

REPORT ON THE PROGRESS MADE TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF EDUCATION FOR ALL IN ZIMBABWE

1.0 BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Chakanyuka (2007) and Kapfunde (2007) report that at a World Conference on Education that was held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, about 155 countries agreed to work towards the realisation of the goal of education for all (EFA) by the year 2000. However, at the world summit on Social Development in 1995, it was agreed that the target year for the realisation of EFA goals be moved to 2015. And at the World Education Forum held in Dakar in 2000, about 188 countries decided to endorse the Jomtien goals. Because Zimbabwe was a signatory to this EFA Dakar declaration, in 2006, the ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, together with the ministry of education decided to launch the National Action Plan (NAP) of Zimbabwe: Education for All Towards 2015. This plan specifies six EFA goals that were outlined at the Dakar Framework for action: Early childhood development, Access to Primary School, Life long Skills, Adult Literacy, Gender equality in education and Quality of education.

This report on the progress that has been made towards the achievement of education for all (EFA) goals in Zimbabwe attempts to evaluate the extent to which Zimbabwe has progressed towards the realisation of the EFA goals referred to above, and is in 2 parts. The first part is based on two detailed UNESCO funded projects that were done by two groups of researchers in 2007. The results of the first project appear in a document entitled “Mid-Term review of progress towards the achievement of EFA goals in Zimbabwe” while the results of the second appear in a document entitled “Directory of Civic Society participation in the provision of EFA”. The first document was written by Dr Kapfunde and a team of researchers from the University of Zimbabwe who worked in collaboration with government officials. It focuses on the role that has been played by government in their attempt to realise EFA development goals by 2015. The second document which was compiled by Dr Chakanyuka focuses on the role civic society plays in the realisation of EFA goals. The second part of the report makes a brief description and evaluation of Child Labour in Zimbabwe.

1.1 Early Childhood Development (ECD)

Government, with the help of UNICEF has been constructing pre-schools in 20 districts in Mashonaland and Manicaland in order to realise ECD goals. And there are about 174 878 children who are enrolled in early childhood centres country-wide. At the same time, about 10, 000 teachers are being in-serviced. Many universities, especially the University of Zimbabwe and the Great Zimbabwe are producing (ECD) teachers. So far, about 1720 heads of schools, teachers in-charge and deputy heads have gone through the in-service training programmes. However, lack of financial resources and poor salaries for tutors are some of the factors that hamper the scale of ECD activities.

1.2 Access to Primary School

The number of children who have access to primary school education increased considerably between 2000 and 2006 due to the establishment of schools particularly in the disadvantaged areas of the country. By mid 2006, the net enrollment was above 95% while the gross enrollment ratio remained at 100%. Furthermore, in 2003, more girls than ever before admitted into form one. At the same time, the number of trained teachers increased from 92.4% in 2005 to 96.75% in 2006. And the teacher pupil ration dropped from 1:41 in 2000 to 1:39 in 2006. However, several problems were also experienced during this period. In 2006, only 70% of pupils managed to complete the primary school cycle. The drop-out rate was very high. Due to the land reform, many children were moved to areas where there were no schools. And in 2007, 7.1% of the pupils who had been enrolled dropped out of school.

1.3 Life-Long Skills

The ministry of education attempts to link students with the “real” world by establishing close links between schools and industry. Polytechnics are instructed to enrol large numbers of school leavers. Welding machines that have been lying idle have recently been distributed to schools. And students are now required to take at least two vocational subjects. Resource Centres have been established country-wide to facilitate the easy production of teaching and learning materials. Those youths who are out of school are provided with training facilities under the Information Sector Outreach Programme that was established by the Ministry of Higher Education. However, the main drawbacks in the area are that poor remuneration for teachers has made skilled staff to leave for other countries. And according to Kapfunde, some industries are closing down due to the harsh economic climate.

1.4 Adult Literacy

In the last few years, the number of education centres country-wide has increased from 242 in 2005 to 270 in 2007. The Ministry of Education has put in place mechanisms to ensure that fees are affordable to disadvantaged children especially those in rural areas. Children in remote and isolated areas are encouraged to enrol in government correspondence schools. Government also encourages employees to establish adult literacy centres at their establishments. It is partly due to these efforts that the literacy level in Zimbabwe of 97% is one of the highest in sub-saharan Africa. However, the training of tutors is slow to the extent that only 124 of the 4495 tutors currently in post were trained under the staff development plan. And remuneration for teachers is very little. As a result, motivation tends to be very low.

1.5 Gender Equity (Gender dimension)

In the sphere of gender equity, several developments have taken place in the last few years. For example, writers of teaching and learning materials have been made to be aware of the need to write materials that are gender sensitive. Statistics indicate that so

far, 10,000 teachers have been sensitized. And, several institutions have introduced gender studies courses. Universities and colleges have been instructed to adopt affirmative action policies so that female applicants can be enrolled even in situations where they are less qualified than males. Also, school girls who fall pregnant while they are at school are now being allowed back into the school system after they have delivered. And special programmes have been put in place to encourage girls to study maths and science subjects at secondary schools and even at universities. Furthermore, several clubs have been set up to identify girls at risk and help prevent drop outs and sexual abuse.

1.6 Quality of Education

Several organizations in the ministry of Higher education have been established to try and improve the quality of education e.g Better Environmental Science Teaching (BEST). Science Education In Service Teacher Training (SEITT) and Better School programme (BSP). Although figures are declining, statistics indicate that the number of qualified teachers increased from 91.22% in 2005 to 91.% in 2006. And, each teacher is required to go for an in-service course every five years. At the same time, the number of untrained teachers has been reduced by about 5%. Stakeholders have been encouraged to provide funding for the procurement of teaching materials and manuals. Also, conditions of service, especially in rural areas have been improved although more still has to be done. However, many teachers are resigning or absconding from the ministry due to poor salaries. As a result, the 'O' Level pass rate dropped from 25.4% in 2000 to 18.3% in 2006.

2.0 Civic society and Education for All

Several societies are actively involved in working towards EFA goals by 2015 all over the country. Some of the societies are as follows: Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED), Farm Community Trust (FCTZ), Farm Orphan Support Trust (FOST), Forum for African Women Educationists in Zimbabwe (FAWEZI), Girl Child Network and Plan Zimbabwe (PLAN) etc. The activities in which these societies are involved include the following: offering of support to girls to go to school, expansion of early childhood centres; establishing of child supplementary feeding schemes; provision of grants and school fees and the promotion of science subjects.

3.0 Child Labour in Zimbabwe

The report on child labour is mainly based on two separate surveys. The first was conducted by Dr Sachikonye in 1991 while the second was conducted by the ILO and the Central Statistics Office in 2004. I will however also make reference to another survey by the Zimbabwe government, in collaboration with several UN agencies (2008) which is just about to be launched. Dr Sachikonye's survey is based on the ILO analytical framework for the abolition of child labour in hazardous employment (1989). In this survey, he argues that there is a link between poverty and the need for children to work. He suggests that those children who work have little time for their studies. Moreover,

some of these children are underpaid and sometimes they are not paid at all. He reports that children in Zimbabwe do different kinds of work e.g they work as vendors, domestic workers, carpenters, street traders, farm workers etc. Dr Sachikonye also reports that several programmes have been put in place to facilitate therapeutic intervention. For example, the Anglican church has formed “The Harare shelter for the Destitute” which provides education, toys and food for destitute children. And as a way forward, Sachikonye makes the following recommendations: children need regular medical checks to determine the extent of their exposure to agro-chemicals; children who work need protective clothing and the minimum age for entry into work must be enforced.

The ILO and the Central Statistics office conducted a survey in 2004 to determine inter-alia, the extent to which child labour (CL) affects the rate of primary school enrollment. The survey revealed that because the prevailing macro-economic context creates a child unfriendly environment, about 5000 street children were out of school. Dr Sachikonye placed CL into 2 categories; economic CL where children between 5-14 years work for three hours a day and non-economic CL where children aged between 5-17 years worked for 5 hours a day. The survey indicated that 42% of the children aged between 5-14 years were involved in economic child labour while 99% of children aged between 5-17 years were involved in non-economic activities. Also 4% of children who were aged between 5-14 years who were involved in economic CL had never attended school while 14% had left school. For those in the non-economic CL category, 6% had never attended school while 35% had left school. In order to remedy the situation, the government of Zimbabwe has ratified all international and regional instruments which relate to CL, e.g the ILO minimum age convention. Also, the government passed the Children Act to restrict child employment. Light work is permitted for children aged about 12 years but those below 12 years are not allowed to work. The minimum age for the right to work is 15 but generally, employers are not allowed to employ anyone below the age of 18 years. Currently (2008), a broad partnership is being built to bring together several groups who are working in the area of the rights of children. It will include the following: the ministry of Labour, UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO, ILO as well as several NGOs. The main aim is to support efforts that are being made towards the realisation of the following development goals: MDG1 (eradicate extreme hunger), MDG2 (achieve universal primary education) MDG3 (promote gender equality and empower women) MDG6 (combat HIV). Also, a study on the worst forms of child labour is just about to be carried out by the government of Zimbabwe in collaboration with several stakeholders. The results will be used to formulate a Time Bound Programme to facilitate the elimination CL in Zimbabwe.

4.0 Conclusion

Zimbabwe has made remarkable progress towards the realisation of the 2015 goals. For example, more teachers have been trained than was the case before the launch of the programme; more girls are now in school; the gender gap has been narrowed; several laws that out-law CL have been passed, and adult literacy has improved considerably. However, the education ministries face a number of challenges as they work towards the realisation of EFA goals. For example, low salaries for teachers and poor

accommodation result in the exodus of teachers from the ministries, poverty contributes to a decline in pass rates; attendance at schools is often erratic and as a result the drop-out rate is high. And because of HIV and AIDS, staff attrition rate is high. Also, it is surprising that MDG researchers appear to be silent about the argument that education in an African context must be able to bring out the africaness in the African child. The overt veneration of African values and aesthetics is therefore a politico-socio-cultural imperative and not some impedimenta.

5.0 Recommendations

- These recommendations are based on (a) The 1991 Sachikonye report (b) The 2004 Central Statistics survey and (c) The 2007 Kapfunde and Chakanyuka reports.
- More ECD teachers should be trained.
- There is need to strengthen the careful supervision of activities that take place at ECD centres.
- More funds for ECD centres must be made available.
- There is need to introduce technical subjects at primary level so that interest in technical subjects is developed at an early age.
- There is need to ensure that children in disadvantaged areas and circumstances as well as those with disabilities remain in school.
- There is need to launch a programme that continues to encourage adult learners to enrol at study centres.
- There is need to staff develop more literacy teachers.
- More women specialists should be appointed into decision making positions so that they can act as role models for girls.
- People appointed into positions of power need to be taught skills that enable them to execute their duties with professionalism, speed and precision.
- Correspondence schools must continue to enrol more learners.
- The policy on pregnant girls must be maintained.
- Maths and science teachers must be given special allowances in order to keep them in their posts.
- Education must be made more affordable.
- A special leadership academy for girls must be established so that they too can perceive themselves as potential leaders of tomorrow.
- Staff development programmes for heads and teachers must be made more elaborate.
- Children need regular medical check-ups to see the extent of their exposure to agro-chemicals and those who work must be provided with protective clothing.
- The minimum age for entry into work must be enforced.