K12 ACADEMICS — WORLD EDUCATION SERIES

Education Systems of Africa

How school works across 54 countries — structure, exams, higher education & more, in plain English.



K12 ACADEMICS

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2026 EDITION

ABOUT THIS VOLUME

Education around the world.

This volume covers the education systems of **Africa** — a two-page profile of each country, with structure, compulsory years, curriculum, exams, higher education and more. From K12 Academics, reaching 185 countries every month.

HOW EACH PROFILE WORKS

The left page introduces the system and its structure; the right page covers schools, curriculum, exams and higher education, with the key facts at a glance. Systems evolve, so each links to its full, updated guide online.



AFRICA — 01 OF 54

Algeria

EDUCATION IN ALGERIA

Algeria runs a large, free, state-centered education system, nationalized after independence in 1962 and overseen by the Ministry of National Education (schools) and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (universities). Arabic is the main language of instruction, French is widely used (especially in the sciences and...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (5 years)** — École primaire, ages ~6–11
- **Lower secondary / middle (4 years)** — Collège (CEM) — completing the nine-year compulsory "fundamental" cycle
- **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, with general and technical streams (sciences, letters, mathematics, etc.)

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

- **Free** — Public education carries no tuition at any level, including university
- **Enrollment** — Primary enrollment is near-universal
- **Language start** — Arabic from the start; French introduced in early primary

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The overwhelming majority of Algerian students attend free public schools . Instruction is primarily in Arabic, with French as a key second language and, regionally, Tamazight. The system is large and state-run; ongoing reforms aim to modernize the curriculum and teaching.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Arabic · French
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	5 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	Dinar (DZD)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Algeria has a small but growing private sector , plus a limited number of foreign-curriculum schools — notably French schools such as the Lycée International Alexandre Dumas (Algiers) serving French and expatriate families. Private options are concentrated in major cities.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum includes Arabic, French, mathematics, the sciences, history and geography, and Islamic education , with Tamazight offered in some regions. French becomes increasingly important in upper grades and dominates much of higher education, particularly in scientific and technical fields.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

- **BEM** — The Brevet d'Enseignement Moyen, taken at the end of middle school (grade 9)
- **Baccalauréat (BAC)** — The national exam at the end of lycée — the gateway to university , taken in a chosen stream (sciences, mathematics, letters, and others)

READ THE FULL ALGERIA GUIDE
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Angola

EDUCATION IN ANGOLA

Angola's education system, overseen by the Ministry of Education (schools) and the Ministry of Higher Education (universities), uses Portuguese as the language of instruction — a legacy of Portuguese colonial rule that ended in 1975. Several national languages (such as Kimbundo, Kikongo, and Chokwe) are used in adult-literacy programs....

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary education (grades 1–6)** — Free and the foundation of the compulsory cycle, beginning around age 6
- **Lower secondary — 1st cycle (grades 7–9)** — Completing the nine-year basic-education cycle
- **Upper secondary — 2nd cycle (grades 10–12/13)** — General programs, plus technical (médio técnico) and teacher-training (médio pedagógico) programs of four years

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

- **Free** — Public primary and basic education carry no tuition
- **School year** — Runs roughly February to November (Southern Hemisphere calendar)
- **Enrollment** — Primary enrollment has risen post-war; secondary participation lags

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most Angolan children attend free public schools run by the Ministry of Education, with Portuguese as the medium of instruction. Post-war reconstruction — supported by oil revenues — has expanded access, but the system contends with teacher shortages, uneven quality, and limited materials, especially outside the cities.

AT A GLANCE

Language	**Portuguese**
Compulsory	**9-year basic**
Structure	**6 – 3 – 3**
School year	**Feb – Nov**
Higher ed	**Agostinho Neto Univ.**
Currency	**Kwanza (AOA)**

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Angola has a private and religious (mission) school sector , concentrated in Luanda and larger towns, alongside a limited number of international schools serving expatriate communities. Several private and religious universities also operate, some linked to European institutions.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in Portuguese , covering the standard academic subjects — language, mathematics, sciences, and social studies — with technical and vocational streams at upper-secondary level. National languages feature mainly in adult-literacy efforts rather than mainstream schooling.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is not an established or common route in Angola; education is school-based, and the priority has been expanding access to formal schooling.

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Benin

EDUCATION IN BENIN

Benin, a West African nation and former French colony, runs a French-language education system modeled on the French structure, overseen by the ministries responsible for primary/secondary and higher education. The government has expanded access — notably making primary schooling free and abolishing fees to boost enrollment, especially...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (6 years)** — École primaire, ages ~6–11, ending with the CEP
- **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat (general or technical)

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Primary education is compulsory and free , beginning around age 6. Fee abolition has driven enrollment gains, but completion and secondary participation remain challenges. The school year runs roughly September to July .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most Beninese children attend free public primary schools , with instruction in French. The system contends with teacher shortages, crowded classrooms, and limited resources, especially outside the cities.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is not an established route in Benin; the priority has been expanding access to formal schooling, and education is school-based.

AT A GLANCE

Language	French
Compulsory	Primary (6 yrs)
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – July
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XOF)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Benin has a private and religious (including Catholic and Islamic) school sector , concentrated in Cotonou and larger towns, offering an alternative to public schools.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in French , covering language, mathematics, sciences, and social studies, following a French-influenced curriculum. National languages feature mainly in literacy and community programs rather than mainstream schooling.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

- **CEP** — Certificat d'Études Primaires, at the end of primary
- **BEPC** — Brevet, at the end of lower secondary
- **Baccalauréat (BAC)** — At the end of lycée — the gateway to university

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Botswana

EDUCATION IN BOTSWANA

Botswana has invested heavily in education using its diamond revenues , building one of Southern Africa's more developed systems. English is the official language and the medium of instruction (with Setswana used in early primary), literacy is relatively high (around 88%), and the government sponsors large numbers of students at home and...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (7 years)** — Standards 1–7, ending with the PSLE
- **Junior secondary (3 years)** — Forms 1–3, ending with the JCE
- **Senior secondary (2 years)** — Forms 4–5, ending with the BGCSE and university entry

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Botswana provides ten years of basic education (primary plus junior secondary), which is effectively universal and free or heavily subsidized, beginning around age 6. The school year runs roughly January to December .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free or heavily subsidized government schools . Botswana's strong public investment — funded by mineral wealth — has driven high enrollment and expanded access across the country.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is uncommon in Botswana; most children attend public or private schools, and provision is centered on the formal system.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · Setswana
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	7 + 3 + 2
School year	Jan – Dec
Exams	PSLE · BGCSE
Currency	Pula (BWP)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Botswana has a private and international-school sector , concentrated in Gaborone and larger towns, offering British, IB, and other curricula alongside the national system.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, Setswana, mathematics, sciences, and social studies , taught mainly in English (with Setswana in early primary), and geared toward the national examinations.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

- **PSLE** — The Primary School Leaving Examination, at the end of primary
- **JCE** — The Junior Certificate Examination, at the end of junior secondary
- **BGCSE** — The Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education, at the end of senior secondary — the basis for university entry

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Burkina Faso

EDUCATION IN BURKINA FASO

Burkina Faso, a landlocked West African nation and former French colony, runs a French-language education system modeled on the French structure. The government has worked to expand access, but Burkina Faso has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world , and — critically — a severe security crisis has forced the closure of thousands...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (6 years)** — École primaire, ages ~6–11, ending with the CEP
- **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Basic education is compulsory in principle (roughly ages 6–16) and primary schooling has been made free to boost enrollment. In practice, access is limited by poverty, distance, and — increasingly — insecurity. The school year runs roughly October to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools , with instruction in French. The system faces teacher shortages, crowded classrooms, and limited resources — challenges compounded by school closures in conflict-affected regions.

AT A GLANCE

Language	French
Compulsory	6–16 (in principle)
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Oct – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XOF)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Burkina Faso has a private and religious (Catholic and Islamic) school sector , concentrated in Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso, offering alternatives to public schools.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in French , covering language, mathematics, sciences, and social studies on a French-influenced curriculum. National languages and Quranic schooling also play a role in many communities.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Three national exams mark the path: the CEP (end of primary), the BEPC (end of lower secondary), and the Baccalauréat (end of lycée) — the gateway to university.

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Burundi

EDUCATION IN BURUNDI

Burundi, a small, densely populated country in East Africa, runs a multilingual education system : Kirundi is the national language, French the traditional language of instruction, and English (with Swahili) increasingly important through Burundi's membership in the East African Community. The government has expanded access with free...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Fundamental education (9 years)** — Compulsory basic schooling combining primary and lower secondary, ages ~6–15
- **Post-fundamental secondary (about 4 years)** — General and technical tracks leading to university

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Fundamental (basic) education is free and compulsory , beginning around age 6. Fee abolition drove major enrollment gains, though completion and quality remain challenges. The school year runs roughly September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most Burundian children attend free public schools . The system contends with overcrowding, teacher shortages, and limited materials — pressures heightened by the country's poverty and its transition across languages of instruction.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is very limited , delivered mainly through NGO and faith-based programs rather than a comprehensive state system.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Kirundi · French · English
Compulsory	Basic (9 yrs)
Structure	9 + 4
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	Univ. of Burundi
Currency	Franc (BIF)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Burundi has a private and religious (largely Catholic) school sector , concentrated in Bujumbura and larger towns, offering alternatives to public schools.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction moves through Kirundi in early grades and French (with growing English) higher up, covering language, mathematics, sciences, and social studies. Burundi's EAC membership has increased the emphasis on English and Swahili.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students sit national examinations at key stages, including at the end of fundamental education and a state/secondary-leaving examination that governs entry to higher education.

READ THE FULL BURUNDI GUIDE
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Cabo Verde

EDUCATION IN CABO VERDE

Cabo Verde (Cape Verde), an Atlantic island nation off West Africa, is one of the region's more stable and developed countries and has invested strongly in education. Portuguese is the official language and medium of instruction, while Cape Verdean Creole (Kriolu) is the everyday spoken language. Literacy is relatively high (around 87%)...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Pre-school** — Early-childhood education
- **Basic education (about 8 years)** — Compulsory, from around age 6
- **Secondary education (about 4 years)** — General and technical tracks leading to further study

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Basic education is free and compulsory , beginning around age 6, and Cabo Verde has extended compulsory schooling over time. The school year runs roughly September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools , with instruction in Portuguese. Cabo Verde's investment in education has produced strong enrollment and literacy relative to the wider region.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Cabo Verde has a modest private and religious school sector , concentrated on the more populous islands such as Santiago and São Vicente.

AT A GLANCE

Language	Portuguese
Compulsory	Basic (8 yrs)
Structure	8 + 4
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	Univ. of Cabo Verde
Currency	Escudo (CVE)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in Portuguese , covering language, mathematics, sciences, and social studies. Cape Verdean Creole is central to daily life, and there have been efforts to strengthen its role in early learning.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students complete secondary-school examinations at the end of upper secondary, which govern progression to higher education.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on the public University of Cabo Verde (Uni-CV) , alongside private institutions such as the University of Santiago and Jean Piaget University. Many Cape Verdean students also study abroad, especially in Portugal.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is developing , with growing efforts toward inclusion, supported by government and NGO programs; resources vary by island.

READ THE FULL CABO VERDE GUIDE
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Cameroon

EDUCATION IN CAMEROON

Cameroon is genuinely unusual: as a country with both French and English colonial legacies , it operates two parallel education subsystems — a Francophone (French-based) system and an Anglophone (English-based, British-derived) system — each with its own structure, exams, and qualifications. Both are overseen by national ministries, and...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Anglophone** — Nursery + Primary (7 years) + Secondary (O-Level, ~5 years) + High School (A-Level, 2 years)
- **Francophone** — Primary (6 years) + Collège (leading to the BEPC) + Lycée (leading to the Probatoire and Baccalauréat)

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Primary education is compulsory and, in principle, free , beginning around age 6. Access varies with region, income, and — in the Anglophone regions — the security situation. The school year runs roughly September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools in one of the two subsystems, chosen largely by region and language. The government runs both, and bilingual schools also exist.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Cameroon has a substantial private and religious (Catholic, Protestant, and Islamic) school sector in both language subsystems, concentrated in the major cities.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	French · English
Compulsory	Primary
Systems	2 parallel
School year	Sept – June
Exams	GCE · Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XAF)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Curriculum and language of instruction follow the subsystem: French in the Francophone system and English in the Anglophone system, each covering the standard academic subjects on its respective (French- or British-derived) model.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

- **Anglophone** — The Cameroon GCE O-Level and A-Level (administered by the GCE Board)
- **Francophone** — The CEP , BEPC , Probatoire , and Baccalauréat

HIGHER EDUCATION

Cameroon's universities serve both language systems: the Universities of Yaoundé I and II , the University of Douala , and the largely Anglophone University of Buea and University of Bamenda, among others. Higher education reflects the country's bilingual character.

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Central African Republic

EDUCATION IN CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

The Central African Republic (CAR) runs a French-language education system on the French model, with Sango — the national language — widely spoken. CAR has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world , and years of conflict and instability have severely disrupted schooling, damaging infrastructure and displacing teachers and students.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (6 years)** — École primaire, ages ~6–11, ending with the CEP
- **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory in principle (roughly ages 6–15) , and primary schooling is intended to be free. In practice, access is limited by poverty, conflict, distance, and a severe shortage of teachers and functioning schools. The school year runs roughly September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools , with instruction in French. The system is under-resourced and heavily dependent on external and humanitarian support; conditions vary sharply between the capital, Bangui, and conflict-affected regions.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	French · Sango
Compulsory	6–15 (in principle)
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XAF)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

CAR has a private and religious (largely Catholic) school sector , concentrated in Bangui, offering an alternative where it operates.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in French , covering language, mathematics, sciences, and social studies on a French-influenced curriculum. Sango is central to daily communication across the country.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Three national exams mark the path: the CEP (end of primary), the BEPC (end of lower secondary), and the Baccalauréat (end of lycée) — the gateway to university, where it functions.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on the University of Bangui , the country's main institution. Capacity is limited, and the sector has been affected by the wider instability.

READ THE FULL CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC GUIDE
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Chad

EDUCATION IN CHAD

Chad, a large, landlocked Central African nation, has two official languages — French and Arabic — and its education system reflects both, with French-medium and Arabic-medium schooling. Chad has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world and a wide gender gap, and the system is severely under-resourced, with poverty, distance, and...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–11, ending with the CEP
- **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Primary education is compulsory in principle and intended to be free , beginning around age 6, but access and completion are limited — especially for girls and in rural areas. The school year runs roughly October to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools , in either French or Arabic medium. The system faces acute teacher shortages, crowded classrooms, and limited materials, and relies heavily on external support; it has also absorbed pressures from regional displacement and refugees.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	French · Arabic
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Oct – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XAF)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Chad has a private and religious school sector (including Catholic and Islamic schools), concentrated in N'Djamena and larger towns.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in French or Arabic , covering language, mathematics, sciences, and social studies, with Islamic education prominent in Arabic-medium and Quranic schooling. The bilingual French/Arabic character is a defining feature.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Three national exams mark the path: the CEP (end of primary), the BEPC (end of lower secondary), and the Baccalauréat (end of lycée) — the gateway to university.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is very limited , delivered mainly through NGO and faith-based programs.

READ THE FULL CHAD GUIDE
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Comoros

EDUCATION IN COMOROS

The Comoros, an island nation in the Indian Ocean, has three official languages — Comorian (Shikomori), Arabic, and French — and an education system that blends a French-model secular system with strong Quranic and Arabic schooling. Literacy is moderate and improving, and the system is limited by the country's small size and resources.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Primary education is compulsory in principle and intended to be free , from around age 6. Access and completion vary across the three islands. The school year runs roughly September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools , taught in French with Arabic instruction, alongside a strong tradition of Quranic education. The system faces resource and teacher constraints typical of a small island economy.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

The Comoros has a private and religious school sector , including Franco-Arab and Islamic schools, offering alternatives to public schooling.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Comorian · Arabic · French
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	Franc (KMF)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction combines French (secular subjects) and Arabic (Islamic and language study), covering the standard academic subjects. The interplay of French, Arabic, and Comorian is a defining feature.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

The secular path uses French-style national exams — the CEP , BEPC , and Baccalauréat — the last of which is the gateway to university.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on the University of the Comoros (Université des Comores) , the country's main institution. Many Comorian students pursue higher education abroad, especially in France and the region.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is very limited , delivered mainly through NGO and community programs.

READ THE FULL COMOROS GUIDE
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Côte d’Ivoire

EDUCATION IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), the largest economy in Francophone West Africa, runs a French-language education system on the French model, with numerous local languages spoken across the country. Since 2015, education has been legally compulsory to age 16, and the government has worked to expand access, though literacy remains relatively...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (6 years)** — École primaire, ages ~6–11, ending with the CEPE
- **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 6 to 16 (since a 2015 law), and primary schooling is intended to be free. The school year runs roughly September to July . Enrollment has risen, though completion — particularly for girls — remains a challenge.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools , with instruction in French. The system faces teacher shortages, crowded classrooms, and resource constraints, and the government has invested in building schools and expanding access.

AT A GLANCE

Language	French
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – July
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XOF)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Côte d'Ivoire has a substantial private and religious school sector (Catholic, Protestant, and Islamic), concentrated in Abidjan and larger towns, which educates a significant share of students.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in French , covering language, mathematics, sciences, and social studies on a French-influenced curriculum, with technical and vocational options at the upper-secondary level.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Three national exams mark the path: the CEPE (end of primary), the BEPC (end of lower secondary), and the Baccalauréat (end of lycée) — the gateway to university.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is limited , delivered mainly through NGO and faith-based programs, and concentrated in urban areas.

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DR Congo

EDUCATION IN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) — the second-largest country in Africa — runs a French-language education system shaped by Belgian and French traditions, with major national languages (Lingala, Swahili, Kikongo, and Tshiluba) used regionally, especially in early grades. A landmark 2019 reform made primary education free...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- **Secondary (6 years)** — A long cycle including general, technical, and teacher-training humanités , ending with the Examen d'État

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Primary education is compulsory and, since 2019, free in public schools — a reform that brought millions of additional children into school. The school year runs roughly September to June . Implementation and quality vary widely across the country.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools (many historically run in partnership with churches, especially Catholic and Protestant networks, under state agreement). The free-primary reform boosted access but strained capacity — class sizes, teacher supply, and funding remain major issues.

AT A GLANCE	
Languages	French + national
Compulsory	Primary (free)
Structure	6 + 6
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Examen d'État
Currency	Franc (CDF)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

The DRC has a private and religious school sector , concentrated in Kinshasa and larger cities, offering alternatives to the public/agreement schools.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in a national language in early primary and shifts to French for later primary and secondary, covering the standard academic and technical subjects. The humanités streams at secondary level allow general, technical, or pedagogical specialization.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

The pivotal assessment is the Examen d'État (state examination) at the end of secondary school, which certifies completion and governs access to higher education.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is very limited , delivered mainly through NGO and faith-based programs, and concentrated in urban areas.

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Djibouti

EDUCATION IN DJIBOUTI

Djibouti, a small, strategically located nation in the Horn of Africa, runs a French-language education system (with Arabic also official and taught), shaped by its French colonial history. The system is limited by the country's size and resources, and the government has worked to expand access and improve retention, especially for girls.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary / basic first cycle (5 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- **Middle / basic second cycle (4 years)** — Completing basic education
- **Secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, general or technical, ending with the Baccalauréat

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Basic education is compulsory and intended to be free , beginning around age 6. Access has expanded, though completion and quality remain challenges. The school year runs roughly September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools , with instruction primarily in French and Arabic taught throughout. The system is small and centrally organized, and relies partly on external support.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Djibouti has a private and religious school sector (including French-curriculum and Islamic schools), concentrated in Djibouti City.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	French · Arabic
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	5 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	Franc (DJF)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in French , with Arabic and Islamic education, covering the standard academic subjects on a French-influenced curriculum.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

The path uses French-style national exams, culminating in the Baccalauréat at the end of secondary school — the gateway to university.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on the University of Djibouti , the country's main institution. Many students also pursue higher education abroad, particularly in France and the region.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is very limited , delivered mainly through NGO and community programs.

READ THE FULL DJIBOUTI GUIDE
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Egypt

EDUCATION IN EGYPT

Egypt runs one of the largest and most centralized education systems in the Arab world, overseen by the Ministry of Education (schools) and the Ministry of Higher Education (universities), with Arabic as the language of instruction. The constitution makes Arabic, religious education, and national history core subjects, and the system...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (6 years)** — Grades 1–6
- **Preparatory / lower secondary (3 years)** — Grades 7–9, ending with the preparatory certificate — completing the nine-year compulsory basic cycle
- **Secondary (3 years)** — General academic (leading to the Thanaweya Amma / Egyptian Baccalaureate) or technical/vocational (3-year, or 5-year advanced) programs

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Basic education (primary plus preparatory, nine years) is free and compulsory , from around age 6. Public education is tuition-free, and the school year runs roughly September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The majority of Egyptian students attend free public schools . The system is centralized, and the constitution requires that public and private schools follow national educational policy. Challenges include understaffing, underpaid teachers, and heavy reliance on costly private tutoring — a central problem the current reforms aim to...

AT A GLANCE

Language	Arabic
Compulsory	Basic (9 yrs)
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Thanaweya Amma → Egyptian Bac
Currency	Pound (EGP)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Egypt has a large private-school sector , including language schools (which teach the national curriculum with core subjects in English or French) and international schools offering the British IGCSE , the IB , or American curricula, concentrated in Cairo and Alexandria. These international qualifications are recognized by universities...

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum centers on Arabic, mathematics, the sciences, religious education, and national history , with English (and often French) taught as foreign languages. A reform program ("Education 2.0") has been modernizing early-grade curricula to emphasize understanding over memorization.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is not a common or formalized route in Egypt; education is school-based across the public, private, Al-Azhar, and international sectors.

READ THE FULL EGYPT GUIDE
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Equatorial Guinea

EDUCATION IN EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Equatorial Guinea is distinctive as the only country in Africa where Spanish is an official language (alongside French and Portuguese), a legacy of Spanish colonial rule. Its education system is Spanish-based , and literacy is relatively high for the region (around 95%). Despite significant oil wealth, investment in human development has...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- **Lower secondary (4 years)** —
- **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Leading to university

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Primary education is compulsory and, in principle, free , beginning around age 6. Access and completion vary, and the school year runs roughly September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools , with instruction in Spanish. The system contends with teacher shortages and resource constraints despite the country's oil revenues.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Equatorial Guinea has a private and religious (largely Catholic) school sector , concentrated in Malabo and Bata.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Spanish · French
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	6 + 4 + 3
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	UNGE
Currency	CFA franc (XAF)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in Spanish , covering the standard academic subjects on a Spanish-influenced curriculum, with French also taught reflecting the country's regional (CEMAC/Francophone) ties.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students progress through secondary-school examinations on the Spanish-influenced model, culminating in the qualifications required for university entry.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on the National University of Equatorial Guinea (UNGE) , with campuses in Malabo and Bata. Many students also pursue higher education abroad, particularly in Spain.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is very limited , delivered mainly through NGO and faith-based programs.

READ THE FULL EQUATORIAL GUINEA GUIDE
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AFRICA — 17 OF 54

Eritrea

EDUCATION IN ERITREA

Eritrea, in the Horn of Africa, runs a state-controlled education system in which early primary is taught in mother-tongue languages (Eritrea recognizes nine), shifting to English as the medium of instruction from middle school, with Tigrinya and Arabic also prominent. The government has expanded access since independence in 1993, though...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Elementary (5 years)** — Mother-tongue instruction, ages ~7–11
- **Middle (3 years)** — Transition to English-medium instruction
- **Secondary (4 years)** — Ending with the national secondary certificate examination

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory through elementary and middle school (around eight years) and is provided free by the state. The school year runs roughly September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Almost all Eritrean students attend free state schools . The system is centralized, and the state places strong emphasis on national languages in early grades and on English thereafter.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

The private-school sector is very limited ; education is overwhelmingly state-provided, alongside some religious schooling.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Tigrinya · Arabic · English
Compulsory	Elem. + middle
Structure	5 – 3 – 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	ESECE
Currency	Nakfa (ERN)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers language (mother tongue, then English), mathematics, the sciences, and social studies. The shift from mother-tongue to English-medium instruction is a defining structural feature.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students take the Eritrean Secondary Education Certificate Examination (ESECE) at the end of secondary school, which governs progression to higher education and other pathways.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education was reorganized after the closure of the University of Asmara in the mid-2000s; it is now delivered through a set of specialized colleges and institutes around the country (such as the Eritrea Institute of Technology). Access to higher education is closely tied to national-service arrangements.

READ THE FULL ERITREA GUIDE
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Eswatini

EDUCATION IN ESWATINI

Eswatini (formerly Swaziland, renamed in 2018) runs a British-influenced education system with English as the medium of instruction and siSwati as the national language. Free primary education was introduced in 2010, boosting enrollment, and literacy is relatively high (around 88%). The country administers its own national examinations...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (7 years)** — Ages ~6–12, ending with the Eswatini Primary Certificate (EPC)
- **Junior secondary (3 years)** — Ending with the Junior Certificate (JC)
- **Senior secondary (2 years)** — Ending with the Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education (EGCSE)

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Free primary education (introduced in 2010) is provided, and the government has worked to expand access and retention. The school year runs roughly January to December .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend government and government-aided schools (many with church involvement), with instruction in English (siSwati in early grades). The free-primary policy significantly increased enrollment.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Eswatini has a private and church-affiliated school sector , offering alternatives concentrated in and around Mbabane and Manzini.



AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · siSwati
Compulsory	Free primary
Structure	7 + 3 + 2
School year	Jan – Dec
Exams	EPC · JC · EGCSE
Currency	Lilangeni (SZL)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, siSwati, mathematics, sciences, and social studies , geared toward the national examinations, and taught in English from the upper primary level.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Three national examinations mark the path: the EPC (end of primary), the JC (end of junior secondary), and the EGCSE (end of senior secondary) — the latter, which replaced the Cambridge O-Level, is the basis for university entry.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on the University of Eswatini (UNESWA) , the main public university, along with teacher-training and other colleges. Some students also study in neighboring South Africa.

READ THE FULL ESWATINI GUIDE
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AFRICA — 19 OF 54

Ethiopia

EDUCATION IN ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia — one of Africa's most populous countries and home to an ancient learning tradition (the Orthodox church's Ge'ez-language schools date back centuries) — runs a large, rapidly expanding modern education system. Early primary is taught in mother-tongue / regional languages (such as Amharic, Oromo, Tigrinya, and Somali), with...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (grades 1–6)** — Mother-tongue instruction in early grades
- **Middle school (grades 7–8)** —
- **Secondary (grades 9–12)** — General secondary leading to university, alongside technical and vocational (TVET) pathways

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Primary education is the focus of compulsory schooling and intended to be free , beginning around age 7. Enrollment has expanded dramatically, though completion, quality, and rural access remain challenges. The school year runs roughly September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools , with instruction beginning in a regional language and shifting to English. The system has grown rapidly at every level, straining teacher supply and resources; conflict in some regions (such as the northern Tigray war) has disrupted schooling.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Amharic + regional · English
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	6 – 2 – 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	National exam
Currency	Birr (ETB)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Ethiopia has a private and religious school sector (including church, mission, and Islamic schools, plus international schools), concentrated in Addis Ababa and larger cities.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers mother-tongue and English language, mathematics, the sciences, and social studies , with the recent reform emphasizing quality, relevance, and skills. Ethiopia's multilingual approach — starting in regional languages — reflects its federal, multi-ethnic makeup.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students sit national examinations at key stages, culminating in the grade-12 national school-leaving / university-entrance examination , which governs admission to higher education. The exams have been tightened in recent years amid concerns about integrity.

READ THE FULL ETHIOPIA GUIDE
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Gabon

EDUCATION IN GABON

Gabon, an oil-producing nation in Central Africa, runs a French-language education system on the French model, overseen by the ministries of education. Literacy is relatively high for the region (around 85%), and the government has invested in expanding access, though quality and rural provision remain challenges.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (6 years)** — École primaire, ages ~6–11, ending with the CEP
- **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 6 to 16 , and public primary schooling is intended to be free. The school year runs roughly September to July . Access is stronger in Libreville and Port-Gentil than in rural areas.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools , with instruction in French. The system contends with teacher shortages and resource constraints despite the country's oil revenues.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Gabon has a private and religious (largely Catholic) school sector , concentrated in the main cities.

AT A GLANCE

Language	French
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – July
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XAF)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in French , covering language, mathematics, sciences, and social studies on a French-influenced curriculum.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Three national exams mark the path: the CEP (end of primary), the BEPC (end of lower secondary), and the Baccalauréat (end of lycée) — the gateway to university.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on Omar Bongo University in Libreville (the main general university) and the University of Science and Technology of Masuku (USTM) in Franceville, along with specialized institutions. Many students also study abroad, particularly in France.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is limited , delivered mainly through NGO and faith-based programs.

READ THE FULL GABON GUIDE
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Ghana

EDUCATION IN GHANA

Ghana runs one of West Africa's stronger education systems, with English as the medium of instruction (local languages such as Twi, Ewe, Fante, Ga, and Dagbani are used in early primary). Basic education is free and compulsory, and in a landmark move Ghana made senior high school free in 2017 — sharply increasing enrollment. Ghana shares...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Kindergarten (2 years)** — Early-childhood education
- **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- **Junior High School (JHS, 3 years)** — Ending with the BECE — completing basic education
- **Senior High School (SHS, 3 years)** — General or TVET streams, ending with the WASSCE

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Basic education (kindergarten through JHS) is free and compulsory (the FCUBE policy), and, since 2017, public senior high school is also free — covering tuition, boarding, and meals. The school year runs on an academic calendar into the following year.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend public schools , with instruction in English (and local languages in early grades). The Free SHS policy expanded access dramatically, bringing both opportunity and challenges around infrastructure, class sizes, and quality.

AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Basic (KG–JHS)
Structure	2 + 6 + 3 + 3
School year	Sept – Aug
Exams	BECE · WASSCE
Currency	Cedi (GHS)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Ghana has a substantial private and religious school sector , from low-cost private schools to well-regarded international schools, concentrated in Accra, Kumasi, and other cities; some private SHSs now participate in the Free SHS scheme.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, mathematics, integrated science, and social studies , with SHS streams in general science, general arts, business, home economics, and visual/performing arts, plus a growing emphasis on technical and vocational education (TVET) .

STUDYING IN GHANA FROM ABROAD

- **Language** — English is the medium of instruction throughout
- **Regional draw** — Ghana attracts some students from across West Africa and the diaspora, including for study-abroad and exchange
- **Practicalities** — International students apply directly and arrange a student permit; confirm current requirements

READ THE FULL GHANA GUIDE
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Guinea

EDUCATION IN GUINEA

Guinea, a West African nation and former French colony, runs a French-language education system on the French model, with local languages (such as Pular, Malinké, and Susu) widely spoken. Literacy is low, and the government has worked to expand access, though poverty, teacher shortages, and rural provision remain major challenges.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (6 years)** — École primaire, ages ~7–12, ending with the CEP
- **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Primary education is compulsory and intended to be free , beginning around age 7. Access and completion — particularly for girls — remain challenges. The school year runs roughly October to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools , with instruction in French. The system contends with teacher shortages, crowded classrooms, and limited resources, alongside Quranic schooling in many communities.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Guinea has a private and religious school sector , concentrated in Conakry and larger towns.

AT A GLANCE

Language	French
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Oct – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	Franc (GNF)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in French , covering language, mathematics, sciences, and social studies on a French-influenced curriculum.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Three national exams mark the path: the CEP (end of primary), the BEPC (end of lower secondary), and the Baccalauréat (end of lycée) — the gateway to university.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on Gamal Abdel Nasser University of Conakry , the country's main institution, along with other public and private universities. Many students also study abroad, especially in France and the region.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is very limited , delivered mainly through NGO and faith-based programs.

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AFRICA — 23 OF 54

Guinea-Bissau

EDUCATION IN GUINEA-BISSAU

Guinea-Bissau, a small West African nation and former Portuguese colony, has Portuguese as its official language, though Crioulo (Guinea-Bissau Creole) is the everyday lingua franca and local languages are widely spoken. The education system is Portuguese-influenced but under-resourced, and years of political instability have hampered...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Basic education (ensino básico)** — The compulsory foundation, in stages across roughly the first nine years
- **Secondary education** — General secondary leading toward higher education or work

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Basic education is compulsory and intended to be free , beginning around age 6/7. In practice, access and completion are limited by poverty, instability, and a shortage of teachers and functioning schools. The school year runs roughly October to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools , with instruction in Portuguese — though many children speak Crioulo or local languages at home, which poses a learning challenge. The system relies heavily on external and community support.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Guinea-Bissau has a private and religious school sector , plus Quranic schooling, concentrated in Bissau.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Portuguese · Crioulo
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	6 + 3 + 3
School year	Oct – June
Higher ed	Amílcar Cabral Univ.
Currency	CFA franc (XOF)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in Portuguese , covering the standard academic subjects, with Crioulo and local languages central to daily life.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students progress through basic and secondary examinations on the Portuguese-influenced model, culminating in the qualifications required for higher education.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on institutions such as Amílcar Cabral University and the private Lusophone University of Guinea, though capacity is very limited. Many students pursue higher education abroad, especially in Portugal.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is very limited , delivered mainly through NGO and faith-based programs.

READ THE FULL GUINEA-BISSAU GUIDE
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Kenya

EDUCATION IN KENYA

Kenya, an East African education leader, runs an English- and Kiswahili-language system that is in the middle of its biggest reform in decades : the shift from the long-standing, exam-heavy 8-4-4 system to a Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) — now often called Competency-Based Education (CBE). Instruction is in English (with Kiswahili...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Pre-primary (2 years)** — Ages ~4–5
- **Primary (6 years, Grades 1–6)** —
- **Junior School (3 years, Grades 7–9)** —
- **Senior School (3 years, Grades 10–12)** — With academic and career pathways (including a strong STEM focus)
- **University (3+ years)** —

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Kenya provides free primary education (since 2003) and free day secondary schooling , with a "100% transition" policy aiming to move every primary graduate into secondary. The school year runs roughly January to November .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend public schools , with instruction in English (Kiswahili taught; mother tongue in early grades). The CBC has driven major investment — new classrooms, laboratories, and large-scale teacher recruitment — to accommodate Junior and Senior School.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · Kiswahili
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	2 – 6 – 3 – 3
School year	Jan – Nov
University entry	KCSE → KCBE
Currency	Shilling (KES)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Kenya has a large private and international-school sector , from low-cost private schools to international schools offering British or IB curricula, concentrated in Nairobi and other cities.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The CBC emphasizes seven core competencies — communication and collaboration, critical thinking and problem-solving, creativity and imagination, citizenship, digital literacy, learning to learn, and self-efficacy — with continuous school-based assessment replacing the old exam-passing culture, alongside core academic subjects.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

- **Old 8-4-4 exams** — The KCPE (end of primary) and KCSE (end of secondary) — the latter still the university-entry exam during the transition, but being phased out
- **New CBC assessments** — The Kenya Junior School Education Assessment (KJSEA) at Grade 9, and a new senior-secondary assessment (toward a Kenya Certificate of Basic...

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Lesotho

EDUCATION IN LESOTHO

Lesotho — a mountainous country entirely surrounded by South Africa — runs a British-influenced education system with English as the medium of instruction and Sesotho as the national language. Free primary education (introduced in 2000) boosted enrollment, and Lesotho is notable for relatively high literacy, with women's literacy...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (7 years)** — Ages ~6–12, ending with the PSLE
- **Junior secondary (3 years)** — Ending with the Junior Certificate (JC)
- **Senior secondary (2 years)** — Ending with the LGCSE

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Free primary education (introduced in 2000) is provided, and the government has worked to expand access and retention. The school year runs roughly January to December .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend government and church-run schools (churches, especially, run many schools with state support), with instruction in Sesotho in early grades moving to English. Herding responsibilities have historically kept some boys out of school, contributing to the higher female literacy.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Lesotho has a private and church-affiliated school sector , concentrated around Maseru.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · Sesotho
Compulsory	Free primary
Structure	7 + 3 + 2
School year	Jan – Dec
Exams	PSLE · LGCSE
Currency	Loti (LSL)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, Sesotho, mathematics, sciences, and social studies , geared toward the national examinations.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Three national examinations mark the path: the PSLE (Primary School Leaving Examination), the JC (Junior Certificate), and the LGCSE (Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education) — the basis for university entry.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on the National University of Lesotho (NUL) in Roma, along with teacher-training and technical colleges. Many students also study in neighboring South Africa.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is limited , delivered through a small number of programs and church/NGO involvement.

READ THE FULL LESOTHO GUIDE
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AFRICA — 26 OF 54

Liberia

EDUCATION IN LIBERIA

Liberia, founded in the 19th century by freed American slaves, runs an English-language education system with a US-influenced structure (elementary, junior high, senior high). Literacy is low — a legacy of civil war (1989–2003) and the later Ebola epidemic, which devastated schooling — and the country has been rebuilding its education...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Elementary / primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- **Junior high (3 years)** — Completing basic education
- **Senior high (3 years)** — Ending with the WASSCE

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory through primary and junior high and intended to be free. Access and completion remain challenges after years of disruption. The school year runs roughly September to July .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public and mission (church-run) schools , with instruction in English. The system has been rebuilding after conflict, with support from government reforms and international partners, though quality and resources remain limited.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Liberia has a private and faith-based school sector , concentrated in Monrovia, alongside public and mission schools.

AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Primary + Junior High
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Sept – July
Exams	WASSCE
Currency	Dollar (LRD)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, mathematics, sciences, and social studies , taught in English on a US-influenced model.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students take the WASSCE (West African Senior School Certificate Examination), administered regionally by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), at the end of senior high — the basis for university admission.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on the University of Liberia in Monrovia (the main public university), along with Cuttington University and other institutions. Many students also study abroad.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is very limited , delivered mainly through NGO and faith-based programs.

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AFRICA — 27 OF 54

Libya

EDUCATION IN LIBYA

Libya, a North African oil producer, runs an Arabic-language education system with relatively high literacy. Once well-funded from oil revenues, the system has been disrupted by years of conflict and political division since 2011, which have damaged schools and split administration between rival authorities.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Basic education (9 years)** — Compulsory, ages ~6–15
- **Secondary (3 years)** — General or specialized/vocational, leading to university

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Basic education (nine years) is compulsory and free , beginning around age 6. The school year runs roughly September to June . Access has been affected by insecurity in parts of the country.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend free public schools , with instruction in Arabic. The system was heavily state-funded from oil revenues; ongoing instability has strained provision and quality.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Libya has a growing private and international-school sector , concentrated in the main cities.

AT A GLANCE

Language	Arabic
Compulsory	Basic (9 yrs)
Structure	9 + 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Secondary certificate
Currency	Dinar (LYD)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in Arabic , covering language, mathematics, the sciences, social studies, and Islamic education, with English taught as a foreign language.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students complete a secondary-school certificate at the end of secondary education, which governs university admission.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education includes the University of Tripoli and the University of Benghazi (the largest institutions), along with other universities. The sector has been affected by the country's division and instability.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is limited and further strained by instability.

READ THE FULL LIBYA GUIDE
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AFRICA — 28 OF 54

Madagascar

EDUCATION IN MADAGASCAR

Madagascar, a large Indian Ocean island nation, runs a French-influenced education system in which both Malagasy (the national language) and French are used in schooling. One of the world's poorest countries, Madagascar has expanded access over time, but literacy, completion, and rural provision remain significant challenges.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (5 years)** — École primaire, ending with the CEPE
- **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Primary education is compulsory and intended to be free , beginning around age 6. Access has expanded, but many children do not complete primary school. The school year runs roughly September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools , with instruction in Malagasy in early grades and French higher up. The system relies partly on international support and contends with teacher shortages and limited resources.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is very limited , delivered mainly through NGO and faith-based programs.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Malagasy · French
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	5 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	Ariary (MGA)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Madagascar has a large private and religious (largely Christian) school sector , which educates a significant share of students, concentrated in Antananarivo and larger towns.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction moves from Malagasy in early grades to French for later primary and secondary, covering the standard academic subjects on a French-influenced curriculum.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Three national exams mark the path: the CEPE (end of primary), the BEPC (end of lower secondary), and the Baccalauréat (end of lycée) — the gateway to university.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is not an established route ; education is school-based.

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AFRICA — 29 OF 54

Malawi

EDUCATION IN MALAWI

Malawi, in southeastern Africa, runs a British-influenced education system with English as the medium of instruction and Chichewa as the national language (used in early grades). Free primary education, introduced in 1994, dramatically increased enrollment. As one of the world's poorest countries, Malawi faces challenges of large class...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (8 years, Standards 1–8)** — Ages ~6–13, ending with the PSLCE
- **Secondary (4 years, Forms 1–4)** — Ending with the JCE (junior) and the MSCE (senior)

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Free primary education (introduced in 1994) is provided, and the government has worked to expand access. The school year runs roughly September to July . Secondary places are limited and competitive.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public primary schools , with instruction in Chichewa in early grades moving to English. The 1994 free-primary policy brought a huge influx of students, straining resources; secondary schooling is more limited.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Malawi has a private and religious (mission) school sector , including community day secondary schools, alongside government provision.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · Chichewa
Compulsory	Free primary
Structure	8 + 4
School year	Sept – July
Exams	PSLCE · MSCE
Currency	Kwacha (MWK)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, Chichewa, mathematics, sciences, and social studies , geared toward the national examinations.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Three national examinations mark the path: the PSLCE (Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination), the JCE (Junior Certificate Examination), and the MSCE (Malawi School Certificate of Education) — the basis for university entry.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on the University of Malawi , the Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST) , and the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, among others. University places are limited relative to demand.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is uncommon in Malawi; most children attend public or mission schools.

READ THE FULL MALAWI GUIDE
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Mali

EDUCATION IN MALI

Mali, a large Sahelian nation and former French colony, runs a French-language education system on the French model, with Bambara and other national languages widely spoken. Mali has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world , and — critically — a severe security crisis has forced the closure of many schools across the north and...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Fundamental education, cycle 1 (6 years)** — Primary, ages ~7–12
- **Fundamental education, cycle 2 (3 years)** — Ending with the DEF
- **Secondary (3 years)** — Lycée (general or technical), ending with the Baccalauréat

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Fundamental education is compulsory in principle and intended to be free , beginning around age 7. In practice, access is limited by poverty, distance, and — increasingly — insecurity. The school year runs roughly October to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools , with instruction in French (and some national languages in early grades). The system faces teacher shortages, crowded classrooms, and closures in conflict-affected regions, alongside widespread Quranic schooling.

AT A GLANCE

Language	French
Compulsory	Fundamental
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Oct – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XOF)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Mali has a private and religious (including Franco-Arab and Islamic) school sector , concentrated in Bamako and larger towns.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in French , with some early-grade teaching in national languages, covering the standard academic subjects on a French-influenced curriculum.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Two national exams mark the path: the DEF (Diplôme d'Études Fondamentales) at the end of fundamental education, and the Baccalauréat at the end of lycée — the gateway to university.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is very limited , delivered mainly through NGO and faith-based programs, and further strained by the education emergency.

READ THE FULL MALI GUIDE
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Mauritania

EDUCATION IN MAURITANIA

Mauritania, straddling the Arab and West African worlds in the Sahel, has Arabic as its official language and French widely used, alongside national languages (Pulaar, Soninke, Wolof). Its education system is Arabic- and French-influenced, and literacy is low. Language of instruction and "Arabization" have been sensitive issues in this...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège
- **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Primary education is compulsory and intended to be free , beginning around age 6, but access and completion are limited by poverty and distance. The school year runs roughly October to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools , in Arabic and French, alongside widespread Quranic schooling. The system contends with teacher shortages and limited resources.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Mauritania has a private and religious school sector , concentrated in Nouakchott and larger towns.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Arabic · French
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Oct – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	Ougulya (MRU)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction combines Arabic and French , covering the standard academic subjects and Islamic education, on an Arabic/French-influenced curriculum.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students complete national examinations, culminating in the Baccalauréat at the end of secondary school — the gateway to university.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on the University of Nouakchott , the country's main institution, along with specialized institutes. Many students also study abroad, in France and the Arab world.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is very limited , delivered mainly through NGO and faith-based programs.

READ THE FULL MAURITANIA GUIDE
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AFRICA — 32 OF 54

Mauritius

EDUCATION IN MAURITIUS

Mauritius, a multi-ethnic Indian Ocean island nation, runs a multilingual education system : English is the official medium of instruction, French is widely used, Mauritian Creole is the everyday language, and various Asian and ancestral languages are taught. The country uses Cambridge (British-based) examinations , provides free...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Pre-primary + Primary (6 years)** — Ending with the PSAC
- **Secondary (7 years)** — Lower secondary (ending with the NCE) and upper secondary, leading to Cambridge SC and HSC examinations

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory and free from age 5 to 16 , and Mauritius has extended free education to the tertiary level (public university tuition free for citizens since 2019). The school year runs roughly January to December .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools , with instruction in English (and French widely used). The system reflects Mauritius's diversity, offering ancestral/Asian language options alongside the core curriculum.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Mauritius has a private and confessional school sector , plus international schools, concentrated in and around Port Louis and the main towns.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · French · Creole
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	6 + 7
School year	Jan – Dec
Exams	PSAC · SC · HSC
Currency	Rupee (MUR)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, French, mathematics, the sciences, and social studies , with optional Asian and ancestral languages (Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Mandarin, Arabic, and others), geared toward Cambridge examinations.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Assessment uses local and Cambridge examinations : the PSAC (Primary School Achievement Certificate) at the end of primary, the NCE (National Certificate of Education) in lower secondary, and the Cambridge School Certificate (SC, ≈ O-Levels) and Higher School Certificate (HSC, ≈ A-Levels) in upper secondary — the basis for university...

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Mauritius supports inclusive education , integrating students with additional needs into mainstream schools with support, alongside special provision.

READ THE FULL MAURITIUS GUIDE
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Morocco

EDUCATION IN MOROCCO

Morocco runs a multilingual education system : Arabic is the main official language of instruction, Amazigh (Tamazight) is now official and being integrated into schools, and French is widely used — especially for mathematics, the sciences, and higher education (Spanish features in the north). The government has pursued major reforms to...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- **Lower secondary / collège (3 years)** — Completing the compulsory cycle
- **Upper secondary / lycée (3 years)** — General or technical, ending with the Baccalauréat

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 6 to 15 , and public schooling is free. The school year runs roughly September to June . Expanding pre-schooling and cutting dropout — particularly in rural areas and among girls — have been reform priorities.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend free public schools , with instruction primarily in Arabic and French increasingly used for scientific subjects in upper grades. Amazigh is being introduced into the curriculum, reflecting its official status since 2011.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Arabic · Amazigh · French
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	Dirham (MAD)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Morocco has a substantial private and international-school sector (including French, Spanish, and American-curriculum schools), concentrated in Casablanca, Rabat, and other cities, popular with families seeking stronger French/English and international pathways.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Arabic, French, mathematics, the sciences, social studies, and Islamic education , with Amazigh being integrated and English increasingly taught. Language of instruction — especially the balance between Arabic and French in the sciences — has been a central, debated reform issue.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

The key qualification is the Baccalauréat , a national examination taken at the end of the lycée (in streams such as sciences, letters, and economics) — the basis for university admission. Some competitive fields and grandes écoles set additional entrance requirements.

READ THE FULL MOROCCO GUIDE
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Mozambique

EDUCATION IN MOZAMBIQUE

Mozambique, a large Southern African nation and former Portuguese colony, runs a Portuguese-language education system with local languages widely spoken (and used in some early-grade bilingual programs). The government has expanded access substantially since the end of civil war, though literacy remains relatively low and the system is...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (7 years)** — Two phases (EP1, grades 1–5, and EP2, grades 6–7), ages ~6–12
- **Lower secondary (3 years)** —
- **Upper secondary (2 years)** — Leading to university

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Primary education is the focus of compulsory schooling and intended to be free , beginning around age 6. Access has expanded, though completion and quality — especially in rural areas — remain challenges. The school year runs roughly January to November .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools , with instruction in Portuguese (and bilingual programs in local languages in some early grades). The system relies partly on international support and contends with teacher shortages; conflict in the north (Cabo Delgado) has disrupted schooling there.

AT A GLANCE

Language	Portuguese
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	7 + 3 + 2
School year	Jan – Nov
Higher ed	Eduardo Mondlane Univ.
Currency	Metical (MZN)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Mozambique has a private and religious school sector , concentrated in Maputo and larger cities.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in Portuguese , with local-language bilingual approaches in some early grades, covering the standard academic subjects.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students sit national examinations at key stages, culminating in the qualifications required for university admission.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo (the oldest and largest), along with the Pedagogical University and other institutions. Many students also study abroad, especially in Portugal and the region.

READ THE FULL MOZAMBIQUE GUIDE
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Namibia

EDUCATION IN NAMIBIA

Namibia, in southwestern Africa, runs a British/South-African-influenced education system with English as the official medium of instruction (local languages such as Oshiwambo, Afrikaans, and German are used in early grades and spoken widely). Literacy is relatively high, free basic education has been phased in, and the country uses...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (7 years)** — Ages ~6–13
- **Junior secondary (3 years)** —
- **Senior secondary (2–3 years)** — Leading to the NSSC examinations

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Namibia has phased in free primary and secondary education , and schooling is compulsory through the basic phase. The school year runs roughly January to December .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend government schools , with instruction in a local language in early grades moving to English. Namibia has invested in expanding access and removing school fees.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Namibia has a private and church-affiliated school sector , plus some international schools, concentrated in Windhoek and larger towns.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English + local
Compulsory	Free basic education
Structure	7 + 3 + 2/3
School year	Jan – Dec
Exams	NSSC
Currency	Dollar (NAD)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, local languages, mathematics, sciences, and social studies , geared toward the Cambridge-based national examinations.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Secondary certification uses the Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate (NSSC) — developed with Cambridge — taken at ordinary and advanced-subsidiary levels at the end of senior secondary, and used for university entry.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is led by the University of Namibia (UNAM) and the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) , along with the International University of Management and colleges. English is the medium of instruction.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is uncommon in Namibia; most children attend government or private schools.

READ THE FULL NAMIBIA GUIDE
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Niger

EDUCATION IN NIGER

Niger, a landlocked Sahelian nation and former French colony, runs a French-language education system on the French model, with Hausa, Zarma, and other national languages widely spoken. Niger has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world , and the system faces severe challenges of poverty, rapid population growth, teacher shortages...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (6 years)** — École primaire, ages ~7–12, ending with the CEP
- **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Primary education is compulsory in principle and intended to be free , beginning around age 7, but access and completion — particularly for girls — are very limited. The school year runs roughly October to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools , with instruction in French (and some national languages in early grades), alongside widespread Quranic schooling. The system contends with acute shortages and a very young, fast-growing population.

AT A GLANCE

Language	French
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Oct – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XOF)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Niger has a private and religious school sector , concentrated in Niamey and larger towns.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in French , with some national-language teaching in early grades, covering the standard academic subjects and Islamic education.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Three national exams mark the path: the CEP (end of primary), the BEPC (end of lower secondary), and the Baccalauréat (end of lycée) — the gateway to university.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on Abdou Moumouni University in Niamey (the main institution), along with newer regional universities. Many students also study abroad, especially in France and the region.

READ THE FULL NIGER GUIDE
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AFRICA — 37 OF 54

Nigeria

EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Nigeria — Africa's most populous country — runs the continent's largest education system, with English as the official medium of instruction (and Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and hundreds of other languages spoken and used in early grades). The system follows a 6-3-3-4 structure, and access to university is famously competitive, filtered through...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- **Junior Secondary School (JSS, 3 years)** — Ending with the BECE — completing the nine-year Universal Basic Education cycle
- **Senior Secondary School (SSS, 3 years)** — Ending with the WASSCE/NECO
- **Tertiary (4 years)** — University (many programs run 4–6 years)

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy, the nine-year basic cycle (primary plus junior secondary) is free and compulsory . The school year runs roughly September to July . Despite this, Nigeria has one of the world's largest out-of-school populations, concentrated in the north.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools run by state and local governments, with instruction beginning in a local language and shifting to English. Quality, funding, and access vary enormously across states and between the wealthier south and the north.

AT A GLANCE	
Language	English + Hausa/Yoruba/Igbo
Compulsory	Basic (9 yrs)
Structure	6 – 3 – 3 – 4
School year	Sept – July
University entry	WASSCE + UTME/JAMB
Currency	Naira (NGN)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Nigeria has an enormous private-school sector , from low-cost private schools to elite and international schools, and a booming private-university sector (such as Covenant and Babcock), reflecting demand that outstrips public capacity.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, mathematics, the sciences, social studies, and Nigerian languages , with religious (Christian or Islamic) studies. Senior secondary students choose science, arts, or commercial streams.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

- **BECE** — The Basic Education Certificate Examination at the end of junior secondary
- **WASSCE / NECO** — The West African Senior School Certificate (WAEC) and the National Examinations Council exams at the end of senior secondary
- **UTME (JAMB)** — The Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination, run by JAMB — the national university-entrance exam — followed by university "post-UTME" screening

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Republic of the Congo

EDUCATION IN REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

The Republic of the Congo (Congo-Brazzaville) runs a French-language education system on the French model, with Lingala and Kituba widely spoken as national languages. Supported historically by oil revenues, the country has relatively higher literacy than some regional neighbors, though quality and resources remain uneven.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (6 years)** — École primaire, ages ~6–11, ending with the CEP
- **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 6 to 16 , and public primary schooling is intended to be free. The school year runs roughly October to June . Access is stronger in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire than in rural areas.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools , with instruction in French. The system contends with teacher shortages and resource constraints, though oil wealth has supported investment in education.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

The Republic of the Congo has a private and religious (largely Catholic) school sector , concentrated in the main cities.

AT A GLANCE	
Language	French
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Oct – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XAF)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in French , covering language, mathematics, sciences, and social studies on a French-influenced curriculum, with Lingala and Kituba central to everyday communication.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Three national exams mark the path: the CEP (end of primary), the BEPC (end of lower secondary), and the Baccalauréat (end of lycée) — the gateway to university.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on Marien Ngouabi University in Brazzaville, the country's main public university, along with a growing number of private and specialized institutions.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is very limited , delivered mainly through NGO and faith-based programs.

READ THE FULL REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO GUIDE
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AFRICA — 39 OF 54

Rwanda

EDUCATION IN RWANDA

Rwanda, in East Africa, runs an education system notable for a bold change: in 2008 it switched the language of instruction from French to English , pivoting toward the English-speaking East African Community and global economy (Kinyarwanda is the national language, and French and Swahili are also official). Rwanda has made education...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~7–12, ending with the primary leaving examination
- **Lower secondary / O-Level (3 years)** — Ending with the O-Level national exam
- **Upper secondary / A-Level (3 years)** — Ending with the A-Level national exam, leading to university

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Rwanda provides twelve years of free basic education (primary plus lower and upper secondary), a major expansion of access. The school year runs roughly September to July . Kinyarwanda is used in early primary, shifting to English as the medium of instruction.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public and government-aided schools . The 2008 language switch and the free-basic-education policy transformed the system, though the rapid shift to English and expanded enrollment brought challenges around teacher proficiency and resources.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is uncommon in Rwanda; education is school-based.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Kinyarwanda · English
Compulsory	Basic (12 yrs)
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Sept – July
Exams	O-Level · A-Level
Currency	Franc (RWF)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Rwanda has a private and faith-based school sector , plus international schools, concentrated in Kigali.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum — recently reformed toward a competency-based model — covers English, Kinyarwanda, mathematics, the sciences, and social studies , with a strong emphasis on ICT, entrepreneurship, and national values including reconciliation.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

National examinations mark the path: a primary leaving examination at the end of primary, and O-Level (end of lower secondary) and A-Level (end of upper secondary) national exams — the latter the basis for university admission.

READ THE FULL RWANDA GUIDE
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Senegal

EDUCATION IN SENEGAL

Senegal, a stable West African democracy and former French colony, runs a French-language education system on the French model, with Wolof and other national languages widely spoken. Alongside the state system, Quranic schools (daaras) educate many children. Literacy is relatively low, and the government has worked to expand access and...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (6 years)** — École primaire, ending with the CFEE
- **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BFEM
- **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Primary education is compulsory and intended to be free , beginning around age 6. The school year runs roughly October to July . Completion and quality vary, and many children also attend Quranic schools.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools , with instruction in French (and growing use of national languages in early grades), alongside a strong tradition of Quranic education.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Senegal has a private and religious school sector (including Catholic and Franco-Arab schools), concentrated in Dakar and larger towns.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	French · Wolof
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Oct – July
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XOF)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in French , with growing use of national languages, covering the standard academic subjects and, in many schools, Islamic or Franco-Arab education.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Three national exams mark the path: the CFEE (end of primary), the BFEM (Brevet, end of lower secondary), and the Baccalauréat (end of lycée) — the gateway to university.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on Cheikh Anta Diop University (UCAD) in Dakar (the largest and most prominent, a major Francophone West African institution), along with Gaston Berger University in Saint-Louis and newer regional universities. Many students also study in France.

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Seychelles

EDUCATION IN SEYCHELLES

Seychelles, an Indian Ocean island nation, has three official languages — Seychellois Creole (Kreol), English, and French . Education uses Creole in early grades and shifts to English (with French taught), and the country provides free education with high literacy. Seychelles uses Cambridge-based examinations.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Crèche + Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~5/6–11, beginning in Creole
- **Secondary (5 years)** — Leading to IGCSE and, for some, A-Level examinations

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory and free from age 6 to 16 . The school year runs roughly January to December . Seychelles has invested strongly in universal education.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free state schools , with Creole used in early grades and English becoming the medium of instruction, alongside French.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Seychelles has a small private and international-school sector , alongside the dominant public system.

AT A GLANCE	
Languages	Creole · English · French
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	6 + 5
School year	Jan – Dec
Exams	IGCSE · A-Level
Currency	Rupee (SCR)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Creole, English, French, mathematics, the sciences, and social studies , geared toward Cambridge examinations, reflecting the country's trilingual character.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Secondary certification uses Cambridge examinations — the IGCSE / O-Level and, for advanced study, A-Level — alongside local assessments.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on the University of Seychelles , along with the Seychelles Institute of Technology and other colleges. Many students also study abroad, often on government scholarships.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Seychelles supports inclusive education , integrating students with additional needs into mainstream schools with support, alongside special provision.

READ THE FULL SEYCHELLES GUIDE
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AFRICA — 42 OF 54

Sierra Leone

EDUCATION IN SIERRA LEONE

Sierra Leone, a West African nation and former British colony, runs an English-language education system (Krio is the lingua franca, with Mende, Temne, and other languages spoken). After the devastation of civil war (1991–2002) and the Ebola epidemic, the government launched a major Free Quality School Education program in 2018, boosting...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (6 years)** — Ending with the NPSE
- **Junior Secondary School (JSS, 3 years)** — Ending with the BECE
- **Senior Secondary School (SSS, 3 years)** — Ending with the WASSCE

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Basic education is the focus of compulsory schooling , and the 2018 Free Quality Education policy made public primary and secondary schooling free, driving a large enrollment increase. The school year runs roughly September to July .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend government and government-assisted schools , with instruction in English (and local languages in early grades). The Free Quality Education program expanded access substantially, bringing challenges around classrooms, teachers, and resources.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is not an established route ; education is school-based.

AT A GLANCE	
Language	English
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Sept – July
Exams	NPSE · WASSCE
Currency	Leone (SLE)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Sierra Leone has a private and mission (church) school sector , concentrated in Freetown and larger towns.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, mathematics, sciences, and social studies , taught in English, geared toward the national examinations.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Three national examinations mark the path: the NPSE (National Primary School Examination), the BECE (Basic Education Certificate Examination), and the WASSCE (West African Senior School Certificate Examination, administered regionally by WAEC) — the basis for university entry.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is very limited , delivered mainly through NGO and faith-based programs.

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AFRICA — 43 OF 54

Somalia

EDUCATION IN SOMALIA

Somalia, in the Horn of Africa, has an education system rebuilding after the collapse of central government in 1991 and decades of conflict. Somali is the main language of instruction, with Arabic and Islamic education prominent. In the absence of a strong state system for years, education became heavily private, community-, and...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (about 8 years)** — The foundation stage
- **Secondary (about 4 years)** — Leading toward higher education or work

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Primary education is compulsory in principle and intended to be free , but access is limited by poverty, displacement, and insecurity, and much schooling depends on fees. Millions of children remain out of school.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The public school sector is limited and recovering ; for years, education was provided largely by private operators, communities, religious organizations, and NGOs. The government and partners have been working to rebuild a national system.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students sit secondary-school examinations where the system functions, culminating in the qualifications needed for higher education.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Somali · Arabic
Compulsory	Primary (in principle)
Structure	8 + 4
School year	varies
Higher ed	Private universities
Currency	Shilling (SOS)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Private and community schools — and Quranic schools — dominate Somali education, a legacy of the long absence of a functioning state system. Fees are a major barrier for many families.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in Somali and Arabic , covering academic subjects and Islamic education. A unified national curriculum has been a goal of rebuilding efforts.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is largely private and rebuilding : the Somali National University has been re-established, and numerous private universities (such as Mogadishu University) operate. Capacity and quality vary.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is very limited , delivered mainly through NGO and community programs.

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South Africa

EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa runs a large, multilingual education system transformed after the end of apartheid in 1994. The country has eleven official languages (English and Afrikaans plus nine African languages such as Zulu and Xhosa) — mother-tongue instruction is common in early grades, shifting to English higher up. The system is defined by the...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **General Education and Training (GET)** — Grade R (reception) through Grade 9 — Foundation Phase (R–3), Intermediate Phase (4–6), and Senior Phase (7–9)
- **Further Education and Training (FET)** — Grades 10–12, ending with the National Senior Certificate

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from Grade R/1 to Grade 9 (roughly ages 7–15). The school year runs January to December . Public schools charge fees on a sliding scale, but the poorest ("no-fee") schools are free.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend public schools , which are grouped into quintiles by the poverty of their community — the bottom three quintiles are no-fee schools . The legacy of apartheid means huge disparities persist between historically advantaged and disadvantaged schools, a central challenge for the system.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	11 official
Compulsory	Grades R–9
Structure	GET + FET
School year	Jan – Dec
University entry	Matric (NSC)
Currency	Rand (ZAR)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

South Africa has a significant independent (private) school sector , from low-fee to elite schools, plus international schools offering the IB or Cambridge curricula, concentrated in the major cities.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The national curriculum (CAPS) covers home and first-additional languages, mathematics (or mathematical literacy), the sciences, and social sciences , with mother-tongue instruction in early grades and a shift to English (or Afrikaans) thereafter.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Unlike systems with several exit exams, South Africa's pivotal assessment is the National Senior Certificate (NSC) — universally known as "matric" — written at the end of Grade 12. Results are reported at levels; a "Bachelor pass" (with the required subjects and marks) is needed to qualify for university degree study, and the annual...

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South Sudan

EDUCATION IN SOUTH SUDAN

South Sudan — the world's newest country, independent since 2011 — is rebuilding an education system after decades of war and continued instability. On independence it adopted English as the official language of instruction (a shift from Arabic), alongside Arabic and many local languages. South Sudan has among the lowest literacy and...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (8 years)** — The foundation stage
- **Secondary (4 years)** — Leading toward higher education or work

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Primary education is compulsory in principle and intended to be free , but in practice access is extremely limited by conflict, displacement, and poverty. Alternative and accelerated learning programs (run with international support) reach some out-of-school children.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The public school system is fragile and under-resourced , with severe shortages of trained teachers, materials, and functioning schools, and heavy reliance on humanitarian and NGO support.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

South Sudan has a small private and faith-based school sector , concentrated in Juba and larger towns.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · Arabic
Compulsory	Primary (in principle)
Structure	8 + 4
School year	varies
Higher ed	Univ. of Juba
Currency	Pound (SSP)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in English (with local languages in early grades), following a national curriculum developed since independence; capacity to deliver it is limited.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students sit national examinations where the system functions, culminating in the qualifications needed for higher education.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on the University of Juba and a few other institutions, all affected by the wider instability. Many students who can pursue higher education do so abroad, especially in the region.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is minimal , delivered mainly through NGO and humanitarian programs.

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AFRICA — 46 OF 54

Sudan

EDUCATION IN SUDAN

Sudan runs an Arabic-language education system (with English taught and local languages spoken). Once home to some of the region's most respected institutions, Sudanese education has been devastated by the war that erupted in 2023 , which closed schools and displaced millions. This guide describes the system's structure while being clear...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Basic education (8 years)** — Compulsory, ages ~6–13
- **Secondary (3 years)** — Academic or technical, ending with the Sudan School Certificate

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Basic education is compulsory and intended to be free , beginning around age 6. Access — already uneven — has been catastrophically disrupted by the war.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attended public schools , with instruction in Arabic, alongside Quranic schooling. The public system is now largely non-functional in conflict-affected areas.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Sudan has a private and religious school sector , concentrated in Khartoum and larger cities — also heavily affected by the conflict.

AT A GLANCE

Language	Arabic
Compulsory	Basic (8 yrs)
Structure	8 + 3
School year	varies
University entry	Sudan School Certificate
Currency	Pound (SDG)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in Arabic , covering academic subjects and Islamic education, with English taught as a foreign language.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students complete the Sudan School Certificate at the end of secondary education, which governs university admission — where and when examinations can be held.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education has centered on the historic University of Khartoum (founded 1902) and other universities — all severely affected by the conflict, with campuses damaged and operations disrupted.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is very limited and further strained by the crisis.

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São Tomé and Príncipe

EDUCATION IN SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE

São Tomé and Príncipe, a small island nation in the Gulf of Guinea and former Portuguese colony, runs a Portuguese-language education system (Forro and other Creoles are widely spoken). Literacy is relatively high for the region, and the government has expanded access, though the system is limited by the country's small size and...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Basic education** — The compulsory foundation cycle
- **Secondary education** — General secondary leading toward higher education or work

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Basic education is compulsory and intended to be free , beginning around age 6. The school year runs roughly September to June . Access has expanded, though completion and quality remain challenges.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools , with instruction in Portuguese. The system relies partly on external support given the country's limited resources.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

São Tomé and Príncipe has a small private and religious school sector , concentrated in the capital.

AT A GLANCE

Language	Portuguese
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	Primary + Secondary
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	Univ. of São Tomé
Currency	Dobra (STN)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in Portuguese , covering the standard academic subjects, with Creole widely spoken in daily life.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students progress through basic and secondary examinations on the Portuguese-influenced model, culminating in the qualifications required for higher education.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is limited; the University of São Tomé and Príncipe and a few institutions offer programs, and many students pursue higher education abroad, especially in Portugal.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is very limited , delivered mainly through NGO and community programs.

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Tanzania

EDUCATION IN TANZANIA

Tanzania, in East Africa, runs an education system with a distinctive language arrangement: Swahili (Kiswahili) — the national language — is the medium of instruction in primary school, and English becomes the medium in secondary and higher education. This shift is a defining (and challenging) feature. Fee-free basic education has...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (7 years)** — Swahili-medium, ages ~7–13, ending with the PSLE
- **Ordinary-level secondary (4 years)** — English-medium, ending with the CSEE
- **Advanced-level secondary (2 years)** — Ending with the ACSEE, leading to university

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Basic education is compulsory and fee-free (a policy that dramatically increased enrollment), beginning around age 7. The school year runs roughly January to December .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools : Swahili-medium primary schools and English-medium secondary schools. The abrupt shift to English at secondary level is a well-documented learning challenge.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Swahili, English, mathematics, the sciences, and social studies , with the medium shifting from Swahili to English at secondary level.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Swahili · English
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	7 + 4 + 2
School year	Jan – Dec
Exams	PSLE · CSEE · ACSEE
Currency	Shilling (TZS)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Tanzania has a private and faith-based school sector — including English-medium primary schools popular with families seeking an earlier start in English — concentrated in Dar es Salaam and larger towns. (Zanzibar runs its own education system within the union.)

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Three national examinations mark the path: the PSLE (Primary School Leaving Examination), the CSEE (Certificate of Secondary Education Examination, O-Level), and the ACSEE (Advanced Certificate, A-Level) — the basis for university entry.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is led by the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) , the oldest and largest, along with Sokoine University of Agriculture and a growing number of public and private universities. English is the medium of instruction.

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Gambia

EDUCATION IN THE GAMBIA

The Gambia — the smallest country on mainland Africa and a former British colony — runs an English-language education system (with local languages such as Mandinka, Wolof, and Fula widely spoken), alongside a strong tradition of Islamic and Quranic (madrasa) schooling . Literacy is relatively low, and the government has worked to expand...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Lower basic (6 years)** — Ages ~7–12
- **Upper basic (3 years)** — Ending with the GABECE
- **Senior secondary (3 years)** — Ending with the WASSCE

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Basic education is the focus of compulsory schooling , and the government has expanded free access at the lower-basic level. The school year runs roughly September to July .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public and grant-aided schools , with instruction in English, alongside madrasas that combine Islamic and general education. Access has grown, though completion — especially in rural areas — remains a challenge.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

The Gambia has a private and religious school sector , including Islamic and Christian schools, concentrated around the Greater Banjul area.

AT A GLANCE	
Language	English
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Sept – July
Exams	GABECE · WASSCE
Currency	Dalasi (GMD)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, mathematics, sciences, and social studies , taught in English, with Islamic and Arabic studies prominent in madrasa schooling.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Two key examinations mark the path: the GABECE (Gambia Basic Education Certificate Examination) at the end of upper basic, and the WASSCE (West African Senior School Certificate Examination), administered regionally by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), at the end of senior secondary — the basis for university entry.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on the University of The Gambia (UTG) , established in 1999, along with teacher-training and other colleges. Many students also pursue higher education abroad, including elsewhere in West Africa.

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Togo

EDUCATION IN TOGO

Togo, a West African nation and former French colony, runs a French-language education system on the French model, with Ewe, Kabiye, and other languages widely spoken. The government has worked to expand access — including abolishing some primary fees — though literacy and completion, especially for girls and in rural areas, remain...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (6 years)** — Ending with the CEPD
- **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Primary education is compulsory and, since fee reforms, largely free , beginning around age 6. The school year runs roughly September to July .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public schools , with instruction in French. The system contends with teacher shortages and limited resources, alongside community and religious schools.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Togo has a private and religious school sector , concentrated in Lomé and larger towns.

AT A GLANCE

Language	French
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – July
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XOF)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in French , covering the standard academic subjects on a French-influenced curriculum, with national languages spoken widely.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Three national exams mark the path: the CEPD (end of primary), the BEPC (end of lower secondary), and the Baccalauréat (end of lycée) — the gateway to university.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on the University of Lomé (the main institution) and the University of Kara. Many students also study abroad, especially in France and the region.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is very limited , delivered mainly through NGO and faith-based programs.

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Tunisia

EDUCATION IN TUNISIA

Tunisia, in North Africa, runs an education system with Arabic as the main language and French widely used — especially for mathematics, the sciences, and higher education. Tunisia has long prioritized education (a large share of the national budget), giving it relatively high literacy and enrollment for the region, and the free public...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Basic education (9 years)** — Primary (6 years) plus a preparatory/lower-secondary stage (3 years)
- **Secondary (4 years)** — General or technical, ending with the Baccalauréat

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory and free from age 6 to 16 (basic education). The school year runs September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools , with instruction beginning in Arabic and French increasingly used for scientific subjects. Tunisia's strong, long-standing investment in education is well known in the region.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Tunisia has a private and international-school sector (including French-curriculum schools), concentrated in Tunis and larger cities.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Arabic · French
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	6 – 3 – 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	Dinar (TND)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Arabic, French, mathematics, the sciences, and social studies , with French prominent in scientific subjects and English increasingly taught.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

The key qualification is the Baccalauréat , a national examination (in streams such as mathematics, sciences, letters, and economics) taken at the end of secondary school — the basis for university admission.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is provided by public universities including the University of Tunis , the University of Tunis El Manar, the University of Carthage, and others, alongside a private sector. Public higher education is largely free and competitive.

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Uganda

EDUCATION IN UGANDA

Uganda, in East Africa, runs a British-influenced education system with English as the official medium of instruction (Swahili, Luganda, and other languages are spoken and used in early grades). Uganda was an early adopter of Universal Primary Education , which dramatically expanded access, and it is home to one of Africa's most...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (7 years)** — Ages ~6–13, ending with the PLE
- **Ordinary-level secondary (4 years)** — Ending with the UCE
- **Advanced-level secondary (2 years)** — Ending with the UACE, leading to university

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Under Universal Primary Education (UPE, introduced in 1997) — and later Universal Secondary Education — public primary schooling is free and expected. The school year runs roughly February to December .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public (government) schools , with instruction in a local language in early grades shifting to English. UPE brought a huge enrollment increase, with accompanying challenges around class sizes, resources, and completion.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is uncommon in Uganda; most children attend public or private schools.

AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Primary (UPE)
Structure	7 + 4 + 2
School year	Feb – Dec
Exams	PLE · UCE · UACE
Currency	Shilling (UGX)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Uganda has a large private and faith-based school sector , from low-cost to well-resourced schools, popular with families seeking higher quality, concentrated in Kampala and larger towns.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, mathematics, sciences, and social studies , geared toward the national examinations; a competency-based lower-secondary curriculum has been introduced.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Three national examinations mark the path: the PLE (Primary Leaving Examination), the UCE (Uganda Certificate of Education, O-Level), and the UACE (Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education, A-Level) — the basis for university entry.

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Zambia

EDUCATION IN ZAMBIA

Zambia, in Southern Africa, runs a British-influenced education system with English as the official medium of instruction (local languages such as Bemba and Nyanja are used in early grades). A major free education policy introduced in 2022 abolished fees for public primary and secondary schooling, driving a large surge in enrollment.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (7 years)** — Ages ~7–13, with a Grade 7 examination
- **Junior secondary (2 years)** — Grades 8–9, with a Grade 9 examination
- **Senior secondary (3 years)** — Grades 10–12, ending with the Grade 12 School Certificate

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Since 2022, public primary and secondary education has been free , and basic education is expected for all children. The school year runs roughly January to December . The fee removal sharply increased enrollment.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public (government) schools , with instruction in a local language in early grades shifting to English. The 2022 free-education policy brought a large influx of students, with accompanying pressure on classrooms and teachers.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is uncommon in Zambia; most children attend public or private schools.

AT A GLANCE

Language	English + local
Compulsory	Free basic education
Structure	7 + 2 + 3
School year	Jan – Dec
Exams	Grade 7/9/12
Currency	Kwacha (ZMW)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Zambia has a private and faith-based school sector , concentrated in Lusaka and the Copperbelt.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, local languages, mathematics, sciences, and social studies , geared toward the national examinations.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

National examinations (administered by the Examinations Council of Zambia) mark the path at Grade 7, Grade 9, and Grade 12 — the Grade 12 School Certificate being the basis for university entry.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is led by the University of Zambia (UNZA) in Lusaka (the oldest and largest) and Copperbelt University, along with a growing number of public and private universities. English is the medium of instruction.

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Zimbabwe

EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe, in Southern Africa, runs a British-influenced education system with English as the main medium of instruction (Shona, Ndebele, and other languages are among its official languages and used in early grades). Zimbabwe is known for a strong education tradition and one of the highest literacy rates in Africa , though economic...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- **Primary (7 years)** — Ages ~6–13, with a Grade 7 examination
- **Ordinary-level secondary (4 years)** — Forms 1–4, ending with ZIMSEC O-Levels
- **Advanced-level secondary (2 years)** — Forms 5–6, ending with ZIMSEC A-Levels, leading to university

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Primary education is the focus of compulsory schooling . The school year runs roughly January to December . Zimbabwe's long-standing investment in education underpins its high literacy, though funding pressures persist.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public (government) and mission schools , with instruction in a local language in early grades shifting to English. Mission (church) schools have a strong historical role and reputation.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Zimbabwe has a private, mission, and trust-school sector (some highly regarded), concentrated in Harare, Bulawayo, and larger towns.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English + Shona/Ndebele
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	7 + 4 + 2
School year	Jan – Dec
Exams	ZIMSEC O/A-Level
Currency	ZIG / US$

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, local languages, mathematics, sciences, and social studies , geared toward the ZIMSEC examinations (a competency-based curriculum has been introduced).

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Examinations (administered by the Zimbabwe School Examinations Council, ZIMSEC) mark the path: a Grade 7 examination, O-Levels at Form 4, and A-Levels at Form 6 — the basis for university entry.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is led by the University of Zimbabwe in Harare (the oldest and largest) and the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) in Bulawayo, along with a growing number of public and private universities. English is the medium of instruction, and Zimbabwean graduates are well regarded across the region.

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