

Developing Africa's Educational System for Global Impact through Transformational Quality Assurance Learning System

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Abstract

Education in Africa has been of great concern to the world for decades. Annually, millions of dollars are injected into the education sector as intervention funds from African governments and other world bodies. This is to show the importance of an educated Africa to the world at large. Blessed with human resources, it is believed that educating the African populace would make the continent easily key into the globalization drive due to the fact that education enhances democracy. However, a lot needs to be done to tackle the challenges the educational sector is facing currently ranging from low funds, to obsolete learning tools, to poor governance. This paper takes a cursory at Africa's educational system and how it could be harnessed for global impact. It discussed Africa's educational system at a glance, took on the challenges currently being faced by the educational system, and proffered solutions on how the challenges could be taken care of.

Introduction

Education, formal or informal, is the bedrock of development in any society. It is the vehicle in which information is transferred from generation to generation. From time immemorial, mankind has put in efforts to ensure that education gets better by the day and as years go by.

Education helps people to survive and flourish and is the most effective investment in the battle against impoverishment, helping to advance socio-economic growth. Education reduces the contagion of poverty between generations by giving greater opportunities to learn, earn, as well as assisting other socioeconomic indicators in a

positive path. Education is also linked to more peaceful communities, greater social engagement, and stronger democracies which Africa is in dire need of. Andrew (2015)

Formal education, which is the globally recognized form of education, has transformed over the years. It has gone beyond the archaic method of inscriptions on rocks to the use of Information and Communication Technologies to impart knowledge. It does not end there; education is now intentional and aimed at solving a specific global challenge. In other words, minds are not just educated but they are educated to meet the challenge the world is facing or might probably face in the nearest future. For example, the Covid-19 global pandemic and its variants the world is currently facing have opened a new area of study in medical science.

In Africa, the story remains the same, even though the pace at which education is evolving is quite slow due to many factors that would be discussed in the course of this paper. According to Ibanga (2020), the future advancement of the African continent rests to a large extent on its ability to improve the skills and talents of its ever-teeming population of young people. However, a school of thought is of the view that the present education system in Africa cannot compete globally as it relies on obsolete techniques and which is far from preparing young people for the future.

Furthermore, it is also believed that regardless of the significant progress that has been achieved in terms of access, completion, and quality of basic education, disparities exist within and between nations, and learning achievement is still below average in many parts of Africa. Girls, young people from the poorest backgrounds, children living with disabilities, and children of nomadic settlers are faced with difficulties in achieving their right to education. Denis (2020)

In an ever-changing global world, for any nation or continent to meet up with the pace of development, it has to adopt and speedily catch up with what are the global best practices in education. This leaves much for one to ponder. Is Africa really ready to catch up with global best practices in education? Is the political will there to push this agenda? Are Africans ready to pay the price financially?

The above questions beg for answers as they stare us in our faces. It is no longer news that most governments of countries in Africa budget are less than 5% of their annual budget for education which is way too low hence the incessant strike actions in public schools including public universities. As a matter of fact, the 2022 budget in Nigeria captured just 3.1% of the budget for education. Braimoh (2022). This is a sad reality as most of the sectors more funds are concentrated on are mere avenues where politicians can easily cart away millions of dollars and indulge in massive capital flight. This leaves education at the mercy of private investors who are ready to fleece parents who dare decide to send their wards to study in privately-owned schools. Politicians in most African countries do not give a hoot if the educational sector sinks as their children and wards are sent to school abroad funded with stolen monies.

Globally, it is estimated that there are 67 million children out of school, 43% of whom stay in Africa. Many of these children reside in warfare areas or 'fragile' nations and many more live in rural regions. Annually, 10 million children drop out of elementary schools in Sub-Saharan Africa. There are a throng of reasons to explain why these children are out of schools – lack of facilities, culture, the need to be in child labour and so on, but sometimes simple steps towards education can make a significant difference.

This paper aims at discussing how to develop Africa's educational system for global impact through a transformational quality assurance learning system. It is the author's

hope that the information in this paper will help African countries rejig their educational policies to fit into the global educational drive.

Educational System in Africa: An Overview

The importance of education and knowledge to a nation, and in a broader view, a continent cannot be overemphasized. Globally, education is considered a fundamental and crucial human right. Education is one of the fundamental indicators to rate the growth, advancement, and improvement of any nation. **Nduka (2012)**

In the African narrative, education has come a long way in the development of the continent. However, in recent times, it seems the fervency has gone cold. Formal education came into the continent through colonization and has remained even when the last sign of colonization left the continent.

In the wake of independence, the first set of African leaders was fast to place education at the top of their development agendas. Having universal primary education on the ground, they insisted, would aid post-independence Africa to take itself out of gross poverty. As national governments started building schools and posting teachers even to the farthest corners of Africa, with the assistance of religious bodies and other partners, young people began to fill the classrooms and basic education was set on course. **Balogun (2018)**

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Africa's primary school admission rate presently is pegged above 80% on average, with the continent attaining some of the highest increases in elementary school admission globally in the last few decades, which is tasked with organizing international collaboration in science, education, communication, and culture. More children now go

to school in Africa than in the last ten years, even though, regardless of the pluses recorded in primary school admission, disparities and inefficiencies remain a big issue in the educational sector.

According to the African Union (AU), the current proliferation in primary school admissions “masks vast disparities and system dysfunctionalities and inefficiencies” in the education sub-sectors such as reception, pre-primary, vocational, technical, and informal education, which are seriously not developed.

It is a widely observed truism that most of Africa’s education and training programs fall short of quality teaching and learning, including inequalities and exclusion at all levels. Even with considerable growth in the number of children with access to basic education, a large percentage of children are still out of school. In fact, only 30 to 50% of secondary-school-aged children are in school, while only 7 to 23% of tertiary-school-aged youth are admitted. This varies by sub-region, with the lowest levels being in Central and Eastern Africa and the highest admission levels being in Southern and North Africa. Lusigi (2018)

Commenting further, Lusigi (2018) posits that many factors are responsible for the few progressions from primary to secondary and tertiary education. The first, she admitted, is inadequate family incomes, which reduces children’s access to education. Deficiency in government investment to create equal admittance to education also has a role to play.

According to Olaniyan (2013), the big push that led to the increase in primary school admission in Africa was the financial support to schools from both public funds and development assistance. Though, this is yet to be carried out in secondary- and tertiary-level education due to paucity of funds as most African nations would admit.

Another impediment to progressing from elementary to secondary tertiary institutions is the inability of national institutions in Africa to guarantee fairness across geographical and gender boundaries. Physically-challenged children are the most disadvantaged. Francis (2019)

More so, decisions to get children educated are made within the circumstances of prejudiced social institutions and cultural norms that may likely kick against young girls or boys attending school. Considering gender equality in education in Africa, great disparity exists in opportunities, learning achievement, and advanced learning, most often female children bear the consequence, although, in some domains, young boys may be the ones to bear it.

Challenges of the Educational System in Africa

The level, quality, and standard of education in Africa have witnessed a significant drop in the last two decades and this alarming trend has seen African nations with a great number of students relocate to different parts of the world in search of quality education.

Out of the different issues bedeviling education in Nigeria, the followings as stated by Edikan (2020) are the real challenges:

Poor funding:

Education in Africa is managed by the ministries set up by governments to oversee education at the national, state, and regional levels. Local authorities also take up the responsibility and are liable for interpreting public education policies. This puts the financing of the educational sector on the shoulders of national governments.

Due to the long existent state of corruption present at all levels of governments in Africa, education in Africa has struggled to catch up with wrong financing which has prompted a poor foundation in the educational sector.

Also, the current global economic crisis has prompted extreme cuts in governments' budgets for education all across Africa. This has led to incessant strike activities, school closures, and protests all across the continent.

Furthermore, the poor working condition and remuneration of teachers in Africa, especially in a country like Nigeria, will definitely demoralize qualified teachers from taking their job seriously. This is the major cause of teacher's attrition in many African countries as most teachers will rather take up jobs in other occupations over teaching, while the few ones who have taken up the teaching calling did so due to the absence of better employment.

Limited qualified teachers and retraining of teachers:

Satisfactory and sufficient measures are usually ignored by the ministries of education which is meant to guarantee that each teacher's work experiences and occasional training system are in check so as to help them be in tune with current education best practices and also help them to redesign their interrelationship with their pupils, students and parents.

Government inability to manage the demands of teeming student population:

Taking Nigeria into consideration, the sum total population of Nigeria as at 1960 was around 45.2 million, however, this is not the situation on ground at the moment as the nation has seen an astronomical climb in its population size.

In 2015, the nation's population was pegged at 182.2 million. That is an increase by 44% when compared to the population 15 years back. This is a challenge to the nation

educationally as it does not have the capacity to manage the young people under school age effectively.

The net admission rate at the primary level was 63.8% when compared with a worldwide normal rate of 88.8%. This low rate of enlistment to essential education in Nigeria, and in a broader scope, Africa has additionally expanded lack of education level in Nigeria.

Nigeria, in 2015, had a young literacy rate of 72.8% and a adult literacy rate of 59.6% when compared with the global rate of 90.6% and 85.3% in 2010 separately (World Bank, 2016)

Corruption, Indiscipline and Fraud In The Academic Sector

In most parts of Africa, there have been reports of high level indiscipline in the academic system, especially in the higher institutions whereby cases of cultism in schools have been on the increase and also the issue of Pay off to pass examinations (popularly known to as ‘sorting’ whereby lecturers are financially induced to score students higher than they scored).

Extortion of students and fraud is fully grounded at all levels of education. Various types of educational misconducts bedeviling the Nigerian educational framework includes examination malpractices, misrepresenting students’ records, financial inducement of lecturers for high grading or declarations with endowments, cash or sexual favour, threats to students and assaulting invigilators, e.t.c.

Poor living standards and bad administration

The challenge of bad governance associated with most African nations has negatively affected the development of education in Africa as the incessant atrocious administrations have further increased the level of impoverishment in the continent.

Many poor parents/guardians cannot afford to send their wards to school because of the bad economies and failure to meet up with school expenses. This persists because most nation governments do not have the wherewithal (as they do say) to completely take up the free fundamental education they promise their nationals.

Obsolete teaching tools/Outdated curricula:

In recent times, education has adopted modern ways of knowledge impartation. In the global scene, education cannot be separated from Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). As a matter of fact, ICT is the driving force of education in the 21st century. The global education system counts on ICT in delivering on its policies.

This is one aspect Africa is lagging behind. Except for few privately owned institutions, the use of ICT in education is still strange to most African countries educationally. At this point, it becomes difficult to key into global educational drive and compete with contemporaries around the world.

While students are exposed to multimedia boards, tablets and the Internet on the global stage, most African countries still rely on blackboard and chalk as instructional tools in the 21st century.

The issue of outdated curricula is really appalling. Many educational institutions use the same curricula for 5 years or more and do not bother to attend seminars to update themselves on the latest curriculum.

Gender and social cultural norms:

Gender and social cultural norms remains a strong barrier to girls, and in few cases boys in Africa, in terms of furthering their education. Socio cultural and economic factors can stop young girls from finishing their studies once they get to adolescence. For example, in Benin and Mali, the rate of passage to secondary school is relatively low for girls, due to families with low income, especially in local regions, where girls are often exposed to domestic work.

Solutions to challenges facing education in Africa

Proper Funding:

It is imperative for government to built more educational institutions and put in more monies to the already existing ones to ensure that the lacking infrastructure are replaced or catered for. Where the governments need help, they can approach bodies like UNESCO for assistance or float Education Trust Funds to help them generate funds.

Poverty:

Poverty is a big challenge in Africa and it is really worrisome. Governments across African nations need to come up with measures on how to create good jobs for their citizenry and also help them to be more self-reliant. They can start with mechanized agriculture or vocational training to empower the youth.

Obsolete teaching tools/Outdated curricula: The ministries of education, related bodies and agencies all over Africa should enact and enforce laws to ensure that

teachers and lecturers make use of up-to-date study materials when teaching. Periodic seminars/fora should be organized from time to time. Also routine checks should be carried out on the teachers unannounced.

Contending against corruption, indiscipline and fraud:

The government should enforce the fight against the menace of corruption, indiscipline and fraud in the educational sector. They should put on ground a good control system that would make crime difficult for its perpetrators. Students should be oriented on entry to the universities on the dangers of cheating or financially inducing a lecturer for marks.

Lecturers should also be warned periodically on the aftermath of being induced by students to gain marks. This can further be taken care of if the governments of different African nations are ready to pay the teachers/lecturers well.

Tackling Disparities:

The government of nations in Africa should enforce schooling for all children regardless of age, religion, gender or tribe. The disparities between boys and girls education should be ruled out.

Adopt the teaching of digital skills in schools: The African educational systems do not presently make use or teach core digital skills in schools. Governments as a matter of urgency needs to provide adequate training for young people hence they will be placing a major constraint on the futures of young people.

Furthermore, governments need to allocate more budgets to support modification of curricula to make it befitting for children and young people growing up in a fast-paced world which is rapidly becoming dominated by digital technologies.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In writing narrative about Africa, it is pertinent to be careful in order not to fall into some kind of Afro-pessimism. It is also essential to be vivid about the prospects for change. It is a fact that Africans love education to a great extent hence its adoption by the founding fathers immediately the colonial master left. However, it seems the passion dwindled along the line. In recent times, there have been a reawakening to drive African educational system to catch up with its contemporaries. But the challenges seem to be more complex. From lack of funds, to low technical know-how, to poor teachers' remuneration, the speed seems to be too slow. If education is to really play a role in transformational change in Africa, then it will need to be essentially re-oriented away from its present path of dependency which it took over from the colonial masters and which has proven outstandingly defiant to change. The way to go about this is to simply adopt new techniques applied globally.

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