

Relevance of post-basic education to the changing realities of youth in sub-Saharan Africa: Exploring the perspectives of young people

Terms of Reference for the synthesis report

1) Research Overview

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has reaffirmed the critical role of education in broader societal development. More specifically, SDG4 envisions to ensure inclusive and equitable education and to promote lifelong learning for all. Against this backdrop, the Education 2030 Framework for Action (FFA) was adopted in November 2015, stating that SDG4 provides the international community's renewed, holistic, ambitious and aspirational education agenda based on a humanistic vision, which reaffirms the principles of education as a human right and a public good. FFA further clarifies SDG4 targets and provides indicative strategies to better mobilize educational efforts towards the promotion and achievement of equity and inclusion in education. SDG target 4.1 proposes to ensure universal completion of primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes among youth. Likewise, target 4.3 promotes equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, and target 4.4 calls for a substantial increase in the number of youth (and adults) who have relevant skills for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship.¹

However, in an ever-changing world where global socio-economic development patterns often characterized by low employment growth, growing youth unemployment, and declining quality of jobs that disproportionately affect young people, and women in particular, ensuring relevance in education has been an increasing challenge. *Rethinking Education* (2015) highlights a growing frustration and disillusion among youth in many contexts with regard to the relevance of formal education, and to the role of education in enabling upward social mobility and greater well-being. Paradoxically, more than one billion young people between the ages of 15 and 24 in the world today are the most informed, active, connected and mobile generation the world has ever seen (Bah, 2014; cited in UNESCO 2015).

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), the youth literacy rate has risen over the past 15 years, but number of youth who do not have basic reading/math competencies is still high (UIS, 2017), and the World Bank reports that most out-of-school youth in the region drop out before secondary education (World Bank, 2015). Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the lowest participation in secondary education. Only half of the population are enrolled in lower secondary education and the proportion drops to one third of the population at the upper secondary level.

¹ See both UNESCO (2015) *Education 2030 Framework for Action*, and UNESCO (2015) *Rethinking Education: Towards a global common good?*

There were 64.8 million out-of-school adolescents worldwide at school-year ending in 2013, of which one third were in sub-Saharan Africa. Given the potential for youth to lead and shape the world, current educational patterns compel a better understanding of youth characteristics and of the gap that often exists between youth realities and aspirations, and the nature of educational provision. This study therefore aims to examine the relevance of formal and non-formal education and of the barriers to access and benefit from learning opportunities. The results aims to contribute to more responsive policies to the issue of youth disengagement from education and the ensuing consequences in skills shortages, low employment prospects, and general well-being.

UNFPA's 2012 status report on adolescents and young people in SSA also stresses the need for further progress in secondary education with a special attention to gender disparities, and improvement of policies and programmes for out-of-school adolescents, as the existing non-formal and alternative education strategies are often of a lower quality due to limited funding.

Given the potential for youth to lead and shape the world, current educational patterns compel a better understanding of non-take up or incomplete take up of post-primary educational and training opportunities. While supply-side factors are relatively well-documented, less is known about the determinants of youth demand for education and training. In order to better understand the subjective dimensions of youth demand for education, it is necessary to better document the characteristics of out-of-school youth, their realities and aspirations, and their perceptions relative to the relevance and potential benefits of educational/training provision available to them.

Objective

The overall aim of the study is to assess the relevance of educational provision and learning opportunities for youth (15-24 years of age) in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is situated within Education 2030, which calls for building education and learning systems that promote inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all by means of society-wide participation and through all channels - formal, non-formal and informal settings. This regional study will explore the learners' point of view relative to the degree of responsiveness of education and training opportunities to their aspiration and their needs.

The study therefore is to: (1) document patterns of take-up of education and training among youth within Sub-Saharan Africa (desk review), (2) examine the subjective dimensions of youth demand for education that may help explain reasons for non-take up (case studies), and (3) provide a set of policy suggestions. In this framework, UNESCO conducted and/or outsourced a few case studies to capture these dimensions at the sub-regional level.

UNESCO is hiring a consultant or an entity (here called 'contractor') to prepare the regional synthesis report based on existing elements of desk review, case study reports prepared during the period of 2016 and 2017² and other pertinent information focusing on the subjective dimension of youth demand for learning opportunities in some 20 Sub Saharan countries.

² Case studies were conducted by UNESCO regional offices, which include: East Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda); Central Africa (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, and Gabon); Southern Africa (Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe); West Africa (Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, and Senegal).

Research questions

The contractor will address issues pertaining to the “Relevance of post-basic education to the changing realities of youth in sub-Saharan Africa” including the following questions:

1. Profile of youth
 - a. Who are those adolescents not in school and what are they doing?
 - b. What are the major causes of non-take up of formal and non-formal education and training opportunities among the youth?
 - c. What are their life prospects and dreams?
2. Youth’s point of view on knowledge and skills for Education 2030
 - a. What are youth’s demands for and expectations from education and training (motivations, aspirations, and needs for learning opportunities)?
 - b. What are youth’s perceptions as regards barriers to pursuing education and training (relevance of education, financial, economic and/or cultural obstacles, future job opportunities, etc.)?
 - c. What policies and programmes exist to respond to learners’ demands? What are the good practices and effective policies and programmes to respond to these demands, particularly in pursuit of the Education 2030 agenda?
3. Options and suggestions for policy consideration
 - a. What are the good practices and opportunities to address youth’s demand for education in countries covered by the case study?
 - b. How can we strengthen the link among formal and non-formal education and training, and the world of work and society, including second-chance programmes, partnerships with industry and community service that may respond to learners’ demands?

Data Collection and Analysis

1. Documenting patterns of take-up of education and training among youth

This section on patterns of take-up would cover all 47 countries in SSA. This exercise would also map the data deficits relative to the final set of indicators that will be adopted.

1.1. Depending on data availability, indicators to be used in documenting patterns of take-up of post-basic education may include, but not limited to the following:

- GER/NER for lower secondary;
- GER/NER for general and technical upper secondary;
- Primary, lower secondary and lower upper secondary transition rates;
- Primary, lower and upper secondary completion rates;
- Repetition rates in lower and upper secondary (general and technical);
- Share of youth in alternative and non-formal education programmes, including literacy;
- Share of youth in formal and non-formal vocational skills development programmes;

- Share of youth in traditional apprenticeships;
- Activity rates for youth in employment in both the formal and informal sectors;
- Share of youth not in education, training and/or employment.
- Share of youth not learning, particularly those who are in school

1.2. National education and employment statistics can, where possible, be complemented by data derived from household living standards measurement surveys, labour surveys, and/or youth surveys. To the extent possible, such data can be used to provide both a snapshot of current realities, as well as trends over time. Where possible, data is to be disaggregated by sex, income, urban/peri-urban/rural residence, region and any other possible factors of disparity. Overview of countries by income level will be presented to see if there are any common patterns among the countries of similar economic development.

2. *An analysis of the subjective dimension of youth demand for education/training opportunities* based on the existing literature, case studies conducted sub-regionally by UNESCO offices, and other pertinent information.

This component will examine the interplay between supply and demand-side factors that may explain the reasons for non-take up of formal and non-formal education and training opportunities among youth. In doing so, particular attention will be paid to the subjective dimensions of youth demand for education and training (motivations, aspirations, and perceptions of relevance of existing education/training provision...). The analysis be organized by themes.

3. *A set of policy options and suggestions* that policy makers, managers and development partners in countries of the region may consider in the process of reviewing their education policies and practices in light of the Education 2030 goal and targets.

2) Tasks

In the framework of the research study ‘**Relevance of post-basic education to the changing realities of youth in sub-Saharan Africa: Exploring the perspectives of young people,**’ the contractor is expected to prepare the regional synthesis report in compliance to the Terms of Reference. The outline of the final deliverable will have to be submitted based on the indicative outline that UNESCO will provide at the inception of the contract

The contractor will:

- 1) Submit for comments by UNESCO the desk review of education policies and practices in Sub Saharan Africa (see data collection and analysis 1.1)
- 2) Submit for comments by UNESCO the analysis of the subjective dimension of youth demand for education/training opportunities that includes the synthesis of commented case study reports
- 3) Submit for comments by UNESCO research team the set of policy options and suggestions

- 4) Submit for validation by the UNESCO research team the final paper in English that has incorporated UNESCO comments.

The documents will be submitted in English.

Deliverable

The final output will be a comprehensive, analytical review with no more than 150 pages including bibliography and annexes (single-spaced, Times New Roman Size 12 Font, and following the UNESCO Style Manual, which can be accessed at the following link: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001418/141812e.pdf>), consisting of:

3) Contract duration

1.5 month (October-November 2017)

4) Requirements

- Be an individual consultant or entity (university, research institute, think tank, consulting firm, etc.) active in the area of education
- Proven experience in research study on youth and education in Sub Saharan Africa
- Proficiency in English and very good working language in French
- Excellent analytical, synthesis and report writing skills

5) How to apply

Please submit a CV (individual) or an expression of interest (organization), as well as previous similar research to Ms. Akemi Yonemura (a.yonemura@unesco.org), cc: Catherine Collin (c.collin@unesco.org)

Please contact Akemi Yonemura (a.yonemura@unesco.org) for any further information.