

The Worldwide Expansion of Education since the Middle of the Twentieth Century: Reconstruction and Assessment

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ABSTRACT This paper has a dual purpose, namely to reconstruct the defining moments in the global history of developments in education, and to assess the outcomes and consequences of the expansion of education. In this paper, the literature survey as method for collecting information was utilised. The historical method was utilised at the second level. Guided by literature, the impressive developments and innovations in education in the West, the East and the Global South were reconstructed, in particular since the 1960s. The paper shows that, despite global endeavours to eliminate disparities in education, there are still no equal opportunities pertaining to quality and accessibility. Possible reasons for the inequalities are highlighted. The paper emphasises the necessity for local and international collaboration in order to establish equal access to high-quality education for all children worldwide.

INTRODUCTION

For fifty years, since the sixties of the previous century, education has been regarded as the panacea for the entire societal problematic (Kuepié and Nordman 2014; Tickly 2014; Wolhuter 2014). Brezinka (1981: 2) states as follows, “When someone wants to do something for peace, he demands ‘peace education’, the person wanting to reduce the number of traffic accidents recommends ‘traffic education’....”

This high value attached to education has increased even further as the move towards a knowledge society has been gaining momentum, namely where society moved through all the preceding phases of economic development. The economic basis was successively located in hunting and collection, and other extracting activities (fisheries and mining), as well as agriculture, manufacturing industries and the services sector, upto the new phase of a society of knowledge that is now emerging, that is where the production and consumption of new knowledge has become the propeller for the economy (World Bank 2002a). According to the World Bank (2002b: v), “education is one of the most powerful instruments known for reducing poverty and inequality, and for laying the basis for sustained economic growth, sound governance,

and effective institutions”. The belief that education is the solution to social, economic and political problems was the impetus behind the massive global expansion of education.

Objectives

The purpose of this paper is dual, namely to reconstruct the defining moments of this massive global education expansion drive, and to assess the outcomes and results of these educational developments.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this paper, a literature survey was utilised as method for collecting information. The search engines ERIC (Education Resources Information Centre), Google Scholar and Ebsco Host, as well as books on Comparative Education (in particular by reputable Comparative Educationists, such as Philip Altbach, Philip Coombs and Torsten Husén) were consulted to collect information on the global developments in education the past centuries, in particular since the mid-twentieth century. The historical method was utilised at the second level, namely the processing of data: data were chronologically ordered. Collected information was applied to accomplish the dual purpose of this research.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Over the past fifty years, especially after 1960, the international educational stage was charac-

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terised by impressive innovations and developments in the West and the East, as well as in the Global South.

The West

By the end of the twentieth century, Western Europe and North America were clearly the global regions that were the most advanced with regard to developments in education. National public primary school education systems, coupled with compulsory attendance, were already emerging in the nineteenth century (in Prussia as early as 1763). Other examples regarding the establishment of education systems are the Guizot Act in France (1833); Massachusetts in the United States of America was the first state to promulgate an act making primary school attendance compulsory (1852); while England was a late starter, with the Balfour Act only promulgated in 1902. Following on this, the first half of the twentieth century was the era of the massification and universalisation of secondary education, with the second half of the twentieth century characterised by the massification and universalisation of higher education (Ulich 1967). Whilst only 7 percent of the population of the relevant age group attended secondary schools in the USA in 1890, it increased to 80 percent in 1960 (Ulich 1967). In 1950, only 5 percent of the relevant age group were studying at higher education institutions in Western Europe, increasing to 50 percent by the end of the century (Trow 2006: 247), with an even further increase during the first decade of the twenty-first century. Despite the institution of compulsory, universal secondary education in most of the European countries during the first half of the twentieth century, inequalities regarding the average number of years that learners spend at school and at other educational institutions still prevail: 13 years in Eastern Europe and Mediterranean countries, compared to 15 years in the rest of Europe (Meschi and Scervini 2012).

The second reform in education that characterised the latter half of the twentieth century in European education was the establishment of comprehensive schools. Historically (until the middle of the twentieth century) the secondary education systems of Western Europe displayed a dual character: on the one hand, there were elite institutions (like the *Grammar Schools* in England and the *Gymnasien* in Germany) that

prepared an elite group (a very small percentage of the learners who attended secondary school) for university studies (Lewin 1982). Most of the learners who attended secondary schools were enrolled at less prestigious institutions (such as the *Secondary Modern Schools* and the *Technical Schools* in England or the *Realschulen* and *Technische Schulen* in Germany). A combination of the pursuit of equal opportunities (*cf.* Wolhuter 1993) and the decline in the school population (*cf.* Wolhuter 2000) led to schools being amalgamated into Comprehensive Schools. This happened, for example, through *Circular 10 of 1965* in England in 1965, the *Bildungsgesamtplan* in (West) Germany in 1973, the *Contourennota van een toekomstig onderwijsbestel* in the Netherlands in 1977, or the Langevin-Wallon reform in France in 1968. However, it was Swedish comprehensive schools, which had already been established since the 1950s, that appeared first on the Western European scene and served as model for the rest of Western Europe (*cf.* Husén 1989).

The East

While mass education, as discussed in the previous paragraph, came into existence in Western Europe and North America during the course of the nineteenth century, it gained momentum in the East (for the purposes of this paper the East refers to the former Eastern Bloc and the countries of the Pacific Tigers) in a next wave of expansion during the twentieth century. However, to catch up, it gained momentum much faster in these regions, and even became a model for the West, as discussed later in this paper. The pioneer was Japan. After the Meiji restoration, which ended the four hundred years rule by the *Shogun* (warlords) and international isolation of Japan, one of the first projects of the Meiji government in 1868 was to establish a modern education system. This education system, which was a combination of the best elements of the American, German, English and French education systems, would later become a classical example in Comparative Education textbooks of how to design/improve an education system by borrowing some of the best practices from a number of foreign education systems (*cf.* Stone 1983).

A far more powerful turn in education development took place in the Union of Soviet Social-

ist Republics (USSR) at the beginning of the twentieth century. To put the achievements of the USSR in perspective, history books often refer to the fact that, prior to the 1917 revolution, not even a third of the adult population were literate (for example, *cf.* Mironov 1991). The day after the November 1917 revolution, the leader, Vladimir Lenin, established a Ministry of Education (the first time that a Ministry of Education existed in Russia) and appointed his own wife, N.P. Krupskaya (a comparative educationist by profession) as Minister of Education, and as a matter of urgency created a modern education system. Characteristics of the Soviet educational model were the extreme central control and uniformity, the 10-year comprehensive school model, and polytechnic education (according to which pupils had to work part of the school day/week in the fields or factories) (Zajda 1980). By 1934, universal primary school attendance had been reached and by the end of the existence of the USSR, in 1991, the gross secondary and higher education enrolment levels were 94 percent and 25 percent, respectively (UNESCO 1993). The Soviet educational project and model were copied in the other Eastern Bloc countries after 1945.

The Soviet educational experiment interested educationists in the rest of the world – for instance, in the discipline Comparative and International Education, Thut and Adams (1964) write that, by the early 1960s, the number of studies on the Soviet education system exceeded the number of studies on all other national education systems put together. This adoration culminated with the launching of Sputnik into space in 1957 — an event which put the USSR ahead of the USA in the space race as part of the Cold War. The Sputnik achievement was widely ascribed in the USA as the result of an allegedly better education system (Noah 1986). Amongst others, it gave rise to A.S. Trace's (1961) publication *What Ivan knows that Johnny doesn't*, a comparison between the education systems of the USA and the USSR. This was but the first of only two occasions in history that a book on Comparative Education became a bestseller amongst the broad intellectual public.

Although the developments in and modernisation of education happened faster in Japan and the Socialist Eastern Bloc than in the West, it proceeded even faster apace in the countries of the Pacific Rim during the second half of the

twentieth century, namely Singapore (after 1965), Taiwan (after 1947), South Korea (after 1950) and Vietnam (from 1986). The belief that educational development is the best catalyst for economic growth and modernisation resulted in an increase in funding of education in this part of the world (Chu 2000). However, the massification of education in this region was not uniform, for example by 2006, participation by children in Vietnam in junior secondary education was 76 percent – significantly higher than the average for South-east and East Asia (UNESCO 2006, as cited in USAID 2008).

The Global South

In the footsteps of the educational development project in the West, followed by the East, came an even more powerful surge in the Global South. For the purposes of this paper the Global South is taken as comprising China, the Middle East, South Asia, Latin America and Africa.

In the midst of the political instability of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,¹ China's selective education system, which reached back several millennia, could not find an environment conducive to developing a mass education system; on the contrary, during the last years of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), all educational institutions were closed down and no tuition took place. However, after 1979, the education system was rebuilt with great vigour. The nine-year universal school (comprising a primary school and a junior secondary school phase) was introduced, with the result that everywhere in China there is currently *de facto* nine years' compulsory schooling. China developed the largest education system globally, with 394 200 primary schools accommodating 112.46 million pupils and 6.17 million teachers; 63 757 junior secondary schools with 65.28 million pupils 3.5 million teachers; 31 407 senior secondary schools with 36.49 million pupils, and 2 236 higher education institutions with 20 million students and 944 500 academic staff (Yang 2008). In 2009-2010, China surpassed the USA as the country with the largest higher education system, measured in student numbers (Altbach 2010).

In the Near East and Middle East, the establishment of extensive formal education systems gained momentum when Mustafa Kemal launched a radical policy of modernisation in Turkey in 1923 (which entailed an entire social

restructuring) and regarded education as one of the instruments to attain this. Nevertheless, the struggle to eradicate illiteracy took a long time. In the Middle-Eastern countries, the illiteracy figures were as high as 80-95 percent in the 1940s. During the twentieth century, one after the other of the countries instituted systems of wide-ranging primary education. By the mid-1990s, 83.9 percent of boys and 71.6 percent of girls in the age group 6 to 11 years were enrolled at schools in the Middle East. For the 12 to 17-year age group, the percentages were 59.2 percent and 47.1 percent, respectively (Mazawi 2002).

Latin America also played its part in the development of education in the Global South since the 1960s. Only 40 percent of the adult population in Latin America were literate in 1960, while the gross secondary and gross education enrolment levels were 17 percent and 4 percent, respectively (De Gamara 1962). A powerful education development project got underway after 1960. In less than a decade, from 1960 to 1968, public spending on education in Latin America doubled (Simmons 1980). Between 1960 and 1980, primary school enrolments in Latin America increased by 134 percent, while secondary school enrolments increased even more, by the staggering figure of 831 percent (Coombs 1985). During the second half of the twentieth century, the massification of primary as well as secondary education on the South American continent proceeded swiftly. However, the massification of secondary school education has not been uniform throughout Latin America. Brazil, for example, has the highest secondary school enrolment of 106 percent, with only 51 percent in Guatemala (USAID 2008). By the end of the twentieth century, the adult illiteracy rate in Latin America had dropped to 10 percent (Cárceles 1990), while the secondary school enrolment ratios have reached the 50 percent level in 1985 (UNESCO 1992).

However, the expansion of education in Asia and Latin America – impressive as it might appear, is dwarfed by the expansion of education in Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in particular. In the midst of the African pessimism, a view that is widely spread (at least, until recently), it is not always appreciated that during the latter half of the previous century, Africa was the scene of the biggest education expansion project in world history (Wolhuter and Van Niekerk 2010). In 1960, on the eve before independence, gross

primary, secondary and higher education enrolment ratios in Africa were but 44 percent, 5 percent and 1 percent respectively, while the adult literacy rate was only 9 percent (Wolhuter and Van Niekerk 2010). Gross primary enrolment levels in SSA increased from 34 percent in 1960 to 53 percent in 1970, 80 percent in 1980, and 82 percent in 2000 (Wolhuter and Van Niekerk 2010). In the SSA region, primary school enrolments increased from 19 million in 1960 to 133 million in 2010, while secondary school enrolments increased from 1.8 million to 43.6 million over the same period (Wolhuter 2012). Despite the impressive growth in aggregate enrolments, it should be borne in mind that enrolment ratios vary sharply from country to country. Only a tiny minority of countries, such as Botswana, Cape Verde and South Africa, have attained gross secondary school enrolment ratios of 80 percent or more; in other countries, including Burundi, Burkina Faso and Rwanda figures still stand under 20 percent (UNESCO 2006, as cited in USAID 2008). In the decade 2000 to 2010, higher education enrolments in SSA more than doubled from 2.5 million to 5.2 million (Wolhuter 2012). Ramphal (2009: 670), former secretary-general for the Commonwealth, declared the growth of education in Africa as follows:

In poor countries and among the most underprivileged the perception that education was the path to improvement was long-standing. It was almost intuitive among the poorest. At the level of government, particularly in the post-independent era, education was investment, not merely consumption; education was for entrepreneurship and innovation, research and development; education and skills formation was readily understood and pursued as a national priority. Whatever the failings of governance, politicians generally did not fall short in their understanding of the vital importance of education to their evolving societies.

The preceding exposition focused on the global education history, based on a literature survey. Next, attention will be paid to the second objective of this paper, namely the outcomes and consequences of the expansion of education.

The Outcomes and Consequences of the Expansion of Education

While an impressive growth of enrolment figures in education took place globally during the

second half of the twentieth century, by the end of that century, two major questions have started to emerge around the project regarding the expansion of education. The first was about the *quality* of (at least, major segments of) the project pertaining to the international expansion of education. Quality of education is a very complex concept, the explication of which falls outside the scope of this paper (cf. Ntshoe et al. 2010; Spaul and Taylor 2015). For the purposes of this paper, however, the operational definition will be used, namely that education quality is measured by generally accepted uniform international tests (such as the IEA and PISA tests). Since the start of the international project on the expansion of education in the 1950s, concerns have been raised about the quality of the exercise, for instance, in publications such as *Educational Wastelands: The retreat from learning in our public schools* by Arthur Bestor (1953). These concerns and criticism of the quality of education at public schools continued in, for example, the *Black Papers* in England in the 1970s (see Cox and Dyson 1970) and publications like *The Closing of the American Mind* by Alan Bloom (1987), Bloom discusses the intellectual deterioration at American universities. However, it was the report, *A Nation at Risk* (USA 1984), which probably contributed more than any other publication to foreground the theme of education standards or education quality in the public debate, at least in the USA. In 1981, the American Minister of Education, T.H. Bell, appointed a commission to investigate the quality of education in the USA. This report raised condemning concerns about the quality of education in the USA. Within the context of the Cold War, which was at its most intense at that time, the Commission stated that the poor quality of education in the USA was the best possible weapon (better than all the other conventional arms in the Cold War arsenal) at the hands of an enemy to conquer the USA; thus, the title of the Commission's report – a nation put at risk by its education system. The conclusion of the commission reads as follows:

Our nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged pre-eminence in commerce, industry, science and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world ... one of the causes ... the educational foundation of our society is presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that

threatens our very future as a nation and as a people (USA 1984).

The debate about the quality of education once again strongly emerged with the institution of international test series about education quality and equality. Although the IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) had already been conducting international test series since 1959 (amongst others TIMSS – Trends in Mathematics and Science Studies), this organisation and their test series fall more within the domain of (Educational) science. It is relatively removed from the public domain. The tests also predominantly measure learning outcomes/achievements. The OECD's (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) PISA programme (programme for International Student Assessment) has placed international test series at the centre of national education politics and competition between countries (cf. Lawn 2013; Meyer and Benavot 2013; Valverde 2014). In developing countries, the debate revolved around the quality of education, especially regarding the so-called "education quality-quantity trade-off". Murtin and Viarengo (2013: 2) regard South Africa as a good example of the "quality-quantity trade-off". The primary and secondary entry levels, as well as years of compulsory education in South Africa compare well with those of Western Europe; nevertheless, the country compares poorly to Western Europe if the outcomes of uniform international tests are compared (Murtin and Viarengo 2013). In a SSA context, Fredriksen and Fossberg (2014: 35) also point to "the very low levels of learning outcomes ... [and] the fact that the last decade's remarkable enrolment growth was not matched by comparable progress in learning outcomes". However, Taylor and Spaul (2013: 2) argue that the massification of education did deliver economic, social and individual advantages for Eastern and Southern Africa, despite the region's poor achievements in TIMSS, PISA and SACMEQ (Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality). These authors therefore reject the argument that "education which fails to produce learning is of limited value".

However, the global project for the expansion of education was not only criticised regarding quality. During the second half of the twentieth century, the clamour for *equality* or *equal education opportunities* emerged in the midst

of a multitude of factors (cf. Wolhuter 1993; Chiang 2014), amongst others, the emerging doctrine of human rights². Equal education opportunities is likewise a concept that could be defined differently, and the clarification of this variety does not form part of this paper (cf. Jacob and Holsinger 2008; Wolhuter 2014). However, during the second half of the twentieth century it was the motivation of a comprehensive series of attempts at education reform (amongst others, the comprehensive reforms in schools in Western Europe (cf. Wolhuter 1993). In recent years, the clamour for equal educational opportunities is visible in legislation such as the *No Child Left Behind Act* in the USA (USA Department of Education 2001) and the popular website, *If the world were a village of a 100 People* (Familycare.org n.d.) made an appeal on people's consciences. The book by Linda Darling-Hammond (2010), *The Flat Word and Education: How America's commitment to equity will determine our future*, in turn, formulates the exigency for equal education opportunities from the advent of a level world (Thomas Friedman's well-known term) of competition in a globalising world.

In spite of the expansion of education globally, statistics show that 61 million children of primary school-going age were not yet enrolled at schools in 2012, and that 12 percent did not complete their primary school education (Murtin and Viarengo 2013: 2). If the millennium objective of universal primary school education is to be attained, even after the 2015 target date (World Bank 2013), not only the current shortage in spaces allocated for schools, but also the projected bigger quest for education will have to be addressed (see also Langsten 2014: 653-654). The effect of population growth, particularly in SSA, will have a significant bearing on future participation rates in education. To make provision for the population explosion ("Youthquake") in SSA implies the following: the 5 to 14-year population in SSA was 214 million in 2010, and is projected to increase by 45 percent by 2030. Just to maintain the 2010 enrolment ratio of 77 percent mean that primary school enrolments will have to increase by another 74 million. While it is projected that the 0 to 15 years age group in SSA will increase by 40 percent between 2010 and 2030, a decline of 3 percent is expected in South Asia, 10 percent in Latin America and 21 percent in East Asia (Frederiksen and

Fossberg 2014). The preceding suggestion that educational planners do not always fully appreciate the implications of compulsory education, is graphically illustrated in the case of China. The implementation of nine years' compulsory education in China led to a serious shortage in schools and teachers for learners in the junior high, but in particular in the senior high school phase. In 2003, only 8 million of the 16 million learners who had completed the compulsory school phase gained access to a senior high school (Lin and Zhang 2006).

The extension of the compulsory number of years of education also led to inequalities in education opportunities between countries in Africa (USAID 2008), Asia (Chu 2000), Latin America (USAID 2008) and even Europe (Meschi and Scervini 2012). The average number of years that people spend in Eastern European and Mediterranean countries (13 years) at educational institutions compares poorly, for example, with the rest of Europe (15 years) (Meschi and Scervini 2012). The implementation of, or extension of compulsory education will inevitably lead to an increased demand for education in the subsequent education phase(s), whether secondary, senior secondary or higher education. Governments' inability to provide inadequate, accessible and affordable/free education for the ensuing phase(s), is not only a problem in countries such as China (Lin and Zhang 2006), Kenya and Uganda (USAID 2008), but also in the United Kingdom (Woodin et al. 2013). Apart from economic limitations, some countries simply do not have the funds to expand access to education (Frederiksen 2010; Frederiksen and Fossberg 2014). A lack of identified teachers is another important factor that has a negative influence on the further expansion of education. Kambouchner (2011: 34) writes that "massification [of schooling] was accompanied, almost everywhere, by a depreciation of the work of teachers". The USAID (2008) identifies the following problems pertaining to the recruitment and retention of sufficient teachers: There is a lack of young people interested in pursuing a career in education; teachers leave the profession after only a few years because of poor salaries and poor working conditions; and teachers are not prepared to go and work in remote, rural areas. Furthermore, there is a shortage of teachers in specialised disciplines such as mathematics and science. The HIV/Aids pan-

demic further aggravated the problem in Africa (USAID 2008).

The pursuit of universal (primary) education is not only thwarted by population growth, but also by historical, cultural and religious factors:

Gender: Despite the expansion of education globally and agitation against gender discrimination in education, gender inequalities still prevail in Africa, South Asia and the Middle East in particular (Mazawi 2002; Hannum and Buchmann 2003; Unterhalter 2013; USAID 2008; Langsten 2014: 656). The paper by Garnier and Schafer (2006) has found that, although a larger percentage of boys than girls have access to education, differences in 2000 were significantly smaller than the 1970 percentages (Garnier and Schafer 2006). Nevertheless, 53 percent of out-of-school children in SSA are girls (Murtin and Viarengo 2013). The differences can amongst others be ascribed to cultural differences in patriarchal societies and pregnancies: for example, as many as 18 percent of girls in SSA left school because of pregnancy in 2004 – the majority of these girls to not return to school after the birth of their baby (Unterhalter 2013).

Religious convictions: This also have an influence on participation in education (for example, see Tsehaye 2014), as would transpire from the brief reviews of the influence of Islam on school enrolment numbers in Africa: Modern education in Africa was initially introduced by Christian missionaries. Muslim parents were therefore hesitant to enrol their children at these schools. The enrolment ratio for Muslim children increased from 22 percent in 1970 to 52 percent in 2000 (Garnier and Schafer 2006). On the other hand, the percentage of non-Muslim learners increased from 53 percent to 72 percent during the period 1970 to 2000 in the 28 African countries forming part of Garnier and Schafer's (2006) investigation.

Colonial Past: From research by Garnier and Schafer (2006), it transpires that the approach to education by former colonial powers also led to the differentiated expansion of education. Education, for instance, initially developed faster in the erstwhile British colonies than in the French colonies. However, it also shrank faster after the global economic collapse in the 1980s (Garnier and Schafer 2006). Amongst others, the differences could be ascribed to a more conservative policy of expansion in the Francophone countries.

Ethnicity: Ethnic inequalities led to not all ethnic groups having access to improved education opportunities in their respective countries (see Benito et al. 2014): ethnic minority groups in Nepal, Israel and China still lag in educational participation rates compared to majority groupings, despite the expansion of education opportunities in these countries (Hannum and Buchmann 2003).

Locality: In Africa, China and the Middle East, the locality of schools (rural/urban) not only exerted a major influence on the availability, but also on the quality of education (Mazawi 2002; Lin and Zhang 2006). The unequal education provision in China is, amongst others, the result of the scarcity of senior high schools in rural areas, the underfunding of rural schools, and the fact that teachers at rural schools' salaries are considerably less than what the salaries of their colleagues are at schools in the cities (Lin and Zhang 2006).

Ramphal (2009) points out that, despite efforts worldwide to address inequalities in education (1) many children still underperform and are illiterate after attending school for five to six years; (2) statistics conceal infrequent school attendance both by teachers and children; (3) gifted children seldom enter the teaching profession; (4) the teaching profession are characterised by a low morale; and (5) there are large inequalities between top and poor school schools. Therefore, there is little evidence of equal education opportunities. In addition, there is worldwide criticism about the so-called "loss of efficiency or effectiveness of teaching" (Kambouchner 2011: 34). In countries where education inequality is still acute, large numbers of children still do not have access to education. According to Frederiksen and Fossberg (2014), questions could be asked about the quality of education. Policy makers and educationists will have to seek expertise and financial assistance locally and internationally in order to address the ever-increasing demand for education, as well as the unequal access to quality education.

Since the middle of the twentieth century, the world has witnessed an education expansion revolution. This revolution commenced with an expansion wave in the West, followed by a stronger expansion drive in the East, which in turn was followed by an even more forceful expansion in the South. However, the quality of education as well as equality in education,

threaten to undo much of the gains made by the expansion. Inequality exist along the lines of gender, ethnic and religious divisions, and the rural-urban divide, with minorities and the less powerful in society falling victim of inequality in education supply.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was dual, namely to reconstruct the defining moments in the global history of developments in education and to investigate the outcomes and consequences of educational developments. Guided by literature, the impressive developments and innovations in education in the West, the East and the Global South, especially since the 1960s, were reconstructed. During the second half of the twentieth century questions began to arise about the quality of education and whether the expansion was in line with the principle of equality or not. The comparative method is used in politicians' and researchers' evaluation of the quality of education in the midst of rapid growth. While the conclusion, based on the USSR's space achievements, was reached in the 1980, that the USA education system has failed, the same inference could currently be made regarding SSA countries. SSA countries' achievements in standardised, uniform tests compare poorly with those of the rest of the world. The research has found that, despite global endeavours to eliminate disparities in education, there are still no equal opportunities pertaining to quality and accessibility. The inequalities, amongst others, could be ascribed to unequal accessibility, availability and affordability of education, particularly in the senior secondary school phase. A lack of enough teachers also has had a negative influence on the expansion of education. The pursuit of universal primary education is also hampered by governments' inability to provide in the ever-growing demand for education because of rapid population growth and a lack of funding. The research also points at the inhibitory influence of religion, culture, history and demographics on the provision of education to women, ethnic and religious minority groups, citizens of former French colonies and rural communities. Local and international collaboration is a prerequisite for the establishment of equal access to high-quality education for all children globally.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Two recommendations can be offered. Firstly, global drives and initiatives, such as the Millennium Development Goals or the Education For All project, as well as foreign aid schemes, noble as these are, should not stop with quantitative targets, but should encompass dimensions of education quality and education equality as well.

Secondly, Comparative Education studies should be done, and be financially supported by the foreign aid donors and the sponsors of initiatives such as Education for All. Such Comparative Education studies should search for models and best practices in attaining quality and equality in education, and the possibilities of learning from such models and best practices, for the improvement of quality and equality in education where in places where such quality and equality are clearly lacking.

NOTES

- ¹ The Opium Wars and Boxer Rebellions of the nineteenth century, followed by the 1907 political revolution and then the civil war, and finally the socio-political convulsions of the Mao Zedong era.
- ² See, for example, Section 26 of UNESCO's 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948).

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