



Summary

This paper makes the case for managed expansion of secondary schooling in Sub-Saharan Africa. The great majority of secondary age African children remain excluded from access to good quality secondary schooling. Increasing numbers are graduating from primary schools where enrolments are rapidly growing as a result of successful Education for All programmes. The knowledge and skill that secondary schools can provide is central to closing the gap between Sub Saharan Africa and the rest of the world in the capabilities in the labour force that can sustain growth.

The analyses undertaken for the Secondary Education in Africa (SEIA) programme of the World Bank have explored many dimensions of the challenges ahead. This paper complements this work and offers new insights into necessary reforms of policy and practice. It outlines the current status and structure of secondary provision, and the demographic issues that will influence expanded access. It then elaborates some of the key issues facing governments and development partners, and reviews the resources that would be needed to reach different levels of participation. It offers a set of policy options and strategies that can be used to shape managed growth within sustainable financial frameworks.

The analysis indicates that budget shares between educational levels and overall spending on secondary education need to be revisited if higher participation is to be achieved. More than 3.0% of gross national product (GNP) would be needed to achieve gross enrolment rates of 60% at lower secondary and 30% at upper secondary in low enrolment countries with existing cost structures. The costs per pupil have to fall if expanded access is to be sustainable. No countries with ratios of secondary to primary unit costs of more than 3:1 succeed in universalising access to secondary schooling but many countries remain above these levels.

New balances will have to be struck between rates of expansion towards enrolment targets at primary, lower and upper secondary levels. Structural changes are needed that can facilitate higher secondary enrolment rates at affordable costs and diminish gender inequities. Better management of the flow of pupils could increase completion rates and lower costs per successful completer. Improved teacher deployment will be critical to successful expansion. Much more access could be provided if norms for pupil-teacher ratios (e.g. 35:1 at lower secondary, and 25:1 at upper secondary) could be applied and if class teacher ratios at secondary level fell from 3:1 to less than 2:1.

Trained teachers will be critical to secondary expansion. Where demand is greatest, and initial training lengthy and expensive, alternative methods will have to be considered which lower costs of training and increase supply. So also will be changes in school management that can provide some incentives to manage human and physical resources efficiently.

Secondary expansion without curriculum reform risks irrelevance and wastage. New populations of school children require curricula that address their needs, respond to changing social and economic circumstances, and recognise resource constraints. Alongside this physical capacity needs planned expansion in ways that optimise increased access.

Expanded secondary access will benefit greatly from successful mechanisms to generate support from the communities that schools serve. There are many possible methods of cost-sharing and cost-recovery that can and should be facilitated. These need to be linked to the capacity of households to support fees and contributions so that they do not become exclusionary. Partnerships with non-government providers can make some contribution to expanded access. However, they are most likely to play a complementary role since they are unlikely to be the providers of last resort to those otherwise excluded by location, household income, or low achievement.

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