

EDUCATION IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the impact of international economic pressures on the provision of education in developing countries, examining how these external factors combine with internal political conflicts in national struggles over education policy. The most vulnerable sections of the society, especially women, are the most affected by the crisis in the field of education.

Key words: Education, training, education policy, basic education, economic recession.

АННОТАЦИЯ

В этой статье рассматривается влияние международного экономического давления на предоставление образования в развивающихся странах, исследуется, как эти внешние факторы сочетаются с внутренними политическими конфликтами в национальной борьбе за политику в области образования. Наиболее уязвимые слои общества, особенно женщины, больше всего страдают от кризиса в сфере образования.

Ключевые слова: образование, обучение, образовательная политика, базовое образование, экономический спад.

INTRODUCTION

More people in the world today are educated than ever before. In 1820 only 12% of the people in the world could read and write. Today the share is reversed: only 17% of the world's population remains illiterate. Primary school enrollment is now almost universal in most countries, with as many girls enrolling as boys.

Nevertheless, these figures overshadow the impact of persistent inequity. Some 63 million children of primary school age were out of school in 2016 and progress on primary school enrollment remains flat. Most impacted are the world's poorest countries, where the lack of basic education is a hard constraint on development. In Niger, for example, just 36.5% of 15- to 20-year-olds are literate¹.

“The World Bank and some donor governments are upbeat about the possibility of public-private partnerships (PPPs) and private provision as alternatives to

¹ Restuccia, Diego; and Vandenbroucke, Guillaume. “Explaining Educational Attainment across Countries and over Time.” *Review of Economic Dynamics*, October 2014, Vol. 17, No. 4, pp. 824-41.

government-funded services. Yet research by Oxfam and other NGOs has shown clearly that education, health and other public services delivered privately and funded through PPPs are not a viable alternative to government delivery of services. Instead they can drive up inequality and drain government revenues. Even the IMF is now warning of the sizeable fiscal risks of pursuing PPP approaches.”

In Pakistan a large majority of the schools enroll more boys than girls, and drop-out rates for girls are reportedly higher. Photo by Vicki Francis/Department for International Development. Pakistan, for example, has 24 million children out of school, with just 15% of poor rural girls finishing primary school. Public spending on education is among the lowest in the world. The state of Punjab is no longer building new public schools and instead, turning over management of the public schools to the private sector. The goal was to get more of the 5.5 million out-of-school children in Punjab into school, but Oxfam’s research shows this is not what’s happening. Only 1.3% of children in the schools surveyed had previously been out of school. A large majority of the schools enrolled more boys than girls, and drop-out rates for girls were reported to be higher².

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

On the other hand, there are many examples of developing countries successfully expanding access by providing universal free education:

- In Uganda, removing direct costs through universal primary education increased enrollment by over 60 percent and significantly lowered cost-related dropouts.

- In Malawi, free primary education increased enrollment by half, favoring girls and poor people.

- In Ghana, in September 2017, after fees for senior high (upper secondary) school were dropped, 90,000 more students walked through the school doors at the start of the new academic year.

- Sierra Leone’s government has made primary and secondary education free and is increasing tax collection from the richest.

- Ethiopia is a poor country, with around the same per capita income as Canada’s in 1840. And yet it is the fifth-largest spender on education in the world as a proportion of its budget, employing over 400,000 primary school teachers. Between 2005 and 2015, it brought 15 million more children into school. Ethiopia still faces

² Barro, Robert; and Lee, Jong-Wha. “A New Data Set of Educational Attainment in the World, 1950-2010.” *Journal of Development Economics*, September 2013, Vol. 104, pp. 184-98.

serious challenges with learning outcomes and improving the quality of education, but as Oxfam reports, “the scale of its commitment and effort to educate its girls and boys is dramatic.”

Achieving greater equality between women and men and increased empowerment of women and girls has long been recognized as a global imperative for development. In 2015 it was made a stand-alone goal in the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG5).

Education is key to meeting that goal, and there has been real progress. Globally, 90% of girls now complete primary school, but only 75% complete their lower secondary education. In low income countries, the situation is less encouraging: fewer than 67% of girls complete their primary education, and only 33% completes lower secondary school. Income and gender combine for a crushing result. According to Oxfam, in Kenya, a girl from a poor family has a one in 250 chance of pursuing her studies beyond secondary school, compared to a one in three chance for a boy from a rich family.

The World Bank calculates that this failure to educate girls costs the world economy as much as \$30 trillion in lost earnings and productivity. It also comes at a high cost to their health and well-being. Globally, women with secondary education earn twice as much as women with no education. Education not only narrows the pay gap with men, it also increases their self-confidence and decision-making power in the household. Women typically invest a higher proportion of their earnings in their families and communities than do men. With even a few years of primary education, women’s economic prospects improve; they have fewer and healthier children, and better chances of sending their children to school. UNESCO estimates that if all girls were to receive a secondary education, there would be a 64% reduction in early and forced child marriages which greatly increase the risk of death in childbirth. If all girls completed even a primary education, an estimated 189,000 maternal deaths would be avoided annually – a reduction of two-thirds.

According to World Bank’s 2018 report, Learning to Realize Education’s Promise, the rise in school enrollment does not mean that all those children are getting a good education. Globally, 125 million children are not acquiring functional literacy or numeracy, even after four years in school. “Rabia Nura, a 16-year-old girl from Kano in northern Nigeria, goes to school despite ever-present threats from Boko Haram. She is determined to become a doctor. But 37 million African children will learn so little in school that they will not be much better off than kids who never attend school.”

Now is the time to act decisively on these strategies. Quality education for all is a must to ensure a creative and engaged global citizenry, ready to meet the challenges of our changing world.

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