Research Paper

The International Comparison of the Educational Systems of Iran, Myanmar and Ethiopia

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Abstract

Education systems usually fall into two main types: the Continental and Atlantic systems of education. Countries belonging to the third world often follow after the characteristics of the continental system, however, the specificities of the country may overwrite some characteristics of the original concept. This article aims to introduce some specific aspects of the educational systems of Iran, Ethiopia and Myanmar through the comparison of these systems. According to the data analysis, centralisation is relevant, but decentralisation tends to be strengthened in each country. Concerning their structure, similarities in the division of levels were identified, along with differences in duration and focus. Unsurprisingly, the curriculums are different in each country; however, the basic subjects are almost the same. Finally, the grading systems use similar categories, although the underlying points providing the basis for the grades significantly differ. Comparing them can contribute to their evaluation and further development.

Keywords: comparative education, centralisation versus decentralisation, ISCED, curriculum, grading

Introduction

Comparison, among these countries, of their different educational systems is becoming more and more common these days. Such comparisons may focus on various levels and actors (e.g. governments, teachers, principals, other professionals, students), general characteristics (e.g. levels of education, training patterns), various characteristics of the actors (leadership efficacy, teaching efficacy, academic achievement of students), narrow and broad environments (e.g. school or classroom climate). These can also promote the continuous assessment and improvement of their educational systems, also supporting the creation of international or local good practices (Bray et al., 2014; Mohammed et al., 2021). Since education, among other factors of political and societal life, lays down the basis for the future of the society, its continuous monitoring and development is inevitable (Forray & Kozma, 2021). This paper aims to compare three educational systems outside Europe, introducing the systems of Iran, Myanmar, and Ethiopia. The authors decided to choose these three countries due to their similarities, e.g. political instability, human rights concerns, economic challenges, and ethnical and spiritual diversity. These factors, of course, have serious impacts on the educational system and the policy it sets; however, these effects may differ according to the society in question, and its characteristics and values. Also, all of the selected countries belong to the "developing countries", providing another reason for the introduction and comparison of systems. This introduction and comparison can be interesting for several reasons, including the level of access to education, quality of education, equity and inclusivity, human capital development, and sustainable development. Furthermore, in this study, we will also provide insight into their centralisation or decentralisation policies, the structure of their systems, and their curriculum systems and grading systems.

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History of education

Education and educational processes have changed with time in all countries of the world.In Iran, education in the modern style and context began after the issuance of the decree of Mirza Taghi Khan Amirkabir to establish the Academy of Arts in 1851. Modern and contemporary education in Iran, almost a hundred years old, has allocated a significant part of the resources of this period of our country's history. In the 19th century, the first schools in Iran were established and after the establishment, the first Ministry of Home Affairs was also founded under the name, the Ministry of Science (Menashri, 2020). Despite the fact that one of the most original and broadest cultural groups in history, that is, teachers, have participated in this system, and, all institutions, groups, and individuals in society participate in the realization of its goals, nevertheless, it is now facing the most complicated problems and challenges of its time. Thus, many researchers and societal thinkers search for and try to identify the root of most problems, disorders, inadequacies and social crises in the educational system and process (Browne, 1914). In the search for a path to confront the challenge of modernism, Iranian political thought over the last two centuries has fluctuated between extremes. Since the nineteenth century, a third layer of Iranian identity seems to have emerged—modern/Western. Together, they shape Iran's new distinctiveness. New education has had a significant role in introducing Western-style education and, through it, has influenced other aspects of Iranian life (Nashat, 1982).

In Myanmar, education has been accessible to communities through religious monasteries across the country since the time of ancient Burmese kings. It was Monastic schools which made the percentage of literacy higher there during the eighteen century than it was in Europe (Hillman, 1946). During the colonial period, the British Government founded the Department of Education in lower Burma in 1866, transforming the monastic education system into a formal one. The first higher educational institution, Yangon College and various colleges were established by the British Government. Myanmar gained independence in 1948, and since then, the Ministry of Education has been responsible for school education, teacher education and training, as well as higher education. In contrast, some professional institutions are not under the direct management of the Ministry of Education. From the time of independence to the present, all governments of different times expanded the number of schools in basic education and higher educational institutions year by year. Moreover, in 2011, Myanmar transformed from a country under long military rule to a democracy. With this turning point, the Ministry of Education under the civilian government led tremendous fruitful reforms in the education sector. The first and foremost change in education is the basic education curriculum in the 2016-2017 Academic Year. However, the Covid-19 pandemic and the 2021 coup drove Myanmar's Education into the shadows.

Regarding Ethiopian history of education, it was mainly rooted in indigenous and religious practices (Mengistie, 2019; Eyasu, 2016). Both traditional and religious education have been playing indispensable roles in socialising a child to get him/her prepared for optimal life in society. Especially, beyond producing religious elites who are in charge of accomplishing religious tasks, the church-run education served as a source of civil servants who could handle the government's duties and responsibilities until the dawn of modern education in the country (Bishaw & Melesse, 2017; Meskerem, 2014; Teshome, 1979). From the above illustrations, it is quite clear that indigenous education in Ethiopia made a tremendous contribution to preserving cultural values, while bringing the country into another phase of development with the commencement of modern education in 1908 during the period of emperor Menelik II. Ethiopia's modern education has an almost one century-old history, which came into being as a result of many factors, like the victory of Adwa[5] and the construction of the Eethio-Djibuti railway project (Mengiste, 2019). Since then, the system has passed through several periods of influence and varieties of systemic and bureaucratic hiccups that hampered the quality of education.

Research design and Methods

In this paper, we collected documents related to the educational systems of Iran, Ethiopia and Myanmar (N=28). Using these papers, document analysis was carried out. Documents allowing us the comparison of the educational systems were selected to perform an in-depth comparison of the educational levels from ISCED 0 to ISCED 6 (UNESCO, 2012). National documents and articles introducing relevant information were selected based on the following keywords: education system, education policy, Iran, Ethiopia, Myanmar. Papers published in English were only used for analysis. The review met the following inclusion criteria (1) reported original, empirical

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[5] The victory of Adwa refers to the major African victory against European colonialism of the Ethiopian forces over the Italian invaders in 1896.

research published in a peer-reviewed journal or policy document, (2) which introduced or examined the educational system and education policy characteristics of Iran, Myanmar or Ethiopia and (3) was published in English. In our analysis, the focus was put on centralisation or decentralisation policies, the structure of the systems and the curriculum systems and the grading systems. To improve the transparency of the data, the most important characteristics of the different systems are presented in tables.

Results

Centralisation versus decentralisation

The Iranian educational system has been sometimes centralised, sometimes decentralised over the past one hundred years. Until the 1950s, centralised education and centralised curriculum development was typical in the country. However, the pressure to decentralize has appeared in Iran as well. Due to great developments and breakthroughs in the realm of technology and sciences, and the inefficiency of curriculums designed in a centralized form, a great movement toward decentralized curricula was made in order to increase the people's and beneficiary parties' partnerships in curriculum decision making (Dadkani et al., 2021, p. 62). Nowadays, schools and teachers are responsible for the own development of the curriculum. Observing the experiences of educational decentralization in various countries showed that there have always been anxieties about education systems despite improvement in education quality. The purpose of decentralization has not just been development in education quality, but such improvements and reformations have been influenced by political, social, economic and cultural evolution and change (Londono Polo, 1996). Experts suggest, the minimalization of government and transfer of the power to the people and to local authorities may result in improving the efficacy of the system.

In Myanmar, the government has practised the centralised system of education since 1948 (Lwin, 2007). However, as the country started walking on the road to democracy in 2011, the government planned to decentralise education step by step. The government allowed the establishment of private schools, and planned to upgrade the universities and colleges as autonomous universities according to the new national education law (2014). The government planned to implement a decentralised system based on the development of the educational staff's ability to make decisions and take responsibility (National Education Law, 2014). This intention can be seen in their actions in many cases. The government has allowed 16 universities to operate autonomously. These universities are not under the management of the department of higher education, having autonomy in governance and management, academic profile, curriculum, external and financial partnerships, and research (Ministry of Education, 2016; Win & Thiri, 2020).

The education system of Ethiopia before 1991 was criticised for its highly centralised, bureaucratic, and inefficient management system. Cognizant of these issues, since the transitional government period, the decentralisation process has been started with the assumption that power and resources can be devolved to the local authorities, in spite of their criticism of pseudo implementation (Meheret, 2002). This new decentralized system has four administrative levels. A federal government exists at the top; regional states execute power besides the federal government. The regional governments were again sub-divided into zones, divided into smaller administrative structures known as Woredas. The Woreda is an important local administrative unit of the current decentralised government's structure. When one goes down from this level, the communities are further subdivided into smaller electoral units, known as kebeles and peasant associations, to enhance further community grassroots participation in formulating and administering policy decisions (Ministry of Education, 2018). Regardless of the development endeavour to decentralise the education system, there existed tremendous activities that are solely handled by the federal government at the centre. Other duties handled by the federal government are as follows:

– formulation of national education roadmaps and policy
– determination and supervision of the country's education standards
– determination of syllabus, the curriculum of secondary and higher institutions (harmonised curriculum framework in line with the modular system)
– placement of students to higher education institutes
– provision of educational materials, including finance on the basis
– preparation and administration of National examinations (matriculation and university entrance examination)
– accreditation and standards of higher education

    – foreign relations
    – monetary policy issues etc. are among the sole tasks managed by the ministry of education at the central level.

Any activities not mentioned above are given to and handled by the other structures based on their responsibilities.

Overall, we can conclude that all educational systems can be regarded as centralised systems which usually brings international criticism. Each centralised system can have similarities, e. g. providing the same regulation for each school in each region of the country allows for national comparisons, or creating national plans for the development and renewal of the educational system. What makes each countries story unique is its local or national characteristics, history, and culture. However, it is a disadvantage that regional characteristics are usually disregarded in this case which can hinder the efficacy of the schools having different student background.

Structure of the educational system

The structural characteristics of the three systems are presented in Table 1. Concerning the case of Iran, we can state that since the 19th century, the education system has been modelled after the French system. The first government polytechnic school was established in 1851. After the constitutional revolution in 1906, the Ministry of Education (MOE) was established in 1910 and the University of Tehran (UT) was established in 1934. With the creation of these two establishments (MOE '10 and UT '34) much was done to create a uniform education system throughout the country (e. g. school and education textbook publishing, test design and conduct). Konkur (university entrance exam) is of essential importance to getting into Iranian universities. Students at school (grades 1-12) must wear a uniform. Schools in Iran are separate schools for boys and girls, and about 75% of the population is literate. More than 50% of the population is under 25 years old. Access to post-secondary education is very competitive in Iran. The education system in Iran is divided into different levels of education: preschool, primary, junior high, high school and higher education. Higher education is provided by 80 public universities (including 30 medical schools) and 25 private institutions. Two ministries are responsible for education in Iran. The Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for secondary and basic education, and the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology (MSRT) is responsible for all higher education. In addition, the University Planning Council, composed of fifteen professors and chaired by the Minister of Higher Education, is responsible for academic outcomes and programs. Generally, education is provided in Farsi (Persian). At the same time, many institutions and centres offer English curricula like EFL in some subjects. The academic year in Iran is divided into two semesters and lasts from September to June (Amin, 2020).

With the political changes in Myanmar, many reforms have been brought about in every sector, including the education system in basic education. Myanmar initiated a new education system called Kindergarten (KG) + 5: 4: 2 in the 2016-2017 academic year, with the old system running parallel to the new (Ministry of Education, 2016). Therefore, both systems need to be mentioned together. The old education system is called the 5: 4: 2 System; Kindergarten (KG) + four years in primary school education (Grade 1 to Grade 4), four years in middle school education (Grade 5 to Grade 8), and two years in high school education (Grade 9 and Grade 10). Whereas the new system, according to the basic education law (2014), is KG + five years in primary school education (Grade 1 to 5), four years in Middle School education (Grade 6 to 9), and three years in High School Education (Grade 10 to 12)). In the new system, Primary education is free and compulsory. All children must attend KG at the age of five in both systems. Notably, Kindergarten and pre-school in Myanmar is different from other countries. Kindergarten is considered the initial grade within the formal schooling system while pre-school serves as a preparatory school for children aged between 3 to 5 years before they enter formal education. It is important to note that Kindergarten is a mandatory part of primary education while pre-schools are optional. Furthermore, pre-schools in Myanmar are mostly operated by the private sector. Regarding the assessment of the old education system, the primary school students must pass the National Examination administered at the end of Grade 4 to continue middle school education, and middle school students similarly need to pass the National Examination that takes place at the end of Grade 8 to continue high school education. The new system also required students to sit for National Examination or State/Township Level Examination at the end of each stage of School Education (National Education Law, 2014). In Grade 10, students are required to sit for the matriculation examination, and the scores they acquire determine which university or college they will attend. Therefore, this examination is the most important. The results determine their possibility of continuing higher education at the university and college, continuing government vocational training and diplomas, and attending

which university they are going to attend. Those who get very high scores have opportunities to join the most privileged universities, such as the University of Medicine, University of Technology, University of Pharmacy, University of Medical Technology, University of Dental, University of Nursing, University of Education, and University of Computer Sciences. On the other hand, those who score low in the examination are more likely to attend art and sciences universities (Win, 2011, p. 17).

Regarding Ethiopia, from the late 1970s to 1994, the educational structure was 6-2-4. However, based on the policy statement set in 1994, the educational structure was changed into a 4-4-2-2/8-2-2 pattern (Transitional Government of Ethiopia, 1994). Schooling in the first eight years is mandatory. Technically speaking, to achieve universal primary education, according to Transitional Government of Ethiopia (1994) and Ministry of Education (2002), the overall educational structure and levels ranging from lower to higher levels are organised as follows.

– Kindergarten education for children aged 4-6 years.
– Primary school grades from 1-8, primary education consists of two cycles. The first cycle comprises grades one to four and is categorised under basic education, and the second cycle consists of grades five-eight, which is termed general primary education.
– Secondary education has two subdivisions. General secondary Education for grades nine to ten and preparatory education for grades (11-12) or the second cycle.
– Post-secondary education (which sometimes is confused with higher education) of 2-3 years for diploma and 3-6 years (differs on the basis of the field of study) for undergraduate and additional 2-3 years for postgraduate studies
– A four years of doctoral (terminal degree) study
– A system of vocational and technical training side by side with an academic education (level1-level 5)
– 1-2 years of integrated functional adult literacy program (alternative basic education + skills of livelihood for proper societal functioning)

Table 1. The comparison of the structures of education systems of Iran, Myanmar and Ethiopia (ISCED 0-7)

Iran	Myanmar		Ethiopia
Kindergarten (ISCED 0)			
3 to 5 years old and is Optional	3 to 5 years Optional and mostly private preschools aimed to develop physical, intellectual, social, moral, and psychological skills and prepare children to continue into primary education		– Nursery and lower KG for children in urban areas – This opportunity is not meant dedicated for most children in rural areas
Pre-school (ISCED 0)			
Duration: 1 year Age: 6 years old and is Compulsory	Duration: 1 year Age: 5 year Free of charge Compulsory		– For children aged 4-6 years Modalities: – Kindergarten – "0" class – child to child focusing on language development, numeracy, aesthetic values and exploration of the environment
Primary School (ISCED 1)			
Old System: **Grade 1 to 5** Duration: 5 years Age: 7 to 11 years **New System:** Grade 1 to 6 Duration:6 years Age: 7 to 12 years	**Old System** **Grade 1 to 4** Duration: 4 years Age: 6 to 9 years Free of charge. Compulsory	**New System** **Grade 1 to 5** Duration: 5 years Age: 6 to 10 years Free of charge Compulsory	– Eight years of education and compulsory – The first four years are basic education in which children focus on literacy and numeracy skills – The other four years are full-fledged primary education that enables students to prepare for life and further education – These days, a new education road map has been launched and recommends cutting down primary education to the first six grades1-4th grades, basic education (lower primary) – 5-8th grades, upper primary

Lower secondary school (ISCED 2)				
Old System: Grade 6 to 8 Duration: 3 years Age: 11 to 13 years	**New System:** Grade 7 to 9 Duration: 3 years Age: 12 to 14 years	**Old System:** **Grade 5 to 8** Duration: 4 years Age: 10 to 13 years Free of charge not compulsory	**New System:** **Grade 6 to 9** Duration: 4 years Age: 11 to 14 years Free of charge not compulsory	In the old system it was the second cycle of primary schooling (5-8th grade) considered to be a middle level. According to the new education roadmap, middle schooling is grades of 7th and 8th, which is named as junior secondary school.
Upper secondary school education (ISCED 3)				
Old System: Grade 9 to 12 Duration: 4 years Age: 15 to 18 years	**New System:** Grade 10 to 12 Duration: 3 years Age: 16 to 18 years	**Old System:** **Grade 9 to 10** Duration: 2 year Age: 14 to 16 years Free of charge Not compulsory	New System: Grade 10 to 12 Duration: 3 years Age: 15 to 17 years Free of charge Not compulsory	This level is classified into: General secondary (9-10 grades) and Preparatory schooling (grade 11-12). The first two years (9-10 grades) are termed general secondary education and the other two years (grade 11-12) are preparatory schooling for higher education. Still, the roadmap recommends the change in structure in secondary education to incorporate grades 7 and 8 as junior secondary school and 9-12 as senior secondary schooling. It has been two years since the government accepted this recommendation and put it into practice
Post-secondary and higher education (ISCED 4-7)				
Only higher education Governmental university Payam Noor university University of Science and Research University of Medical Sciences Art university Private University Non-governmental university **Bachelor:** Duration: 4 year Age: 19 to 22 years **Master:** Duration: 2 year		**Colleges** Educational Colleges, Nursing Diploma Training Schools, Government Technological Colleges Lacquerware Technology College Myanmar Mercantile Marine College Cooperative Colleges **Bachelor:** Duration: 4 year * There are some exceptions for professional universities, such as universities of medicine, universities of education and some technological universities. **Master:** Duration: 2 year		**Post Secondary** Vocational and technical colleges Nursing schools College of teacher education Agricultural colleges Higher Education Bachelor's degree (originally 3- 6 years) now becomes 4-6 years with the promulgation of the new educational roadmap Two years of graduate-level studies

We can see that while kindergarten can be mentioned as a basic part of the educational system in Iran and Myanmar, it is not as well stated in Ethiopia. However, pre-school is common in each country. Regarding primary education, the same can be seen as all countries operate at this level (ISCED 1). Although this means ground for further levels, the Ethiopian system rather precludes having a separate lower secondary level (ISCED 2) as it is quite integrated in the primary school system level. As usual, the upper secondary level (ISCED 3) operates as the last obligatory stage, usually providing a school-leaving certificate or a professional certificate. This is also the obligatory step to further education. As another difference, while the Ethiopian system has a well-developed separation for post-secondary education (ISCED 4) and higher education (ISCED 6 and 7), the Iranian and Myanmar systems rather have tertiary educational levels (bachelor's and master's degrees)

Curriculum system

In Iran, curriculum planning as it is today begins with "activities" that began to be carried out after the establishment of the Academy of Arts (1230) – activities like translating (and sometimes compile) textbooks and, with the establishment of the Education Association (1277), forming new schools and expanding existing

ones, Rushdieh schools[6] in particular. This issue found new conditions with the change of government in the early part of the present century (1304) and the tendency of Reza Shah's government to focus on affairs and the development of education. The formulation and approval of primary (1306) and secondary education (1307) curricula, and the government's extensive efforts to produce uniform textbooks for all primary (1306) and secondary (1316) schools led to the Office of Studies and Programs (1324). Thereafter, the Iran Textbook Organization 13 (1341) was established to prepare the ground for limiting the production of curricula to the centre (Tehran). Working days are Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, and classes are on Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday. Class starts at 8 am and ends at 6 pm. The pressure of time and the dense amount of information on these candidates further reduces the quality of their courses. Professors often assume that these candidates cannot concentrate due to fatigue and information overload. One good reason they cannot do their homework is that they work all week and do not have enough time to complete the course requirements. As previously mentioned, the academic year in Iran is divided into two semesters lasting from September to June. The schools are closed on Fridays, and religious and national holidays. English and Arabic are foreign languages taught in public schools, and private or international schools that teach French and German (Khosravan, 2015).

In Myanmar, the former curriculum of elementary education has been criticised by local and international educators as outdated, focused on rote learning and teaching, and exam-oriented learning rather than achieving study skills and competency (Lwin, 2000, Hayden & Martin, 2013; Lall, 2020). The Comprehensive Education Sector review also pointed out the weakness in the curriculum. Therefore, with the technical support of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Ministry of Education initiated a project in 2014 to plan, design, and implement a new basic education curriculum for primary, middle, and high school levels (NESP, 2016). The new curriculum focused on 21st Century Skills, soft skills, and higher-order thinking skills began practice in the 2016-2017 Academic Year (NESP, Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 18). As in the previous system, the medium of teaching instruction can be either Myanmar or English or both. However, an ethnic language can be used as a medium of instruction together with the Myanmar language if necessary, at the primary education level. (Section 43 of the National Education Law, 2014). As the previous education system is still running parallel to the new system, both aspects of the curriculum are described in the following Table.

Technically, Ethiopian education is a curriculum divided into various groups based on the different educational structures (Ministry of Education, 2016). According to Transitional Government of Ethiopia (1994) and MoE (2009), the various levels of education mentioned in the above discussion have distinct but not mutually exclusive learning objectives and contents. In the first cycle of primary education, the curriculum focuses on basic literacy and numeracy skill development and exploration of the environment. On the other hand, upper primary schooling is all about the preparation of learners for secondary education. At the end of primary education, learners need to acquire knowledge and develop skills to function properly in their upcoming stage of life. More or less, the curriculum system and framework in general secondary schooling are similar to upper primary education with extended and in-depth content. Thus, the purpose is to enable the children to identify their needs, interests, and potential for further education and training and otherwise for joining the labour market with appropriate knowledge, skill and attitude. The next level, so long as the education structure of Ethiopia is concerned, is preparatory schooling. As its name indicates, preparatory is a level that enables students to prepare for higher education. Students need to choose between two streams. Natural science and social science still share Language, Mathematics, and Civics subjects in common. All in all, the curriculum in the Ethiopian education system is broadly categorised as the general education curriculum, which mainly focuses on academics and vocational education, which tends to be more practical and technical (MoE, 2002).

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[6] Hassan Roshdieh was an Iranian cleric, teacher, politician, and journalist. He introduced some modern teaching methods in Iran, especially in teaching the alphabet

Table 2. The comparison of the curriculum of the education systems of Iran, Myanmar and Ethiopia

Iran	Myanmar	Ethiopia
Primary education (ISCED 1)		
– Obligatory from the age of six to twelve – Persian is the only language taught in all Iranian schools – All institutions require an admission test, and the competition for spots may be fierce – A nationwide test based on the courses taught in elementary school is given (including the social sciences, religion, Persian literature, and mathematics), exam results can be „outstanding," „good," „satisfactory," and „requires further improvement," rather than numerical numbers – Other courses include the study of the Quran, which is considered to be the most significant subject, as well as art, athletics, work and technology	**Compulsory Learning areas** – English – Mathematics – Sciences, and – Social Studies **Co-curricular learning areas** – Physical education, – life skills, – moral and civics, – aesthetics (music and art) and – local curriculum (in the new system) (in the new curriculum, ethnic languages are allowed to learn according to the locality)	**Primary basic education (lower primary)** – Language (International, National and local languages – Maths – Environmental science – Aesthetics (Music, art and physical fitness) **Upper primary (grades 5-6)** – Language (International, National and local languages – Maths – Civics and Ethical Education – Social studies – Basic Integrated Science – Health and Physical Education **Upper primary (grades 7-8), which is now structured as junior secondary** – Language (International, National and local languages – Maths – Civics and Ethical Education – Social studies – Physics – Chemistry – Biology – HPE
Lower secondary education (ISCED 2)		
– The standardised curriculum focused on general education – The national 3-year guiding cycle for students between the ages of 11 and 13 came next (sixth through eighth grade) – To assess the student's suitability for either academic or vocational schooling – A regional test that would serve as the period's culmination would allow students to earn the Certificate of General EducationThis form of education was not totally free and was not required.	– All learning areas in middle school education are closely related to primary school education and extend the level of knowledge of the subject – Social Studies is divided into social studies (Geography) and social studies (History)	
Upper secondary education (ISCED 3)		
– Both general academic and technical instruction were included – The final decision on whether to pursue academic or technical education rests with the student – If academic, they choose from one of four academic streams: experimental sciences, physics/mathematics, literature and culture, or sociology and anthropology. – If vocational, agricultural, business/vocational training, and technology are the options – A nationwide test that marked the culmination of this period allowed students to earn their Certificate of Completion of Secondary School Studies – The academic Certificate of Completion of Secondary School Studies is equivalent to a diploma in terms of level	**Subject trends in both the new and old curriculum:** – the art stream – the science stream **Common subjects in both stream** – Myanmar, – English, – Mathematics and – co-curricular subjects **Elective subjects in both stream** – Biology – Physics, – Chemistry, – History, – Geography, – Economics,	**Grade 9-10** – One main stream can be found with the following subjects: Language (International, National and local languages, Maths, ICT, Civics and Ethical Education, Geography, History, Physics, Chemistry, Biology and HPE. **Grade 11-12** – This level has two streams: the natural stream and the social science stream. – The natural science stream is meant to undertake the following subjects: Language (International, National and local languages (national and local languages are electives), Math for natural science, ICT, Civics and Ethical Education, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, HPE, Technical Drawing. – The social stream is meant to take the following subjects: Language (International, National and local languages (national and local languages are electives), Math for social science, ICT, Civics and Ethical Education, Geography, History, Economics, General Business, HPE

As a similarity, some basic subjects can be found in all countries. Obviously, learning the national language and mathematics is of paramount importance in each country. The bigger disciplines (e.g. social sciences) can also be found in each system and in each level (following the maturity of the children) but their focus can differ. It is also similar that children are obligated to learn at school until the age of 18. It is a significant difference regarding the Ethiopian system that students can choose between natural science and social science streams in the last two years which can be a great support concerning profession orientation and career guidance. Similarly, the Iranian system concerning academic and vocational streams, students are allowed to commit to a specific subject area but provide a certificate which does not restrict the area of further applicable professions (e.g. a student learning in a vocational stream can also apply for university courses) can be regarded as a significant educational support.

Grading system

In Iran, education in the modern style and context began after the issuance of the decree of Mirza Taghi Khan Amirkabir to establish the Academy of Arts in 1230. The construction of this educational centre was a turning point in the establishment of the university. Based on this, the first structures of the University of Iran, called Tehran College, were established with the efforts of Professor Hesabi in 1313. Priority of agricultural and medical schools was approved. Today, in most provinces, various universities with the titles of government, free, Payame Noor, non-profit, applied science, cultural and technical and professional offer various associate, bachelor, master and doctoral degrees to science seekers. In Iran, the grading system is based on a 0-20 scale. At the elementary, secondary, and undergraduate levels, an average grade of 10 is the minimum required passing grade (Amin, 2020). The minimum average grade at the graduate level is 12; in doctoral programs, the cut-off score stands at 14. However, in matriculation, the grading system is on a four-point scale, the highest is four, and the lowest is 0. The grading system in HLIs has a four-point scale, where grades range from A (the highest) to F (the lowest).

In Myanmar, the grading system of the old education curriculum differs according to Grades and type of examinations, e.g., monthly tests and year-ending examinations. However, in the new curriculum, the grade scale for all stages is based on 0 to 100 scores, whereas 50 is the passing score. Instead of test scores, the results are presented by A, B, C and D for every subject, in which A stands for "Excellent", B stands for "Good", C stands for "satisfactory" and D means " need to be improved" (NAG, 2020).

As far as the Ethiopian education and training policy, Transitional Government of Ethiopia (1994) is concerned, the grading system in general education remains on a one hundred-point scale except for the matriculation examination, which is judged by 4-point scales. The grading system in higher education is on a 4-point scale which denotes 4 (Equivalent to an A grade), the highest mark and 0 (F), the lowest grade.

Table 3. The comparison of the grading systems of Iran, Myanmar and Ethiopia

Iran	Myanmar	Ethiopia
The grading system in Iran has four levels; passing is from 10 to 20, and A and B are the higher grades. 18 – 20 = A+ (Excellent) 16 – 17.99 = A (Very Good) 14 – 15.99 = B (good) 12 – 13.99 = C (Fair) 10 – 11.99 = D (Pass) 0.00 – 9.99 = F (Fail)	The grade scale used in the new education system is: 0 to 100, 50 is the passing score 80 – 100 = A (Excellent) 60 – 79 = B (Good) 40 - 59 = C (Satisfactory) 0 - 39 = D (Need to be improved) (National Assessment Guidelines)	In general education, the grading system for classroom assessment is in a 100-point scale. Students are required to fulfill the minimum requirement set by schools to be promoted to the next grade level, usually an average of 50 points. But in matriculation, the grading system is in 4-point scale, the highest is 4 and the lowest is 0. The grading system in HLIs has a 4- point scale, where grades range from A (the highest) to F (the lowest). More specifically, – 90 and above =A+ – 85-90) = A – 80-85) = A- – 75-80) = B+ – 70-75) = B – 65-70) = B- – 60-65) = C+ – 50-59) = C – 45-49) = C- – 40-45) = D and other wise

Conclusions

This paper aimed to introduce and compare the basic characteristics of three developing countries. Concerning the practice of centralisation versus decentralisation, we can see that centralisation was typical for all of the counties. However, this is not only characteristic of the countries analysed, since centralism in the design and development of curricula is a traditional and dominant view that was typical for most nations up until the end of the twentieth century. Also, centralism is still dominant in countries belonging to the continental education system. Even if, in Iran, Myanmar, and Ethiopia, education policy shows a greater tendency toward decentralization , overall, we can see that the most basic facilities and directions are still centralised. However, a higher level of freedom concerning the development and governance at lower levels like provinces, regions, schools and classrooms may be useful, since it is easier to address issues and affect change on a local level, to specific areas.

Regarding the structures of the three educational systems, some similarities and several differences were also detected. Kindergartens and preschools belonging to ISCED level 0 can be found in all countries which are partly compulsory, with timing and duration that differ. In the past decade, the systems of Iran and Myanmar have changed, and some shifts could be experienced in the length of the ISCED levels. In these two countries, the old and new systems will continue to function parallel to each other until the student classes belonging to the old system graduate. In Iran and Myanmar, a separate lower secondary level (ISCED 2) can be detected too while it is not typical of Ethiopia. Upper secondary levels (ISCED 3) can be found also everywhere with length and content focus varying by country. Post-secondary education (ISCED 4) is not typical of Iran. Concerning higher education, the divided structure of the Bologna system (ISCED 6 and 7) functions in all countries.

With regard to the curriculum system, we can see that subjects like the mother tongue, English, mathematics, scientific subjects, physical education and arts can be found among the basic compulsory classes. The content of these subjects are closely related to content taught in the lower levels (bottom-up). Of course, because the content is developed individually by each country, different emphases and preferences emerge. Similarly, the grading systems show significant differences. Iran and Myanmar have similar categories (A to D). Still differences among these nations can be found here as well. While the Iranian system calculates with scores between 0 and 20 (adding an extra grade, compared to Mayanmar – F), a 100-point scale is used in both Myammar's and Ethiopia's systems.

Overall, within the three systems both similarities and differences were found. Despite the tendencies of their developing decentralisations, the common characteristics of the continental education system were evident. This comparative article may be useful for comparative pedagogy experts, as well as teachers and professionals, giving them relevant and up-to-date knowledge of these systems. For instance, with this knowledge, they would be able to better model change in their home country's education systems, or to better aid local authorities in implementation of new policies. Finally, the comparison of these systems can contribute to their own evaluation and further development.

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