

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM—OVERVIEW Kenya

Missionaries introduced Western education in Kenya. The first missionaries to settle on the East African coast were Portuguese Roman Catholics. By 1557 they had established monasteries at Mombasa and Lamu, Kenyan coastal towns. The second wave of Christian missionaries included the Lutherans, who were sent to Kenya through the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Among these were Johann Ludwig Krapf, Johann Rebman, and Jacob Erhardt. The partition of Africa in 1884 established British rule in Kenya and led to an increase of Christian missionaries. As the missionaries established themselves on the mainland, they started schools as a means of converting Africans to Christianity. Their acceptance was somewhat due to the fact that they used the schools as a means of rehabilitating slaves who were returned after having been captured by Arabs. The Arabs had established themselves earlier on the coast, and had already introduced some schools where they taught the *Koran*. Thus, the Christian missionaries had to move further inland, away from the Moslems where they could easily rehabilitate the returned slaves. Later the British colonial government started to urge the missionaries to expand the educational system to include a technical focus in the curriculum in addition to religion. Although some were reluctant, for fear of losing the monopoly of schools to the government, some went along and even received funding.

In 1908, the missionaries formed a joint committee on education that later became the Missionary Board of Education, representing all the Protestant missions in the British protectorate. In 1909 the British government established an education board with Henry Scott of the Church of Scotland serving as the chair. The establishment of the education board occurred at the same time that the Fraser and Giroud Commissions were put in place. These commissions called for racial consideration in developing the British protectorate. The recommendations included a push for industrial development, technical education, and the teaching of religion as a moral foundation. The import of expensive labor from India was discouraged. Professor Fraser also recommended the establishment of a Department of Education.

After the First World War, a more concerted effort by the British to develop African colonies was established. The British began reexamining and reevaluating education in the African territories. In 1923 the British secretary of state established a committee chaired by the parliamentary under-secretary of state to advise on the educational affairs of the African-Kenyans. This marked the beginning of the first educational policy by the British colonial government.

This period marked the beginning of the three-tier education system in Kenya. There were racially segregated schools for Europeans (whites), Asians, and Africans. It was also the starting point of a joint venture between the colonial government and the missionaries, whereby the missionaries paved the way for colonialism. After Kenyan independence was achieved, the three-tier system developed into three types of schools: government, private and/or missionary, and *harambee* (a grass-root movement of self-help schools). The government schools, formerly reserved for whites, and the private schools were the best equipped. The missionary schools continued to exist, although some were converted into government schools. The quality of *harambee* schools, which were geared towards increasing education for Africans, depended on the economy of the location.

As of the early 2000s, the government schools have deteriorated and lost prestige due to lack of funding. The private schools seem to prosper most as the economy continues to decline. In the government schools tuition is waived; however, the government introduced a cost-sharing funding of the schools, whereby the parents contribute to the building facilities and supplies. Because most of the parents cannot afford their share, the schools are falling apart. This has created chaos in Kenya's educational system that has resulted in poorly trained personnel and loss of quality education. The country is calling for major education reforms in the twenty-first century.

The Kenya education policy was implemented under the mandate of the Ministry of Education, which is also responsible for writing up educational curricula through the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE), and setting and regulating national examinations through the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC). Education takes up to 25 percent of the government expenditure.

The current educational curricula, commonly referred to as the 8-4-4 system, consists of eight years of primary education, four years of secondary, and four years of university education. According to Sifuna (1990), there are three events that led to implementation of the 8-4-4 system: the 1966 conference on education at Kericho in Kenya, which stressed the need for integrating rural development; the International Labor Organization mission report entitled "Employment, Incomes and Equality: A Strategy for Increasing Productive Employment of 1972;" and the recommendation of the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies of 1975. In 1979 the Ministry of Education was changed to the Ministry of Basic Education with an introductory nine-year basic education system program. The rationale was that the previous program was too short and not rigorous enough to give graduates enough practical education. It also recommended that the first

six years of primary were to concentrate on numerary and literacy skills and the last two years on basic education with practical orientation. This represented a shift from a focus on enrollment to restructuring the program as a means to cater to the influx of unemployed.

The twenty-first century educational reform proposals are under review because the systems have failed to meet the original purpose. The system in Kenya has been described as a burden to both teachers and pupils due to the wide scope expected in the numerous subjects studied. The failure of the system is blamed on financial constraints and inadequate training of the implementers. Between 1980 and 1990, Kenya faced tremendous growth of privately owned schools and higher education institutions, while the government schools deteriorated. There are also several private schools that offer an international curriculum, including the London education and international baccalaureate (GCE), among others.

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