



Association for the
Development of
Education in
Africa

Improving learning outcomes and educational quality through the use of African languages and cultures

Burkina Faso hosts a pan-African conference for the successful implementation of multilingual education policies from 20 to 22 January 2010

Tunis, January 14, 2010 - From 20 to 22 January 2010, Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, will host a conference on the integration of African languages and cultures in education, in which 26 African countries will take part.

The conference, jointly organized by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and Burkina Faso's Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy, will provide the opportunity for African ministries of education, education sector professionals, experts and academics, and development partners to engage in dialogue on the political and technical issues surrounding the introduction of reforms to promote multilingual education policies using African languages and cultures.

The use of African languages as teaching vehicles is recognized as a key factor in achieving quality education in Africa. It has been observed that school system inefficiency, reflected in high dropout and repetition rates, is largely due to the fact that children learn to read, acquire knowledge and take examinations in a language that they often have not mastered and do not speak.

A 2005 study on mother tongue instruction and bilingual education, commissioned by ADEA, the UIL and GTZ and presented at a conference in Windhoek, Namibia, demonstrated the need to promote multilingual education to improve learning outcomes and the efficiency of African education systems. Based on the conclusions of the conference, a policy guide was drafted.

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In Ouagadougou, the participants will discuss the lessons learned from practical experiences aimed at promoting and implementing effective multilingual education policies. They will consider these lessons in depth in order to gain a better understanding of the conditions required for success.

The conference will address the challenges relating to the political will, technical experience and capacity building needed to introduce the extensive but necessary reform of policies and practices concerning African languages in education, and consequently to improve the quality of education for all in Africa. Another aim is to contribute to the achievement of the goals of the African Union's Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education for Africa.

The conference will be divided into two parts. A one-day experts' workshop will concentrate on challenges and guiding principles for the development and implementation of policies on education through African languages. Questions considered will include: legal frameworks and policies; advocacy, particularly as addressed to communities; institutional strengthening and capacity building; evaluation of learning outcomes; curricula and training; research. The recommendations of the experts' meeting will then be presented to ministers for their validation.

The main outcome expected from the meeting is the adoption, and subsequent publication and dissemination of a policy guide on the implementation of reforms concerning multilingual education and the use of African languages as media of instruction.

Apart from Burkina Faso, the following countries are expected to send ministerial and technical staff to the conference: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Congo (Dem. Rep.), Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia.

Tunis, January 14, 2010.

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