Peer Review of the paper on

"Secondary Education in Africa: Preparing Youth for the Future of Work"

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This desk review on *'Secondary Education in Africa: Preparing Youth for the Future of Work'* is based on secondary data from academic and grey literatures, supplied by three short case studies. It identifies, presents and analyzes documents relating to out-of-school youth conditions in Sub-Saharan Africa. It also documents on the most common alternative educational strategies utilized there to overcome these conditions and prepare youth for employment. Next, it pins down lessons that could be considered to improve the conditions of dropped out and unschooled youth in Africa. The paper concludes with recommendations intended for decision makers, with the ultimate goal of facilitating African youth insertion into the labor market.

A peer review, which is structured around nine sections is undertaken here to assess if the paper could serve to complete a report on "*the role of secondary education in preparing African youth for the future of work*". The peer review would also assess the extent to which the paper, which is intended for African policymakers, implementers, teachers and other stakeholders dealing with dropout and unschooled youth in Africa, could be suitably utilized for drafting policy briefs, blogs and other policy documents.

Despite these very positive elements however, a few areas could be improved to make the report even more useful. Details of these elements are presented in the following parts.

1. Introduction

The introductory part sets well the stage for research. It provides an appropriate context for the work to be undertaken. The conceptual framework is clearly outlined

and justified. By drawing the reader's attention to the difficult conditions of the African OOSY and to the two main options implemented in SSA to overcome these conditions (either attending alternative schooling or going back to formal school), the introductory part centers the review on the critical issues to explore. This provides also methodological boundaries that help to stay focused on where it matters the most. The review presents very well the funnel-shaped interlocking situation of (1) the broader issue of youth conditions in Africa, especially those of girls, (2) the particular case of the out-of-school African youth and (3) the specific case of those that are left out from secondary education. This sets the tone for the entire review.

Despite these positive aspects, the following may be considered to improve the introductory part:

- Geographical limitations could be discussed here. There is a congruence problem between the title, which proposes to present "A background paper for Secondary Education **in Africa** "and the introductory part, which restricts the work to **Sub-Saharan Africa**. It is granted that many studies exclude the Northern part of the continent from the rest of the continent. But, as far as out-of-school youth is concerned, there are very interesting studies on marginalized youth in such countries as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. Therefore, for the present review, it would be appropriate either to include these documented cases or to state that they are deliberately excluded because of methodological or programmatic reasons.

- In the same vein, the introductory part could also valuably discuss regional disparities in the continent. Diversity is one of the characteristics that are too often overlooked in studies on Africa. The conditions, from one sub-region to the other, from country to country vary substantially. Therefore, it would have been interesting, in setting the stage for the review, that geographical, linguistic and political diversity be underlined. This helps capture variations on policies and practices underway from places to places, even when the targeted groups are similar.

- The graph proposed in the introductory part is interesting, but it is limited to the gender issue and does not cover, as announced, two other background dimensions that are critical to a good understanding of out-of-school characteristics: (1) sub-

regional disparities between the different parts of Africa and (2) progress made over time in relation to each of these two characteristics.

Actually, this graph may be of better use in the analysis section.

▪ It would have been appropriate to state clearly the key research questions, early in the introductory part. This helps to follow through and assess if all aspects are covered.

2. Literature review

The literature review is up-to-date, with latest information available from international institutions such as UNESCO and Unicef. It focuses mainly on how to help OOSY acquire necessary knowledge and know-how, either through re-entering formal schooling or through attending alternative programs. It proposes very interesting discussions on the most critical issues pertaining to OOSY status and to programs designed to help them overcome their situation.

The literature review covers not only Anglophone, but also Francophone countries.

However, here again, the following may be considered to enhance the literature review:

▪ The out-of-school domain is a kind of peripheral subject in common literature relating to education in Africa. Therefore, it is best captured through grey literature provided by associations, non-government organizations and individual researchers. Unfortunately, the review tends to give too much weight to data from international organizations such as UNICEF and UNESCO compared to information from other sources. A bigger share of grey literature would have produced more sensitive and accurate idea of OOSY conditions. Who are these kids and young fellows? Where are they mostly located? What kind of hardship they face daily? How difficult is it to identify and reach out to them? What solutions exist on the ground that could be scaled up? How hard is it to implement such solutions? , etc.

To illustrate the point, the ILO/ANSD report on working children in Africa could have provided very insightful information on the status of these kids, on their involvement in traditional and modern productive activities, on the negative

consequences of such involvement, and on measures to be taken in order to stop abusing these children, etc.[1, 2].

The same could be documented by Terre des Hommes or EMPAM, which provides quite vivid and inspiring information on OOSY S conditions in a typical West African country such as Burkina Faso[3].

- Most of reviewed documents are from Anglophone literature. The use of French literature (even translated in English) is limited in the review. If it were the case, it would have reached deeper ground. For example, it would have covered more extensively, issues such as those concerning Street and Taliby Children and effects of urbanization / modernization on the fate of OOSY in West and Central Africa. Authors such as Boursin Balkouma[4], Wallez[5], would have helped to better understand some of the issues specific to Youth in the Sahelian strip.

Some of the works undertaken by ADEA Working Group on Non-Formal Education, and other organizations that are active on the ground such as CODESRIA, and ROCARE, would have also provided valuable information on programs underway in Francophone Africa to identify best practices in literacy and non-formal education[6]. There is also an abundant literature on education and

[1] See: BIT/ANSD, Enquête Nationale sur le Travail des Enfants au Sénégal, Rapport national d'analyses, Dakar, Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie, 2007

[2] See: BIT/ANSD, Enquête Nationale sur le Travail des Enfants au Sénégal, Rapport national d'analyses, Dakar, Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie, 2007

3 See: Sanou Tolo Antoine, « Les enfants des rues au Burkina Faso », EMPAN, 2007/2, N° 66

4 See : Boursin-Balkouma. Terre des Hommes (2014). Etudes sur les problématiques et les risques de protection de l'enfance. Collection educate a child.

5 See : Wallez Paul et Aubrée Loïc, «L'expérience de la rue chez les jeunes comme forme extrême d'urbanité», Espaces et sociétés, 2005/1-2, 120-121

6 See: Association for the Development of Education in Africa (2011). Nigeria; Reaching out to the Disadvantaged: Nomads, Adults and Children in Difficult Circumstances. ISBN 10: 92- 9178-114-2, ISBN : 978-92-9178-114-0.© Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)

See also, on the same issue : GTENF/ADEA (2017). Référentiel des bonnes pratiques en alphabétisation et formation au profit des jeunes vulnérables. Publications du Groupe de Travail sur l'Éducation Non Formelle de l'ADEA. Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. ISBN n°13: 978-92-9178-139-3 © ADEA et UIL gtenf@fasonet.bf; www.gtenf.org ; www.gtenf-adea.org

development that have been produced in France and in other European countries involved in development in Africa. Such documents could have helped capture some of the critical issues at stake with OOSY in Africa. A few references are posted below[7]. Some of the official reports of works carried out under the auspices of African Governments' ministries of education and youth would have provided very relevant data on second chance programs in these countries[8]. The same goes for studies undertaken by ISESCO.

3. Importance and relevance

Reviewed documents are relevant and they cover Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. The issues identified by the reviewers for discussion are appropriate and they provide an insightful landscape of the context, the main challenges facing education, and the means utilized by countries and their partners to overcome such challenges. The selected case studies are eloquent and they propose successful models that could be tried out somewhere else in Sub-Saharan Arica. One of the interests of two of them (Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia) is that they speak about conflict / post conflict countries where significant numbers of young women and men are still sitting on the fence and are left out from education mainstream. In a country like Liberia, which was heavily affected by consecutive wars, the program was implemented with the support of UNICEF, Save the Children and Norwegian Refugee Council. It was structured around teacher training, curriculum improvement to facilitate learning processes in a condensed way and for a shorter time, validation of whatever is learned, and alteration of legal schooling requirements for the underprivileged, etc. After the program was evaluated, the Government was encouraged to mainstream it in order to make it more sustainable. The program was also used to inspire other undertakings and to be duplicated somewhere else. The same goes for the two other programs, in Cote d'Ivoire and in Kenya.

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7 See for example: Pilon (2006). Défis du développement en Afrique subsaharienne; l'éducation en jeu. IRD UR 105 « Savoirs et développement ». Paris 2006 ; © Copyright CEPED, ISSN : 1772-0125 - ISBN : 2-87762-153-7

8 See: PRD (2017). Restitution des résultats de l'étude: Diagnostic du "Programme d'appui à l'emploi dans les zones frontalières et périphériques au Burkina Faso", Expertise France, en collaboration avec SIMAQ International. Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso 2017.

To summarize, the choices made by the review were relevant and the issues raised were discussed in length to help decision makers set policies and follow through implementation. However, here again, a few steps could be considered to improve the review:

Concerning, for example, the proportion of youth who were out of school at various phases of the DSS data collection, the review shows how the proportion of OOSY increases with age. At this stage it would have been appropriate to also explore documents related to the side effects of EFA revolution. With this major undertaking adopted by all African countries, a high number of children were enrolled in pre-primary and primary education. However, recent studies seem to indicate that not enough attention was paid to the effect of such move, down the road, when these children grow up and reach secondary education, and, later on, when they get to the age to enter into the job market.

It is also argued that the EFA revolution seems not to have paid enough attention to adult education. The matter was left mainly to NGOs, community associations, charitable organizations and other volunteer groups.

The review depicts well the uncertainty facing such organizations when funding becomes scarce and technical savoir-faire limited. However, some of these experiments are so promising that they need to be evaluated, endorsed by Government and its partners, and scaled-up in order for them to effectively impact on the youth. The review would have benefited from documenting more these blossoming endeavors.

For example, France Expertise and a NGO called AFEB, in collaboration with local governing bodies in the Northern part of Burkina Faso and Southern part of Mali, are trying out a formula to train local artisans in such areas as work ethics, entrepreneurship, and networking. Then these trained artisans will be used as trainers for the youth so that the latter acquire proper skills to be in a position to get employment and/or to run their own business. There are many similar attempts in West and Central Africa.

4. Research design and methods

The research design is rigorous and is clearly described and justified. The research methods adopted are appropriate for the issues to explore through this research. The paper is well structured and the approach used is comprehensive enough to encapsulate the most important elements that need to be taken into consideration when

examining the painful situation of those that have been left out from education mainstream. It is well documented with a review of over 75 papers most of which are from major international institutions and from authors that are recognized, worldwide. These documents are supplemented by three case studies from Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Kenya. Skype and phone interviews are run to cover any gaps spotted by the authors.

Because of these steps, as well as the outstanding quality of the analysis and the pertinence of the recommendations, the review is strong and it could be a handy tool for other ADEA and MasterCard works.

5. Research conduct and ethics

As stated in the introduction, this was mainly a desk review relying on three kinds of sources: academic databases, grey literature and telephone + skype interviews. There are no indications that instruments utilized by this review were tested and piloted. However, the quality and amount of data collected through this review, as well as safety measures undertaken to ensure compliance with research ethics and quality control measures taken throughout the research, are testimony that the reviewers involved in this work master well what it takes to conduct credible, reliable and useful research work.

The three case studies were selected in a way to have a sample that could speak for the entire continent. However, as said earlier, one may wonder why not having other sub-regions such as Maghreb, Central Africa, and Southern Africa represented in this sample. Not only the OOSY challenges are paramount there, but also literature on them is abundant.

One might suspect that the linguistic barrier was the major reason for putting aside these countries. If this was the case, it would have been appropriate to mention this among the limitations of the review in the methodological section.

Actually, one of the weaknesses of this review is that it does not discuss in length what kind of limitations it has to deal with and what measures were proposed to overcome the predicament.

6. Data collection and analysis

Although the methodological approach to data collection and analysis are not fully described in the report, there are indications that the research complied with agreed upon ethic criteria. The data analysis is thorough and it touches on very critical issues pertaining to the faith of the OOSY in Africa. The following examples illustrate this:

- The gender issue is well covered and barriers to girls' education well identified, and analyzed in the review. These include, but are not limited to "*cost, distance to school, domestic chores, and traditional social and cultural expectations about their future roles as wives and mothers… community and family… early marriage and engagement in work*".
  Boys' predicament in relation to effective education is also well presented and discussed, especially as it concerns those adolescents stuck in "youth-man stage" because of wars and social conflicts. The only setback is that the review did not address in detail, the issue of youth from marginalized populations. Here again, grey literature could be of considerable help. For example, the ADEA Peer Review on Reaching out to the Marginalized in Nigeria provides insightful illustrations and understanding of the situation of three marginalized groups in Sub-Saharan Africa: Nomads, Adult Illiterates and Youth in poor suburban areas [9] .

- Another example is the review extensive coverage of the funding issue. It extensively gathered documentation relating to financing OOSY programs and observed that such programs are poorly funded, mainly by Non-Government Organizations, which *"usually exit once their resources run out"*, and by community associations whose capacities are too limited.

- A third example relates to the diversity of OOSY conditions. The review identified several documents showing that OOSY population is hugely high. In this regard, it is revealing that, for instance, seven out of the 23 countries included for analysis have more than one-half of the 15-17 year-olds as OOSY. The review also pinpointed that disparities among countries and programs are significant as it regards their policies and practices targeting the OOSY.

- A forth example is the review indication that Alternative Education programs are reportedly most successful when they use multiple "entry and exit points", and when they are closely associated with formal education structures.

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[9] See: Association for the Development of Education in Africa (2011). Nigeria; Reaching out to the Disadvantaged: Nomads, Adults and Children in Difficult Circumstances. ISBN 10: 92- 9178-114-2, ISBN: 978-92-9178-114-0. © Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) 2011

These examples are testimony that key issues have been fully identified by the review, inferences drawn and analysis processes thoroughly conducted and supported by data. Despite this, one or two issues may have been overlooked or not sufficiently documented. They relate to the main reason for not attending formal schooling in some part of the continent, such as the Sahel Strip where a clash of cultures is partially responsible for low schooling rates. On the one hand, there is the so-called "Islamic World" and the kind of schooling it borrowed from the Middle East. This schooling is, for the most part, informal, decentralized, close to local communities, and in tune with local conditions in rural Africa; On the other hand, there is the formal schooling, inherited from European colonization, urban, committed to modernity, centralized and supported by African Central Governments and their partners. Attempt to reconcile these two worlds had, in many cases, produced side effects that were detrimental to the regular schooling of the African child in this part of the continent[10]. It is symptomatic that most OOSY are from rural Africa where Islamic schooling is spread. In West Africa for example, young women and men from this milieu constitute the bulk of OOSY. Unfortunately, current political situations and international political settings just complicate the problem, as Islamic Education is often associated with "Islamism", and "Extremism". Added to this is the perception, by the Research Community that this kind of education is an *"unregulated and indigenously-run"* one that just needs to be formalized, while the matter is complex and asks for more study and understanding. Actually, a holistic approach, where the Koranic and formal systems collaborate and support one another, could more effectively contribute to alleviating the dropout predicament and facilitate entering to the world of work for some of those who have resisted enrolment in formal schooling, notably in the Sahel Strips.

The review would have benefited from exploring this issue further.

7. Research results

The research results are clearly presented, sufficient data are presented, and they strongly support claims made earlier, in the introductory part. However, as explained, it is unfortunate that the key research questions have not been itemized earlier, in the

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10 See: Bah-Lalya (2015). Koranic Education Centers: A viable educational alternative for the disadvantaged learner in Sahel Africa? International Review of Education. Journal of Lifelong Learning. ISSN 0020-8566

introductory part, to facilitate the structuring of the review. This would have helped following through.

8. Discussion, conclusion and implications

Discussions are conducted and they are supported by relevant literature. Conclusions and implications on policy and practice are outlined. Lessons are drawn at the end of the review. A few concise and attainable recommendations are drafted to address the key issues raised throughout the paper.

9. General Comments

Overall, the review on Secondary Education in Africa: Preparing Youth for the Future of Work is commendable in the nine sections identified for the peer review. Therefore it is keenly recommended that this report be used for drafting the MasterCard and ADEA final report, and for preparing other policy documents on OOSY, provided that the following steps are undertaken to complete the review:

1. conduct a thorough literature desk review of documents from Francophone Africa and from European countries involved in development in francophone Africa, especially in the Sahel strip where the highest rates of OOSY are recorded;
2. deepen grey literature desk review as documentation on OOSY matters is weak in usual academic literature;
3. further document research on learning experiences that are happening in the field, some of which needing to be reviewed, recognized and scaled up ;
4. further explore uncommon alternative strategies such as those used in Koranic Education in the Sahel strip as this could provide viable alternatives for reaching out those who have resisted being enrolled in formal schooling;
5. pay more attention to the critical steps to be undertaken beyond schooling and before actual employment.