

Conference Theme Paper:

The Role of Education in Poverty Eradication

Human Rights Participatory Growth and Poverty Eradication Program
(HRPEP)

CONFERENCE RATIONALE

Education plays a crucial role in alleviating poverty by addressing health issues, gender inequality, access to education, as well as facilitating skills development. However, global barriers to accessing education still exist today. Collaboration is therefore key to increasing the accessibility of education.

Education is critical to the ability to improve one's social and economic conditions. The importance of education, both formal and informal, is multidimensional, beneficial for literacy and skill development, and social education. Conversely, although education is often misconceptualized as being limited to reading and writing other forms of education have risen to prove to be essential in our ever changing world. However, it is often women and children who suffer the most as they are least likely to access opportunities to access it.

This conference aims to bring together actors who focus on the importance of education as a means of eradicating poverty. With poverty continuing to have a great impact around our world, the purpose of this conference arises from the proven and accepted principle that education is key to poverty eradication. Using this as a starting point the intention of the conference is to discuss the role of education in poverty eradication and share best demonstrated practices. Additionally, the intention is to also engage those working in development, government, the non profit sector, and the private sector in constructive dialogue on how, using education as a tool, we can eradicate poverty across the globe.

Education & Skills Gained

Education is linked to improved social and economic conditions. An integrated approach suggests looking at education in terms of literacy, skills development and social education by making connections and seeing how each of these aspects impacts the other. This can be achieved through "informal" education, or developmental activities such as skills training. A multifaceted approach of empowering people through skills training has proven to uplift families and communities. The development of skills emphasizes self-worth and dignity, enabling individuals to realize their rights and how to demand them. Furthermore, practical skills gained through education, such as learning, leads to an increase in social productivity and capacity building.

Education & Women:

Having access to education promotes gender equality, which improves and empowers the lives of women. Women with access to education are more likely to be able to earn their own income and develop independence. The practical skills obtained through education, lead to a personal increase in productivity, wages, and income.

Education & Children:

The *Education for all Global Monitoring Report* reveals that in Latin America there is a connection between the number of years of secondary school a woman completed and the amount expected (or completed) by her child. This demonstrates that women's access to education is an essential part of breaking the cycle of poverty for her children.

SUCCESS STORIES

The Colour of Poverty

In 2007, the Colour of Justice Network announced the launch of the Colour of Poverty Campaign that aims to bring together Ontarians in a community-based effort to raise awareness about the serious problem of poverty within racialized communities in the province. With the support of the Department of Canadian Heritage, fact sheets have been created to address the different aspects of racialized poverty including its detrimental impacts on education and learning, health and well-being, employment, income levels, justice and policing, immigration and settlement, housing, and homelessness and food security in Ontario. By raising awareness of the rising rates of poverty in Ontario and its different impacts on individuals and their communities, the Colour of Poverty's work continues to be pivotal in the fight against poverty through using education as a tool to tackle the issue of poverty. The Colour of Poverty continues to hold engaging speaking engagements among students and community members to spread awareness surrounding the different factors that contribute to poverty in Ontario.

Proyecto Joven (Youth Project)

The Proyecto Joven in Latin America combines training and work experience for youth 16 to 29. It also provides instructions for life skills, transportation, health care, books, materials, clothes, and in some cases, child care to reach young women¹. In Argentina, young women 21 and older experienced a 10 percent increase in the probability of employment measured against a control group. In Chile, the increase was 21 percent, and in Peru it was 7.5 percent². These life skills help youth make more informed decisions about education, health, personal finances, and conflict resolutions³.

The Mubarak Kohl Initiative

The engagement of employers in non-formal training and in technical and vocational schools shows evidence of increasing skills development. An example of where employers have worked successfully with secondary technical schools is found in Egypt. In 1994, Egypt adapted the German dual system to its secondary technical schools with support from German Technical Cooperation (GTZ)⁴. Disadvantaged youth spent two days each week in school learning theory and four days in a factory where they acquired practical skills. Employers participating in the

¹ Arvil V. Adam, *The Role of Skills Development in Overcoming Social Disadvantage*. Education for all Global Monitoring Report. Page 6.

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.* page 7.

program helped set occupational standards, design curricula, provide practical training, and assess student performance⁵. Upon completion, students enrolled in the Mubarak Kohl Initiative – Dual System (MKI-DS) program received a secondary education degree and a certificate of experience from the private sector⁶. A tracer study conducted in 2009 for the MKI-DS program found that 85% of students completing the program were offered full-time jobs by their employers.

Nelson Mandela Children's Fund Canada

Founded in 1998, the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund Canada promotes Nelson Mandela's vision of social justice for children and youth. Globally, the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund financially supports programs and activities in South Africa that enable disadvantaged children to overcome post-Apartheid challenges. In particular, this charity tackles: development issues, disability issues, HIV/AIDS, homelessness and poverty through youth leadership, fundraising and acquiring volunteers to assist these children.

An example of one of their initiative is the Schools Safety Seminar which facilitates youth activism against violence that women and children face. Other examples include; the Teenage Pregnancy Seminar that supports a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by teenage parents, the Reading Initiative that promotes a culture of reading through visit centers such as orphanages, hospitals, youth clubs and a primary schools. Lastly, the Youth Parliament initiative celebrates the life and commitment of Mr. Mandela to the children of South Africa. In addition to South Africa and the world at large these initiatives are pivotal to ensuring that both children and youth alike are given opportunities to be leaders in their communities through empowerment.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development

The International Fund for Agricultural Development, a United Nations agency, was established in 1977 with the aim of eradicating rural poverty in developing countries. One example of their work can be demonstrated in Ghana where the IFAD has supported 16 projects and has provided as much as US\$224.9 million in loans approval. In the northeast area of the country, the agency supported small scale ruminant (i.e. goats, cattle, and sheep) breeding businesses for women. With the program, the women were educated on how to take better care of herds of sheep and goats through improved rearing and feeding practices. This program enabled the women in this particular part of Ghana gain more independence, increased their personal food security and most importantly generate income to send their children to school.

CUSO-VSO

CUSO-VSO, which is also known as Cuso International, works to send volunteers to work on collaborative development projects overseas. Their people to people approach to provide solutions on development issues takes place over 40 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*

and the Caribbean. As one of their main goals is education, 30 per cent of their volunteers are working in education overseas.

CUSO-VSO has three main objectives on education: to improve the quality of teachers and professional development centers in developing areas, improve the management of the education system, and make sure education is an all-encompassing area for all learners. The organization supports 17 education programs worldwide and looks forward to contributing to the sustainability of the education system in the future.

WHAT TOPICS WILL BE DISCUSSED/PRESENTED ON?

- Gender Equality
- Maternal Health
- Economic Access
- Skill Development
- Different Types of Education

WHAT WILL THE DAY LOOK LIKE?

The following is a schedule featuring the itinerary for the day of the conference:

9:00 am - 9:30am	Registration/Performance
9:30am - 9:35am	Moderator's Welcome and Introduction (Lorne Foster, Professor, York University)
9:35am - 10:05am	Keynote Speaker (David Langtry, Acting Canadian Human Rights Commissioner)
10:10am - 10:40am	Keynote Speaker (Joanne Doyle, Senior V.P. Community Impact, UNITED WAY)
10:45am - 12:00pm	Seminar A
12:00pm - 12:45pm	LUNCH
12:45pm - 12:55pm	Convene in Main Hall
1:00pm - 2:30pm	Seminar B
2:40pm - 4:00pm	Panel Discussion
4:00pm - 4:30pm	Closing Address (Hon. Roy McMurtry, Chancellor, York University)

Additional Information

If you would like additional information on the conference and/or the Human Rights Participatory Growth and Poverty Eradication Program (HRPEP) please contact:

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