



## THE IMPACT OF THE BOLOGNA REFORM ON THE ARAB STUDENTS IN ISRAEL

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### **Abstract:**

The Bologna reform, which began in 1999, created many changes in the academic system in all countries. One of its contributions was the beginning of academic mobility among students and faculty members. The impact was also on population sectors within the countries. Students from the Arab sector in Israel find themselves looking to study in other countries.

**Keywords:** educational mobility, Bologna reform, economic knowledge

### **Introduction**

The definition of educational mobility in economic knowledge according to Bologna Process and the Bologna Agreement, also called Bologna reform. This reform is an agreement among universities from different European countries to recognize the different curricula of these universities and similar academic degrees. The agreement was made by academics from different countries in spite of the different languages, cultures and places [2].

The process is not complete yet; it is not an initiative of the European Union and the countries implementing it are not necessarily part of it. One of the results of this process was the cancellation of the "Diploma", a standard degree that was awarded for hundreds of years by universities in Central Europe, mainly German-speaking ones. The Diploma was replaced with the degrees BA/Bsc/Msc/MA. This enabled the European market to evaluate and employ academic workers from neighboring countries and to depend on academic products, like scientific and social studies, which

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is another process in making Europe a multi-national federation known as the European Union [6].

The Bologna reform was named after the place where it was signed, Bologna University in 1999. In the beginning, 29 countries signed the agreement; others joined later. Arar [1] present the situation in Israel which participated the discussions as an "observer" only, not as a country that would implement or relate to the decisions. The initial desire to implement the Bologna Process started in 2006 but it has never been exercised and no deadline has been set yet to implement it. According to the agreement, Israel is not a country that will implement it in the future as it is not within the geographical borders of Europe.

Since Israel has not willfully adopted the agreement, it is estimated that Israeli academics may have problems with the evaluation of their degrees if they want to continue their studies in Europe because of the lack of comparability of academic degrees. In some faculties, the MA degree is not comparable to the acceptable degrees in Europe. In addition, there is a problem with architecture studies that last 5 years and at the end, the graduate gets BA only. In other parts of the world, the process is implemented partially or there is a similar process even in academies out of Europe such as in North America, China, Japan, Australia and even in the Middle East [7].

More and more Arab students are studying abroad. Hebrew is an obstacle because it is not used outside the classroom. English is also difficult for Arab students and so they prefer to study at Arab universities abroad. The psychometric test is also another obstacle in front of Arab students who would like to study at Israeli universities. There is a gap of 110 points between examinees in Arabic and Hebrew [9]. In the following report, we use the terms "Arab population", "Arab sector" or "minorities" to refer to Arabs and Druze in Israel for convenience.

The Arab population is 20% of the population and 26% of the target population for higher education. However, the percentage of Arabs in academic institutions is 12% only. The higher the degree is, the less the percentage of the Arabs is. In addition to its contribution to equality and bridging gaps, increasing the percentage of Arabs in higher education has great social and economic implications. Academic studies are a very important factor of social mobility in each sector and the whole economy.

**Table 1:** The Arab population from 15 years old according to religion, the highest certificate and gender in 2009

Gender	Absolute numbers	Highest certificate of education							
		Total	Did not study	Elementary schools	High school	Matriculation certificate	Post high school education	Academic degree	Do not have certificate
		Total in %							
Total	78119	100	5.7	38.7	14.6	20	5.1	9.2	6.7
Men		100	2.3	41.6	17.2	18.5	4.5	9.8	6.1
Women		100	9.2	35.7	11.9	21.6	5.7	8.3	7.4
Muslims									
Total	593793	100	6.5	40.7	15.0	18.5			
Men	301345	100	2.7	44.5	17.5				
Women	292448	100	10.5	36.8	12.4				

Source: [2, 6].

In the last 20 years, Arabs all over the Arab world were exposed to a large number of educational programs and institutions mainly coming from the West and recently from the East. It included programs at all levels and it is mainly in Rich Arab countries where people can afford such programs. A main reason of this was that Arab countries signed free trade accords including trading education services [5]. The accords were imposed by the new liberal forces. Although some countries like Canada and the USA refused to include educational services in the trade accords claiming that education is a national issue that cannot be put in the hands of foreigners and should not be influenced by foreign forces, Arab countries did not do so in spite of the weak national control, corruption and disrespect of laws in them.

Most of the foreign educational programs are profit-oriented and the foreign institutions have good relations with local businesspeople and private universities. They also got direct and indirect help from governments to encourage them to work in their countries to change the culture and make it easier for the Zionist project and integrating the Arabs mentally and behaviorally into flat consumer globalization in addition to preparing Arab intellectuals to leave their countries and conduct suspicious studies on their countries.

### Recommendation

The recommendations of the author are:

1. To treat the higher education as a commercial product managed like commercial institutions with stocks that yield profits for their owners. Thus, the media promotes it and some international companies get involved into it. If we want education to be accessible to the whole population from the different social classes, states should have an economic plan that suits the different social classes.
2. The governments should understand that universities are the main source of future scholars and scientists in all the fields that are important for their nations and their future development. It is important that these universities conduct studies that benefit the societies and train highly qualified workforce that can lead institutions and companies interested in social development. There should be conferences to address pending issues and to come up with a plan for higher education and research. Attempted should be made to come up with a coordinated and comprehensive plan to help researchers and academics stay at their home countries so that they will not have to adapt to new cultures and environments.

The term education accessibility refers to an attitude which insists on availability of higher education at universities and colleges and their acceptance conditions and the ability to face economic, environmental and academic conditions. The accessibility of academic education depends on two factors: the demographic and educational background of the applicants and the ability of the academic institutions to accept them. In the 1990s, the higher education system in Israel went through several changes including political and social pressure to make higher education accessible to marginalized populations in the Israeli society after the closure of prestigious universities in front of Arab students [7].

There were changes in accessibility of higher education in Israel in the 1970s and they were implemented in the period from 1981/1982 to 1991/1992. In this period, the number of Arab students at universities increased by 50% and at colleges by 700%. Arab students benefited from this and their percentage increased from 2.9% in the mid 1970s to 6.7% to in the mid 1980s. In the mid 1980s, the percentage of the Arab students who were accepted at universities was 7.4% while the percentage of the age group was 22.7%. The percentage of Oriental Jews who were accepted at universities at that time was 25.7% while they constituted 40.5% of the whole population. In comparison, the percentage of Western Jews who were accepted at universities was 38.5% while they were 19.7% of the whole population. This clearly shows the discrepancies among the different populations in the state and that the Arabs are at the bottom. It is possible to conclude that unlike Arab schools, Jewish schools prepare their pupils for academic education. The problem with Arab schools is that they focus on the number of the pupils who pass the matriculation exams rather than the quality of this certificate. This

makes the Arab education less efficient than the Jewish one. According to a report by Sikkuy in 2007, the percentage of students who met the basic conditions of university education was 46.4% in the Jewish sector while it was 29.6% in the Arab sector.

## Conclusion

For the conclusion, the author of the article finds that the academic mobility, which has spread throughout the world, has a similar effect in the state of Israel as well. We find more and more Israeli – Arabs students who prefer to study outside their country.

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