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Is Kenya likely to achieve education for all by 2015? Strength and challenges

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ABSTRACT

The participation of Government of Kenya in the Jomtien Conference in 1990, and its subsequent endorsement of EFA Declaration, re-enforced the commitment Kenya had on the provision of education to its citizens. The events related to the development of education sector in the country following the Jomtien Conference exhibit how Kenya has tried to domesticate the EFA Declarations. Two crucial events laid the foundation for domesticating EFA commitments in the country. These are: National Conference on Education for All held in Kisumu in 1992, and National Symposium on the Education of the Girl-Child held in Machakos in 1994. Education for all is not about putting children in a classroom. It is about providing children with a qualified teaching professional in acceptable teaching and learning environment. While it is extremely encouraging that the Kenya government took the first bold step in implementing free primary education in 2003, this achievement has not been without challenges. This paper examines the progress, challenges and the strategies and the government in trying to achieve education for all.

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Introduction

Education for All (EFA) is a goal and strategy - a global commitment, with a national outlook, that addresses the provision of quality basic education for all children, youth and adult in a country (MOEST 2001). Education for ALL (EFA) is thus an inclusive concept that 'must encompass not only primary education but also early childhood education literacy and life skills programme.

Using both formal and non-formal approaches, it must take account of the needs of the poor and the most disadvantage, including working children, remote rural dwellers and nomads, and ethnic and linguistic minorities, children and adults affected by conflicts, HIV/AIDS, hunger and poor health and those with special needs. (The Dakar Framework for Action, 2000).

The 1990 Jomtien world conference on Education for All (WCEFA), initiated this new impetus for the development and pursuit of quality basic education for all. In April 2000, the world conference on Education for All was held in Dakar, Senegal. It provided an opportunity to assess the progress made since Jomtien and the prospects for developing quality education for the 21st century.

The conference reaffirmed governments and international agencies commitment to Jomtien EFA goals. The framework recognizes education as a fundamental human right and a key to sustainable development and peace within and between countries, and thus an indispensable means for effective empowerment and advancement of women and men to participate in the development of their countries in the 21st Century. (Dakar Framework for Action, 2000).

The world Education Forum meeting in Dakar, Senegal reiterated the need for action by national governments, Kenya included, in rededicating themselves towards the attainment of EFA goals and targets. It provided deadlines for achieving the goals and set the year 2015 as the deadline for realizing all of them. The specific goals targets, areas of focus and prospects for 2015 include:

Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adult literacy by 2015, especially for women and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are all achieved by all, especially literacy, numeracy and essential life skills. (Dakar framework for action, 2000).

The individual governments, groups of countries, as well as International regional and national organizations are expected to use the Dakar Framework for Action on EFA to develop their own specific programmes, plans and strategies in line with their own priorities, objectives, legal and policy framework.

Development of education for all in Kenya

The provision of education opportunities has been a standing objective of the Government of Kenya. Since independence in 1963. This is because education has been regarded by various stakeholders as a vital vehicle that promotes social economic and political development. It has now become clear that when educational opportunities are opened to girls and women, such benefits are even greater. To achieve this; "Kenya's guiding philosophy for education is that every Kenyan has the right to basic education." Education has, therefore, been seen as a fundamental strategy for human capital development

and a crucial vehicle for enhancing the quality of life. (MOEST, EFA 2000)

Based on the experience of segregated education during the colonial period, the independent government's first objective was to decolonize education and make it responsive to the development of an independent nation. The National commission on Education (Ominde Commission) was established in 1964 and given the mandate of setting a framework for revitalizing the entire education sector. The commission provided the policy framework for operationalising a unified education system in independent Kenya (GOK, 1964).

From independence, therefore the government has been committed to fighting the three enemies of development, namely poverty, ignorance and disease. In pursuit of this goal, the Government has adopted a policy of providing education to all citizens regardless of their economic, social or cultural status. Over the last four decades the government, households, communities and private investors have striven to enhance the development of education in the country and have invested heavily in education. (MOEST, 2000). Such investments have been in line with national philosophy spelt out in the 1965 sessional paper No. 10 on African socialism and its application to planning in Kenya (GOK, 1965).

Various other policy documents such as National developments, economic survey and sessional papers have emphasized the role of education and provided a framework for investment in the sector by various players.

Recently other policy initiatives on attainment of Education for All (EFA) and in particular universal primary education. For example, sessional paper No. 1 of 2005 on a policy framework for Education Training and research which provides new direction on the provision of education and training at all levels. It underlines the government commitment to achieving universal primary education by 2005 which is a key strategy towards attaining the overall goal of Education For All by 2015. (GOK, 2005).

Achievements / progress made in achieving EFA goals

The past two decades have witnessed renewed Government commitment to EFA goals. There has been considerable expansion of educational opportunities during the period for both boys and girls. The Government and other partners, including parents and communities, civil society, private investors, educationists and donors have intensified efforts to reverse the declining enrolments and improve on quality and relevance of education and training. (MOEST, 1999).

Besides there is also a renewed call for greater partnership among the partners for the development of viable and sustainable plans, mobilization of additional resources and efficient implementation of education programmes. The most notable positive progress has been in the following areas:-

Early Childhood Education

The Government is already implementing measures that seek to improve the performance of early childhood education. These include establishing guidelines and standards for the management, supervision and curriculum development for Early Childhood Education and establishment of District Centers for Early Childhood Education (DICECE) for purposes of inservicing teachers and training of trainers, mobilizing communities and parents through awareness creation. (GOK, 2009).

The government is also implementing a 2 year in-service training programme for Early Childhood Development Education teachers to enhance quality at this level; mounting a 9 (nine) month training of trainers, developing guidelines and syllabuses for ECDE programmes enhancing the capacity of supervisors and inspectors to ensure quality of ECDE programmes and equipping the District Centers for Early Childhood Education to meet the needs of the program (GOK, 2005). Private investor has invested in the provision of ECD service. They have contributed in the provision of physical facilities, training of pre-school teachers and their remuneration and also in the provision of learning materials.

Investment in primary education

The government policy on primary education is to achieve universal primary education by 2005 which is a key strategy towards attaining overall education for all (EFA) goals by 2015. Attaining UPE will ensure that all Kenyans children eligible for primary schooling have the opportunity to enroll and remain in school to learn and acquire quality basic education and skills training. In pursuit of this objective the government has continued to allocate substantial resources to primary education sub - sector. Since 1992/93 financial year, primary education has been taking over 50% of the Ministry recurrent expenditure. (Public Recurrent Expenditure on Primary Education 1990/91 - 1998/99), Communities have also invested heavily in education at this level. Under the cost -sharing policy, communities' put up physical facilities and met other direct and indirect costs of education while government pays teachers' salaries. The contribution of individual private investors has also been high. Private schools have been developed throughout the country and there are prospects for the sector to grow. (MOEST 2000).

In 2003, the government introduced Free Primary Education (FPE) which resulted in an increased enrolment of children from 5.9 million in 2002 to 7.2 million in formal public schools in 2004.

Secondary Education

The Government partnership with the community has continued to invest in Secondary education. There has been a remarkable growth in secondary education, with 151 secondary schools at independence (1963) to 800 in 2009. In addition to improving the quantitative expansion of education at the secondary level the government is also committed to raising the quality of education. Partnership with international organizations has provided instructional materials and equipments to secondary schools to improve the quality of instruction especially in disadvantaged areas. (MOEST 2001).

The government continues to provide teachers to all public secondary schools. In addition, MOEST, through Kenya Education Staff Institute (KESI) is strengthening the capacities of educational managers at this level. The Government has also reviewed the staffing norms in order to ensure equitable distribution of teachers and thus their proper utilization. The Government has rehabilitated some schools to improve the teaching and learning environment.

Special education

Since the late 1960's the special education. Programme has been growing steadily. Access and participation has increased over the last decades. In 1990, the total enrolment in special schools was 6115 pupils and by 1998 the enrolment had risen to 8978 of which 5424 were boys and 3553 girls. In 1990 integration was introduced and this greatly enhanced enrolments.

The Government is currently implementing measures to improve the participation of children with special needs. Under the FPE additional grants are provided to physically challenged children enrolled in special education institutions and units attached to regular primary school to begin removing existing barriers that make school environment unfriendly to physically challenged learners. In addition, the Government continues to train teachers in special education as well as sponsoring training at university level in order to improve the capacity of teachers. (MOEST 2005)

Non - formal education

Various policies and programmes have been put in place to develop non-formal education and other alternative and complementary approaches. The government, the Non Governmental Organizations, Donors, Religious Organizations, Parent Teachers' Association (PTA) and other stakeholders have been investing in Non - Formal education (NFE). The main investment by the Government is the provision of service to the programme. The Ministry of Education and Human Resource development's inspectorate has appointed a senior school inspector for Non-Formal Education and also provided some teachers to NFE centers.

Challenges facing EFA

Cost and Education Financing

The Government of Kenya and households face the challenge of providing adequate financing for achieving EFA goals and targets. Constraints on public resources due to competing sector and poor economic growth have limited the government's ability to address the challenges facing the provision of quality education for all. The internal problems like the inefficient allocation and utilization of resources and poor management has also affected the achievement of Education for All goals. The challenge is therefore not just how much resource are available but how efficiently and effectively these resources are distributed and utilized. (MOEST 2001).

Poor economic growth and increases poverty. Poor economic growth in Kenya in the last decade has led to persistent poverty among Kenyans. Official documents indicate that about 50% of Kenyan live below the poverty line and are therefore unable to access basic services like food, education, shelter and health.

Household and communities have therefore been unable to invest and support the development of basic education. Many parents especially in rural areas, ASAL regions and slums in urban centers have been unable to provide their children with necessary education requirements.

This has resulted to:-Non - enrolment of school age children, especially girls and Pulling out those who are in school to supplement household income.

Inappropriate and inadequate policy and legal frameworks and statements

Inappropriate and inadequate policy and legal frameworks have negatively affected the development of quality basic education. Based on the inherited education system, the government and other partners have not come up with a clear vision / mission of education, which has changed with time and circumstances which would enhance the provision of quality education for all. The process of policy making, planning and implementation does not seem to be based on systematic evaluation of the education sector based on available information. Policies relating to education have in most instances been politically instigated, resulting to-Political

interference, Reduction of government financing of basic education, Over loaded inappropriate and gender insensitive curricula, Non-involvement of all stakeholders in policy formulation and the management of education.

HIV/AIDS pandemic

The increased HIV/AIDS pandemic has had devastating effects on the education sector in general and the participation of children in particular. HIV/AIDS affects both the demand and supply of basic education. The sector is losing many qualified human resources from the pandemic. Many teachers are either infected or affected by HIV/AIDS and thus ineffective in their work. The pandemic affects the demand for schooling, the enrolment rates, participation and completion rates. The high rate of absenteeism and high dropout rate, is defeating the whole purpose of education and eroding all the gains in basic education which contributes towards attainment of Education For All.

Overall, it seems likely that the targets of quality basic education for all by, 2015 and of elimination of gender disparities in primary secondary education by 2005 as affirmed at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000, are unlikely to be attained in those countries heavily affected by HIV/AIDS. On the other hand, the demand for higher numbers of trained and skilled personnel will rise steeply as the epidemic takes its toll of adults in all the profession (MOEST 2008).

Teacher's shortage

Teacher shortage has also been witnessed as a key challenge. Increased enrollment in primary schools and currently in secondary school means that more teachers are required. Due to financial constraints that the government is facing, it has been unable to increase the number of teachers to match the increase in enrollment. The current shortage stands at 66,000 teachers. There has also skewed distribution of teachers which seem to favor urban areas obviously at the expense of the so called hardships or remote districts. In one forum Prof.Karega Mutahi, admitted that FPE has increase pupils/teacher ratio to 83:1 leading to overcrowded classrooms where pupils do not enjoy the services of a teacher-student relationship.

The other major challenge is the way in which adult education is handled. Currently it is based in the ministry of culture and social services, rather odd ministry to place an education department. This clearly shows that the government is not considerable of the adult education. Adult illiteracy is increasing despite committing enormous resources to eliminate illiteracy at basic level.

Other challenges are-Some negative cultural practices have also contributed to dropouts and serious wastage in schools, the high wastage rate and inadequate funds.

Poor utilization of the available funds. In the recent past we have heard of gross misappropriation of funds meant to be for F.P.E. There have also been complaints of missing textbooks worth billions of shillings from the primary schools. This means that funds meant for free education is being misused at all levels.

Strategies

Working with partners in the development of a legal framework for early childhood education policy, developing a program to build community capacities for development and equipment of early childhood development. enters building partnerships with parents ,promote early childhood education ,setting quality standards and implementing appropriate programmers' for children with special needs, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, and Conduct specialized research in developmental issues of children.

Providing additional support at low cost boarding schools in arid and semi-arid areas, grants for special need education, providing support for non-formal education, offering primary curriculum in slum areas and improving health & nutrition.

The government through the ministry of education should adopt the child friendly school approach by:

(a) Establishing inclusive learning friendly classrooms that promote quality effective teaching and learning.

(b) Providing a safe and protective school. A school; should be a heaven for peace and should address issues of physical, mental and emotional development in a holistic manner.

(c) Provide an equity and equality promoting school by demonstrating, promoting and monitoring the rights and well-being of all children irrespective of gender and geographical location.

(d) A healthy and nutrition promoting school that promotes physical, mental, emotional health and nutrition.

(e) enhancing school community linkage and partnership by promoting school community partnerships, provide clear roles and responsibility of various partners and encourage local partnerships in school based management and governance.

Expansion of secondary school infrastructure to improve transition from primary to secondary. Currently it is paged on the number of available spaces in public secondary schools. The

government is committed to fully equip 560 new secondary schools to accommodate the increasing number of students graduating from primary schools, establish a teacher recruitment program to employ more teachers to improve the quality of education and to ensure that all schools have adequate teachers, build a boarding school in each constituency in the pastoral districts to ensure that learning is not disrupted as people move from one place to the other.

Conclusion

The past decade has witnessed a renewed Government of Kenya commitment to Education for All goals. Unfortunately, a wide disparity has emerged between the Jomtein agreed upon goals and actual domestication of those principles in Kenya. Although there has been considerable expansion of educational opportunities, major issues have emerged which have made the achievement of EFA goals difficult. The country's progress towards the development of quality Education for All has been much slower than those anticipated after Jomtein conference in 1990.

The Achievement of Education for All goals targets will therefore depend on how the government and other players in education development proceed with implementation of articulated strategies.