

Education System In Zambia

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ZAMBIA is a republic (official name: Republic of Zambia) located in Southern Africa, east of Angola and bordered by Congo, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. The territory of erstwhile Northern Rhodesia was renamed Zambia upon Independence in 1964 from the UK. The total area of Zambia is 752,618 sq km (over five times larger than Bangladesh) and it harbors fewer than 12 million (11,862,740; July 2009 est.) people (about 1/12th of Bangladesh population). Population growth rate is 1.6% that is less than Bangladesh's 2%. The per capita purchasing power parity (ppp) in Zambia is about US \$ 1,500 (equal to Bangladesh's ppp). The literacy rate is about 80.6% (male: 86.8%, female: 74.8%). Zambia spends about 3% of its GDP in education, higher than Bangladesh's 2.4%.

Education is the established 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. During the independent existence of Bangladesh, the curriculum underwent two full revisions and the primary stage alone experienced the third revision that needs to be followed serially (shouldn't be other way) by upper grades. Besides, since a new education policy committee is working now, we can have a look into the education system of this African country influenced by the UK as ours. The description follows the usual format having Education Policy & Administration, the Structure, Program of Study, Assessment System and finally Lessons for Bangladesh.

I- Education Policy & Administration

Education in Zambia is managed by the Ministry of Education (MOE). The education system in this country has suffered a decline over the past two decades as a result of a drop in national revenue, linked to the low copper (an export item of Zambia) prices and substantial increase in fuel costs. Despite this setback the Zambian government has made

serious effort to recover and reform the education sector. The government is committed to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education For All (EFA) objectives. The MOE is supportive of free primary education that has resulted in a massive increase in enrolment, basic education being up to grade-9.

II- The Structure

Zambia follows the universal basic structure of primary, secondary and higher education. Primary education is a 7-year study divided into lower (grades 1-4) and upper (grades 5-7). Secondary education lasts for 5 years; divided into two unequal parts: 2 years (grades 8-9) junior and 3 years (grades 10-12) senior. The usual Bachelor course in universities lasts at least for 4 years and the Masters usually for 2 year. Therefore, the structure becomes $[(4+3)+(2) + 3] + (4+2)$.

Higher Education

Zambia has both non-university (technical) and university level higher education. The first phase of university education leads to a Bachelor's Degree. It usually lasts for 4 years, except in Medicine and Engineering, which take 5-6 years. A further 2 years' study leading to a Master's Degree is the second phase. The third phase is doctoral research that usually takes 4 years.

Teacher Education

The training of teachers at the primary level takes place in primary school teacher training colleges. After completion of the course, students are awarded certificates. The duration of the course is 2 years. The training of teachers at secondary level takes place in teachers' colleges and at the University of Zambia. Colleges award Certificates and Diplomas after 3 and 4 years respectively. Those trained at University level are awarded degrees after 4 or 5 years.

III- Program of Study

The primary curriculum includes the subjects: English language, arithmetic (number work), science in the environment, social studies, arts and creative activity clubs. The junior secondary course provides

for studying English, mathematics, environmental science, civics, history, geography, book-keeping, Arabic (non-Muslims are offered other subjects like office practice), Islamic education (non-Muslims are offered other subjects such as art), physical education and information technology.

The senior secondary curriculum is clearly diversified having a set of "core" and another of optional subjects. The core subjects are: English, math and a science subject. There is a wide range of optional subjects in the fields of humanities (languages and various social sciences), science, mathematics, commerce, and technical, practical and aesthetic areas.

IV- Assessment System

In Zambia, there are three public examinations held before entering the universities. The first one is on completion of the primary education at grade-7. This is Primary School Certificate examination. The second one is in completion of junior secondary at grade-9 and is termed Junior Secondary School Certificate. The third one is held in completion of senior secondary at grade-12 and is termed General Certificate of Education (GCE) or Zambian School Certificate.

Grading system

Zambia follows two distinct grading systems in school and higher education. For school education a 9-point scale is used. 1-2 = Distinction, 3-4 = Merit, 5-6 = Credit, 7-8 = Satisfactory and 9 = Unsatisfactory (fail). In higher education, letter grading is used. The grades are: A+ and A = Distinction, B+ = Meritorious, B = Very Satisfactory, S = Satisfactory, C+ = Distinto Pass, P = Pass, C = Bare Pass, CP = Compensatory Pass, D+ = Bare Fail, D = Clear Fail and F = Worthless.

V- Lessons for Bangladesh

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

Economy of Zambia, in terms of purchasing power parity (ppp) is similar to that of Bangladesh; yet she spends

around 3% of her GDP in education against our at best 2.4% of GDP devoted to education sector. This explains how Zambia's literacy rate reached over 80% against our 48%. We should first allocate money at Zambian scale and later can try to reach gradually the UNESCO standard of 7% spending in education.

The duration of primary education is 7 years in Zambia, but basic and compulsory education is up to grade-9. Instead of long-standing (since 1974) over-ambitious plan of 8-year long primary education, Bangladesh can better follow the universal pattern of 6-year primary.

In Zambia, basic and integrated education is up to grade-9. We can just follow this gradually after implementing 6-year compulsory primary education, keeping grades 7-9 (lower secondary) in secondary schools. This would be in conformity with the most prevalent world education structure: 6+3+3 for which I have been campaigning for long.

Zambian senior secondary core subjects contain a science subject. We can think of such a compulsory study on basic science up to higher secondary.

Zambia has provision for three pre-university public examinations. These are at grade-7, grade-9 and grade-12. We arrange the first public examination after long 10 years of study and then two secondary examinations very close to each other. This arrangement has been depriving the higher secondary students of proper learning. Our primary education is unaccountable, while higher secondary students virtually running after examination just on enrolment. To ensure systematic accountability, we should arrange three public examinations before higher education placing those at logical distances. I propose to arrange public examination in completion of primary, lower secondary and higher secondary at grade-6, grade-9 and grade-12 respectively.

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