

OPINION

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AU Year of Education is a great opportunity to lead

When African Union Heads of State gathered in Addis Ababa for their 37th General Session on February 17, education took the centre stage with 2024 marked as the organisation's "Year of Education".

The dawn call for education reform was led by Mohamed Ould Cheikh Ghazouan, the President of Mauritania and new chair of the AU, who highlighted that high-quality education in Africa was key to achieving sustainable development. Kenya's first Lady Rachel Ruto also attended a special session for first ladies across the AU to highlight the importance of empowering women and girls through education, showing strong political commitment. Access, quality, equity and relevance are the key themes of the special period.

Kenya now has an opportunity to show other countries in the continent what education transformation looks like. In 2023, President William Ruto delivered a working party report that identified far-reaching reforms. It had foundational learning; science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); and technology, equity (including girls and children with disabilities), youth upskilling and strengthened technical and vocational education and training (TVET); and higher education.

Accompanied by now-recorded levels of government investment in education, 2024 is the year to deliver these policy reforms and achieve the AU's ambitions for education transformation right here.

The stakes could not be higher. Across the continent post-Covid education systems are nearing breaking point. The World Bank estimates that 90 per cent of children in Sub-Saharan Africa cannot read a simple sentence at age 10 (defined as learning poverty) despite the vast majority now attending

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Richard King | Education



ing school. In Kenya, research findings of 2018 by the National Assessment Systems for Monitoring Learning Achievement (Naasma) showed low literacy rates in early years education (EVE). Further, 3.5 million youth aged 15-35 in Kenya are not in work or training. The Year of Education, therefore, could help focus all stakeholders to ensure education leads to productive and dignified employment for all.

The year presents an unparalleled opportunity to mobilise stakeholders towards a common goal. Ensuring that education serves as a pathway to meaningful and dignified employment for all individuals. Some specific policy reforms that will make a difference this year include the revisions to the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) recently announced by Education Cabinet Secretary Ezekiel Machogori, which could support a more effective curriculum and offer chance to upskill teachers.

Furthermore, prioritising the quality of early-childhood education, implementation of the comprehensive school system and investing in foundational learning are among key steps to prevent future crises in education. Additionally, focusing on enhancing the quality of TVET—including updating the curriculum to make it more relevant and providing training for tutors—is essential. By implementing the reforms, stakeholders can work towards making education a catalyst for equitable development and prosperity across the nation.

The year is an opportunity for Kenya to show leadership across the region on education. But to do so, all stakeholders need to rally behind the intention, ambition and commendable political will signalled by the presidential reforms and align for the sake of the children who are missing out. May this be the turning point for greater quality education for all.

Mr King is the regional director, Education Development Trust. rkking@educationdevelopmenttrust.com.



Students in Nairobi last week, going for mid-term.

Avoid a Meta outage repeat

Meta Platforms—Facebook, Instagram and Threads—were down for hundreds of thousands of users across the globe on Tuesday according to outage tracking website Downtidetector.com.

The disruptions started around 10:00 am ET with more than 300,000 reports of outages for Facebook and about 40,000 reports for Instagram, it said.

We're aware people are having trouble accessing our services. We are working on this now," Meta spokesperson Andy Stone said in a post on X.

The issues appeared around 10:20am ET, impacting all social media sites' apps and website. Downtidetector, which monitors online outages, shows more than 200,000 Americans have problems with Facebook but over 30,000 reported the same with Instagram—Messenger has a little over 8,000.

Reportedly, the outage seems to have impacted various kinds of businesses and publishers who relied on Facebook for marketing and various outreach activities. Ever since the platforms went off the grid, several users were seen flocking to other

Global media platforms should ensure 99.999 per cent uptime

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Jackson Kimeu | Technology



platforms to find out the potential reason and cause behind the outage. The X platform showed #Facebookdown trending with thousands of users sharing memes and their take on the outage.

In past years, several social media platforms have experienced a similar event. Amidst such practices and principles of cloud governance, such global media platforms should ensure 99.999 per cent uptime as per the Uptime Institute's Tier Standard.

Mr Kimeu is a specialist in cloud governance and cybersecurity consultancy. jacksonkimeu@gmail.com.

The economic and social returns of investment in sanitation must be spotlighted

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Dominic O'Neill | Sanitation



Make Kenya a sanitation powerhouse

As Kenya readies to host the Water and Sanitation Investors Conference (WASIC), one can only laud its vision for universal access to sanitation and hygiene by building a vibrant sanitation economy and wooing investments.

Kenya's sanitation economy could be worth \$2.8 billion, probably shattering long-held views of sanitation being the dirty side of water or waste. That can be the next frontier for impact investment. Global progress on sustainable development goal (SDG) target 6.2 (on universal access to sanitation) lags severely behind, and countries must build resilient sanitation economies that can provide safe-by-managed sanitation to millions while hedging against environmental and health risks. With the possibility to generate jobs, livelihoods and businesses along a robust value chain built around toilets, national sanitation economies offer prospects for social and financial returns on investment.

Over the years, Kenya has focused on building the sanitation sector's institutional and regulatory frameworks to attract financing. Consistent and deliberate efforts to deliver constitutional rights to sanitation services include the 2021 National Water and Sanitation Strategy, which recognises the need for sewers and non-sewered sanitation.

In emerging markets, where small and medium-sized enterprises create 70 per cent of formal jobs, the sanitation economy can create even more jobs by scaling up sanitation solutions. We're not just improving public health but also investing in local economies and supply chains. With women entrepreneurs often leading the sanitation and menstrual hygiene sectors, investing in it strengthens the societies and economies that they fuel.

The saying "Tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today" is especially true on our rapidly warming planet. But amid the harsh realities of climate change, an opportunity exists: Building a circular sanitation economy that reduces methane emissions and sustainably reuses wastewater.

Climate-induced floods devastate sanitation and hygiene access. Investing in climate-resilient water sanitation and hygiene infrastructure strengthens resilience against these disasters. And nature-based systems can pre-emptively reduce emissions. A circular sanitation approach holds huge potential of reusing 3.8 trillion litres of human waste yearly. Strategic investments are needed to make Kenya the sanitation powerhouse it can be. The market is ready for investment, with over 39 of 64 utilities receiving ratings of BB and above for their creditworthiness after evaluation by the national regulator. With global water and sanitation leaders attending WASIC, the economic and social returns of investment in sanitation must be spotlighted front and centre. Actors like the UN's Sanitation and Hygiene Fund (SHF) are committed to partnering with countries such as Kenya to build a thriving sanitation economy and menstrual health and hygiene market. There, all women and girls can exercise their agency as consumers as members of the economic workforce and the community fabric.

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