

# Education System in Kenya

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**K**ENYA is a republic (official name: Republic of Kenya) located in Eastern Africa, bordering the Indian Ocean, between Somalia and Tanzania. The country achieved independence in 1963 and the founding president and liberation struggle icon Jomo Kenyatta led Kenya until his death in 1978 when President Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi took power in a constitutional succession. The country is still run under its 1963 constitution (amended several times); but a new draft constitution was defeated by popular referendum in 2005. The total area of Kenya is 582,650 sq km (about four times bigger than Bangladesh) and it harbors below 40 million (39,002,772; July 2009 est.) people (slightly less than 1/4th of Bangladesh population). Population growth rate is 2.69% that is more than Bangladesh's 2%. The per capita income in Kenya is about US \$ 1,600 (2008 estimate). The literacy rate is about 85.1% (male: 90.6%, female: 79.7%). In 2006, Kenya spent about 6.9% of its GDP in education, which is about treble of Bangladesh's 2.4% in the same year.

Education is the known way of enriching people with required knowledge, skills and values in any nation. Requirement for these qualities changes over time and curriculum requires periodic revision. Bangladesh completed the third revision of the primary curriculum and such a revision was due on the lower secondary few years back, need to start immediately and to be followed serially (cannot be other way round) by upper grades. Now we can have a look into the education system of this African country influenced by the European system like ours to find some lessons for us. The description follows the usual format having Education Policy & Administration, the Structure, Program of Study, Assessment System and lastly Lessons for Bangladesh.

## I-Education Policy & Administration

Education in Kenya is managed by the Ministry of Education, Science and technology. Since 2003, major reforms to revamp the educa-

tion system have been going on. The reforms cut across the major sub-systems like the primary, secondary and tertiary education. The new secondary school curriculum lays greater emphasis on job-oriented courses, such as business and technical education.

## II-The Structure

Kenya follows the universal basic structure of elementary, secondary and higher education. Primary education is a 8-year long study. The secondary education is undivided and lasts for 4 years. The Bachelor Course lasts for 4 years; the duration of Masters Course is 2 years. Therefore, the structure becomes 8 + 4 + 4 (+2).

## Higher Education

There are both non-university and university level higher education. The non-university level higher education is pertained in technical institutes offering training, at both craft and diploma level. University level first stage is Bachelor's Degree program in various disciplines that lasts for 4 years. The second stage is Master's Degree course having the usual duration of 2 years. The PhD is offered after at least 2 years' further study and requires individual research work and the presentation of a thesis.

## Teacher Education

Primary school teachers are trained in the teacher training colleges where the course lasts 2 years, at the end of which students are awarded a P1, P2 or P3 certificate, depending on their success in centrally set examinations. Training of secondary school teachers is carried out at two levels. In universities, graduate teachers are trained for 4 years for the Bachelor of Education (BEd) Degree. Graduates holding a BA, BSc or BCom take a 1-year post-graduate diploma course in education. Teachers are also trained at two diploma colleges. The 3-year course leads to a Diploma in education. There is no formal training for higher education teachers who wish to teach in universities. Candidates must hold a first class or upper second class Honours Degree, followed by a Master's Degree.

## III- Program of Study

Subjects taught in primary schools include: language

(Kiswahili and English), mathematics, history, civics, geography, science, arts and crafts, and religious education.

The secondary curriculum covers six major areas: communication (English, Kiswahili and foreign languages), mathematics, science (physical and biological), humanities (geography, history, government, religious education, social education, and ethics), applied education (agriculture, industrial education, wood technology, metal technology, power mechanics, electrical technology, business education, accounts, commerce, typing and office practice, home science, clothing and textiles, food and nutrition, arts, and music), and physical education. Both primary and secondary curriculum is integrated up to Grade-12.

## IV-Assessment System

In Kenya, there are two public examinations held up to the end of pre-university education. The first one is on completion of the primary education at Grade-8; this is the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examination. The second one is Kenyan Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) held in completion of the secondary Grade-12.

Kenya follows two distinct types of grading for secondary and higher education. The secondary (Kenyan Certificate of Secondary Education) grading is done on a 12-point scale as follows: A.A- (distinction/very good); B+, B.B- (credit/good); C+, C.C- (average); D+, D.D- (fair); and E (poor). Grading in higher education is on A-F letter system. The Grades are defined as: A=70%-100% (First Class Honors), B=60%-69% (Second Class Honors (upper division)), C=50%-59% (Second Class Honors (lower division)), D=40%-49% (Pass), E=0%-39% (Fail).

## V- Lessons for Bangladesh

The major characters of Kenyan education system that Bangladesh can follow or adopt can be as follows:

1. Kenya is a poor country as Bangladesh; yet she spends about 7% of her GDP in education. It seems our present government realizes the essentiality of education, so it can

easily reach the Kenyan mark (that is the UNESCO standard as well) surpassing the present level of spending (about 2.5%).

2. The duration of universal primary education is 8 years in Kenya; but analysts claim the system fails the most important test of all: maintaining high educational standards. There's a plan of 8-year long primary education in Bangladesh since 1974 and this was not implemented during this long 35 years. I guess if it was realized, standard of primary education would have gone further down because 8-year period is too long to hold students in a single school and would result in monotony and less interest. So having the Kenyan experience, we can rather extend the primary up to Grade-6 (that is almost universal) and try to make education basic, integrated and compulsory up to grade-9, keeping grades 7-9 with high schools, naming that lower secondary.

3. Kenya emphasizes on technical education and business studies. Due to students' choice, higher education in Bangladesh has lost science orientation and has become more business subjects-oriented. Now it is high time to place more emphasis on technical education so that we can have skilled manpower for both industrial development and to export abroad.

4. Before higher education, Kenya has provision for two public examinations having a gap of about 4 years. The first one is in completion of primary (Grade-8) and the second one in completion of secondary (Grade-12). Since we don't have a prolonged primary education but have two secondary examinations very close to each other, we can rather largely rearrange our system up to Grade-12 as 6+3+3 structure. Then we can arrange a public examination in completion of each of the primary (Grade-6), lower secondary (Grade-9) and higher secondary (Grade-12) levels.

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