

Contemporary challenges of future growths in education in sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract:

This paper examines contemporary challenges of future growth in education in the sub-Saharan Africa. Amongst such challenges that are highlighted here include; dwindling revenue against rising cost, funding and free education, high wastage ratios, autonomy and academic freedom, professionalization of teaching, opportunity cost amongst others. New directions were also recommended.

Keywords: Africa, free education, academic freedom, professionalization of teaching

Dwindling Revenue Against Rising Cost:

One of the most serious problems threatening the survival of the educational systems in most of the less developed countries (LDCs) is that of dwindling level of public funding in the face of rising demands and hence rising cost of education. It is an established fact that the funding of education for quite some time has dominantly been a public concern. It is equally true that the priority attached to educational funding by these countries have been dwindling in more recent times.

Available data on regional basis reveals that the growth in public support for education in middle and low-income countries improved between 1960 and 1980. It ranged between 5.4 and 8.1; 11.3; 14.1 and 10.2 and 13.1 for primary, secondary and tertiary levels respectively. However, between 1980 and 1985, it deteriorated to a range of 1.1 and 3.2; 6.3 and 11; 4.9 and 11.7 for the three levels of education respectively. Countries like Latin America and Tanzania, witnessed the worst deterioration (Vessuri, 1989 & UNESCO 1994). According to Psacharopoulos and Sanyal, (1981), the total public expenditure on education as a percentage of GNP was between 1.4% and 6.5% for Egypt, Philippines, Tanzania and Zambia between 1978 and 1979. Togo's educational budget as a percentage of national budget fluctuated between 9% to 11% from 1978 to 1988 (Gorham and Dubery; 1992). The same proportion obtains for Niger Republic from 1990-1997 and are as follows; 15.55%, 18.57%, 19.92%, 14.68%, 14.61%, 16.35%, 15.17% and 12.78% respectively (Republie du Niger, MEN, 1999).

For Nigeria, educational funding was ranked 5th with about 10.3% of the gross public sector investment during the 1st National Development Plan of 1962-68. This position improved to 2nd during the 1970-74 plan with 13.5% allocation and retrogressed to 5th with 7.5% allocation during the 1975-80 plan. The same sector was allocated only 5.5% of total projected federal government investment during the 1981-85 plans. This declining allocation to education has become more chaotic in recent time as a result of the general economic downturn and the introduction of the structural adjustment programme. This phenomenon is similar in many of these LDCs.

The worsening dimension of this problem is that this condition of declining public funding of education for many countries is being contrasted by rising cost of education.