



Association for the  
Development of  
Education in  
Africa

Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)  
African Development Bank - Temporary Relocation Agency  
B.P. 323 - 1002 Tunis Belvédère - Tunisia  
Tel: (+216) 71 10 35 03  
Fax: (+216) 71 25 26 69  
Web: [www.adeanet.org](http://www.adeanet.org)

## African conference on the integration of African languages and cultures into education

Draft Concept Note

### **Context and rationale**

The use of African languages as means of instruction is viewed as one of the key factor in the quest to improve access to as well as quality of education in Africa. Indeed, the school ineffectiveness (i.e. high rate of drop-out, repetition among learners at all levels of instruction) is to some large extent attributed to the fact that African students are required to become literate, learn content and pass examinations in a language that they often neither master (in listening / speaking) nor practice (at home / among peers). Repetition is not only cost inefficient, but discouragement of learners can also lead to drop-out, relapse into illiteracy and the *de facto* failure to realize the right to education.

A major stocktaking study commissioned in 2005 by ADEA, UIE (now UIL) and GTZ showed that multilingual education should be promoted as a strategic choice to improve learning among learners and the effectiveness of the educational system including primary, secondary and tertiary education and non-formal education. Assessments have demonstrated that students at bilingual schools in Mali, Zambia, Niger, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Nigeria fare better in mathematics, sciences and languages – including French or English – than students in monolingual institutions. Indeed, Hon. Nangolo Mbumba, Namibian Minister of Education, stated at the 2005 Windhoek Ministerial Conference that “The use of local languages in education systems is a vital factor in enhancing the relevance, efficiency and quality of education in Africa.”

The ADEA, UIE and GTZ study, validated during the 2005 Windhoek Conference and presented to Ministers of Education during the ADEA Biennale in Libreville, Gabon in 2006 suggested that multilingual policies which promote additive bilingualism among learners should be designed and implemented in order to optimize learning and education in Africa. This type of educational reform requires appropriate and sustained political commitment, social mobilization and careful planning and investment of adequate financial resources in order to build capacity for the implementation of multilingual policies in education, with the overall aim to improve access to and quality of education.

On the basis of the conclusions from the Windhoek Conference, an orientation policy guide has been developed by UIL. Along this policy guide, and in follow up to 2008 International Year of Languages proclaimed by the United Nations to address issues of linguistic diversity (in the context of cultural diversity), respect for all languages, and multilingualism, ADEA and UIL will in 2009 organize a follow-up conference in order to develop in an active and participatory way with national experts these policy guidelines and to adopt them for the integration of African languages and cultures into education. The

Conference will address the challenges related to both political will as well as technical experience and capacity development to the introduction of meaningful, but necessary reform in African-language-in-education policies and practices and therefore to the improvement of access to and quality of education for all in Africa.

The Conference is embedded in framework of regional agreements promoting African languages, multilingualism and cultural diversity such as

- Draft Charter for the Promotion of African Languages in Education (1996);
- Harare Declaration (1997);
- Nairobi Plan of Action for Cultural Industries in Africa (2005);
- Proceedings of the Regional Conference and expert meeting on bilingual education and the use of local languages (2005);
- Language Plan of Action, African Union (2006);
- Bamako Call to Action (2007);
- African Statement on the Power of Youth and Adult Learning and Education for Africa's Development (2008).

### **Objectives**

The Conference will address the theme of integration of African languages and cultures into education and engage African education ministries and professionals and experts from Ministries of Education in dialogue to exchange – on the basis of the knowledge accumulated by ADEA in this area – the lessons learned on concrete practices to successfully promote and implement effective multilingual education policies. The use of African languages as languages of instruction will constitute an entry point into broader dialogue on education grounded in African cultures and visions.

The African Conference on the integration of African languages and cultures into education will serve three concrete purposes:

1. To further deepen the lessons learned from analytical work on bilingual education and use of African languages as languages of instruction in order to contribute to informed decision-making and to improve the understanding of conditions for successful language-in-education policies and programs, through:
  - a. Going more in-depth into some seminal examples in Africa that illustrate the implementation of the recommendations of the regional Conference and Expert Meeting on bilingual education and the use of local languages in Windhoek (2005);
  - b. Submission to decision-makers of an evidence-based advocacy guide
  - c. Indicating what advocacy measures have been taken since the Windhoek Conference.
2. To present to experts guidelines on the development and implementation of language-in-education policies, work with them in a participatory manner in order to reach consensus among experts on these policy guidelines, and on the basis of the synthesis of the participatory work have the policy guidelines appreciated and finalized by the Ministers.
3. To contribute to the realization of the objectives of the African Union's Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education in Africa, particularly those related to the area of focus "Gender and Culture", one of the seven areas of focus of the Plan of Action.

### **Conference aims and procedures**

The African conference on the integration of African languages and cultures into education has been scheduled to take place from 20 to 22 January 2010 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

To prepare the Ministers and other participants for the Conference, jointly with UIL ADEA will publish and disseminate an orientation policy guide that includes an in-depth review of the (policy) lessons learned from the analytical work ADEA and its partners have carried out on bilingual education and the use of African languages as languages of instruction in the context of the 2005 Windhoek Conference and the ADEA Biennales of 2003 (Grand-Baie, Mauritius) and 2006 (Libreville, Gabon).

It is expected that the process of frank and open dialogue based on solid analytical work and evidence produced at country level that has fed into the Windhoek Conference will encourage genuine peer-review that will enrich and validate the discussions on policy guidelines for the integration of African languages and cultures into education. The focus of the Conference will be on implementation of multilingual education policies at the national level.

The Conference will be in two parts. An experts' workshop will gather experts in order to engage in a process of peer review of positive outcomes around reforms undertaken at country level. This process will involve countries that are implementing multilingual policies, countries that are at the beginning of the process, and countries that are watching. It will present and discuss the policy guidelines, strategies for its integration into national programs, and challenges and implications of this integration. The subsequent Ministerial meeting will present the policy guidelines to the Ministers of Education for their appreciation and finalization. It will include at least one round table on with Ministers of Education who have already started with the implementation of African languages.

Dissemination of the messages, outputs and lessons learned from the conference is planned via publications (e.g. a report of the conference) and via the ADEA website. In order to provide quality products that are able to attract the attention of policy makers and civil society at regional and national levels, media coverage of this event through on-site reports and subsequent in-depth analyses for wide-spread diffusion and exchange will be organized. This permits at the same time for ADEA's Working Group on Communication for Education and Development (COMED) to provide on-the-job training activities, to increase expertise on education issues of young talented African journalists and their ability to express education issues, in particular related to African languages and cultures, co-gently and provide access to national and international data sources.

### **Expected results**

A direct output identified is the publication and dissemination of a policy guide on the implementation of African languages as languages of instruction. (Longer-term) outcome indicators identified to monitor and evaluate the impact of the event are proportion of national policies and programs that include measures aimed specifically at tackling challenges relating to use of African languages as languages of instruction.

Furthermore, it is expected that through a broad-based consultative process that will be initiated at the conference and pursued and strengthened in follow-up of the conference, consensus will be built among a group of countries around policy guidelines to be recom-

mended to a group of countries to take into consideration to be used and put into practice, and that as such will contribute to sound and sustainable national education sector programs through the prioritization in these programs of African-language-in-education policies. Through a process of peer learning in and through action, this group of countries, in the context of a so-called “inter-country quality node” (ICQN), is expected to establish clear working relations with strategic partners and to elaborate on a work program that includes the development and implementation of a communication strategy to accompany the ICQN process, as well as a special effort to disseminate the results of the ICQN upon completion. The learning process within the ICQN is expected to strengthen government’s capacity (not so much technical but especially institutional) to develop and implement policies and programs to improve learning outcomes and the effectiveness of the educational system including primary, secondary and tertiary education and non-formal education.

### **Partners involved**

For participation in the conference, a selected number of African countries will be invited. There will be a special effort to mobilize and continue to work with those countries that expressed the need and willingness to engage with this thematic in follow-up to the 2005 Windhoek Conference and that have made the issue of the integration of African languages and cultures into education into a priority policy question. Other countries invited will be at a different level of implementation of language policies; some countries will continue to do mobilization and sensitization work, while others will go much further in the implementation phase. On these bases, countries invited will be Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Congo, Cote d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia.

ADEA will seek the possibilities for concrete collaboration on the organization of the conference with regional and international (research) institutions (in particular ACALAN, AU Commission, ERNWACA/ROCARE, UIL, UNESCO BREDIA), and will also seek to work together with agencies such as BMZ and GTZ, CIDA, DfID, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, OIF, Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), and USAID, as well as ADEA Working Groups (such as the Working Group on Non-Formal Education and the Working Group on Books and Learning Materials) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Invitations will be sent to all ADEA member agencies, in particular. Other organizations to be invited are CREEA, SIL and the Spanish Cooperation. Furthermore, South-South Cooperation may also be an important aspect of the conference, in particular between African countries, Asia and Latin-America. Partners will assist with their long-standing overview of multilingual formal and non-formal education policies and practice.