

Literacy as a Parameter for Development Case Study of East African Countries Special Reference: Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya and Djibouti

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ABSTRACT

Education is one of the indices of development. While assessing the HDI ranking of countries, education is considered as one of the indices of HDI calculation. Most of the low HDI ranking countries have low literacy level. Education level determines the knowledge and efficiency of human beings. Most of the East African countries have low literacy level, particularly Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya and Djibouti have lowest literacy level. As a result the HDI ranking of these four countries is also very low. Though the efforts are made to enhance the literacy level still it is quite low in these countries.

The article attempted to bring out the education scenario of these four countries. Various programmes launched to increase enrollment ratio and encourage higher education. The paper depicts the problems of education in these countries.

INTRODUCTION

The necessity of education is viewed to be more social than a personal obligation. A society needs to have qualified and well educated citizens as it helps to create a smooth and developed society. Education is a necessity of civilization to develop in size and quality, and it has become vital that the society needs educated individuals to solve life challenges and problems.

Education is a prerequisite as the society needs able thinkers who can solve life challenges when they arise. For that reason, education has become more important than just for personal fulfillment, it is now indispensable especially now that times are changing to the modern world.

Although one might be an intelligent individual and he knows his field of expertise and potential, employer does not yet know about the person. For that reason, pursuing a degree in higher education will enable anybody to achieve the knowledge required in his career of choice. As a result, one needs to have an edge over other applicants in the job market which means one need to have a new perspective on the society.

Pursuing higher education is an expensive investment but pays off in the long run. Employers normally make pay decisions depending on experience and education. According to recent studies, graduates with degrees and doctorates earn twice as much as compared to those

with high school degrees. For that reason, individuals are able to participate actively in various projects in the society.

The main shortcoming is poor educational attainment attributed to development Studies indicate that children who come from disadvantaged families are subsequently disadvantaged in education.

When group of countries set a Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to combat the issues fo underdevelopment countries, enhancing the literacy in LDC's is one of MDG S.

Achieve universal primary education has been one of the priorities of MDGs. Target ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling Progress on primary school enrolment has slowed since 2004, even as countries with the toughest challenges have made large strides, it was expected to increase net enrolment ratio in primary education proportion old pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary and literacy rate 15-24 year old, women and man to be encouraged

On September 8, 2000, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Millennium Declaration, which reaffirmed the universal values and principles of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and the UN's commitment to promoting peace, security, disarmament, human rights, democracy and good governance.

The Millennium Declaration also outlined the most ambitious global agenda till date for eradicating poverty and preventable disease, promoting equitable development and protecting the earth's environment. Thus, it became the ethical basis and pre-cursor for the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, each further outlined with measurable targets and indicators, which were officially revised in 2008.

The objective of MDG, s was to ensure that by, 2015 children everywhere boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.1

Enrolment in primary education in developing regions reached 90 per cent in 2010, up from 82 per cent in 1999, which means more kids than ever are attending primary school. In 2010, 61 million children of primary school age were out of school. More than half of them (33 million) were in sub-Saharan Africa and a further one fifth (13 million) in Southern Asia. Even as countries with the toughest challenges have made large strides, progress on primary school enrolment has slowed since 2004 dimming hopes for achieving universal primary education by 2015. With more children completing primary education, the demand for secondary education is growing. In 2010, there were 71 million young adolescents (typically aged 12-15 years) out of school around the world. Gender gaps in youth literacy rates are also narrowing. Globally, there were 95 literate young women for every 100 young men in 2010, compared with 90 women in 1990. Thus it was aimed to enhance the literacy rate particularly in East African countries and same Asian countries.

EDUCATION BACKGROUND IN EAST AFRICA

Harmonization of Education Curricula

The Education level in East African countries is very low. The people of East Africa have shared in the past a common educational curricula which changed after the break-up of the former East African Community in 1977 With the re-establishment of the new Community, there is a renewed commitment to ensure that the common goals and aspirations of the peoples of East Africa are realised through a harmonised curricula. During the colonial period and the immediate past colonial period, the East African countries were integrated and harmonized in the provision and training services through a harmonised curriculum and through established regional organisations and institutions. The East African National Examination Council ensured standardisation and quality assurance of education in East Africa. The University of East Africa served the region in higher education needs. The various colleges of the university were located in the three Partner States each specialising in a specific discipline. Thus the

medical school was located in Makerere, Uganda; Nairobi hosted the Faculty of Engineering while the Faculty of Law was based in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania.

This cooperation occasioned many interactions amongst the people of East Africa, but with the breakup of the old East African Community in 1977, this interaction was curtailed. The break up also weakened the instruments of harmonisation of the basic education and training programmes, and therefore facilitating diversity in approach and implementation by each partner state. Tanzania and Uganda still retain the 7.4.2*3 system whilst Kenya adopted an 8.4.4. system of education. The curriculum content also changed to adopt to each country's National priorities and aspirations.

However, the labour market demands have changed over the years allowing a free movement of human resources across countries within the region and outside it. To facilitate the Regional Integration process and especially the free movement of human resources, the EAC Partner States have identified the harmonisation of the education curricula, standards, assessment and evaluation of education programmes as a priority issue.

EDUCATION OF EAST AFRICA IN 21st CENTURY

UWEZO Report

Uwezo launched its 2012 **Report on the State of Numeracy and Literacy** across East Africa. Similar to last year, the results are not cozy. Here is a round-up of the critical facts this year:

1. Less than one third of pupils possess basic literacy and numeracy skills.
2. 20% of children in Standard 7 do not have Standard 2 level literacy and numeracy competencies.
3. There are large differences among EA countries, particularly with regard to literacy.
4. There are minimal differences in literacy and numeracy levels between boys and girls.
5. Children from socio-economically disadvantaged households perform worse.
6. Private schools pupils perform better public school pupils.

Education of the Sub-Saharan Africa 2012 for All Report to be presented at the Global Education for All Meeting in Paris (France) on 21-23 November 2012, the report is the result of the discussions that took place during the Africa Education for All Conference from 16-19 October 2012 in Johannesburg, South Africa. "Across Sub Saharan Africa, there is a general awareness that the last decade has witnessed unprecedented progress in the development of education", says Zulmira Rodriguez, Education Coordinator for Africa in UNESCO's Regional Office in Dakar.

The report that revealed that Net Enrollment Ratio in primary education had increased from 58% in 1999 to 76% by 2010 and the Gender parity index from 0.85 to 0.93 over the same period of time.

Enrollment in secondary education more than doubled from 20.8 million to 43.7 million to grasp the full significance of the dividends yielded by the Education for All effort across the region within a decade.

Despite the great achievements however, very few countries in the sub Saharan African region will reach the Education for All goals by the year 2015. The international community set the goals in 2000 during the World Education Forum in Dakar.

While the prospects are positive for Universal Primary Education and Gender equality, the challenges are particularly daunting for the remaining four goals, namely early childhood care and education, youth and adult skills, adult literacy and the issue of quality. Here again the figures from Africa speak for themselves:

- 31 million children are out of school
- 35% of the youth has no access to secondary education or technical skills development

In terms of the quality of education the situation is daunting: 36% of the children in eastern and southern Africa reaching the minimum required level of maths competences against 43% in central and west Africa 35% of children in west and central Africa acquire the minimum level of reading at the end of primary education against 64% of the children in eastern and southern Africa.

Regional differences

“The gaps are simply too large and with the decreasing international assistance to education, resources are just not enough to bridge the differences”, comments Rodriguez, “Urgent action is needed to improve the quality of education in sub-Saharan Africa”.

The Johannesburg conference gave some 150 participants from 34 African countries the opportunity to reflect on the achievements, debate the challenges and initiate a process for the identification of possible areas of engagement for the remaining three years. They also started the reflection on the implications for the post 2015 agenda.

In addition, Rodriguez says, it was “an opportunity to acknowledge the diversity between and within sub-regions. We just cannot continue to think about Africa as a whole, but need a more diversified agenda and related target setting for education development in Africa. Participants decided that additional efforts are needed before the deadline of 2015 and identified the following acceleration priorities:

All countries choose quality as one of the key areas for engagement for the next three years and most of them say to emphasize the need to focus on teachers.

Different regions set different priorities: Eastern countries like Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya and Djibouti followed by some others choose to focus on early childhood care and education.

The positions of these countries in H.D.I ranking are very low Statistical review of four of East African countries namely Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya and Djibouti’s evaluation and estimation of human development indicators in 2013 from United Nation on over all the world, East Africa get the fifty lowest rank in that list

Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, and Djibouti

Countries	HDI rank (world)	E.F.C. rank	Population rank	Year
Kenya	145	17	43,291,000	2013
Djibouti	164	30	918,000	2013
Ethiopia	173	39	86,565,000	2013
Somalia	161 (2001-UNDP last report)	51	9,662,000 (UNDP estimation)	2012
Total			140,436,000	

Sources UNDP (East Africa-2012)

Again the list of H.D.I rank in Africa, East African countries not getting top fifteen positions in Africa, Kenya has been placed first rank among East African countries and its seventeenth (17th) position in whole African list where as Djibouti is the second position in thirtieth (30th) rank in the continent, Ethiopia and Somalia are lowest rank positions, due to poverty and illiteracy. The various programs lunched are not implemented effectively. The international assistance for N.G.O’s is not adequate, as the result these countries are positioned in the lowest rank in H.D.I.

All these countries invariably consider quality as the key priority for the post 2015 agenda. All of them in a context of an expanded vision of basic education for all that should go from one year of pre-primary across to the lower secondary school cycle.

CONCLUSION

East Africa has not a dynamic educational development which has been undergoing reforms of social and economic progress. The East African education is poor due to inadequate teachers, materials and schools. These living conditions are not an ideal environment for the children. The governments of Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Djibouti try to improve children's educational levels based on Millennium Development Goals before 2015.

Most of the East African countries have low literacy rate particularly, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya and Djibouti. As the result of these four countries, when education is one of the indices of development, the Government of East African countries launched new policies and schemes towards educational developments and it would shown very respective step progress on educational system to eliminate the very low ranking in literacy on Human Development Index list.

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