

Education System in Uganda

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UGANDA is a republic (official name: Republic of Uganda) located in Eastern Africa, west of Kenya. The colonial boundaries created by Britain to delimit Uganda grouped together a wide range of ethnic groups with different political systems and cultures. These differences prevented the establishment of a working political community after independence achieved in 1962. During the 1990s, the government promulgated non-party presidential and legislative elections. The total area of Uganda is 236,040 sq km (fairly less than double of Bangladesh) and it harbors slightly over 32 million (32,369,558; July 2009 est.) people (about 1/4th of Bangladesh population). Population growth rate is 2.69% that is a bit more than Bangladesh's 2%. The per capita income in Uganda is about US\$ 1,100 (2008 estimate). The literacy rate is about 66.8% (male: 76.8%, female: 57.7%). In 2004, Uganda spent about 5.2% of its GDP in education, which is more than double of Bangladesh's around 2.2%.

Education is the established way to enrich people with required knowledge, skills and attitudes in any nation. Requirement for these qualities changes over time and curriculum requires time to time 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. We can have a look into the education system of this African country influenced by the same UK (as 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.

1-Education Policy & Administration

The current education policy is on expanding the functional capacity of educational structures and reducing on the inequities of access to education between sexes, geographical areas, and social classes in Uganda. It advocates for redistribution of resources viz a viz

reforming the educational sector. More resources have been allocated to lower educational public sector through the UPE (Universal Primary Education) programme in order to enhance equity of access at that level between boys and girls. Higher education especially tertiary education is increasingly becoming liberalized - in fact privatized. The impact of this shift in policy on the gender is yet to be ascertained, but for females from poor districts, their chances for higher education have become dismal.

II-The Structure

Uganda follows the universal basic structure of elementary, secondary and higher education. Primary education is a 7-year long study. The secondary education is divided into two sub-stages: lower and upper. Duration of lower (called junior) secondary is 4 years, and the upper secondary course is shorter (2 years) termed 'A' level. The Bachelor Course lasts for 3-4 years; the duration of Masters Course is 1-2 years. Therefore, the structure becomes 7 + (4+2) + (3/4 + 1/2).

Higher Education

There are both non-university and university level higher education. The non-university level higher education is pertained in technical colleges for two years leading to the Ordinary Technician's Diploma. University level first stage is Bachelor's Degree program in various disciplines that lasts for 3-4 years. The second stage is Master's Degree course having duration of 1-2 years. The PhD is offered after at least 3 years' further study and requires individual research work and the presentation of a thesis.

Teacher Education

Primary school teachers are trained at Grade III primary teachers colleges. For lower primary school, candidates who have completed four years of secondary education follow a two-year course leading to the Grade III Teachers Certificate. Upper primary school teachers who hold the Uganda Certificate of Education follow a one-year course leading to the Grade IV Teachers Certificate.

Secondary school teachers are trained at the National Teachers' Colleges, the University and the Institute of

Teacher Education, Kyambogo. Courses last for two years. There is also a three-year upgrading course for grade IV teachers leading to the Grade V Teachers Certificate. To teach in Form 6 (Grade 13), teachers must hold a Bachelor of Education Degree.

III- Program of Study

The primary curriculum has provisions for teaching-learning of three languages (English, mother tongue and Kiswahili); Mathematics; Integrated Science; Social studies; Agriculture; Religious education; Art & Technology; Music, Dance & Drama; Business and Entrepreneurship education and Physical education.

The secondary curriculum is integrated up to Grade 11 (end of junior secondary) having 20% optional subjects that are: Practical studies (Business studies, Home economics) and General studies (Arts, Music, Physical education, Religious education and third language). The 80% Core subjects are: English, Mathematics, Integrated Science, Social studies, Agriculture, Moral Education and Design & Technology. The upper secondary or Advanced level (Grades 12-13) is decidedly multi-track having group based studies on Science (Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry and Physics) and Arts (English literature, History and Economics).

IV-Assessment System

In Uganda, there are three public examinations held up to the end of pre-university education. The first one is on completion of the primary education at Grade-7; this is the first Primary School Leaving Certificate (PSLC). The second one is Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) in completion of the lower secondary Grade-11 (O level). The last one is Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) after 2 years' further study of A level.

Uganda follows a simple A-F, 1-9 system of grading: 1-2 very good (distinction); 3-6 credit pass; 7-8 pass grade; 9 fail in the school system. Grading in higher education follows class system: Class I = top honors; Class II(i) = honors upper; Class II(ii) = honors lower; Pass = general pass;

and Fail.

V- Lessons for Bangladesh

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

Uganda spends about 5.2% of her GDP in education. Having a grasp of the essentiality of education, Bangladesh can easily reach the Ugandan mark surpassing the present level of spending (about 2.5%); later we can try also to reach the UNESCO standard of 7%.

The duration of integrated and universal primary education is 7 years in Uganda; the basic structure at lower secondary education is also integrated (up to Grade 11) with few optional subjects. But education is distinctly diversified as pre-university education during Grades 12-13. In Bangladesh, we have only 8-year long integrated and 4-year diversified education before specialized higher education. I propose to follow a 6 (primary) +3 (lower sec) year integrated and 3 (higher sec) year diversified system that is the most prevalent system all over the world. When we can elevate the pre-university education up to Grade 13, only then we can integrate up to Grade 10 that has been on the air since 2005 in Bangladesh.

Religious education is a basic subject only in primary grades in Uganda; Moral education replaces this in the secondary. Religion being optional there. We can try this to elevate national moral.

Uganda has provision for three public examinations before higher education. The first one is in completion of primary (Grade 7), second one in completion of lower secondary (Grade 11) and the third one in completion of upper secondary (Grade 13). We can just follow this plan having rearranged OUR system up to Grade 12 as 6+3+3 structure. At present, we have no public examination before Grade 10; primary education seems unaccountable. Later we arrange two public examinations very close jeopardizing the actual study at the higher secondary level where students get only one year to learn.

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