

Education for All: Myth or Reality for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children in Zimbabwe?

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Abstract

The freedom of Zimbabwe from colonial rule in 1980 brought with it the vision of Education for All by the year 2000. A number of initiatives were implemented in order to benefit the once disadvantaged children who were kept out of school due to the discriminative colonial policies and the adverse effects of poverty. These new policies which accompanied the ushering in of independence were received with jubilation and enthusiasm as the majority of black people hoped to acquire education for purposes of their personal and national development. The educational programmes that followed saw an increase in literacy levels and also an improvement in the general infrastructure earmarked for education. This made the Zimbabwean education system the envy of many, including those beyond its borders. However, as Zimbabwe entered into the new millennium, it had missed its target of affording each and every child an opportunity to learn. A plethora of factors impeded the accomplishment of the vision. This paper, therefore, seeks to make a critical examination of such factors in a bid to establish the feasibility of the concept of 'education for all'. The research focused on whether the education policies that were put in place, as well as their implementation, were cognizant of the challenges of orphaned and vulnerable children in Zimbabwe. The paper will interrogate processes of policy formulation, policy implementation as well as policy evaluation in the education system in Zimbabwe. It will try and find out if these processes are not making it difficult for orphaned and vulnerable children in Zimbabwe to access education, thereby impacting negatively on their personal development and national development respectively. The motivation to focus on orphaned and vulnerable children is inspired by the continued increase of orphans and vulnerable children in Sub-Saharan Africa in general, and Zimbabwe in particular as a result of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, in addition to increasing poverty levels. The research went further and investigated whether there are any mitigation measures that have been put in place to ensure the accessibility of education to orphaned and vulnerable children. Questionnaires, unstructured interviews and general observations will be used in gathering data relevant for this paper.

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