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# Education System in Cameroon

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**C**AMEROON is a republic (official name: Republic of Cameroon), located in Western Africa, bordering the Bight of Biafra, between Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria. The former French Cameroon achieved independence in 1960 and merged in 1961 with the part of British Cameroon to form the present country. Cameroon has generally enjoyed stability, which has permitted the development of agriculture, roads, and railways, as well as a petroleum industry. Despite a slow movement toward democratic reform, political power remains firmly in the hands of her President. The total area of Cameroon is 475,440 sq km (over 3 times larger than Bangladesh) and it harbors fewer than 20 million (18,467,692; July 2008 est.) people (about 1/8<sup>th</sup> of Bangladesh population). Population growth rate is 2.2% that is slightly more than Bangladesh's 2%. The per capita income in Cameroon is about US \$ 2,200 (2007 estimate). The literacy rate is about 68% (male: 77%, female: 60%). Cameroon spends about 3.3% of its GDP in education, which is about 1.5 times more than Bangladesh's around 2.4%.

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 in no time and to be followed by upper grades. We can have a look into the education system of this African country influenced by the European system- both UK and France 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

Cameroonian education system is sharply divided into British

(Anglophone) and French (Francophone) ones. The main government organ for controlling and managing education is invariably the Ministry of Education (MOE). The ministry has long been trying to establish bilingual system starting from the primary. The first two attempts taken by the government to foster bilingualism in primary school education had failed to turn out bilingual pupils, and the third measure still to be implemented already bears the seeds of its downfall. Monolingual teachers' expert only in French, whose linguistic knowledge of English and proficiency in second-language teaching are yet to be assessed, are instructed to teach a second official language. Anyway, it is obvious that before establishing a bilingual system nationwide, the two systems (Anglophone and Francophone) are destined to go on.

## II- The Structure

As mentioned above, Cameroon has a sharply divided British (Anglophone) and French (Francophone) education systems. The Anglophone primary education lasts for 7 years and the Francophone one ends in 6 years. The secondary education is divided into two sub-stages: lower and upper. Lower secondary is 5(?) years in Anglophone and 4 years in Francophone zones of the country. The upper secondary course is longer (3 years) in Francophone system, and shorter (of 2 years, called 'A' level) in Anglophone system. The Bachelor Course lasts for 4 years; the duration of Masters Course is 1-2 years. Therefore, the structure becomes (6/7) + (5/4+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 specialized schools and institutes in such fields as Administration, Technology, Social Work, and Public Works. 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 duration of 1-2 years. The PhD is

offered after about four years' study following the Master's Degree and requires individual research work and the presentation of a thesis.

## Teacher Education

Pre-primary and primary school teachers are trained at the *Ecoles normales d'Instituteurs* (ENI). The course lasts for 1-3 years according to the prior qualification. Secondary school teachers are trained in three years following secondary high school or two years following a first degree at the *Ecoles normales supérieures* for college and *lycée* teachers or at the *Ecole normale supérieure d'Enseignement technique* for technical secondary education teachers.

## III- Program of Study

The primary curriculum has provisions for teaching-learning of two languages (French and English), Mathematics, Science and environmental studies, Civics, Health and hygiene, Art work, Music, National culture and Physical training.

The secondary curriculum is integrated up to Grade 10 (end of lower secondary) in Francophone system, but up to Grade 9 in Anglophone system. In the latter (Anglophone) system, length of diversified system is longer during both Ordinary (Grades 10-11) and Advanced (Grades 12-13) levels. However, the system of diversified education in Francophone is only at upper secondary (Grades 11-13) having open choice of subjects specialized for Science, Arts etc.

## IV- Assessment System

In Cameroon, 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-6 or 7; this is the First School Leaving Certificate Examination. The second one is on completion of the lower secondary Grade-10 in Francophone system and at Grade-11 called Ordinary (O) Level in Anglophone system. The last one is *Baccalauréat* in Francophone system after 3 years' further study, while this is after 2 years of 'A' Level in Anglophone system.

Cameroon follows mainly the French system of grading on a 0-20 scale (in the Francophone system). 0-9 fail; 10-11 passable; 12-13 *assez bien* (Satisfactory); 14-15 *bien* (Good); 16-20 *très bien* (Very Good).

## V- Lessons for Bangladesh

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

Cameroon spends about 3.3% of her GDP in education. Having a grasp of the essentiality of education, Bangladesh can easily reach the Cameroonian mark surpassing the present level of spending (about 2.4%); later we can try also to reach the UNESCO standard of 7%.

The duration of integrated Primary & Lower Secondary education in Cameroon is 9 (Anglophone)/10 (Francophone) years. But education is distinctly diversified as pre-university education during Grades 10-13 (Anglophone) or 11-13 (Francophone). 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.

Cameroon has provision for three public examinations before higher education. The first one is in completion of Primary (at Grade 6/7), second one in completion of Lower Sec (at Grade 10 (Francophone) or 11 (Anglophone) and the third one in completion of Upper Sec (at 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 and we arrange two public examinations very close jeopardizing the actual study at the Higher Secondary level where students get only one year for actual study.

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