

# SCHOOL IN TANZANIA AND GERMANY – A COMPARISON

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## THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

**Ester, Maren (Germany):** Education is primarily the responsibility of the individual German states (Länder). We start with four years of primary school before we go on with secondary education. In Bavaria, there are three types of secondary schools: one of them lasts for five years, another one for six years and the last one for nine years. The longer you stay in secondary school, the higher is your level of education. After secondary education the usual procedure for most students is to either do a vocational training or, if you've successfully completed your "Abitur" (German A levels) after nine years, to go to university. There are no final exams except for your last year in school. The other years we only have tests as well as regular smaller and bigger exams. Except for a few private schools, all schools are free in Germany. In fact, children are even obliged to go to school. Compulsory schooling begins for all children in the year in which they reach the age of six and involves nine to ten years of full-time schooling. Under one percent of all schools in Germany are boarding schools.

**Dalu, Lilian, Herieth (Tanzania):** The Tanzanian educational system operates on a 7-4-2-3 system: seven years of primary school, followed by four years of ordinary level of secondary school and two years of advanced level secondary education. After the thirteen years of primary and secondary school education, the student may take the advanced certificate examinations and attend college for three to four years. In universities there are some courses of study with three years and others with four years.

After finishing the ordinary level of education, the student may decide to go to certificate colleges (technical / vocational education which offers certificates / diploma) or to continue with the advanced level. But this depends on the form four national examinations pass mark. Before primary school entry, there are pre-primary classes to which parents normally send their children to study the elementary knowledge in order to prepare them to join the primary schools.

### MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTIONS (LANGUAGE USED IN TEACHING)

**Ester, Maren (Germany):** German is the teaching language in almost all subjects. Only the foreign languages are taught in the respective language – except for Latin and ancient Greek, these two are also taught in German.

**Dalu, Lilian, Herieth (Tanzania):** In Tanzania there are two languages - Kiswahili and English - which are used as the media of instructions in our educational system. Kiswahili is used in teaching at primary schools, certificate teaching colleges and vocational training colleges while the English language is used in teaching in secondary level up to university level of education. Both English and Kiswahili are also taught as individual subjects in all levels of education.



*Group disussion at Emmaberg Girls Secondary School, Tanzania, 2019 (c) Benjamin Rückert*

## TECHNIQUES WHICH ARE USED IN LEARNING PROCESS

**Ester, Maren (Germany):** Our teachers try to organise their classes as interactively as possible, for example we do presentations, partner and group exercises, quizzes, experiments and projects. But of course, frontal teaching is also still a common technique. Teachers also increasingly use digital learning tools.

**Dalu, Lilian, Herieth (Tanzania):** There are many techniques we use in class, the following are some of them:

- Frontal teaching: it is very common in Tanzania.
- Group discussion: we mostly use this method to discuss the questions or topic the teacher displays to us after teaching; we normally work in groups of five to six students and share our results with other groups through presentation in front the class.
- Private studies: sometimes the students study privately through reading notes or books in order to revise what was taught by the teacher.
- Study tours: this is another method we normally use in learning and includes visiting the case studies areas, for example hospitals, industries, forests and farms, and meeting there with experts who give us more explanations about what we learnt in class.
- Experimentations: sometimes we go to the laboratory for different experiments about what we learnt in the classes theoretically, for example in science classes.

## BENEFITS OF LEARNING AND BEING A STUDENT

**Ester, Maren (Germany):** Being able to go to school is definitely a privilege. It prepares you for life because you learn so much about yourself, this world, other countries, cultures and people. In addition to that, you share your learning experience together with other students – therefore, you also learn how to work together and cooperate with them.

**Dalu, Lilian, Herieth (Tanzania):** In school we gain different life skills such as good decision making, problem solving, forming friendships, self-awareness and environmental conservation. We also develop different language skills (writing, reading speaking and listening) and learn about living and non- living things (animals, rocks as well as plants etc.) agricultural activities, our national and world history etc.

## CHALLENGES OF LEARNING AND BEING STUDENT

**Ester, Maren (Germany):** Sometimes it's hard to continuously put enough effort into school to fulfil the teachers' expectations and requirements. It can be very stressful and straining, so it's important to take care of yourself and keep doing things that you love and that give you energy, like sports or music.

**Dalu, Lilian, Herieth (Tanzania):** The following are some of the challenges we encounter in schools as well as in learning process.

- Lack of technological devices for learning: most Tanzanian schools lack computers, hence it makes it difficult for students to get access to learning material. Therefore, most of us depend only on the materials provided by teachers and books. The government needs to supply schools with computers in order to facilitate easy and updated learning in schools.
- The English language: the use of the English language in secondary education is very difficult for most students due to their poor English knowledge as we use the Kiswahili language in primary school. When we join secondary school, it takes us some time to cope with the English language and sometimes we even fail the examinations because we do not understand the questions which are in English.
- Shortage of school hostels in most government schools: most government school lack hostels, therefore most students are day scholars which causes a higher number of absentees in schools because some schools are very far from residential areas and the students become tired with the long distances. Furthermore, many girls drop out of school due to pregnancies. If they lived at schools, they could be secured from bad peer groups in the streets.

## EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**Ester, Maren (Germany):** In general schools offer a broad variety of extracurricular activities. At our school, for example, we can choose between choirs, orchestras, bands and drama groups for different age groups. We also have a reading club, a politics and history club, a sustainability club, a club for our school magazine and of course for our partnership. Furthermore, there is a group of students who help organise different things like special projects or project days; they are supervised by our student representatives.

**Dalu, Lilian, Herieth (Tanzania):** Beside the classes, many schools in Tanzania set the timetable for students to participate in other activities such as sports and games and every year there are national sports and games competitions (“Umiseta” for secondary schools and “Umitashumta” for primary schools). Also, students participate in choirs, debate groups, projects e.g. gardening, watering flowers, and different clubs i.e subjects clubs, peace clubs, environmental clubs etc.





*Group discussion at Emmaberg Girls Secondary School, Tanzania, 2019 (c) Benjamin Rückert*

## SCHOOL ELECTIONS

**Ester, Maren (Germany):** In Germany every class elects their own class representatives on the first day of a new school year. Three weeks into the school year, at the beginning of October, the whole school elects the three student representatives together. These three students are allowed to participate in regular discussions with the headmaster, teachers and parents. And, as already mentioned, they also organise different projects and project days together with the class representatives.

**Dalu, Lilian, Herieth (Tanzania):** The school general election date is normally indicated on the school calendar. The assistant headmaster is the one who is responsible to organize and supervise the election, he is being assisted by teachers, too. The positions which are being contested by the students are the following: head girl, assistant head girl, general secretary, discipline committee, health and environmental committee, security and safety committee, academic committee, sport and games, food committee, project committee, dormitory leaders. The teachers are the ones who discuss the best way to conduct the election. Then the assistant headmaster asks the students who aspire for different positions to fill in the election forms about the position they want to contest. After that the students are interviewed<sup>1</sup> by teachers and if they pass the interview, they are allowed to campaign for almost 2-4 days to their fellow students before the election. During the election the students are required to write the names of the contestants they want in the respective position on the ballot paper. Then the contestants pick their fellow students whom they trust to count their votes. During the election day teachers act as observers and supervisors of the election. After the election has finished, the assistant headmaster declares the winners who got the majority of the votes.

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<sup>1</sup> The interview with the contestants is important before allowing them to campaign so as to ensure that students who have major discipline cases are not elected as school leaders.

## OUR FAVOURITE EXPERIENCIES IN SCHOOL

**Maren (Germany):** I can't really narrow it down to a single favourite experience I've had in school. There are just so many little memories that I will always remember. For example, the trips we made with our partnership group "Emma" or as student representatives, meetings with different clubs, bigger events like the school's summer festival or the little things like our Christmas Bazaar and our services at the beginning of each school year.

**Ester (Germany):** I can also not limit myself to only one experience. But some of my favourite memories include the concerts and performances of the drama groups that I've participated in, as well as growing up with our school partnership and seeing it evolve into what it is today.

**Lilian (Tanzania):** I like the way we cooperate with each other in school; although we come from different areas, we live and learn together.

**Dalu (Tanzania):** I like the way we cooperate in different issues such as sports and games in school. Also, I like reading story books.

**Herieth (Tanzania):** I enjoy when we sing, worship and pray together every day as a school routine. Also, I like the way we live together regardless of our different family backgrounds.

## WHAT SURPRISED / IMPRESSED US ABOUT THE OTHER STUDENTS' ANSWERS

**Ester, Maren (Germany):** Even though we've been aware of this for a long time now, it impresses us over and over again that students in Tanzania have to speak English in class when they attend secondary school and that they also write their exams in a foreign language. We're sure this is a great benefit, but also a big difficulty - at least it would be one for us.

**Dalu, Lilian, Herieth (Tanzania):** What impressed us most is that the educational system of Germany is quite different from ours. However, teaching and learning techniques are the same, they are universal.