

## **AFRICAN ENVIRONMENT AND EDUCATION**

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### **Abstract**

*Education is the backbone and a prerequisite for the development of any nation. The introduction of education in Africa undoubtedly brought advancement and transformation in all ramifications but some factors has posed a challenge to its success. Using the critical analysis, the researchers find out that countries across Africa face major challenges in education due to certain environmental factors: training programs suffer from low quality teaching and learning, lack of access to basic education as well as inequalities and exclusion at all levels. The researcher therefore has employed different strategies for education enhancement in Africa.*

**Keywords:** Education, Africa, African environment

### **Introduction**

Getting an education is not just a fundamental human right but is one of the most important investments a country can make in its future. Education refers to a set of knowledge that is accrued through learning using various methods of teaching for the purpose of providing

answers to the challenges that face our environments. Education is understood as a wholesome process of human learning by which knowledge is generated and passed on from one generation to another. It is a lifelong process that ensures that culture is preserved, transmitted and changed in line with the prevailing situation in a given society.

Education is an important aspect of all human societies while environment comprises of humankind, plants, buildings, animals and the ecological development. The need to eradicate illiteracy in the world has however been attracting the attention of those in governments. In the early sixteenth century the famous medieval traveler and scholar Leo Africanus (al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Wazan), who had travelled across most of North Africa giving detailed accounts of all that he saw there, suggested that the name 'Africa' was derived from the Greek word 'a-phrike', meaning 'without cold'.

There is no doubt that Africa is the second largest continent (after Asia), covering about one-fifth of the total land surface of Earth. The continent of Africa is the world's second largest continent after Asia, with a total surface area, including several surrounding islands of 30,313,000 square kilometres. The economic powerhouse of Africa south of the Sahara Desert is South Africa. The continent is bounded on the west by the Atlantic Ocean, on the north by the Mediterranean Sea, on the east by the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, and on the south by the mingling waters of the Atlantic and Indian oceans.

Despite Africa being a great continent, it is one of the least in development in education and technological advancements. This is as a result of so many factors which will be developed in this article in which the African environment is a major factor.

## **THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN AFRICA**

According to Fafunwa, A.B. (1974), the history of education in Africa can be roughly divided into precolonial and postcolonial periods. Since the introduction of formal education to Africa by European colonists, African education, particularly in West and Central Africa, is characterised by both traditional African teachings and European-style schooling systems. The state of education reflects not only the effects of colonialism, but instability resulting from conflicts in many regions of Africa as well as fallout from humanitarian crises such as famine, lack of drinking water, and outbreaks of diseases such as Malaria and Ebola, among others. Although the quality of education and the quantity of well-equipped schools and teachers has steadily increased since the onset of the colonial period, there are still evident numerous inequalities in the existing educational systems based on region, economic status, and gender.

In Ancient Egypt (between 2500 and 500 BCE), men were formally taught to become scribes and administrators, that is, people who could write and people who could govern. But in those early days most other African societies lived just above subsistence levels, which means that they produced little more than the basic goods they needed for daily life and their economy did not advance. So they had very little need for education. Generation after generation, children in Africa learned their skills and gathered their knowledge from their parents and relatives and their community. These skills have mostly to do with farming, and the knowledge was mostly about their environment and their social and cultural traditions. Basic level of education does not give the skills to advance their economy.

Formal education existed only in India and China and in the Mediterranean civilisations of Ancient Greece and Rome. A famous early example is the Platonic Academy of Athens, a school that was founded in 385 BCE. It was mostly for the elites (the rich and the powerful).

## **THE INFLUENCE OF ISLAM**

The introduction of Islam in North Africa (around 670 CE) and parts of West and Central Africa (around 1075 CE) set off a rapid growth of formal education in this continent. Timbuktu, in modern Mali, was the centre of Islamic learning from the 13th to the 17th century, especially under the rule of Askia Mohammad I (around 1500 CE). Timbuktu's economic success attracted many scholars to the town, further strengthening the teaching of art, science and religion. With Emperor Askia Mohammad's support, thousands of manuscripts were written. About 700,000 of these manuscripts still survive in Timbuktu libraries today, and scholars are busy restoring, translating and digitising these valuable documents, so that we can learn more about the politics, economy and culture of this early African civilisation.

The question is: why did formal education start in Africa only after the establishment of Islam? In most sub-Saharan African societies, language was not written down. Skills and knowledge were passed from generation to generation in other ways, by story-telling, for example, or in cultural dances and rituals. And we know of the hunter-gatherer people in sub-Saharan Africa who expressed their ideas in cave paintings for thousands of years before written language was developed (somewhere in Mesopotamia and Egypt around 3700 BCE). The earliest known cave art, at Blombos on South Africa's southwest coast, dates from 80,000 years ago. But these hunter-gatherer groups – and the pastoral and agricultural groups that replaced them – did not develop or adopt written language.

The most likely reason why writing did not develop in sub-Saharan Africa is that the knowledge and technology of Egypt could not reach Central and Southern African countries because of the climatic differences between the Northern Sahel, the tropical forests of Central Africa and the Savannah of the south. American scientist and popular author Jared Diamond shows, for example, that knowledge of how to make paper from papyrus, a plant common in Egypt, was adopted by societies in the Middle East and Europe, but never by those in

Southern Africa, because of the barrier of the tropics.

Without writing, African societies could not develop a system of formal education like the European education system that developed during the Middle Ages (500 to 1600 CE). Instead, most African societies relied on traditional informal education where ritual, games, singing and dancing played an important role. Boys and girls were often taught separately to help prepare them for their adult lives. There were no teachers or lecturers as we know them. Instead, all members of the community did this work, helping to educate the children until their ritual passage ceremony from childhood to adulthood.

The arrival of Islam introduced more formal models of education to Africa. The Muslim conquerors and traders brought with them written texts. This meant that Africans who adopted Islam and learned Arabic could now read, write and deepen their knowledge of philosophy, religion, science, medicine and many other subjects. Now Africans could share in the knowledge of great thinkers and philosophers who came before them. They could study mathematics, science and medicine by reading what generations of scholars had written on these subjects. In the old days Africans had only the elders in their own villages to learn from. Now that they could read and write, they could make progress by ‘standing on the shoulders of giants’ – as the physicist and mathematician Isaac Newton (1642–1727) said. Written language gave them access to the works of great scholars. And with their influence, Africa could now produce its own internationally famous scholars. Ahmad Baba al Massufi, for example, studied at Timbuktu and by the time he died in 1627 he had published more than 40 books, becoming one of Africa’s greatest scholars.

## **THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES**

Islam spread mostly to those countries at the top of Africa that were conquered by North African warriors or were part of the North African trade network. The rest of the African continent, particularly the Central Africa, East Africa, the southern parts of West Africa, and

all of southern Africa continued their traditional lifestyle without access to written texts. The arrival of Europeans dramatically changed this picture. During the 15th century, Europeans began to explore the coast of Africa in search of a route to Asia, where they hoped to trade in spices. In 1488 Bartolomeu Dias sailed from Portugal down the west coast of Africa, around Cape Point at the southern tip of Africa, and a little way up the East coast. Ten years later, Vasco da Gama was the first European to sail all the way from Europe around Africa to India. He returned to Portugal with large shipments of spices. Other traders followed, and until the Suez Canal was completed in 1869 this was the only sea route for Europe to trade with Asia.

Europeans began to settle in Africa, most noticeably at the southern tip of Africa. They brought with them printed books and taught them to read and write. Printing had been invented in Germany by Johannes Gutenberg in around 1450. This technology had brought a large increase in literacy – and economic growth – to Europe. Now, 200 years later, its benefits spread to Africa. The settlers built schools for their children where they could learn to read and write, and for some slave children too. Formal education, and with it a more advanced economy, had arrived in southern Africa.

These early schools were small and served only a small part of the African population. But something else that arrived with these Europeans began to transform African societies across the continent: The Christian religion. At the end of the 18th century, missionary societies began to set up mission stations in areas outside the border of the colony. The aim of these stations was to convert Africans to Christianity. But their work also had another – and very important – result. To become a Christian, a person must be able to read the Bible. So missionaries had to teach Africans to read and write. Just like the Islamic schools at the top of Africa, Christian mission stations at the other end of the continent were the main reason that southern African societies became literate.

Some missionaries went further into the continent to convert African societies. A famous example is David Livingstone (1813–1873), a Scottish doctor and missionary from the London Missionary society who explored deep into Africa. Livingstone’s geographical discoveries inspired missionaries to spread the gospel and the written word throughout Central, East and Southern Africa. The legacy of their efforts can be seen even today. Several economists have recently tested the effect the missionaries have had on people’s educational attainment and on their incomes. The results show that African residents on mission stations today reach higher levels of education and earn higher incomes than their African neighbours not living on a mission station. This is because missionaries emphasise the importance of literacy.

Literacy leads to higher productivity, more freedom and greater equality. Christian missionaries therefore made a strong contribution in many African countries not only to formal education but also to the economy and to the creation of a free and equal society. Not all missionary societies provided the same kind of education though. A recent study by an economist found that Protestant and Catholic societies had different effects. Both had a long-lasting effect on educational attainment. But although the Catholic mission teaching brought large benefits to men, it had no lasting benefits for women. The Protestant mission teaching, on the other hand, benefited women more than men. Both the Catholic and the Protestant missionaries benefited education in Africa, but the Protestants left a particularly large positive legacy because of all the positive externalities that women’s education brings.

## **THE INFLUENCE OF THE COLONISERS**

One effect of Livingstone’s discoveries about the African interior was that they enabled European countries to claim African countries as colonies for their own benefit. Early 20th-century colonisation had a variety of effects, some good and some bad. We will take two examples.

The Republic of Ghana was colonised by the British. These colonisers brought new technologies and other improvements such as formal education to Ghana. They helped Ghana to develop an advanced market economy that could become part of the global trading network. But in the case of the Belgian Congo, the present-day Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), colonisation brought very few benefits and many severe hardships. The colonial master, King Leopold II, and later the Belgian government, exploited the Congolese cruelly and invested little in the country in the form of building, technologies and education that would benefit later generations. The very different effects of colonisation in these two countries can be seen today. Ghana, the first sub Saharan country to gain independence (in 1957), is the rising star of Africa today. In contrast, the DRC suffers frequent outbreaks of political unrest and civil war. Income is the best reflection of the difference in living standards; Ghanaians today earn roughly ten times more per person than citizens of the DRC.

The differences between the colonial experiences of African countries are often explained as the effect of the nationality of the coloniser. Countries that were colonised by the British tend to be better performing economies today than those that were colonised by France, for example. Some economists have argued that this was because the British invested more in education than the other colonisers. But another economist suggests that this was because the British were more supportive of missionary education than other colonisers, who believed that education was the government's responsibility. British colonial governments 'privatised' their education. They encouraged private organisations to provide education, rather than providing it themselves. In this way, the British could educate far more children than the French could, even though the French may have spent more on education.

## **THE EFFECTS OF INDEPENDENCE**



Already before independence, the need for formal education in Africa had been highlighted. The Phelps Stokes Fund, an American foundation, convened several commissions in the 1920s to study the educational conditions and needs of Africans, and made recommendations for improving access and quality. These recommendations were taken up especially after the Second World War, as European colonizers started to realize that they had to fundamentally change the principles and legitimization of colonial governance to maintain in power. Independence from colonial rulers occurred mostly in the 1950s and 1960s. It did not always bring better educational and economic results for the African citizens. In some countries the new political rulers invested in formal education, building new schools and providing more and better qualified teachers. This led to a revolution in African education, as literacy rates increased at massive rates. According to Michael Clemens (2004), it has “spent the last few decades bringing children into primary school at more than twice the rate achieved by today’s rich countries when they were developing. It has done this with an economy far less developed than the leading economies of the 1800s and less developed than the vast majority of countries after 1960.” Indeed, a revolution.

This rapid expansion in African primary education happened in nearly all African countries after the Second World War and continued after independence. This can be seen in work done by Ewout Frankema which presents the average enrolment rates (another indicator to measure education) in colonial Africa in 1938, 1950 and 1960. It is interesting to note the slower post-1940 growth of enrolment rates in British Africa. In other words, that British leads in African education is mainly due to the high rate of activity of missionaries in the British colonies prior to 1940, rather than supposedly effective educational investment policies in the postwar and independence years.

## **EDUCATION IN POSTCOLONIAL AFRICA**

In 2000, the United Nations adopted the Millennium Development Goals, a set of development goals for the year 2015; “to ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.” That same year, the World Education Forum met in Dakar, Senegal, and adopted the Dakar Framework for Action reaffirming the commitment to achieve education for all by the year 2015.

At the time, according to UNESCO, only 57% of African children were enrolled in primary schools, the lowest enrollment rate of any region surveyed. The report also showed marked gender inequalities: in almost all countries, enrollment of boys far outpaced that of girls. However, in some countries, education is relatively strong. In Zimbabwe, literacy has reached 92%. According to Sawyerr, H. (2012) steps such as the abolition of school fees, investments in teaching infrastructure and resources, and school meals from the World Food Programme helped drive enrollment up by millions. Yet despite the significant progress of many countries, the world fell short of meeting its goal of Universal Primary Education (UPE). In sub-Saharan Africa as of 2013, only about 79% of primary school-age children were enrolled in school. 59 million children of primary-school age were out of school, and enrollment of girls continued to lag behind that of boys. Disparity between genders is partially due to females being excluded from school for being pregnant.

Following the expiration of the MDGs in 2015, the UN adopted a set of Sustainable Development Goals for the year 2030. The fourth goal addressed education, with the stated aim to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” The World Education Forum also convened in Incheon, Korea to discuss the implementation of this goal, and adopted the Incheon Declaration for Education 2030. Data reflecting the effects the latest measures have on the state of education participation in African countries is not readily available. There are many underlying causes that deter progress towards education equity,

such as high attrition rates of students, teacher shortages, poor infrastructure and supplies, access to education for rural and remote areas, and stigmas surrounding marginalized groups, among many others (UNICEF;2005).

## **EDUCATION IN AFRICA TODAY**

Many African countries have very low levels of education. Literacy, i.e., the ability to read is often used as a measure of basic education. Some African countries score very badly on this measure. Only 31% of people can read in Mali, only 42% in Sierra Leone and only 56% in Côte d'Ivoire. In contrast, some other African countries have more literate populations. In Namibia 89% can read, in Zimbabwe 92% and in Equatorial Guinea 94%. The average for sub-Saharan Africa is 62%. This is much lower than the average for the world, which is 84%.

There are big literacy differences between African countries. But there are also big differences within African countries. Literacy is not shared equally in these countries. The biggest differences are often across gender. To see how women's access to education in many African countries is restricted compared to men's. 78% of Nigerian men are literate, but only 66% of Nigerian women. Most African countries cannot produce enough skilled people to benefit from the world's advanced market economy (Norman, A.S.;2009). So the question now is, what are then the reasons for Africa's poor performance?

## **THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION IN AFRICA**

There are many reasons for African countries' poor literacy rates and generally low level of education. Throughout history, better access to education and better quality education have gone hand in hand with better incomes. Better education helps people to get a higher income, but a higher income also helps people to get a better education. The extra income means they can buy goods that help them to benefit from education, from basics such as electric lighting and better food to

more advanced educational aids such as books and laptops. So improvements in education and improvements in the economy reinforce each other. The important point here is that as African societies become wealthier we can expect more Africans to demand better education from their schools and universities. If improvement comes too slowly, they will seek better education elsewhere. This does further damage to Africa, as valuable skills are lost. (Buchen, I;2005). In the past, to find better education usually meant leaving Africa, but with the rise of our digitally connected world, high quality education is just a click away. Modern communication technology is an essential tool in the quest to provide better education for African students.

Mobile phones are used everywhere in Africa. We all have one because it gives us quick and cheap access to all our friends, and smart phones give us access to the internet. Farmers in Tanzania use it to get market prices for their produce, entrepreneurs in Kenya use it to make secure payments for goods and services, South African consumers use it to pay their monthly electricity bill; these are just a few examples. Mobile phones can also be educational tools. Several African firms are producing mobile phone games for children to improve their skills, for example in mathematics or English. But the biggest advantage of better technology is access to the internet. As the libraries of Timbuktu did in the past, it gives access to a large body of knowledge previously unavailable to African students. Information about philosophy, medicine, economics, biology, engineering, statistics, history, geography, chemistry or any other subject imaginable is now at their fingertips. Not only is this information free, but the teaching of it is increasingly becoming free too.

Several courses from leading universities like Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology now provide free online courses in several subjects. Instead of enrolling at an African university, students can subscribe for free to these online courses and learn the skills necessary to partake in the advanced market economy. Perhaps, African tertiary education of the future will not all be large

universities funded by under-resourced governments. Perhaps some of them will be computer centres funded by communities where students can listen to and learn from the top professors from around the world. This demonstrates how transformative technology can be when combined with African ingenuity. Just as Islam traders and Christian missionaries brought the written word to African communities, promoting African scholarship, so too can the digital age provide rural African villagers with some valuable tools for transforming their communities from subsistence farming to sophisticated market economies.

But technology cannot do everything. Governments must provide the conditions necessary for all children to go to school. They must provide a safe and secure environment, because formal education usually stops during times of political unrest and civil war. They must provide a good transport system, especially during winter when roads are muddy and rivers too deep to cross. They must provide good classrooms with reliable electricity, to power everything from a light bulb to a computer. They must provide a healthy environment, because many diseases found in Africa, such as Malaria, make it hard for children to learn. And they must make education compulsory for all children and prohibit the employment of children in full-time jobs. Even though many African countries have made important improvements over the last 20 years, too many children in some of these countries do not have the basic conditions necessary for going to school.

Getting children into schools is important, but without good teachers even the most well-equipped school can do little. In South Africa, for example, nearly all children go to school, but the quality of South African primary and secondary education is very bad. In 2012 almost 90% of the final year South African students failed to obtain a grade above 50%. Many teachers are unqualified, often absent, and poor motivated to do their jobs well and unable to keep discipline in the classroom. The South African government has tried to solve the

problem by hiring more teachers and increasing their salaries, but with little effect. Governments are often slow-moving and have their own interests at heart rather than the citizens' interests. Teacher trade unions can add to the problem, for example, by preventing the dismissal of bad teachers. Clearly the culture of learning needs to improve, but this will not happen fast.

If governments cannot provide quick solutions, citizens of African countries must find other sources of help. Civil society, which involves citizens and private companies, must become more involved in education and not leave it all to the government. Parents must demand better education for their children. One way they can do this is through school governing bodies. These are run by parents and they make important decisions that affect the school. Schools that have active governing bodies, run by parents who are passionate about education, have better performing students. Further still, the wider society can also help. In several African countries, NGOs (non-governmental organisations) run classes in mathematics, science and English for underperforming students. In some countries church groups or other volunteer organisations provide textbooks and other school supplies. Sometimes foreign aid is used to support school feeding and health programmes.

But the best solutions are local solutions. An excellent example is Uganda's Mountains of the Moon University. In 2007, a rural western Ugandan community decided that they wanted tertiary education for their children. With the support of the local Archbishop, government officials and village elders, a new university was born. It is funded by the local community and its students are mostly from the surrounding area. This shows what a community can do if it demands better education for its children.

## **THE AFRICAN ENVIRONMENT**

Africa is the world's second largest and second most populous continent, after Asia in both cases. At about 30.3 million km<sup>2</sup> (11.7

million square miles) including adjacent islands, it covers 6% of Earth's total surface area and 20% of its land area. Despite this low concentration of wealth, recent economic expansion and the large and young population make Africa an important economic market in the broader global context.

Africa's climate is dominated by desert conditions along vast stretches of its northern and southern fringes. The central portion of the continent is wetter, with tropical rainforests, grasslands, and semi-arid climates. Temperatures are about the same as those in the desert regions. The continent is surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea to the north, the Isthmus of Suez and the Red Sea to the northeast, the Indian Ocean to the southeast and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. The continent includes Madagascar and various archipelagos. It contains 54 fully recognised sovereign states (countries), eight territories and two de facto independent states with limited or no recognition. Algeria is Africa's largest country by area, and Nigeria is its largest by population. African nations cooperate through the establishment of the African Union, which is headquartered in Addis Ababa.

Today, Africa remains the poorest and least-developed continent in the world derided by hunger, poverty, terrorism, local ethnic and religious conflicts, corruption and bribery, disease outbreaks (OECD; 2006).

## **FACTORS AFFECTING EDUCATION FROM THE AFRICAN ENVIRONMENT**

- African environment has resulted to degrading education. This is because of poor environment in which people live. Many are striving to survive and don't have enough money for education.
- Local attitudes and/or traditional practices
- Health and nutrition: Lack of access to good food which affects health
- Crisis and instability in leadership

- Distance to school: Most times, the students and teachers lacks mobility
- Poor quality environment (e.g., infrastructure, overcrowding, sanitation, violence)
- Poor quality content (e.g., outdated curriculum, inadequate materials)
- Poor quality processes (e.g., untrained teachers, poor school management)
- National legal framework (e.g., lack of compulsory education requirement)
- Poor legal enforcement of education policies
- Lack of national budgetary allocation to education
- School isolation from the national education system

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENT**

Education encourages people to use energy and water more efficiently and recycle household waste. By increasing awareness and concern, education can encourage people to reduce their impact on the environment through more efficient use of energy and water supplies, especially in areas of resource scarcity.

Education is a process that allows individuals to explore environmental issues, engage in problem solving, and take action to improve the environment. As a result, individuals develop a deeper understanding of environmental issues and have the skills to make informed and responsible decisions. However, environment can affect the growth of education in a particular area. For example, the level and system of the Americans are not the same with the Africans. This is because of low development and technological advancements.

## **CHALLENGES OF EDUCATION IN AFRICA**

African education sector continues to face serious challenges of low and inequitable access to education, irrelevant curriculum and poor



learning outcomes, inadequate education financing, weak education system capacity, and weak link with the world of work. According to Kwapong, A. K. (1988) other factors include;

- **Poverty**

Illiteracy and lack of quality education is the main reason why Africans remains in poverty despite the abundance of both human and natural resources. Most schools lack learning facilities. Students travel long distance to attend classes. In Nigeria, rich people send their children to private and international schools while poor people are left with no choice than to send their children to public schools. Public schools lack good teachers and facilities and most times, their classes are overcrowded.

Low-income students tend to perform worse in school than their more affluent peers. Studies have shown that family income strongly correlates to student achievement on standardized tests. That may be partly because parents with fewer financial resources generally can't afford tutoring and other enrichment experiences to boost student achievement. In addition, low-income children are much more likely to experience food instability, family turmoil, and other stressors that can negatively affect their academic success.(Bloom, D., Canning, &Chan, K; 2006)

- **Vocational and Technical Education**

African countries paid little attention to Technical and Vocational Education during the early periods of their independence. Presently technical and vocational education has become a top priority in Africa along with Basic Education as a path to youth employment. Pupils should be exposed at the Basic Education level to range of practical activities in the vocational field in order to make them familiarize them with it and stimulate their interest in vocational subjects and occupational skills for further training. Technical and vocational training provides personnel with knowledge and skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development,

matching the supply of skilled labour with demand. It also provides operatives, artisans, craftsmen, technicians and other middle-level technical personnel and prepares them for self-employment.(African Union, January 2007).

- **Strategic Capacities**

Most countries in sub-Saharan Africa lack the strategic capacities needed for the formulation, development and implementation of effective policies based on in-country processes. Curriculum managers, administrators, educators, supervisors and specialists should have jobs. The Universities in Africa need to develop specialised knowledge base to support the professional development of such personnel.

- **Education Statistics**

The quantity and quality of research-based data in Africa is extremely low compared to that of the developed countries and most of the educational policies do not have such empirical-based support. Well managed and responsive statistical information services are essential to viable policy formulation and efficient investment in education.

- **Teaching Profession and low income**

Teachers' conditions in most African countries in terms of management benefits and professional support are poor and teacher motivation and performance low. This situation has been detrimental to the quality of basic education in those countries. The teachers earn peanuts as salary which doesn't encourage them at all.

- **Female Education**

Several millions (approximately 30 million) African girls are out of school either because they have never enrolled in school or because they have dropped out of the education system. Girls in many poor communities still suffer from discrimination when it comes to decisions on whether a boy or girl should go to school. Girls still provide most of the household labour and are forced into early marriage after they have been denied a chance to take control of their

own destiny through education. Adolescent pregnancies, puberty rituals and sexual myths, and manipulation of culture, still lead to early entry into marriage and reduce the chances of bridging the gap. Access to schools must be improved and discriminatory practices against girls should be eliminated. Social and cultural practices should not stand in the way of girls' education. Recruitment of female teachers must be encouraged and incentives provided.

The cost of educating girls should be subsidized. Scholarships and uniform for girls may help raise enrolment. Above all, parents should be made aware of the benefits of girls' education like greater earning ability for families, reduced fertility, reduced infant mortality and increased levels of public health.

- **Science and Technology**

Without a strong science and technology base no country can develop in this modern era. African countries are really handicapped in this field. New techniques and products are emerging in the information sciences, communications, biotechnology, space science and aeronautics, medicine and many other areas. Our Universities and Research Institutes should take up the challenge. They should be more flexible; they should shed off the excess baggage carried over from the colonial era and re-equip themselves with learner more efficient resources.

- **Distance Education**

Africa has a predominantly youthful population. Presently the median age in Africa is 17.3 as against 33.7 in more developed regions and 22.0 in the less developed regions. It is estimated that nearly two-thirds of the population in Africa will be 24 years and below in the 2025. The 21st Century will therefore see many young people as youths and young adults demanding education, employment, basic services and other citizen's rights. The education sector must be ready to provide the necessary social, economic and technological skills for productive existence while at the same time offering the cultural and

spiritual dimension necessary for an integrated and fulfilled life. Unfortunately, our educational institutions cannot contain all the qualified candidates especially at the secondary and tertiary levels. Certainly more schools and universities will have to be opened but a viable and ultimately cost-effective alternative to formal delivery will have to be pursued with added vigour to meet the serious challenge of access to education in the next century.

Distance Education lends itself to full utilisation of technological and scientific advancements and meet the diverse human and social needs. It incorporates into its basic correspondence teaching methods, educational broadcasting, audio-visual aids, and recently telecommunication and computer based technologies. The development of interactive computer-mediated communication systems in particular, provides educational institutions with a means of both delivering education to individuals when and where they want it, and being receptive to students' views and queries (World Bank; 2006).

- **Education System**

African education system is on the whole centralized in nature and characterized by weak management, planning, evaluation, and incentive structures. Most countries do not have reliable information system to facilitate planning, monitoring, evaluation, policy formulation and resource allocation. More seriously, the system is not able to ensure proper use of funds often due to corrupt practices. The highly centralized nature of education delivery in most African countries precludes possibilities of local participation which could resolve some of the issues in resource mobilization, management, accountability, and sustainability of the education system. Most countries have not been able to meaningfully operationalize decentralization due to the problems involved in local capacity development and devolution of power and resources. But in the absence of proper budget and expenditure tracking systems, decentralization has in some cases been rendered ineffective either

because of limited financial management capacity or it has simply meant the decentralization of corruption to the local level.

- **Education Financing**

Education financing by African governments is still very inadequate due to low capacity of many of them to raise taxes for increasing economic and social investments. Little or no attention is paid in funding the economic sector.

### **IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION TO AFRICA**

Education is pivotal to increasing employment and income opportunities. It is fundamental to breaking the cycle of poverty. Education is the key to unlocking the golden door of freedom for all in Africa. It is the bedrock of social and economic development. Education is crucial as it is an investment in human capital. This yields tremendous benefits at many levels and spheres. According to Summers, L (2000), importance of education to Africa includes;

- Creating More Employment Opportunities
- Education brought technological advancement and enlightenment in all ramifications.
- Securing a Higher Income: People with higher education and varied experience are more likely to get high-paying, expert jobs. Study hard, dedicate your time and effort to acquire knowledge and reach a high level of competence if you would like to lead a comfortable lifestyle.
- Developing Problem-solving Skills: One of the benefits of education is that the educational system teaches us how to obtain and develop critical and logical thinking and make independent decisions.
- Improving the Economy: Education helps countries grow economically.
- Creating Modern Society: Education is of key essence for modern society. One needs to learn about culture, history and other important aspects so that they would be able to contribute to modern society.

- Creating equal opportunities: The importance of education in society has always been great as it is irrespective of caste, race, gender, religion. Educated people are treated as equals on the basis of their knowledge and competence.
- Introducing Empowerment: Education is the key to turn a weakness into a strength. It offers different tools and ways to understand problems that lay ahead of us and helps resolve them. It offers different tools and ways to understand problems that lay ahead of us and helps resolve them.
- Education is critical for development and helps lay the foundations for social well-being, economic growth and security, gender equality and peace.

### **CONCLUSION**

It can thus be concluded that education is the key for development when the programs created are able to deal with the challenges that face human beings. Education must provide answers to societal problems and when utilized, be able to improve the livelihood of the people. It defeats any intelligent mind to say one is educated when the same is not able to manage the environment, and more specifically the environment in which he is working and particularly the area of his competence.

Education is the key to prosperity. History shows that countries prosper when they are part of the advanced market economy and integrated into the world economy. The key to integration is a well-educated workforce. If the next century is to be the African century, it will be because students know the history of education in Africa and the problems we face today and are determined to get a good education not only for themselves but for future generations.

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