordan, offering a detailed analysis that extends beyond mere statistics to capture the spirit and aspirations embedded within the system.

From the foundational learning environments of nurseries and kindergartens, where the seeds of curiosity and social development are sown, to the sophisticated research institutions of higher education, this volume meticulously dissects each stage of the educational continuum. We examine the evolution of curricula, the methodologies of pedagogy, and the vital role of teacher development in shaping future generations. Furthermore, we explore the mechanisms of quality assurance, the impact of various educational policies and legislation, and the crucial aspects of funding and financing that underpin the entire enterprise.

Beyond the formal structures, this book also addresses the multifaceted dimensions that influence and enrich education in Jordan. We investigate the significant contribution of private education, the dedicated efforts in special education and inclusive practices, and the transformative power of digitalization and technology in modernizing learning environments. Crucially, we confront the persistent challenges and emerging opportunities facing Jordanian education, including the profound impact of regional crises such as the Syrian refugee crisis, and the proactive engagement in international cooperation and partnerships.

"Education In Jordan" is designed for a diverse audience, including policymakers, educators, researchers, students, and anyone with a keen interest in understanding the nuances of educational development in the Middle East. It serves as an invaluable

resource, offering insights into the historical trajectory, current realities, and future aspirations of a nation deeply invested in the intellectual and personal growth of its citizens. Through this comprehensive overview, we hope to illuminate the enduring legacy and the promising future of education in the Hashemite Kingdom, showcasing its resilience, adaptability, and unwavering commitment to knowledge.

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CHAPTER ONE: Historical Development of Education in Jordan

The narrative of education in Jordan is not merely a chronicle of institutions and policies; it is the unfolding story of a nation's unwavering commitment to its human capital, a testament to the belief that knowledge is the most enduring wealth. This journey, stretching back centuries, reveals a remarkable evolution from informal instruction rooted in religious texts to a sophisticated, modern educational system. Understanding this historical trajectory is crucial to appreciating the current landscape and the future aspirations of education in the Hashemite Kingdom.

In the earliest periods, long before the modern state of Jordan took shape, education was primarily informal and deeply intertwined with religious and communal life. Mosques and Kuttabs (Qur'anic schools) served as the foundational learning centers, imparting religious knowledge, basic literacy, and arithmetic. These institutions, while limited in scope, played a vital role in preserving cultural identity and fostering a sense of community. Learning was often an organic process, passed down through generations within families and local gatherings, emphasizing oral traditions and practical skills necessary for daily life in an agrarian society. This nascent form of education, though not structured in the way we understand it today, laid the groundwork for a valuing of knowledge that would persist through subsequent eras.

The Ottoman era, spanning from 1516 to 1918, introduced a more formalized, albeit still rudimentary, educational structure to the region of Transjordan. For much of this period, the state's involvement in education was minimal, leaving the establishment and supervision of schools largely to local communities. As a result, educational progress was slow, with formal schools appearing predominantly in major cities only in the late 19th century. Education during this time largely relied on "writers" who taught reading, writing, basic arithmetic, and the Holy Qur'an. Higher education as a distinct system was not known in Transjordan during the Ottoman period; instead, Al-Rashidi schools represented the highest level of education available. These schools, some of which still stand today, served as vital, albeit limited, centers of learning.

Towards the latter part of the 19th century, the Ottoman authorities began to implement administrative reforms across their empire, which included the establishment of more formal schools, primarily for the Muslim population. These schools, known as "rüşdiye" schools, provided middle-school-level education and aimed to train local elites to become loyal Ottoman subjects. One notable example is the junior high school established in Irbid in 1899 by the Vilayet of Damascus' Education Council, which continues to function as an educational institution today.

These efforts, while primarily serving imperial objectives, nonetheless introduced a more structured approach to education and increased access to formal schooling in some urban centers. However, the overall educational landscape remained underdeveloped, particularly in rural areas, with the majority of the population still relying on informal learning.

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I and the subsequent establishment of the Amirate of Transjordan in 1921 marked a pivotal moment in the development of education. At the time of its creation, Transjordan's educational facilities were starkly limited, consisting of only twenty-five religious schools offering a basic education. This nascent state faced the immense challenge of building a modern administration and social infrastructure from the ground up, and education was quickly identified as a critical component. The early leaders of Transjordan, particularly the Hashemite family, recognized that human resources would be the bedrock of the new entity, especially in a region with limited natural resources.

The period of the British Mandate (1921-1946) saw the gradual expansion and formalization of the educational system in Transjordan. The British administration incorporated existing Ottoman laws and institutions, alongside Ottoman-trained personnel, into the new educational framework. While British policymakers were cautious about widespread higher education, fearing the rise of an educated unemployed class that might lead to anti-colonial sentiment, local support for education remained strong. Early public secondary schools, such as Salt Secondary School, were established through a combination of government initiative and donations from wealthy citizens. These schools initially faced challenges, including a shortage of Arabic-language teaching materials, as many subjects had previously been taught in Turkish. Efforts were made to provide Arabic terminology for scientific subjects, laying the groundwork for a national curriculum.

Initially, secondary education was largely confined to males, with females often considered to have completed their basic education after the seventh grade. However, by the 1940s, a significant shift occurred. The government mandated school attendance for all children, moving away from the earlier Ottoman educational policies. This policy change, coupled with increasing societal recognition of the value of education for girls, led to a dramatic increase in female enrollment and a decline in dropout rates among girls in subsequent decades. The curriculum during this period began to evolve, incorporating subjects like Arabic language and literature, religion, arithmetic, civics, history (with an emphasis on Arab history), geography, science, music, physical education, and drawing for boys, with embroidery offered to girls. English was introduced into the official curriculum in the fifth grade, a practice that continues to reflect its importance as a global language.

Following Jordan's full independence in 1946, and particularly after the annexation of the West Bank in 1948, the emphasis on education intensified. The Jordanian

government sought to foster a unified Jordanian-Palestinian identity through the educational system, introducing comprehensive changes to study programs and textbooks to promote loyalty to the Hashemite regime. This period saw a concerted effort to expand access to education across the kingdom, even in remote areas, with the government committed to providing a school for every village with ten or more school-aged children. This policy led to a rapid increase in educational facilities and a significant rise in enrollment rates.

A landmark moment arrived with the Education Law No. 16 of 1964, which formally expanded compulsory education to nine years, comprising six years of primary and three years of preparatory education. This law also introduced the diversification of secondary education, offering both general academic and vocational programs, a critical step towards catering to diverse student aptitudes and the growing needs of the national workforce. The establishment of the University of Jordan in Amman in 1962, through a Royal Decree, marked the dawn of higher education within the Kingdom. Before this, Jordanians seeking a university degree had to travel abroad, primarily to neighboring Arab countries like Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Egypt, or further afield to Europe. The Teachers House (Dar Al-Mualemeen), opened in 1958, had previously been the only higher education institution, offering two-year diploma programs for teachers.

The founding of the University of Jordan was a direct response to a recognized national need, spearheaded by figures like Field Marshal Habis Majali, who famously requested a university during a British delegation visit in the 1950s. This institution quickly became the country's largest and premier university, known for its commitment to academic excellence. Its initial enrollment was 167 students, with the Faculty of Arts as its sole college. The university rapidly expanded, adding the School of Science and the School of Economics and Commerce in 1965. The first graduate program, an MA in Educational Administration and Guidance, was launched in 1968/69. The impact of the University of Jordan was profound, producing a generation of educated professionals and contributing significantly to the nation's human capital.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Jordan continued to prioritize educational expansion and reform. The country recognized the growing challenge of unemployment among educated youth, particularly in fields like medicine, engineering, and teaching, alongside a concurrent demand for skilled technical labor. To address this imbalance, the government initiated efforts to expand vocational and technical training programs. This period also saw the establishment of additional public universities, including Yarmouk University in 1976 (admitting its first students in 1978), Mutah University in 1981 (initially a military university, later bifurcating into military and civilian wings in 1986), and the Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST) in 1986.

Community colleges emerged as crucial institutions during this time, playing a dual role: providing higher education opportunities that resonated with cultural values and

equipping the workforce with much-needed technical skills. In the early 1980s, teacher training institutes and other public and private training centers were transformed into community colleges, offering associate degrees after two years of study. These graduates could then transfer to universities if they wished. By the late 1980s, over fifty-three community colleges operated under the newly formed Ministry of Higher Education (established in 1985), enrolling about 31,000 students, more than half of whom were women.

The 1994 Education Act further solidified the commitment to universal education by expanding compulsory basic education to ten years. It also introduced comprehensive and applied secondary education streams, offered free of charge for two years. This legislation underscored the government's vision of an education system that provides lifelong learning experiences relevant to current and future needs, fostering sustained economic development through an educated and skilled populace. The establishment of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR) and the Higher Education Council further streamlined the governance and policy-making for the tertiary sector, ensuring a coordinated approach to quality assurance and strategic planning.

The historical development of education in Jordan is a narrative of continuous adaptation and progress. From its humble beginnings in religious schools, through the gradual formalization under Ottoman and Mandate rule, to the deliberate construction of a comprehensive national system, education has always been viewed as a strategic investment. This journey reflects a nation that has consistently prioritized the intellectual and personal growth of its citizens, transforming its educational landscape from one of scarcity to one of comprehensive access and ambition, setting the stage for the sophisticated system that exists today.

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