
Education in Tunisia Facing the Health Crisis Linked to the Covid19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT: Education represents one of the most important foundations on which societies are built and developed however due to the Corona outbreak, we have experienced a continued disruption of education during the lockdown. The ministry therefore used distance learning in schools to implement educational continuity allowing students to continue activities and progress in their learning acquired since the start of the school year. Since we did not anticipate this period of confinement, we experienced many difficulties. Indeed, we noted the inability of some to master the means of communication and especially the lack of internet networks in several rural regions. By adding the poverty factor we concluded that distance education has created a sort of discrimination between students, since a significant rate of them do not have access to information, either due to poor Internet speed on the one hand, or due to lack of computer. This deepened the problem of children dropping out of school.

KEYWORDS: dropping out of school, distance learning, apprenticeship

Following the Corona epidemic, the State in Tunisia resorted to distance learning, which created a sort of disparity between regions, particularly in terms of the availability of computers and the fluidity of the Internet network. and how to approach modern technology for distance learning. Knowing that most teachers have not undergone continuing training in distance education, which has created difficulties in communicating with pupils and students.

Furthermore, several studies have shown that there is an increase in the rate of student labor in Tunisia during this, which according to the International Labor Organization amounts to 51,800 working children in Tunisia.

1/The most important problems in the education sector

In Tunisia, the end of the sixties of the 20th century saw a revolution in the education sector such as the Arabization of programs .¹ Since 1989, legislative reforms have taken place in the education system aimed at improving the level of education and creating the best balance between professional training and employment. The reforms resulted in Law No. 91-65² whose objective was to promote the principle of free education in the different education cycles. Regarding higher education, the bachelor's, master's and doctoral system was reformed in response to the development of European higher education in 1999, according to the Bologna Declaration, which was adopted by 29 European countries. The objective of the reform was to ensure the quality of higher education, encourage the mobility of students and teachers, facilitate the equivalence of diplomas and integrate young people into the labor market.³

Development goals in the education sector required comprehensive and integrated development at all levels of education: primary, secondary and university. In fact, 1/5 of the state budget is devoted to education, which in 2015 represented 6.6% of gross domestic product⁴. However, the problems still persist such as :

- Infrastructure problem of schools and universities
- Problem of weak public transport network which increasingly complicates the movement of teachers to inland and rural regions
- Increase in the number of untrained temporary teachers

¹ De Bouttemont,C,The Tunisian education system. Sèvres International Education Review, 2002.

²Law No. 91-65, published in the Official Journal of the Tunisian Republic, July 29, 1991.

³ Jules, TD and Barton, T. Educational Transitions in Post-Revolutionary *Spaces Islam, Security, and Social Movements in Tunisia* .Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.

⁴ Directory of North Africa, National Center for Scientific Research; Center for Research on Mediterranean Africa (CRAM) (eds.), Paris, Editions du CNRS, 1968, pp. 45-114.

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Currently, Tunisia faces a deep crisis for most of the country. The increase in the number of graduates has not been accompanied by a parallel improvement in the quality of learning.

In this context we showed that Tunisians felt the difficulties in effectively implementing educational policies and programs and expressed their frustration with the education system. Data from the sixth session of the Arab Barometer show that the level of satisfaction of Tunisians with the education system is as follows: 70% of Tunisians are dissatisfied with the education system, while 30% express their satisfaction (see table 1) .

Table 1. Degree of satisfaction with the educational framework

Satisfaction of the education system	Dissatisfaction with the education system	Percentage
30%	70%	100%

Study in the field

Table 2. Dissatisfaction with educational attainment across all age groups

satisfied with the education system	their dissatisfaction with the education system	are dissatisfied with the education system between 18 and 36 years old	Percentage
6%	73%	71%	150%

Study in the field

For greater precision, the distribution of data on the level of dissatisfaction with the education system by age groups gives us the following results: More than 71% of respondents between 18 and 36 years old are dissatisfied with the education system. Individuals in this age group were the preferred targets of two of the aforementioned reforms (basic education reform, bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees). Additionally, 73% of the 37-52 age group expressed dissatisfaction with the education system. Their discontent reveals that the successive reforms of recent years do not live up to expectations.

The data also reveals that dissatisfaction with the education system at each stage of education exceeds 70% for those with basic education or above. In addition, respondents with master's and doctorate degrees are those who express the most dissatisfaction.

Unsurprisingly, the highest rates of dissatisfaction were found in the governorates of Kasserine, Sidi Bouzid and Kairouan, where dissatisfaction with education increased to 80% of respondents. This regional discontent is due to high dropout rates, the lack of qualified teachers for primary, preparatory and secondary schools, low enrollment rates in "reputable" Tunisian universities and high unemployment rates.⁵

The impact of the Corona epidemic on education in Tunisia

Despite the failures and dissatisfaction of Tunisians with regard to the education system, education remains a major priority. The coronavirus pandemic has disrupted face-to-face education, which is already suffering. In fact, to limit the spread of the pandemic, schools were closed for six months (from March 12 to September 15, 2020) with very limited availability of online teaching and the cancellation of third term internal exams. During the 2020-2021 school year, primary, pre-secondary and secondary students attend schools on an alternating basis, in order to avoid crowding in classrooms. Our results showed that many families in the west-central region of Tunisia are influenced by the change in the educational process during the epidemic period, in fact 47% of respondents say that the upheaval of education on children are very negative, 27% consider it to a low degree and 26% to a very low degree (see tables 3 and 4). In fact, distance learning, for some institutions, has minimized the negative effect of the pandemic on education.

Table 3. The effects of the Corona virus on education in the center west of the Tunisian country

Education in the Corona pandemic is positive	consider it moderately negative .	of respondents say the effects of the Corona virus on children's education are very negative	Percentage
% 26	27%	47%	% 100

Study in the field

Table 4. The impact of Corona on the education of children in central west Tunisia

little negative	No negative effects at all	Too negative	Rather negative effect	I don't know and I refused to answer	Percentage
12%	10%	28%	"48%	2%	100%

Study in the field

⁵ <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/tunesien/14418.pdf> date 05/20/2023.

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3/Economy and education in Tunisia

Frustration with education is strongly linked to the economy as a whole, since Tunisia has failed to make economic progress for almost a decade. Therefore, the education crisis cannot be resolved by reforming the education system alone. Furthermore, the education sector is currently facing several challenges, mainly the inability of the Ministry of Education to meet the development needs of the education sector due to the significant deficit in investments in education. Coronavirus-related disruptions will not only have a short-term impact, but will also have long-term repercussions for affected groups and are likely to exacerbate existing inequalities. Tunisian decision-makers must develop a strategy to address this educational deficit.

Distance education has deepened the problem of economic and social difference between regions and individuals, particularly due to the weakness of the Internet network in internal regions on the one hand, and the lack of computers for students and students on the other hand, which is clear from the following table.

Table 5. The impact of the Corona epidemic on the education of children in central west Tunisia

boys leave the school system before 6th grade	Percentage of children who did not benefit from distance learning	Percentage of children who benefited from distance learning	Percentage
21%	45%	34%	100%

Study in the field

It is worth noting that the Corona epidemic has affected children's learning and supported the class disparity between children and students, with the percentage of children unable to follow distance learning reaching percentages 45%, more than 34% expressed their interactions with distance learning to avoid infection in children and maintain physical distance.

Given the difficult economic and health difficulties, the child becomes more and more oppressed, as confirmed by the sociologist Jean Labbens, who said that "the countries of the third world are more oppressed than the capitalist countries, because the global imperialism eats away poor people to suck their blood in order to operate their industrial machines »⁶The Corona pandemic has divided community members in west-central Tunisia between those who master communication technologies on the one hand, and on the other hand the physical side by providing a private computer to communicate and receive lessons remotely, but it should be noted here that the teacher or professor in these disadvantaged neighborhoods experiences particular difficulties in terms of training in the means of communication remotely or in terms of availability of a private computer, especially since most of them work in a fragile capacity, that is, what is known by the Ministry of Education as temporary workers", who are numerous in the interior regions, especially in the central west.

Globally, University has become 1.6 billion students around the world, and statistics show that the number of students forced by "Corona" included 63 students in primary and secondary education in 191 countries⁷. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the largest disruption to education in history, as it has already had a near-widespread impact on job seekers and teachers around the world so far, from pre-primary education to secondary schools, technical and vocational education and training, universities, adult learning, construction facilities. As of mid-April 2020, 94% of the world's knowledge seekers were children and young people, from pre-primary to tertiary education, across 200 countries⁸.

CONCLUSION

Distance learning has helped limit the spread of the Corona epidemic, thanks to physical distancing, but in poor societies it has encountered many problems, the most important of which is the lack of computers, the low speed of Internet flow and the lack of training of teachers and students. Therefore, the depth of distance education is the class disparity between students, which has contributed to the high dropout rate of students and the reliance on work at an early age, but what about the work of children?

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⁶ - Jean (Labbens), *Sociology of poverty: The third world and the fourth world*, Editions, Gallimard, 1978, p.103.

⁷UNICEF report on the Corona epidemic and education in 2020.

⁸Ibid., p.30

Education in Tunisia Facing the Health Crisis Linked to the Covid19 Pandemic

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