

## **Africa-Asia University Dialogue for Basic Education Development**

### **Editorial**

In *Educate or Perish* Ki-Zerbo (1990) reiterated an old argument that he held dear and which constituted almost a guiding thread in his ideas that he expressed consistently in his written works and oral presentations: education is a comprehensive social system that cannot be compartmentalized. That is to say that education, specifically in planning it with the purpose of organizing it as an effective tool to tackle Africa's challenges and to promote social progress in the continent, has to be conceptualized and practically organized as a holistic system that should incorporate all the levels in a functional way toward the same goal of societal development. In his call for providing education as a universal and unavoidable requisite for survival and progress, he also articulated the importance of localizing the organization of human-centered knowledge geared toward the needs of the community.

Reflecting on the net outcome of Africa's international cooperation, especially the international component of its contemporary educational system, he stated the following about all sectors with a focus on education:

The larger truth, though, is that in practically all cases, interactions between Africa and the outside world have turned out to Africa's disadvantage, leaving a negative balance when all costs in such sectors as agriculture, food, trade, tourism, technology, health, communication, etc. are taken into account. Of all these interfaces shaping tomorrow's Africa, it is the educational sector, informal as well as formal, that presents the most absurdly negative aspect (Ki-Zerbo 1990, pp.11-12).

These critical ideas and examinations of Africa's experiences are very much relevant to this deeply reflective, practical and functional project of the "Africa-Asia University Dialogue for Basic Education Development" and its research output. This project is conceived to create solid knowledge not for its own sake or fine intellectual exercise. The project is designed to ensure that the knowledge produced makes its way to the policymakers who need to be informed as they debate and choose options, implement them and evaluate them to assess their effectiveness and identify mechanisms for adjusting them toward the stated educational and societal goals.

Formal education as a fundamental human right and a means for acquiring functional competence to practically operate in the local and global world, as well as an investment—not only for individual socio-economic attainment and mobility but as an agency for collective social progress and national development—has been a ground of nearly universal agreement among the various stakeholders of African education.

## **Background of the Issues and Research Questions**

African education from the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to this first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has experienced major phases that require sufficient understanding in order to effectively analyze it and identify promising solutions to the major stumbling blocks toward educational and societal goals. Indeed, in this first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, an appreciation of recent historical processes is important in any effort to find solutions to some of the daunting tasks of providing quality basic education for all. Beyond this immediate educational goal is the question of how to provide the best education to form the next generation of competent political leaders from the community to the national and global levels, economic planners, scientists, artists, humanists, and more generally, informed citizens, especially in this fast-paced, technology-prone and globalized world.

For the purpose of this editorial it is worth noting the most critical moments in this educational process in Africa during the period that spans from the first wave of independence in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present. This period can be presented in four main stages with their respective characteristics: 1) the euphoric belief in, and demand for, education supported by national stakeholders and international assistance in the 1960s and 1970s; 2) the shock of the economic crisis and subsequent policies leading to the stagnation and decline in enrollment in the 1980s; 3) the renewed high demand at the national levels and stated commitment at the global level minus the economic resources of the first phase; and 4) the new targets in the race toward the goals of 2015 as defined by international organizations and the challenges at the national, local, and institutional levels in working toward the stated goals with limited supply and poor quality. These four phases are elaborated below.

1) The first phase of the transition between the colonial era and independence was characterized by enthusiastic and convergent treatment of education as “the priority of all priorities” in providing the means for individual self-realization and investment toward the actualization of the national development agenda. In this context the resources were certainly not perceived as unlimited but they were not spared by any of the main education stakeholders to ensure increasing supply and encourage all the segments of the population to value and seek education for the youth:

- Governments and their specialized sectors and agencies that deal with education of the various levels (primary/basic education, secondary, and higher/tertiary education) and types (academic, technical, vocational);

- The general population of all social origins, families and the youth in general and especially students, particularly the “fortunate few” who survive the selection process and move up in the system;

- The teaching and administrative professionals of the various levels and types of the education sector;

- The external assistance community, in bilateral and multilateral frameworks,

including governments of industrial countries and international organizations, private foundations, NGOs, and the like.

By and large, African countries devoted relatively large proportions of their revenues to education during the 1960s and 1970s. As a matter of fact, during the second half of the 1970s until the very beginning of the 1980s, the proportion of the GNP allocated to education increased, from 3.4 in 1975 to 5.2 percent in 1980. Beside the government, a considerable part of the complex costs and expenses involved in education were borne by the population as a whole, including even the youngest segments, especially in the case of rural communities where they are heavily involved in cash crop economy, in building and operating educational infrastructure and even providing revenues in cash and in kind for teachers.

2) The second phase was characterized by the external shock of the global economic crisis that started in the 1970s with full and enduring effects throughout the 1980s. This led to the shock of increased influence and aggressive interference of international financial institutions, as best exemplified by the roles of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in the definition of African domestic policy through SAPs (Structural Adjustment Programs) influencing and directly setting priorities with regard to the relative importance of the different levels of the educational sub-sectors. These economic and policy imperatives, which included the SAPs and the introduction of school fees, contributed significantly to the slowdown and outright decline in enrollment rates in many countries. In terms of governmental support to education, the trends of the first phase were reversed in the 1980s as reflected in the proportion of public expenditure on education with, on average, 16.7 %, 16.2%, and 11.9% for 1970, 1980, and 1983 respectively.

Thus, while on the whole the African context of the 1960s and 1970s was one of resolute upward trends in educational expansion, the 1980 decade was characterized by significant stagnation or even sharp decline in enrollment rates at all levels of the education systems in many African countries. This new phenomenon affected the educational systems of one-third of African countries.

In assessing the general situation of the trends in the 1980s, African countries could be grouped into three categories with three different trends: continued increase, stagnation and decline. A UNESCO document showed that among forty-four countries on which enrollment data were available, these three trends were represented by 18 countries (1 to 30 points), 9 countries, and 17 countries (1 to 65 points) respectively, for the period of 1980 to 1988. On the whole, while the average increases in the enrollment rates was 7.4 per cent from 1970 to 1980, it dropped to 2.5 per cent for the period of 1980 to 1988 (UNESCO 1991, p.6). The rate of increase in the primary level during the decade of the 1980s appeared lower than the average population growth rate. These statistical facts about the population and schooling led to speculations about the demographic factor when the first signs of the decline in enrollment rates became evident. Even if this factor had been an actual cause of the phenomenon, it would have explained only enrollment trends at entrance in the lower grades

of the educational systems. As the decline appeared at all levels simultaneously, this factor had to be ruled out.

Most decisions made by social actors are guided by their respective utility function, given their socialization, social class, and the objective conditions of the social environment. The actual or perceived returns of alternative choices are instrumental in the decision process. In explaining the decline in education enrollment, it was found that African families and youth did not change their preference for education because they had found viable and more promising alternatives. In the absence of valuable alternatives to education, which even until now has been mostly offered in the formal school setting leading to jobs in the public sector, the major explanatory factor of lower demand for education in all the levels of education sector was the increasing cost while the ability to pay was declining. In the context of economic crisis and the structural adjustment programs of the World Bank/IMF, especially with the introduction of user fees and the freeze on public hiring while given the negligible private sector the government constitutes the most important employer, three contradictory central forces—decline in families' economic means, increase of the cost of education, uncertainty in terms of job prospects—led to the stagnation and decline in the demand for education.

3) The third phase could be referred to as a new awakening and global call for the renewal of educational development. The families, especially the most disadvantaged in the rural communities, realized that no matter the cost of education or the uncertainty of the benefits in the context of growing unemployment, there was not yet competitive and viable alternatives to education. Thus, although the disillusion vis-à-vis the socio-economic performance of education could not be ignored, the lack of resources was identified as the major obstacle to further expansion of the educational systems, even in African countries that had not then reached yet half the school age population. Decline in enrollment as a reflection of low demand was an ephemeral phenomenon. Thus, by the beginning of the 1990s, demand for education was clearly on the rise again.

The beginning of the 1990s was also marked by several international conferences emphasizing the importance of education. It is worth noting the Jomtien (Thailand) World Conference on Education for All sponsored by several international institutions, the World Bank, UNDP, UNESCO, and UNICEF and the Mexico World Congress on Educational Management and Development, both held in 1990.

4) The global call for renewed effort for educational development was further intensified in the beginning of the new Millennium. Thus, the Dakar World Education Forum of April 2000 was reaffirmed the same year in the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as both reiterated the global commitments to achieve the target of EFA by the year 2015.

In spite of the renewed demand in African countries and the official commitments by African governments and global partners, the reality is that African populations and states had not, and still have not, recovered from the economic crisis while the external promised

support has not been materialized fully. Thus, there is no vigorous and concrete engagement in training the needed teachers and renovating and expanding the exiting educational infrastructures and building new ones to meet the soaring demand. Furthermore, while demand is still high among the populations, in many countries increased and entrenched poverty has been compounded by post-conflict and ongoing conflict situations of variable intensity with negative impact on the capacity of the populations to match their considerable historic contributions (Assie-Lumumba 1993).

High demand and limited supply have led to the current situation of limited infrastructure, and increased class sizes, and insufficient number of teachers especially those with adequate training.

While there are general characteristics of the educational situation in the continent as presented in the above identified four phases, this evolution has been complex, with sub-regional, national, and intra-national variations. Thus, in search for solutions that respond to the needs, it is necessary to have a better understanding of the local manifestations of the same phenomenon observed in different countries, the specific achievements to build on, assets, innovations, setbacks and bottlenecks, and so forth, at the national, provincial, district, or school levels.

To sum up, by any standards within the historical and global contexts, the earlier post-independence quantitative achievements by the African governments and communities, in terms of the increase in enrollment and the speed of the expansion of educational facilities, could be legitimately characterized as astounding. Furthermore, while even in the context of colonial legacy the issue of problematic relevance and suitability of the content of formal education could be raised in earlier decades of high expansion, there was no doubt that the qualitative performance of the African schools in terms of the cognitive skills mastered by the African youth was equally remarkable. In the new context of rising demand, it is equally important for the learners to have a solid mastery of the content of what is taught.

### **School Quality and Effectiveness**

Most of the analyses of the educational problems as a result of the economic crisis of the 1980s focused on the decline in enrollment and, after the renewal of demand, the inability of the states and communities to continue to create new educational facilities as they had done in the previous decades (Lange 1984, Dougna 1987, Berstecher & Carr-Hill, 1990). In contrast, the problem of critical importance regarding the decline in quality, in terms of the ineffectiveness of cognitive skills acquisition and retention, has not been fully acknowledged and addressed. Yet, the change in financial revenues led to new trends in enrollment supply, training of teachers, and learning space that require understanding and solution.

Some of these issues of the relative importance of the factors that influence and determine learning have been the sources of debates and research (Heyneman 1990). However, while the decline in enrollment was ephemeral and demand resumed quickly amidst the prolonged economic crisis, it was only later, and relatively recently, that the foreseeable

issue of large class sizes and the ensuing problems of quality and effectiveness of learning started to be addressed systemically. Various debates, policy positions and studies have been engaged focusing on the general situations, sets of countries or individual national cases. Thus, for instance, it is worth mentioning as an illustration the research by Michaela (2001) that used “Program on the Analysis of Education Systems” (PASEC) data for a comparative study on Francophone countries in addressing the questions of quality and learning effectiveness.

ADEA has also been debating mechanisms that can be devised to promote efficient learning and long-lasting acquisition of “competencies.” Of particular significance is its adoption, at its 2003 Biennial, of a theme emphasizing the need to improve the quality of education in Sub-Saharan Africa. Efforts were made to address the issue in its multifaceted aspects: starting with the appropriate conceptualization of quality and proceeding with a full grasp of the processes of decision-making that emulate the concern, funding for the actualization of the decision, mechanism for monitoring, addressing the critical determinants by taking into account factors that are internal and external to the school system, as well as the necessary revision of the curricula, the central issues of training teachers and the nature of the administrative organization of the school systems, effective response to major challenges such as HIV/AIDS and other health problems. The quality question became central in part in relation to the question of how to reach the EFA goals (initially expressed mostly in quantitative terms) by the year 2015.

### **The Philosophical Framework of the AAD Project**

This AAD project aims at providing research findings that can contribute to a better understanding of, and practical solutions to, some of the immediate problems. More importantly, this project is designed to provide a new model for creating the foundation for permanent solutions. The old problems and new challenges, including health/HIV/AIDS pandemic and its impact on school-age populations and consequences regarding human resource depletion, especially the teachers, the immediate problems or looming consequences of the crisis of climate change, all necessitate innovative mechanisms, methodology, and creative pedagogical approaches to reach the maximum youth with maximum effective learning and knowledge retention for the transformation of communities and society at large.

As articulated by Ki-Zerbo and mentioned above, it is necessary to address education in Africa as a sector and pay more attention to the inter-dependence of the levels from pre-school and basic/primary education to secondary education whether it is considered as terminal or a link between the basic and the ultimate upper level of tertiary/higher education. The link between what has been traditionally classified as academic, vocational and technical education, at the secondary and post-secondary levels, must be consistently acknowledged in the conceptualization, formulation and implementation of policies of education for sustainable development in designing and organizing learning at the level of basic education.

Given this obvious inter-dependence, it is quite striking that in the Dakar Declaration,

the simple expressions of “higher education”, “tertiary education”, and “university” are absent. In the MDGs, higher education does not fare well either. Thus, major problems arise, some of which may contribute to perpetuating some of the deficiencies in the African educational system and which hinder development agendas. This raises some fundamental and practical questions. For instance, where and at what level are the teachers of the basic education expected to be educated? Will basic education be self-reliant, autonomous, and capable of producing its own teachers? What are the necessary qualifications that teachers must acquire in the teacher training institutions to fulfill the duties of providing quality basic education? What learning needs and conditions do the teachers require to be well prepared to teach and develop core competences and innovative capabilities? What roles can the existing institutions of higher learning, especially the universities, play in contributing to produce scientific and practical knowledge as research output for policymakers?

With this backdrop, the original, unique, and welcome initiative of the project is its contribution toward understanding and solving problems in basic education and while, by the same token, addressing the issue that was alluded to above in referring to Ki-Zerbo’s criticism of the conception of education with autonomous levels. Indeed, in the compartmentalized system of education, the higher education sub-sector has not been conceptually and functionally related to basic education as the different sub-sectors (primary, secondary and tertiary) have been designed on a hierarchical, parallel, and uni-dimensional ground instead of conceiving them in their dialectical and inter-dependent relations.

When the oldest among the Western-type of institutions of higher learning were inherited or created by the Africans in the post-colonial context, the political leaders, policymakers and scholars assigned a specific mission to their higher education institutions, especially the universities. Well captured in *Creating the African University: Emerging Issues of the 1970s*, edited by Yesufu (1973), was a determination to Africanize higher education in terms of the relevance of the curriculum and research. In fact, they decided to implement the idea of “development university” whereby the higher education in general, and more specifically the university as a site of higher learning and knowledge production, would cater to the needs of the entire society.

However, while these institutions were enthusiastically built on the African soil with high hopes and expectations, they inherited an ancient European tradition coupled with colonial practices of the separation between the governing elite and their institutions and the rest of society. Thus, in Africa, the history of a perceived and actual initial social disconnect between European universities and their social environments that led to the notion of the university as an “Ivory Tower,” wherein reflection becomes an end in itself, took a new life and perpetuated traditions of the distance between the role of the university and the needs of its social and national surroundings. Philosophically, the neo-colonial African states did very little to significantly change the practices advanced by the colonial powers.

Thus, event output of relevant research does not reach decision-makers to enrich their deliberations and choices. Often, the mechanism and methodology are not adequate to create functional channels of communication between different governmental agencies and

sectors or even units within the same sector, especially education.

In sum, practically, African countries and their respective educational systems inherited the old European tradition that is the birthmark of the university in Western Europe centuries ago, which earned the aforementioned characterization as “Ivory Tower” as a result of its location in society. At the time this institution emerged and evolved, it was marked by a social, psychological, and at time, physical boundary separating it from the broader society, even its immediate surrounding. While many changes have occurred in Europe, African countries and institutions, even the ones that were created after independence, still have challenges to make their institution of tertiary education become functionally an integral parts of the broader society.

In its design, the AAD project is intended to carry research with immediate educational objectives of insuring “research conducive to the development of basic education in their respective countries”. The long-run educational and broader societal goals as stated in its implementation plan are captured in the following statement:

African researchers and educational administrators participating in this Project will enhance their skills and knowledge in education for all through the exchange of ideas with Asian universities and research institutions and from the planning and conduct of research in basic education for all. Through networking, a space will be created for African experts to dialogue among themselves and with Asian experts on the fundamental issues.

It includes research and reflection meetings and brings together the voices of the Africans with the contribution of partners from Japan and developing Asian countries. This also illustrates the necessary link between basic and higher education.

What Japan brings to this experience is the nurturing of the gradual emergence, reaffirmation and harnessing a philosophical dimension of the Japanese international development assistance which calls for “collaboration toward Greater Autonomy,” which has constituted the bedrock for building trust and mutual respect as a sine qua none for positive and mutually enriching co-operative assistance.

As I have articulated elsewhere, besides the impressive statistics in terms of financial and material contribution, schools built, teachers trained, and curricular programs developed through Japan’s sponsorship, this guiding ethos for building local self-reliance in the process of the cooperation between Japan and Africa is one of the major achievements with lasting impacts in the decades to come. This AAD project is an illustration of the actualization of this philosophy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The AAD project has proposed a very useful and practical methodology which consists of forming teams that include the researchers at the university and agents working in other sectors that are potential users of the research results that can inform their policy choices, formulation, and implementation aimed at addressing specific issues within and outside the educational system. These include relevant units of the Ministry of Education regarding

large class sizes and quality of basic education for pupils or for teachers in teacher training institutions, the Ministry of Health, or Ministries and other institutions/organization dealing with climate change awareness and environmental protection.

### **The AAD Project and this Special Issue**

In 1998, I was honored to be one of two African advisers invited to serve on the Advisory Panel of the Forum on “International Cooperation in Education for the 21st Century: Africa and Japan,” organized by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Center for the Study of International Cooperation in Education (CICE) and that was held at Hiroshima University (Japan) in 1998. I had further cooperation with CICE colleagues such as Professor Kazuo Kuroda now at Waseda University and Professor Nobuhide Sawamura under the CICE Directorship of Professor Akira Ninomiya and Professor Shinji Ishii. As a Visiting Professor in CICE in 2003, I had the honor and privilege, upon the request of Professor Masafumi Nagao, who had had a productive discussion of the project with Professor Juma Shabani, to contribute to the conceptualization of this AAD project as well as the Japan Education Forum (JEF) project. Both projects have been actualized and are continuing with great stride.

I participated in the launching meeting of the AAD at CICE in December 2004 and also in the reflective analysis meeting that was held in Paris in December 2007. In between, I have followed the work of the different cohorts making modest contributions in giving feedback to the African researchers while they were in Japan at CICE or the United Nations University (UNU) in Tokyo during their trips to Asia. It is, therefore, with great satisfaction and also an honor to serve with Professor Jandhyala Tilak of the National University of Educational Planning and Administration in New Delhi (India), as guest co-editor of two special issues of the *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*. In his foreword to this issue, Professor Norihiro Kuroda has articulated the process and the methodology and presented the teams, institutions in Africa, Japan and the other Asian countries that have been involved in this AAD project. For the remainder of this editorial, I wish to provide summaries of salient features of the six studies that are published in this issue of the *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*.

**Ampiah** analyzes the use of input factors in the classroom toward the promotion of quality education in a case study in Ghana. His analysis of teaching and learning in the classrooms is based on a sample of six private and public (rural and urban) basic schools located in two districts in the Central Region of the country using the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) results as a measurement of what is considered by the Ghana Education Service as producing “satisfactory learning outcomes.” His sampled teaching staff includes 6 headteachers and 26 teachers. The data collection methods consist of observation of the classes or lessons and interviews of 128 pupils from primary grades 3, 4, and 6, and Junior High School were selected by using stratified random sampling. The practices of the schools which have reached high scores on the outcomes are expected to

practically serve as models for the schools which register poor learning outcomes. As expected, the findings indicate variations between private and public schools in the type of English used and availability of resources. The similarity in the use of input factors at the classroom level suggests that the less endowed schools could do better if they had better resources.

**Mokhele and Jita** focus on the process of actualizing new mandates to include environmental education (EE) in the curriculum of basic education in South Africa, stipulating that all school youth between 1 and 9 must be introduced to the relevant concepts and learn practices. This is an educational innovation which, although it is a planned change, has not yet built a systematic human resource base with the technical knowledge and professional experience to apply this new content across the board. Few schools, and even fewer teachers, have developed the knowledge, experience, and competence to make the implementation possible. The capacity of the departments of education at the provincial levels have not developed either the human, scientific, technical, and infrastructural readiness required for a fuller integration of the environmental education in the curriculum and educational process. In such conditions, educational agents resort to creative coping mechanisms. Focusing on two schools, one of which can be considered a relatively vanguard, both in the Mpumalanga, the authors aim to understand the actual capacity building processes in the two schools by using the concept of opportunities to learn (OTL). In spite of the major challenges of the limitation of the implementation process, this study identified a promising case of interaction and cooperation between governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the efforts to build the foundation for the actual institutional capacity of the schools and human capabilities of the teachers to develop and disseminate quality learning in EE. The most important findings reveal the actual limitation of the scientific and material power base to implement the EE. The authors propose collaborative efforts by the public and private sectors to productively gather the required resources to implement the EE program.

**Goza, Kallekoye and Mounkaila** assess a case of the institutional setting and education in the training of teacher trainers in the Ecole Normale d'Instituteurs (Teacher Training Schools) in Niger. They analyze the conditions of the process of the training of future teachers of primary schools and the determinants of effectiveness, or rather lack of it, in the institutional characteristics including the preparation of the teachers in these institutions for the training of teacher trainers and factors that pertain to the learners themselves. There is considerable ripple effect of the nature and quality of education of these future teachers and trainers on the whole primary education and the likelihood of reaching the goals of increasing enrollment in the country. The most significant determinants are the lack of effectiveness.

**Komba and Nkumbi's** study is a critical examination of perceptions and practices of Teacher Professional Development by head teachers, primary school teachers, ward education coordinators, district education officers, school inspectors, and members of the school committee in Tanzania. Using data collected from samples of 6 school districts and 186 respondents, they found that most of these consider Teacher Professional Development an important component of the educational assets on the human resource front considering the

opportunity for the professional, academic and technical competence acquisition and update, and more broadly, professional growth. Given precisely the value they attach to this service, they are eager to receive a good quality which is not available in the current form. Thus, they deplore the poor coordination and inadequacy of the budget allocated. They propose a more systematic provision of this crucial service as a means to build on the initial knowledge of the teachers and critical human resource capacity of the educational system.

**Nakabugo, Opolot-Okurut, Ssebbunga, Maani and Byamugisha** provide a descriptive account and analysis of the implementation of the policy by the government of Uganda to increase enrollment rates toward domestic and international targets of basic education for all. The populations have responded enthusiastically by enrolling massively. However, as the supply of infrastructure and the number of teachers were not prepared beforehand, there is a huge problem of exceptionally large class sizes leading to overcrowding, large pupil/teacher ratios, and subsequently, a difficult teaching and learning environment. With the study structured in two phases, including a baseline survey of 35 teachers in 20 schools followed by a reflective action which involved 10 teachers in 5 schools, the researchers identified and contributed to enhance the strategies that the teachers themselves used and identified as having actual and/or potential attribute to promote better teaching and learning in their large classes. The researchers conclude that for the short-term need, instead of seeking class size reduction, it would be more feasible to increase the number of teachers and allocation of teachers per class.

**Sawamura and Sifuna** argue that in an effort of Kenya to implement a long-standing goal of achieving universal primary education targeted since its independence, the government introduced free primary education in 2003. Since then, enrollment rates have increased sharply while the quantitative goal has not been accompanied by any clearly articulated policy for maintaining quality. Using the transitional stage from primary to secondary education as an indicator of quality of education, the authors articulate further that in order to achieve the actual educational goal it is necessary to tackle the issue of quantitative and qualitative performance in the system as linked. They further call for the need to focus on the different dimensions that are encompassed in quality by paying particular attention to the “qualitative growth of individuals for the community.” They conclude by emphasizing the need to address educational policies of reaching universal enrollment in comprehensive terms, aiming to promote sustainable educational development so that such individuals can contribute in a holistic manner to develop their communities.

## **Concluding Note**

As indicated earlier, there are considerable variations in the manifestation of the educational issues addressed in these studies. Besides the obvious national specificities, there are further variations at the levels of different units of analysis. There are similarities and differences, ranging from subtle nuances to sharp contrasts, between institutions even within the same country and inside the same educational administrative units. There are also

many other facets of each of the issues studied that could be equally relevant but were not tackled. As, furthermore, several of these studies rely on small samples, even with the next set of studies to be published, the findings and conclusions call for precaution in terms of our full understanding of the issues and the applicability of the respective recommendations. In fact, understandably several researchers themselves express considerable modesty and do not make any sweeping generalizations.

However, it is hoped that these studies can contribute to enhancing our understanding of issues. More importantly, they are expected to contribute to improve the dynamics of educational processes in the concrete local contexts through integration of the findings in the decision-making process for transformative policies, one small step at a time, even if the broader sector(s) must be taken into consideration, in the journey of establishing long-term effective educational practices. Also, beyond the findings and the potential or actual use of the results of these specific studies, it is hoped that collaborative action research, with contribution of the universities and the other levels of the education sector and other sectors, will inspire to build the foundations for solid bridges between the university and its institutional and societal surrounding and needs toward social progress. This is an area of high expectation as expressed by everyone involved in the AAD project as reiterated at the 2007 reflective analysis meeting. Actualizing such a tradition will lead to the actualization of the “development university” and contribute not simply to the achievement of quantitative MDGs and EFA target by the year 2015, but the realization of quality and effective basic education with a human-centered approach.

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