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Essay contest

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Education & Corrupt Leadership Africa

The African continent is full of diversity, full of differing ideas, religion, political outlooks, and governments. While Africa does have the potential to become a powerhouse, they currently act as a resource rich continent dependent upon others for survival. Africa has potential to feed itself however they are importing 80% of their food, this could be due to a lack of education for minors and young adults, which will eventually lead to bad leadership. Without successful and compassionate leadership a country could lose stability and end in failure. Education participation rates in many African countries are extremely low. Schools often lack many basic facilities, African universities are overcrowded, and underpaid teachers are being tempted away to Western countries by better conditions and opportunities. With good education and knowledge comes good leadership.

According to UNESCO's Regional overview on sub-Saharan Africa, in 2000, 52% of children were enrolled in primary schools, the lowest enrollment rate of any region. UNESCO also reported marked gender inequalities. In most parts of Africa there is much higher rate of boys attending some sort of schooling; in some there are more girls, due to sons having to stay home and tend to the family farm. However, in many African countries young girls receive little to no education, yet the boys attending school will finish with no more of an education. Africa has more than 42 million children, almost half the school-age child population, receiving no schooling. Two-thirds of these are girls. Center reports that as of 2005, 40% of school-age

children in Africa do not attend primary school and there are still 46 million school-age African children who have never stepped into a classroom. The regional report produced by the UNESCO education sector team in 2005 said that less than 10% of African children are now allowed in the system. Four out of 10 children did not complete primary school in 2002/2003, and it has been that way for generations.

There are of course barriers, keeping children from reaching education in Africa.

Due to extreme diversity, and the need for knowledge of languages such as English and French, many pupils do not ever finish learning their native tongue. In employment and higher education, most schooling in Africa takes place in languages that teachers and pupils do not speak natively, and in some cases simply do not understand. There is evidence that pupils schooled in a second language get poorer results than those schooled in their native tongue, as lack of fluent knowledge in the second languages, which makes it hard to learn, and discourages students. Although UNESCO have recommended that children be taught early education in their mother tongue, progressing later to other languages, not all African countries do this effectively. Even where the earliest grades are taught in the mother tongue, pupils are often forced to switch to languages such as English and French. Another reason for the low education rates in Africa is the lack of proper schooling facilities and unequal opportunity for education across countries. Many schools across Africa find it hard to employ teachers due to the low pay and lack of educated people. This is particularly true for schools in remote areas. Most people who manage to receive education would prefer to move to big cities or even overseas where more opportunities and higher pay await. Therefore, there will be an overly large class sizes and high average number of students per teacher in a school. So, the teachers are usually unqualified with few teaching aids and poor textbook knowledge. Due to this, children attending schools in rural areas usually attain poorer results in standardized tests compared to urban children.

Military spending is causing education spending to decrease greatly. According to a March 2011 report by UNESCO, armed conflict is the biggest threat to education in Africa. While the number of dropouts across the continent has been increasing dramatically, one of the influences of war and conflict on education is the diversion of public funds from education to military spending. An already underfunded system is losing more money. Twenty-one African countries have been identified as the highest spenders of gross domestic product on military globally compared with the amount put toward education. Military and conflict also leads to the displacement of children. It often forces them to remain in camps or flee to their neighboring countries where education is not available to them. In Kenya, after disputed national elections in December 2007, civil unrest displaced over 250,000 people and affected a total of 500,000 people. The Ministry of Education statistics indicate 62,848 of primary school going children were affected by the violence.

A country filled with such uneducated, and poor citizens becomes an easy target for dictatorship, and generally is taken over effectively with little resistance. This is because the citizens are not always aware of the danger, or intentions of a person of political power, because they are undereducated and lack basic learning skills. 61 million children will reach adulthood with no basic skills, which leaves huge opportunity for corrupt leadership. Statistics show that countries with poor education opportunities are ruled by cruel dictatorship. Guinea, Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Central African Republic, and Niger are all in the top ten countries in the world with the worst education system, and all are under the control of a long lasting dictator.

The solution is within grasp, starting with a better infrastructure, creating the building blocks to better educational opportunities for the continents pupils. Compared to countries worldwide Africa truly lacks, and to improve Africa should follow a similar path to Finland who leads in education. Finland runs its schooling off of tremendous government funding, meaning that every student, including the thousands of immigrants receive free education. Finland

schools do not hold standardized testing, and they do not in anyway rank students against one another. Ninety-three percent of Finns graduate from academic systems, the highest rate in the European Union. Yet Finland spends about 30 percent less money per student than the United States. Finland is successful because the politicians and government understand that education comes first, they provide good funding, and are always sure that the children's needs come first. Without the proper supplies, teachers, funding, tools and infrastructure the educational system in Africa cannot and will not thrive.

Work Cited

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