



ISSN: 0975-833X

Available online at <http://www.journalcra.com>

International Journal of Current Research
Vol. 11, Issue, 08, pp.6372-6375, August, 2019

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24941/ijcr.36399.08.2019>

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF CURRENT RESEARCH

RESEARCH ARTICLE

CRITICAL REVIEW ON SECONDARY EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT IN ETHIOPIA: ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 11th May, 2019
Received in revised form
15th June, 2019
Accepted 13th July, 2019
Published online 31st August, 2019

Key Words:

Secondary Education,
Development,
Achievement,
Challenge and Ethiopia.

ABSTRACT

Expanded access and improved quality of secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa is one of key components for economic growth in the region. The review is timely because it discusses best practices and solutions for developing and implementing sustainable and high quality secondary education systems in African countries. The review's objectives are to facilitate the dialogue between African countries and its development partners and to provide a "roadmap" to practical solutions facing Africa's secondary education systems in the 21st century. Throughout much of the twentieth century, Ethiopia was one of the most educationally disadvantaged countries in the world (MOE, 2005b). The majority of its current population has had little access to schooling, a legacy that continues to affect the country's human resources (MOE, 2004a). Only 36 percent of the adult population (aged 15 years and over) is literate (MOE, 2002). Great strides have been made in education since 1994 (TGE, 1994). Access has surged, especially at the primary level, with 85 percent of children of primary-school age now in school (MOE, 2003). Enrollment growth has also been impressive at the secondary level, especially in the first cycle (grades 9–10), for which the gross enrollment rate has more than doubled since 2000. Yet key challenges remain for secondary education, including: (1) a low primary education completion rate that constrains enrollment at the secondary level; (2) inequitable access, with rural populations and girls at a particular disadvantage; and (3) student learning achievement that is disappointingly low (World Bank, 2005). In contrast to remarkable achievements in access, progress to date in raising the quality of education in Ethiopia has been limited. Efficiency and quality input indicators, achievement tests, and classroom observations suggest that it has been difficult to maintain the quality of education during a period of very rapid enrollment expansion. Learning achievement (School performance and student achievement) in the education system remains unacceptably low. This has become a source of concern for government officials, educators, parents, and other stakeholders. School performance is critically dependent on the leadership skills of school principals. The starting point here must be a sustained effort to enhance school leader effectiveness. It is so clear that the quality of school leadership is the most important factor influencing school performance. Skills of effective school leaders include instructional leadership, financial and human resources management, effective working relationships with the staff of line educational agencies, and winning the confidence of parents and School Management Committees.

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Citation: Endale Berhanu Demissie, 2019. "Critical Review on Secondary Education Development in Ethiopia: Achievements and Challenges", International Journal of Current Research, 11, (08), 6372-6375.

INTRODUCTION

According to Adriaan and Jacob (2006), expanded access and improved quality of secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa is one of key components for economic growth in the region. The review is timely because it discusses best practices and solutions for developing and implementing sustainable and high quality secondary education systems in African countries. The review's objectives are to facilitate the dialogue between African countries and its development partners and to provide a "roadmap" to practical solutions facing Africa's secondary education systems in the 21st century. This also marks an important milestone because Africa is beginning to be successful

in promoting primary education. Thanks to the progress made in boosting primary school enrolments through the efforts of African countries, supported by the Education For All campaign, the gross enrollment rate at primary school level increased from 63% in 1990 to 95% in 2006. Similarly, the primary completion rate increased from 49% to 65% over the same period. Consequently, the demand for secondary education is rising very fast in Africa: Faster than for primary education and faster than in any other region in the world. Where are all these primary school graduates going to go? If they do not find opportunities to continue their education to prepare them for productive employment, will parents continue to make the sacrifices to put their children through primary school? This is not likely. So, in order to sustain and improve

on the progress made on primary school enrolment, Africa now need to focus also on secondary education and training designed for aspiring school leaders. In today's schools, leadership plays a significant role in bringing about quality of education in general and student achievement in particular (Adriaan and Jacob, 2006). It is agreed that Africa needs more scientists, engineers, doctors, managers and skilled technicians, and that there is a strong desire to become competitive in today's globalized economy, so economies will grow faster and improve peoples' lives. The global world today is increasingly based on knowledge, technology and skills. This indicates that universal primary education is only the first step. In fact, can African nations fully justify the resources invested in primary and secondary education, if it does not produce trained labor forces with relevant skills and make economies competitive? Yet, secondary school enrolment in African countries averages only about 30%, compared to 65% for developing countries worldwide, and close to 100% in East Asia. And quality in most cases is not where it needs to be.

In all middle-income economies quality and quantity of secondary and tertiary graduates are among the driving factors behind economic and social performance. With this regard, school leaders are in the front line in leading and managing the change process to ensure the quality of education, which in turn improves students' learning and achievement. Indeed, the professional standards for school principals require that principals "engage in continuous inquiry about effectiveness of curricular and instructional practices and work collaboratively to make appropriate changes that improve results". This requires very particular knowledge, skills, instincts and personal stances, which this report aim to cultivate, thus producing school leaders who can effectively lead and manage change (Adriaan and Jacob, 2006). While African countries continue to seek progress on primary education, the need to now also increase our focus on secondary education. The need to expand access, improve quality and relevance, and improve equity - both between boys and girls, between urban and rural areas, between the rich and poor, and across regions within countries. This is not going to be easy. It will require fundamental changes in the way we approach secondary education. For example, secondary curricula will in many cases need to be revised to make them more relevant to today's needs. In many countries in the region these have not been revised for decades. Most secondary systems in Africa continue to reflect the elite traditions of academic schooling that are inappropriate for today's rapidly changing society and labor market, and that cause significant wastage due to repetition and dropout. And where curriculum reforms have been attempted they have often had limited success.

In this regard, principals need to spearhead the management of the curriculum and instruction by facilitating the setting of the school's vision and goals, maintaining academic standards, monitoring student progress, enhancing parental involvement and creating learning structures that sustain learning. Principals are required to be close to the classroom and lead learning by providing instructional and curricular feedback to the teacher through clinical supervision and mentoring. Good school leaders will create learning communities that sustain uninterrupted learning and nurture learning by prioritizing instruction over any other school activity. Hence this report is intended to equip principals to have the requisite knowledge, skills, instincts and attitudes to be fit instructional leaders who lead their schools into holistic success (Adriaan and Jacob, 2006).

Secondary Education Development in Ethiopia

Throughout much of the twentieth century, Ethiopia was one of the most educationally disadvantaged countries in the world (MOE, 2005b). The majority of its current population has had little access to schooling, a legacy that continues to affect the country's human resources (MOE, 2004a). Only 36 percent of the adult population (aged 15 years and over) is literate (MOE, 2002). Great strides have been made in education since 1994 (TGE, 1994). Access has surged, especially at the primary level, with 85 percent of children of primary-school age now in school (MOE, 2003). Enrollment growth has also been impressive at the secondary level, especially in the first cycle (grades 9–10), for which the gross enrollment rate has more than doubled since 2000. Yet key challenges remain for secondary education, including: (1) a low primary education completion rate that constrains enrollment at the secondary level; (2) inequitable access, with rural populations and girls at a particular disadvantage; and (3) student learning achievement that is disappointingly low (World Bank, 2005). Ethiopia has a long and rich educational history (MOE, 2010). Indigenous education in the country remains an important transmitter of cultural identity from one generation to the next among all ethnic and linguistic groups (MOE, 2008a). Ethiopia's early Christian heritage represents a second important element of education in the country (MOE, 2008b). The primary purpose of Ethiopian church education has been to prepare young men for service in the church as deacons and priests, but it has also served as the main educational preparation for civil servants (EPDRD, 1976). Islam is a third source of educational provision, especially in the southern and southeastern parts of the country, where a non formal school system was established to teach the ethics and theology of Islam, with schools managed by local communities (EPDRD, 1976).

Modern Education in the Twentieth Century

The introduction of modern education in Ethiopia began toward the end of the nineteenth century with the establishment of a central state authority and a permanent urban seat of power, the arrival of foreign embassies, and the development of a modern economic sector. Modern education officially commenced in 1908 with the opening of Menelik II School in Addis Ababa, marking a significant step in the history of education in the country (MOE, 1998). In May 1961 Ethiopia hosted the United Nations-sponsored Conference of African States on the Development of Education in Sub-Saharan Africa. At that time, primary and secondary school participation rates in the country were among the lowest in Sub-Saharan Africa. There were shortages of both schools and teachers, as well as high dropout rates. In 1960, the primary GER for boys was 11 percent and for girls, 7 percent; the respective rates for secondary education were much lower. In addition, many families were sending their children to schools operated by missionary groups and private agencies. The conference gave Ethiopia an incentive to focus on educational development. The government proceeded to expand the public school system more than fourfold between 1961 and 1971 and declared universal primary education a long-range objective. In 1971, there were 1,300 primary and secondary schools and 13,000 teachers in the country, with total enrollment of 600,000 at both levels. Yet schooling remained available only to a small urban elite, with a primary GER of only 16 percent (10 percent for girls) and a secondary GER of 4 percent (2 percent for girls) in 1971 (MOE, 2002). After the overthrow of

imperial rule in 1974, the provisional military government (known as the Derg) dismantled the then existing feudal socioeconomic structure through a series of reforms that also affected educational development. The National Democratic Revolution Program of the Ethiopian government of April 1976 issued an educational guideline that stated, "There will be an educational program that will provide free education, step by step, to the broad masses" (MOE, 2003). The new education policy emphasized the improvement of learning opportunities in rural areas as a means to increase economic productivity. As a result, primary school enrollment increased from about 957,300 in 1974/75 to nearly 2,450,000 in 1985/86, while enrollment in the country's primary, junior secondary, and senior secondary schools reached a total of 3.1 million students, up from nearly 785,000 a decade earlier. While the figure for primary enrollments represented 36 percent of the relevant age group, the combined secondary enrollment figure (grades 7 through 12) represented only 5.3 percent of the relevant age group. Despite improved enrollment numbers, many schools did not meet minimum standards, teachers lacked basic teaching skills, and the curriculum remained deeply politicized. Further, the system was highly centralized, with instruction delivered in English and Amharic rather than in students' mother tongues. Clapham (1990) argues that "a fairly good education for a relatively small number of children had under the socialist regime been transformed into quite a poor education for a much larger number of children. In order to mitigate the above problems the Ethiopian government had started to improve school Leadership, Structure and Organization in quality education imply the formation of a leadership body starting from woreda education office.

Committees composed of representatives who are chairpersons of committees including quality assurance committee, quality audit committee, academic education competition committee, extra-curricular education committee, curriculum committee, procurement committee, tender committee, examination and evaluation committees are established at each school. Members of the parent - teacher associations, representatives of school supervisors association and kebele education and training board members are duly included in a typical school leadership committee (MOE, 2004). Additionally, management development and teachers Development Programme is another important component of the quality education programme. In this programme, induction sessions are organized for new teachers and principals so that they will be able to accomplish their duties on equal footing with senior and experienced teachers and principals in the schools who have been teaching and leading in the schools for several years. Continuous professional upgrading is systematically arranged to teachers and principals in several cases on job trainings and granting of scholarships have been used to encourage teachers and principals with higher level of performance (MOE, 2005a).

Education Development Since 1991

By the end of the civil war and the overthrow of the Derg in 1991, the country's infrastructure was devastated and access to education was low: gross enrollment rates were 30 percent at the primary, 13 percent at the secondary, and less than 1 percent at the tertiary level (MOE, 2006). The primary enrollment rate was, moreover, less than half the average GER for Sub-Saharan African countries. Girls' participation rates in primary education were much lower than those of boys, especially in rural areas. In addition, there were severe regional

differences in primary GERs, ranging from 7 percent in the Afar region to 87 percent in the city of Addis Ababa (Dufera, 2011). The quality of education was also poor, with inadequately trained and poorly motivated teachers and an overall lack of instructional materials. The system was both seriously underfinanced and inefficient one-third of all students dropped out of school in their first year. Physical facilities were dilapidated due to war damage and the absence of preventive maintenance. Education was a priority in the national development agenda of the government that took power in Ethiopia in 1991. New policy directions for the sector were set out in the 1994 Education and Training Policy, including the goals of:

- Expanded and equitable access to general education and vocational training to meet the demands of the country and the economy
- Improvement of the quality of education throughout the system
- A special focus on girls' and women's education
- Changing the curriculum to increase the relevance of education to local communities, including a shift to vernacular languages (Dufera 2011)
- Gradual decentralization of school administration, with strong community participation. The basic function of management are planning, organization, staffing, evaluating and developing (Bush, 2003). Leadership is about having vision and articulating, ordering priorities, getting others to go with you, reviewing what you are doing and holding on to things you value (Harris, 2000). Hence, the quality of administrative support and leadership is another critical element in school processes. Education system need decentralized management to better serve and bring services closer to their beneficiaries: students, parents and communities. Effective leadership assume authority to not be located in the persons of the leader but can be dispersed within the school in between and among people (Harris et al, 2000). Thus, effective leaders in a school are those who are able to build collaborative cultures through generating positive relationship. This implies that effective leadership occurs when individuals have the opportunity to develop high performing work teams.

In addition, the education system was restructured to better fit the context and needs of the country at that time. The "6-2-4" structure (that is, six years of primary schooling, followed by two years of junior secondary education, followed by four years of senior secondary education) that had been in place since 1962 was replaced by a new "8-2-2" structure that remains in place today. Primary education consists of an eight-year cycle divided into a basic education cycle covering grades 1-4 and a general primary cycle covering grades 5-8, followed by two years of general secondary education (grades 9-10) and two years of preparatory secondary education (grades 11-12) (EFDRE, 2004a). General secondary education (grades 9 and 10) aims to prepare students to identify areas of interest for further education and training. The preparatory level (grades 11 and 12) prepares students for higher education or choosing a career. National examinations are now administered only at the end of grades 10 and 12; regional examinations have replaced those at the end of grade 8. TVET is institutionally separate from the regular educational system, forming a parallel track. Access to formal TVET is offered after completion of grade 10 (ETPE, 1994). Students who plan to

pursue higher education are required to sit for the Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Certificate Examination at the end of the preparatory level. Those who enroll in TVET after completing grade 10 have, at present, three options to choose from, depending on their performance at the general secondary level: (1) one-year training (10+1); (2) two-year training (10+2); or (3) three-year training (10+3) (MOE 2010a). Students who complete three years of training after grade 10 are considered to have completed the first year of college-level education and are eligible to join higher learning institutions to complete an undergraduate degree (ETPE, 1994).

Challenges: Quality and Learning Achievement

In contrast to remarkable achievements in access, progress to date in raising the quality of education in Ethiopia has been limited. Efficiency and quality input indicators, achievement tests, and classroom observations suggest that it has been difficult to maintain the quality of education during a period of very rapid enrollment expansion. Learning achievement (School performance and student achievement) in the education system remains unacceptably low. This has become a source of concern for government officials, educators, parents, and other stakeholders. School performance is critically dependent on the leadership skills of school principals. The starting point here must be a sustained effort to enhance school leader effectiveness. It is so clear that the quality of school leadership is the most important factor influencing school performance. Skills of effective school leaders include instructional leadership, financial and human resources management, effective working relationships with the staff of line educational agencies, and winning the confidence of parents and School Management Committees (Harvey, 2011). The importance of the role of principals and their impact on the school performance cannot be overlooked. Principals have a very unique role in schools. Principals are managers and the job of managing involves among other things, the provision of leadership for men and women, coordinating both human and material resources to ensure the achievement of organizational goals (Hallinger and Heck, 1998). The fundamental goal of the school is to enhance teaching and learning process. This review investigated the leadership behaviors of principals who were successful in enhancing students' academic achievement. Leadership plays an important role in any organization to achieve particular goals. It is the ability of leadership that harnesses human and material resources to create productivity. School leadership is therefore of paramount importance in schools to the extent that without it goals may be difficult to attain (Jackson, 2000).

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