

**Inter-country quality nodes from the standpoint of
Biennale follow-up**

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ADEA's mission is:

To act as a catalyst for innovative policies and practices conducive to change in education in Africa through the pooling of thinking, experiences, lessons learned and knowledge.

To this end, it has, among other things, given priority to the following:

- policy dialogue and sharing of knowledge and experience;
- exchange of knowledge on concepts and approaches conducive to convergence and operational synergies;
- identification of promising practices that should be analyzed and disseminated to strengthen the technical and institutional capacity of its components;
- networking of institutions and individuals who can make a joint contribution to the advancement of theory and/or action at the regional and sub-regional levels.

In addition, strategic objectives 3 and 4 of the strategic plan call for ADEA to:

- **provide knowledge and lessons learned from successful experiences** in areas that are critical to the **qualitative transformation** of education in Africa in order to **reinforce policies and capacity for reform**;
- **and to disseminate as widely as possible the messages and findings accumulated** by ADEA from policy dialogue, analytical research and exchanges of experience in order to **share knowledge**, promote inter-learning and support **capacity building**.

ADEA's activity is guided by three main principles: partnership, learning and commitment to social transformation.

Partnership is the basis for dialogue and exchanges of experience, which promote the mutual enrichment of partners through sharing of the knowledge they develop. It is marked by the **leadership** of African countries in the formulation and implementation of policy, and helps to build countries' capacity for **ownership**.

As a learning organization, ADEA gives learning a central place in both its activities and its methodological approaches, enabling the different partners to learn through individual and group **analysis** of the **action** taken in the field – i.e. education policies and practices – and, after putting the lessons learned into perspective by comparison with the experience of other countries and international expertise. **Capacity building** must be understood from this standpoint of sharing knowledge acquired in other regions of the world; in this perspective, capacity building occurs in a process of **active learning** as an approach to problem solving, a **social learning process** based on collegiality and the pooling of ideas and knowledge, and a learning process that results in the **establishment of an analytical culture** among stakeholders and in the **social transformation** of education.

ADEA is committed to social transformation through **change in education** – change in educational **visions, policy** and **strategies** that support **reform** and **innovation**; changes in **conceptions, attitudes, practices** and **relations** among stakeholders, leading to **new ways**

of thinking, acting and cooperating. This is why some say that ADEA's mandate relates more to **processes** than to **projects** and **programs**.

How can this vision be translated into practice in African countries, especially as regards all the knowledge accumulated by the Association over its 20 years of existence through the working groups, ministerial conferences, biennales and topical conferences? In a nutshell, **how can we ensure that ADEA's efforts to accumulate, compare and analyze experiences make a practical contribution to improving the quality of African education programs?**

Applying the lessons drawn from ADEA biennales is primarily a matter for country-level initiatives, since it is African countries that take the lead in formulating and implementing their national education policies, while external partners do no more than support and reinforce the efforts of education ministries.

The inter-country quality nodes could serve as catalysts for this process of accumulating information on innovative educational experiences in Africa and for the implementation of the lessons that each country or group of countries draws from those experiences to improve their own programs. The reason is that these nodes bring together representatives of education ministries from different countries to address issues designated as national priorities that are already included in current programs. The countries concerned form a network for discussion and sharing of problems they have encountered and solutions they have tried. They take a joint problem-solving approach, in which they are supported by one or more specialized national and/or regional institutions allied with a strategic partner (ADEA working group or expert international institution).

Knowledge sharing among peers and expert support contribute to on-the-job capacity building for those who are engaged both in the regional network and in implementation of their national programs.

To follow up on the Maputo Biennale, ADEA will thus need to take a highly flexible, pragmatic approach in order to identify initiatives taken by groups of countries relating to the lessons drawn from experiences presented at the Biennale; to analyze the implications of these initiatives in terms of operational goals, methodological and conceptual approaches, roles and responsibilities; and to define jointly – among ministries, cooperation agencies, working groups, Secretariat, etc. – the processes, stages and procedures for implementing activities stemming from these initiatives.

In constituting the inter-country quality nodes, we will need to be flexible and pragmatic and to consider the following possibilities:

- ✚ Grouping of countries along the lines of the six regions currently represented in ADEA (Southern Africa, Central Africa, West Africa, East Africa, North Africa and Indian Ocean);
- ✚ Grouping of countries based on current educational initiatives (SACMEQ, PASEC) or along other lines (such as the Lusophone countries) or on Africa's regional economic communities (SADC, ECOWAS, CEMAC, etc.);
- ✚ Grouping of a certain number of countries around shared challenges and themes (teacher training, use of African languages, post-primary education, pre-vocational and vocational training, education in rural areas, etc.).

Considering that the initiative for activities involving inter-country quality nodes lies primarily with the countries concerned, and in order to make a rapid start on the follow-up to the Maputo Biennale or other initiatives at country or regional level, the following steps are proposed:

- **Ministers**, both those who are and are not Bureau members, identify a challenge common to several countries in their region and a topic of common interest.
- They discuss the matter with their peers and decide what process they wish to initiate, and the various stages and procedures of that process (sub-regional consultations, possible formation of teams to carry out the work, definition of shared objectives, expected results, joint activities and deadlines).
- They also specify their expectations regarding any support from partners such as educational research institutions, cooperation agencies, ADEA working groups and the ADEA Secretariat.
- They identify, if possible, agencies or institutions operating in their regions and in the field of activity selected that are liable to support their initiatives.
- They establish a direct dialogue with the regional or national representatives of these agencies or institutions.
- They inform the ADEA Secretariat of their initiatives and specify what kind of support they may need from it.

The **ADEA working groups** participate in accordance with the direction taken by their activities and the information available to them at the country and regional levels:

- They inform ministers and the Secretariat of concerns that might be addressed by sub-regional and regional initiatives.
- They identify sources of expertise, both individual and institutional, that could play a role in these nodes and inform ministers and the Secretariat of same.
- They notify ministers and the Secretariat of the roles and responsibilities that they themselves are able and willing to assume in the inter-country quality nodes.

The Secretariat

- exchanges information with ministers and cooperation agencies on current or upcoming initiatives at regional level, on their interests and their capacity to provide support, as well as on the terms and conditions of partnership and support;
- discusses with working group leaders and coordinators the activities that these groups and the Secretariat can conduct in support of the inter-country quality nodes.
- On the basis of all the information provided by ministers, agencies and working groups, it finalizes **by the end of December 2008** an operations plan to implement the activities of the inter-country quality nodes.