

Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)

2012 TRIENNALE: DIASPORA DAY
Saturday, 11th February 2012

Concept Note

Introduction and Background

The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) is a forum for policy dialogue among stakeholders in education within and outside Africa. Its mission is to act as a catalyst of innovative policies and practices for change in education through the pooling of ideas, experiences, learning and knowledge. ADEA's core business is the provision of various fora for policy dialogue. Indeed, its vision is to become a leader in the process of dialogue, sharing and learning for the qualitative transformation of education in support of Africa's development. ADEA's main spheres of operation are networking, research, capacity building and advocacy. One of its instruments for conducting policy dialogue among African Ministers and development agencies is the Triennale.

The 2012 ADEA Triennale which is taking place in Ouagadougou in February 11-17, 2012 is a high level forum for policy dialogue on education and training that will bring together African Ministers of Education, development partners, experts and stakeholders in education in Africa. Its theme is: *Promoting critical knowledge, skills and qualifications for sustainable development in Africa: how to design and implement an effective response by education and training systems?* The objective of the Triennale is to design and build systems and mechanisms for the acquisition of critical knowledge, skills and qualifications that will provide African countries with the capacity to meet the challenges of sustainable development. It is therefore imperative that critical stakeholders such as the African Diaspora should have an opportunity to bring their transnational experience and expertise to bear at the event.

African Diaspora has been defined as "people of African descent residing outside Africa or in countries other than their own within Africa as citizens and permanent or temporary residents engaged in circulation as well as transnational lifestyles" (Oucho: 2008). It is not a homogenous group. It consists of: (i) African migrants (including their descendants) who moved to other countries outside Africa for different personal reasons; (ii) Intra-African migrants – Africans living in other African countries; and (iii) Descendants of African slaves in the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean. Latin America and Caribbean have the largest African diaspora but with very remote links to Africa. A significant feature of the African Diaspora particularly in the first two categories is that they have a unique relationship with their countries of origin the way donors or development partners do not have, namely, shared history, culture, language and religion as well as sustained network or relationships.

The Diaspora Day is a modest beginning with the goal of progressively involving the African Diaspora in policy dialogue. So important is the African Diaspora that the African Union has declared it as the sixth region of the continent. The attitude to the Diasporas has evolved over time. Initially, the concern was to how to persuade them to return to their home countries. Emphasis then shifted to the remittances they were sending home to help their less fortunate relations. Today there is an awareness that African Diaspora can do much more than remitting money to their relations. Cognizant of the immense skills and expertise as well as experience and networks of the Diaspora there is a new understanding that they can contribute significantly to the development of the continent. Indeed, initiatives of the Diaspora in many countries testify eloquently to their growing contributions.

Context and Rationale

The need for sustainable development in Africa is central to the theme of the Triennale. Economic and social development continues to elude African countries not necessarily because of lack of resources; rather it is due to their inability to equip their human asset with relevant skills and engage them in productive economic activities. The quality and relevance of learning are critical to sustainable development because they provide a country with a stock of knowledge workers and capacity to participate actively not only in productive activities that result in economic growth but also in globalization in terms of expansion of business beyond the national boundaries. Countries that have made significant progress are those that built their capacity through education and training. Unfortunately, current education and training systems in Africa do not provide students with the skills set that they direly need in the labour market, and for technological innovations and entrepreneurship.

The challenges in the education systems are many and vary from country to country. Generally, they center on lack of not only access and quality but also relevance to the current needs of the society. These challenges produce unsavory consequences for economic development. There is therefore the imperative need to: (i) re-orientate the education systems toward imparting job-related and life skills in order to overcome the mismatch between education and social needs, employment and to optimize investment in skills development; (ii) combat unemployment by providing entrepreneurial education to the youth and an enabling environment for institutionalizing an entrepreneurial culture in African countries; (iii) transform tertiary institutions from social sciences and humanities-based learning to science and technology-based learning so that Africa can catch up with the developed countries; and (iv) introduce skills and values that are congruent with the needs of the society and that will make the youth active citizens of their countries.

By virtue of living in developed countries, the African Diaspora has acquired essential experiences and skills that could be shared and used in order to foster sustainable development in Africa. This is why ADEA, within the framework of the preparation of the Triennale, desires to engage with members of the African Diaspora on a day specifically set aside for the African Diaspora. The objective of this event therefore is to bring together Africans in the Diaspora to the Triennale not only to participate in the policy dialogue on education on the continent but also to reflect with other stakeholders on how they can contribute to the transformation of the education and training systems into effective tools for skills development.

Framework for Discussions

The African Diaspora Day aims at attracting and bringing together Africans in Diaspora and their organizations. They will be expected to share their experiences and the initiatives they are currently undertaking particularly in education, science and technology, ICT, and innovation and entrepreneurship which can benefit the continent. It would be interesting to know how they would like to partner with the public and private sector organizations in the following spheres:

- **Support to Education:** “Science, technology and innovation (STI) play a significant role in a country’s economic development and are key contributors to poverty reduction, health care, environmental conservation and development of the knowledge society, through their ability to solve problems and initiate and sustain economic growth” (GeSCI: 2010). African Diaspora could be a formidable catalyst in influencing their individual countries to invest in science and technology education or initiate public-private partnership in ICT infrastructure. They could also support science and technology research in universities and relevant research institutions. The Diaspora could assist African universities in the following ways: (i) identify common challenges facing universities in Africa and (ii) develop strategies or best practices for addressing such challenges. Financing of vocational training and higher education is another important area in which the African Diaspora could provide assistance. Education and training needs are huge and beyond the capacity of government. Reliance on only government for financial resources is proving unsustainable as evidenced by under-funding of education and the resultant less than satisfactory quality of many graduates.
- **Skills Development and Employment Creation:** African Diasporas have incredible skills in different specializations. They could define how they could make their awesome skills available to educational and research institutions on the continent. They can also establish technology firms in African countries. Finally, they could also help to create an enabling environment for youth entrepreneurship through mentorship, development of ICT-skills or supply of computers to schools.
- **Direct Investment:** African Diaspora has a wide network of potential partners and investors who can be attracted to create opportunities for investment and transfer of knowledge and technology in Africa thereby creating employment. They could define ways in which they could work with the youth to acquire relevant skills and competencies for the labor market.

Discussions will center on presentations on the following topics:

- The Theme of the Triennale
- Broad picture of African Diaspora
- Different areas of expertise
- Ongoing initiatives by the African Diaspora
- Policies and strategies of countries on Diaspora

The presentations will be followed by discussions and finally a shared understanding and vision of the way forward

The Diaspora Day takes place before the commencement of the Triennale and therefore has the advantage that its key messages would be presented at the Opening Ceremony to Heads of State, Ministers (about 60-70) holding different portfolios and operating in different development sectors, and also to about 20 representatives of development agencies.

Expected Outcomes

It is expected that at the end of the Diaspora Day there would a common understanding of how the Diaspora could contribute to skills development as well as a shared vision or agreement on a the initiatives that could be implemented as a way forward. Finally, ADEA expects greater collaboration with African Diaspora organizations.