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United Nations
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UNESCO Institute
for Lifelong Learning



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long-term implementation of SLS is under consideration at the Prime Minister's Office.

Mr Brij Kothari is an Adjunct Professor at the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad (IIM-A), the President of Planet Read (a non-profit organisation), and CEO of BookBox, Inc.

4 – 4.30 p.m. Tea and coffee break

4.30 – 6.30 p.m. Plenary Session on Effective Practices in Africa: Languages in Literacy and Basic Education

While multilingualism is the norm in Africa, many educational programmes neglect this fact. The role played by African languages, the languages used most widely by citizens on the continent and the African diasporas, is often reduced to a springboard function and their value belittled. The idea that international languages of wider communication (English, French, Portuguese and Spanish) are the only means for upward economic mobility persists across Africa. Today, new research findings are increasingly questioning the consequences that these policies and attitudes have on the quality of education, as well as on the marginalisation of the continent.

The effective practices selected for this conference demonstrate that there are promising experiences and initiatives taking place in Africa; and that more are needed. These examples touch on different aspects of the question as to how education and learning can be optimised for children, youth and adults in Africa with regard to language as a medium of instruction and as a subject in education. Effective language use in education will help learners to become skillful and creative language users. The ultimate aim is that literacy and basic education will improve quality of life by enabling a deeper insight into and much greater use of African know-how, values and wisdom, while at the same time providing a greater opening for cultural diversity, increasing social cohesion and contributing towards sustainable development.

Chair: Mr Adama Samassekou, Director of the Academy of African Languages

Moderator: Ms Becky Ndjize-Ojo, Deputy Minister of Education of Namibia

Resource Persons:

Mr Paul Taryam Ilboudo (Ecoles Bilingues, Burkina Faso)

Mr Fary Silate Ka (ARED, Senegal)

Ms Kathleen Heugh/Ms Hassana Allidou (Effective Literacy and Language Teaching)

**Programme d'Education Bilingue (Burkina Faso)
Ministère de l'Enseignement de Base et de l'Alphabétisation (MEBA), Oeuvre Suisse d'Entraide Ouvrière (OSEO)**

Since 1994, the Ministry for Basic Education and Literacy, OSEO and civil society organisations have been developing a bilingual education programme aimed at helping to resolve the problems

of access, quality and relevance with regard to basic education in Burkina Faso. The initiative started with a non-formal adult literacy programme which teaches adults national African languages and French. The results were so convincing that formal education and education policymakers were persuaded to adopt the bilingual approach. Today, the bilingual education programme links non-formal and formal education and is conceived as an educational programme for children, youth and adults.

The main objectives of the programme are:

- a) to improve the internal and external efficiency of basic education;
- b) to establish collaboration and links between formal and informal basic education;
- c) to improve the cost/efficiency ratio of basic education; and
- d) to strengthen the autonomy of local development initiatives.

French and the national languages are used in combination in order to provide a more effective education. The different ages and needs of the learners are targeted through a multi-programme approach consisting of 5 programmes:

- 1) Non-formal livelihood literacy training for adults;
- 2) Non-formal „educational discovery areas“ for children aged 3 to 6 years;
- 3) Non-formal bilingual primary schools for children aged from 7 to 12 years that are attended for a period of just 5 years and promote productive and cultural activities;
- 4) Non-formal literacy training for development for out-of-school youth aged from 9 to 14 years that offers them the possibility of going on to take courses leading to professional qualifications; and
- 5) Multilingual secondary schools for pupils aged from 12 to 16 years that - in addition to the normal secondary education - incorporate a second national language, and related production and cultural courses.

The bilingual education programme is disseminated throughout the thirteen regions that make up Burkina Faso. In 2006, about 20,000 children and out-of-school youth and 15,700 adults were reached.

In addition to its own funding, OSEO receives financial or technical backing from the following partners: the Government of Burkina Faso, the Netherlands, the Swiss Cooperation, the Danish non-governmental organisation DIAKONIA, the Catholic Church, the National Fund for Literacy and Non-Formal Education and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa.

Mr Paul Taryam Ilboudo is part of the bilingual education programme team, which developed a method for intensive adult literacy teaching. He also coordinates the establishment of continuing education centres for neo-literates.

HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL (SOUTH AFRICA), ALLIANT INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY (USA)

Problem statement

In 2004, the UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE) – now formally known as the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) – the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), and the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ) commissioned a stock-taking study on the use of African languages in formal education in Africa. Five linguists and language educators and one publisher participated in the study, which was finished and presented in 2006 during the ADEA biannual meeting held in Libreville, Gabon. With regard to the promotion of quality education, the researchers concluded that:

- the use of African languages as a medium of instruction is fundamental to the provision of effective bilingual programmes;
- the development of academic literacy, as well as social literacy (the ability to use reading and writing skills to perform different communicative functions in society) among African learners is critical to improving both literacy in Africa and learning outcomes among pupils and students attending formal education in Africa;
- most current literacy teaching practices (monolingual and bilingual) do not facilitate the development of sustainable and balanced bilingualism or additive bilingualism (e.g. adequate literacy in mother tongue and second languages (English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese)) among African students; and
- there are very few empirical studies that analyse seriously the effectiveness of current and new forms of bilingual programmes promoted in Africa. Most of the documents used in the UIE, ADEA and GTZ study were mid-term reviews of projects or end-of-projects evaluation reports commissioned mainly by the executing agencies themselves. While they provide valuable information on the project objectives, the target population and the achievements of students attending grade 1 to grade 3, they do not address literacy development and learning in upper grades. They do not therefore provide adequate evaluation of the literacy practices and programmes across whole primary schools. Moreover, they often claim that early transitional mother tongue to second language programmes promote effective literacy achievement, yet the research shows quite the reverse. Apparent and early educational gains are not sustained throughout the primary and secondary school systems. Unfortunately, research shows that the use of mother tongues or children's main languages for only three years of instruction is not sufficient to develop the degree of academic literacy needed in the upper grades, particularly if teaching and assessment are conducted in the second languages or international languages of wider communication (English, French, Portuguese and Spanish).

Literature review

This study draws on the comprehensive literature review undertaken in the UIE-ADEA-GTZ report discussed above (Alidou et al. 2006). It takes special note of studies conducted in West Africa, e.g. Bergmann et al.'s (2000) study of experimental schools in Niger, Ilboudo's (2003) study of *Ecoles Bilingues* in Burkina Faso and Wilmot's (2002) study of the use of national languages in primary schools in Ghana. It takes into account the implications of a recent evaluation of literacy in Zambia (Allsop et al. 2005) and a study of the medium of instruction in Ethiopia (Heugh et al. 2007). It includes the findings of underachievement in literacy as found in systemic studies such as the SACMEQ 11 study of literacy and numeracy in 15 Southern and Eastern African countries (Mothibeli 2005), the South African language, mathematics and science study of Grade 6 students (DoE 2006) and a study of 75,000 Grade 8 learners in the Western Cape, South Africa (Heugh et al. 2007). Finally, it emerges alongside a comprehensive study of literacy teaching in the schools of South Africa's Limpopo Province, commissioned by the Limpopo Department of Education and Irish Aid and will be carried out by the Human Sciences Research Council.

In short, the studies point towards a disparity between language education policy, programme implementation and delivery at the chalk-face. Whilst this is not a new finding, what is new is that

the focus is once more drawn towards classroom practices and teacher preparedness, and this time in conjunction with significantly more nuanced theoretical understandings as well as large-scale assessment data.

Purpose of the study

Diagnostic, system-wide assessment of language and mathematics achievement in South Africa has identified a serious mismatch between learners' reading abilities and the cognitive literacy demands of science, mathematics, history and geography texts. This is exacerbated when learners are confronted with texts in a language they do not understand. As a consequence, learners are developing a range of strategies to disguise their inability to read and write extended text to grade level. The implications of these point towards two crucial areas for development and change: teacher education and curriculum. Teacher education, in Africa at least, needs to be enriched by methodologies which offer explicit teaching of reading and writing for learners who live in environments which are poorly resourced with literary texts and books. Curriculum change requires more detailed and guided information for teachers to follow. It is becoming increasingly clear, that the contemporary fascination with outcomes-based education is leaving teachers and learners in limbo, and this exacerbates educational wastage at all levels. The research and development initiative under consideration here is one which returns the focus to the practicalities of explicit teaching and learning of literacy.

One of the main goals of this study is to conduct an empirical and comparative study of literacy teaching and learning in the new bilingual programmes promoted in Africa since the 1990 Education for All conference in Jomtiem, in order to shed light on what exactly is being promoted in terms of school-based language policies, teaching practices and learning. The main focus of this research is language use and literacy teaching and learning. The main assumption is that effective learning takes place when students develop adequate literacy skills in both their mother tongues and the second languages. Therefore bilingual programmes which promote effective mother tongue and second language literacy throughout primary school (six years) should be able to deliver quality education.

The principal researchers have undertaken or are involved in recent and smaller scale studies conducted in several countries, including Rwanda, Ethiopia and Limpopo Province, South Africa.

Objectives

The main objective of this new study is to go beyond the current studies. It will involve a thorough examination of classroom-based language and literacy practices which are triangulated with policy and system-wide assessment data. The specific objectives are therefore to:

- analyse language policies and programmes, examine the way in which they are interpreted and implemented in non-formal, alternative and formal schools, and identify how they materialise in everyday classroom practices;

- develop a relevant theoretical model that accounts for language use, language teaching and practices in multilingual contexts in Africa;
- determine the effectiveness of literacy teaching and learning in these programmes through an examination of ethnographic data and systemic assessment;
- propose an effective model of bi/multilingual teacher education and development in both pre- and in-service programmes designed to promote adequate literacy across the curriculum (i.e. from early childhood through the entire education system) and the delivery of quality Education for All;
- recommend practical ways to empower policy-makers, decision-makers and school-based personnel to ensure the coherency and efficient alignment of policy, planning and implementation throughout the educational system; and
- offer pedagogical suggestions as to how literacy and language policies may be translated effectively through the curriculum and into programmes delivered in classrooms.

Another important objective of the study is to build research capacity in literacy and bilingual education in Africa. The two lead researchers will therefore team up with African researchers based in institutions of higher learning in Africa (preferably universities) and teacher training colleges in order to share knowledge and expertise during the study, which is done collaboratively. The Limpopo study currently involves three faculty members from the University of Limpopo and their undergraduate and post-graduate students. The study conducted in Ethiopia also involved faculty members from Ethiopian universities and teacher colleges.

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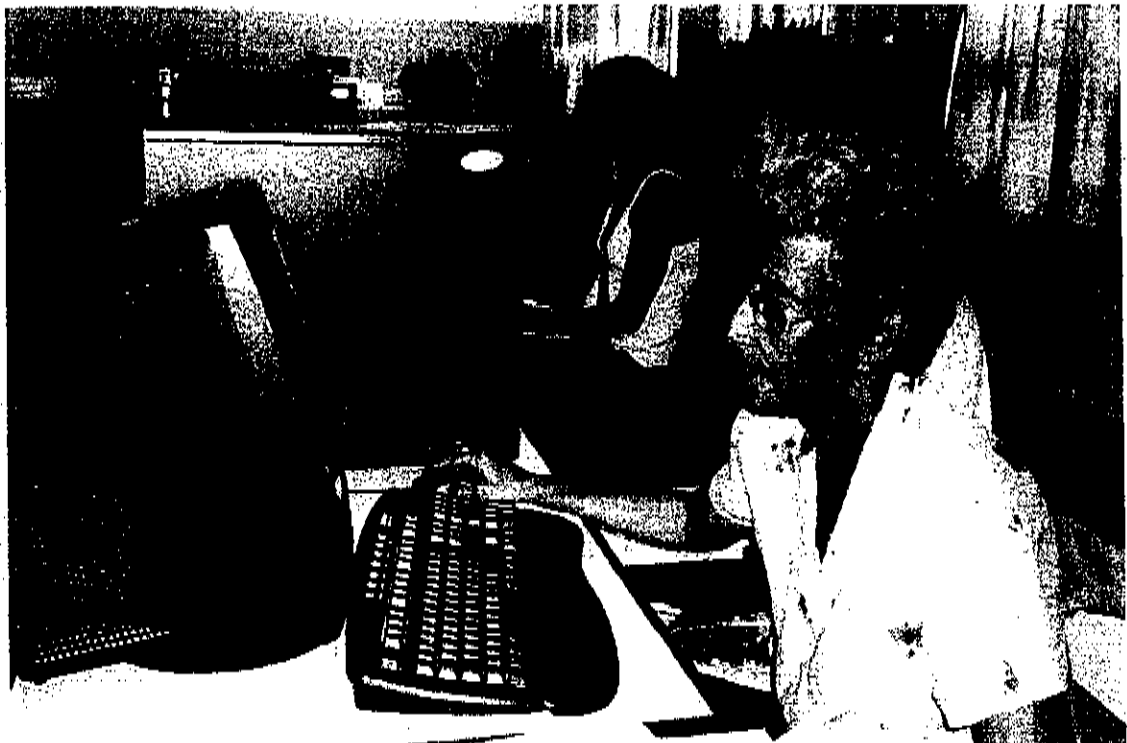
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In less than two centuries, the nature and social functions of literacy have changed dramatically. In particular the use of new learning technologies has opened up significant opportunities for informal and continuing literacy learning in adult and youth basic education programmes. Distance learning and ICTs can facilitate skills development, use learner-generated materials, stimulate awareness-raising and learner motivation, support and train literacy workers, facilitate the distribution and updating of materials and information to resource centres, and gather feedback from centres and individual learners regarding available centres and programmes. It is rare, however, for adult literacy programmes to be conducted solely through these media, which instead are used primarily in support of conventional programmes or as one component of a multi-pronged approach to literacy and numeracy learning.

Telephones, radio, TV, computers and Internet can and should be increasingly part of any literacy and basic education effort today. Traditional and modern ICTs have continuing potential for learning and help to reach out to rural and remote areas. In the African context however, where the "digital divide" is more prominent than in other regions, access to technology often seems to pose insuperable challenges. Furthermore, different experiences have shown that access to technology does not guarantee that its use will be meaningful or empowering.

On the other hand, there are many interesting and promising examples of how new information and communication technologies can contribute both to the creation of a literate environment and to the enhancement of literacy learning opportunities. A Community Knowledge Centre in the rural area of Western Uganda, for example, recently launched a solar and pedal powered communications system which enables villagers to use a phone, computer and the Internet. It is empowering them to use communications and technology to improve their lives dramatically.

The use of ICTs and other electronic media in literacy learning must be examined in context. Concrete examples show how the unevenness of access to ICTs can be addressed successfully and how digital technologies enable individuals and groups to engage meaningfully in specific social practices.



Source: Radio KCCA Project