**A CORPORATE UTOPIA?**

**A REVIEW OF THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION REPORT ON SECONDARY EDUCATION IN AFRICA**

**PAUL BENNELL**

1. **Introduction**

The MasterCard Foundation report on secondary education in Africa, which was published in August 2020, is a major, high profile publication which lays out an ambitious strategy for attaining universal secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa over the next thirty years. The scale of this corporately sponsored effort is unprecedented. An ‘Education Commission’ was established to manage the overall preparation of the Report. It was written by a core group of researchers from the Overseas Development Institute in London who were able to draw on 22 specially commissioned background papers covering a wide range of relevant topics. A series of consultations were also held with various stakeholders across SSA[[1]](#footnote-1).

*‘Preparing youth for the future of work’*

The main message of the Report could not be clearer, namely that the need for all youth in SSA to acquire modern, 21st century work-related skills is both overwhelming and urgent. The current low levels of secondary education provision must, therefore, be expanded rapidly with the ultimate goal of attaining universal secondary education (USE)[[2]](#footnote-2) across the entire continent by 2050[[3]](#footnote-3). The most critical reform proposed by the Report is the implementation of a new curriculum which imparts the requisite attitudes, knowledge and skills to be universally adopted by all secondary schools as soon as is practicable. With regard to access, the Report estimates that attaining USE will require a sevenfold increase in annual average expenditure – from US$25 billion in 2015 to US$175 billion in 2050.

The overall intention in commissioning the Report is commendable and reflects the MasterCard Foundation’s strong commitment to improving secondary education in SSA. The report itself is an impressive 275 page document with wide-ranging analysis of most aspects of secondary schooling provision. However, a detailed review of the Report raises important concerns about its overall value in providing strategic guidance for the development of secondary education in SSA over the next 30 years. There are three main sets of issues. Firstly, the Report under-estimates the constraints that are preventing the expansion of secondary education in SSA. Secondly, for a variety of reasons, the proposed curriculum and some of the other ‘promising practices’ are quite problematic. And thirdly, the Report does not adequately situate its USE strategy in the broader context of other human resource development challenges in SSA that need to be immediately addressed.

Taken as whole, the main conclusion of this review is that the Report’s proposed USE strategy is overly ambitious, too simplistic and, in some key respects, substantively misconceived. As it stands, it should not, therefore form the basis for any renewed global effort to reform secondary education in SSA.

*Review organisation*

Section 2 of this Review discusses the three above-mentioned sets of concerns about the Report’s overall approach and content. The third section then assesses the Report’s situational analysis of secondary education in SSA[[4]](#footnote-4) particularly with respect to access and equity. Section 4 looks, in turn, at each of the main elements of the proposed USE strategy including curriculum content and related pedagogy, teacher competence and commitment, system and school governance, and system restructuring. Finally, section 5 discusses the importance of adopting a comprehensive national human resources strategy as the overall framework in which specific education and training strategies including USE must be located.

1. **Cross-cutting issues**

The following discussion focuses on three important shortcomings of the Report namely the narrowness of its conceptual framework, weaknesses in the evidence-base for the Report’s USE strategy (coupled with insufficient attention devoted to examining the outcomes of previous and on-going policy interventions) and its under-estimation of the challenges of successfully implementing the proposed reforms for secondary education in SSA.

*The political economy of secondary education reform*

In common with other overview reports on the future of education and training in SSA which are periodically produced by the World Bank and other major international organisations (UNESCO, UNICEF, ILO etc.), the Report’s overall conceptual framework is too narrowly technical and ahistorical. As a result, its situational analysis and proposed recommendations do not take in consideration how economic, social and political structures and power relations collectively shape the prospects for education development in SSA. The Report does mention the importance of ‘vision and political will’, ‘broad coalitions’, ‘partnerships’, ‘roles’ and ‘accountability’ (p.20), but does not analyse these in a coherent, holistic and sufficiently detailed manner. This requires a multi-disciplinary political economy approach which, in particular, enables realistic assessments to be made of the overall levels of political commitment to the attainment of USE by governments and other key stakeholders, the underlying economic factors determining the current and future demand for secondary education, and the challenges of reform implementation on the ground. Without this, the Report’s prescriptions are politically and economically naïve and misguided and ultimately, therefore, quite utopian.

The necessary conceptual framework for analysing the attainability of both and UPE and USE in SSA should be based on three inter-related aspects of economic and social competition, namely competition between social classes, competition for education at all levels, and competition for jobs which, in conjunction with political settlement theory, can be used to analyse the wider politics of education policy reform formulation and implementation and, in particular, the degree of government commitment to the reform process (see Bennell, 2021a and 2021b).

*Class reproduction, education distancing and job competition*

The role of education in the reproduction of class systems and, in particular, the privileged positions of national elites, which has been extensively researched by sociologists and political scientists in Europe and North America is equally salient in SSA (see, for example, Bourdieu and Passeron, 1978; Gintis and Bowles, 1976). The job competition model is an extension of internal labour market theory which highlights the role of education in determining an individual’s place in employment queues for job vacancies (see Doeringer and Priore, 1971; Thurow, 1975). And, with regard to education competition, since educational qualifications are widely used by employers as proxies for ability and trainability, individuals seek to gain competitive advantage by acquiring the best education and thus highest qualifications as they can (see Dore, 1976). As will be discussed below, for a number of reasons, this conceptual framework is particularly relevant in analysing the attainability of both UPE and USE in SSA.

USE, like UPE before it, is being implemented at the same time as far reaching economic and political transformation in SSA. The dominant political economy in most of SSA is being increasingly shaped by pervasive national programmes of economic and political liberalisation. The superordinate economic reform goal is to replace the previous model of quasi-socialist state development with a neo-liberal, market-driven development strategy with the private sector taking the leading role. Promoting private sector development hinges critically on creating the enabling environment for the emergence of a strong national class of capitalists/entrepreneurs coupled with sizeable foreign direct investment. This amounts to a major restructuring of the national social class system with economic and political power shifting decisively away from the previously dominant bureaucratic middle class which, since independence controlled the state apparatus and the public sector as a whole (which usually included large swathes of the formal economy), towards a newly empowered business/private sector-based middle class spearheading a process of successful capitalist development. In those countries where economic liberalisation is most advanced, the growing economic, political and social power of this reconstituted middle class has already resulted in a reconfiguration of national education system in ways which has facilitated the continued consolidation of their increasingly powerful social class position.

The social class-education-job competition model hypothesises that secondary and post-secondary education are increasingly the main sorting mechanisms for accessing usually very scarce ‘good jobs’ in the formal sector. Furthermore, secondary and post-secondary education powerfully serve the interests of the middle class by ensuring that their children are well positioned with regard to the intense educational competition for these jobs. As such, secondary education in most countries in SSA continues to be a very efficient but brutally inequitable and socially wasteful sorting mechanism where only a small elite of students can be ‘successful’ while the large majority are destined to be ‘failures’. The Report recognises this ‘winnowing’ function of the education system but does not take on the board the political and social implications this has for the overall feasibility for educational reform at least for the foreseeable future.

*The politics of USE in SSA*

Given this emerging political economy, the key question is how politically committed are governments likely to be the rapid expansion of secondary education? The educational conservatism of social elites in SSA will profoundly affect both the formulation and implementation of USE-related reforms throughout the continent. The increasingly economically and politically powerful (reconstituted) middle class will continue to be highly protective of the underlying rationale and structure/organisation of secondary schooling which so effectively serves its social and economic interests. Consequently, any reforms which undermine key features of current schooling provision (including exclusionary tuition fee and other parental contributions, high-stakes entrance and terminal examinations, and a very academic, subject and content heavy curricula) will face strong social and political opposition from the middle class and other elites.

In addition, there are other key factors which influence the overall commitment of governments to USE. A basic tenet of political settlement theory is that the degree to which political elites are committed to specific reforms such as USE is very strongly influenced by the extent to which this helps them stay in power. This, in turn, leads onto two related questions namely, which groups are seeking these reforms and, under what circumstances, will governments need the support of these groups in order to stay in power (see Hickey and Hossain, 2019, Kosack, 2012, and Di and Putzel, 2009). In the large majority of countries in SSA, these political settlements continue to be based on high levels of patrimonialism and rent-seeking clientelism which makes government commitment to reforms that much more fragile and difficult to sustain (see Bennell, 2021b).

With the rapid increase in primary school enrolments as a result of UPE, governments are under increasing political pressure to increase secondary education provision. While USE is a potentially very popular reform which helps political elites remain in power, there is strong evidence to suggest that the overall level of government commitment to USE remains generally low in SSA. As will be discussed in more detail below, to date, fewer than 15 countries in SSA have formally adopted national USE strategies and only a handful of these countries have shown any serious intent to achieve USE over the next decade or so.

A key indicator of government commitment to USE is the share of secondary education in total public education expenditure. Among the 33 countries for which data are available, two-thirds of governments in SSA allocate less than one-third of the total education budget to secondary education. Furthermore, since the early 2000s, this share has declined in almost half of the 28 countries for which time-series data are available. It is also noticeable that the current commitment of governments to education as a whole, as proxied by total expenditure on public education expenditure as a percentage of GDP, is not only relatively low by international standards (i.e. under 4%) in over half of all countries for which data are available but this share has decreased in nearly 40% of countries in SSA during the last 15 years or so (see annex tables 1 and 2).

It is not only dominant social class pressures which are tempering government commitment to USE. Firstly, the very high costs of providing free secondary education to all children is itself a major factor reducing the level of government commitment to USE. Secondly, political elites are also aware that, by raising expectations that secondary education will be freely available to all eligible children, for these to be then dashed as a result of limited implementation on the ground (both in terms of enrolment growth and educational quality) can have serious political consequences. And thirdly, there are also deep-seated concerns that, without major increases in youth employment opportunities in the formal sector, too rapid expansion of secondary education could be seriously politically destabilising. In particular, most governments want to forestall further large influxes of rural youth to urban centres. Research shows that not only are more educated rural youth more likely to migrate to urban areas but, significantly reducing the costs of secondary education, is likely to lead to increased ‘migration for education’. For example, recent survey data shows that education was the second most common reason for migration among rural youth in Ethiopia and that two-thirds of the rural youth respondents expressed aspirations to migrate either to urban areas or even overseas (especially the Gulf states). Consequently, ‘development agendas that aim to keep people ‘on the farm’ and at the same time provide higher levels of education are in tension’ (Schewel and Fransen, 2019:25).

*2.2 Evidence based reform*

The Report provides little hard evidence (particularly from SSA) as empirical support for its ‘promising practices’. At a very general level, it is merely assumed that, since ‘secondary education has transformational potential’ (p.16), it is self-evidently the case that the rapid attainment of USE should be pursued as a top priority in every country. It is also (implicitly) assumed that the same education policy reforms that have been adopted in mature and other industrial economies (mainly in South and South-East Asia) can be transferred to the African context without any major scrutiny and adaptation. As a result, the Report is mainly preoccupied with spelling out what should be done with relatively attention given to assessing realities on the ground including past attempts by governments in SSA to implement many of the same ‘promising practices’ which underpin its proposed strategy.

What we are presented with, therefore, is an essentially uncontested list of desirable ‘recommended actions’ with no serious recognition given to the usually very limited room for manoeuvre for successfully implementing these reforms and other interventions in the highly resourced constrained and the frequently fragile state context of SSA. The plethora of questionable and unsubstantiated statements and assertions that are made in the Report is symptomatic of this uncritical approach to global policy transfer. The overriding impression is, therefore, that there are no serious debates and controversies about secondary education policy and practice in SSA and, in particular, the attainment of USE.

*Evidence bias*

The overall tone of the Report is up-beat and optimistic and, as such, the focus is on positive recent country experiences in improving secondary education provision and a corresponding lack of attention given to the complex and often messy realities of recent policy implementation. It is noticeable that only two countries in SSA are singled out for special praise namely Senegal and Sierra Leone. Even here, it is questionable just how successful improvements in secondary education policy and practice have been. There are certainly other countries, in particular DRC, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya and Togo, where more impressive progress has been made in implementing USE policies.

*Information paucity*

As with other similar education overview and strategy documents which have been regularly published during the last 30 years[[5]](#footnote-5), the scope and depth of the analysis in the Report is limited by the paucity of good quality, up-to-date information in almost all the 50 or so countries in SSA including very basic descriptive information on key secondary education policy interventions during the five years or so.[[6]](#footnote-6)

The reasons for this information crisis are diverse and complex but, at least in part, relate to (i) an increasing research focus on free-standing, experiment-driven research and other randomised control trials which, despite their high costs and sophisticated analytical techniques, provide little insight into the current realities of secondary schooling provision; (ii) the current preoccupation with assessing (generally very poor) learning outcomes (although mainly at the primary school level); and (iii) the heavy reliance on fairly limited household survey data.

There is surprisingly very little research which provides a good picture of the current situation in secondary schools in any country in SSA[[7]](#footnote-7). While weak national research capacity remains a concern in many countries, the lack of national and international direction and commitment to ensuring that comprehensive national reports are regularly produced remains a key constraint.

Relatively very limited information is collected and publically reported by UNESCO’s Institute of Statistics which is the sole source of education data across all countries in SSA. This mainly includes school enrolments and completion, teacher numbers and qualification profiles and recurrent and capital education expenditures. The list of information which is not collected covers almost all facets of schooling provision and system functioning. With regard to teachers, it includes levels and trends in pay, health, living and working conditions, workloads/teacher-stream ratios, subject knowledge content, pedagogic subject knowledge and practice, deployment, (internal) turnover and attrition, deployment, industrial action, absenteeism and professional behaviour. Even the most basic information on school facilities including numbers of new classrooms, schools, and other facilities (teacher housing, laboratories, electricity, water and sanitation) are unavailable.

Other important information includes student absenteeism, school feeding, tuition fees and other parental contributions, unit costs for all types of day and boarding secondary schooling, examination results and other assessments of learning outcomes, employment and other work-related and welfare outcomes, parental perceptions of education outcomes, reasons for repetition and drop-out, and key indicators of school management and governance performance.

Apart from this basic empirical information, what is also lacking are simple descriptive accounts of implementation progress with respect to all key policy reforms and other interventions. Without this, there is no basis on which to assess what governments and other key stakeholders are actually doing to improve the main areas of secondary education provision including access (most notably fee abolition, school feeding, school and classroom construction, teacher recruitment, scholarships and targeted support) and learning outcomes (curriculum content, pedagogy, teacher competence and motivation, school management, school governance etc.).

* 1. *Unrealism and over-optimism*

The Report’s failure to locate its analysis and strategy in the overall context of the rapidly evolving political economy In SSA coupled with the absence of any detailed assessment of past and on-going policy and practice to improve both access to and the quality of secondary education are key concerns which help to explain why the Report’s proposed strategy is so unrealistically ambitious and overly optimistic.

*Comparing UPE with USE*

Comparing USE with UPE highlights just how much more challenging attaining USE will be in SSA. While UPE focused (at least initially) on increasing access, the Report’s USE strategy requires that both access and quality are simultaneously improved. The overall cost of attaining USE is much greater than UPE because the unit costs of secondary education are, typically, at least three-four times higher than primary schooling. There was strong political support for UPE among all social classes and stakeholders. By contrast, as discussed earlier, the level of political support for USE is generally weak with its overall goals likely to be more strongly contested. The rights-based case for UPE was that much stronger and widely accepted than is currently the case for USE.

Donors funded a large proportion of national UPE programmes in a significant number of highly-aid dependent countries and the main aid modality, namely budget support, ensured that governments were more likely to comply with the high levels of conditionality that were attached to donor support. Given prevailing conditions, it seems highly unlikely that similar levels of external assistance will be forthcoming to fund the much greater costs of attaining USE. At the same time, however, the attachment of donors and other key stakeholders (including international and national education NGOs) to the (even more unrealistic) SDG4 education goals (which have a target date of 2030) will serve to pressurise governments to do too much (given seriously inadequate funding) which will further contribute to the downward pressures on quality and learning outcomes and also to divert scarce resources away from tackling more urgent human resource development priorities (see section 5).

*The youth demographic dividend?*

The Report repeatedly emphasises that ‘Africa’s greatest resource is its young people’ (p.8). In particular, ‘Africa’s young and growing population positions the region well (sic) to realize the benefits of a demographic dividend’ (p. 30). Such unalloyed optimism is misconceived mainly because the explosive growth of the youth population in SSA (doubling every 20-25 years) without even more rapid growth in productive employment (by at least a factor of three-four) poses the greatest short-term threat to economic, social and political development in SSA as a whole. In the current context, therefore, the demographic dividend could well be a demographic catastrophe unless decisive measures are taken to accelerate dramatically economic growth and employment expansion in the formal sector.

1. ***Situational analysis: access, equity and urban bias***

The Report devotes only seven pages to assessing the current ‘status’ of secondary education in SSA. The focus is entirely on presenting basic statistics on student access and equity. Given the overriding importance of access issues, a more detailed and comprehensive analysis is needed which, as the following discussion will highlight, provides key additional insights into the nature and extent of the challenges that will have to be surmounted in order to attain USE in SSA.

* 1. *Access and equity*

The Report highlights the impressive growth in secondary education enrolments in SSA during the last 20 years. Gross enrolment rates have increased from 29% in 1998 to 51% in 2018 for lower secondary schooling and from 20% to 34% for upper secondary schooling. At the same time, however, the Report recognises that ‘national averages mask considerable inequality in access and completion at the secondary level’. It notes, in particular, that ‘there are more than 15 countries where less than 5% of the poorest rural girls complete lower secondary’ (p.65).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 1: Current level and recent trend in gross enrolment rates for lower | | | | |  |
| secondary education in SSA, 2014-2018/lya (%) | | |  |  |  |
| <30 | 30-49 | 50-75 | 75> |  |  |
| CAR | Ethiopia | Burkina Faso | Angola |  |  |
| Chad | Guinea | Burundi | Benin |  |  |
| Somalia | Madagascar | Cameroon | Botswana |  |  |
| South Sudan | Malawi | Congo | Ghana |  |  |
|  | Mozambique | Cote d'Ivoire | Kenya |  |  |
|  | Niger | DRC | Namibia |  |  |
|  | Nigeria | Eritrea | South Africa |  |  |
|  | Uganda | Gambia | Swaziland |  |  |
|  | Tanzania | Lesotho | Togo |  |  |
|  |  | Liberia |  |  |  |
|  |  | Rwanda |  |  |  |
|  |  | Senegal |  |  |  |
|  |  | Sierra Leone |  |  |  |
|  |  | Sudan |  |  |  |
|  |  | Zambia |  |  |  |
|  |  | Zimbabwe |  |  |  |
|  |  | SSA |  |  |  |
| Notes: During the most recent five years for which data is available, | | | | |  |
| blue countries <5pp increase in GER (stagnant growth), yellow countries >5pp decrease, | | | | | |
| and green countries>5pp increase. No colour cell countries have insufficient data. | | | | | |

In many ways, relying on overall secondary education enrolment and completion rates for the continent as a whole is fairly meaningless given the very large disparities between and within countries. Tables 1 and 2 show the country breakdown of gross enrolment rates for lower and upper secondary education respectively. It is noticeable that GERs for lower secondary schooling are still less than 50% for one-third of countries in SSA and that, for upper secondary schooling, nearly 40% of countries have GERs of less than 30%.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 2: Level and trend in gross enrolment rates for upper secondary education in SSA, 2014-2018/lya (%) | | | | | | |
| <20 | 20-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60-69 | 70> |
| CAR | Angola | Benin | Burundi | Botswana | Ghana | South Africa |
| Chad | Burkina Faso | Congo | Cameroon |  |  | Swaziland |
| Ethiopia | Madagascar | Cote d'Ivoire | Gambia |  |  |  |
| Guinea Bissau | Malawi | DRC | Lesotho |  |  |  |
| Niger | Mali | Eritrea | Zimbabwe |  |  |  |
| Somalia |  | Guinea |  |  |  |  |
| South Sudan |  | Liberia |  |  |  |  |
| Uganda |  | Mozambique |  |  |  |  |
| Tanzania |  | Namibia |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | Nigeria |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | Rwanda |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | Senegal |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | Sudan |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | Togo |  |  |  |  |
| Notes: During the most recent five years for which data is available, | | | |  |  |  |
| blue countries <5pp increase in GER (stagnant growth), yellow countries >5pp decrease, | | | | | |  |
| and green countries>5pp increase. No colour cell countries have insufficient data. | | | | |  |  |

Completion rates are much lower still. Almost three-quarters of countries have lower secondary school completion rates of less than 50% and upper secondary school completion rates of less than 25% (see tables 3 and 4). The enrolment situation of girls in rural areas is even worse than described in the Report; their completion rates for the full cycle of secondary education are less than 10% in over three-quarters of all countries in SSA and less than 5% in most of West Africa (see annex table 3).

The large divergence between enrolment and completion rates is due to very high drop-out rates which receives very little explicit attention in the Report. Figure 1 shows that (imputed)[[8]](#footnote-8) drop-out rates for lower secondary schooling are well over 25% for most of the countries for which data are available. They are over 40% in nearly half of these countries including Cote d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Madagascar, Malawi and Senegal. Poor schooling quality (with very low examination pass rates) and high direct schooling costs are two major factors. However, there are other deep-seated economic and social/cultural demand-side reasons for such high dropout rates, many of which are not directly amenable to short-term policy interventions. These include the still very high

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 3: Level and percentage point change in lower secondary school completion rates in SSA, 2000-2018 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <25 | | | 26-50 | | 50-75 | | 75> | | |  |  |  |
| Benin | | | Angola | | Botswana | | Botswana | | |  |  |  |
| Burkina Faso | | | Burundi | | Congo | | South Africa | | |  |  |  |
| CAR | | | Cameroon | | DRC | |  | | |  |  |  |
| Chad | | | Cote d'Ivoire | | Eswatini | |  | | |  |  |  |
| Ethiopia | | | Gabon | | Kenya | |  | | |  |  |  |
| Guinea Bissau | | | Gambia | | Namibia | |  | | |  |  |  |
| Malawi | | | Ghana | | Nigeria | |  | | |  |  |  |
| Mozambique | | | Guinea | | Sudan | |  | | |  |  |  |
| Niger | | | Lesotho | | Zambia | |  | | |  |  |  |
| Somalia | | | Liberia | | Zimbabwe | |  | | |  |  |  |
| South Sudan | | | Madagascar | |  | |  | | |  |  |  |
|  | | | Mali | |  | |  | | |  |  |  |
|  | | | Namibia | |  | |  | | |  |  |  |
|  | | | Rwanda | |  | |  | | |  |  |  |
|  | | | Senegal | |  | |  | | |  |  |  |
|  | | | Sierra Leone | |  | |  | | |  |  |  |
|  | | | Tanzania | |  | |  | | |  |  |  |
|  | | | Togo | |  | |  | | |  |  |  |
| Notes: Blue countries <10 pp change, green countries 10-20pp change | | | | | | | | | |  |  |  |
| and yellow countries > 20pp change. No colour cell countries | | | | | | |  | | |  |  |  |
| have insufficient data. | | |  | |  | |  | | |  |  |  |
|  | | |  | |  | |  | | |  |  |  |
| Table 4: Level and percentage point change in upper secondary school | | | | | | | |
| completion rates in SSA, 2000-2018/lya | | | | |  | |  |
| <10 | 10-24.9 | | 25-49.9 | | 50> | |  |
| Benin | Angola | | Eswatini | | Botswana | |  |
| Burkina Faso | Cameroon | | Gambia | |  | |  |
| Burundi | Congo | | Ghana | |  | |  |
| CAR | Cote d'Ivoire | | Kenya | |  | |  |
| Chad | DRC | | Lesotho | |  | |  |
| Guinea Bissau | Ethiopia | | Namibia | |  | |  |
| Somalia | Gabon | | Nigeria | |  | |  |
| South Sudan | Guinea | | South Africa | |  | |  |
|  | Liberia | | Sudan | |  | |  |
|  | Madagascar | | Zambia | |  | |  |
|  | Malawi | |  | |  | |  |
|  | Mali | |  | |  | |  |
|  | Rwanda | |  | |  | |  |
|  | Senegal | |  | |  | |  |
|  | Tanzania | |  | |  | |  |
|  | Togo | |  | |  | |  |
|  | Uganda | |  | |  | |  |
|  | Zimbabwe | |  | |  | |  |
| Notes: Blue countries <10 pp change, green countries 10-20pp change | | | | | | | |
| and yellow countries > 20pp change. No colour cell countries no data. | | | | | | |  |
|  | | |  | |  | |  |

incidence of early marriage and teenage pregnancy and the high opportunity costs of secondary schooling resulting from the heavy involvement of adolescents in SSA in household productive activities.

Progress in increasing enrolment and completion rates has also been generally limited. Completion rates for both lower and upper secondary schooling increased by less than 10 percentage points (pp) in around 40% of countries between 2000 and 2018. The two standout best performers for lower secondary education are DRC and Togo (with 30 and 36pp increases respectively) and Ghana for upper secondary education (31pp) (see tables 3 and 4 and annex table 4). It is important to focus on these countries in order to gain an in-depth understanding of why they have managed to achieve such relatively large improvements in their completion rates.

What is also very concerning is that increases in gross enrolment rates at both lower and upper secondary school levels have stalled in most countries in SSA during the last five years (see Tables 1 and 2). This is the reverse of what one would expect if governments in SSA are commitment to attaining the SDG education goals by 2030. Again, only in-depth analysis which identifies all the key underlying political, social and economic factors can adequately explain the reasons for this apparent slowdown.

*3.2 The crisis of rural schooling*

Over two-thirds of Africa’s population continue to live in rural areas. The Report notes that ‘rural-urban (enrolment) inequalities are significant’ (p.65) but more substantive analysis is needed in order to assess the extent of and reasons for these spatial disparities. This is an important omission since one of the greatest challenges in attaining USE in SSA is to redress serious urban bias in the provision of secondary education. The concept of urban bias focuses in particular on the degree to which the provision of key public services is disproportionately concentrated in urban areas and especially capital cities and large urban conurbations (See Lipton, 1977).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 5: Female secondary school age population and enrolments in rural areas in selected | | | | | | | |
| countries in SSA, 2019/lya | |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | rural % national | rural % national | Percentage | Urban bias index | | |  |
| Country | school age | enrolments | point | 2019 | 2000 | Difference |  |
|  | population |  | difference |  |  |  |  |
| CAR | 57 | 4 | 53 | 14.6 | 5.3 | 9.3 |  |
| Guinea Bissau | 58 | 25 | 33 | 2.3 | 6.8 | -4.5 |  |
| Cote d'Ivoire | 46 | 21 | 24 | 2.1 | 4.3 | -2.1 |  |
| Sierra Leone | 47 | 23 | 24 | 2.0 | 2.5 | -0.5 |  |
| Cameroon | 51 | 29 | 22 | 1.8 | 1.9 | -0.1 |  |
| Gambia | 34 | 20 | 14 | 1.7 | 2.0 | -0.3 |  |
| Congo | 51 | 30 | 21 | 1.7 | 1.9 | -0.2 |  |
| Chad | 79 | 51 | 28 | 1.6 | 5.5 | -3.9 |  |
| Nigeria | 64 | 48 | 16 | 1.3 | 1.2 | 0.1 |  |
| Madagascar | 75 | 58 | 18 | 1.3 | 2.3 | -1.0 |  |
| Ghana | 53 | 45 | 8 | 1.2 | 1.3 | -0.1 |  |
| Lesotho | 64 | 58 | 7 | 1.1 | 1.2 | -0.1 |  |
| Zimbabwe | 73 | 66 | 7 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 0.0 |  |
| Eswatini | 81 | 81 | 0 | 1.0 | 1.1 | -0.1 |  |
| Source: UNICEF, Multi-Indicator Cluster Surveys |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Table 5 shows the percentage point difference between the percentage of the national secondary school-age population which is female and the percentage of rural female secondary school students for the 14 countries where time-series MICS household survey data is available for the last 20 years. This differential is very sizeable in the majority of countries but is particularly large in West and Central Africa. War-torn Central Africa Republic is the most extreme case where rural females account for 57% the national secondary school age population but only 4% of total female secondary school enrolments. A similar country pattern can be observed for rural males (see annex table 5). Excluding the four countries which have been badly affected by conflict/unrest during the last 20 years[[9]](#footnote-9), it can also be observed that the degree of urban bias (as measured by the urban bias index)[[10]](#footnote-10) has remained largely unchanged in the remaining countries which is a reflection of the deeply engrained nature of urban bias and relative rural disadvantage across SSA.

There are two sets of reasons for urban bias. Firstly, in much of SSA, economic and political power is heavily concentrated in urban centres and especially capital city conurbations. Given their current levels of economic development, most countries are over-urbanised and continuing rapid urbanisation further increases urban bias. As discussed earlier, widespread economic and political liberalisation during the last three decades has led to the emergence of a reconstituted, business-oriented middle class whose members live and work overwhelmingly in capital cities and a few other major urban centres and who are increasingly cut off from the rural roots. Meanwhile, the relative importance of agriculture and the rural economy continues to decline.

There are few countervailing tendencies which are might mitigate these high and increasing levels of urban bias. With political liberalisation and the advent of multi-party democratic politics, the political power (and thus the ‘voice’) of rural populations has increased with the result that they cannot be largely ignored by political elites as was the case in the past. However, the saliency of this political power is generally only manifest during the run-up to national elections when political parties make promises and give ‘handouts’ to the rural population but are then largely ignored once in power. By contrast, the urban electorate and especially the middle class and other elites have benefited disproportionately from this new political dispensation.

And secondly, urban bias is due to the intrinsic challenges of providing key public services and, in particular, schooling to sparsely populated, generally poor rural communities. In order to deliver a multi-subject curriculum taught by designated subject teachers, the minimum size of secondary schools, in terms of teachers and facilities, is considerably larger than for primary schools which makes it difficult, if not impossible, for most rural children to commute to school on a daily basis. Boarding schools are, therefore, often the only option but have unit costs which are usually between three-five times higher than day schools. This access challenge is further compounded by the inability of most rural parents to make the same level of financial contributions to their children’s education as is the case in urban areas.

Another major resourcing issue is the acute difficulty of deploying poorly paid and motivated teachers to work in challenging rural locations with very basic amenities (see Bennell and Acheampong, 2007). The ability of teachers to refuse rural postings invariably results in the relatively few rural secondary schools being under-staffed with generally poorly qualified and inexperienced teachers while urban schools are over-staffed and endowed with the best qualified and most experienced teachers. These challenges coupled with usually poor learning outcomes among rural students tend to dampen the overall commitment of urban elites and politicians to expanding secondary schooling in rural areas.

By increasing the complexity and resource-intensity of learning in secondary schools, some of the key ‘recommended actions’ proposed by the Report could further exacerbate rural-urban schooling input and outcome inequalities. What is most urgently needed is the development of innovative, well-researched national strategies which focus on expanding secondary education provision for rural children in SSA. Without this, there is no prospect of being able to attain USE in the foreseeable future.

1. **Promising practices?**

The report proposes ten sets of ‘recommended actions’ which, between them, cover most of what is a fairly standard list of interventions needed to attain USE. What is particularly striking, however, is the extent to which the Report focuses on ‘improving the relevance of the curricula to build knowledge and skills’ and the related reforms (in particular improving teacher skills), which also need to be implemented. By contrast, the World Bank’s most recent review of schooling in SSA has a much stronger emphasis on improving access.[[11]](#footnote-11)

The following discussion first reviews the Report’s analysis and recommendations about how to improve the quality and relevance of secondary education in SSA and then goes on to consider its proposals for the rapid expansion of secondary school enrolments.

*4.1 Curriculum reform*

Curriculum reform has two, closely related dimensions, namely changing what is taught (curriculum content) and how it is taught (learning strategies and pedagogy). The rapid universalisation of a reoriented secondary education system is justified by the changing nature of work across the world. As a result, the Report contends that employers in both the formal and informal sectors in SSA increasingly need workers with digital literacy and 21st century skills’. More generally, ‘secondary education can contribute to broad-based economic growth through improved labour productivity’ (p.16). The Report identifies six types of skills which should be integrated into the secondary school curriculum; foundational, 21st century (interactive and group-based learning, experiential learning, and leadership development), digital, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), technical and vocational, entrepreneurship and work-readiness.

*The need for reform*

This focus on the primary importance of curriculum content reform in SSA is the centrepiece of the Report’s USE strategy. Again, however, little substantive evidence is presented to support this particular reorientation nor is any attempt made to consider what the counter-arguments might be. It is noticeable that the Report broadly endorses the analysis and recommendations of the World Bank’s recent flagship report on skills development in SSA (World Bank, 2019) which itself has a number of conceptual and empirical shortcomings (see Bennell, 2021c).

The key issue is that ‘the future of work’ in ‘automated and digitalised enterprises’ has little immediate relevance for most workers in SSA both now and for the foreseeable future. Given that most young people will continue to work in predominantly subsistence agriculture and household and other micro enterprises in the informal sector, the (effective) demand for these type of skills will remain limited as will the overall scope for significant productivity gains. Even within the formal sector, there are generally no acute economy-wide skills shortages in the key productive sectors in most countries. This is because most enterprises are small (less than 100 employees) and utilise relatively simple technologies and can, therefore, rely primarily on internal training processes (see Bennell, 2021c and 2021d). Where this modern skills set is most urgently required are in specific catalytic growth industries in the formal sectors (such as mining, oil, construction, tourism and hospitality, advanced manufacturing, modern agri-business, telecommunications, finance etc.). However, total employment in these sectors is likely to remain limited for the time being (see section 5).

*School-based vocational and technical training*

In line with its overall rationale for curriculum reform, the Report asserts that ‘a more intentional focus on skill development is needed in many countries’ secondary school curricula’ (p.71) and that, in particular, ‘secondary level TVET has yet to be leveraged to its full potential’. (p.67). While it is recognised that ‘there is continuing debate about the value and cost-effectiveness of school-based pre-vocational and vocational education’ (p.91), in common with the other recommended actions, the Report only briefly addresses the key issues and evidence around which these debates are centred.

This attachment to wholesale curriculum vocationalisation (including full-blown, pre-employment occupational training) is misconceived on both conceptual and practical grounds. Conceptually, it is akin to the simplistic discourse which has dominated political discussions in SSA on the need for increased vocational intent in the school curriculum since well before Independence over sixty years ago.[[12]](#footnote-12)

What the Report does not point out is that the African continent is littered with failed attempts to vocationalise the secondary school curriculum. The experience of the last 50 years has repeatedly confirmed the ‘vocational school fallacy’ (originally coined by Philip Foster in 1966) which postulates that, given the central sorting function of secondary schooling coupled with the dominant economic incentives and goals of both students and parents in most of SSA, vocationalisation and other types of school-based vocational training schooling are generally unable to alter fundamentally deeply engrained attitudes about the importance of general, academic education (see, for example, Foster 1965, Lauglo2012, Lauglo and Maclean 2007, Middleton et. al.1993).

Quite apart from these conceptual concerns, the practical challenges of providing school-based VET in SSA have been daunting. The cost of pre-employment occupational courses (which are usually limited to increasingly out-dated artisan trades) are typically three-five times higher than general academic secondary schooling. Even with these much higher costs, the quality of training is invariably compromised by shortages of poorly trained instructors (especially because they lack essential practical work experience), as well as equipment and materials. Given the low status of this training, the quality of student intakes is also another frequent concern. With low levels of vocational intent and limited job opportunities in the formal sector, only a minority of vocationally-trained school students usually end up in training-related employment.

It is also important to point out that school-based occupational training in SSA is mainly confined to Francophone countries which have the lowest secondary schooling enrolment rates in the continent and, somewhat ironically, report the highest skill shortages (see Bennell 2021c). Almost all Anglophone countries in SSA have effectively abandoned school-based occupational training and, as in most countries across the world, rely on mainly on post-secondary school pre-employment occupational training institutions.

The key lesson is, therefore, is that beyond the introduction of ‘pre-vocational’ training in core skills (particularly IT and entrepreneurship and work-readiness), attempts to more comprehensively vocationalise the secondary school curriculum are unlikely to succeed. Vocationalising the curriculum invariably exacerbates already high levels of curriculum overload.

*Curriculum pedagogy*

As with almost all continent-wide education policy reviews before it, the Report is strongly supportive of learner-centred, competency-based curricula. At the same time, the Report cautions that ‘although competency-based curricula have been widely adopted on paper, implementing these changes can be challenging’ and, therefore ‘gradual’ roll-out is required (p.100).

For a variety of reasons, widespread attempts over the last 30 years to ‘switch-over’ to new learner-centred curricula have been largely ineffective in SSA for three main reasons. Firstly, the overall commitment for such change by teachers, school management, and parents has been and continues to be limited. And secondly, class sizes, especially in urban areas, are too large for learner-centred group work approaches to be practicable. And thirdly, teachers are not sufficiently well prepared to adopt more complex and demanding pedagogies. Given the deeply entrenched conservativeness and highly competitive nature of school systems in SSA, this again highlights the limited room for manoeuvre with regard to most of the Report’s proposed reforms.

*Assessment*

The proposed replacement of high-stakes terminal examinations with continuous assessment is unrealistic in the context of highly competitive secondary schooling systems in SSA which, as discussed earlier, play the central sorting role with regard to progression to post-secondary education and training and where reported levels of corruption and cheating are high in many countries. Continuous assessment calls for a further intensification of teacher effort both in terms of both time and task complexity, which has been resisted by both teachers and teacher unions.

*Teachers*

The Report recognises that the success of its proposed USE strategy is dependent on the availability of adequate numbers of competent and committed female and male teachers. In common with other continent-wide and national reviews of secondary education, many of the key recommendations directly affect teachers. The Report’s calls for ‘a huge expansion’ in teacher recruitment and training (with an additional 10.8 million teachers in schools by 2030) ‘while also improving teacher’ working conditions to attract good-quality entrants and reduce attrition’ (p.25). In order to improve teacher efficiency, the Report recommends that concerted efforts should also be made to increase teacher-stream ratios, ensure more equitable teacher deployment and reduce teacher absenteeism.

Given the centrality of teachers in the proposed reform process and schooling provision in general, a detailed situational analysis is required of all aspects of teacher recruitment, training, utilisation and job satisfaction and motivation. The report merely notes that ‘the world’s best education systems have succeeded in making teaching a high status profession… By contrast, many African education systems struggle to attract well-qualified candidates in to a profession that has declined in status and relative pay in recent years’ (p.121).

The stark reality is that there is no immediate likelihood of the enormous increase in funding that is needed in order to meet the projected recruitment targets for teachers (especially in priority shortage subjects) while, at the same time, creating a ‘virtuous cycle’ of sustained improvement in teacher competence and commitment. It is well to recall that similar (wishful) thinking was widespread during the planning for UPE which led to major implementation shortcomings. As with UPE, given the likely persistence of acute resource constraints, the rapid expansion of secondary school enrolments is likely to lead to a worsening of the working and living conditions of teachers. The pressure to recruit under-qualified teachers will be enormous and motivation and job satisfaction levels are likely to fall with the added work load burdens of larger classes, higher teaching loads and more demanding curricula, all of which will undermine the attainment of USE.

Finally, considerably more robust planning is required[[13]](#footnote-13). In particular, modelling of teacher requirements and recruitment targets should be based on detailed labour market analysis. It is particularly important to take into account the very high levels of unemployment among teachers in many countries in SSA[[14]](#footnote-14).

*3.2 Increasing access and equity*

The Report justifies the rapid implementation of USE on the basis of both human rights entitlement and more strictly economic grounds. Its main access recommendation is that fee-free secondary education should be complemented with ‘equity-based financing’ which targets ‘the most disadvantaged students, girls in particular with bursaries, scholarships, or cash transfers to enable them to meet secondary school costs such as uniforms, transport, and boarding’ (p.26). Targeted funding formulas for disadvantaged regions along with the overall restructuring of the secondary school system are also considered to be potentially important access reforms.

To date, governments have embarked on national USE strategies in around 15 countries. Surprisingly, the report makes no attempt to assess comprehensively what the impacts of these strategies have been to date especially with respect to enrolment and completion rates, learning outcomes, teacher commitment etc. Without this assessment, it is difficult to make meaningful recommendations about what future interventions are required.

Past experience highlights just how difficult it is to increase rapidly secondary school enrolments, especially in rural areas. The evidence from the three large countries which embarked on UPE ten years ago, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda shows that there was an initial surge in enrolments and that completion rates increased significantly. However, as discussed earlier, gross enrolment rates have stagnated during the last five years which indicates that it has been difficult to sustain enrolment growth over time. In Kenya, the free secondary education policy was announced in 2007 but, over the next decade, only one-quarter of the required funding was forthcoming. This demonstrates just how enormous the challenges of attaining USE are even for a relatively developed country such as Kenya.

Once again, it is also noticeable that increases in upper secondary school completion rates have been quite limited, again especially in rural areas. Certainly in Tanzania and Uganda and, more recently, in Ghana and Sierra Leone, rapid enrolment increases have led to growing concerns about schooling quality and learning outcomes. In Ghana, for example, the government introduced a tuition free policy for upper secondary (high school) in 2017. However, in order to meet the resulting surge in enrolments, a two-shift system has had to be introduced with staggered intakes which means that students have to remain at home for two months at time. Not surprisingly, this temporal form of double-shifting is unpopular among both students and parents and the overall quality of secondary education has declined. The government response has been that it is an acceptable cost in the short term. However, the experience from other countries in SSA highlights the negative, longer-term impacts of such short-termism on the overall development of public schooling systems.

*Increased domestic funding*

The Report estimates that total annual expenditure on secondary education will have to rise from the current level of around $25billion to $175 billion in 2050. Although details of the USE cost modelling from which these projections are derived are not presented in the Report[[15]](#footnote-15), the likelihood of these expenditure requirement targets being met is remote. Assuming that the current GDP share of secondary education expenditure is maintained at current levels, this seven fold increase in expenditure would require annual average rates of economic growth across the continent of nearly 7% over the next 30 years. Achieving even half this rate of growth would be a significant achievement. This is implicitly recognised by the Report itself since the costing model calls for a doubling of the GDP share of secondary education by 2050 which, as was discussed earlier, seems very unlikely given the current level and recent trends in government expenditure on secondary education and education as a whole during the last decade.

Even the baseline expenditure figures used for the costing exercise appear inflated. As noted earlier, the paucity of comprehensive finance data on secondary education in SSA is a major issue. However, for the 31 countries for which UIS data is available, the unweighted average share of secondary education expenditure of GDP is less than one half of the reported 2.1% in the Report. This percentage share is less than 0.5% in nearly one-quarter of these countries including the large population countries of DRC and Uganda (see Figure 2).

*External funding*

Very sizeable increases in external assistance (aid) will be essential for the large majority of countries for there to be any real prospect of USE being attained in SSA within the next 30 years, let alone by the SDG4 target date of 2030. National UPE strategies in many countries in SSA benefited considerably from large scale donor support and especially general budget support which could be used to fund additional teachers and other essential recurrent expenditure. Despite strong expressions of support among the international donor community for the SDG4 education goals, current levels of aid disbursements for secondary education amount to only a tiny fraction of the total required for the attainment of USE in SSA[[16]](#footnote-16).

The Report notes that although the share of education in total aid disbursements to SSA fell from 9.6% in 2002 to 6.6% in 2016[[17]](#footnote-17), ‘official development assistance has started to focus more on secondary education’. (p.231). However, as can be observed in Table 6, this is only true for technical secondary education which benefits relatively few students and, for the reasons discussed earlier, is unlikely to be cost-effective. Support for general secondary school, on the other hand, which is essential for the attainment of USE, has remained unchanged at just US$200-220 million per annum (in 2018 constant US$) during the last decade and its very small share of total education aid to Africa has barely increased – from an average of 4.7% between 2009 and 2011 to 6.5% between 2017 and 2019. Ten years ago, support for general secondary education accounted for nearly 57% of total aid for secondary education. Currently, this share is barely one-third of the total.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 6: Aid disbursements on all education and general and technical secondary education | | | | | | | |
| in SSA, average 2009-2011 and average 2017-2019 (US$ constant 2018, millions rounded) | | | | | | |  |
|  | Total | General | Technical | Total | Education % | Secondary % | general secondary % |
| Period | education | secondary | secondary | secondary | aid | total education | total secondary |
| 2009-11 | 3358 | 208 | 159 | 367 | 6.1 | 4.7 | 56.7 |
| 2017-19 | 3307 | 216 | 416 | 632 | 7.3 | 6.5 | 34.2 |

Source: DAC, Creditor Reporting System

Aid modalities are also changing in ways which will make external support less effective in attaining USE. In particular, the current trend is away from general and sector budget support (which can be allocated to fund additional operational expenditure) back to traditional project-based assistance, a large proportion of which is spent on technical assistance and training which have little direct impact on enrolments.

*Fee abolition and targeted support*

Surprisingly, the Report does not discuss the impact of the abolition of tuition and other fees on secondary schooling in SSA. It merely notes that ‘17 countries currently provide fee-free secondary education’ (p.248). In part, this is because of the paucity of information on the direct costs of secondary schooling in SSA. It is also a reflection of the fact the Report is strongly supply-driven. While the removal of supply-side constraints is a necessary condition for the attainment of USE, it is not on its own a sufficient condition since demand-side constraints are invariably so much more difficult to overcome.

Universal fee abolition with fairly strictly enforced controls on the level of parental school contributions has been the central plank of national UPE strategies which led to impressive and fairly immediate increases in enrolments. It is noticeable that, to date, only in Tanzania[[18]](#footnote-18) has this level of fee abolition been enforced for secondary education. Elsewhere, governments have found it too difficult politically to prevent secondary schools from levying various kinds of ‘parental contributions’ which continue to exclude the majority of the population. For example, in 2012, the Rwanda Government promised to introduce free secondary education but there continue to be various parental contributions. Per capitation student grants are meant to replace lost fee income but these are rarely sufficient and, in many countries, their real value has fallen appreciably.

In the short term, across-the-board fee abolition is inequitable because the principal beneficiaries are students from relatively wealthy households while the majority of poorer children from poorer households will still not attend, let alone complete secondary education[[19]](#footnote-19). Thus, ’making secondary school free would generate a transfer from the generally wealthier households where parents are already sending their children to secondary school’ (Duflo et. al 2019: 1). While the report recognises this inequity, it does not reject universal fee abolition as a key intervention.

While targeted support for those who cannot afford to send their children to school is a more equitable approach, the multiple challenges of implementing means-tested support remain daunting in most of SSA. To date, the majority of scholarship and cash transfer schemes in SSA have been donor funded and financial constraints have prevented nationwide coverage on a long-term sustainable basis.

*School construction*

Apart from teachers, the other key input required for expanded secondary schooling is the construction of new schools and more classrooms and other facilities at existing schools. The Report provides no hard data and virtually no commentary on this critical area of provision. It is certainly important to know just how many new secondary schools are being built especially in countries which have adopted fee-free and other related USE policies where the enrolment pressures on existing schools are likely to be high with the concomitant risk, therefore, that learning outcomes will decline and drop-outs rates will increase.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 7: Public capital expenditure as a percentage of total education | | | | | |
| expenditure, 2018/latest year available | | |  |  |  |
| 0.1-2.9 | 3.0-4.9 | 5-6.9 | 7-8.9 | >10 |  |
| Burundi | Lesotho | Cote d'Ivoire | Botswana | Cameroon |  |
| CAR | Madagascar |  | Ghana | DRC |  |
| Guinea | Malawi |  | Kenya | DRC |  |
| Mali | Senegal |  | Namibia | Ethiopia |  |
| Niger | South Africa |  | Zambia | Gambia |  |
| Sierra Leone |  |  |  | Guinea Bissau |  |
| Togo |  |  |  | Mozambique |  |
|  |  |  |  | Rwanda |  |
|  |  |  |  | South Sudan |  |
| Source: UIS |  |  |  |  |  |

What statistics are available indicate that the share of capital expenditure in total public education expenditure as a whole is very low (less than 5%) and declining in the majority of countries in SSA (see table 7). There are at least four sets of possible reasons for this. Firstly, as discussed earlier, government expenditure on education is declining or stagnant in three-quarters of countries in SSA for which data is available which almost inevitably puts further strain on capital budgets. Secondly, the relatively high unit construction costs for secondary schools (especially for boarding schools which are usually unavoidable in more sparsely populated rural areas) are typically at least twice as much as primary schools. Thirdly, intensifying recurrent expenditure pressures will increasingly crowding out already relatively very small capital expenditures. And fourthly, many governments in SSA have called on local communities to build their own schools especially after Independence as well as during the early stages of UPE. The willingness and capacity of local communities to continue to shoulder this burden (both cash and labour contributions), especially given the much higher construction costs of secondary schools, is a key issue. In some countries, government pressure has amounted to coercion which has negatively impacted on both individual and community commitment to USE. Tanzania is a notable example. In 2005, the government made an election promise that it would build one secondary school in every one of the country’s administrative ‘wards’. Once elected, however, households were forced to make contributions both in kind and money which, on average, amounted to one-half of the monthly cash income of households. Community resentment led to lower support for the ruling party at the next elections.It also proved to be very difficult to deploy teachers to the new schools and examination pass rates fell considerably (see Habyarimana et al. 2020).

*Organisation and management*

Increased citizen/client accountability at all levels, from the national level down to the community and household/individual level, is a core element of the overall process of political liberalisation which is being pursued (albeit with varying degrees of commitment) by most countries in Africa and which closely complements the overall neo-liberal, economic liberalisation agenda discussed earlier.

The Report’s discussion of the organisation and management of secondary education in SSA is limited. Once again, the absence of any comprehensive information on the extent and impact of secondary school governance reforms is striking. It appears though that both school managements and teachers frequently do not welcome the additional involvement of parents and other community members in school planning and management. For school heads, it usually increases their workloads, especially financial management. Consequently, resistance to and subversion of these reforms is widespread.

In some countries, school governance reforms are also likely to have exacerbated access and learning outcome inequalities because better-off schools have used their increased levels of organisational and management autonomy to generate considerable additional resources through higher parental contributions and other income generating activities. This additional funding is used to employ additional teachers, pay teacher bonuses, increase operational resources and improve school facilities and other infrastructure.

The weak organisational capacity of Ministries of Education to implement USE-related reforms is another major constraint which receives scant attention in the Report. Even where Ministries of Education have devolved responsibility for the direct provision of secondary schooling to non-state actors (as, for example, with the private-public partnership scheme in Uganda), the capacity of the Ministry to enforce contract implementation through basic monitoring of participating private schools has been quite limited (see O’Donoghue et al. 2018).

*System restructuring*

The Report mentions other ways of expanding access to secondary schooling. With regard to system restructuring, it notes that ‘in many countries, merging primary and lower secondary education into a good quality extended basic education of nine years for all can be an effective approach’ (p. 244). What is clear though is that, to date, major attempts in SSA to restructure national school systems in this way have been generally unsuccessful and that the previous organisational arrangement of separate primary-lower secondary school cycles has had to be reinstated. Again, this is a prime example of the dangers of promoting particular ‘promising practices’ with little or no knowledge of the extent to which they have already been adopted and their implementation outcomes.

During the roll-out of UPE, Universal Basic Education was strongly promoted by UNESCO and the World Bank as a cost-effective way of extending universal primary school enrolment to the lower secondary cycle especially in hard-to-reach rural areas. The intention was that most students would leave school after 9-10 years of basic education and that only a relatively small proportion would proceed to upper secondary school.

More research is need on the extent to which UBE has been adopted in SSA. However, at least three sizeable countries in Anglophone Africa, Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia, adopted UBE strategies with the establishment of 9-10 year unified basic schools or extended cycle primary schools (as in Kenya). While the process of ‘disarticulation’ never got off the ground in Nigeria, basic education schools were widely established in Zambia during the early 2000s. But, in the face of considerable opposition, the policy was reversed in the early 2010s. Kenya abandoned its 8-4 (year) primary-secondary school structure in 2018 and reverted back to the 6-3-3 school system which it had discarded thirty years earlier. In so doing, the duration of the full secondary school cycle has increased from four to six years making it that much harder to achieve USE.

What is clear is that the adoption of the SDG4 goal of universal secondary (lower and upper) education has effectively sounded the death knell of UBE in SSA which was a significantly more attainable goal.

*Private education*

*T*he role of private, for-profit secondary schooling provision in SSA is barely mentioned in the report. This is surprising given the sizeable share of secondary school students who attend these schools especially in Francophone and fragile and conflict-affected states where publicly-funded school systems remain seriously under-developed (see figure 3). Moreover, governments are also becoming increasingly reliant on private schools in order to increase overall secondary school enrolments. Just as was the case with UPE, the adoption of USE is likely to lead to the rapid growth in private schools. For example, half of all new secondary schools that were established in Ghana between 2011 and 2017 were privately owned[[20]](#footnote-20).

As discussed earlier, both UPE and USE pose a potentially serious threat to the privileged social and economic status of an expanding and increasingly powerful middle class in SSA. Coupled with declines in the quality of public secondary education as a result of rapid but seriously under-resourced USE-driven enrolment expansion, it is likely that the middle class and other elites will increasingly rely on relatively high-cost private schools in order to main sufficient educational distance between their children and those from the rest of society. As with UPE, USE may well, therefore, be accompanied by increasing educational inequality with poorer children ghettoised in low quality public secondary schools.

The likely political economy implications of the increasing public-private polarisation of secondary school provision for the eventual attainment of USE are, therefore, far reaching and need to be explored in far more detail. In particular, declining standards in public secondary schools will negatively impact on the overall demand for secondary schooling (especially among the poor) who are reliant on these schools and also on the overall level of government commitment to USE as major ‘political constituencies’ increasingly focus on other areas of public service delivery and investment besides secondary education (see Bennell 2021b).

The Report broadly endorses the growing interest in public-private partnerships in harnessing the allegedly better quality and greater cost-effectiveness of private schools while enabling better access of the poor to secondary education. However, considerably more research is needed before it can be recommended as being an efficient and equitable policy. Traditional public-(not-for profit) private partnerships with mainly faith-based/church owned schools are well established in many countries including DRC, Lesotho, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Uganda. However, for secondary schooling, it is still the case that much of what usually amounts to very sizeable grant funding (mainly for teacher’s salaries) disproportionately benefits children from better-off households.

1. ***Developing comprehensive national human resource development strategies***

The starting point for the development of a comprehensive strategy for secondary education in SSA is not what general knowledge and skills African youth require for future work but rather identifying the knowledge and skills that are indispensable in the short-medium term for successful economic transformation in each country. The fundamental nature and key features of this economic transformation must, therefore, be thoroughly analysed. As discussed earlier, most governments in SSA have adopted neo-liberal, capitalist development strategies, the success of which is dependent on the nurturing of an ‘enabling environment’ for private sector development.

A coherent, carefully prioritised and properly resourced national human resources development (HRD) strategy is a core component of this process. The poor and, in many countries, declining quality of training for high and middle level management and technical personnel has become a fundamental constraint on the overall economic development in SSA. Too often, quality is sacrificed for quantity as a result of chronic under-resourcing and popular and political pressures to maximise enrolments. It is imperative, therefore, that this downward spiral of declining quality and relevance is reversed as quickly as possible.

*Nurturing world class entrepreneurial and managerial talent*

The current, superordinate HRD priority in SSA should be to ensure that the requisite number of educated and trained individuals are available in order to meet the immediate and short-term occupational and other skill requirements for rapid and sustained economic growth and overall capitalist development. Successful national capitalist/private sector development is ultimately dependent on the actions of a critical mass of world class entrepreneurs and corporate managers who can spearhead the development of strategic ‘catalytic’ industries in the formal sector. High quality managerial and technical personnel are also essential in order to attract substantial, mainly ‘greenfield’ foreign direct investment. This national business class is developing quite strongly in some countries in SSA (such as Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria). However, it remains quite underdeveloped in the majority of countries in SSA.

Just what role education and training should play in the rapid nurturing of this business elite is far from straightforward. However, the carefully targeted provision of world class management and management-related training (in particular finance) should be a top priority. Where this training is not immediately available locally (which is likely to be the case in most countries), talented individuals should be sent for training overseas[[21]](#footnote-21).

*High and middle level managerial and technical personnel*

In addition to this national cadre of top entrepreneurs and senior managers, other essential managerial and technical personnel need to be trained, again to world class standards. These personnel are essential not just for private sector development but also in order to improve significantly the quality of public services right across the board. National capacity to provide the required world class training for this group of personnel should be developed as a matter top priority. Very high levels of external assistance will be almost certainly be needed in most countries. Regional provision is the only viable option for small and even medium sized countries especially for more specialist occupations and skills.

Successfully implementing this proposed HRD strategy requires the ruthless prioritising of the education and training needs of the key growth sectors. In most countries, training provision for these key sectors remains seriously inadequate as is evidenced by the continued heavy dependence on expatriate workers[[22]](#footnote-22). Unlike in the past, there should be no compromising on quality and training outputs must be strictly related to the human resource requirements in each industry/sector.

*Post-secondary education and training*

In order to meet the overall goals and objectives of this high-skill national HRD strategy, the strengthening of post-secondary education and training should be the immediate top priority for most countries in SSA. Clearly, given the importance that is currently attached to increasing the inclusivity of education and training provision (especially with the widespread adoption of UPE and USE strategies), this will be widely challenged as a seriously contentious and unpalatable option. However, it offers the only realistic way of developing the high-quality, world class skills that are indispensable for successful capitalist economic transformation and, especially in the short-term, for generating the very high rates of economic growth which is the only effective solution to redressing the mounting development crisis in SSA.

A few countries in SSA, most notably Ethiopia, have adopted high-skills, human resources-led development strategies. However, these have been undermined by too rapid expansion of higher education enrolments. Tackling the low and generally declining quality of education and training provided by universities and other post-secondary institutions in SSA will be very challenging in the short term especially given the weak qualification profiles of lecturers and the paucity of high quality, specialist post-graduate training in most priority areas.

National and external resources should be carefully targeted at the top priority, generic occupational areas, and in particular management/ entrepreneurship and the more specific skills requirements of the high priority growth sectors (construction, mining, tourism, financial services, export-oriented agri-business etc.). Establishing high-intensity capacity-building partnerships with world class universities and other specialist training institutions with high levels of direct teaching support will be essential.

The expansion of secondary education in each country in SSA should be directly supportive of these top priority national HRD goals. Increasing secondary enrolments beyond this should be avoided because it will lead to the diversion of very scarce public resources away from other priority areas both with regard to human resources development and other ‘enabling’ investments. The SDG4 target of attaining USE by 2030 is, therefore, wholly unrealistic for most countries in SSA and, if pursued too energetically, is likely to have quite serious adverse consequences for economic growth and overall national development.

*The concept of preparation*

This high-skills, human resource-led HRD strategy is in many ways similar to the traditional national ‘manpower planning’ approach which was prevalent in SSA during the 1960s and 1970s. As such, it is open to criticism for being outdated and largely discredited.

Modernisation theory and the related concept of preparation underpinned national HRD strategies (of which manpower planning was an integral component) in the late colonial period which were based on the identification of key occupational training needs which had to be met for the successful transfer of political power to newly independent governments and, more widely, the development of capitalist economies. The widespread failure of this late colonial-early independence HRD strategy was not because it was itself fundamentally misconceived but rather that the other key prerequisites for rapid economic growth did not exist and, in particular, appropriate economic policies and good governance at all levels.

As the experience of the late industrialising countries has clearly demonstrated, the concepts of preparation and human resources-led development are fundamentally sound and are highly relevant in the current development context in SSA. A new, updated concept of preparation should, therefore, be operationalised in order to address the current HRD priorities for sustained and rapid (capitalist) economic development in SSA.

A good number of governments in SSA have adopted ‘national visions’ to become successful industrial or semi-industrial countries over the next 20-30 years. While the current nature of the global economy has changed dramatically since the 1950s, other important lessons can be drawn, therefore, from the late industrialising economies of South East Asia and elsewhere.

The main objective of early industrial policy in the LICS was to identify and then promote single-mindedly the development of strategic sectors which over time increasingly required sizeable investments in new technologies in order to maintain international competitiveness. The timely provision of the necessary skilled personnel has been a critically important aspect of this state-directed development process. The state had to take the initiative in satisfying these human resource requirements for the simple reason that the effective demands for these personnel did not yet exist. This was human resource planning in the truest sense (Bennell, 1993:59). [[23]](#footnote-23)

The LICs were also able to focus on HRD for economic growth without facing strong political and social pressures to expand rapidly public schooling systems. As with the mature industrial economies in Europe and America, educational development remained largely symbiotically, in-step with and thus directly supportive of national economic transformation. By contrast, this relationship is, from a strictly economic perspective, increasingly dysfunctional in most of SSA with educational development outpacing economic development.

*The potential pitfalls of prioritising USE*

The consequences of uncritically adopting the overall goal of rapid implementation of USE in SSA are potentially very serious. Firstly, as noted above, national secondary education goals and objectives must be firmly located within the wider framework of well-developed human resource development strategies. Since these will differ markedly from country to another, the adoption of a universal policy prescription for the rapid expansion of secondary education across SSA as a whole is ill conceived and likely to be counterproductive.

And secondly, it is likely to adversely affect the implementation of the national HRD strategy outlined above. In particular, because the MasterCard Report treats secondary education in isolation from the other main education and training sub-sectors, there is no sense of what the overall strategic priorities should be in order to guide national human resources development as a whole.

The Report implicitly recognises that serious policy and resource trade-offs exist between these education sub-sectors. In particular, it cautions that ‘investments in secondary education are not at the expense of improving access and quality of primary education’ (p. 26) and that ‘robust tertiary systems that prepare youth for highly technical and specialised roles are instrumental for the advancement of Africa’s economic transformation’ (p.52). However, the full implications of these possible trade-offs for the future development of secondary education are not explored.

A related weakness of the Report is that it fails to consider the potentially serious trade-offs between enhancing productivity, on the on hand, and promoting inclusiveness through rapid enrolment expansion on the other. In fact, given its emphasis on the overriding role of reformed secondary education in providing all youth in SSA with the skills for future work, the goals of national productivity growth and inclusivity are treated as being entirely complementary. As discussed earlier, with the large majority of secondary school leavers destined to be employed in smallholder agriculture and the informal sector, this is unlikely to be the case.

The other critical productivity-inclusion trade-off is that the very sizeable public funding required for rapid increases in secondary school enrolments results in the under-funding of the post-secondary education and training that is immediately needed for the rapid economic development of the formal sector.

1. **Conclusion**

The main conclusion that can be drawn from this review of the MasterCard Foundation report is that greater realism is required in assessing the opportunities and constraints with regard to the attainment of USE in SSA. This calls for more robust, evidence-based analysis and recommendations which, inter alia, pay more attention to (i) the outcomes and impacts of the many policy and other interventions that have sought to improve secondary education provision in SSA; (ii) the importance of political economy and politics in shaping the commitment to USE and policy implementation; and (iii) the precise role and relative priority of secondary education in national human resource development strategies.

Even if it is possible to implement successfully the proposed efficiency improvements outlined in the report, it is still the case that the overall costs of attaining USE will, at least for the foreseeable future, simply too high for most governments in SSA. As with UPE, expanding enrolments too rapidly is likely to lead a marked deterioration in learning outcomes and divert resources from other higher HRD priorities which could adversely affect rather than contribute to national economic development.

The paucity of timely and sufficiently detailed information on secondary education policy and practice in SSA is major issue which should be urgently addressed. In particular, the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring reports do not have access to adequate information to be able to monitor and analysis adequately the progress in meeting the SDG4 education goals and especially the key factors shaping access, equity and quality/learning outcomes. A far more proactive, internationally coordinated approach is needed, therefore, in order to ensure that this information is collected from every country in SSA on a regular basis.

REFERENCES

Amsden, A.H. 1989. Asia’s next giant: South Korea and late industrialisation. London, Oxford University Press.

Arias, O., Santos, A., Evans D.K. 2019. The skills balancing act in Sub-Saharan Africa: Investing in skills for productivity, inclusion and adaptability. World Bank, Washington D.C.

Bashir, S., Lockheed, M, Ninan, E., Tan J-P. 2018. Facing forward: Schooling for learning in Africa. AFD and World Bank. Washington D.C.

Bennell, P.S. 2021a. “The political economy of attaining Universal Primary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: social class reproduction, educational distancing and job competition.” International Journal of Educational Development, January.

Bennell, P.S. 2021b. “The political economy of attaining Universal Primary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: the politics of UPE implementation.” International Journal of Educational Development, January.

Bennell, P.S. 2021c. “The Skills Balancing Act: A review of the 2019 World Bank report on skills development in Sub-Saharan Africa.” Compare, forthcoming

Bennell, P.S. 2020d. “Strengthening vocational education and training in Sub-Saharan Africa: A review of World Bank policy and practice, 1991-2019.” KSD Working Paper 9. Brighton.

Bennell, P.S. 1993. “Industrial training in the new South Africa: some lessons from the LICS and MICS.” Education With Production. 10, 1. pp. 49-76.

Bennell, P.S., Acheampong, K. 2007. Teacher motivation and incentives in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. London. DFID.

Bourdieu, P., Passeron, J.C. 1978. Reproduction in education, society, and culture. London, Sage.

Di J., Putzel, J. 2009. Political settlements: Issues paper. Discussion paper. University of Birmingham.

Doeringer P.B., Priore, M.J. 1971. Internal labour markets and manpower analysis. Lexington, Heath.

Dore, D. 1976. The diploma disease. Allen and Unwin, London.

Duflo, E., Dupas, P., Kremer, M. 2019. The impact of free secondary education: Experimental evidence from Ghana. Mimeo.

Foster, P. 1965 The vocational school fallacy in development planning. In Andersen, C.A., Bowman, M.J. Education and economic development. Aldine, Chicago.

Gintis and Bowles. 1976. Schooling in capitalist America: Education reform and the contradictions of economic life. Basic Books, New York.

Habyarimana, J., Ochieng’ Opalo,., Schipper, Y. 2020. The cyclical electoral impacts of programmatic policies: Evidence from education reforms in Tanzania. RISE Working Paper 20/051, September.

Hickey, S., Hossain, N. 2019. The politics of education in developing countries: From schooling to learning. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Kosack, S. 2012. The education of nations: How the political organisation of the poor not democracy led governments to invest in mass education. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lauglo, J. 2012. Vocationalised secondary education. International Handbook of Education for the Changing World of Work. pp. 2295-2302.

Lauglo, J., Maclean, R. (eds.) 2005. Vocationalisation of secondary education revisited. Netherlands: Springer.

Lipton, M. 1977. Why the poor stay poor:a study of urban bias in world development. Oxford, Palgrave.

Middleton, J.A., Ziderman A., Adams, A.V. 1993. Skills for productivity: Vocational education and training in developing countries. New York: Oxford University Press.

O’Donoghue, J., Crawfurd, L., Makaaru, J., Otieno, P., Perakis. 2018. R. A review of Uganda’s Universal Secondary Education Public-Private Partnership Programme. Education Partnerships Group.

Schewel, Fransen. 2019. Formal education and migration aspirations in Ethiopia. Population Development, 44(3) 587-602.

Thurow L.C. 1975. Generating inequality of distribution in the United States economy. Basic Books, New York.

World Bank. 2008. Transitions in secondary education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Equity and efficiency issues. World Bank Working Paper. No. 126. Africa Human Development Series. World Bank. Washington D.C.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Annex table 1: Share of secondary education in total public | | | | |
| education expenditure, 2000-2018/lya (%) | | | |  |
| Country | 2000/nya | 2018/lya | Change |  |
| Benin | 25.8 | 23.7 | -2.1 |  |
| Burkina Faso | 9 | 27.7 | 18.7 |  |
| Burundi | 35 | 26.8 | -8.2 |  |
| Chad | 36.7 | 19.7 | -17 |  |
| Congo | 40.6 | 53.3 | 12.7 |  |
| Côte d'Ivoire | 32.7 | 35.1 | 2.4 |  |
| DRC | Na | 14.3 | na |  |
| Eswatini | 27.8 | 34.1 | 6.3 |  |
| Ethiopia | 24.3 | 18.1 | -6.2 |  |
| Gambia | 15.6 | 32.6 | 17 |  |
| Ghana | 39.6 | 37 | -2.6 |  |
| Guinea | 14.1 | 21 | 6.9 |  |
| Guinea-Bissau | Na | 29.7 | na |  |
| Kenya | 17.4 | 41.8 | 24.4 |  |
| Lesotho | 27.5 | 30 | 2.5 |  |
| Liberia | 10 | 53.3 | 43.3 |  |
| Madagascar | 18.9 | 19.3 | 0.4 |  |
| Malawi | 21.5 | 28.6 | 7.1 |  |
| Mali | 43.5 | 37 | -6.5 |  |
| Mozambique | 29.3 | 30.6 | 1.3 |  |
| Namibia | 27.2 | 23.5 | -3.7 |  |
| Niger | 21.4 | 12 | -9.4 |  |
| Rwanda | 16.7 | 38.2 | 21.5 |  |
| Senegal | 22.4 | 16.8 | -5.6 |  |
| Sierra Leone | 25.3 | 19.1 | -6.2 |  |
| South Africa | 31.3 | 29.8 | -1.5 |  |
| Tanzania | 8.9 | 18.3 | 9.4 |  |
| Togo | 29.2 | 16 | -13.2 |  |
| Uganda | 17.3 | 18 | 0.7 |  |
| Zambia | 25.8 | 23.3 | -2.5 |  |
| Source: UIS |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Annex table 2: Government expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP, 2010/nya-2018/nya | | | | | |
| Country | 2010 | 2018 | Change |
| Angola | 3.4 | na | na |
| Benin | 3.7 | 2.9 | -0.8 |
| Botswana | 9.6 | na | na |
| Bukina Faso | 3.5 | 5.4 | 1.9 |
| Burundi | 6.8 | 5.1 | -1.7 |
| Cameroon | 3 | 3.1 | 0.1 |
| CAR | 1.1 | na | na |
| Chad | 2 | 2.5 | 0.5 |
| Congo | 6.2 | 3.5 | -2.7 |
| Côte d'Ivoire | 4.6 | 3.3 | -1.3 |
| DRC | 1.5 | 1.5 | 0 |
| Eritrea | 2.1 | na | na |
| Eswatini | 6.1 | 7.1 | 1 |
| Ethiopia | 4.5 | 4.7 | 0.2 |
| Gabon | 3.1 | 2.7 | -0.4 |
| Ghana | 5.5 | 4 | -1.5 |
| Guinea | 2.6 | 2.3 | -0.3 |
| Guinea-Bissau | 1.9 | na | na |
| Kenya | 5.5 | 5.3 | -0.2 |
| Lesotho | 12.1 | 7 | -5.1 |
| Liberia | 1.7 | 2.6 | 0.9 |
| Madagascar | 2.8 | 2.8 | 0 |
| Malawi | 3.5 | 4.7 | 1.2 |
| Mali | 3.3 | 3.8 | 0.5 |
| Mozambique | 3.9 | 5.5 | 1.6 |
| Namibia | 8.3 | na | na |
| Niger | 2.7 | 3.5 | 0.8 |
| Rwanda | 4.6 | 3.1 | -1.5 |
| Senegal | 5.2 | 4.8 | -0.4 |
| Sierra Leone | 2.6 | 7 | 4.4 |
| South Africa | 5.7 | 6.2 | 0.5 |
| Tanzania | 4.5 | 3.7 | -0.8 |
| Togo |  |  | 0 |
| Uganda | 1.7 | 2.1 | 0.4 |
| Zambia | 1.1 | 4.6 | 3.5 |
| Zimbabwe | 1.5 | 5.9 | 4.4 |
| Source: UIS |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Annex table 3: Upper secondary education completion rate country | | | | | | | | | | |
| distribution for rural females by region in SSA, 2018/lya | | | | | | | | | |  |
| Region | <5 | 5-9.9 | | 10-19.9 | | 20-29.9 | | 30> | |  |
| West | 12 | 1 | | 0 | | 2 | | 0 | |  |
| Central | 3 | 3 | | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | |  |
| Eastern | 4 | 3 | | 2 | | 1 | | 0 | |  |
| Southern | 1 | 2 | | 0 | | 3 | | 1 | |  |
| Total | 20 | 9 | | 2 | | 6 | | 1 | |  |
| Notes: For example, 12 countries in West Africa have female rural upper secondary completion rates of less than 5%. | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | | | | | | | | | |  |
| Source: UIS | |  | |  | |  | |  | |  |
| Annex table 4: Percentage distribution of countries in SSA according to the | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| percentage point increase in secondary school completion rates, 2000-2018 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| PP increase | | | <10 | | 10-19.9 | | 20-29.9 | | 30> | | |  |  |
| Lower secondary | | | 37 | | 30 | | 30 | | 3 | | |  |  |
| Upper secondary | | | 41 | | 30 | | 26 | | 4 | | |  |  |
| Upper secondary- | | | 76 | | 5 | | 16 | | 3 | | |  |  |
| female rural | | |  | |  | |  | |  | | |  |  |
| Source : UIS | | |  | |  | |  | |  | | |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Annex table 5: Male secondary school age population and enrolments in rural areas in | | | | | | |
| selected countries in SSA, 2019/lya | | |  |  |  |  |
|  | Rural % national | Rural % | Percentage | Urban bias index | | |
| Country | school age | national | point | 2019 | 2000 | Difference |
|  | population | enrolments | difference |  |  |  |
| CAR | 60 | 3 | 57 | 19.6 | 2.8 | 16.9 |
| Guinea Bissau | 63 | 30 | 34 | 2.1 | 4.7 | -2.5 |
| Sierra Leone | 53 | 29 | 24 | 1.8 | 1.9 | -0.1 |
| Cote d'Ivoire | 51 | 28 | 23 | 1.8 | 2.7 | -0.9 |
| Gambia | 33 | 19 | 14 | 1.7 | 1.8 | -0.1 |
| Cameroon | 52 | 36 | 16 | 1.4 | 1.8 | -0.4 |
| Chad | 80 | 59 | 21 | 1.4 | 2.1 | -0.8 |
| Congo | 55 | 42 | 13 | 1.3 | 1.5 | -0.2 |
| Madagascar | 78 | 61 | 17 | 1.3 | 1.8 | -0.6 |
| Lesotho | 71 | 56 | 15 | 1.3 | 1.4 | -0.1 |
| Nigeria | 66 | 54 | 12 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 0.1 |
| Zimbabwe | 80 | 67 | 13 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 0.0 |
| Ghana | 60 | 52 | 8 | 1.2 | 1.2 | -0.1 |
| Eswatini | 81 | 80 | 2 | 1.0 | 1.1 | -0.1 |
| Source: UNICEF, Multi-Indicator Cluster Surveys |  |  |  |  |  |  |

1. Just how much the report cost is not publically available but it is likely to be in excess of

   US$1.0 million. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. USE is attained when all children are enrolled and completion rates approach 100%. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. It is noticeable that this is 20 years later than the target date for the attainment of the United Nations's Sustainable Development Goal Target 4.1 which states that ‘by 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes’. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This review excludes the (mainly atypical) five small island states of Cap Verde, Comoros, Mauritius, Sao Tome Principe, Seychelles. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This includes the World Bank’s review of primary and secondary schooling in SSA which was published in 2018 and covers most of the same ground as the Report (see World Bank, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. This is reflected in the subject content of the 22 background papers only two of which focus directly on actual policy and practice in SSA. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The last time this was done was in the early-mid 2000s when the World Bank’s Secondary Education in Africa research programme commissioned five-six country reports relying on one-three week country visits led by foreign consultants (see World Bank, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The imputed dropout rate is GER-CR/GER. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The cessation of conflict/internal unrest in Guinea Bissau, Cote d’Ivoire and Chad resulted in a marked reduction in urban bias whereas the intensification of the civil war in CAR has significantly exacerbated urban-rural enrolment disparities. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The urban bias index is the percentage of the female/male rural school age population divided by the percentage of female/male rural secondary school enrolment. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Six of the seven ‘promising reforms’ in the World Bank’s 2018 review are access-related namely changes to the ‘standard package of facilities’, gender, targeted support for poor, leveraging the private sector, and eliminating high stakes primary school leaving examinations. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The following statement by the Minister of Education in Namibia is typical; ‘When you look at the developed countries, they were built by technicians, by people with vocational and technical skills, so we want to move that way’. Dr. David Namwandi, quoted in Namibia Economist, January 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Most of the basic data need for establishing teacher requirements is not available in SSA (in particular, teacher attrition, unemployment, training outputs, teacher-stream ratios, subject shortages). The Report’s projections (made by the UNESCO Institute of Statistics) are likely to be subject to wide margins of error. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. In Kenya, for example, in 2018, around 40% of teachers were unemployed; the total number of teachers in employment amounted to 429,000 but another 290,000 teachers were estimated to be unemployed.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. The ‘background memo’ on the costing model results is also not available on line. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. At current funding levels, total external support for general secondary education will account for a mere 0.15% of the Report’s projected USE annual funding requirement of $175billion over the next 30 years. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. By 2019, it had fallen still further to 6.1%. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. The Tanzania government abolished most secondary school fees in 2016. Schools are now only permitted to charge T.Sh.20, 000 per annum. It is planned to introduce automatic enrolment from Standard 7 to Form 1 from 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. The SDG4 endorsement of free USE is, at least in the short term, regressive. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. In some countries, the immediate, short-term impact of USE-related policies may result in a decline in the number of private schools (as in Rwanda), but it is likely that this will be reversed as mainly richer parents increasingly turn their back on public secondary schools. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. The very high proportion of top entrepreneurs and senior managers in the largest companies in SSA who are foreign-trained is striking (see Bennell, forthcoming). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. For example, an estimated 250,000 Chinese are reported to be working in Angola. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Another key lesson was the very intensive involvement of foreigners in the development of human resource and other technology-related capacities in the key growth industries. ‘The formal education of the workforce and the apprenticeship of firms to foreign technical assistants (rather than the apprenticeship of workers to particular crafts) lies at the heart of late industrial expansion’ (Amsden, 1989:122). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)