

Sixth Conference

**of Ministers of Education
and Those Responsible for
Economic Planning in
African Member States**

**Organized by UNESCO
with the co-operation
of ECA and OAU**

**Dakar,
8-11 July 1991**

Final Report

UNESCO

PART IV

Recommendations

No. 1: Educational strategies for the 1990s in Africa

The Conference,

Observing that the multifaceted crisis and the burden of debt affecting African societies is growing worse, in spite of the economic policies pursued, especially those aimed at structural adjustment,

Noting the disquieting situation in the education sector, which is beset by severe demographic, economic, financial, socio-political, cultural and environmental constraints that are inhibiting its development,

Aware of the fundamental role that basic education plays in the development of human resources and hence in the overall development of individual societies,

Stressing the importance of science and technology in development,

Anxious to reverse the negative trends in enrolment and literacy that have been observed during the last decade, in the form of a decline in the region's gross enrolment ratio and an increase in the absolute number of illiterates and in the quality of education generally,

Taking into account the relevant conclusions and recommendations of the World Conference on Education for All and the proposed development policy principles contained in the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP),

Resolved, within the framework of the African Economic Community, to strengthen co-operation between Member States in education and training, and to co-ordinate their policies in that area,

Recommends:

Objectives and priority groups

1. The adoption, as a matter of priority, of the following two overriding objectives:

broadening of access to the formal, non-formal and informal components of basic education;

improvement of the quality of basic education, with special emphasis on improving teacher training and learning outcomes;

Basic education must ensure, *inter alia* greater interaction of learners with their environment and more effective participation in development through the acquisition of knowledge and the development of appropriate skills and attitudes;

2. Assignment of priority to school-age children and to such vulnerable social groups as young children, illiterate girls and women, children in difficult circumstances, disabled persons and refugees;
3. Formulation, implementation and evaluation of programmes designed to cater primarily for the different target groups, while continuing to give due attention to other groups;

Global strategies for the year 2000

4. Adoption of a global strategy for the African region, based on an interactive multi-sectoral approach, with the aim of achieving at least the following objectives:
 - reducing illiteracy by half compared with its 1990 level by the year 2000 (from 52 to 26 per cent);
 - exceeding the regional gross enrolment ratio attained in 1980 in order to reverse the downward trend recorded in the meantime (the ratio decreased from 79 to 72 per cent between 1980 and 1988);
 - developing educational facilities to improve the quality of basic education;
5. Adoption of national strategies that differ according to the degree of development of basic education, with a view to achieving the goals of the global strategy:
 - countries with a net enrolment ratio of less than 40 per cent would aim at doubling that ratio;
 - countries with a net enrolment ratio of between 40 and 49 per cent would aim at a target of 75 per cent;
 - countries with a net enrolment ratio of between 50 and 70 per cent would aim at a target of 80 per cent;
 - the other countries would aim at universal school enrolment;
 - for all countries, the goal of reducing the illiteracy ratio by half by the year 2000 is maintained;

Specific strategies

In order to attain these objectives, recommends:

in respect of national development policies

6. Making due allowance for the population variable in drawing up economic and social policies and in planning development;
7. Ensuring appropriate distribution, redistribution and reallocation of resources for people centred development, giving priority to basic education;

8. Exercising control over material, financial and human resources for endogenous development;
9. Democratizing political life so as to enable the population to take an effective part in decision-making on matters of national and local importance;
10. Spelling out the obligations of the State, regional and local authorities, non-governmental organizations and the population with a view to achieving the objectives set out in paragraph 5;
11. Promoting national and community languages for development, unity and liberation;
12. Preserving and enhancing the cultural heritage;

in respect of educational policies

13. Improving the planning and management of education systems as well as information systems;
14. Enhancing the status of the teaching profession and the function of educators;
15. Ensuring efficient linkage between the different educational levels and promoting mutual-support between formal, non-formal and informal education;
16. Promoting action-oriented research and innovation in teaching and learning methods with the aim of improving results;
17. Introducing far-reaching reforms of curricula consistent with the objectives laid down in respect of basic education and promoting the use of African languages in education;
18. Promoting structures for designing, preparing, publishing and distributing school textbooks and teaching and learning materials;
19. Developing national programmes and systems for evaluating learning outcomes;
20. Fostering better integration of the school into everyday life;
21. Promoting population education and education for environmental protection;
22. Developing scientific and technological research, especially in higher education,
23. Promoting science and technology teaching and pre- and in-service training in the different types of education, including basic education;
24. Making use of new information and communication technologies in favour of education;
25. Creating centres of excellence in order to ensure that better use is made of African human resources;

in respect of the mobilization of resources

26. Generating awareness in and mobilizing local communities and the different partners engaged in basic education, including the private sector;
27. Promoting mutual assistance, solidarity and a participatory approach to the implementation of basic education projects;
28. Organizing large-scale literacy campaigns in which every literate person instructs somebody who is illiterate;
29. Making allowance for the basic education component in development projects and in the re-scheduling of African debt;
30. Broadening the scope of partnership with the aim of diversifying the resources available for funding and implementing basic education projects and programmes;

in respect of subregional and regional co-operation

31. Stepping up the exchange of information and experiences between Member States;
32. Promoting technical co-operation in education between African Member States;
33. Giving effect to the regional integration provisions in respect of the development of human resources set out in the Treaty of the African Economic Community;

Practical measures

34. Preparing and implementing economic and social reforms centred on the human dimension of development;
35. Organizing national consultations at different levels with the aim of spelling out the objectives and strategies laid down for basic education for all and of briefing and alerting the public at large;
36. Preparing and implementing national action plans;
37. Setting up special funds for the development of basic education;
38. Preparing and implementing a regional action plan in support of the national action plans;
39. Setting up multisectoral co-ordinating machinery including, at the national level, the creation and running of national committees on basic education for all, supported at the regional level by an operational coordinating structure;
40. Taking appropriate steps to follow up the decisions and recommendations of the MINEDAF conferences.

No. 2: Long-term regional plan of action for basic education for all

The Conference,

Recalling the World Declaration on Education for All and the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs,

Taking note of the educational conditions that prevailed in the economic context of the 1980s as described in the document 'Educational Strategies for the 1990s in Africa: Promotion of Literacy Teaching and Basic Education for Development' (ED-91/MINEDAF/3),

Considering the development goals and strategies laid down for the 1990s in Africa (ED-91/MINEDAF/REF.3),

Taking into account the guidelines for the national and collective self-sufficiency of African countries contained in the Lagos Plan of Action (1980-2000) adopted by the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the OAU,

Anxious to halt and reverse the present negative trends in the quantitative and qualitative development of education in Africa,

Aware of the need for regional action based on economies of scale and comparative advantage with a view to optimising available resources, creating an adequate learning environment and reducing dependence on outside assistance,

Aware of the fact that such regional collaboration would be particularly appropriate in the following fields:

the training of planners and managers in order to enhance capabilities for the management and analysis of data on basic education;

the strengthening of capabilities for evaluating the quality of education, particularly through the compilation of data and the analysis of indicators on the quality of basic education;

enhancing capacities for the production of and increasing the availability of teaching and learning materials for basic education, especially in African languages;

the training and further training of teachers to enable them to provide high-quality teaching suited to the needs of different types of learners;

the use of the media to meet basic educational needs, particularly with reference to distance education strategies, which will be the subject of research, exchanges of information, staff training and the production of teaching aids, in accordance with the specific plan of action drawn up by the Arusha seminar held at Arusha (Tanzania, September 1990);

Recommends to the Member States of Africa that they reinforce, in the framework of their national plans of action, the capacities of the individual countries to fulfil the objectives relating to:

the protection and education of young children;

the universalization of primary education;

the promotion of basic education for girls and women;

improving access to basic education for marginal and disadvantaged populations;

the promotion of basic education for young illiterates in the 12 to 17 age-group as well as for adults;

the promotion of participatory approaches to basic education, including the 'each one teach one' approach;

improving teaching and learning outcomes for the different target groups identified at the national level;

Recommends to UNESCO that it:

draw up and implement, in collaboration with Member States, bilateral and multilateral institutions, in particular UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank, and all interested partners, a long-term regional plan of action for basic education for all in support of national action plans;

launch an appeal for international co-operation in support of the regional plan of action;

address itself to setting up appropriate coordinating machinery at the regional level;

Recommends to multilateral and bilateral institutions and to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that they co-ordinate their action aimed at preparing, implementing, following up and evaluating the regional plan of action and contribute to the setting-up of an appropriate cooperation mechanism involving both donors and recipients.

No. 3: Follow-up to ministerial conferences

The Conference,

Having taken note of the Synthesis of the Evaluation Report on the Follow-up to MINEDAF Conferences and Advisory Bodies in the Field of Education in Africa (BREDA/91/EPVMF.VI/0163),

Acknowledging the quality of the results achieved in respect of follow-up, both by Member States and by UNESCO and other partners interested in education in Africa (ED-91/MINEDAF/REF.2),

Considering the commendable work accomplished by the advisory committees set up after MINEDAF V,

Conscious nevertheless of the scale of the tasks still to be addressed in order to undertake systematic follow-up capable of ensuring more coordinated action and of encouraging worthwhile initiatives,

Aware of the economic difficulties confronting Member States, which are aggravated by an unfavourable economic and financial environment,

Trusting, however, in the new world outlook for education for all and particularly in the new awareness of the strategic role played by education in development,

Anxious to enhance the effectiveness of the action undertaken by UNESCO and the Member States in following up the decisions and recommendations of the MINEDAF conferences,

Recommends to the Director-General of UNESCO that he:

1. Take appropriate steps to ensure better follow-up to MINEDAF conferences;
2. Consider, for that purpose, the possibility of setting up a regional committee to follow up those conferences, which could replace the existing advisory committees in different specialised educational fields in Africa;
3. Enlist the assistance of the existing advisory committees in following up ministerial conferences, pending the establishment of the regional committee, namely the committees on higher education, literacy and the teaching of science and technology;
4. Involve UNESCO's regional and subregional offices in the follow-up mechanism for MINEDAF conferences and strengthen them for that purpose;
5. Report to the Executive Board at its 140th session in autumn 1992 on the action taken in respect of points 1 to 4 above;

Recommends to the Member States that they set up national follow-up mechanisms in which the National Commissions for UNESCO would play an active part.

No. 4: Co-operation for the development of education in Africa

The Conference,

Acknowledging the efforts made by Member States to step up regional co-operation despite the severe constraints to which their economies have been subjected during the past decade,

Considering the importance and the nature of the current challenges to be met by Member States in the field of education, especially as regards basic education for all, development of the teaching of science and technology, the promotion of national languages, and the development of higher education and research and development,

Recognizing the stated intention of Member States and international bodies to assign increasingly high priority to the development of human resources at all levels,

Observing, however, that basic educational needs are not being properly catered for, chiefly because of the difficulties entailed in mobilizing and making use of resources and in fulfilling the conditions set in adjustment programmes, which affect the social sector and in particular education,

Considering the favourable role that can be played by national, regional and international co-operation in this regard,

Recommends to Member States that they:

1. Promote new and more active partnerships within each Member State, making provision for popular participation, in particular through social mobilisation based, for example, on the mass media;
2. Mobilize national resources through multisectoral and interactive participation by all those involved in basic education, secondary education and higher education alike;
3. Deploy appropriate means for the identification, preparation and evaluation of priority projects in the field of education;
4. Implement special programmes to promote the use of African languages, in particular when designing teaching materials and methods for the development of education;
5. Set up a system for the exchange of information and experiences between Member States, thus stepping up technical co-operation among the African Member States;
6. Enhance existing subregional and regional institutional capacities for the promotion of centres of excellence;
7. Discharge their financial obligations so that the regional and subregional institutions that they have joined become more functional;
8. Assist in implementing the Special Programme for the Improvement of Higher Education in Africa and the Plan of Action drawn up by the Consultation of Experts on Future Trends and Challenges in Higher Education in Africa;
9. Co-ordinate the activities of the international agencies, bilateral institutions and NGOs, in particular in the field of basic education;

Recommends to UNESCO that it:

1. Continue and intensify co-operation with Member States, by promoting the formulation, execution and evaluation of educational policies and plans, as well as co-ordination and consultations in that area;
 2. Step up support for Member States in its different fields of competence, particularly by implementing a regional plan of action for basic education for all and special programmes for the other levels of education, as well as in science and technology, culture, communication and social sciences, and the promotion of African languages;
 3. Develop existing networks, especially the Network of Educational Innovation for Development in Africa (NEIDA);
- 4 Promote the use of African expertise in the preparation and execution of educational projects and update the existing directories for that purpose;

5. Set up operational machinery for follow-up and co-ordination in the field of basic education;
6. Assist in mobilizing outside resources to enhance the capacity for action of the regional and subregional institutions (for example AALAE, CREEA, BASE, ACO, etc.);
7. Assist liberation movements in South Africa in basic education and in training the high level manpower that will be needed in post-apartheid South Africa;
8. Foster closer co-operation with African and international non-governmental organizations with a view to stepping up educational development activities in local communities;
9. Step up the efforts being made under UNESCO's 'Priority: Africa' programme to develop the national capacities of Member States;
10. Strengthen co-operation with OAU and ECA in the development of education and human resources;

Recommends to the international agencies that they:

1. Develop inter-agency co-operation on the lines of the UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO and World Bank initiative in organizing the Jomtien World Conference, which represents an important step towards new concerted action to develop human resources;
2. Employ all the means at their disposal to assist Member States in preparing and implementing national action plans for basic education for all;
3. Step up co-operation with a view to raising funds for educational development in Africa, so that the volume of assistance is increased to a level consonant with the objectives laid down.

No. 5: The debt burden, education and development

The Conference,

Noting the adverse effects of the debt burden on African economies, particularly during the past decade,

Aware of the magnitude of the financial resources needed to finance development,

Anxious to reverse the trend towards net capital outflows from Africa,

Emphasizing the need to find solutions to the debt crisis that preserve the continent's chances of development,

Recommends to the Member States that they:

1. Take suitable steps to reverse the trend towards net capital outflows;

2. Strive to ensure that no more than ten per cent of export revenue is used to service the debt, in accordance with the recommendations of the AAF-SAP (African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation);
3. See to it that educational development projects are taken into account in negotiations on African debt conversion arrangements;

Recommends to UNESCO that it:

1. Support Member States' efforts to reduce the adverse effects of the debt crisis on the social sector, particularly education;
2. Contribute to the strengthening of national capacity for the preparation of educational projects in the framework of African debt conversion arrangements;

Recommends to international institutions that they:

1. Help to reverse the trend towards capital outflows, which are an obstacle to the financing of development in Africa;
2. Strive to find solutions to the debt crisis, in particular by taking into account the human and social dimension in alternative strategies.

PART V

The Dakar Declaration

The Sixth Conference of Ministers of Education and Those Responsible for Economic Planning in African Member States, meeting in Dakar from 8 to 11 July 1991 to discuss as its central theme 'Educational strategies for the 1990s in Africa: Promotion of literacy teaching and basic education for development', solemnly adopts the following declaration.

Preamble

Thirty years after the first gathering in Addis Ababa, the Conference draws attention to the deterioration in social, economic, cultural and environmental conditions, reflected, *inter alia*, in the continuing difficulties and the magnitude of the problems besetting the continent.

The Conference is also taking place amid unprecedented social and political upheavals in Africa that are one expression of the striving of the peoples of the continent for democracy and social justice. It is a situation that calls for urgent measures to formulate new development policies and strategies.

In this connection, the Conference supports the approach put forward by the Economic Commission for Africa in the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation, which represents a departure from the traditional adjustment programmes which have by and large contributed to a worsening of the condition of African economies.

In the search for answers to the crisis in education, the Conference voices its satisfaction at the outcome of the World Conference on Education for All held at Jomtien in March 1990, illustrated mainly by the adoption of the World Declaration on Education for All and the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs.

The Conference also attaches considerable importance to the relevant conclusions of the summit meeting of the Organization of African Unity held in Abuja in June 1991, which led to the signing of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community whose purpose is to ensure the successful accomplishment of the continent-wide process of economic integration.

Challenges

Despite the steps that the Member States have taken and the efforts that they have made, the challenges still remaining are considerable if literacy and basic education for development are to be effectively promoted. Although there has been a reduction in the illiteracy rate, the absolute number of illiterates is increasing, especially among women. While two men out of three are now literate, two women out of three are still illiterate. It is estimated that, by the year 2000, there will be 181 million illiterate persons in the Africa region, or some 9 million more than in 1990.

Moreover, the gross primary school enrolment ratio in the region fell by 7 points over the period from 1980 to 1990, indicating a negative trend in enrolment, which is even more marked among girls, particularly in rural areas. In some cases, the number of children attending school is falling, a trend that is also related to a loss of interest in schooling. The failure to match education and training with employment opportunities is becoming critical as a result of the adverse impact of the

policies pursued over the past decade. Youth employment is still a challenge of crucial importance for development.

Over and above the promotion of literacy and basic education, the development of human resources in Africa is a challenge that will have to be addressed as a fundamental prerequisite for development in its economic, social, political, cultural, scientific, technical, environmental and other dimensions.

In addition, the Conference draws special attention to the following challenges:

harnessing science and technology for the development of Africa;

preserving and promoting the African cultural heritage;

harnessing African natural and financial resources for the development of the continent.

Strategies

In view of the challenges identified and the progress made in placing due emphasis on the development of basic education, the Conference:

emphasises the need to evolve new human-centred strategies, taking into account the interaction between the different demographic, socio-cultural, environmental, technological, economic and political factors;

advocates the adoption of a systems approach in formulating development strategies for basic education so that a global, consistent and dynamic procedure may be followed in the analysis, formulation, implementation and evaluation of programmes;

sets out the following priority objectives which the strategies should help to achieve:

extending access to basic education, as a matter of priority, for school-age children and such vulnerable social groups as young children, illiterate girls and women, children in difficult circumstances, disabled persons and refugees;

improving the quality of basic education, which should provide African men and women with knowledge, skills and attitudes that are relevant to their environment and meet the needs for genuine development of the society in which they live and of African societies generally.

Decides accordingly to:

strengthen co-operation between national structures within Member States and among Member States themselves for a new and effective partnership in favour of basic education;

Promote the development of human resources at all levels, in particular the training of trainers and specialists through appropriate education and training;

promote science and technology education and research, in particular research and development in such vital areas as agriculture and the local processing of national resources;

promote African languages and their use in education and training.

Commitment and appeal

Mindful of the scale of the challenges facing the continent of Africa, the Conference solemnly reaffirms its determination to continue pursuing the objectives for basic education set out in this declaration, in keeping with the commitments made by the Member States both at the World Conference on Education for All and at the last OAU summit meeting, especially as regards the development of human resources for collective self-sufficiency and African economic integration.

The Conference **appeals to the Member States** to:

prepare and implement national plans of action for basic education for all that are designed to achieve national objectives established through a process of consultation with local and external partners; these plans should incorporate and supplement the eradication of illiteracy in a more comprehensive and multisectoral approach;

build up an effective partnership for basic education by adopting an interactive multisectoral approach conducive to involvement of the different sectors and mutual support among them and ensuring economies of scale;

contribute to the strengthening of subregional, regional and South-South co-operation, particularly as regards information systems for educational management, the exchange of experiences and technical co-operation.

The Conference **appeals to UNESCO** to:

prepare and implement, in co-operation with Member States, fellow agencies in the United Nations system, bilateral and multilateral co-operation agencies, non-governmental organisations and other partners, a long-term regional plan of action for basic education for all, designed to provide diversified support for national plans of action and to mobilise additional resources for the achievement of national objectives;

establish a regional co-ordinating mechanism to enhance the efficiency of technical support and external resource mobilisations;

increase its support for subregional and regional co-operation, in particular by improving co-operation mechanisms and stepping up its assistance to the Member States of the region.

The Conference **appeals to the international community** to take effective and efficient action to assist in achieving the goals and objectives of education in Africa, particularly those of basic education for all, in accordance with the different commitments already made and in the spirit of this declaration.