

THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION IN AFRICA

Aligning education to Africa's
development goals



by Jeff Megayo

ACT AFRIQUE

JULY 2020

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I. Introduction

Until the mid-1960s, African economies were on similar grounds with many countries in other regions of the world. Based on standard of living indicators such as GDP per capita, African countries were more or less on par with their Asian and Latin American counterparts. In fact, the prospects of African countries were better than most countries in East Asia. For example, in 1960 Sudan had the same GDP as South Korea's and Zaire's was the same as that of Taiwan¹. East Asian countries faced economic ruin as a result of the Second World War and the effects lingered for over a decade. Internal armed conflicts also reduced social development within countries in the region and eroded development gains achieved prior to the Second World War.

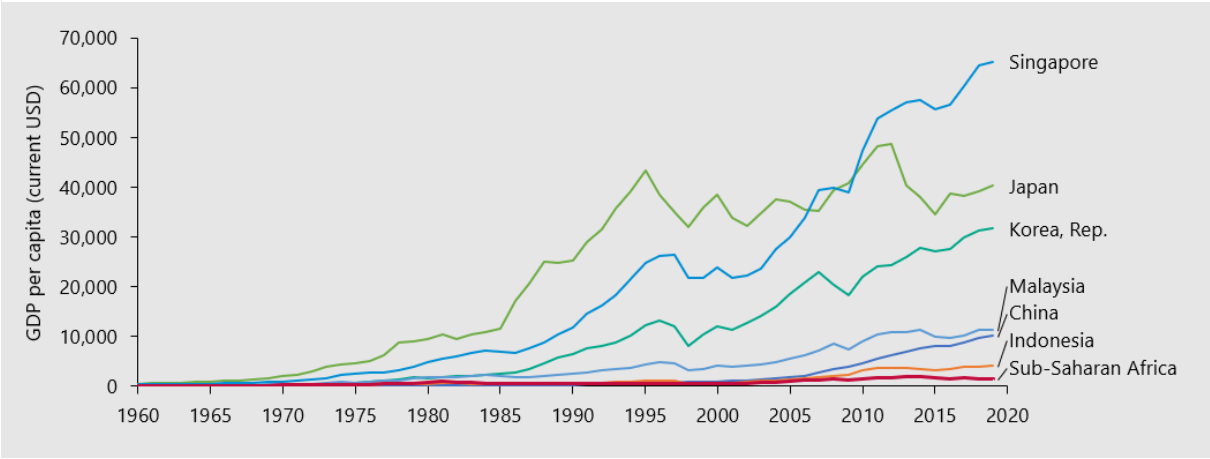
Africa was relatively unscathed from the global wars² and armed struggles that wrecked economies in East Asia and other regions of the world during the first half of the 20th century. In the 1960s, through peaceful and sometimes violent struggles, African countries obtained independence in a rapid sequence from their former colonial rulers. The future of the continent looked even brighter.

Decades after the independence heydays on the continent however, the socio-economic reality has not improved. While other regions pulled ahead, living standards in many African countries have declined. The continent still trails the rest of the world on nearly all indices of development. Absolute poverty has increased; famine and malnutrition remain a critical topic in many countries; basic health care is still out of reach for most; the wealth gap has soared. Essentially, the improvements in Africa over the years have been greatly overshadowed by the many other failures.

¹ Oxford Studies in Comparative Education, *Education and Change in the Pacific Rim: meeting the challenges* (United Kingdom: Triangle Books, 1998).

² Most theaters and campaigns of the two World Wars occurred outside of Africa.

Figure 1 – Average income has grown more slowly in Sub-Saharan African countries compared to countries in other regions



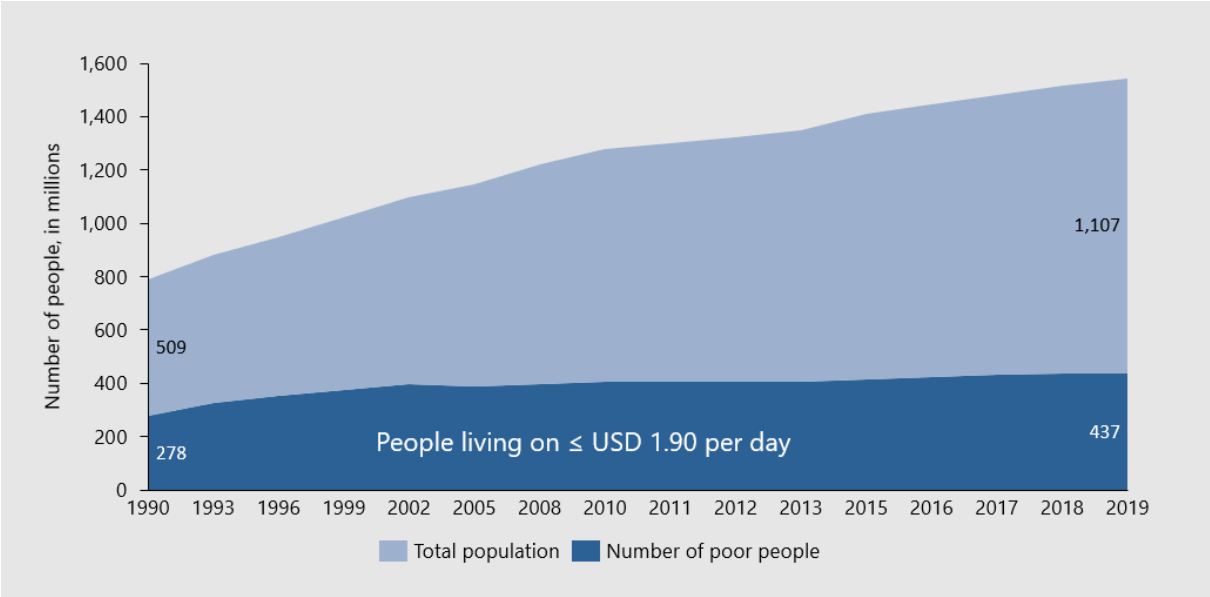
SOURCE: World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data

During the past two decades, most countries in Africa experienced a sustained economic growth that caught the world’s attention. Since 2011, the *Africa Rising Narrative* became a popular theme in the media and during conferences on Africa’s development³. The impression was that Africa was finally on the right path to achieve an economic miracle, much like parts of Asia did decades ago.

Then, the oil crash of 2014 happened, and commodity prices fell sharply between mid-2014 to early 2015. The Africa Rising Narrative subdued as stakeholders began to question the fundamentals of Africa’s economic growth. While Africa’s growth during this period was mainly due to improved microeconomic and business climate conditions as a result of structural government reforms, it became apparent that the commodities boom was also a driver of this growth. Moreover, the African economic development strategy has helped to reduce poverty, but not fast enough in light of the demographic boom on the continent. While poverty rates had gone down on the continent, the number of people living in poverty has increased. While the commodities-led economic output increased, living conditions have worsened for many Africans; income inequality has increased; and the human development index shrank.

³ The African Rising Narrative refers to the idea that the continent of Africa will finally turn the tide and become the next economic miracle after Asia. This concept first surfaced in the media in 2011 after the publication of *The Economist’s The hopeful continent - Africa rising*.

Figure 2 – While poverty rates decreased, the number of poor Africans equally increased



SOURCE: World Bank Development Research Group

The contrarian development of Africa is complex and is the focus of countless research spanning from economics to politics and history to science. Experts have tackled Africa’s development challenge and developed various theories to identify the core of the issue. In their book *Why Nations Fail*, Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson argue that poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa is largely a result of its weak political and economic institutions. Other economists such as Jeffrey Sachs believe that abundant natural resources are an impediment to development. The reality remains that Africa’s development challenge is intricate and could not be abridged into any single theory.

Nonetheless, key areas of Africa’s development challenge could be examined, and solutions could be proposed to improve them. This is the case of education, which is essential to the continent’s development, but does not garnish proportional consideration. There is now sufficient empirical evidence which indicate that investments in education may have significantly contributed to the economic growth of many Asian countries. Industrialization played a central role in the development of these countries and the overall betterment of people’s livelihoods. The *East Asian*

miracle was largely a result of an increase in factory production which could not have occurred without an abundant supply of young skilled workers⁴.

Investment in human capital was therefore key in the rapid and sustainable economic growth in East Asia. Led by the manufacturing sector, these countries experienced a dramatic economic growth that saw some of them enter the small cluster of advanced economies. In Africa, the situation is different. While there is an investment uptick in education, it has been largely inadequate. Access to quality and affordable education remains a privilege on the continent and the education system is not aligned with the development aspirations of most countries. With a growing population and high poverty levels, education could level the playing field and enable every African to participate in an *African Development Miracle*.

II. A tale of schooling in Africa

We paced ourselves along the dusty trail. On both sides of the dirt road were lush vegetation and a number of cocoa farms and subsistence crops. Occasionally, a motorcycle would zip by, carrying plantain bunches, a bag of maize or other food stuff. We crossed paths with very few people on our way. It was summer in the year 2018 and many young people who normally help their elders on the farms have traveled to the cities for the summer vacation. We were in a village within the Plateaux Region of the Republic of Togo.

We veered right off the dirt road and immediately walked into a vast compound. I saw in the distance something that appeared to be a structure made out of mud. We kept walking along the compound which was hidden in a small bush. We approached the

⁴ The East Asian Miracle refers to 8 countries in East Asia that experienced a rapid economic growth and transformation starting from the 1960s. These countries are Taiwan, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Singapore, South Korea, Japan, Thailand, and Malaysia.

lone tree in the compound and a rusted school bell hang from a branch. Bemused, I stopped and rang it and imagined the little students in khaki school uniforms running frantically into classrooms.

We stood for a moment under the shade of the tree, observing the compound, the bush and farms surrounding the area. Suddenly, one of my companions pointed into the direction of the clay structure and said: "that's the only primary school in this village".

We took a few minutes to explore the school. The structure was built with mud and covered with sheet metal roofs, rusted in some areas and porous in others. I stared at a faint sunlight escaping through tiny holes in the ceiling of one of the classrooms. One of my companions casually uttered: "they're the lucky ones. Some have no roofs". The floor was not tiled; it was not even cemented. It looked more like the dirt road we sauntered moments earlier. The classrooms were doorless and windowless. There was only a large opening within each classroom wall, exposing the students to the elements.

Suspended on makeshift tree branches, the wood chalkboards have done their time with noticeable holes on them. I approached the board in one of the classrooms and read the entry-level science lecture that the teacher had written. I caught a few mistakes that I imagined the students have copied and memorized. The wooden desk chairs were in a dreadful shape and some were broken, creating sharp edges that posed a risk to the young students.

It is difficult to formulate my sentiment and the thoughts that crossed my mind during the tour of the school. Indeed, some feelings are hard to clearly express. I wondered, how many of these adolescents are likely to rise out of poverty in a world that is increasingly competitive. Right there in the moment, it was difficult to picture a future where most of the students are not struggling for basic human necessities.

Image 1 – Public school students in a classroom in rural Togo



While touring the facility, I recalled a documentary that I once watched on Singapore. A segment of the documentary focuses on education as a key to Singapore's continuous economic transformation. In a scene that marked me, young Singaporeans were engaged in sequential learning in a relaxed and fun atmosphere, much different from the intricate environment of the students in the village. Evidently, the Singaporean children have a head start in achieving not only for themselves, but also for their country and the world. They can aspire to be future problem solvers and leaders in their respective fields because they are equipped to do so.

Image 2 – Technology and modern learning techniques are the core of Singapore's education system



The condition of the school my friends and I visited is not specific to Togo. In many African countries, most education facilities are in a poor state. For example, only 22% of primary schools have electricity in Sub-Saharan Africa⁵. This is an impediment to learning in an era when technology is playing an increasing role in our lives. Although rural schools are in worst conditions⁶, many schools in urban areas also lack adequate education infrastructure. Nevertheless, the poor state of education facilities in Africa is only part of the challenge. Even more important is the quality of education. How do we train and retain the best teachers? How do we align education to the development ambitions of the continent? These questions are equally important to tackle. Solving the education infrastructure gap is a start, but certainly not the ultimate goal.

III. The challenges of education in Africa

Africa's partners have contributed to improving economic and social conditions on the continent. They have helped in key areas such as energy, food, health, education, and infrastructure. But let us face it: education is the elephant in the room whenever stakeholders discuss the development potential of Africa and the continent's technology revolution. Governments, NGOs, development banks, and think tanks have brilliant projects for the continent and ideal ways to achieve them. Yet, education, which is the mainstay of all these development plans, is not equitably valued. Interestingly, stakeholders view education more as a social investment than an effective economic development tool.

⁵ UNESCO: Accountability in education: meeting our commitments; Global education monitoring report, 2017.

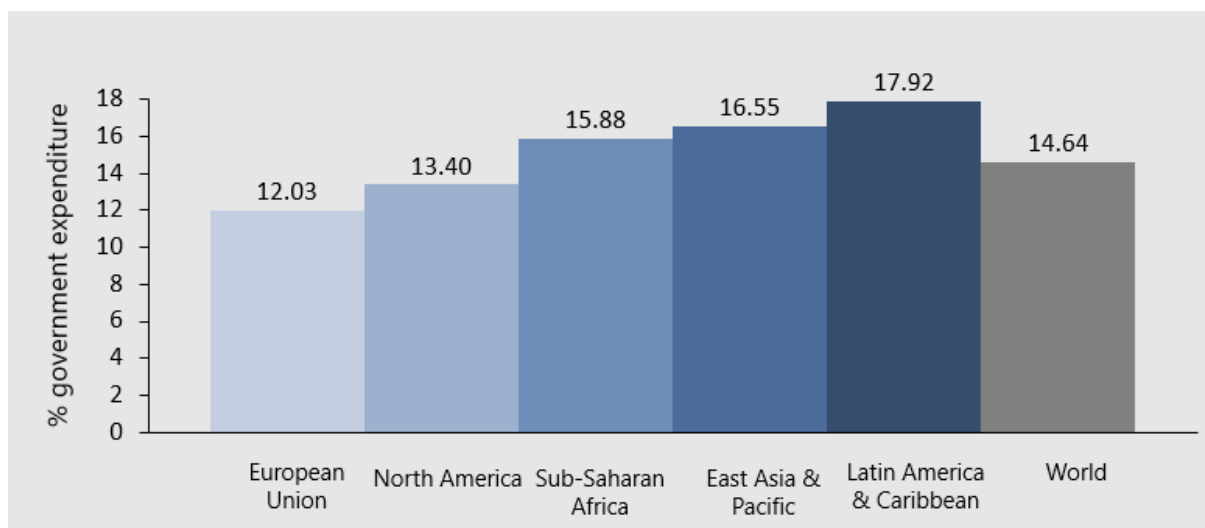
⁶ It is well documented that rural schools in Africa receive less public expenditure. Also, the bad state of infrastructure in rural areas amplify educational challenges.

i. Education has improved across the continent

To be fair, stakeholders have provided great efforts to improve access to education in Africa. The continent has come a long way since the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) of the 1980s and 1990s that crippled national spending in sectors which included education. The SAPs caused a reversal in the gains that were observed in education decades prior to the 1980s.

Today in Africa, public expenditure on education exceeds many other areas of the world. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) estimates that governments in Africa are among the highest spenders on education in the world. Furthermore, the continent is catching up with the rest of the world on GDP amount allocated to education.

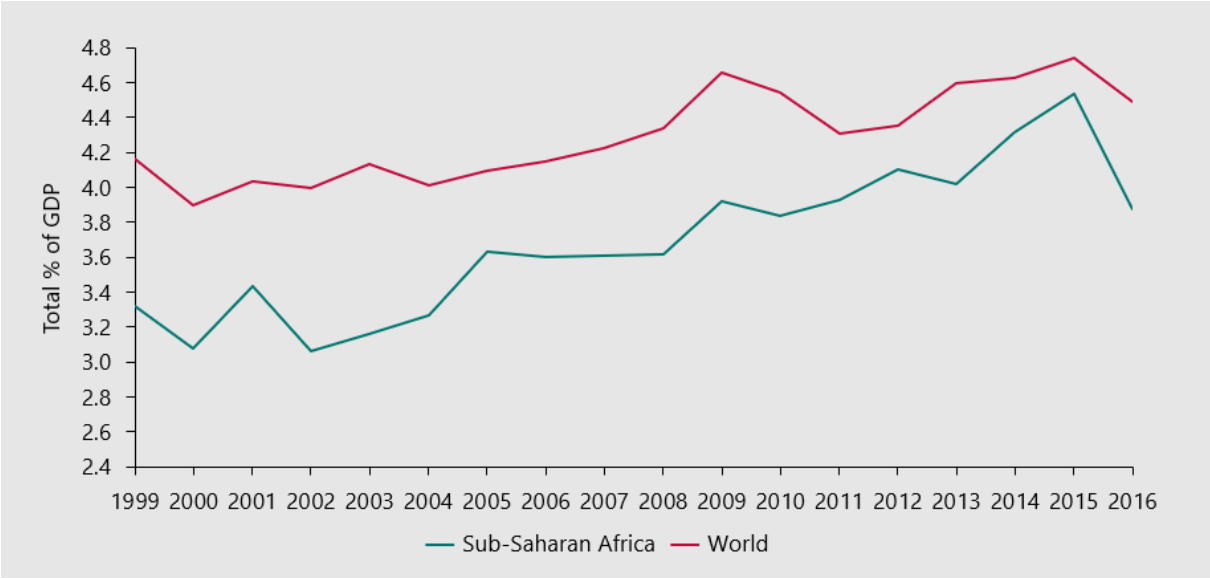
Figure 3 – African governments are among the highest spenders on education in the world (2016)⁷



SOURCE: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

⁷ More recent data is not yet updated for many regions. 2014 data for North America.

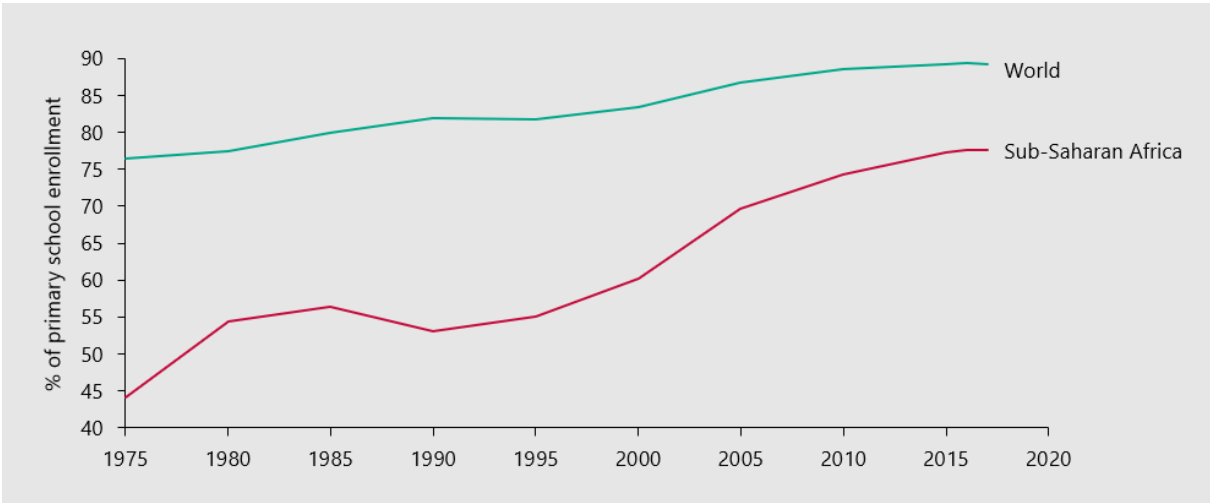
Figure 4 – African governments are increasingly allocating more of their GDP towards education



SOURCE: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Education has improved in Togo as well, particularly at the primary school level. Since 2005, the government has initiated various measures aimed at improving the quality and affordability of education in the country. Notably, school fees have been eliminated at the public preschool and primary levels in 2008. This measure facilitated access to education to many young Togolese. Overall, in Africa, enrollment is up at all levels and primary completion rates have increased from 54.4% in 2000 to 68.78% in 2018⁸.

Figure 5 – School enrollment, primary (% net). Africa is rapidly catching up with the world in primary school enrollment rates

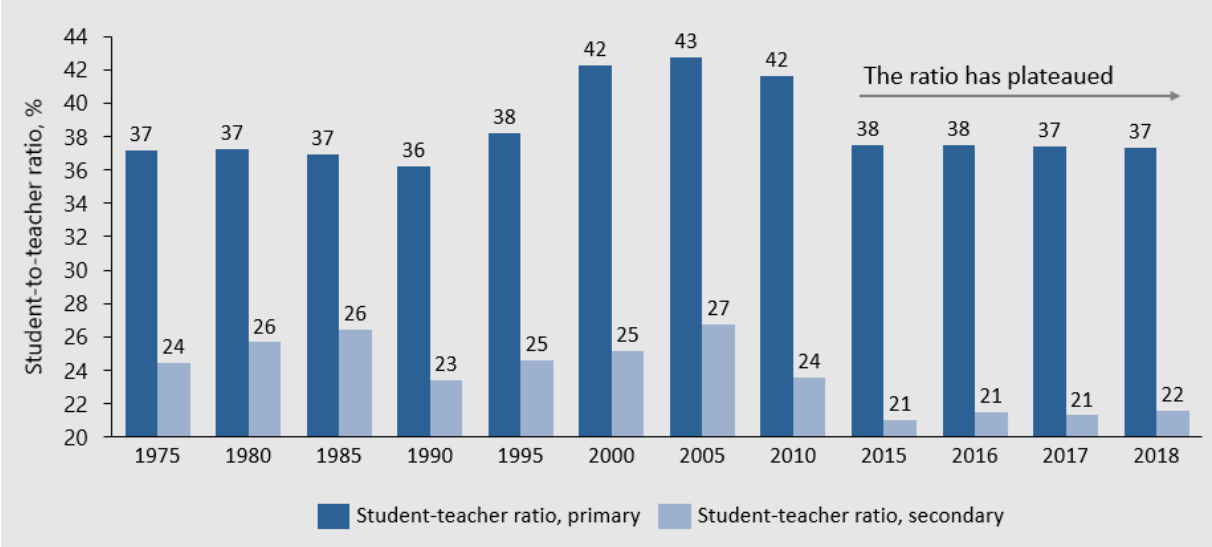


SOURCE: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

⁸ UNESCO Institute for Statistics (uis.unesco.org)

Furthermore, there has been a push to improve the quality of education. For example, the student-to-teacher ratio has slightly improved over the past decade. This ensures that teachers have more time to spend on each student and follow their progress. Moreover, teachers can allocate more of their time to following the progress of students, instead of administrative tasks such as grading assignments.

Figure 6 – Student-to-teacher ratio has improved following a nearly 15-year uptick



SOURCE: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

ii. More investment is needed in education

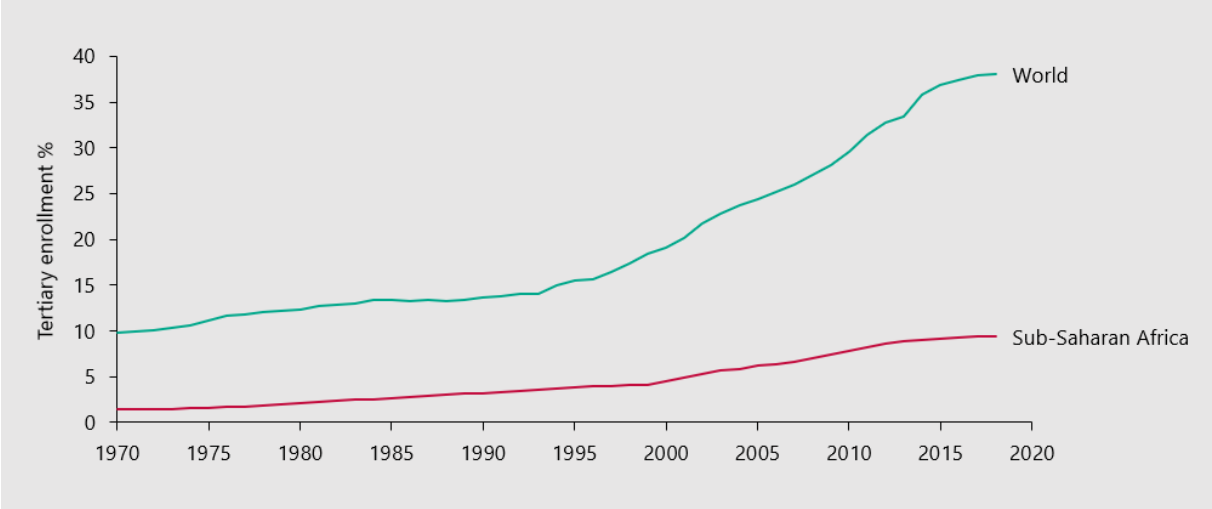
Despite investments observed in Africa’s education sector, improvements could be made. It should be noted that the continent is coming from a low base from an education perspective. Hence, the relatively small investments made in the sector translate to bigger percentage changes in various indicators such as enrollments. In absolute terms however, Africa still trails the world in providing affordable and quality education to its population.

Countries in Africa have comparatively smaller revenues and with a rapidly growing population falling within the student age group, the average spending per student is much lower than anywhere else in the world. The amount of government spending per

student is at around \$533 for primary school and \$925 for secondary school. This represents a quarter of the spending in Latin America and a fifth in Asia⁹.

The investments made in the sector during the past two decades focused primarily on preschool and primary school levels. This is good because early education provides a strong foundation for lifelong learning and social development. Nonetheless, when we compare enrollment rates in secondary and tertiary levels, we can observe that Africa has not been able to catch up with the rest of the world. Globally, enrollment is at 38.04% while in Africa it is at 9.39%.

Figure 7 – Tertiary enrollment is significantly lower in Africa and is slow to catch up with the world

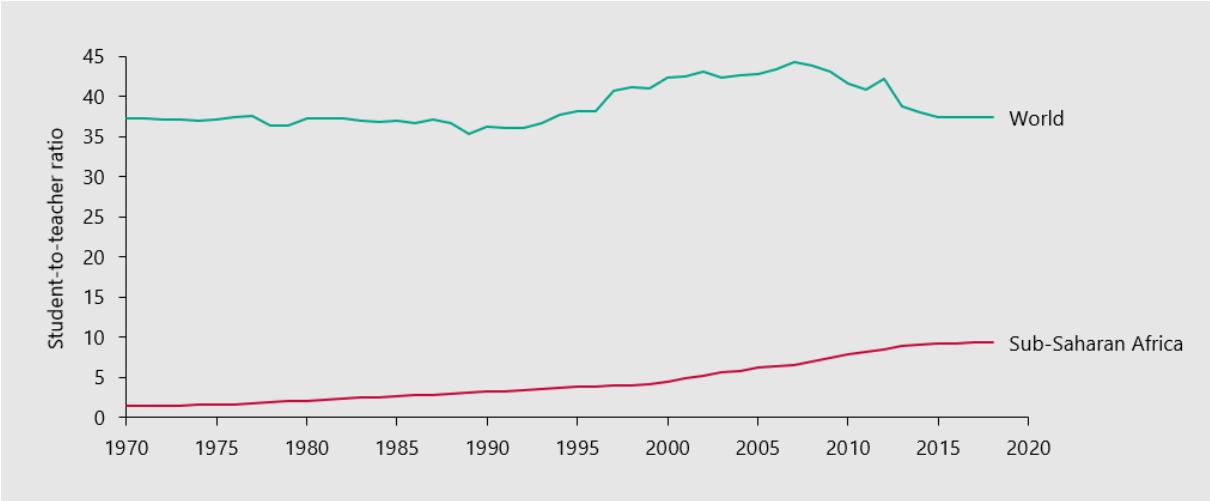


SOURCE: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Even the primary level which experienced substantial resource allocation, much more could be done. For example, although student-to-teacher ratio has improved, it has not fallen fast enough to catch up with the rest of the world. Whereas the ratio improved steadily in the world, in Africa it underwent significant fluctuations which erased improvements made between 1970 to 1990.

⁹ African Development Bank: African Economic Outlook 2020.

Figure 8 – High student-to-teacher ratio can reduce quality of education and increase teacher burnout



SOURCE: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

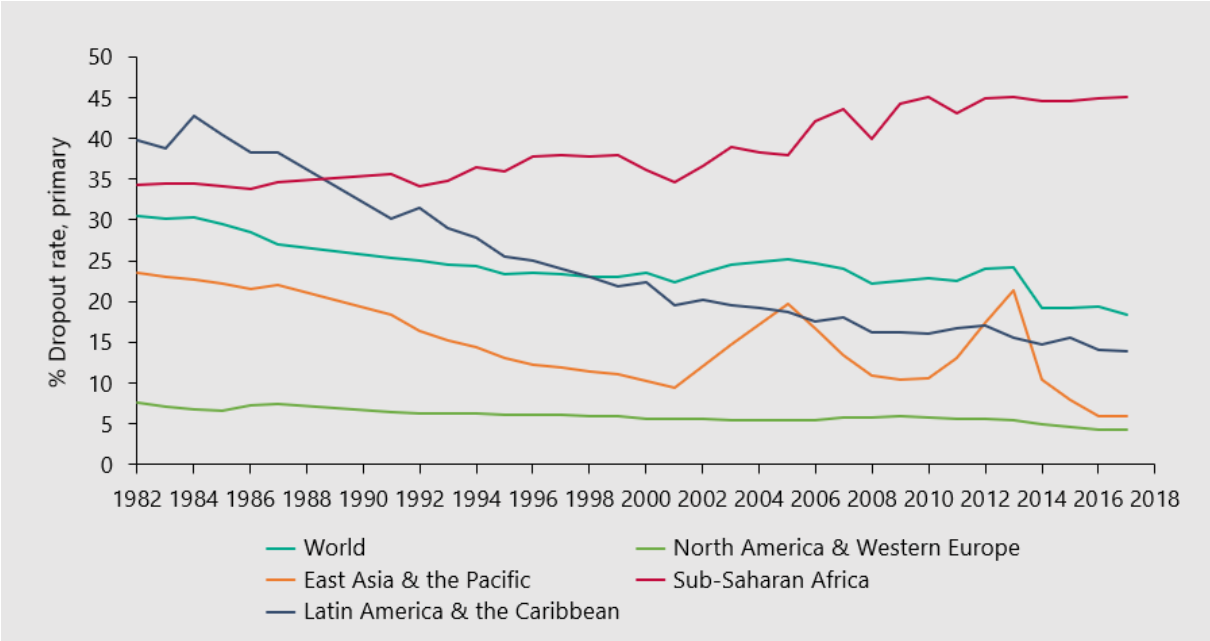
iii. Dropout rate remains a challenge

More African children are enrolling into school, but an increasing number is also dropping out. According to the UNESCO, dropout rate in primary school has topped 45% in 2017. Although African countries are working to achieve a free universal basic education¹⁰, poverty still poses a challenge to education, particularly in rural areas. A movement towards free school enrollment at the primary level has alleviated expenses for parents.

Still, due to weak revenues of families, many parents are unable to cover ancillary costs associated with their children’s education. These costs may include meal allowance, cost of uniform, school supplies, and transportation. Sometimes the costs are not monetary. For example, some schools are located too far from students’ homes. Given these, while primary school dropout rates have fallen over the years globally, in Africa it has increased in some countries.

¹⁰ More than half of African countries have eliminated school fees for primary and secondary school with the objective to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 by 2030.

Figure 9 – Primary school dropout rate has increased in Africa despite improvements in enrollment



SOURCE: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

There are many other challenges that the education sector faces in Africa, but which constitute a bigger scope than the purpose of this paper. For example, it is widely reported that many African students at the preschool and primary levels are not learning, therefore not reaping any benefits from school compared to their peers who are not enrolled.

To illustrate this, a survey once revealed that 80 percent of Sokoto’s Grade 3 pupils in Nigeria cannot read a single word¹¹. In other words, 80 percent of the students in Grade 3 have completed three years of school and were still unable to read. This could be due to a plethora of reasons which include unqualified teachers, lack of school supplies, or difficult studying conditions. Furthermore, the overall disparity in education reveals the wide income inequality on the continent. Wealthier families are able to enroll their children into quality institutions. The children in turn gain critical learning skills, which are fundamental for future skills attainment.

¹¹ Kevin Watkins, *Too Little Access, Not Enough Learning: Africa’s Twin Deficit in Education* (The Brookings Institution, 2013).

IV. Education as a catalyst in the East Asian

Miracle

There is now sufficient empirical evidence to recognize the positive effect of education on economic development. Although this correlation is observed across the world and in different periods, the focus here will be on Asia, particularly East Asia. First, just six decades ago, the countries in this region had similar economies as many African countries. Furthermore, numerous countries in Africa aspire to achieve the growth rates observed in East Asia during the 1960s to 1990s.

Education played a key role in the “East Asian miracle”. The high-performing Asian economies (HPAEs) in the region focused on mass education at the base—societies where the majority of people are educated, and a smaller proportion are highly educated. In other words, through public policy, leaders of the HPAEs focused on building societies where most people are moderately educated (primary school and secondary school) rather than ones in which most people are uneducated and a small elite are highly educated. They understood that to increase productivity quickly, a bigger proportion of the population must be involved in growing the economy.

Industrialization in East Asia was highly dependent on building human capital. According to data, levels of human capital were higher in the HPAEs in the 1960s than in other low and middle-income economies¹². The State was central in elaborating the framework for education and engaging with the private sector to absorb the increasing number of skilled talents. Education was closely curtailed to the development ambition of the government which then was industrialization. Even the low-wage labor force had average educational attainment that exceeded that of other middle-income countries.

¹² The World Bank, *The East Asian Miracle: Economic Growth and Public Policy*, (September 1993).

V. Recommendations for a 21st century education in Africa

Africa does not need to reinvent the wheel in education because there are sufficient learned practices across the globe. In its *African Economic Outlook 2020* report, the African Development Bank (AfDB) proposed a few solutions to improve education in Africa and ultimately enhance economic outcomes of countries. One solution is that countries should consider investing in both education and infrastructure instead of focusing exclusively on either due to complementary effects. An investment in electricity in a village could also help students to study longer hours and efficiently.

Also, the private sector could complement public financing in the education sector in Africa. According to the AfDB, governments could leverage financing from impact investors, philanthropists, and entrepreneurs to invest in education. Beyond the potential to provide liquidity for investments in education, the private sector could also involve in skill training, but the government must intervene through policy to protect the interests of workers as well as employers.

Finally, the AfDB explained that it is equally important to enhance the efficiency of public spending on education. Although African governments spend a high share of national GDP on education, the allocation of these resources have “leaks” that essentially reduce the intended impacts. By performing audits and reviews and implementing checks and balances, the efficiency of public spending could be enhanced.

While these recommendations should certainly help to improve education outcomes in Africa, the following section provides a broader perspective to stakeholders in fostering the economic leap that Africans yearn for in their countries. The continent

could adopt and adapt education reforms that the HPAEs implemented to catch up with other advanced economies. Given the wide scope of education and its interrelation with public policy and other sectors, these recommendations are non-exhaustive. Nevertheless, they highlight the fundamental changes that are needed in Africa's education in order to foster economic growth and social welfare.

i. Increase investments in primary and secondary education

East Asian leaders understood early that their countries lacked sufficient natural resources to compete against the West. As a result, they concluded that human capital was their most important resource. In so doing, they focused on primary and secondary education. This strategy enabled the HPAEs to achieve two main objectives: generate rapid increases in labor force and increase social welfare in the long term by preparing the population for a lifelong learning and skills development. A 1993 World Bank Policy Research report revealed that in the mid-1980s, Indonesia, Korea, and Thailand devoted more than 80 percent of their education budget to basic education¹³.

Public spending at postsecondary levels focused on science and technology and were subsidized. These fields were more important for the development strategy of the governments which hinged on large-scale industrialization. Overall, tertiary education was mainly financed privately and students who wanted to study humanities and social sciences relied on private financing. The governments preferred a moderately educated population than a small elite that is highly educated. Evidently, tertiary education has now gained importance in those countries, however within the context of rapid industrialization at the time, the strategy worked.

¹³ The East Asian Miracle: Economic Growth and Public Policy, a World Bank Policy Research Report published by the Oxford University Press, New York, NY, USA, 1993.

ii. Shorten education cycles

During his 2008 State of the City Address, Michael Bloomberg, the former mayor of New York City stated that “College isn't for everyone, but education is”. This statement is especially relevant for Africa where poverty is proportionally higher than anywhere else in the world and where financing mechanism for higher learning is still not developed. Not all Africans need a master’s or a doctorate degree to earn a fair income and a dignified life.

Higher education is expensive, particularly in Africa. Ancillary education expenses contribute to making postsecondary expensive for students. Even after families manage to enroll students into university, many are unable to financially sustain the three to four years required for graduation. In Togo for example, yearly tuition at the bachelor’s level¹⁴ at the public university of Lomé is around USD 362.28 (211,000 XOF). This may appear insignificant, but the minimum wage in Togo is USD 60.09, making university an expensive undertaking.

Table 1 – Tertiary education is out of reach for most students in Togo

Nature of fees	Bachelors’ degree (amount in USD ¹⁵)		
	Students	Workers	Foreigners
Academic registration	17.17	34.34	85.85
Course registration	85.85	171.70	343.39
Laboratory fees	171.70	214.62	386.32
Documentation fees	85.85	128.77	171.70
Total fees	360.56	549.43	987.25
Student campus fee	1.72	1.72	1.72
Total tuition	362.28	551.14	988.97

¹⁴ The Francophone equivalent is *License*, which normally takes three years to complete. It is the first degree at the university level.

¹⁵ 1 XOF equals USD 0.0017 as of 7/5/2020.

iii. Vocational programs as a feeder for the labor market

One way for African governments to shorten the education cycle is to further explore vocational programs¹⁶. A vocational program is a type of postsecondary education that trains students for a specific line of work. A hallmark of vocational education is that it focuses on hands-on knowledge rather than theoretical learning. This differentiates vocational schools from conventional tertiary education which is more academic, and less job focused. Vocational programs, therefore, generally require a shorter timeframe to complete.

Generally, when students graduate from university, even at the graduate level, there remains a sharp learning curve once they join the labor force. Depending on the line of work, newly graduates must undergo a few months or sometimes a couple years of training to gain the necessary experience to work independently in their role. This is often not the case for students that attend vocational schools. Graduates from vocational programs are equipped to begin working independently in their roles upon graduating. In fact, that is the objective of vocational training. Moreover, all else being equal, students who graduate from vocational programs are sufficiently skilled to embark on an entrepreneurship route if the labor market is tight.

Most countries that have industrialized have undergone a period where this type of postsecondary education was a priority. Vocational education has proven to be a particularly good investment for countries that were recovering from war (Germany and Japan after the Second World War) or those that were embarking on a new development ambition under a new leadership (South Korea and China).

¹⁶ In most African countries, vocational programs are already part of the education system. However, they are not as regulated as conventional education and are not strategically designed to integrate national economic activities.

Contrary to common belief, vocational schools do not only focus on the technical aspect of training. Students also learn foreign language, social studies, or history, but within the context of their training. These elective courses are ideally designed to teach students the “necessary” information to be well-rounded without digression from their core subjects.

Many vocational programs can be completed within a year, allowing students to enter the labor market and begin earning the dividends of their investment. This does not exclude the fact that students can return to school and earn certificates or pursue other courses that will help them maintain their qualifications for an improved career path. With the increase in technology usage in Africa and the onset of massive open online courses (MOOC), it is now easier for students and employees to continue learning and improving their skills.

iv. Adapt education to actual needs of African economies

In developing the curricula for education systems, African governments should account for established national development plans and projected labor force needs. Otherwise, students risk graduating with skills which are not aligned with the demands of the market. At any given period, the law of supply and demand in the labor market is present. Consequently, in elaborating a national curriculum, it is worthwhile for governments and other stakeholders to ensure that there is a great deal of cohesiveness between the output expected from education attainment and the input that is needed.

Currently, most thought leaders agree that to catch up with the rest of the world in economic and social development, Africa must inevitably industrialize and integrate technology in economic activities. This vision should be reflected through the ratio of

students who graduate from programs that are significant for Africa's industrialization and technological revolution.

As much as it is important for individuals to pursue their interests, these interests should be tailored to the current and potential demands of the market where the interests will be offered. Career interests also follow the laws of demand and supply. A psychology graduate in Japan is more likely to find a job after graduating than a Togolese graduate in the same field. Compared to Togo, Japan's economy is a bit more sophisticated and the scope is wider for psychology specialists in the labor market.

Governments can channel people into key sectors by rewarding students who enroll, and complete studies related to established priority sectors of the economy. Governments of the HPAEs did this by heavily subsidizing public education even at the tertiary level. They provided textbooks to public school students that studied in fields that are in line to national development goals. They also focused on helping these students find jobs in the private and public sectors upon graduating. African governments can adapt this strategy to align studies with jobs, especially in public education.

v. The education curricula should be dynamic

The school curricula in many African countries is outdated and does not reflect the major changes that have occurred during the past few decades in Africa and the rest of the world. The most visible consequence of this is the poor quality of teachers on the continent. It also creates a cycle of poor learning which is not nearly helpful in the labor market. Students study outdated materials and eventually become teachers who educate young students using an outdated knowledge base. A concerted effort must be provided to change this paradigm and implement mechanisms that would enable a more dynamic development of school curricula in Africa.

During my primary school days in Togo in the mid-1990s, we read a textbook entitled *Mamadou et Bineta*, written by French teacher André Prosper Davesne. Two generations before that, students had also read the book when they attended primary school. Most people alive today who have attended school in francophone Africa have read the book at one point in their primary school career. The book was written in the year 1950. In 2010, a new edition of the book was published, entitled, *Mamadou et Bineta sont devenus grands*, meaning Mamadou and Bineta have grown up. It was a reading book that many students and teachers appreciated.

Years later, well after I graduated from university, I realized that while the book was helpful in teaching children how to read, improvements were not made to the reading book to align with the changes that were occurring in our societies. Multiple generations used the same textbook that did not adapt to topics such as technology, urbanization, and national identification.

The book was also counterintuitive in helping them to broaden children's imagination. I recalled that in most texts within the book, "dad" was usually hunting or was at a farm and "mom" was often cooking or doing a chore. Essentially, it was a rural setting with rural activities. Perhaps the author attempted to reflect a reality that students could identify with, however most students who read the book resided within the large cities. Therefore, "dad" could be a mechanic, a carpenter, or a banker. "Mom" could be a doctor, a police officer, or an accountant.

In the elaboration of their education policies, the HPAEs accounted for this issue. For example, while leaders valued Western knowledge, they preferred it to remain complementary to the established education framework in their countries. As a result, in addition to academic knowledge, the education systems in East Asia incorporated moral education with respect to principles such as hard work, ethics, comradeship and a common goal. This created a modern, but culturally immersive learning for students.

VI. Conclusion

Education is not a panacea for economic development in Africa or anywhere else in the world. Development is elaborate and requires a successful coordination of targeted policy actions by different stakeholders. Nevertheless, quality education in a nation is a multiplier effect in the sense that it enhances productivity and levels the playing field for most people. In Africa, education is regarded more as a social investment than an economic policy tool. This perspective should be reviewed because the value of education transcends the social impact. It is strategic in materializing the development objectives of a nation and giving a chance to everyone to contribute to this development.

Within the current economic context, there should be a radical shift in Africa's education system. Countries should leverage technology today and experiences from the HPAEs to provide a targeted and efficient education which in line with national development goals. If Africa wants to industrialize soon enough, it must inevitably channel this vision through education by producing a highly qualified labor force in the shortest timeframe possible. Conventional postsecondary education will remain relevant, particularly for research, but the objective should be to provide people with highly relevant skills in the most cost and time-efficient way.

In reality, Africa's demographic dividend that experts often refer to may in fact be an education dividend because when the youth bulge enters the workforce and is unequipped to participate in enhancing economic productivity, the continent will be unable to reap any economic dividends from its working-age population. Education, therefore, could prevent this by enabling every African to play a constitutive role in building a prosperous continent.

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