

# Stimulating Children to Secure Their Rights Through Education in Ethiopia of Africa

A. H. Faizee

Associate Professor, Humanities and Social Sciences, Dr. K. N. Modi University, Newai, Rajasthan, India.

Email: akbarul.hs@dknmu.org; a.h.faizee@gmail.com

**Abstract:** Today, education is possibly the utmost important function of state and educational institutions and also the principle tool in awakening the child to cultural values, in formulating him for later professional training and in assisting him to adjust routinely to his setting. The key purpose of education and learning is to help children in understanding their own perspective groups and to develop admiration for their feelings and thoughts. Without education no children can understand the world and secure their rights. Education stimulates the realisation of the survival rights, development rights, protection rights and participation rights. The essential rights including the right to freedom of speech and expression and other rights cannot be cherished and fully enjoyed unless a citizen is educated and is aware of his self-dignity. Therefore, the right to life and dignity is most significant right of an individual, cannot be guaranteed unless the right to education complements it. Hence, education as a crucial right unlocks the enjoyment of other human rights. As per UDHR, education should be focused towards the full growth of the human behaviour and reinforce respect for human rights. And this aspect of achieving education helps them to enjoy a variety of, economic, political, and cultural opportunities and valued outcomes. Without education no children can understand the world and secure their rights.

**Keywords:** Child rights, Curriculum, Education, Ethiopia, Literacy, Millennium Development Goal (MDG), Net Enrolment Rate (NER), UDHR, Universal Primary Education (UPE).

## I. INTRODUCTION

The key purpose of education is to help children in understanding the pride of all people of the world for their own perspective groups and to develop admiration for their feelings. As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares with Article 26(2):

“Education shall be focused to full development of human personality and to the establishment of respect for human rights and the ultimate freedoms. It shall encourage understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups and shall further the activities of the United Nations for

the maintenance of peace”<sup>1</sup>.

The purposes of education are co- relative to the idea of life. They vary with political, social and economic situation of a place. An exciting point raised by Roman and Greeks is: whether education would train good citizens or good individuals. Also whether in education social desires are more important than individual needs. An individual of course, is born with usual endowments and great potentialities but his personality cannot develop unless it is cultivated in a society. In education both individual as well as the society are vital.

Education is a social good as it provides opportunities and gives people choices. Education improves social movement and assists people to escape from discrimination based on social status. It enables people to move up the social ladder. Furthermore, education stimulates the realisation of the social, economic and cultural rights, such the right to food or the right to health. An educated person has a better chance of reaching his appropriate position in the society as he is better equipped to secure his own basic necessities. In other words, “education as a crucial right unlocks the enjoyment of other human rights. From the viewpoint of the rights of the child, education contributes to socializing children and understanding happenings and assists in the process of securing rights”<sup>2</sup>.

## II. CASE OF ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia is one of the most populous nations in the Africa. The first is Nigeria. It is the second most populous country in Africa. Ethiopia has an annual population growth rate of 2.36% and 43.9% of the population is under the age of 14. In respect to age structure, those under 15 years old constitute 48%; those between 15-64 years old make up 49%.

Population under 18 is 42,124, Population under 5 (thousands) 13,651, U5 mortality rate (2007) is 119, Infant mortality rate (2007) is 75, Primary school enrolment ratio (2000-2007, net, male/female) is 74/69, Estimated adult HIV prevalence rate (aged 15-49) 2007 is 2,1<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Article 26 (2) (1948) UDHR.

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF (2006) *A Guide to General Comment 7: Implementing Child Rights in Early Childhood*. p. 79.

<sup>3</sup> The State of the World's Children, 2009.

Ethiopia ranks among one of the poorest countries in the world with an estimated 44% of the population living below the poverty line. According to the World Bank (2005), the average income barely exceeds 100 USD per day<sup>4</sup>. It is physically, culturally, and linguistically extremely diverse, about 85 percent of the people are rural. In 2005/05, there were 14.3 million primary school age children; 11.4 million students were enrolled in the primary schools at that time (MOE2005b).

Ethiopia has a federal system of government consisting of nine regional states and two city administrations. Currently (2008), there are over 720 weredas and close to 18,000 kebeles. Under the federal system of government, education is a shared responsibility of the federal, regional state and wereda governments<sup>5</sup>.

Ethiopia's vision towards education is reflected in its constitution. Considering education is a basic need, it desired to established uniform, mass oriented, universal, free and compulsory education up to certain level determined by the law. In order to fulfill these commitments a number of steps have been taken by the government during the last 20 years since the end of civil war in 1991.

Under the described circumstances, schools in African countries were a trauma for many children. In the last two decades, there has been extraordinary expansion of education opportunity in African countries. In many African countries the government had set up public educational systems free of charge, like i.e. in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Eritrea and many African countries that after independence tried to maintain and expand their education system based both on their ruler's model and self-indigenous models. One motive that seems to be common to all governments and states is the desire to provide more and better education for children. While owing to limited availability of resources the governments of African countries are not been able to spend the desired budget on education.

The constitution of Ethiopia ensures the rights and privileges of children. In recent years, the government of Ethiopia has committed itself to improving education. Compulsory primary education was introduced in 1993 (Government of Ethiopia, 1990). Education for girls is now free up to grade eight in rural areas. Apart from these public efforts several international agencies have initiated educational programmes for the children. And they continued to search out innovative teaching methods to upgrade the children in given circumstances.

### III. EDUCATION FOR ALL

Like many other countries Ethiopia also supports the international conventions; Article 9:4 of the federal Constitution guarantees that "all international agreements ratified by Ethiopia are an integral part of the law of the land" (FDRE 1995)<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF Humanitarian Action, Ethiopia, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> P. Toggia, and A. Zegeye, "Ethiopia in Transit: Millennial Quest for Stability and Continuity," Routledge, 2013.

Hence the correct question for Universal Primary Education (UPE) is not why but how. Ethiopia has signed and ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); the World Declaration on Education for All (1990) and the Millennium Development Goals (2000)<sup>7</sup>.

It is widely believed that the expansion of educational opportunities is a keystone to the nation's accelerated socio-economic development and securing the rights of the people. Education provides a fundamental base for all further development and its availability and quality are central to the securing human rights of any society. National government of Ethiopia agreed to dedicate themselves to securing the goals, while international agencies pledged that no country thus committed would be prevented from achieving them by a lack of resources. Eventually, The Ethiopian Government has long recognized that the realization of basic education is both a necessity and a fundamental human right. It is the signatory of all the regional and global proclamations and approaches to provide basic education for all. It is the signatory of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948, which, asserted that 'everyone has a right to education', and which is re-affirmed by subsequent international conferences<sup>8</sup>. It took part in all the regional UNESCO conferences. Therecent World Summit for Children and the Convention on the Rights of Children in 1989, the 1990 Jomtien Declaration on Education for All and the 1999 Sub-Saharan Conference on Education for African Renaissance and the 2000 Dakar Declaration which are all efforts that bear witnesses in the realization of education as a basic human right world-wide<sup>9</sup>.

The Dakar goals covered the attainment of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and gender equality, improving literacy and educational quality, and were to be achieved within 15 years. However, the gender goal was judged to be particularly urgent requiring the achievement of parity in enrolments for girls at primary and secondary levels by 2005, and of full equality throughout education by 2015<sup>10</sup>. The hopes and aspirations to universalize basic primary education remains a matter of great concern at the dawn of the 21st century. Millions of children in Ethiopia still fail to gain access to schooling, and even

<sup>7</sup> H. Ahmed, "Aftermath of the World Conference on Education for All," Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, UNESCO, 1992.

<sup>8</sup> J. P. Worner and D. Coleman, "The United Nations and education: multilateralism, development and globalization," Routledge, 2005, p. 237.

<sup>9</sup> D. Dufera, "Theoretical and practical issues in the implementation of the current Ethiopian school curriculum," Curriculum planning, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> E. R. Schweitzer, V. Greaney, and K. Duer, "Promoting Social Cohesion Through Education: Case Studies and Tools for Using Textbooks," World Bank Institute Learning Resource, World Bank Publications, 2006.

larger numbers among those who do enrol leave prematurely, dropping out before the skills of literacy and numeracy have been properly gained. A majority of such children are girls.

Today, the Central role of education in Ethiopia is to speed up socio economic development and to enhance the building a democratic nation. According to the prevailing Ethiopian ethos, it is desirable and expected that all citizens must be involved in constructive and effective contributions. To allow citizens to realize this mandate, access to primary education is vital. The Ethiopian constitution states that “to the extent the country’s resources permit, policies shall aim to provide all Ethiopians access to public education” (Article 90:1).

Besides its obligation to meet the social demand of education, Ethiopia believes that much of its underdevelopment syndrome could be resolved by educating the society. This is also the basic reason for emphasising education in the budgetary. The power that was once cantered in Addis Ababa was devolved to the lower echelons of administration, and responsibilities legally divided between the federal ministry of education and the Regional Bureaus of Education in proclamation Number 260 and Number 471/2005<sup>11</sup>.

#### IV. RESTRICTIONS

While Ethiopia is officially committed to achieve universal primary education, it faces huge challenges on the way to achieve this goal. The current net enrolment rate stands at only 57.4%, and the overall situation in the education sector is characterized by a large rural-urban disparity, as well as a pronounced gender gap. Access to school is one of the problems that need to be overcome, a problem that is especially pronounced in rural areas. According to the 2001 Child Labour Force Survey, one in seven youths blames the lack of a school in the area as the reason for non-enrolment (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2001). The 2000 Welfare Monitoring Survey found one third of the children in the rural areas lived at least 5 kilometres away from the nearest primary school. But even out of the group of rural children with a primary school in the immediate vicinity, only 43.6% are enrolled (compared to 85.5% in urban areas). These numbers point to the fact that problems of enrolment and attendance are more complex than simply distance and that improved access needs to be combined with other incentives.

The Ethiopian government usually faces a daunting task in their effort to expand the delivery of educational services due to increasing enrolments and tight government budgets. Attending school on a regular basis is crucial for the children to secure their rights. Numbers of children are currently not attending school, with multiple detrimental effects.

#### V. UNDERTAKINGS

Despite these daunting difficulties, the optimism today about the country’s future is intense. The Ethiopian Government has

begun to pay careful attention to capacity building at institutional and organizational levels. This means governments, which are serious about putting into practice the vision of the Education for all, and the Beijing platform for action need to ensure that all citizens have an understanding of education and understand the connection between education and the rights of the child. These include: consulting organization are to support government; provide equitable education through working with planners in spreading of education at all level of government; to campaign for strong political commitment to equitable education; and to maintain attention on the educational dimensions of national and international goals and targets. Drawing on successful work from a range of context, some concrete steps includes: support and encourage local organizations and schools to engage in their own situational budget exercises; point out, locate good innovative practices that improve equality in education for purpose of dissemination and advocacy and learn from what does not work so well; encourage community participation in schooling governance, involving the local pupil; monitor progress on education at the local level, and use this to influence government and donor policy at the national level; provide good quality information gathering at local level and support non-government organizations; schools and communities to participate in the promotion of education in securing child rights.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

Since Ethiopia emerged from 16 years of civil war in 1991, access to education has improved significantly. Approximately 3 million pupils were in primary school in 1994/95; by 2008/09, primary enrolment had risen to 15.5 million, an increase of over 500%. Secondary school enrolment also grew more than fivefold during this period. Benefiting from sustained growth, the Ethiopian government, in partnership with donors, has invested heavily in improving access to education. Key measures have included abolishing school fees, increasing expenditure on school construction and maintenance and hiring and training thousands of new teachers, administrators and officials. This has been complemented by a shift to mother tongue instruction and by the gradual decentralisation of the education system to progressively lower administrative levels. This has likely contributed to improved service delivery.

While these trends are encouraging, a number of challenges put many of the recent achievements at risk. Progress has not been uniform throughout the country. The discrepancies are particularly pronounced in the four Developing Regional States (DRS) of Afar, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella and Somali<sup>12</sup>.

A decade after launching its 1994 New Education and Training Policy, Ethiopia’s government facing challenge to serve all of Ethiopia’s children. The government’s recent Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program reaffirm its

<sup>11</sup> H. Roschanski, “Deprived Children and Education Ethiopia,” 2007.

<sup>12</sup> The World Bank, “Education in Ethiopia-Strengthening the Foundation for Sustainable Progress,” Washington, 2005.

goal of universalizing primary education. Concerning equity issues in access to education, the determinants of exclusion from education are poverty and food insecurity, child labour both at home and commercially, distance especially to second level school, gender disparities especially early marriage, and a pastoralist way of life<sup>13</sup>.

As long as education is seen as an investment rather than a right, and success is measured by employability only, the relevance of primary education as such remains very limited<sup>14</sup>. The ongoing educational reform encompasses every aspect of the educational system; the curricula, teacher training, educational inputs, educational finance, organization and management, structure of education, carrier structure of teachers, and evaluation<sup>15</sup>.

The most African countries including Ethiopia have succeeded to improve the enrolments of the students in the primary schools. Both primary and secondary school Net Enrolment Rates (NER) have more than doubled since 1999 and had surpassed the regional average for the first time<sup>16</sup>. According to the most recent Ministry of Education statistics, the NER stood at 83.0% in 2008/09. The net enrolment rate among primary school aged children has increased. The GER for primary education, which was only 30% in 1994/95, is nearly more than double (68.4%) in 2003/04. Accordingly the dropout rates were also increased.

Ethiopia is now trying to emphasize on completion of the full cycle of quality primary education for all children. Such activities need to consistent with that of the international goals and targets on Education For All (EFA) including the Millennium Development Goal (MDG). Ethiopia has its vision towards long-term issues of poverty alleviation, illiteracy eradication and improvements of marginalized group for a just, enlightened, healthy and democratic Ethiopia free from

illiteracy and all forms of exploitation based on age, sex, region and & ethnicity.

Whereas public spending on education in the 1980s remained under 10% of total expenditure, and under 3% of GDP, by 2000 it constituted 4.1% of GDP and 13.6% of total spending. By 2007, this had increased to over 5.5% of GDP and 23.6% of total expenditure, exceeding the target set for ESDP III (19.9% of the total budget). Today, better administrative management is also critical for continued progress. This task is difficult in the best of circumstances, but it can be made by cultivating a culture of accountability for results and good management of resources throughout the system. In relation to learning through and for rights, whilst opportunities for children's participation are widespread, it generally falls short of an entitlement in most countries. In the forthcoming year the majority of children in Ethiopia, African and Asian developing countries will have secured their rights through education.

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<sup>13</sup> UNICEF, UNESCO, Save the Children, "Taking Stock of Girls' Education in Ethiopia," Preparing for ESDP III, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Federal Ministry of Education, "Education Sector Development Programme III," (ESDP-III), 2005/2006-2010/2011.

<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Education, "Education Statistics Annual Abstract", 2001 E.C. /2008-09 G.C. / Education Management Information System, 2010.

<sup>16</sup> UIS Statistics in Brief: Education in Ethiopia, accessed at <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx>