

PREFACE

I have worked in the field of education and development for nearly 40 years and my key area of geographical interest has always been sub-Saharan Africa. As a result I have visited, done research in (and sometimes lived in) some 20 sub-Saharan African countries. I have therefore been aware for some time that there is a need for a single, readable overview book that analyses education, and more specifically schooling, in Africa in a thematic and comprehensive way to include all major aspects of educational debate. This book thus aims to provide a broad introduction to formal education in sub-Saharan Africa.

When I first became interested in education in Africa in 1977 it would be fair to say that published material was not thick on the ground. Thanks to the growth of higher education and research in Africa, and increased interest and funding outside Africa, this situation has changed drastically. There is now an abundance of published material on education in Africa covering a huge variety of topics so any selection of topics for this book has, to a certain extent, to be subjective. The book therefore considers a series of topics that seem, to the author at least, to be of particular importance and relevance to those interested in education in Africa. The approach of the book is to focus on the key educational ideas, processes, structures and issues of education in Africa with an emphasis on examining them in the light of published, research-based *evidence*. There are common patterns in educational provision across

sub-Saharan Africa and this book identifies them but also discusses differences between and within countries.

The book begins with the argument that in any education system it is important to understand what the key goals, intentions and policies are and to consider how they are made and where they come from. It is only against these that one can make judgements and evaluate educational practice. The book therefore starts by considering possible goals for education and the policies that are formulated as a result. It then goes on to examine the realities of education in Africa—the evidence on how it is actually practiced in schools and teacher education because, as has been argued,

‘The decade and a half since 1990 has at one level seen the growing homogenisation of educational discourse in sub-Saharan Africa. At another there also appears to be continued divergence from the discourse at the level of practice, although practice itself tends to show many convergencies’ (Chisholm and Leyendecker 2008: 196).

The chapters on educational practice start with what might be considered to be the key ‘inputs’ into the formal education system i.e. the basic elements required for an education system to exist and to start functioning—access by pupils to education, the teaching profession, teacher preparation and education and physical and financial resources. The book then turns to the content and processes of education—what actually goes on in schools and classrooms in terms of curriculum and assessment, teaching methods, language of instruction and school organisation and management. The next two chapters examine specific but important issues for education in Africa—violence in education and special educational needs and inclusion. Chapter 11 examines what might be considered the nub of the issue—what we know about the results of education in Africa, the outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills and values and impact upon society, including both positive and negative impacts. This discussion also provides further insight into the general quality of education in Africa. The penultimate chapter returns to the issue of contextuality—while the book examines patterns of schooling across Africa, there can be significant differences between national contexts in terms of goals and priorities. The chapter therefore discusses three different priorities for schooling in three different national contexts: democracy in Namibia, national unity in Nigeria and self-reliance in Tanzania. The final chapter of the book brings together earlier discussions by summarising the patterns of schooling across sub-Saharan Africa identified in the

body of the book. While not having separate chapters of their own, gender, inequality, religion and the need for greater social justice are also important and explicit themes cutting across the content of many of the existing chapters.

As the book will argue, there have been both general socio-economic and political patterns affecting education in Africa as well as specific local, contextual factors. Some general, though not necessarily universal, patterns are existing pre-colonial/informal forms of education rooted in African culture, colonialism, independence, the influence of world religions such as Christianity and Islam, authoritarian government and transitions to democracy and the economic issues of World Bank initiated structural adjustment programmes involving cuts to public expenditure on education. In addition it is important to recognise that all sub-Saharan African countries are seen as ‘developing’ countries. While a controversial term (Harber 2014: Chap. 1), it is still one that is widely used. The UNDP’s annual Human Development Index ranks all countries in the world by what they regard as certain key indicators of development namely wealth, life expectancy and access to education. In the 2015 Human Development Index all sub-Saharan African countries were in the medium and low human development category with Botswana the highest at 106 out of 185 with 19 of the bottom twenty being in sub-Saharan Africa. (UNDP 2015).

As further discussed in this book, this ‘developing country’ context has implications for education in Africa in terms of access, quality and outcomes. For example, in 2015 UNESCO ranked 113 countries that had sufficient data in what they called the ‘Education For All Development Index’. The index was a composite of four data components—proportion of enrolment in primary education of the relevant school age population, the rate of adult literacy, the level of gender equality in terms access to primary and secondary education and adult literacy and the quality of education as measured by the proportion of pupils who survived school until grade 5. Despite considerable achievements in terms of these factors in some African countries over the last 15 years, the highest ranked country on mainland sub-Saharan Africa was Ghana at 89. Of the bottom 25 countries, 17 were in mainland sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO 2015: 233).

While all chapters of this book are concerned in some way with the relationships between education and the wider society, the present book is primarily concerned with discussing and analysing the ways in which

formal education is actually practiced in Africa in the light of the goals and policies that have been set for it. Theoretical explanations of the relationships between education and the ways in which societies do or don't develop economically, socially and politically (i.e. the how and why of education and development) are discussed in Chaps. 1 and 11 of this book in relation the goals and outcomes of education.

This book, then, focusses specifically on post-colonial, formal education at three broad levels—primary (including pre-primary), secondary and teacher education—while acknowledging the importance of other forms and levels of education in Africa,. Higher education tends to have its own issues and literature and would have expanded the length and scope of the book to too great an extent. Other important forms and levels of education in Africa that influence contemporary formal education include pre-colonial, traditional (informal) education, colonial education and Islamic education. Traditional, informal education where the child learns skills and culture first hand by experience in the family and community (e.g. Omolewa 2007; Blakemore and Cooksey 1980: Chap. 1) continues both before and outside school. The child is not a 'tabula rasa' and brings with him or her to school from home certain knowledge, assumptions and beliefs about how the world operates that may fit with what is learned in school, clash with what is learned in school or be changed by what is learned in school. Islamic education preceded colonial education in a number of countries and many Moslem pupils may still now attend an Islamic school. However these can vary considerably from a school like a madrasa that may focus exclusively on Islamic teaching, to a school which may have a strong Islamic ethos but which has the full range of non-Islamic subjects as well. Moreover, some pupils may attend a formal school during the day and attend an Islamic school in the afternoon or at the weekend (Bray, Clarke and Stephens 1986: Chap. 5; Tsehaye 2014: 165–166, 170–171; Grant-Lewis 2014: 27–29).

Also, while the more racist and culturally controlling elements of colonial education may have disappeared (e.g. Altbach and Kelly 1978; Blakemore and Cooksey 1980: Chap. 2; Whitehead 2005; Bray et al. 1986: 7–11; Mugomba and Nyaggah 1980; Moumouni 1968) colonial education nevertheless continues to influence post-colonial education. This is because the basic ways in which a school operates including, for example, school management and organisation, teacher-pupil relationships, discipline and assessment were bequeathed by the colonial model and have not changed significantly since. Moreover, the introduction of

formal school by Christian missionaries in many countries in Africa has meant that schooling often remains strongly influenced by Christianity in terms of provision, content and ethos (Oudraogo 2010; Cogneau and Moradi 2014). Where relevant, reference will be made to traditional, Islamic and colonial forms of education but this is essentially a book on modern, formal schooling in Africa.

The book is based on a number of sources. First, a critical reading of a wide range of secondary sources in the form of books and articles on education in Africa in general and in specific countries accessed via the University of Birmingham library's electronic database. Second, a further, detailed, alphabetical internet search of sources on education in Africa country by country via Google and Google Scholar which revealed both further academic articles but also a wide range of other governmental and non-governmental documents on education in individual countries. I have tried to present as balanced a picture of education in Africa as I can but there is no doubt that my own research interests, personal knowledge and experience has also played a role in the themes selected for analysis and the arguments made. I hope that nonetheless the reader finds the content of the book both interesting and useful.

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<http://www.springer.com/978-3-319-57381-6>

Schooling in Sub-Saharan Africa

Policy, Practice and Patterns

Harber, C.

2017, XVI, 283 p., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-57381-6