

Harnessing cultures to advance education in sub-Saharan Africa: Review of education policies and practices Terms of Reference for the synthesis report

In the framework of the research study ‘Harnessing cultures to advance education in sub-Saharan Africa: review of education policies and practices’, UNESCO is hiring a consultant or an entity (here called ‘contractor’) to prepare the regional synthesis report based on existing elements of desk review, case study reports in some ten countries and other pertinent information focusing on experiences of cultural levers in education policies and strategies.

These terms of reference intend to outline the following main areas that the contractor will consider in developing the application for preparing the synthesis report (report structure, duration) as well as application modalities.

1) Research Overview

Background

Despite appreciable progress over the past decades, the level of economic and social development in Africa still remains low and lags behind all other regions. Challenges relating to low human development, poverty, gender inequality and exclusion persist in most African countries, which are also vulnerable to health, environmental and social risks (AfDB, OECD, UNDP 2015).

Cultural values were identified by some academics and practitioners as factors that may explain the low level of social and economic development of some countries and regions and have a determining impact on the performance of educational systems and student learning in different social contexts.

There have been several theoretical assertions on the potential of cultural values and traditional knowhow that can be better leveraged for education development in several parts of Africa. However, African thinkers and practitioners deplored the failure of African modern education systems to integrate positive African values and proposed to build intrinsic knowledge systems based on African traditional values.

Many recent attempts to deepen the understanding of the role of cultures (e.g. Confucianism) in the performance of educational systems and student achievement (OECD, 2011; Schenck 2015) exists. But it appears that no serious studies have been conducted to document and build regional evidence on what cultural assets have actually been harnessed for enriching education and learning systems across Africa and how to leverage them to further enhance education policies and practices and to enrich policy dialogue on the education models and knowledge systems that could be more relevant to African countries.

This research study is an effort to promote cultural diversity. It ambitions to uncover the potential benefits of harnessing positive cultural assets to further advance education development in sub-Saharan African countries and to counter the cultural stereotyping of knowledge systems and learners’ performance.

It is based on the working assumption that it is not the culture itself that determines the performance of educational systems and student learning, but rather an ill-suited application (or ill-conceived adaptation) of “exogenous” systems that might lead to perceived underperformance in education.

This regional study assumes that cultural attributes that are embedded in most African societies, if tapped on properly, and to the extent they are compatible with universally recognized human rights norms, may be conducive factors to support the construction of genuine knowledge systems relevant to African countries. The study will also contribute to international discourse on building lifelong learning systems for the benefit of other regions of the world. It is guided by the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016-2025 that is issued “in the bid to ‘create’ a new African citizen who will be an effective change agent for the continent’s sustainable development as envisioned by the AU and its 2063 Agenda”.

Objective

The purpose of the research study ‘Harnessing cultures¹ to advance education in sub-Saharan Africa: Review of education policies and practices’ is to document and compile the concrete examples of cultural assets² and traditional values that have been leveraged and harnessed in practice to enrich education policies and practices in sub-Saharan African countries in order to derive a number of reflection points, policy options and recommendations.

These would be disseminated for consideration by countries (policy makers, managers and development partners) in the region in the process of reviewing their education policies and strategies in light of the SDG4-Education 2030 goal and targets which calls for building education systems that promote inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all by means of society-wide participation and through all channels - formal, non-formal and informal settings.

Research methodology

This study consists of essentially three strands:

1. *A desk review of education policies and practices in sub-Saharan Africa*, not only to document and compile the historical and theoretical developments, but more the actual concrete examples and experiences and lessons learnt of education systems and projects in leveraging cultural levers in education policies and practices;

The review specifically aimed at examining: 1) The current educational policies in sub-Saharan Africa and practices that indicate the integration of cultural assets in formal educational systems.
2) The conceptual, Theoretical and Epistemological considerations of Integration of African

¹ This study uses the commonly used definition of culture from the English Anthropologist Edward B. Tylor in his book, *Primitive Culture* : “ complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society” (Tylor, 1871).

² There are numerous interpretations as to cultural assets. For the sake of this study, cultural assets will be used to mean traditional cultural resources that evolve over time and contribute to the vitality of community’s livelihoods and its environment. These assets can be material, immaterial, socio-emotional or environmental, which shape the way of thinking and living of the majority of community members, and if properly valued and tapped can positively influence and advance the shaping of economic, social and in our case knowledge systems of the societies.

Cultural Assets within School Systems. 3) The implications for Educational Practices in Africa for Political, Social, and Economic Sustainability.

2. An *empirical study* of perceptions of experiences of increasing access to education and improving learning by leveraging the cultural assets of value in educational practice, from a range of stakeholders.

This is informed by 3 case studies that were conducted independently in the sub-Saharan African region, covering a group of countries in Central Africa (Cameroon, Chad, and Gabon), Western Africa (Gambia, Ghana, and Nigeria) and Southern Africa (Malawi, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe). Each case study focuses on the way the cultural assets were leveraged to strengthen education systems and improve access and learning covering to the extent possible all the guiding questions in the annex 1, e.g. how education policies are formulated, education and learning systems and institutions managed, curricula are made relevant and education processes/approaches designed and implemented.

Data collection methods included document review, semi-structured interviews and FGDs, as well as any other methods, which the case study teams deemed appropriate.

3. A set of *policy suggestions* that policy makers, managers and development partners in countries of the region may consider in the process of reviewing their education policies and practices in light of the SDG4-Education 2030 goal and targets.

2) Regional synthesis report

Based on the analysis of existing desk review and case study reports, the contractor will develop a regional synthesis report in English of not more than 150 pages.

This report will include at least the following:

- A broad overview of diverse knowledge systems and conducive cultural values in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) that are perceived to be potential leverages to improve educational performance.
- An overview of proven experiences of such leverages of African cultural values and their integration into current national education policies, governance systems and practices (e.g. sector plans, governance structures, curricula, teacher training, school organization, pedagogy, learning assessment, etc.)
- A number of reflection points, policy options and recommendations that policy makers, managers and development partners in countries in the region may consider in the process of reviewing their education policies and strategies in light of the SDG4-Education 2030.

The Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016-2025 will also guide the course of the reflection.

3) Tasks

In the framework of the research study ‘Harnessing cultures to advance education in sub-Saharan Africa: review of education policies and practices’, and in compliance to the Terms of Reference, the contractor is expected to prepare the regional synthesis report in English with no more than 150 pages, including bibliography and annexes (single-spaced, Times New Roman Size 12 Font), and following the UNESCO Style Manual.

Specifically, the contractor will:

- 1) Analyze the existing desk review, case study reports and any other relevant document provided in a view to suggest a number of reflection points, policy options and recommendations for consideration by countries in the region in their process of reviewing education policies and strategies in light of the SDG4-Education 2030.
- 2) Submit for validation by UNESCO the outline of the final deliverable based on the indicative outline that UNESCO will provide at the inception of the contract.
- 3) Submit for comments by UNESCO the draft synthesis report
- 4) Submit for validation by UNESCO the final regional synthesis report in English that has incorporated UNESCO comments.

4) Contract duration

1.5 month (October-November 2017)

5) Requirements

- Be an individual consultant or entity (university, research institute, think tank, consulting firm, etc.) active in the area of education
- Proven experience in research study on youth and education in Sub Saharan Africa
- Proficiency in English and very good working language in French
- Excellent analytical, synthesis and report writing skills

6) How to apply

Please submit a CV (individual) or an expression of interest (organization), as well as previous similar research to Ms. Valérie Djioze-Gallet (v.djioze@unesco.org), cc: Catherine Collin (c.collin@unesco.org) by October 26, 2017.

Please contact Ms. Valérie Djioze-Gallet (v.djioze@unesco.org) for any further information.

Annex 1: Indicative guiding questions for case studies

1. Cultural levers in selected countries of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)
 - a. What are the traditional cultural values and assets that are perceived to be compatible with universally accepted human rights?
 - b. How these traditional cultural values and assets were used to promote education and learning in traditional societies?

2. Experiences of cultural levers in current education policies and strategies:

This involves analysing relevant education policies, programmes, initiatives and/or projects and using other methods (e.g. interviews, surveys and/or Focus Group Discussions) in order to capture relevant experiences, such as ensuring rapprochement between education institutions and communities and integrating conducive cultural levers into education policies and practices from a lifelong and life-wide perspective, in terms of:

 - a. Increase of access/participation in education and training (including school building, supply and demand-side interventions, etc.³)
 - i. What cultural values and assets have been effective to increase access and participation in education and learning? Was it the use of “proximal” language, the relevance of curricula, locally-relevant pedagogical approaches, the leverage of traditional governance system, community involvement in education and school organization, or other cultural assets?
 - ii. How are these efforts and experiences reflected in national education policies and programmes? What are the perceived benefits, success factors and lessons learnt?
 - iii. What could be the opportunities for these experiences to be further leveraged and scaled up to advance education and learning in line with countries’ development contexts, needs and aspirations and in pursuit of the SDG4 (education)?

 - b. Improvement of teaching and learning
 - i. What cultural values and assets have been effective to improve teaching and learners’ acquisition of knowledge, skills/competences and also values (e.g. resilience, responsible citizenship, etc.)⁴? Was it the use of local language, the relevance of curricula, locally-relevant pedagogical approaches, the leverage of traditional governance system, community involvement in education and school organization, or other cultural assets?
 - ii. How are these efforts and experiences reflected in national education policies and programmes? How do beneficiaries perceive these experiences? What are the perceived benefits, success factors and lessons learnt?
 - iii. What could be the opportunities for these experiences to be further leveraged and scaled up to advance education and learning in line with countries’ development contexts, needs and aspirations and in pursuit of the SDG4 (education)?

 - c. Governance of education systems and institutions (including involvement of community and other stakeholders in policy design and management)

³ Some examples include initiatives 3E (Espaces d’Eveil Educatif) and non-formal vocational training centres in Burkina Faso; Nomadic education in Nigeria; community involvement in school construction in Rwanda; use of local languages in e.g. Mali, Niger, Botswana, etc.

⁴ Ref. Sustainable Development Goal 4, target 4.7. Please also refer to relevant paragraphs of the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

- i. What cultural values and assets have been effective to improve governance in education? Was it through leveraging traditional governance system, community involvement in education and adaptation of school organization, or other cultural assets?
 - ii. How are these efforts and experiences reflected in national education policies and programmes? How do beneficiaries perceive these experiences? What are the perceived benefits, success factors and lessons learnt?
 - iii. What could be the opportunities for these experiences to be further leveraged and scaled up to advance education and learning in line with countries' development contexts, needs and aspirations and in pursuit of the SDG4 (education)?
 - d. Education for the disadvantaged (girls, minorities, disabled, etc.)
 - i. What cultural values and assets have been effective to improve inclusion and equity in education? Was it the use of local language, the relevance of curricula, locally-relevant pedagogical approaches, the leverage of traditional governance system, community involvement in education and school organization, or other cultural assets?
 - ii. How are these efforts and experiences reflected in national education policies and programmes? How do beneficiaries perceive these experiences? What are the perceived benefits, success factors and lessons learnt?
 - iii. What could be the opportunities for these experiences to be further leveraged and scaled up to advance education and learning in line with countries' development contexts, needs and aspirations and in pursuit of the SDG4 (education)?
- 3. Options and suggestions for policy consideration for scale-up (that could be shared with policy-makers, managers, practitioners and development partners including reflection on the implication and applicability of the experiences reviewed in the case study in light of the Education 2030 agenda not only in the countries reviewed and also in other countries and/or contexts)