



## **QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION**

Regional Seminar - Nairobi, 23 - 27 July 2007

### **Poverty Alleviation, HIV and AIDS Education and Inclusive Education: Priority Issues for Quality Education for All in Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa**

Organization: IBE-UNESCO, Kenyan Ministry of Education and Kenyan Institute for Education (KIE)

#### **Curriculum and poverty alleviation: insufficiently explored links up to present**

The relationships between education and poverty are fairly well known thanks to the numerous studies carried out over recent decades, particularly by international organizations such as the World Bank, UNESCO and UNDP. In contrast, the specific links between the curriculum as such and poverty alleviation have been less explored, in spite of a (tacit) agreement between education specialists, politicians and sociologists about the influence that the curriculum can have on both improving the living conditions of communities and on individual and social development.

The result is that there is, at present, little information on the possible effects that improving learning processes and teaching methods can have on reducing poverty, whereas data on the link between poverty reduction and the structure of education systems, or on access and retention mechanisms is plentiful.

In terms of educational policies, it is of note that poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSP), prepared by the governments of the nine participating countries mainly focus on the issue of access and quality, in terms of infrastructure and the management of education systems. The lack of emphasis on the need to change teaching and learning strategies at the same time is evident. Nevertheless, such strategies, which go beyond the simple idea of schooling for all children, seem necessary to ensure that all children remain in school, including the poorest, and that their achievement improves.

As regards the guidelines for Education For All on the contents of education, teaching and learning strategies and school life they are still very general and—given the global nature of commitments—non-contextualized and insufficient to build capacity in education and play a role in poverty alleviation by means of basic education curricula.

Curricular policies, designed to provide the necessary milestones to guide educational actors as to the skills to train, the contents to transmit in school, the desirable teaching methods and the organization of school life within a political unit (country, province, district or town, according

to the political organization of each case) frequently suggest inadequate guidelines and are still insufficiently developed on two tightly linked levels:

- (a) the curriculum development process (prescribed curriculum);
- (b) the curriculum implementation process by means of textbooks, teacher training and all other means of educational support (implemented curriculum).

### **Conceptualizing the links between curriculum and poverty alleviation**

It is true that it is not easy to analyse the links between the curriculum as such and poverty alleviation due to the different facets of a curriculum that co-exist within a given education system. In addition to the written, official and prescribed curriculum, there exists an applied curriculum, which is the result of interactions in the classroom, as well as an effective curriculum that reflects students' achievements. It is often said that there is, in addition, a hidden curriculum, defined as the sum of values, beliefs, attitudes and knowledge that students and educators share outside, and sometimes in contradiction with the content selected and organized by the official curriculum. In these conditions, what curriculum should be analysed?

In the context it is necessary to analyze the official written, basic education curriculum that, in most participating countries, is in the form of next year next year teaching programmes and/or curricular policy documents—in particular, curricular frameworks for primary and secondary education.

It is also clear that the curriculum cannot function by itself, isolated from the other components and dimensions of an education system, such as teacher training, the availability of teaching materials, assessment of students' achievements, or school and class management. The analysis of these dimensions that evidently impact on the implementation of the curriculum is therefore crucial.

It is equally appropriate to infer that other factors outside the curriculum, such as the family and social context or the economic and political situation of a country, with all their conceivable consequences on the allocation of resources for education, play a part and will affect the necessary support for a curriculum to be effectively implemented. The IBE is aware that such external factors should also be considered when developing curriculum change strategies.

To analyse the complex relation between curriculum and poverty, the relevance of the learning proposed by the curriculum and its effect on poverty alleviation, analysis is required of the equally complex conditions, dimensions and causes of such poverty, including the very concrete situations with which the members of a community are confronted and that may vary widely from one place to another, between countries or within the same country. The literature on poverty and its causes broadly separates the social, political and economic causes ('structural factors') from the psychological and cultural causes ('personal factors').

Both the objective and subjective definitions of poverty, interpreted as situations of poverty at the personal, community and societal level should also be explored. It is then needed to look at the solutions that the curriculum, prescribed and implemented, could bring in terms of values, attitudes, skills and knowledge, teaching and learning methodologies, etc. to assist learners to learn what they need to lead fulfilling lives, to ensure decent living conditions for their family within their community and to participate actively in the sustainable development of their society.

Once all this said, it is need to develop strategies to change the education that considers the different levels and dimensions mentioned above and include main stakeholders involved at each level in a continuous process of policy dialogue.

**Questions to be explored during the seminar**

- What is the situation in your country? Who are most affected groups of learners, what are the consequences on their learning opportunities abilities?
- How does the curriculum (prescribed an implemented respond to these issues at the moment?
- How can our basic education curriculum contribute to EFA goals and poverty alleviation?
- What should be changed in the prescribed curriculum and in its implementation so that children and youth affected by poverty would have a better chance to learn and participate into education?