The problem of education and development in sub-Saharan Africa

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Lecture Outline

- Why the problem of education and development in sub-Saharan Africa?
- The economic context of sub-Saharan Africa
- Is human capital theory convincing, even if suspect?
- A brief history of education and economic growth research
- Economic trends in sub-Saharan Africa
- TVET aspect of the education and development problem
- Basic education aspect of the education and development problem
- Higher education aspect of the education and development problem
- Conclusion
Why the problem of education and development in sub-Saharan Africa?

- **Does Education Matter?** Wolf 2002 ‘an unquestioning faith in the economic benefits of education has brought with it huge amounts of wasteful government spending, attached to misguided and even pernicious policies. Just because something is [economically] valuable, it does not follow that yet more of it is by definition a good idea’.

- **Education and Development: Measuring the social benefits:** McMahon 2002 ‘true economic development does not occur unless this pure economic growth is accompanied by other dimensions important to quality of life…to which education simultaneously contributes’.

- To a government minister in sub-Saharan Africa listening to both of these expert views, what should be his or her appropriate policy direction with regard to education spending?
Human capital theory: An illustration
(McMahon and Oketch, 2010)
### Evolution of Meaning and Measurement of Development

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Concept of Development</th>
<th>Measure of Development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>GDP per capita growth</td>
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<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>Basic needs (inc. economics)</td>
<td>GDP per capita growth + basic goods</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>GDP per capita</td>
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<td>1990s</td>
<td>Human development (inc.economics)</td>
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<td>2000s</td>
<td>Multi-dimension “freedoms” “Capabilities”</td>
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<td>Post 2015</td>
<td>Shared Prosperity, eliminate deprivation, multidimensional development- basic rights</td>
<td>Multiple Development Index, Sustainable Development Goals</td>
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Scenario 1: Survival (%) of a Cohort of Students in Primary and Secondary Education in SSA
The problem

• Need for better evidence and clarity on who are the marginalised children, youth, young adults and adults;
• Too few of them (as in scenario 1) in sub-Saharan countries make the transition from primary to post-primary learning;
• They have very limited life-chances (education systems driven purely by meritocracy and high stakes exams are bad for inclusion);
• Yet, little is known about how to address improvements in learning for the masses;
• Hence there is neither coherent perspective nor adequate and consistent intervention. This is the beginning of the problem of education and development in sub-Saharan Africa, which my research has focused on across three levels of education: basic education, TVET and higher education under the auspices of human capital theory.
Though usually positive, per capita growth has been slowish

Source: own calculations, WDI
Great differences in economic development

Source: WDI
Persistently youthful populations…

**15-24 YEARS OLDS TO WORKING AGE POPULATION**

SE Asia, 2015

Source: own calculations, UN Population Estimates
...that have never been better educated...

**PROJECTED CHANGE IN SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN POP15+, 2000-2015**

Source: own calculations, Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital
Employment in agriculture (in % of LF)

Source: own calculations, WDI
Transition to Work: Vulnerable Employment or Joblessness?

Source: own calculations, ILO School-to-Work Transition Surveys
Employment aspirations at ages 15-19

Source: own calculations, ILO School-to-Work Transition Surveys
Basic Education: Tremendous progress in enrolment
Enrolment patterns under FPE in Kenya between poor slum residing households vs non-poor non-slum residing households (Oketch et al. 2010)
Excess Demand

• Drives poorer parents to low quality private schools

Differentiated Demand

• Drives non-slum parents to choose private schooling for their children over free public schools

Oketch, Mutisya, Ngware, Ezeh, 2010
Disparity in achievement in reading attainment at primary level between the rich and the poor in sub-Saharan Africa
Economics of Education Review
Determinants of human capital formation and economic growth of African countries
Oketch, 2006

Review of Research in Education
Policies on Free Primary and Secondary Education in East Africa: Retrospect and Prospect
Oketch and Rolleston, 2007

International Journal of Educational Development
Why are there proportionately more poor pupils enrolled in non-state schools in urban Kenya in spite of FPE policy?
Oketch et al. 2010
International Journal of Educational Development
To vocationalise or not to vocationalise? Perspectives on current trends and issues in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Africa
Oketch, 2007

Comparative Education Review
The Role of Classroom Resources and National Educational Context in Student Learning Gains: Comparing Botswana, Kenya, and South Africa
Carnoy, Ngware and Oketch, 2015

Higher Education
Financing higher education in sub-Saharan Africa: some reflections and implications for sustainable development
Oketch, 2016
Questions?

• If priority needs to be given to supporting this transition from primary to post-primary learning for the masses, what kinds of opportunities can build relevant life and labour skills and support civic participation for the majority marginalised at BoP in learning in SSA?

• What types of measurement tools can or should be used (or not used) in order to determine effective learning and effective policies for supporting access and learning for majority?

• How are these questions addressed (or not) by human capital theory?
Some of the issues

- At post primary level what do these marginalised youth, young adults and adults know and able to do (skills?)?
- How can their skills be measured?
Conclusion

• Human capital theory has not been sufficiently experienced in sub-Saharan Africa for us to be able to robustly analyse its contribution to economic development in the region. Therefore, it remains tacit to governments and parents.

• For basic education, weak implementation means inequalities in access and weak learning. This generates negative feedback effects from education provision, undermining the basis for human capital theory.

• Economic indicators will need to be analysed along with education indicators for the true meaning of human capital theory to be discerned. The examples of Ethiopia and Nigeria illustrate this.

• Implementation of reforms will require that economists and educators work together so that evidence from econometrics and pedagogies can be pulled together.

• In this endeavour, education research should be given the same weight in shaping policies as is currently enjoyed by economists and their methodologies.