

EDUCATION

Eritreans are open-minded people. Now, with the recently upgraded curriculum and opening of five extra higher educations, Eritrea is a center of brain competition. Modern education was introduced in Eritrea during the Italian colonization. This was limited to elementary level, meant only for the citizens to serve the colonizers in administration level. During the British Administration, the level rose to Middle School in many places. This was however, short-lived when Ethiopia illegally annexed Eritrea and replaced the educational system by its own curriculum. And the chance for education was mainly preserved for Ethiopians. After independence, the Government of Eritrea sought to reform the inherited educational system of the colonizers to make it compatible and efficient with the country's progress to development. Education is perceived as fundamental human rights in Eritrea.

The goals of the reform of education are:

- To minimize a wastage of manpower, resources, efforts and time in the education system
- To open opportunities to all citizens to develop to their full potential, both professionally and personally.
- Set employment-oriented opportunities at all educational level
- Create a competitive both globally and locally standards and quality of education and training in the education system.

Primary, Middle and Secondary School

The formal early childhood education is basically composed of four stages: Pre-school, Elementary, Junior and Secondary School. Children between the age of 4-6 years go to Pre-school. The Elementary Schools entertain from 1st to 5th grades. After passing to the Junior School, the students take general examination to join Secondary Schools. After completing 11th grade, the students go to Wairday-Ykealo Secondary School to finish their 12th grade. After taking their matriculation exam, those who got the right grades join the colleges of their choices. The rest are provided with the opportunity to join the Vocational School to develop their professional skills. Joining the colleges is highly competitive. The matriculation exam is carried out within and outside Eritrea to all Eritreans who choose to study in the colleges in Eritrea. The students are exceedingly motivated for competitions. During the 16 years of independence, the number of pre-university education students has increased from 200,000 in 1991 to 600,000. Those who score full GPA in their matriculation are provided with special awards by the youth organization.

Higher Education

Higher education plays a great role in this age of globalization, information and communications technology. As a result, the Government of Eritrea has invested heavily in Higher Education. The only one higher education institution in Eritrea, Asmara University has now flourished to five Higher Education Colleges accommodating Degree, Diploma and Certificate programs. Before the opening of these colleges, only 10%-15% of the total Secondary School students were allowed to join University of Asmara. In 16 years, the University of Asmara graduated only

12,000 students. At the moment there are 8,000 students studying in the five colleges. These colleges are Eritrea Institute of Technology, College of Marine Science, College of Business and Economics, College of Agriculture, College of Health Science and College of Arts and Social Sciences. With the opening of these colleges tertiary education in Eritrea has increased to 45%. In the near future, these colleges will develop to full-fledged Universities.

Postgraduate Programs

The Postgraduate Program is carried out in connection with the reputed universities around the world. This year about 30 students have been graduated with Masters Degree programs through correspondence. There is also a plan for the post-graduate program to be established in Eritrea soon, when efficient curriculum and facilities are provided.

Vocational Training

After independence various vocational training services were opened to meet the post war reconstruction and development needs and to facilitate the re-integration of people disadvantaged by the decades-long conflict. The vocational training was given in three different certification levels. The Secondary School Certificate, Intermediate Certificate and Advanced Diploma Certificate. By 2006, the total enrolment in the Intermediate Level reached around 15,000 and the Advanced Level reached more than 2,000. The Vocational Training Centers were opened in Agordat, Barentu, Belewkelew, Mendefera, Haykota, and Mayatal to provide few-month courses for elderly farmers on improving their lives by introducing them with modern farming and other necessities.

On January 2007, National Center of Vocational Training was established. This gives a chance to the students who are unable to join the colleges to develop various skills in this institution. Currently, the NCVT holds four departments: Department of Agriculture which provides courses on Animal Science, Soil and Water Conservation, Plant Science and Farm Irrigation; Department of Commerce which provides; Accounting, Secretarial Science, Store Management, Library Science and Achieves, Department of Technical Skills which provides; Plumbing, Drafting, Survey, Masonry, Electric Installation, Carpentry, Metal work, Furniture Building, and Department of Light and Heavy Machinery.

These departments provide one year extensive training to their students and who then are provided with chances to work with different companies and ministries in the country.

In the near future, this training center will expand further and will host about 10,000 students.

This comprises about one-fourth of the total number of students in the whole country.

There is also a plan that all the ministries in Eritrea will also provide vocational training that will equip the staff members with necessary functional skills.

SPORTS

Even though Eritrea has been a member of the world sport community since mid 1990's, it was from 2004 (in the Olympics) that it started gaining fame. Athlete Zerisenay Tadesse won a 3rd prize in the 10,000-meter race and enabled his country, Eritrea, to be named among the best in the athletics world. Following his steps, many young Eritrean athletes also won in many big competitions. Eritrea also won 2nd place in the 34th International Cross-country Race held, in April 2006, in Japan. On October 2006, again Athlete Zerisenay Tadesse grabbed the gold medal in the International Road-race held in Hungary, putting Eritrea on the 2nd rank. Eritrea also won the first prize in international mountain race in September 2006 in Turkey and was

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Monday, 30 November 2009 00:00 -

awarded two trophies and eight gold medals.

In the football arena, Eritrea also gained fame by defeating reputed teams such as Egypt, Zambia, Libya and other best football teams in the world, and moved to African youth football tournament of 2007 held in Togo. This dramatic change enabled the country to elevate itself in the FIFA and CAF status.

Eritrea also has one of the best cycling teams in Africa. Eritrean cycling team won the 1st prize in the East Africa (zone-5), in the tournament held in November 2006 in Kenya.

Eritrea is also the first prize-winner in all African games held in July 2007 in Algiers. The icon athlete in Eritrea, Zerisenay Tadesse, grabbed the gold medal again in this tournament. The Eritrean cycling team ranked as 2nd, 5th, 9th and 10th individually, shooting Eritrea in the 1st position of all the countries in Africa.