

Education System in France

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Abstract

Education is free and compulsory for all children from 3 years to 16 years of age in France. The national curriculum is set by the Ministry of Education and is compulsory for all schools. Teachers are recruited by the government after qualifying required examination. Training to instructors is also given by the government. Medium of instruction is French and its script is Roman. The teacher-student ratio is about 1:30. There are four Parts of school education. Students having difficulties in their studies are given additional supervision and remedial classes. Continuous assessment and graded system for evaluation is one of the best practices of French education system. For poor and needy students, financial assistance is given by government. Computer literacy, sex education are the part of syllabus. Measures are taken to ensure inclusive education to physically challenged students. Those students, who are not interested or not so good in academics, can get technical training courses. Due to these steps, the quality of education is maintained. Indian policymakers have to study French education system and the initiatives are to be taken to improve the standard of education in India.

Keywords

education system in France, teacher-student ratio, recruitment of teachers, continuous assessment, graded system for evaluation, remedial classes, French curriculum, quality education

Introduction

The current population of France is about 67 million (6.7 Crores) and literacy rate is 99%. The French Government provides secular education in country. It is free and compulsory at different levels as mentioned in French Constitution. This free education is given by state-run schools, whereas private schools charges fees from students. The salary of teachers is paid by Government. Number of private schools is very less and near about 75 to 80% students learns in state schools. The education system in France is appreciated by world. It fosters imagination, creativity, and ability to question and to reflect in students.

Free public and private schools in France:

Since 2019-20 education is free and compulsory for all children from 3 years to 16 years of age. Earlier it was for the children of 6 to 16 years of age. Public French schools (écoles publiques) are free, co-ed, and secular. Conversely, private schools can choose to be single-sex or have a religious affiliation, although this represents a minority of France's private schools. They are almost always fee-paying, although the scale varies greatly. In public schools, parents only need to pay for lunches, after-school care, and class outings.

'Similar to other countries, parents can opt to send their child to a private or a public school within each cycle. Naturally, there are several differences between the two. For instance, children in state schools may have to change buildings, classrooms, and teachers at each stage of their schooling. Private schools, on the other hand, tend to teach several or even all cycles within the same premises and administration.'¹

There are international schools, which may charge substantially higher fees. Around 22% of secondary school students in France attend private schools. Teaching standard is high in these schools. They may offer bilingual or international curriculums, specific religious education, or a non-traditional educational approach.

French primary schools have catchment areas. Child has to be assigned to a school that is close to his or her home. If a parent wants to admit his or her ward with a school preference, there should be a good reason to attend a school which is outside catchment area. They have to gain permission from local town hall (mairie) and the school inspectorate (rectorat) to do so.

Recruitment of teachers:

Master's level in Teacher Training course is the qualification required for primary and secondary teachers. There is a selection procedure and exam by state which has to be clear successfully by the candidate to become a teacher. Teachers are recruited by the government after qualifying required examination. Training to instructors is also given by the government. Due to these steps, the quality of education is maintained.

Curriculum and Medium of instruction:

The national curriculum is set by the Ministry of Education. It is compulsory for all schools. Teachers and students have to follow it. The curriculum in education is secular. There is no religious education in the curriculum. Sex education is a part of curriculum in middle and high schools. As curriculum is same in all schools, standardization is maintained in education at school level.

Medium of instruction in France is French. French language uses Roman script. While some public schools also offer bilingual programs. Bilingual education is mainly available at private schools. There are few English schools, which teach American or British curriculums. Swedish, Japanese and Russian schools are also available. Most of these are located in and around Paris.

Academic year and weeks:

The academic year is from September to June. It consists of 36 weeks. Students get two weeks of holidays after every six weeks of work and two months of summer vacations. Students attend 24 to 28 hours of school per week. 5 days week is observed to attend classes in schools. Primary schools can organize their week. Generally they teach 24 hours per week, from Mondays to Friday, and Wednesday is a half-day.

Teacher-student ratio

The teacher-student ratio is about 1:30. It means a teacher handles class of 30 students. At some schools only 25 students are admitted in a class.

Uniform in schools:

'The law prohibits all clothing or other attire displaying religious worship to be worn in schools. Schools are of mixed sexes. There is no school uniform in most schools except for a few.'² There is a less importance for school uniforms in France.

Four Parts of school education:

1. Children of 3 to 6 years are admitted in Kindergarten. It is just like a Playschool. The word used for this stage in France is **écoles maternelles** means Preschool.

2. Children of 6 to 11 years learn in Primary school. The word used for this stage in France is **école élémentaire**. Objective of this stage is to instill values, knowledge skills and attitudes to succeed in academics, as an individual and as a future citizen. At this level students get the option of choosing a foreign or regional language. There is no exam at the end of primary education. Education in colleges is compulsory and common to all students.

3. Children of 11 to 15 years get admitted in Middle school after their primary education. The word used for this stage in France is **collège**. At the completion stage, students have to face the examination.

4. Students of 15 to 18 years age get admitted in High schools after completion of Middle school. The word used for this stage in France is **lycée**. This is the stage of final 3 years education of secondary level. There are two types of high schools in France: General and Vocational. As per ability and will, students can opt any one of them.

There is a national examination at the end of high school. The assessment level is 40 percent at beginning and 60 percent at final examination. Those students, who want to get higher education, have to pass this final exam. Their academic interests and grades special streams are considered to choose in their education. Once they graduate from high school, they can continue on to higher education, complete internships, or enter the local job market.

Higher Education:

At the end of high school (lycée), students must sit the baccalauréat exams which assess all of their subject areas. Each subject is graded on a scale of 0 to 20, and they need a grade of 10 to pass. Around 80% of students leave high school with a baccalauréat (bac) diploma and most go on to study at a French university. Around 44% of students enroll in university go on to complete a degree. French public universities are open to all to those student possesses a baccalauréat or equivalent foreign high school diploma. Admission to the elite higher education institutions (grandes écoles) in France is highly competitive. Students have to face oral and written exams. Most of the students complete two to three years of preparatory classes after high school for the admission in higher education.

The licence, a three-year course of study, is an undergraduate degree. After the licence, students can complete a master, a two-year course of study. 'The master can be a professional degree (master professionnel), e.g. law, business, or engineering, or it can be a research degree (master recherche), leading towards doctoral work. Students holding a master recherche may complete an additional three years' coursework to qualify for a doctorat (doctoral-degree equivalent). The doctorat is obligatory for medical doctors, who receive a state diploma in medicine (diplôme d'Etat de docteur en médecine).'

Education facility to physical challenged students:

Measures are taken to ensure inclusive education to physically challenged students. The system is developed to educate the students with different needs or having learning difficulties. Home schools are also permitted.

Evaluation process:

Continuous assessment is one of the best practices of French education system. There is a graded system for evaluation. Oral exams, written exams, project based assignments, individual and group discussion are the methods of assessment.

Guidance or orientation programs:

At middle school or college level the guidance or orientation programs are arranged to choose the further courses by students. It depends upon their reports, aptitude and interests.

This counseling is for the students as well as for the parents by consulting with professional counselors.

Scholarships:

For poor and needy students, financial assistance is given by government. Facility of scholarship and allowance for meals in canteens is a part of assistance. In school transport or public transport there is a concession for students to travel. The students get the concession or discount in entry fee of museum and education based tours or visits.

Medical facilities:

At the age of 6, every child has to go through medical checkup. It is compulsory. It helps to know if there is any visual or auditory problem in student. Every institute has a first aid centre which is dedicated. The special lectures are arranged on tobacco, drugs, alcohol abuse issues as well as on discrimination, violence etc. Sex education is also a part of curriculum in middle and high schools.

Remedial and extra coaching classes:

Students having difficulties in their studies are given additional facilities such as completing their homework on campus under the supervision of the teacher. Remedial coaching classes are arranged to bring students up to the level of the class. Extra classes are arranged by teachers and schools during vacations. Each batch is of 5 to 6 students only. The students having language problem also get extra coaching.

Comparison between education system in France and India:

There are few differences in education system of India and France. In India, the education system is quite rigid where students are forced to study all the subjects during their schooling. The French education system is quite flexible. France ranks 3rd globally in education have intensive teaching and beneficial facilities for student.

As formal education is compulsory, free and begins at early age in France, it reduces the inequalities in between students as well as parents from different socio-economic backgrounds.

The teacher-student ratio is about 1:30 in France whereas in India a teacher handles 60 to 80 students depending on admissions. Due to this, quality of education is maintained at all levels and dropout rate is very low at school education in France.

Various cultures, traditions, and festivals celebrated in India. France has been a high culture center dating back to olden times in most parts of Europe. But they never waste their more time in other things during education.

Results of exams in India are generally based on a percentage of the marks obtained by the student. 'The students are taught textual matter and are expected to present their answers exactly as they are given in the textbooks for maximum marks in their tests and exams. In the French grading system for secondary education, the students are assigned their ranks in numbers ranging from 0 to 20. Grades like 20 or 19 are rarely given and any score above 15 is considered to be excellent.'⁴ In India students of class X or of class XII can also score 100% of marks.

Considering higher education or university education, India is ranked 131st out of 188 countries in the world. India's focus is on theoretical education than the practical knowledge. France is one of the Top 3 study destinations globally. Studying in France not only enhances student's knowledge and learning but also improves as an individual. International students

have to score well in TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) if they desire to study in French Universities.

Conclusion:

Overall quality is maintained at School level as well as University level education in France. There are job oriented courses or vocational courses at different levels. Those students, who are not interested or not so good in academics, can get technical training. Computer education, sex education, guidance or counseling for needy students, scholarship and concession to poor students, remedial classes for slow learners, facilities to physical challenged students, grade system for evaluation, continuous assessment, medical facilities at institutional level are the key features of French education system.

Other than educational standard and quality, in general, most of the facilities provided by the Schools and Universities in France are much better as compared to India. Huge campus, infrastructure, libraries with several reference books, food facilities at nominal cost, gyms and courts, track and swimming pools for various sports provided to students by French schools and higher education institutions as well as by universities are much more than in India. French universities provide their students with every opportunity to grow and enhance their respective fields.

Indian policymakers have to study French education system and the initiatives are to be taken to improve the standard of education in India.

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