Saudi Journal of Business and Management Studies (SJBMS) **ISSN 2415-6663 (Print)**
Scholars Middle East Publishers **ISSN 2415-6671 (Online)**
Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Website: http://scholarsmepub.com/

The Political Economy of Education and Educational Change in the East African Community

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Article History
Received: 06.12.2017
Accepted: 17.12.2017
Published: 30.12.2017

DOI:
10.21276/sjbms.2017.2.12.9

Abstract: This paper contributes to an understanding of the main factors and actors that create the imperative for educational change in the six member countries of the East African Community (EAC) and how governance dynamics reflect on their policy positions. The method of study is qualitative and uses mainly existing literature as a synthesis. The study notes that the main drivers of educational change in the region are national and political transformation agenda; foreign aid conditionality; the advent and revival of the East African Community; and patronage, clientelism and corruption inherent in the neo-patrimonial set-up of the state. The member countries of the bloc initially drew upon the imperative of nation-building back in the 1960s to assign value to educational change as intertwined with Independence from colonial rule. Orthodox reform later assumed greater prominence in the 1980s and 1990s as aid conditionality drastically undermined gains made in educational expansion. Reforms undertaken in late 1990s and 2000s have been in response to the quest for democratisation in East Africa. Amid the clamour for policy convergence on educational change, there is need for a region-wide process of mutual policy borrowing, considerable harmonisation of curricula for secondary & higher education, and increased student and staff mobility. The study concludes that the history of state formation, political competition and state-society relations in the EAC points to a complex variable of macro policy convergence in educational change and governance that calls for consummate tact as the region seeks a market-mediated identity and contemplates political federation.

Keywords: Political economy, educational change, governance, economic integration, political federation.

INTRODUCTION

This paper sets out to contribute to an understanding of what the political economy of education can tell the wider public in the East African Community [i] (EAC) about educational change and its governance as a particular public area of interest at a time of great enthusiasm about increased economic integration of markets in the region.

It is done from the perspective of political economy that sees educational change as essentially undergirded by interests and preferences that are political and economic in nature and outlook [1]. Political economy, as defined by Leftwich [2], is "all the activities of cooperation, conflict and negotiation involved about the use, production and distribution of resources" [3].

The political economy of education, therefore, allows us to analyse the "norms which shape people's behaviour as well as the formal and hidden incentives and power dynamics within and between groups of institutions which influence how decisions are made (about educational change and its governance)" [4]. Educational change is simply the name given to the goal of changing public education. Simply put, it is about the processes of education reform [5]. Conversely, its governance is the collection of laws and regulations that govern the operation of education systems. As Varghese [6] puts it, "the term 'governance' is used to imply structures and processes of decision-making".

This conceptual study is the first of its kind to examine the "interactions between the structural background, the institutions and the incentives" in terms of educational change in the East African Community [7], using Margaret Archer's [8] Social Realism and the Dutch Strategic Governance & Corruption Analysis [9] as an explanatory framework. Odebero [10] has offered in a book chapter a vintage point on education inequalities and opportunities in the East African Community.

This paper adds a much-needed conceptual layer through a review of the main factors and actors that create the imperative for educational change in the member countries of the trade bloc and how governance dynamics reflect on their policy positions.

The study is structured into three sections. The first section presents a brief introduction of the topic in question and lays out the study methods and its conceptual framework. The second section brings to the fore an overview of the EAC and its dynamics. The third section charts the basis for analysis of the political economy of education in the bloc and the results thereof. This is duly followed by discussion at length and conclusion.

STUDY METHODS

The method of study for this paper is qualitative, giving an account of the historical specificity and institutional embeddedness of educational change and its governance in the East African Community as a regionalization drive. This is particularly so since political economy considers a characterization of time and place [11].

The unit of study is the EAC with its six member countries (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan). The study has mainly used published research and existing literature in a synthetic manner to "maximise their explanatory leverage" [12], with a view to helping the public in the EAC gain a perspective on some most recent issues about educational change in the bloc's member countries and the connections therein with the historical evolution of their regional integration. The conceptual framework of choice is Archer's [8] realist distinction of educational politics as three-pronged: broad educational politics, high educational politics[ii] and political aggregation [[iii]]. The focus will be on *Broad Educational Politics* which are "attempts, conscious and organised to some degree, to influence the inputs, processes and outputs of education, through legislation, pressure group action, union action, experimentation, private investment, local transactions, internal innovation or propaganda" [3]. This conceptual framework allows us to investigate three critical *transactions* in which these broad educational politics can play out as 'educational change' and its governance. Kingdon *et al.*, [3] see these as follows:

1. *Internal initiation* (education personnel themselves taking the lead in introducing change)
2. *External transaction* (change is initiated from outside and transacted by both external and internal groups in the name of more services or novel ones altogether).
3. *Political manipulation* (change is triggered by the manipulation of political groups because of the fact that education is funded mainly from public sources).

Context: The East African Community

The East African Community (EAC) was first conceived as a regional economic bloc in 1967 when Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda thought of extending their colonial-era history of cooperation beyond the confines of independence. A decade later, it failed miserably owing to primarily Kenya's hegemony as well as contradictory political standpoints [[iv]] by the founding member countries. They got it back again in 2000 with the new edition explicitly set up to "create a common currency and eventually a political federation" [13]. The area size of the economic bloc is 1.82 million sq. Km; and as of 2015, its total population stands at 145.5 [[v]] million; and its economies are worth US$147.5 billion [[vi]].

The member countries are by and large "undergoing the same demographic transition, with substantial lags but posing similar challenges to education systems and job markets" [7]. For example, they all reduced big numbers of out-of-school children ranging from 50% to 75% between 2006 and 2012 [14]. The EAC has been outperforming its counterparts on the African continent, "averaging some 6% annual GDP in the period since 2011" [15].

Fig-1: Map of East African Community Member Countries

Source: http://nitibhan.com/2016/10/18/the-east-african-community-is-a-hidden-gem/

It is inevitable that the new EAC should now work to sidestep the divisive path to political federation initially and, instead, focus its energies on an economic integration that could yield tangible dividends. To date, it has launched a Customs Union [16], declared a Common Market [17] and initiated a regional Monetary Union with a view to adopting a single currency.

The EAC now boasts a membership of three more countries with Rwanda and Burundi signing up in 2007 and South Sudan joining the fray in 2016.

Table-1: EAC Member Countries' Social Statistics (2012)

Indicators	Kenya	Tanzania	Uganda	Rwanda	Burundi	South Sudan
Life expectancy at birth	59.55	59.18	57.30	62.21	52.62	55
Mortality rate, infant (per 1000 live births)	48.7	37.7	45.4	38.8	66.9	99
Population (total)	43,178,141	47,783,107	36,345,860	11,457,801	9,849,569	12,340,000
Literacy rate, adult (% of people aged 15 and above)	72.20	67.80	73.21	65.85	67.00	27

Eyster [18], World Bank [19], ACAPS [20]

The long-term strategic payload of the East African Community is to construct "market-mediated national and regional cultural identities. What remains to be seen is who produces what[vii] to further integrate the region economically and to construct [an East African] identity for economic and political gains" [21]. The bare minimum the regional bloc could provide is a lower level of protection for its economies as they integrate into the world economy [7].

The Political Economy of Education in the EAC

In this sub-section, an analysis is presented of the main factors or drivers of educational change in the EAC. The main driver of educational change in the region is national and political transformation.

Calls for wide-ranging reforms of the education system have come from quarters associated with transforming EAC member countries into a democratic dispensation. Recurrent bouts of political upheavals such as the genocides in Rwanda [22] and Burundi [23] and civil wars in Uganda [24] and South Sudan [25] [viii] have served as real catalysts for overhauling their education systems in a manner that radically prevents any cycle of the same atrocities while at the same time providing an education system that suits their peoples' aspirations. A particular reference is the emphasis laid on skill formation as instrumental in wealth redistribution in the case of Rwanda[ix], Burundi and South Sudan [26].

The World Bank's economic structural adjustments formed the basis of another driver. Owing to extreme dependence on external aid, most member countries of the EAC have reorganised their economies and education systems based largely on the dictates of the World Bank and its cohort. A clear example is how Universal Primary Education (UPE) was considered over and above secondary education which led to the latter being largely privatised, thus increasing educational inequalities [1, 14].

The advent and revival of the East African Community itself as a regional platform for trade has become a key driver of change. Harmonising education systems across member countries was seen as a crucial step to the integration of the markets in the region. In 1967, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania adopted a single system of education, consisting of 7 years of primary education, 4 years of secondary education, 2 years of high school and 3–5 years of university education.

With the collapse of the East African community in 1977, Kenya continued with the same system till 1985. Progressively, Rwanda has since 2009 been offering only English syllabi in its secondary education as a change of direction towards the East African Community and the Commonwealth. South Sudan adopted in 2015 a new school curriculum [[x]] and a school system similar to that of Kenya in anticipation of EAC membership which eventually happened in 2016.

Clientelism, patronage and corruption together constitute a formidable driver of educational change in the EAC because of the "hybrid" or neo-patrimonial structures of state formation in Sub-Saharan Africa [7].

Neo-patrimonial states may exhibit democratic dispensation undergirded with a bureaucracy; but their political motivations by and large spring from pursuit of short-term advantages by the political elite under the umbrella of ethnic loyalties and other particularizations. The impact of this system of rule on educational change could be as follows:

"Academic grades and promotion from one grade to another grade are exchanged for sex, cash and/or work; flawed testing administration and lax accountability standards that allow exam questions to be sold in advance; grades to be changed for pay, and students from specific identity groups to fail; teacher recruitment and postings are influenced by bribes or sexual favours, and teaching certificates and licenses obtained on false grounds via corrupt means; children from certain communities are granted free admission while others are subjected to extra payments; and education funds are misused at the national, regional or local levels and diverted to other official or non-official uses, including individual rent seeking" [4].

In short, it fosters patterns of social change where "horizontal interest-groups (are) subordinated to vertical patronage relationships" [4].

DISCUSSIONS

This section is devoted to discussing in greater detail the manner in which educational change is transacted in the East African Community as a welfare regime and/or policy sector mainly at the macro level but invariably at the meso and micro levels as well.

Educational Change

It is obvious that as a function of state formation and evolution, all the six countries in the economic bloc have *internally initiated* educational change over the last few decades or so. Kenya set up Ominde Commission in 1963 to thoroughly review the system of education and provide counsel to the government on the design and execution of new national policies for educational change as a means for the country to modernise its economy and spread knowledge [[xi]] [27]. Secondary & tertiary education came out as crucial stages to be addressed [28].

Tanzania's President Julius Nyerere wasted no time to single out secondary education as basic to his country's development as early as Independence in 1961. A year later, Uganda followed suit when President Milton Obote accorded secondary education the same status as Nyerere in his call to expand education in Uganda. Education and Independence went hand in hand, so to speak.

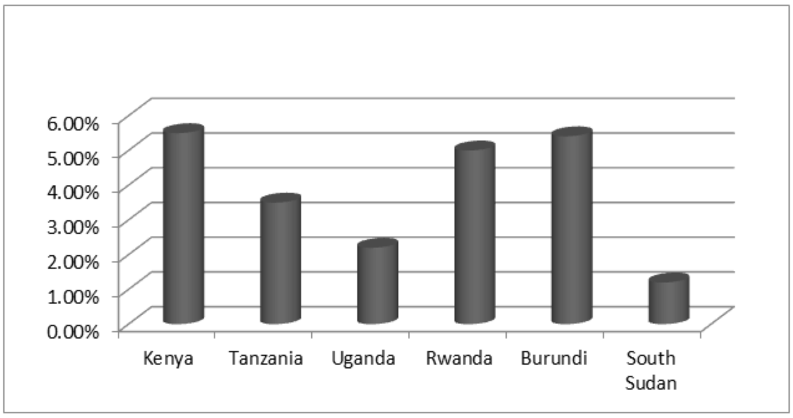

Fig-2: Government Expenditure on Education as % of GDP (2014)
UNICEF [57]

Tanzania put forward a major policy document in 1967, "Education for Self-Reliance", declaring education as an instrument of transformation of Tanzania into an African socialist society. The Musoma Declaration of 1974 underscored Universal Primary Education as a way of transforming rural society and agriculture [29]. After independence, Rwanda restructured its education system and developed a national curriculum in 1966. It sought to improve access to schooling in rural areas.

This initial thrust of the variable of "nation-building" in early 1960s resurfaced later as "democratisation" in the 1990s when these three countries devised and carried out policies for free primary education as a response, in part, to the popular call for democratic accountability. For example, in 1997, the Ugandan government came up with Universal Primary Education (UPE) program to improve enrolment and attainment in primary schools [28].

Table-2: Gender Parity Index (GPI) for Primary & Secondary Education, 2006-2012 [xii]

Country	Primary Education		Secondary Education	
	2006	2012	2006	2012
Burundi	0.89	0.99	0.72	0.73
Kenya	0.97	0.99	0.93	0.88
Rwanda	1.03	1.02	0.87	1.07
Uganda	0.99	....	0.80	....
Tanzania	0.97	1.03	....	0.88

ADEA [14]

In all the above instances of *internal initiation* of conscious and organised inputs, processes and outputs of education, the main driver of educational change has been *national and political*. Chang'ach and Kurgat [27] note that the "variable of nation-building....constitutes the core of politics of independent countries in terms of the uses of state power through value allocation".

As the advent of independence gave way to a more nuanced growth environment, the East African Community experienced its first waves of *external transaction* of educational change, just as the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa did in the late1970s and early 1980s. Through the orthodox reform, Structural Adjustment Programs, donors quickly banded together and imposed a unilateral vision of transformation for East Africa as elsewhere on the continent [30].

This was ostensibly meant to roll back "historical political conflict and widespread government mismanagement standing in the way of poverty reduction and economic development" [18]. It actually ended up undermining the recipient countries' "facilities and capacities.....The fiscal crisis and the resultant decline in state funding were considered to be a major cause of the decline" in service provision such as education and other welfare regimes [xiii] [6]. For example, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda had only 27.5 million people living in poverty around 1981 when the SAPs were all the rage. The same countries had 53.2 million people living in poverty in 2005-double trouble [30].

This hard stretch of supposed market-oriented "transformation" has come to symbolise the global-local divide aptly in two important respects. First, international financial organisations have come to assume a potent agenda-setting capacity in recipient countries' education arenas, effectively advancing the world's capitalist economy as a force for change in the increasingly globalised world. Second, there is a political dimension to the economic thrust of this imposition. There have been "legitimation" pressures on countries in the Global South such as those in question here to "demonstrate to the international community that they are building a modern state especially in post-colonial settings" [31].

To recover from the fall-out of SAPs, in 2003 President Mwai Kibaki of Kenya had to re-introduce free primary education which was available before the mid-1980s when the government was forced to adopt cost-sharing measures (causing a minor level of school fees charged by primary schools for text books, PTA, and extracurricular activities). President Kibaki did it to "reverse a decline in enrolment rates and in the quality of education [as a result of] structural adjustment and austerity along with [a] rising population" [32].

The same plight befell Tanzania when by the early 1980s external shocks (oil crises, low coffee prices, drought, and war with Uganda) and poor economic policy had resulted into a crisis that needed to be resolved through economic restructuring and recovery. For the education sector, this period witnessed massive cuts in resources that eventually undermined the direction and pace of progress made towards UPE during the 1970s and a steep drop in the quantity and quality of education in all stages. Little had changed after economic reforms in late 1980s and early 1990s. In 1995, Tanzania put forward a recovery plan for its stagnant education indicators. The Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) of 1997 got cash infusion of a US 150 million Sector Adjustment Credit from the World Bank to expand school access, improve education quality; and increase school retention at the primary level [33].

Uganda, too, witnessed an Economy Recovery Program (ERP) in 1987 with 77% devaluation, an increase in all export prices, budgetary discipline and privatisation of parastatals among others [30]. South Sudan is still in "a transitional stage" in which the direction and pace of its education system owes a lot to its foreign aid dependency ties.
The newest member on the block has to use and protect its assets of peace and stability to strengthen its core state functions and deliver services to its people, as opposed to relying on foreign aid for about 30-40% of the government's budget [34]. Relatively older members like Rwanda do not fare any better, either. "In Rwanda in 2010, 45% of total government spending was funded by aid" [35].

In all these stumbling blocks, "the interplay between economic crises and policy change usually works in a paradoxical way because crises can motivate countries to undertake processes of education reform but simultaneously limit their capacity and resources to do so" [5]. These countries are left with no option but a crisis mood of "managing exclusion" as a result of a yawning gap between the 'haves' and 'have nots' [32]. In South Sudan, 1.3 million children aged 6-14 years are yet to attend school [36]. 63% of beginners enter Rwandan's primary schools 3-4 years late; and only 58 % of disadvantaged children are likely to complete primary education compared to 76% of children from rich families [35]. The odds of attending primary school are against children from poor socio-economic backgrounds in Uganda where "out of 100 children from the poorest households, around 90 enter school and just 49 make it to the end of the cycle" [35]. By contrast, children from the country's richest households are more likely to access and complete primary schooling at the rate of 97 out of 100 attending and 80 completing [35]. In Kenya, "48% of children from the wealthiest households passed the numeracy test, as opposed to only 28% of children from the poorest households" in a nation-wide survey [37].

This is simply because "the distribution of the benefits and the costs of structural transformation was unequal and had instead engendered domestic tensions given the fact that political influence was unevenly distributed between groups" in the countries respectively [38]. So, when all is said and done about *external transaction* of educational change in the East African Community, two points are crucial. One, individual member countries' economic development determines their level of autonomy in charting their own course and weighing which processes of educational reform are viable and affordable. Two, in sum, the very notion of bringing about policy convergence through the instrument of aid is often "nuanced by the diffusion of the values of western modernity" [5].

The third and more complex type of transaction of educational change is *political manipulation*. This is a situation where national actors in the main work for educational change from the ulterior motives of clientelism, patronage and corruption. What this means is that small groups of elite use their positions to extract rents from their economies by manipulating the conditions under which economic activities take place instead of creating new wealth; and dispensing patronage in the process [7]. They could use their informal networks to manipulate government grants, public procurement regimes, official channels or service delivery mechanisms that are meant for public education provision.

For example, in surveying the political economy of education in the East African Community, two main policy decisions about educational change are significant in relation to the influence of patronage and corruption: increasing *access* to school and improving the *quality* of schooling. In all the six countries of the bloc, the narratives of increasing access and enhancing quality of learning have been used to boost patronage relationships in the interest of competition for political power. Reforms on *access* to education are popular because they offer politicians tangible deliverables to distribute to their constituencies [14].

These could be concrete school buildings and facilities, school supplies and equipment, and jobs. As a result, politicians reinforce their image and worth by reinventing their local connections. However, reforms to do with *quality* of education are often hard to come by because they usually call for more accountability and cost-effectiveness in the use of public resources. This attribute may most likely be resisted by the powerful interest groups as it threatens their "wellbeing" [14].

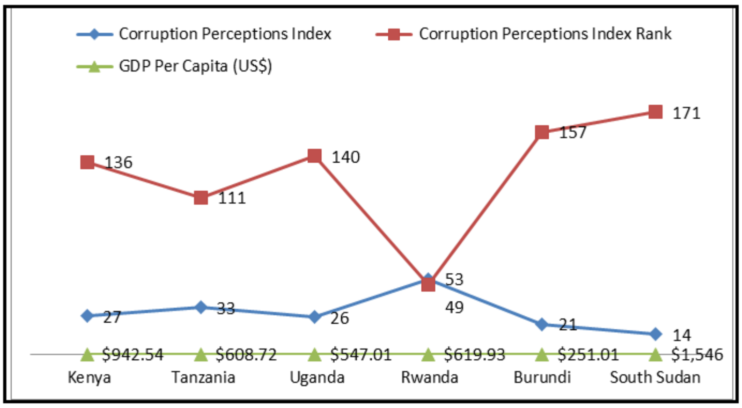

Fig-3: Corruption vs. GDP Per Capita in EAC Member Countries (2013)
Eyster [18], ACAPS [20], UN [39]

Examples abound in the countries in question. Kenya, for one, carried out a nation-wide assessment of the basic literacy and numeracy skills of children aged 6-16 in 2009. One key finding was that the government was reluctant to invest in educational institutions in marginalised areas thereby developing schools in cities only, resulting in inefficient education process in the periphery. Another important finding was that public funds were consistently misused by school administrators and the use of government grants in educational institutions was characterised by high levels of corruption and lack of accountability [40]. Boak [4] notes that "Inequities in the distribution of education resources generate economic, ethnic or geographic favouritism and dominance."

Following Uganda's UPE launch in 1997, enrolments shot up from 3 million to 5.3 million but without the corresponding resource outlays to offset the demand for learning materials, teachers, and infrastructure. Low pupil achievement, untrained teachers and poor infrastructure ensued [41]. The elimination of primary school tuition in Tanzania's public schools in 2002 led to similar rise in enrolment numbers (from 4.8 million in 2001 to 8.4 million in 2008) without any proportional increase in resources for teachers and pupils. The Pupil-Teacher Ratio of 40:1 set in 2000 was exceeded by 35%, standing at 54:1 in 2010 [42, 43].

In Rwanda, access had the upper hand, too, resulting in a situation where the quality aspect of teacher training was neglected. About 40% of the teacher's population in Rwanda have less than 5 years of teaching experience [44]. No wonder, Rwanda's Education Sector Strategic Plan [45] shifted from increasing access to improving quality and relevance of schooling. All the above instances are suggestive of patronage considerations in expanding access to schooling but failing to provide resources to uphold quality of education. The Pattern of government spending on education is another complex indicator. In Rwanda between 1996 and 2001 total public spending rose from 3.2% to 5.5%. But much of this was channelled into secondary and tertiary education at the expense of primary education. Eger[46-48] notes with concern that "Rwandan education has continued to benefit the ruling party, currently the Tutsis, and has been inimical for the rural majority, the Hutu". A clearer picture emerges from Gyimah-Brempong *et al.*'s [49] review of higher education and economic growth in Africa. They contend that:

"Between 1970 and 1995, Sub-Saharan African countries, on average spent 3.7% of GDP and 14.9%of government budget on education compared to the (world's) averages of 3.35% and 12.6% respectively. It is, therefore, possible that the low stock of education human capital in Africa is due to *inefficiency* in the educational system and/or the emigration of educated people" [49].

South Sudan furnishes the most extreme example of how social policy could be constrained by governance deficits. The ongoing political instability has brought about quick gains that are short-lived for political actors [50]. But South Sudanese children today are "three times less likely to attend primary school than children in non-conflict contexts" [1]. The failure is due to a perfect storm of "resource abundance, poor development performance, authoritarianism and civil conflict" [51].

These examples show that choices about educational change are constrained by governance structures and attitudes embedded in patronage, clientelism and corruption. These factors erode state legitimacy, strengthen the grip of vested interests, reduce the level of service delivery and limit the reach and depth of social policy [3]. Boak [4] alludes to this fact when he argues:

"Where states are weak and lack legitimacy they are forced to provide favours to strong interest groups in order to preserve their power base. In these contexts, formal and informal institutions are not only distinct but sometimes at odds with each other and informal rules of games subvert formal ones. Formal institutions are therefore purely facades, masking the reality of the dealings behind them." [4].

More heat will be shed on this as we turn to discuss "governance" as a sub-set of the narrative of educational change in the East African Community.

Governance

The Dutch Strategic Governance & Corruption Analysis (SGACA) provides a systematic and structured tool for analysing the governance of educational change in the EAC using three dimensions [9].

The first is *Foundational Factors.* If the term "governance" stands for processes of decision-making [6], then it is Kenya who may, if it chooses to do so, disproportionately dictate the policy agenda and its pace in the EAC just as it did to the education systems of Tanzania and Uganda in 1967. The prime reason is Kenya's GDP makes up 37% of the total of EAC's, a disparity that will not augur well with Rwanda's GDP of just 6%, Burundi's 2%; and the fact that Kenya is the outlet for 80% of Uganda's transit traffic [13]. Kenya's narrative of what change entails may always define the bloc's consensus. Moreover, the member states collectively have considerable infrastructure deficits which will over the next few decades force the EAC's hands to channel resources into costly infrastructural projects, eventually biting a huge chunk off sectors such as education. These are structural background issues in the EAC which may impact education.

The second dimension is about *Institutional Factors.* Stakeholders in the EAC enterprise are the least to be duly and roundly consulted in formal settings, according to Mathieson [13]. The EAC Summit and Council are likely to exert tremendous power and influence in regional matters, a supranational attitude that may affect individual nations' engagement of non-state actors in governance of social services including education. This situation could be further complicated by the thin line between the "national" and the "regional" in the very increasing policies being packaged as regional goodies when in fact they are not!

For example, South Sudan's premature ascent into the trade bloc was a glaring error by commission on the side of the EAC. There was no way the most fragile nation on earth, a rentier state[xiv] with an enclave economy, massive governance deficits and a bloody civil war raging across the entire country could be "eligible" for membership in the EAC.

But Kenya's huge economic interests in South Sudan overrode EAC's eligibility criteria; and the other member countries had to cave in to Kenya's insistence that the time was ripe for a new member to join the club. Uganda backed Kenya for fear the regional hegemon would literally outflank it on the new frontier of their economic interests, South Sudan. Thus, what was essentially Kenya's national interest was repackaged as a regional good. The ability to split between the national and regional will increasingly come under scrutiny as the chorus for fast tracked political federation gathers speed in the EAC.

The third and last dimension is of the governance analysis framework is for *Context & Key Actors/Stakeholders*. For the member countries and their constituents, the temptation may be hard to resist when it comes to complying with donors whose financing of EAC's establishment and projects is likely to favour donors' own narrative of what change means. In 2013/2014 budget, EAC member countries contributed just 28% while the lion's share worth 65% was thrown into the fray by EAC's donors [13].

So, the prime actors of the drive for regionalization have little to back up their commitments! Moreover, the member countries' commitments to other regional bodies and protocols such as IGAD, SADC, COMESA and ECCAS [[xv]] will put competing demands on them and possibly create situations where conflict of interests will be hard to atone. The picture is, therefore, clear: integration, much as it is desired, is going to prove anything but clinical.

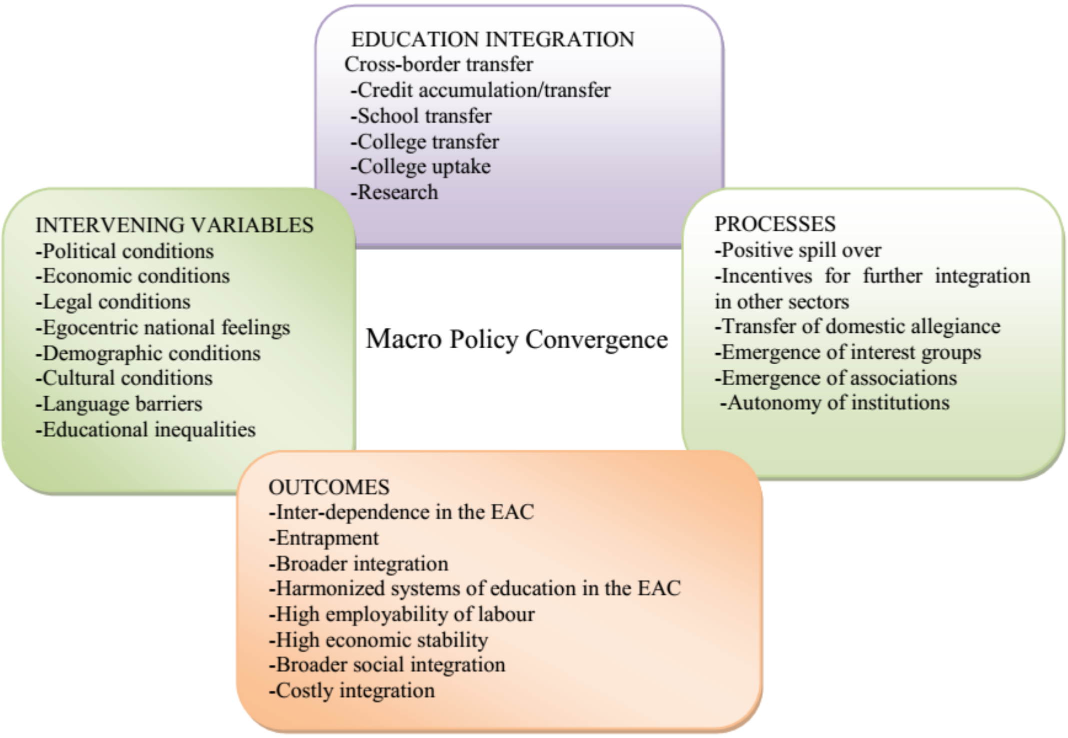

Fig-4: Conceptualising Education Integration in the EAC Odebero [52]

In short, the history of state formation, political competition, revenue base, and state-society relations in and among the EAC member countries points to a simple need to approach the desired goal of political federation with consummate tact if it is to translate into tangible macro policy convergences, particularly in the case of educational change and its governance.

Issues & Criticisms

The EAC's drive towards regionalisation of trade and politics is still a modest one in which the desired outcome would be to see policy emulation and diffusion among the member countries on grounds of its geography, linguistic community and, perhaps more importantly, similar stages of economic growth and institutional development [53, 5].

A way forward for the member countries with regard to policy convergence on educational change would be to strive for a process of "partial regionalisation of education involving increased student and staff mobility, widespread policy borrowing and attempts to enhance the regional dimension of curricula at secondary and higher levels" [32].

One good example is to improve chances of smooth transition from primary to secondary education by introducing a soft cycle just as Rwanda did in 2009. Coupled with school fee abolition, Rwanda's new 9-year cycle spurred an increase of 25% in student numbers in just one year [35]. Uganda's policy change on making secondary education affordable is another commendable piece for mutual borrowing. Girl children are 49% more likely to attend secondary school as of 2009 because Uganda simply abolished fees for lower secondary education [35].

Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda also offer valuable lessons in government expenditure in education as well as development performance. As a result of spending over 5% of its GDP on education, Kenya's net enrolment ratio increased from 62% in 1999 to 83% in 2009. Tanzania followed suit and saw its spending as a percentage of GDP rose from 2% in 1999 to 6.2% in 2010. As a result, it has cut down the number of out-of-school children from 3.2 million to just 137, 000 [[xvi]] [35]. There is equally a lot to learn from Rwanda's successful experimentation with the developmental state model, proving that a dedicated political leadership could produce development results [7].

But there are problems. First, transformation will require popular engagement at a time when the wider public in the region is far withdrawn from the discourse on the East African Community, particularly policies being devised and executed at the "regional" level. Second, political succession in the member countries will prove a big obstacle to coordinated reforms in the interest of realising the political federation [54]. Third, the EAC is in essence an elite undertaking involving a potential clash between two opposing schools, rent-oriented and export-oriented regional elites. So, there will continue to be divergent policy positions [xvii] [7].

Fourth, under any regime for educational change, the demographic explosion in the region and "the pressures on the skilled labour market and the re-emerging need for social differentiation in the ranks of the new elites [xviii] will push towards a greater place for private provision of (secondary and higher education, in particular)" [55]. Fifth, if access to quality education remains strongly associated with household wealth, the poor will more likely be left out of school in bigger numbers. The ensuing debate on educational equity will take into account emblematic policies such as privatization [xix] within the scope of political economy of education in the EAC.

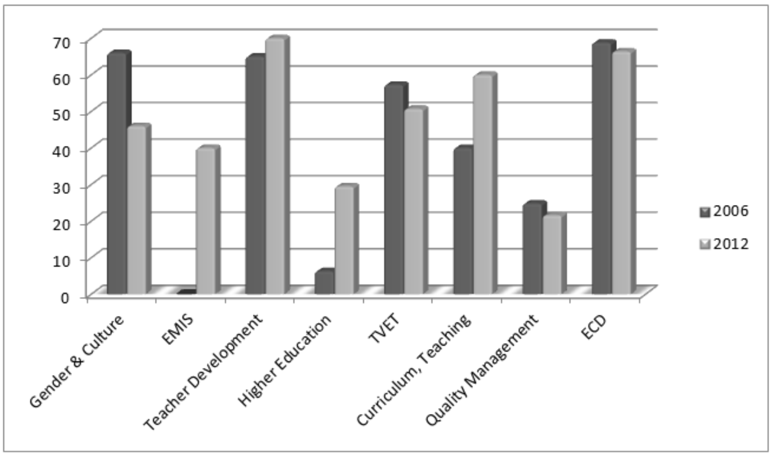

Fig-5: Priority Areas for All EAC Member Countries ADEA [14]

Other related issues will contribute to understanding the political economy of education as such. Among them are the political effects of the pluralisation of development actors, limitations of political patronage and questions of civil society empowerment [56]. The assumption is that member countries' desire for policy convergence on the nature and scope of educational change in the EAC is by and large the outcome of an eagerness to improve their regulatory competition in the face of a perceived rapid economic integration of markets in East Africa [5].

CONCLUSION

The imperative for continued processes of educational reform in the East African Community is constituted by the variables of nation-building, economic development and regional integration. The state is the main actor in this endeavour together with its citizenry through the support of donors and stakeholders such as the private sector and civil society with varying interests for students, schools and the larger educational system. Dynamics of governance show that member countries' conscious and organised attempts to change public education are constrained by the range of incentives and disincentives that shape their contexts in this economic block.

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[i]The East African Community (EAC), headquartered in Arusha, Tanzania, is an ambitious, regional economic bloc first established in 1967 and revived in 2000 to create a single currency union and a political federation for six countries in East Africa (Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan).

[ii] It deals with interpersonal relations at central and local government levels.

[iii] It is all about what individual decisions amount to in terms of whether to attend school or not, drop out or continue, etc.

[iv] Kenya and Tanzania literally disagreed over shared infrastructure, leading to closure of borders in 1977; while Tanzania invaded Uganda to oust President Idi Amin in 1978

[v] South Sudan’s membership in 2016 adds about 8.3-12.3 million to the total population

[vi] https://www.eac.int/eac-quick-facts

[vii] For example, “Kenya is interested in exporting surplus capital and Uganda in an outlet for its surplus labour, while Tanzania wants to realise a Pan-African vision” [7]. Almost invariably, Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan are in for new-found identity and a gateway to their landlocked countries.

[viii] This was when the country was part of the old Sudan.

[ix] The Government of Rwanda has been able to transform the country’s education system in about two decades because it has the “sustained commitment of politicians and administrators to invest the necessary resources to achieve specific objectives and willingness to make and implement policy despite opposition” [3].

[x] http://www.childrenofsouthsudaninfo/south-sudan-launches-first-ever-comprehensive-national-curriculum/

[xi] “If primary school enrolment rates at independence in African countries had been as high as those in OECD countries, the average annual growth rate of per capita income in Africa would have been 2.37% instead of the 0.9% recorded in the last four decades; a growth that would have more than doubled per capita GDP over the 40-year period” [49].

[xii] This table excludes South Sudan.

[xiii] Stein (2009:13) argues further that “aid and withholding aid have been effective in breaking down political resistance to orthodox reform and in shaping East African economies in a neoliberal image.”

[xiv] A state that vastly relies on one source for its revenues (such as oil in the case of South Sudan) but without creating growth in the other sectors of the economy nor providing quality health care and education to the masses.

[xv] These acronyms stand for Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, Southern African

Development Community, Common Market for Eastern & Southern Africa and Economic Community of Central African States.

[xvi] Sadly, Uganda's spending as a percentage of GDP has dropped from 3.5% to just 2.2% [35].

[xvii] One side is pursuing rents in the form of keeping physical and administrative barriers to trade. The other side is after increasing exports through removal of barriers. "It will become an increasingly important weakness if bread-and-butter issues arising out of the integration process, such as labour migration, come to popular attention ahead of any public education on the potential benefits of the process" [7].

[xviii] African middle class is at 330 million as of 2011, effectively boosting consumer demand, business, travel and, importantly, widening the scope of private provision of health and education [38].

[xix] For example, a case for privatisation has always been made along the lines that it happens "de facto" because of the state's inaction "in the face of growing demand for education and/or the changing educational needs of an emerging middle class" [5].