

HIGHER EDUCATION AND POVERTY REDUCTION AMONG YOUTH IN THE SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA.

MATTHEW BORODE

Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Foundations and Management, P.M.B. 5363. University of Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria.

E-mail address for correspondence: matthewborode@yahoo.com

Abstract: *This paper is set out to examine how Higher education can be used to reduce poverty among the youth in the Sub-Saharan Africa. The paper addresses itself comprehensively to the subject matter. It examines the conditions of the youth and what poverty actually signifies. It also considers the situations of higher education in the Sub-Saharan Africa. It eventually came out with copious views on how higher education can be used to reduce poverty among the youth like relating the curricula to the need of the industrial education in the practical sense into the curriculum and create a linkage between the outside community and the higher institution.*

Key words: *poverty, ICT, Higher Education, Sub-Saharan African, Underdevelopment, and Goal oriented.*

INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations publications, over one billion people in the world today live in unacceptable conditions of poverty, mostly in developing countries, particularly in rural areas of low income countries: such as Asia and the Pacific, the sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the least developed countries. Poverty has various manifestations: hunger and malnutrition. Ill health limited or lack of access to education, increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments, and social discrimination and exclusion; it is also characterized by a lack of participation in decision-making, in civil and socio-cultural life.

The Millennium Development Goals single out youth as a key target group target 16 of the MD6S is to develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth. The 2007 world development report published by World Bank focuses on youth which is a sign of a growing awareness among the sub-Saharan government and other international donor agencies. This is a welcome idea in the enlistment of the youth in the development process.

For several decades, development agencies have placed great emphasis on primary and more recently, secondary education. But have neglected tertiary education as a means to improve economic growth and mitigate poverty among the youth. The Dakar summit on "Education for All" in 2000 for example advocated only for primary education as a driver of broad social welfare. It left tertiary education in the background.

The reason for de-emphasizing tertiary education was due partly to the earlier submission about whether there was evidence that "higher education yields social benefits or not. And for the fact that there was no clear empirical evidence that higher education can be used to eradicate poverty among the youth. Recently it has become a world wide accepted facts, that higher education is a determinant of income growth, and can also produce public and private benefits. Higher education may create great tax revenue, increase savings and investment and lead to a more entrepreneurial and civic society. It can also improve a nations health, contribute to reduced population growth, improve technology and strengthen governance. Bloom (2006) found a positive and statistically significant correlation between higher education enrolment rates and governance indicators, like absence of corruption, rule of law, absence of ethnic tension, bureaucratic quality' and low risk of appropriation. And that youth education through higher education will boost high level of entrepreneurial skill.

Higher education enrolment is generally made up of the youth and so higher education graduates are likely to be more aware of and better able to use new technologies. They are also more likely to develop new tools and skills themselves. Their knowledge can also improve the skills and understanding of non-graduate co-workers, while the greater confidence and know-how inculcated by advanced schooling among the youth may generate entrepreneurship with positive effects on job creation.

THE CONDITION OF THE YOUTH IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

The global population of young people aged 12-24 is currently 1.3 billion. The youth population is projected to peak at 1.5 billion in 2035, it is likely to increase most rapidly in sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia by 26% and 20% respectively. FAO estimated that 55 percent of youth reside in rural areas, but this figure is as high as 70 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and South Asia. In SSA young people aged 15-24 comprise 36 percent in the entire labour force, 33 percent in the near East and North Africa and also 29 percent in South Asia.

In outlining the issues and challenges facing youth in sub-Saharan Africa, Oyewole (2006) asserted that youths make up over half of the region's population and that statistics indicated that Africa's demographic is getting increasingly younger. This youth bulge has profound and far-reaching consequences in terms of development, growth and good governance. The perception and reactions to the youth bulge have had and been disproportionately negative, focusing more on youths' potential roles in fostering peace, security and development in the sub-Saharan region.

Age definition of youth varies quite considerably. The United Nations defines youth as individuals between the ages 12 and 24. The 2007 world development report, which focuses on the next generation, expands the definition of youth to include all the young people aged between 12 and 24. Traditionally, policy discussion concerning youth has been based on the premise that youth are in transition from childhood to adulthood and as such, have specific characteristics that make them a distinct demographic and social category. According to the world youth report (2005), it is estimated that currently 209 million young people or 18 percent of all youth, live on less than one US dollar a day, and 515 million young people, or nearly 45 percent live on less than (\$2) two US dollars per day.

South Asia has the largest number of youth living below these two poverty lines, followed by sub-Saharan Africa.

Table I Estimates of the number of youth age 15-24, living in poverty in 2005/ in I million

Region	Less than 81/day	Less than 82/day	Undernourished
South Asia	84.1	206.1	57.8
Sub-Saharan Africa	60.7	102.1	39.9
East Asia and the Pacific -	46.5	150.5	38.6
Latin America and the Caribbean	11.1	27.2	10.8
Middle East and North Africa	2.0	12.1	7.1
Europe and Central Asia	4.1	18.2	5.8
World *	208.6	515.1	160.1

Source: Curtain R. (2004); youth in Extreme poverty.

* The total does not exactly reflect the total of the regions due to rounding.

Most poverty in the sub-Saharan Africa is concentrated in rural areas, especially among small farmers and landless families. Much Urban poverty in its turn is the consequence of rural deprivation and economic decline, which creates distress migration to cities. Rural youth tend to lack economic independence or "autonomy". The rural household is a joint venture and the gender division of labour is such that full, individual control of the productive process is virtually impossible for women in many countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Given that large proportions of rural youth are subordinate, members of usually large extended household, they are largely dependent on their parents for their livelihood needs. As youth grow older, the autonomy of males increases, but contracts for females.

The youth unemployment both in urban, and rural areas has been a persistent concern of politician and policymakers since the 1960s, youth development has remained at the margins of national development strategies in sub-Saharan Africa. The incidence of youth unemployment varies considerably from one region to another. The highest unemployment rates as found in the near East and North Africa region and 18 percent in sub-Saharan Africa.

Table 2: Youth unemployment rates by region 1995 and 2006

Region	1995	2005
Developed Economics and EU	15.2	13.1
Central and Eastern Europe and CIS	19.6	19.9
East Asia	7.5	7.8
South East Asia and Pacific	9.2	15.8
South Asia	9.9	10
Latin America and the Caribbean	14.4	16.6
Middle East and North Africa	28.7	27.7
Sub-Saharan Africa	17.5	18.1

Source: ILO Global Employment Trends. (2005)

According to international labour organization (2008), the results of their findings indicated that of the 1.1 billion youths aged 15 to 24 world-wide, one out of three of these figures is either seeking, but unable to find work, has given up the job search entirely or is working but living on less than US \$2 a day. The youth unemployment rate was far higher than the adult unemployment rate of 4.6 percent in 2005, rising from 12.33 percent in 1995 to 13.5 percent.

The condition of the youth in the sub-Saharan region is marred with poverty syndrome which often resulted from high unemployment rate, in both pre and post-tertiary education most families, believe that investment in higher education will bring economic benefits to them in return but things seems not to go the normal way, as most of the rural youth who had been to tertiary institutions still find solace on the farm work, while majority of them prefer roaming about on the urban streets than going back to farmland.

THE POSITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Enrolment rates in higher education in sub-Saharan African are by the lowest in the world enrolment growth has been slow in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the absolute gap by which it lag behind others region has increased rapidly. The regions present enrolment ration is in the same range as that of other developing regions 40 years ago.

The international development community has encouraged sub-Saharan government's relative neglect of higher education. The world Bank, which exercises significant influence over developing country government, has long believed that primary and secondary schooling are more important than tertiary education for poverty reduction. The belief stemmed up from two consideration.

First, some earlier research findings by scholars in economics of education, shows that the returns to investments in primary and secondary education were higher than those to higher education.

Secondly, on equity consideration, primary and secondary schools were well favoured than tertiary institution for example from 1995, the proportion allocated to higher education declined to just 7 percent, as the focus been shifted to primary education in the wake of the domitten World Education Conference in 1990.

In-Sub-Saharan African, legal environments vary widely, in that some countries keep public Universities, where central policy is highly put into practice. This seems to restrict the autonomy of universities and politicizes -them, thus subverting the learning experience in response to political objectives. Beginning from the late 20th century, many countries in Sub-Saharan region have started experience the upsurge of private tertiary institutions, in which the government law over them is lower than the public higher

institutions.

The current unique under funding of tertiary institutions and population of the youth outburst in the sub-Saharan Africa has led to the development of alternatives means of the higher education which was based on the colonial background is now experiencing radical changes to cater for the unemployment problem among the youth in the sub-Saharan Africa. The so called 'Orthodox' Universities is gradually becoming integrated higher education institutions.

Access to the right type of higher education remained a key problem for many youth in Sub-Saharan Africa, and even when youth were Educated, it did not guarantee meaningful employment effort to break poverty and underdevelopment nexus is urgently needed. Access to higher education by the youth is also inextricably linked to socio -economic status, and unfortunately, most people, particularly in rural areas, were poor and socially excluded. There is a great demand by the youth for the higher education more than two decades past, this may be as a result of viewing higher education as a way out of poverty by both the poor parents in the rural areas and the individual students in the urban areas of the sub-Saharan Africa.

HOW HIGHER EDUCATION CAN BE USED TO REDUCE POVERTY

Poverty means more than simply low income. It included lack of voice in determining what goes on in ones community, as well as vulnerable livelihoods. Skills development through higher education curriculum contributes to social and economics integration. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and the life skills programmes is one of the Six goals outlined in the Dakar framework for action to achieve education for all.

The curriculum of the higher education in sub-Saharan African countries should be more flexible and adaptive I in order to cure the upsurging problem of poverty among the youth. The orientation should be towards job market responsiveness, focused training in highly sought after specializations and vocational streams. The main streams of the higher education should be geared

towards producing graduates that are relevant to their economy, which will be able to make use of the knowledge and skill acquired to shape their environment and create job, rather than seeking for white collar job all the time.

There should be de-centralization of higher education governance and deregulations. This will allow them to operate all youth curriculum to cater for the environmental youth problem. It will also facilitate implementing adaptive curricular, flexible evaluation system and specific goal oriented rapid changes within the pedagogical process as and when necessary result will be rapidly developments.

The bulk of the youth graduates from majority of the countries in the sub-Saharan region and currently employed or seeking for job in the organized sector. The informal and vocational education is still less catered for this should be entrenched so that the youth can be more self-reliance after graduation.

Youth as it was pointed out earlier can be defined, not only ion terms of age but also as a social construct defined not by a number od factors including culture, economic independence and responsibility. The type of higher education given to them should address all these areas, anything short of this will lead to deprivation of essential growth ingredients.

There should be a linkage between the labour market and the higher institution so as to know the current demand by the youth outside the higher institution and what should be emphasized in the pedagogical make up of the institution. These may even change the text book contents, or call for the revised editions of the old existing

textbook, other things that can be done to facilitate the free flow of information to the educated youth, so as to alleviate their poverty after graduation include among others (a) Regular guest lecturer by industry experts and warm interaction session with the students after lecture, (b) Arranging industrial intership for students hands-on- the job exposure.

All the higher institution, both private and public should take it as a matter of must, to gets their students educated in the practical & theoretical aspect of Information Communication Technology (ICT). it should not just be a one general student course but part of the body of knowledge to be acquired and passed before graduations.

This will afford the youth the opportunity of securing employment elsewhere apart from their immediate environment.

The higher education curricular should be so structured, to cater for the rural youth who may not want to go back to agricultural practices again after graduation such programme as income generating venture from marketing and sales of raw, semi-finished and finished goods should be entrenched in the general studies programme on both the theoretical and practical aspect.

There should be integrating counseling evaluation and career guidance initiatives: whether public or private higher institutions the necessity of proper guidance to the students for helping them choosing the right career cannot be over-emphasized. This process should begin at the pre-selection phase of a programme and should continue through out the course duration. This will help the young undergraduate to know the purpose of that very education in a practical world scenario. This practice can be implemented in an

integrated frame work, involving multiple institutions to set up an umbrella body for advising students on multiple disciplinary career perspectives,-in a deregulated academic a integrated approach can be all the more effective to help discrete centers of education and learning to contribute in a holistic manner to the greater a cause of youth developments whose integrated evaluation process will help immensely the discrete bodies of the deregulated academic to self-evaluate their quality of institution.

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CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the issue of higher education and poverty reduction among the youth in the sub-Saharan region ought not to be trivializing on the developed nations and IMF direction. Going to higher institutions by the youth is a way of avoiding agricultural practices, and coming out as a University graduate to go back to the farm, land is like a-curse to them. Therefore, higher education curriculum should be made appropriate to the need of the sub-Saharan countries youth.

Poverty is more than individual situations. Higher education reforms should be geared towards allowing the youth grandaunts to integrate very well to their community. Giving preference to vocational, technical and modern marketing systems will invariably leads to increase in income and reduction in the instability of livelihoods of both the rural and urban youth.

The type of agricultural reforms through the higher education, that will motivate the sub-Saharan youth to go back to farm will be such that will allow for minimum input to bring out large output with less rigor. Without this, higher education youth grandaunts will prefer rooming the large cities, seeking for white collar job than taking one loan or the other, to get back to the land.

As previously mentioned, wealth creation is a significant aspect in higher education programmes that can contribute immensely to poverty eradication. The question is, how can higher education assist the youth graduate to create wealth? The answer is not far fetched, integration of higher education within the economic activities of an environment where it is cited. This would ensure their future employment possibilities and contribute to the well being of the youth in the whole sub-Saharan countries. And finally, the higher institutions would not be, alleviated from the area or country/community where it is situated. It will make the youth to face the realities of future demand.

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Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have shown strong signs of growth resilience in the aftermath of the recent global crisis. Yet, this paper finds evidence that growth has more than proportionately benefited the top quintile during PRSP implementation. It finds that PRSP implementation has neither reduced poverty headcount nor raised the income share of the poorest quintile in Sub-Saharan Africa. While countries in other regions have been more successful in reducing poverty and increasing the income share of the poor, there is no conclusive evidence that P Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Situation in the OIC Member Countries. A Preliminary Report February 2007. Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRTCIC). The report also demonstrates a strong link between poverty and rural population. The countries with a higher proportion of rural population experience a higher incidence of poverty. It also shows that higher growth in agricultural value-added and productivity are of prime importance in alleviating poverty. Growth in real GDP per se does not seem to reduce poverty incidence, considering the high income disparities and strong rural-urban divide in the region. Rural young sub-Saharan Africans put their lives at risk by moving to the city for greater employment opportunities and a smooth transition into adulthood. The education they receive in rural areas tends to promote an urban orientation that it adds to the belief that opportunities are better in urban centers. As the world's poorest continent, rural Africa is home to some of the most disadvantaged and marginalized youth in the world. Therefore, the increasing trend of young people migrating from their rural villages to urban centers as a survival strategy is of great concern. Many who arrive in the city lose hope of finding employment, are exploited, and find themselves in tragic situations. Youth employment is a pressing challenge throughout sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) today. With a median age of only 24 projected by 2050, the UN estimates that Africa's 15-24 year-old age group will swell by about six million each year for the next decade. The employment picture is a challenging one for youth in sub-Saharan Africa. The majority of young people work in low-productivity jobs, most often in agriculture or in self-employment or household enterprises, with low earnings and little security. Demography is the second reason why the stakes are high. SSA is the youngest region in the world, with a large youth bulge that will continue to expand in the future. The median age is 18 now, and will only climb to 24 by 2050.