

# Education System in Sudan

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**S**UDAN is a republic (official name: Republic of the Sudan) located in Northern Africa, bordering the Red Sea, between Egypt and Ethiopia, bordered also by Chad, Central African Republic, Uganda and Kenya. Since independence from the UK in 1956 Sudan was embroiled in two prolonged civil wars during most of the remainder of the 20th century. The conflicts have mostly been between northern Muslim and Arab and the southern non-Muslim, non-Arab Sudanese. The first civil war ended in 1972 but broke out again in 1983. The second war and famine-related effects resulted in more than four million people displaced and about two million deaths. Peace talks gained momentum in 2002-04 with the signing of several accords. The final North/South Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed in January 2005, granted the southern rebels autonomy for six years. Still the UN peacekeeping troops are struggling to stabilize the situation.

The total area of Sudan is 2,505,810 sq km (over 16 times larger than Bangladesh) and it harbors slightly over 40 million (40,218,456; July 2008 est.) people (about 1/4<sup>th</sup> of Bangladesh population). Population growth rate is 2.134% that is slightly more than Bangladesh's 2%. The per capita income in Sudan is about US \$1,900 (2007 estimate). The literacy rate is about 61.1% (male: 71.8%, female: 50.5%; 2003 estimate). Sudan spends about 6% of its GDP in education.

## I-Education Policy & Administration

Sudan is rooted in the Islamic culture of the northern riverine Arabs, and influenced by previous British imperial policy and the Mahdist nationalist sentiment prior to the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium era. The education systems inherited by the government after independence was

designed more to provide civil servants and professionals to serve the colonial administration than to educate the Sudanese. Moreover, the distribution of facilities, staff, and enrollment was biased in favor of the needs of the administration and a Western curriculum. Schools tended to be clustered in the vicinity of Khartoum and to a lesser extent in other urban areas, although the population was predominantly rural. In 1980, despite the emphasis on technical education proposed by the government and encouraged by various international advisory bodies, there were only thirty-five technical schools in Sudan, less than one-fifth the number of academic upper secondary schools. Since 1990, the new education philosophy of General Bashir provided a frame of reference for the reforms. Now education is based on the permanence of human nature, religious values, and physical nature.

## II-The Structure

Primary and lower secondary education in Sudan is merged constituting 8-year long 'Basic' education which is both free and compulsory. Secondary education lasts only for 3 years-in both general and technical streams. The last year (3<sup>rd</sup>) of secondary (Grade-11) is specialized on arts, science etc. The Bachelor Course lasts for 4 years; the duration of Masters Course is 1-3 years. Therefore, the structure becomes (8) + (3) + (4 + 1-3).

## Higher Education

University level general Bachelor's Degree programs last for 4 years mainly in humanities, social studies, education and teachers' training. An additional year is needed to continue for an Honors degree.

A postgraduate diploma/ Master's Degree is offered in certain disciplines following one year of study after the Bachelor's degree. A Master's degree by course work is offered after 1 to 2 years of study

involving a dissertation and a Master's degree by research follows 2 to 3 years of study and requires a thesis. The PhD is offered after at least three years' study following the Master's Degree and requires individual research work and the presentation of a thesis.

## III- Program of Study

The 8-year basic education in Sudan goes through three cycles: first one- Grades 1-3, second- Grades 4-6, and the third Grades 7-8. In the first cycle, students learn Religious Studies (Islam or Christianity), Arabic, Mathematics and Applied and Expressive Arts. Besides, learning of School Environment begins at Grade-3. In the second cycle Man and Universe, and Physical Education are added to the curriculum; also learning English begins at Grade-6. In Grades 7-8 two subjects- School Environment, and Arts are replaced with Science, and Health and Nutrition; the third new subject- History and Geography begins at Grade-8.

The secondary curriculum is integrated up to Grade 10, and students choose a stream- Science, Arts or in the final year of secondary, i.e., at Grade-11.

## IV-Assessment System

In Sudan, there are two public examination held up to the end of the secondary education: the first one is on completion of the basic education at Grade-8; this is the Basic Education Certificate (BEC) Examination. The second and last one is in completion of the secondary education at Grade-11; this is Sudan Secondary School Certificate (SSSC) Examination.

Sudan follows a simple grading system under letter grades. A: 80-100%; B: 70-79%; C: 60-69%; D: 50-59%; and F: 0-49% signifying failure.

## V- Lessons for Bangladesh

The major characters of Sudanese education system that Bangladesh can follow or adapt can be as follows:

Sudan spends about 6% of her GDP in education and this explains how the country could reach literacy rate more than in Bangladesh even under much political turmoil. Bangladesh spends about 2.4% and should try to reach the Sudanese mark that is very near to UNESCO standard of 7%.

The duration of integrated primary & lower secondary into 'Basic' education in Sudan is 8 years. For this education, the country has 'basic education schools'. In Bangladesh arranging for such lengthy program in a single school may rather lower the standard. So it is better to follow the almost universal norm of 6-year primary and 3-year lower secondary together declaring 'basic'.

In Sudan the basic education and the first 2 years of secondary (Grades 9-10) is integrated. Specialized streaming is done only for 1 year (Grade-11). The system seems not much effective. Bangladesh has long 4 years (Grades 9-12) of group-based learning. Yet the last 2 years in HSC can't cope with the need because the actual study time is only 1 year. So it is better to elevate the integrated education up to Grade-9 followed by a group-based higher secondary consisting of Grades 10-12 at a stretch.

Sudan has provision for public examinations twice: first in completion of 'Basic' education at Grade-8, and the second one on completion of the secondary education at Grade-11. The system is very similar to ours except that we don't have an acceptable 'Basic' education level and we arrange two public examinations very close jeopardizing the actual study at the secondary levels.

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