The Global Education Imperative

How can the international community work together to educate the over 60 million children not in school, build the needed 4 million classrooms and train the necessary 2 million teachers?

Key Points

- Governments must take greater ownership of education.
- An increased level of female education is critical.
- Private sector engagement is necessary.

Synopsis

In an introductory speech, Ban Ki-Moon said education is the priority of his second term as Secretary-General of the United Nations. " Education empowers people and transforms lives, " he said. " It gives them hope, confidence and dignity. It is the foundation for a more peaceful and sustainable future. "

The challenges of education are significant: 61 million children are not in primary school; 15 million children are working rather than attending school; 25 thousand girls per day are being forced into marriage and taken out of education.

Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Prime Minister of Denmark, stated the importance that governments take ownership of education, saying that daily school attendance should be mandatory in all countries. She described the economic imperative of education. " If all students in all low-income families acquired basic reading skills, we would have 171 million brought out of poverty, " she said.

Thorning-Schmidt also drew attention to the special focus required in education for girls, saying that 32 million of the children out of school are female. She cited cultural and religious choices in some countries as being responsible and described the importance of focused aid efforts, such as Denmark ' s initiatives in Afghanistan, which encourage the attendance of girls in schools.

Jim Yong Kim, President, The World Bank, Washington DC, described the importance of best practise techniques being applied in education. " We can leapfrog generations of bad practise by taking the learnings which exist and applying them in poorer countries, " he said. He also advocated wider adoption of apprenticeship schemes of the type used in Switzerland and Germany.

Hikmet Ersek, President and Chief Executive Officer, Western Union Company, USA, said that for business to have greater engagement in education initiatives, it must better understand the different needs of education in its local environment. He confirmed his belief that education is a compelling business investment which correlates with the long-term goals of shareholders. " Education means growth. Education means potential. Educated people create jobs, " he said.

Omobola Johnson, Minister of Communication Technology of Nigeria, spoke about the potential for information communication technology (ICT) to improve the efficacy of education and also of its limitations. " ICT cannot replace classrooms, " she said. " But it can complement them. The target of 2 million extra classrooms is achievable if we leverage technology. "

Disclosures

This summary was written by Martin Rushe. The views expressed are those of certain participants in the discussion and do not necessarily reflect the views of all participants or of the World Economic Forum.