

A study on the worlds educational system



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A number of similarities as well as differences exist between the K-12 education system in the United States and the 8-4-4 system in Kenya. The similarities are such as the age at which children enter into school. In both countries children enter school approximately at the age of five or six. Also, the initial grade of commencing education is termed as kindergarten in both countries. In addition, one has to spend twelve years both in primary and high school education level before qualifying for tertiary education which may be in the universities or colleges despite the difference in the grading system within the twelve years. Another similarity between both systems is that one can access the K-12 or 8-4-4 education from both private institutions as well as public institutions. Moreover both systems enjoy funding from the state governments as well as federal and local government but those attending private institutions are self-sponsored that is they have the responsibility of paying their tuition fees to the institutions. Also in both systems one has to perform at a certain set average standard at the examinations provided in each level in order to qualify for the next level. In both systems students traditionally proceed from one level to the subsequent one as a "class" upon the completion of each academic year. In both countries it is compulsory to enroll in to the education systems after attaining the minimum required age and the parents or guardians who fail to abide by this law risk been prosecuted in accordance to the laws of the countries. However these laws are much more strict and effective in the United States as compared to Kenya where laxity has been observed in the enforcement of the compulsory education laws leading to a very dismal enrolment of children in schools especially in the parts of the country inhabited by the pastoralists' communities. Nevertheless, in both countries

there is no a compulsory level of the education system which one should go up to before leaving the education system. One is free to undertake his or her studies up to primary level, high school level or even college or university level in accordance to his intellectual capabilities as well as financial strength. In both countries student loans and scholarships are provided in the university level to enable students meet their tuition costs as well as other related costs such as those incurred while undertaking research projects (Brint & Karabel, 1989).

On the other hand, several differences can be observed between the K-12 education system in the United States and the 8-4-4 system in Kenya. In the United States; in the primary and high school level the school year usually starts immediately after the customary summer recess that is in August and sometimes in September while in Kenya the school year commences in January immediately after the New Year festivities. In the U. S, students have only six hours of schooling per day while in Kenya students spend almost ten hours in school on a daily basis. In the 8-4-4 system, students in primary and high school level break for holidays three times per year while in the K-12 system students have only one long holiday which is slated during the summer season. Another difference between the systems is that in the K-12 system, primary education takes only five years while in the 8-4-4 system it takes eight years. In the K-12 system; upon graduating from primary school, one proceeds to middle school before proceeding to high school while in the 8-4-4 system one directly joins high school upon completing primary education. In the U. S each state governs the public education unlike in Kenya where the public education system is governed by the central

government. In Kenya, one is free to obtain admission to any public school of his or her choice within the country while in the U. S the right of entry to a certain public school is mostly granted on the residential basis. Also the grading scale used in the 8-4-4 system is quite different from the one applied in the K-12 system. The rate of enrollment into the K-12 system is quite high as compared to the 8-4-4 system. Besides, teacher employed in the primary level in the K-12 system are graduates of early childhood development degree program while in the 8-4-4 system majority of primary school teachers possess only a certificate from a teachers training college (Herbst, 1996)

British colonists are the ones who set up the curriculum for early education in Kenya. But immediately after attaining independence, the educational system in Kenya was changed. The education system focus was shifted from being Eurocentric to an identity of national unity and so as to reflect this change geography and history were added into the curriculum. From 1964 to 1963 to 1985, the 7-4-2-3 system was the one which was followed in Kenya. This basically meant that seven years were spent on primary education, four years on lower secondary schooling, and two years on upper secondary and then lastly three years on university studies. Nonetheless, reformations were carried out in the year 1985 which led to the formation of the 8-4-4 system. This system is simply interpreted as eight years of primary education, four years of secondary education and four year of university education as well. The main emphasis of the 8-4-4 system was to encourage self-sufficiency amongst students upon going through the system. The system actually focused on vocational subjects so as to ensure that those who dropped out of

the system at whichever level had adequate skills to self-employ themselves instead of looking for vacancies in the formal sector. The student teacher ratio has always been below average due to the low number of teachers employed by the government. This has actually worsened after the introduction of the free primary education program in the year 2003. This program has lead to the escalation in the number of pupils enrolling into primary schools and the government has been reluctant in employing more teachers leading to a very poor student teacher ratio in the schools. On top of this, the government does not provide handsome salaries to primary teachers thus making many young people to lack interest of joining the teaching profession. In the primary and secondary level, pupils and students spend approximately forty two weeks in school each year. The academic year commences at early January immediately after the New Year festivities. The school's academic year is split into three terms of fourteen weeks each with a four to six weeks holiday slated in between each term. Each student spends approximately eight to ten hours in school on a daily basis. Most of the primary schools are day schools with a few of them offering boarding facilities while majority of the secondary schools are boarding schools. The academic calendar in the universities is not uniform country wide as the private universities have different academic calendars as compared to the public universities. Most public universities have two semesters of fifteen weeks each in every academic year and the time spent on the lecture theatres varies from course to the other. Approximately university students spend a minimum of two hours to a maximum of eight hours in class on a daily basis. Most of the universities' academic calendar comprises of only a

single three month holiday per year which is slated at the end of the second semester (Eshiwani, 1993).

Most of the country's national laws on education are not adhered to. For instance, the primary education is said to be compulsory in accordance to the laws but there are several number of children who have not joined school especially in the pastoralists' communities. There has never been any case of a parent or a guardian who has been prosecuted because of the failure to send his or her children to primary school. Also, in accordance to the laws, each class of students in primary and secondary schools should not comprise of more than forty students. This law has been overlooked in many schools and no punitive measures which have been undertaken on the culprits. As a result of the negligence of the educational laws, the quality of education especially in the public schools has been greatly affected and most parents prefer enrolling their children in private schools. The 8-4-4 system has actually been considered to have failed to meet the international high standards of education because of the failure to abide to the set educational laws. The government should ensure that strict punitive measures are put in place to the offenders of these laws if this system is to succeed at all (Eshiwani, 1993).

Besides the teacher shortage in most of the schools, the 8-4-4 system has also been criticized due to the heavy workload imposed on students and teachers as well. This has resulted to a high number of students dropping out of school with others resorting to drugs. The students who manage to go through the whole system are eligible to seek employment in the formal sector either in the public or the private sector. The government offers

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limited number of employment opportunities and thus many graduates end up being absorbed by private companies. However, the rising number of people graduating from colleges and universities has led to unemployment. This is quite unfortunate as it discourages students from working hard because they have low hopes of securing employment upon completion of their studies. On the other hand, graduates are unable to practice self-employment due to financial constraints