

Global Jobs and African Education

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1 Implications of Globalization for African Education

Among other benefits for Africa, globalization presents the opportunity to export labour to the rest of the World and within Africa. It is hard to justify the export of African labour to the developed countries of the World, when this resource is critically needed in Africa. However, one should not lose sight of the fact that Africa has surplus labour, especially of the youth, something in short supply in developed countries. Second, as many African countries prepare to exploit the newly found wealth and accelerate economic growth, Africans who will have had experience in developed countries will come in handy. Third, many of the multinational companies to benefit from the Africa economic boom are located in developed countries; having a pool of Africans who understand their business culture will be an asset for their African operations.

For Africa, there is much potential with regard to the export of doctors, nurses, tourism and hospitality professionals, skilled and unskilled labour, sporting talent, entertainers and teachers of African culture/languages. Africa should also benefit from the youth bulge with almost 70% of the continent's population aged below 30. Forty percent of the World's youthful population resides in Africa. The continent's large deposits of natural resources, a growing continental market, a high spirit of entrepreneurship and rapid embracing of technology, and the fact that Africa is the last unexploited development frontier, also favour international exchanges in education and employment.

2. African Education not Good Enough for Global Competiveness

Although on average, Africa devotes 22% (Kenya and a few other countries over 30%) of the public budget on education, while the world average is 16%, a substantial number of African children do not enroll in school and many of those who do, drop out. As of 2010, compared to the rest of the World, Africa had the lowest gross enrollment and net enrollment ratios at all levels of the education system, the most dropouts and out of school youth, and the most illiterates. The situation is worse at the tertiary education level with Africa registering the lowest gross enrollment ratio of 7% compared to the World average of 29%. There are also major social, religious and geographical disparities in enrollment, completion and outcomes as well as with regard to areas of study all the way to the university. The explanation for this education crisis lies in poor governance, misplaced priorities, inadequate funding, conflicts and wars and some negative cultural and religious values, poor national infrastructure and poverty.

Even for those who are able to remain within the school system, there are major quality issues. At the primary and secondary school levels, Africa has the highest percentage of repeaters in the World. A large percentage of primary school pupils cannot read or write material meant for their respective grades. Quality and relevance are also an issue at the tertiary level as evidenced by; poor rankings of African universities compared to universities elsewhere, the fact that less than a quarter of the students are enrolled in science and technology fields, complaints by employers about graduates who do not seem to have mastered the basics, and the fact that African universities and research institutes' contribution to world knowledge is almost negligible.

As a result, compared to the rest of the World, a lot of Africa's talents are unlikely to develop, contribute to the development of the continent or benefit from global educational and employment opportunities. This is one reason, imports of scientific and other experts into Africa will continue. Donors' prioritization of basic education over tertiary education and their prescriptions that disadvantage the marginalized has not made matters any better. Nor have rather stringent visa requirements for potential African students and those seeking work in developed countries helped.

It is estimated that Africa loses up to \$4billion to pay for over 140, 000 expatriates based in Africa. In a way, this is evidence that Africa benefits from the global employment market. Export of African experts comes with some benefits for Africa in the form of financial remittances (estimated at \$1billion for Kenya in 2012), linkages for further training overseas and opening up of new ground for other Africans. Unfortunately, these experts are not available to support development in Africa or to nurture future talent for a continent that has an acute shortage of high-level resources in the most critical fields of development.

3. Generating a Globally Competitive Labour Force

Governance. The African leadership has to lead the way in reforming African education to be globally competitive by:

- Building national consensus on what needs to be done and prioritise economic advancement while not tolerating negative distractions
- Eliminating conflicts and wars while promoting the rule of law, peace building initiatives, inclusiveness and equity in the sharing of national resources
- Promoting positive values of honesty, hard work, nationalism, meritocracy, transparency, fairness, etc.
- Strengthening regional economic and educational ties
- Investing in the IT revolution. Together with education, they are the greatest equalizers
- Raising the vote for research and innovation to at least 1% of GDP
- Involving the private sector in the provision of education at all levels
- Establishing/strengthening centres of excellence nationally and regionally to optimize on scarce resources and to train and upgrade the skills of practitioners
- Supporting graduate training for specializations where there is the greatest need and more so, with universities in South and East Asia from which Africa could learn more than from Europe and North America
- Promote local capacity (in collaboration with foreign experts where needed) for government consultancy projects
- Providing appropriate incentives to get renowned African experts to return home to share and prepare young talented Africans for global opportunities; the strategy of South Korea and Taiwan to bring back their best brains from the developed countries contributed to their economic miracles
- Promoting the export of youth possessing vocational skills given the declining youthful population in developed countries and those talented in sports, drama, art and music where Africa may enjoy a comparative advantage over the rest of the World
- Investing in widely accessible and high quality education from basic to tertiary and vocational/technical, and in non-core curriculum subjects (sports, drama, music, art)
- Making education delivery more cost-effective while managing the excesses of teacher unions
- Insisting on accountability by all teachers from primary to university

- Making a deliberate efforts to get education to be more inclusive of marginalized social, religious and regional groups by making basic education free and compulsory and through affirmative action interventions at all levels

Higher Education Reform. African higher education institutions have to espouse more dramatic reforms for effective global competition labour force by:

- Expanding higher education only if sure of the availability of commensurate resources to support the expansion; quality must come before quantity
- Identifying alternative methods of expanding access and delivery (day universities, distance learning)
- Diversifying funding sources; in addition to governments, student fees, research grants and consultancies and partnerships with industry, philanthropy, and more
- Doing more with less; available resources can accomplish more than is currently the case
- Ensuring that higher education institutions are truly national in outlook before they plan for a global role
- Reaching out to Asian countries (in addition to the traditional allies in the developed World) for research and graduate training
- Linking up with top sporting universities in the developed world and especially the USA to strengthen sports in the respective universities
- Digitizing content and exploiting the full potential of IT
- Paying greater attention to quality education through appropriate quality assurance mechanisms, the basing on recruitment and promotion of staff and students on none other than merit considerations and targeted graduate training
- Reorienting the curriculum to reflect global market needs informed by research findings
- Establish/strengthen programmes on student start-up companies as a way preparing them to benefit from global opportunities
- Identify niche areas for specialization instead of duplicating what is already in existence

The International Community. International partners and governments of developed countries could enhance Africans' exploitation of global employment opportunities by:

- Linking future support to countries to evidence of accountability in government and educational institutions
- Putting more money into science and technology education, IT and higher education.
- Targeting scholarship support to priority areas of development such as nuclear energy, mining, solar power, water and energy, IT, mathematics, the sciences, engineering and high quality vocational/technical education
- Supporting diversification of sports' and entertainment beyond the traditional (swimming, gymnastics, film making, baseball, cricket, American football, etc.) to expand the range of available opportunities
- Lobbying for a more open door policy for prospective African students and employees seeking opportunities in the developed World, as long as they are eligible
- Encouraging basic and high school students' and teacher exchanges between Africa, Europe, North America and Asia; early interaction is good investment for future international cooperation
- Opening up their consultancy and other donor jobs that are focused on Africa to more African experts

- Investing in international student, internship and employment exchanges between Africa, Europe, North America and Asia
- Investing in international student competitions (from primary to university) to expose African talent to professional sporting clubs in the developed countries
- Supporting research and graduate study for African scholars in areas where Africa has a competitive edge (mineral exploitation, tourism, African languages/culture, Sports, solar energy, and more)
- Encouraging multinational companies to invest in the education of Africans who would be their ambassadors in Africa; and, in internship and university/industry and business links in support of both scientific and business innovations and post school employment
- Supporting value addition educational programmes to widen opportunities for business with the rest of the World targeting agricultural and mineral products
- Promoting joint consultancy and research projects between African scholars/experts and their counterparts in from Europe, North America and Asia

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