



THE WEEKEND READER

"Your Weekly Read on Debt, Development & Socio-Economic Justice"

STATE OF EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE

As in the words of George Washington Carver, ***“Education is the key that unlocks the golden door to freedom.”*** These words speak to the importance of education as a means of uplifting the poor and changing their socio-economic standing. Being a socio economic justice movement that values education, we are concerned by the degradation of such an indicator. While Zimbabwe has a literacy rate of 90%, there’s a serious gap in provision of quality, accessible education for the poor majority. Furthermore, Zimbabwe continues to lose valuable human capital through the brain drain towards the West leaving our development potential in a grave position. There is need for government to then move from rhetoric to provide meaningful education opportunities and key employment opportunities to consolidate that value and add to our development trajectory.

The Problem

The education sector has not been spared by the economic crunch that Zimbabwe has been facing for the last few decades. The seriousness of the matter is seen in the fact that government has declared a gap of over 3 000 schools.² This is also with the admission that the existent schools are not up to standard especially in rural areas. As seen below in the Newsday article of the 25th January 2023, government has admitted failure to fund education.

Govt sends SOS on education

Local News By Miriam Mangwaya | 11h ago | 3 Min read



Primary and Secondary Education minister Evelyn Ndllovu

GOVERNMENT has admitted failure to fund education, exposing its earlier free education pledge as a fallacy.

1. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202203020101.html>

2. <https://www.newsday.co.zw/local-news/article/200006611/govt-sends-sos-on-education>

This comes after popularized media reports that government had promised free education for all to be in effect.³ Progressive organizations and individuals are then concerned that government is using propaganda or populist speech to make promises that can't be delivered (unfortunately). The victim at the end of this fiasco is always children who are left unable to benefit and gain the 'key that unlocks the golden door.'

Speaking to the present context, the Covid-19 pandemic significantly reversed gains which we had garnered over the years. While learners from households that were able to facilitate online learning were in a better position, those from poor backgrounds, especially in rural areas lost two to three years of meaningful education. As a result, there is immediate need for government to invest in pulling the weight for those who can't. Facilities like Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) were supposed to help the most vulnerable in our society but the lack of government capacity means the poor are on their own.

In the same light, Zimbabwe is already facing the challenge of brain drain through which we are losing value as a country as the educated are leaving for greener pastures in the West and the region. The majority of departures were in the health sector but recently, there have been new calls for teachers and other educators. This creates a gap as we are already facing a deficit of schools and educators. Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union Zimbabwe President, Obert Masaraure, speaking on the poor remuneration teachers receive states,

"Teachers from Zimbabwe are on high demand internationally and we are set to witness a massive brain drain. Morale will remain low among the few who remain, and parents will once again be forced to pay teacher incentives. The poor will further face discrimination and inadequate access to education."⁴

Recommendations

Education is not only a key to individual development but a tool for national development. A strong human capital force will ensure growth in all economic sectors as we have the requisite expertise to solve the social, political and economic problems that we face. Beyond, it is a social justice issue protected by our Constitution as Section 27 provides that the state must take all practical measures to provide free and compulsory basic education for children and higher and tertiary education. It is not an ask nor a demand, it is a right! We therefore recommend that government take the following steps;

- Increase public spending/ budgeting on education, especially focusing on not only constructing schools but ensuring the requisite quality of facilities.
- Continue investment in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) to ensure graduates remain relevant in the dominant fields of the day.
- Remunerate teachers and educators meaningfully to avoid flight of expertise to the West.
- Pursue Public-Private Partnerships in funding of education ventures. The corporate world can pitch in to fund the gaps.
- Desist from propaganda that promises free education for all while not focusing on the low-hanging fruits and initial steps necessary.

3. <https://www.newsday.co.zw/local-news/article/200006611/govt-sends-sos-on-education>

4. <https://www.newsday.co.zw/local-news/article/200005589/teachers-hit-back-at-mthuli-over-salaries>