

Education System in Madagascar

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MADAGASCAR is a republic (official name: Republic of Madagascar) located in Southern Africa, an island in the Indian Ocean, east of Mozambique; its location is strategic along Mozambique Channel. Formerly an independent kingdom, Madagascar became a French colony in 1896 but regained independence in 1960. During 1992-93, free presidential and National Assembly elections were held ending 17 years of single-party rule.

The total area of Madagascar is 587,041 sq km (over four times larger than Bangladesh) and it harbors slightly more than 20 million (20,653,556) people (about 1/8th of Bangladesh population). Population growth rate is 3% which is just 1.5 times of Bangladesh's 2%. The per capita income (PPP) of Madagascar is about US \$ 1,000. The literacy rate is about 69% (male: 75.5%, female: 62.5%). Madagascar spends about 3.2% of its GDP in education, which is about 1.5 times of Bangladesh's 2.27%.

Education is the established way of enriching people with required knowledge, skills and values. 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 this for the third time that needs to be followed serially in upper grades. Besides, since a new education policy is now underway, we can have a look into the education system of this African country influenced by the Europeans. 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

In traditional Madagascar, education was not seen as separate from the other spheres of life. It emphasized the importance of maintaining one's place in a hierarchical society, trained people in the proper observance of ritual and innumerable *fady* prohibitions, and, above all, taught respect for ancestors. The foundation of modern Malagasy education is rooted in nineteenth century Protestant and Catholic colonial experience. The modern education system of Madagascar is divided into

elementary, secondary, adult and higher education levels. Because of the French policy of assimilation, educational institutions adopted French curricula, structures, standards and philosophical outlook. It is instructive to observe how each level has evolved and functions since independence. Now, education in Madagascar is managed by the Ministry of Education. Education is compulsory for children between the ages of six and fourteen.

II-The Structure

Madagascar follows the universal basic structure of primary, secondary and higher education. Primary education is a 5-year study, compulsory by government rule. Secondary education lasts for 7 years: divided into two unequal parts: 4 years (grades 6-9) junior secondary, 3 years (grades 10-12) senior secondary. The Bachelor course in universities lasts usually for 3 years (subdivided into two) and the Masters for 1/2 years. Therefore, the structure becomes (5) + (4+3) + (2+1)+1/2).

Higher Education

Higher education in Madagascar is rather different from the world pattern in that it has four stages (instead of three up to Doctorate). The first stage of higher education comprises a 2-year broad-based multidisciplinary course common to all students wishing to study Letters, Science, Law, Economics, Management and Sociology. The second stage is a year of specialization that leads to the Licence (Bachelor). The *Maitrise* (Masters) is conferred after 1-year further study beyond the Licence. If students successfully present a short thesis they are awarded the *Maitrise d'Enseignement*. A *Diplôme d'Etudes approfondies* is conferred another year after the *Maitrise*. Presentation of a (longer) thesis then leads to the *Doctorat de troisième Cycle* after a minimum of 1-year further study beyond the *Diplôme d'Etudes approfondies* and research work.

Teacher Education

Primary school teachers are trained in *Ecoles normales d'Instituteurs* in courses lasting for two years and five months. Candidates must hold the *Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle* (BEPC), but this requirement will be upgraded to the *Baccalauréat*. Secondary school teachers are trained in two years at second level National teacher training colleges. Entry is via a com-

petitive examination and candidates must hold the *Baccalauréat*. For the second cycle of secondary education (*lycées*), third level teacher training takes place at the *Ecole normale supérieure* and at training colleges within the universities. Access is via a competitive examination and training lasts for five years.

III-Program of Study

Primary education provides children with basic reading, writing, and mathematics skills along with an elementary understanding of such subjects as history, geography, natural science, social science, art, and music. The junior secondary school curriculum consists of mathematics, natural science, Malagasy language, civics and religion, some French and English, history, geography and arts, and physical education. The senior secondary curriculum is very similar to the junior secondary. The curriculum includes advanced mathematics, natural science, introduction to technology, French, Malagasy, history, geography, civics, religion, and physical education.

IV-Assessment System

In Madagascar, there are three public examinations held before entering the universities. The first one is held in completion of the primary education at Grade-5; the examination is called *Certificat d'Etudes Primaires Élémentaires* (CEPE). The second one is in completion of the junior secondary at Grade-9; it is termed *Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle* (BEPC). The third one is held in completion of senior secondary at Grade-12 and is termed *Baccalauréat de l'Enseignement Secondaire* (BES).

Grading system

Madagascar follows a simple grading system both in school and higher education. It's a 20-point scale: point 10 decides the pass/fail level. For higher education where a thesis is submitted a more detailed grading system is applied (also a 20-point scale). Passable: 10-12 points; Assez Bien: 12-14; Bien: 14-16; Très Bien: 16-18; and Très Honorable: 18 or more.

V-Lessons for Bangladesh

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

Madagascar is a poor country, poorer than Bangladesh. Yet she spends 3.2% of her GDP in education against our 2.27%. This explains how Madagascar's

literacy rate reached 69% against our 48% (or is it 53%?). We should try to allocate money at least at the Madagascar scale, and gradually try to increase this to reach the UNESCO standard of 7% spending in education.

The duration of primary education is still 5 years in Madagascar as in Bangladesh. Secondary education in Madagascar is also a 7-year study as in our country; but subdivided into two: junior and senior unlike our unusual three sub-stages. Bangladesh can adapt two sub-stages of secondary education from Madagascar and divide it equally into two 3-year cycles making a compromise in elevating primary education up to Grade-6 which is the usual world pattern.

In Madagascar, integrated education prevails up to Grade-12 (senior secondary) although subjects in senior secondary are a bit different from those in the junior secondary grades (6-9). Our curriculum is much different having integrated curriculum only up to Grade-8 and diversified since Grade-9 for long 4 years before higher education. We can learn a bit from Madagascar system elevating the level of integrated curriculum by a year making education up to our lower secondary (Grade-9, being proposed here) integrated and provide for diversified pre-university higher secondary education at grades 10-12 at a stretch.

Madagascar has provision for three pre-university public examinations: the first one at Grade-5 (completion of primary), second one at Grade-9 (completion of junior secondary) and the third one at Grade-12 (completion of senior secondary). We can adapt this system of three pre-university public examinations just deferring the first one to Grade-6 (at completion of the elevated primary being proposed here; this is plausible because though the education committee suggested gradual elevation to Grade-8, the present term of governance would not proceed beyond Grade-6). Such an arrangement would have provision for taking lower Secondary Certificate (LSC) examination at Grade-9 and thus the higher secondary students can have the required time for real learning (instead of being driven only by examination) at Grade-12.

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