

THE INSTITUTE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

NAIROBI, KENYA

ENHANCING QUALITY EDUCATION

BACKGROUND

In 2003, our former President, the late Mwai Kibaki, launched the widely praised Free Primary Education program soon after taking office. Under this, all fees for primary schools were abolished, confirming Kenya's commitment to ensuring that all children have access to free and compulsory primary education. However, taking into account the status of education in Kenya today, we realize that only 63% of Kenyan boys and 68% of girls complete primary education, and only 53% of both boys and girls enroll in secondary school.

The government aims to achieve universal primary education as part of its commitment to international goals like, the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, the quality of education needs to be addressed, and thus, improving the quality of education should be the primary goal. This includes enhancing the curriculum, improving teacher training and professional development, and ensuring that schools have adequate facilities and learning materials. Kenya strives to achieve this through the competency-based curriculum (CBC), which is designed to emphasize the significance of developing skills and knowledge, and how to apply those competencies to real life situations. At the end of the learning period the learner is molded to have values such as love and responsibility.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the gains made in achieving universal primary education, some problems remain that greatly hinder the quality of education in schools. These are:

- Having no teachers, or having untrained teachers. This is sometimes contributed to by a school's inability to pay an adequate number of trained teachers thus resulting in getting a cheaper option. As a result, the students don't receive proper quality education.
- Lack of funding for education. There are up to 1.5 million school aged children in Kenya today who don't attend any school at all. One of two Kenyan girls will never attend school. At times, this is because of period poverty, gender norms, cultural norms, early marriages and even early pregnancies. Due to such instances, such girls do not get funding for their education. Also, nine in ten children from poor households will fail to complete even basic primary education.
- No classrooms. There are more than 50 students in some rural schools in Kenya today in contrast to the national average classroom number of students which is about 38 students. Overcrowded classrooms often lead to insufficient assessment time, increase in illness risks, increase in disciplinary problems, less personalized instructions and many more.
- Lack of learning materials. Outdated or worn-out textbooks are often shared by 6 or more students in many parts of the country. Teachers also need materials which help them prepare for their lessons and guide their lessons.

- Lack of proper facilities. Some schools even lack basic facilities like running water and even toilets. When girls do not have access to safe toilets, they are often harassed or attacked when looking for a private place to go. At times some schools may even lack dining halls where meals should be taken.
- Hunger and poor nutrition. Lack of a balanced diet which is given to children especially in boarding schools, often leads to illnesses such as marasmus.
- Lack of talent identification programs. A child may be very talented but is then hindered by limited financial support, lack of equipment to facilitate talent identification and lack of knowledgeable coaches to facilitate these programs.

PROPOSING SOLUTIONS

These problems could be addressed by supporting schools to enhance quality education. By providing adequate funding to different schools, we could:

- Introduce a long term and sustainable school feeding program in such schools and to build dining halls for schools that do not have them.
- Recruit well trained and sufficient number of teachers in schools.
- Introduce talent identification programs in our curriculum today like: debate competitions, science fairs in order to showcase their different innovations, sporting competitions, exchange programs and many more.
- Increase supply of adequate chairs, desks and books both for teachers and students.
- Build enough classrooms to accommodate the right number of students in each classroom.
- Administer scholarships to students with talents that come from poor backgrounds.
- Provide free sanitary towels to adolescent girls for comfortability during learning.
- Provide security of learners from wars that hinder effective learning.
- Provide effective infrastructure and materials to learners with disability.

CONCLUSION

Supporting these schools through providing adequate funding in order to enhance quality education would be the best solution to addressing all these problems. For if we provide quality education to one generation, poverty would be automatically eradicated from society. By providing every student with quality education, and the materials they need for class and to do their assignments, we can help students from all backgrounds learn and thrive.