



Education in LEDCs



All people have a right to education under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Public education is an essential driver of economic development. LEDCs need to address two issues if their public education systems are going to produce the highly skilled, knowledgeable, and adaptable workers required to prompt economic growth. These are widening access and improving quality.

Widening Access

Access to education in LEDCs is notoriously sporadic. In LEDC's in Sub-Saharan Africa, over one-third of the population of 12-14 years old don't have access to education and a further 60% of 15-17-year-olds are uneducated before getting a job, only reducing the rate at which these countries develop and progress into major world powers.

Geographical accessibility is a key issue; transport networks in LEDCs are often unreliable, and even non-existent outside of urban centres. Children in rural areas often need to walk several miles to attend the local school. This is part of the reason why many families still discourage schooling for their children; such extended travel time can be seen as time wasted, especially when there is a financial imperative for children to lend a hand on the family's farm, or with domestic chores such as raising younger children.

Many LEDCs do not have the infrastructure to provide universal public education. As such, many schools are run by independent bodies and charitable organisations. Often, they charge fees – on average it costs \$650 (USD) to educate one child. Many poverty-stricken families cannot afford to even contemplate paying these fees. The financial demands of educating children (the cost of losing their labour and the cost of fees, materials, and transport) are compounded by the size of families; in African LEDCs, there are roughly 5 children for every woman.

Young girls usually have even less access to education than young boys. Some LEDCs such as South Sudan, Ethiopia, Niger, Chad, and Liberia, actively restrict female access to education on the basis of their gender. In extreme cases, such as Niger, up to 80% of women are illiterate. If women continue to be excluded from education, then they lack essential knowledge about leading safer lives, contraception, and diseases from ill sanitation. Clearly, illiterate citizens are usually unable to contribute to the economic growth of a country too.

Improving quality

Furthermore, there are serious problems with the quality of education received by pupils in schools. Some statistics say that up to 37 million children who do attend an education service learn so little that they were not much better off than children that didn't receive and education.

Even worse still, in LEDCs across the world, there is not only a low quality of education but high rates of teacher absenteeism. In some cases, this has led to up to 200 pupils being taught in the same classroom by only one teacher. This simply isn't the one to one attention children

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need to develop the skills required to live in the outside world. Many LEDCs lack the resources within their education systems to provide materials essential for learning including textbooks. When combined with the low level of training which many teachers receive, it is clear to see that the pupils who manage to attend school are not making the progress needed. Low quality of provision leads to further problems with access, as families do not see the point of sending children to a low-quality school, thus creating a vicious cycle.

There are, also, ideological debates about what is to be taught in these schools. Many LEDC's, especially in Africa, are under the economic influence of much more powerful global nations. A key example of this is how China has helped countries such as Angola and Zimbabwe and then used them to establish communist dictatorships, possibly spreading China's ideology through influence on the curricula. This must also be tackled when thinking about how these countries influence the education curriculum in these developing countries.

Points to Consider

- How can access to education in rural communities be improved?
- How can access to education for girls be widened?
- How can the culture of education in LEDCs be changed?
- How can quality education be guaranteed for all pupils in LEDCs?
- How can the issue of ideological interference be tackled, when many LEDCs will rely on the economic power of MEDCs to reform their systems?

Useful Links:

[UNESCO Africa Education](#)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_access_to_education