



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

# Pedagogical Use of the General History of Africa Conceptual Framework

---

By Prof. Mamadou NDOYE,

1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chairman of the Scientific Committee for the Project

## **Executive Summary**

### **An African project supported by UNESCO**

In response to a request made in 1964 by newly independent African States that wished to improve knowledge of their past, UNESCO completed in 1999, the publication of the *General History of Africa* with the view of helping Africa to recover ownership of its history while contributing to a better understanding of the continent's contribution to the progress of humanity. "*The Pedagogical Use of the General History of Africa*" project, requested on several occasions by African Member States to UNESCO, was a follow-up to the preparation and publication of the General History of Africa. It is equally a product of the favourable environment that arose after the establishment of the African Union (AU) and the launch of the Second Decade of Education for Africa. The project is thus firmly oriented towards support for African unity, while in specific operational terms it aims:

- to develop common content for African countries' history syllabi and textbooks;
- to produce a historical atlas, a CD-ROM and teaching tools for primary and secondary schools and teacher user guides;
- to improve teachers' initial and continuing training for a renewed approach to history teaching;
- to promote and harmonize *GHA* teaching in higher education;
- to reorganize and update the *GHA* website so that the content of all eight volumes can be posted online together with teaching material produced and any relevant literature, one of the main aims being to provide free access for all to these digital resources.

### **A favourable environment**

The project falls within the context of the favourable environment that arose after the creation of the African Union and the launch of the Second Decade of Education for Africa. As a matter of fact, after the early stages of the construction of Africa, new hopes were raised when the Constitutive Act of the African Union was signed in Durban (South Africa) in 2000 and the establishment of its institutions (Commission, Parliament and Peace and Security Council). That is where the expression of new political ambition also translated into strategic reflections and collective commitment marked by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in 2001, the Vision for African Union and Commissions for the African Union in 2004, the 2004-2007 Strategic Framework of the African Union, the Charter for African Renaissance in 2006, Action Plans of African Union departments and, as a matter of fact, the Second Decade of Education for Africa.

In these strategic documents, the unity of the continent is highlighted as a necessity for Africa's development in the face of large economic entities. However, the lack of absence of broadly based political, social and cultural support for the construction of African unity appears to be reflected in the lack of urgency among political leaders. With this in mind, it is important to promote historical awareness of a common past and the objectives of mutual knowledge and understanding, reciprocal trust, peaceful cohabitation and the desire for cooperation and solidarity between peoples in the construction of African integration.

### **The position and role of history in the construction of African unity.**

With some exceptions that prove the rule, the curriculum position of history teaching is generally deemed inadequate; moreover, it is tending to lose ground in terms of accredited teaching hours

and indeed of its independence as a discipline, as it is increasingly subsumed into the social sciences. Yet, the central position and role of African history and the teaching of that history in the construction of African unity are strongly affirmed in the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance. African history is portrayed there as the very basis of justification for the integration project, both in its genesis and in its legitimation. It stimulates pan-African awareness, sentiments and energies by revealing the encounters, exchanges, reciprocal influences, intermingling, sharing and forms of solidarity that have marked the progress of the peoples of Africa through time, in prosperity and adversity – in short, the fundamental community of historical development and destiny that link them, whatever the differences that may have arisen and whatever the divergent pathways thus caused at particular times and in particular circumstances. All these and many other underlying notions are admirably summed up by the words used in the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance: “The unity of Africa is founded first and foremost on its history” (1<sup>1</sup>).

This fundamental element, naturally led African Heads of State and of Government to determine the position of African history teaching as central to the pan-African project, meaning both African integration and the African renaissance, which call to mind the three aims of the vision (unity, prosperity and peace), stated from the outset and providing African history teaching with the requisite aims and lines of emphasis to pursue in its reinstatement of a past that embodies missions for the present and future. To this end, the Charter politically validates use of the *GHA* published by UNESCO and the project outlined here.

Article 7 of the Charter expresses the political determination of the Heads of State and government of the African Union, in the clearest terms:

- “1. African States commit themselves to work for African Renaissance. They agree on the need for reconstruction of the historical memory and conscience of Africa and the African Diaspora.
2. They consider that the General History published by UNESCO constitutes a valid base for teaching the History of Africa and recommend its dissemination, including in African languages, as well as the publication of its abridged and simplified versions for wider audiences.”

Reaching the set aims of the teaching of the General history of Africa by Member States to the Charter implies the achievement of the duties mentioned here below:

- Exposition of the educative philosophy orientating this teaching;
- Congruent definition of the general aims and objectives of the curricula;
- Development of common contents for education programmes forming the base of African historical awareness to be promoted amongst all the peoples of the continent;
- Preparing a guide to the integration of common content into the education curriculum of different African countries;
- Designing and production of manuals and other pedagogical materials serving as teaching tools for GHA in primary and secondary institutions.
- Preparing a pedagogical guide and training programme destined for use by teachers as well as their trainers
- Development of a distribution strategy in higher education, vocational training, media and virtual sites.

## **The philosophical and political framework of *GHA* teaching**

The philosophical and political framework which must direct *GHA* teaching may be analysed from the strategic documents mentioned herein, together with the set human, political, economic and social objectives.

“An Africa that is integrated, prosperous and peaceful” (2<sup>2</sup>), such is the Vision of the continent’s future that the Heads of State and of Government of the African Union would like all Africans to share. The favourable factors and conditions that must be created if these three closely interrelated aims: integration, prosperity and peace, - are to be learnt from the lessons yielded by critical reflection on the ills that impede the continent’s progress : i) mutual knowledge, solidarity and peaceful construction of unity versus intolerance, instability, conflicts and wars, ii) good governance, democracy, economic efficacy and poverty reduction versus corruption, violations of democratic principles, gender of sexes and discriminations...

The right path for this destination is undoubtedly African integration which is considered leverage towards:

- the establishment of the United States of Africa on a federal or confederal basis;
- the acceleration of the continent’s economic and social as well as African cultural renaissance;
- the strengthening of Africa’s position in the world economy.

To carry out such a project, the type of person to be trained requires the emergence of new stakeholders from both the State and society:

- a State political leadership that is deeply committed to interactions, cooperation and solidarity among African countries;
- a large, active grass-roots base that is committed to the goals of integration (parliamentarians, political parties, economic agents, civil society organizations);
- citizens who are aware of their role as stakeholders and their status as beneficiaries of integration;
- young people who are inspired to act as standard-bearers for the ideals of a renewed pan-Africanism;
- peoples that are determined to achieve effective unity and solidarity

The values, ideas and behaviour that education must inculcate in order to promote African integration refer to:

- the affirmation of African identity as a common concern of all the peoples of Africa, while respecting its component identities;
- thorough understanding of the cultural unity of the continent, including recognition of and respect for cultural diversity;
- attachment to the continent’s historical heritage and common culture, to the shared values of its roots (languages, cultures, history, dialogue, solidarity, sharing, integration into the

community) and to the dynamic values of its heritage (human rights, social cohesion and human development);

- vigilance and action against all forms of alienation, exclusion and cultural oppression, in particular with a view to the freedom and promotion of African women;
- openness to Africa's relations with the rest of the world.

### **General aims and objectives of *GHA* teaching**

The orientations of the philosophical and political framework can be summed up in general aims and objectives of *GHA* teaching. They are relative to the restoration of the dignity of African personality, in the sense of developing pride in their origins and historical belonging and whilst at the same time engaging in integration and African Renaissance as described in the axes here below:

- the affirmation of African identity as the basis for knowledge and understanding of the common historical and cultural heritage and for mobilization of endogenous forces and factors of development;
- mutual knowledge, comprehension and cultural and spiritual tolerance in the interests of harmony, solidarity and peace between groups, peoples and countries in Africa;
- consolidation of the aspiration for African integration, most particularly to promote the ideals of a dynamic and renewed pan-Africanism;
- the promotion of an African citizenship based on informed civic awareness and rooted in an active, responsible community of memory with a view to appropriating the project of African unity and contributing to its construction on a basis of free, democratic consent and respect for human rights, including gender equality;
- openness to the rest of the world to promote an understanding of its historical development and relations with Africa.

### **Principles for developing common content**

On the basis of these general aims and goals, the development of a common educational content must also take into consideration local and regional peculiarities, for example by opting for a spiral approach to *GHA* problematic (taking the immediate environment as a starting point and then progressing to broader and more abstract levels) that can be combined with a spatio-temporal comparison approach, competences and behaviours to be developed depending on the epistemological, ethical and pedagogical choices. This task has been entrusted in the first instance to subgroup 2 of the Scientific Committee, after which the Regional Conference scheduled for the purpose will be called upon to validate its recommendations and organize the development work of the common education content. It is necessary to already define without any ambiguities what the history of Africa is not, to the people and especially to the youths of the continent:

- a manipulation aid for the purposes of ideology, propaganda or the promotion of ideas opposed to human and democratic values (racism, xenophobia, intolerance, violence, denial of human rights, etc.);
- a tool for spreading the falsification, distortion, negation or omission of historical facts for the sake of any cause or power whatsoever;
- a source of prejudice and mistrust and, still less, of discord and hatred among African groups, peoples and States;
- a compendium of encyclopaedic knowledge.

What *GHA* teaching should try to do:

- enunciate the history of the continent to that of its component regions and countries;
- train the young to consider history from the viewpoint of African integration;
- impart knowledge and understanding of the African past and its relationship to the continent's present and future;
- educate pan-Africanist citizens who are aware, responsible, active and demanding in regard to respect for and promotion of the values of freedom and democracy;
- establish a common core of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes enabling the young:
  - to grasp and understand the historical milestones and foundational events of the common African heritage;
  - to develop powers of critical thought and reflection and a capacity for research, analysis and synthesis that will enable them to deal suitably with historical information;
  - to harness their historical attainments to the task of successfully addressing, each in his or her sphere of responsibility and collectively, the challenges facing the peoples of the continent in their endeavour to construct a “unified, prosperous Africa”.
  - Disseminate an open, pluralistic and tolerant conception of the *GHA*

Once the common content has been defined, Expert Commissions will be set up to develop, under the supervision of the competent working groups of the Scientific Committee, all the other components of the project: school textbooks and other learning-inputs, assessment methods and teacher learning processes, dissemination strategies in higher learning institutions, vocational training, media and virtual sites.

## **Conclusion**

By way of conclusion, it is appropriate to underpin that the adopted “Pedagogical use of the *General History of Africa*” approach has been placed within a development philosophy and an education policy (vision and cultural charter of the (*GHA*), which provided a framework for the transposition of scientific knowledge into teaching and learning content. The extended integration of these contents into African educational systems is meant to be detailed with regard to the diversity and development of contexts as well as from a systematic standpoint in so far as it affects learning, curricular and human inputs as much as the teaching-learning processes and their outcomes.

However, beyond the necessary expert work, the successful implementation will depend on the political will of African States manifested through the exerted national leadership, active commitment, effective resource mobilization and indispensable support for adequate integration of *GHA* teaching in the educational system of every country. Here, the African Union finds a leading role in the piloting, regular evaluation and follow-up of the implementation of the mission that African Heads of State have set on the route towards continental construction and integration.

## **A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PEDAGOGICAL USE OF THE GENERAL HISTORY OF AFRICA**

Readers should note that this conceptual framework uses African Union and not UNESCO terminology: the term “continental” (or continent) refers to the whole of Africa while the term “regional” (or region) means the various country groupings that constitute the whole.

### **Introduction: use and purpose of the conceptual framework**

This conceptual framework is a work in progress, and should be considered and treated as such.

It was at the first meeting of the Scientific Committee (16 and 17 March 2009) on the “Pedagogical use of the *General History of Africa*” project that the decision was taken to draw up a conceptual framework with a view to clarifying the different issues, dimensions and lines of emphasis of the project, particularly as it relates to African integration. Accordingly, the conceptual framework analyses the main challenges involved in developing and implementing the various project components, sets out the issues entailed and offers some possible approaches for responding to them. The following are therefore examined in turn:

- the contextual challenges associated with African integration, developments in curricular and pedagogical approaches and the current state of history teaching in African education systems;
- the political and educational challenges involved in setting the aims and objectives of teaching the *General History of Africa (GHA)*;
- the conceptual and operational challenges involved in creating a common core of knowledge and capabilities for all African countries;
- the methodological challenges of integrating that common core into national syllabi;
- the challenges involved in designing, editing, producing, storing and distributing school textbooks and other teaching material;
- the challenges of paradigms and approaches for teacher training and awareness-raising;
- the challenges of mobilizing and integrating formal, non-formal and informal education and training systems and resources to meet all the targets concerned;
- the challenges of harmonizing and reforming history teaching in higher education.

The conceptual framework is intended in the first instance for the members of the Scientific Committee, particularly those of its subgroups that have been tasked with providing input into the various project components: preparation of pedagogical content (subgroup 2), integration of pedagogical content into school syllabi (subgroup 3), employment and dissemination of the *GHA* in higher education (subgroup 4) and formulation of an informal and non-formal education strategy (subgroup 5).

The aim is to use the framework to present them with a set of issues that can guide their thinking, while their contributions should in turn serve to develop further the issues in their respective areas of competence that are covered in the framework.

Once the framework has been enhanced by these groups' contributions, it can serve as a policy document for the work of the Regional Conference scheduled for 2010 and tasked with beginning the development of common content, in which all African countries, each represented by two experts from the ministry of education, will participate.

After the completion of this widely inclusive development process, once the framework has been revised in the light of the conclusions of the Conference, it can be treated and used as a reference framework for integration of the *GHA* into the syllabi of African countries.

Before doing so, however, the project to which this conceptual framework relates should first be outlined in brief.

### **1. “The pedagogical use of the *General History of Africa*” project**

In response to a request made in 1964 by newly independent African States that wished to improve knowledge of their past, UNESCO began to publish the *General History of Africa* with a view to helping Africa reclaim its own history while contributing to a better understanding of the continent's contribution to the progress of humanity. The last volume was published in 1999. Owing to the *GHA*, a number of truths about the continent's past have been re-established:

- history can draw upon oral traditions, not only written sources;
- Africa not only has a history, it has a history that is longer even than other continents', going back more than three million years;
- Africa retained a leading role for the first 15,000 centuries of human history;
- the oldest civilizations, including that of ancient Egypt, can trace their origins and inspiration back to the African peoples themselves and arose out of their development as they responded to existential challenges;
- the Sahara has never been a barrier but rather a place of contact and interchange among the different peoples of Africa;
- Africa has never been cut off from the rest of the world but has always been in contact with Asia, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas;
- Islam had a very early and very profound influence on the continent's development;
- human trafficking and slavery have had a great impact on the continent's destruction;
- the African Diaspora has not only survived dehumanization, but has had a considerable influence on the creation of new cultures and post-slavery societies.<sup>3</sup>

Three hundred and fifty experts from Africa and the rest of the world have accomplished this monumental eight-volume work and an abridged edition translated into 13 languages:

**Volume I: *Methodology and African Prehistory***, edited by J. Ki-Zerbo (main edition: English, French, Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Japanese and Chinese; abridged edition: English, French, Hausa, Kiswahili and Peul);

**Volume II: *Ancient Civilizations of Africa***, edited by G. Mokhtar (main edition: English, French, Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Japanese and Chinese; abridged edition: English, French, Hausa and Peul);

**Volume III: *Africa from the Seventh to the Eleventh Century***, edited by M.M. El Fasi and I. Hrbek (main edition: English, French, Arabic and Spanish; abridged edition: English and French);

**Volume IV: *Africa from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century***, edited by D.T. Niane (main edition: English, French, Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese, Japanese and Chinese; abridged edition: English and French);

**Volume V: *Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century***, edited by B.A. Ogot (main edition: English, French and Arabic; abridged edition: English and French);

**Volume VI: *Africa in the Nineteenth Century until the 1880s***, edited by J.F.A. Ajayi (main edition: English, French and Arabic; abridged edition: English and French);

**Volume VII: *Africa under Colonial Domination, 1880-1935***, edited by A.A. Boahen (main edition: English, French, Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese, Japanese and Chinese; abridged edition: English and French);

**Volume VIII: *Africa since 1935***, edited by A.A. Maxrui and C. Wondji (main edition: English and French and Arabic; abridged edition: English and French).

“The pedagogical use of the *General History of Africa*” project was requested on several occasions by the Member States of Africa following the preparation and publication of the *General History of Africa*, in response to the favourable environment that arose after the establishment of the African Union (AU) and the launch of the Second Decade of Education for Africa. It was designed on the basis of the conclusions and recommendations of a number of expert meetings (Dakar 1986, Nairobi 1989, Tripoli 1989 and Dakar 2001) and different studies (Dramani-Issifou 1999 and Kipré 2002). The general objective is to contribute to a renewal of history teaching in the schools and universities of African countries from a perspective of African integration and through:

- a better understanding of Africa’s rich past, heritage and contribution to the general progress of humanity;
- awareness of the shared values and ties linking the African peoples;
- the promotion of African identity and citizenship.

The project is thus firmly oriented towards support for African unity, while in specific operational terms it aims:

- to develop common content for African countries’ history syllabi and textbooks;
- to produce a historical atlas, a CD-ROM and teaching tools for primary and secondary schools and teacher user guides;
- to improve teachers’ initial and continuing training for a renewed approach to history teaching;
- to promote and harmonize *GHA* teaching in higher education;
- to reorganize and update the *GHA* website so that the content of all eight volumes can be posted online together with teaching material produced and any relevant literature, one of the main aims being to provide free access for all to these digital resources.

To determine the methodology for implementing this project and for integrating the *GHA* into the education policies of African Union Member States, UNESCO was tasked with establishing a scientific committee of 10 members selected in a personal capacity on the basis of their expertise and experience in the fields of African history, education policy, history teaching, curriculum development and teacher training.

The Committee has intellectual and scientific responsibility for the project.

## 2. Contexts and issues

Among the contextual factors determining the goals and implementation of the project, it seems vital to analyse those relating to African integration, the development of education systems and history teaching in Africa. The main (although not the only) requirement where the first dimension is concerned, particularly at the political level, is to build awareness of the *GHA* among those in a position of leadership and a determination to avail themselves of the contribution it and its teaching can make to the construction of African unity. As regards the second dimension, the project cannot succeed unless it takes account both of the reforms and innovations now transforming education systems in Africa and the current state of history teaching, which will enable expected *GHA* inputs to be integrated efficiently and consistently.

### 2.1 African integration: a long and difficult road

The road towards African integration seems to be a long and difficult one for the States of the continent. While the subject cannot be analysed in detail here, some key project issues can at least be outlined.

When the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was established in 1963, 32 States committed themselves to the construction of African unity. Between minimalist and maximalist pan – Africanism, however, proponents of the former seem to have been in the ascendant for a long time.

Achieving economic integration the better to move towards political unity among States – thus one might interpret the strategy symbolized by the Treaty of Abuja, which promised a continent-wide common market by 2025. Although the deadline still lies ahead, there are few tangible signs of any transition from the current regional phase of economic integration (the existing regional economic communities) towards the desired continental phase.

New hopes were raised when the Constitutive Act of the African Union was signed at Durban (South Africa) in 2000 and its institutions (Commission, Parliament and Peace and Security Council), and were established. Although the contradictions between “immediatist” and “long-termist” positions on the subject of a United States of Africa remained insoluble when pl

aced again on the agenda of the Heads of State at the 2007 and 2009 summits, the desire to go further seems to be very much alive.

This record raises a number of questions.

First, why has this old pan-Africanist project, advocated by Marcus Garvey in 1924 and by Dubois, Lumumba, Padmore, Kenyatta and Nkrumah at the 1945 Pan-African Congress in Manchester, not progressed as quickly as desired?

It would be hard to question its legitimacy and relevance as a political ambition, and still less the need for it if Africa is to develop in a world of great global economic blocs.

Where, then, are the obstacles that must be overcome? And how can teaching the *GHA* contribute to their removal?

The obstacle most often mentioned is undoubtedly the lack of political will. Can teaching the *GHA* carry the debate forward and heighten the awareness and determination of the African political leadership?

Moreover, conflicts are tearing Africa apart rather than bringing it together. Can teaching the *GHA* not contribute to the elimination of the prejudice and ignorance that engender mistrust, incomprehension, intolerance and conflict between cultural groups, societies and countries in

Africa by establishing the historical facts in collective memories and revealing the positive reciprocal influences between civilizations, societies, religions, cultures and languages in the historical development of the continent?

Is the lack absence of broadly based political, social and cultural support for the construction of African unity not reflected in the lack of urgency among political leaders?

Can teaching of the *GHA* help to raise among the peoples of Africa, the ones primarily concerned in this regard, awareness of a shared history and heritage, a pan-African consciousness, a feeling of common belonging, in short an African identity underpinning determination to work in solidarity towards a common destiny?

With particular regard to the priority given under the project to investing in primary school children and young people in secondary education, might now not be the time to open up a long-term but more ambitious prospect for these rising generations: teaching the *GHA* as part of the development of strong civic awareness and active African citizenship, as the bases of the future United States of Africa?

These considerations are not exhaustive but are intended to highlight the importance of historical awareness of a common past and of mutual knowledge and understanding, reciprocal trust, peaceful coexistence and the desire for cooperation and solidarity between peoples in the construction of African integration, but also the challenges facing *GHA* teaching in terms of the multiplicity and diversity of those who must be reached (the general public and the intellectual and political elite, adults and young people including children, the educated and the illiterate, urban and rural dwellers, etc.), the multifaceted goals that must be developed (political, ideological, cultural, social, etc.), the objectives to be defined, which are not only cognitive but range from “training” to socio-affective development, and the pedagogical choices involved, which must be relevant and effective in bringing about intellectual, cultural, social and political change.

The Conference of Ministers of Education of the African Union (COMEDAF) has therefore stressed in a number of declarations the important contribution that education can and must make to the construction of African unity. The launch of the Second Decade of Education for Africa reflects this political will.

Despite these favourable omens, the complexity of the premise underlying the project, namely that knowledge of the history of Africa can contribute significantly to the establishment of pan-Africanism and African integration on the basis of shared and enduring political, social, cultural and ideological foundations and values, cannot be ignored.

That complexity increases when the broader background is taken into account, as the context is marked by economic globalization and a media explosion that reduce space and time and intensify interaction and influences among the peoples and societies of every continent, region and country on the planet. The major challenges facing all humanity are being played out at a planetary level, and thus in Africa too: the promotion of models of sustainable economic growth, conservation of the environment (global warming), the construction of inclusive societies (poverty reduction) and mutual understanding between cultures (the struggle against fanaticism, intolerance and extremism of every stripe).

The issue here is whether the re-appropriation by Africa of its history and the affirmation of its identity and unity might also prepare it to participate actively in humanity’s current and future progress.

## 2.2 Developments in African education systems: major reforms and innovations

The project is designed for inclusion in African education policies. It is therefore important to analyse the developments in and state of the education systems that are expected to adopt and implement it.

Most education systems in Africa are a legacy of colonization, which implemented policies designed to “tame” and “assimilate” indigenous peoples and bring them into “partnership”.<sup>4</sup>

Since the wave of independence in the 1960s, reforms and innovations have sought to change these policies so that they are better suited to the real needs and situation of African countries. The various reforms undertaken in each African country will not be reviewed here; rather, emphasis will be laid on the major trends and most striking transformations that have marked developments in and the current state of African education systems generally.

The first reforms were initiated after the 1961 Conference of African Ministers in Addis Ababa invited Member States to Africanize their education systems. The thrust of those reforms was to revise school syllabi and textbooks to remove all content derived from colonial ideology that most offended African dignity. Ideological disciplines, history foremost among them, were particularly concerned insofar as they propagated colonial caricatures and distortions that misrepresented the personalities, cultures and traditions of African societies by stressing their civilizational virginity (denial of the existence of African civilization) or at least their inferiority.

The second wave of reforms in the late 1960s and the 1970s sought to achieve a less defensive and more “maieutic” (inward-looking) Africanization of education systems, insofar as they sought to integrate the endogenous heritage, namely local practices and knowledge, African values, cultures and languages, into school syllabi. One of the main innovations was interaction between schools and neighbouring communities to draw on knowledge that was then adapted with a view to resolving problems in the local environment, while bilingual education (first an African language, then a language of past colonization) was the other. In the teaching of history, a high priority was to be given to local surveys and oral sources, particularly through study of the milieu. It should be noted, though, that in practice the Africanization of history teaching took the form more of a search for national identity than of a pan-Africanist curriculum approach.<sup>5</sup>

Those reforms, particularly bilingual education, are still being implemented in a number of African countries that have opted for “contribution” policies in regard to the colonial language and culture policy. They have made more decisive progress (significant improvement in the effectiveness and relevance of learning) in other countries that have adopted “transformation” policies in respect of the colonial culture and language policy. Some countries whose policy has been one of continuity have not yet engaged in such an overhaul of their education systems.

From the late 1980s to the present day, curricular and educational reforms initiated in the developed countries have spread to primary and secondary education in a number of African countries. Besides the inclusion of new subjects in curricula (environment, population, HIV/AIDS education, etc.), the main innovations have been mastery learning (ML) and the competence-based approach (CBA).

ML was the first innovation to be introduced. It is supposed to entail a change of perspective: learning processes over teaching, task production (behaviour) over the internalization of knowledge, criterion-referenced assessment (measuring learning on the basis of performance criteria and indicators) over subjective appreciation of learning outcomes.

The CBA is more recent, having been adopted after ML, and entails an inclusive curricular approach encompassing capacities, knowledge and attitudes to develop competences defined as complex and effective capabilities enabling learners to identify, analyse and resolve particular families of problem situations.

ML and the CBA set out, at various levels of integration, to reinforce the meaning, relevance and effectiveness of classroom learning (what is to be learned, why and to what end, to solve which problem?) by stressing its utility and utilization to solve problem situations. This also shifts learning away from disciplinary compartmentalization and towards an inter- and/or cross-disciplinary approach. Furthermore, ML and the CBA are based on teaching styles that are learner- rather than teacher-centred, and thus on active, participatory pedagogies, including constructivism (“all knowledge is constructed from experience”) and socio-constructivism (“knowledge is heavily correlated with the learner’s environment”).

ML has been widely applied in most African countries’ education systems, but the penetration of curricular reforms based on the competence approach seems to have been slower and more difficult, even though they have been adopted by a number of countries.

This short survey gives an overview of the challenges to be taken up in implementing the project:

- countries’ commitment to, and implementation of these reforms varies considerably, and this is true both of bilingual education and of curricular and educational reforms;
- these variations have necessarily had an impact on the choice of the language of instruction, particularly in primary education, on the formulation of the syllabi to be taught (traditional content, mastery or competences), on teaching-learning processes and thus on teacher training and the preparation of textbooks and teacher’s guides;
- the common core of knowledge and skills, textbooks, teacher’s guides and other material that must be produced as part of the project must take account of the curricular and educational consequences of the reforms concerned, while being open to the diversity of situations in the countries, including the need for translation into the African languages that are now languages of instruction;
- the integration of *GHA* teaching into renewed education systems will also be challenged by the interdisciplinarity and cross-disciplinarity advocated under these new approaches.

### 2.3 The situation of history teaching in the countries of Africa

Project implementation will require good understanding of the current situation of history teaching in African countries. The Scientific Committee is currently awaiting the findings of a survey on the subject: a questionnaire has been designed and sent out to all the countries so that stock can be taken of history syllabi and the textbooks used. The evaluation report will undoubtedly provide a fuller and more nuanced analysis of the challenges that must be met when the project is implemented.

In the meantime, analysis of the conclusions of the studies and expert meetings<sup>6</sup> on the subject has already revealed some potential challenges for the project:

- comparisons of history syllabi and the set textbooks reveal wide disparities among African countries in terms of subject matter, methodological approaches, the pace of learning and accredited teaching hours allocated to history;
- with some exceptions that prove the rule, the curriculum position of history teaching is generally deemed inadequate; moreover, it is tending to lose ground in terms of accredited teaching hours and indeed of its independence as a discipline, as it is increasingly subsumed into the social sciences;
- more problematically still, the portion of history syllabi assigned to the teaching of African history is considered too small on average, although it varies considerably from country to country;

- some disparity can be observed between official instructions, generally intended to renew history education (with general and specific goal-setting and active, participatory and discovery methods), and classroom teaching practices and textbooks, geared more to the straightforward transmission of knowledge;
- another source of disparity is that in some countries it is the State that sets syllabi while in others this responsibility is entrusted to national or subregional expert bodies.

### **3. The *GHA* education policy framework: formulation of core approaches and education goals, setting of general aims and objectives for syllabi and preparation of common content**

Preparing common content for teaching the *GHA* in all African countries is not simply a matter of taking stock of education systems and the teaching of history. Such content must be part and parcel of an African education policy that formulates the political, social, cultural, economic and human objectives to be pursued. It must also flow from a determination of the general educational aims and objectives that will determine the syllabi's general thrust. The process of turning general goals into specifics, together with the stocktaking exercise mentioned above, leads to the identification, selection and determination of the content which is to form part of the common core.

#### 3.1 The philosophical and political framework: aims and lines of emphasis of *GHA* teaching

The *GHA* must be taught as part of an education policy with clearly defined core aims and lines of emphasis. This type of education policy is usually made by the political authorities of the State which, guided by their vision of the future and their core values, sets policies that reflect the kind of society it wishes to build and thus the type of person the education system should produce.

At the continental level, the African Union is undoubtedly the most legitimate source for the expression of the political, cultural, economic, social and human intentions that should guide *GHA* teaching. While this continent-wide body has not issued any official text that specifically spells out an African education policy, elements of such a policy can be found in numerous documents, particularly as regards the teaching of African history in relation to African integration. For example, the most recent and substantial reference documents on the subject include:

- the Strategic Plan of the Commission of the African Union, Volume 1, "Vision and Mission of the African Union" (see African Union Conference, third ordinary session, 6-8 July 2004, Addis Ababa);
- the Strategic Plan of the Commission of the African Union, Volume 2, "2004-2007 Strategic Framework of the Commission of the African Union";
- the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance (see African Union Conference, sixth ordinary session, 23-24 January 2006, Khartoum);
- the African Youth Charter;
- the Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006-2015);
- COMEDAF declarations I, II, II+, III and IV.

Analysis of these documents reveals the educational intentions underlying African integration and the role assigned to the teaching of African history. The educational policy framework that can be sketched out from this analysis includes the following elements: a vision of the continent's future, the path for reaching it, the stakeholders to be trained, the values and ideas that are to inform them and the core position and role of African history in implementing the pan-African project.

The vision of the continent's future that the Heads of State and government of the African Union would like all Africans to share clearly constitutes the blueprint for the society to be constructed. It is characterized essentially by three closely interrelated aims: the unity of the continent, prosperity and peace. The favourable factors and conditions that must be created if these are to emerge flow naturally from the lessons yielded by critical reflection on the ills that impede the continent's progress: instability, conflicts, wars and violations of democratic principles and rights. Conscious civic commitment on the part of the continent's women and men to the African cause is indispensable if the Africa projected here is to emerge. This is all expressed in a condensed form in the vision adopted at the third session of the African Union Heads of State and Government Conference: "An Africa integrated, prosperous and peaceful".<sup>7</sup>

The right path to this destination is undoubtedly African integration. The document setting out the vision of the African Union details the implications of this conviction for the different dimensions of development – political, cultural, economic and social:

- the goal of political integration is the establishment of a federal or confederal United States of Africa;
- integration will provide the greatest impetus to the African renaissance;
- African unity is a factor of equilibrium and a force for economic development, conflict resolution and the reduction of inequality and injustice;
- integration should boost the continent's economic, social and cultural development;
- Economic integration will strengthen the position of Africa in the world economy.

The stakeholders that must emerge to take up this project and carry it to a successful conclusion are also identified by the document setting out the vision:

- a State political leadership that is deeply committed to dialogue, cooperation and solidarity among African countries;
- a large, active grass-roots base that is committed to the goals of integration (parliamentarians, political parties, economic agents, civil society organizations);
- citizens who are aware of their role as stakeholders and their status as beneficiaries of integration;
- **young people who are inspired to act as standard-bearers for the ideals of a renewed pan-Africanism;**
- peoples that are determined to achieve effective unity and solidarity.

The values, ideas and behaviour that education must inculcate in order to promote African integration are set out in various parts of the same document. Without seeking to be exhaustive, they may be summarized as follows:

- the affirmation of African identity as a common concern of all the peoples of Africa, while respecting its component identities;
- thorough understanding of the cultural unity of the continent, including recognition of and respect for cultural diversity;
- attachment to the continent's historical heritage and common culture, to the shared values of its roots (languages, cultures, history, dialogue, solidarity, sharing, integration into the

community) and to the dynamic values of its heritage (human rights, social cohesion and human development);

- vigilance and action against all forms of alienation, exclusion and cultural oppression, in particular with a view to the freedom and promotion of African women;
- openness to Africa's relations with the rest of the world.

The central position and role of African history and the teaching of that history in the construction of African unity are strongly affirmed in the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance. African history is portrayed there as the very basis of justification for the integration project, both in its genesis and in its legitimization. It stimulates pan-African awareness, sentiments and energies by revealing the encounters, exchanges, reciprocal influences, intermingling, sharing and forms of solidarity that have marked the progress of the peoples of Africa through time, in prosperity and adversity – in short, the fundamental community of historical development and destiny that link them, whatever the differences that may have arisen and whatever the divergent pathways thus caused at particular times and in particular circumstances. All these and many other underlying notions are admirably summed up by the words used in the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance: “The unity of Africa is founded first and foremost on its history”.<sup>8</sup>

This underlying conviction quite naturally informs the determination to place the teaching of history at the heart of the pan-African project, meaning both African integration and the African renaissance, which calls to mind the three aims of the vision (unity, prosperity and peace), stated from the outset and providing African history teaching with the requisite aims and lines of emphasis to pursue in its reinstatement of a past that embodies missions for the present and future. Accordingly, the Charter politically validates use of the *GHA* published by UNESCO and the project outlined here. Article 7 of the Charter expresses the political determination of the Heads of State and government of the African Union, in the clearest terms:

- “1. African States commit themselves to work for African Renaissance. They agree on the need for reconstruction of the historical memory and conscience of Africa and the African Diaspora.
2. They consider that the general History published by UNESCO constitutes a valid base for teaching the History of Africa and recommend its dissemination, including in African languages, as well as the publication of its abridged and simplified versions for wider audiences.”

In short, the political, cultural, economic, social, psychological, moral and intellectual goals of African integration are also those assigned by the political authority to the teaching of the *GHA*. They constitute basic lines of emphasis that will guide project implementation once they have been translated into general aims and objectives in the syllabi, while bearing in mind that for all the importance of the pan-African project and its vital ambitions for the continent, it is not itself the goal but rather a means to the goal. The goal, as emphasized in the African Union vision document, is to improve the well-being of African population groups and ensure the full development of Africans, and particularly African women, freed from want and from all oppression and discrimination.<sup>9</sup>

### 3.2 General aims and objectives of *GHA* teaching

If *GHA* teaching is thus placed at the service of this African Union education policy, geared to preparing young people to build tomorrow's “Africa that is integrated, prosperous and peaceful”, the general aims and objectives for teaching, training and education that can be deduced from the above goals will guide decisions about common content to be imparted to all young Africans. The details given here relate first of all to the aims set in syllabi. This is followed by an analysis of the general objectives associated with them, drawing on the three domains (cognitive, psychomotor and socio-affective) of Bloom's taxonomy.

In terms of general syllabus aims and objectives, *GHA* teaching imparts the following to primary and secondary school pupils:

- (a) a renewed sense of African dignity, so that they develop a sense of pride in their origins and of historical belonging, while engaging with the African renaissance:
- to gain knowledge and raise awareness of events and their causes in African history at the local, regional and continental levels with regard to:
    - the African origins of humanity;
    - Africa in Antiquity, Egyptology;
    - the positive action of the African peoples in history;
  - to acquire skills in using a variety of historical sources (oral tradition, archives, museums, monuments, historical objects, information and communication technologies, etc.) and carry out individual and group research, analysis, objective criticism, interpretation, comparison, reconstitution and discussion of historical facts and information based on the study of African history, particularly as relating to:
    - slavery and human trafficking, colonialism, colonization and independence;
    - falsification and distortions of African history, concentrating on deconstruction of the alienating representations and concepts of colonialism;
  - to develop feelings and values of African belonging by means of:
    - a renewed appreciation by Africans of themselves and their history;
    - pride at the rehabilitation of the African historical and cultural heritage;
- (b) the affirmation of African identity as the basis for knowledge and understanding of the common historical and cultural heritage and for mobilization of endogenous forces and factors of development:
- to gain knowledge and raise awareness of events and their causes in the local, regional and continental history of Africa, with regard to:
    - the common historical heritage of its peoples;
    - the common cultural heritage (linguistic, spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional values, goods and productions encompassing the arts, literature, ways of life, value systems, traditions and beliefs);
    - the temporality of African history (periodization of key events and times in the continent's evolution);
  - to acquire the ability to use a variety of historical sources (oral tradition, archives, museums, monuments, historical objects, information and communication technologies, etc.) and carry out individual and group research, analysis, objective criticism, interpretation, comparison, reconstitution and discussion of historical facts and information based on the study of African history, particularly as relating to:
    - the dialectic of Africa's common yet diverse identity;
    - local sources, including oral ones, for the history of Africa;

- To develop feelings and values of African belonging by means of:
  - a stronger feeling of sharing a common past;
  - the aspiration to live together in an enlarged community;
- (c) mutual knowledge, comprehension and cultural and spiritual tolerance in the interests of harmony, solidarity and peace between groups, peoples and countries in Africa:
  - to gain knowledge and raise awareness of events and their causes in the local, regional and continental history of Africa, with regard to:
    - cultural unity in diversity;
    - migrations, contacts and reciprocal influences among African peoples over time, including those resulting from trade and trade routes;
  - to acquire the ability to use a variety of historical sources (oral tradition, archives, museums, monuments, historical objects, information and communication technologies, etc.) and carry out individual and group research, analysis, objective criticism, interpretation, comparison, reconstitution and discussion of historical facts and information based on the study of African history, particularly as relating to:
    - prejudice and internal conflicts within Africa;
    - aspects of the continent's history that are controversial in Africa;
    - historical instances of and forces for reconciliation, solidarity and communality among African groups and peoples;
  - to develop feelings and values of African belonging and pan-Africanist ideals by means of:
    - the promotion of attitudes and behaviour conducive to peaceful coexistence;
    - attachment to ideals and practices of tolerance, respect for differences, and peace;
- (d) reaffirmation of the aspiration for African integration, most particularly to promote the ideals of a dynamic and renewed pan-Africanism:
  - to gain knowledge and raise awareness of events and their causes in the local, regional and continental history of Africa, with regard to:
    - the historical and cultural events and currents that gave rise to pan-Africanist awareness;
    - colonization and independence;
    - the history of African integration;
  - to acquire the ability to use a variety of historical sources (oral tradition, archives, museums, monuments, historical objects, information and communication technologies, etc.) and carry out individual and group research, analysis, objective criticism, interpretation, comparison, reconstitution and discussion of historical facts and information based on the study of African history, particularly as relating to:
    - the experiences and challenges of African integration;

- policies and strategies for the free, democratic development of African unity;
- to develop feelings and values of African belonging and pan-Africanist ideals by means of:
  - engagement with the ideals and goals of pan-Africanism;
  - the quest for common solutions to the major challenges facing the continent;
- (e) the promotion of an African citizenship based on informed civic awareness and rooted in an active, responsible community of memory with a view to appropriating the project of African unity and contributing to its construction on a basis of free, democratic consent and respect for human rights, including gender equality:
  - to gain knowledge and raise awareness of events and their causes in the local, regional and continental history of Africa, with regard to:
    - the vision, mission and institutions of African integration,
    - the role and status, rights and duties of African citizens and civil societies in the integration effort;
  - To acquire the ability to use a variety of historical sources (oral tradition, archives, museums, monuments, historical objects, information and communication technologies, etc.) and carry out individual and group research, analysis, objective criticism, interpretation, comparison, reconstitution and discussion of historical facts and information based on the study of African history, particularly as relating to:
    - requirements to ensure ownership by citizens of integration schemes;
    - the democratic implications of constructing African unity;
    - the issues of gender inequality, youth, women and socio-political stability;
  - to develop feelings and values of African belonging and pan-Africanist ideals by means of:
    - high standards for the rights and duties of African citizens;
    - attachment to the values of freedom, democracy and human rights;
- (f) openness to the rest of the world to promote an understanding of its historical development and relations with Africa:
  - to gain knowledge and raise awareness of events and their causes in the local, regional and continental history of Africa, with regard to:
    - historical relations between Africa and the rest of the world;
    - the historical development of other continents;
  - to acquire the ability to use a variety of historical sources (oral tradition, archives, museums, monuments, historical objects, information and communication technologies, etc.) and carry out individual and group research, analysis, objective criticism, interpretation, comparison, reconstitution and discussion of historical facts and information based on the study of African history, in particularly as relating to:
    - the impact of interactions between Africa and the rest of the world;

- a comparative assessment of the development of Africa in relation to other continents;
- the temporality and periodization of history (different times, duration, moments, pace, sequences of events, sudden changes of direction);
- To develop feelings and values of African belonging and pan-Africanist ideals by means of:
  - the development of feelings and behaviour that combine rootedness with openness;
  - the adoption of ideals of progress for the whole of humanity.

### 3.3 Developing common content

With the goals of education policy translated into the general aims and objectives set in syllabi, the next step is to continue this process of specification by identifying, selecting and determining common educational content. It should be pointed out, however, that this cannot be achieved by a mechanical process of deduction. On the contrary, it is a complex process that must not only take account of the syllabi currently followed in African countries and of the content of the different *GHA* volumes, but it involves epistemological choices (what history should be taught?), curricular approaches (traditional content, objectives or competences) and educational views (teaching or learning), without forgetting the need to clarify what “common” means as applied to content.

This task has been entrusted in the first instance to subgroup 2 of the Scientific Committee, after which the Regional Conference scheduled for the purpose will be called upon to validate its recommendations and organize the development work. It will be important to take advantage of the opportunity afforded by the development of the Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006-2015), in particular, the implementation of its objectives relating to “Curriculum development and related issues of teaching-learning materials” (point 2.6, paragraph 53, then 55 to 57, pages 11 and 12); to “Gender and culture” (particularly priority area no. 4, “Increasing synergy between culture and education”, page 16; priority area no. 2, “African languages in education”, page 45; and priority area no. 5, “African knowledge systems”, page 49).

The conceptual framework is therefore not the appropriate setting for developing common content. It can raise the issues involved and propose options and policy thrusts that may be used to develop such content.

First, which history(ies) should be taught?

The Committee’s terms of reference certainly cover the teaching of the *GHA*. More specifically, what is required is to transpose a body of scientific knowledge (*GHA*) into learning content for pupils at primary and secondary schools. One of the requirements involved in this transposition exercise is to make choices about possible interpretations, views and approaches in the teaching of the *GHA* and about the content to be used in contexts whose peculiarities may differ greatly from case to case.

Where interpretations and views are concerned, a number of questions can be raised: is a “defensive” interpretation of African history in reaction to Eurocentrism required, or an interpretation based on the analysis of endogenous dynamics? An events-based history or a structural one? A history of “great personalities” or a history of civilizations? A political history or a social one? While these choices are certainly difficult when they concern subjects over which specialists are divided, it is always in the interests of teaching (aiding reflection, comparison, criticism and research) for the epistemic paradigms underlying content to be stated explicitly rather than implicitly.

As to approaches to and the pace of *GHA* teaching at the different stages of the educational cycle, should a chronological and/or thematic approach be adopted? Owing to the differing capacities of pupils of different ages and education levels to comprehend history, the answers to these questions must take account of what they can be assumed to be capable of learning.

For example, some proposals<sup>10</sup> seem to be premised on children's progression from intuitive thought to operative and then conceptual thought (Piaget) when recommending content for distribution across the three successive stages of schooling targeted by the project: (i) begin in the final stages of primary education with evidence of the continent's past that is present in pupils' own environment; (ii) adopt a chronological approach in the first stage of secondary education, with emphasis on ancient Egypt and the development of societies, cultures and techniques characteristic of the continent; and (iii) examine the fundamental themes and elements of the African past in the second stage of secondary education.

Other proposals<sup>11</sup> instead advocate: (i) providing a complete digest of the *GHA*, suitably simplified, from the outset (children aged 10-14), on the grounds that most pupils may well go no further in their studies; (ii) continuing with this complete presentation for pupils aged 15-18, but chronologically; and (iii) concluding with a thematic analysis for those aged 19-20.

These proposals seem to be convergent as regards the chronological and thematic approaches to be adopted successively in the two stages of secondary education. Conversely, they are divergent as regards the content to be taught at primary level, owing to different considerations: the first is primarily informed by the psychopedagogy of history teaching while the second highlights the need to give all children a common core of knowledge before they leave school.

Underlying all this, the various references to education levels from primary schools and age groups for secondary schools reveal another difficulty: the variations in the number and length of educational stages in African education systems. For example, the duration of primary schooling varies from four to eight years. Secondary teaching may take place in a single stage or two. In the latter case, the first stage (often a common-core curriculum) lasts from two to four years and the second stage (optional content) from two to five. Clearly, the ages corresponding to the different stages vary depending on which distribution applies. For this reason, it seems helpful to determine content in relation to reference age ranges: 10-12, 13-16 and 17-19. Each country must therefore target them specifically, depending on the way in which their own system is organized.

What is meant by common content?

The concept of a common-core curriculum, which is more familiar in school education, refers to what all young people are supposed to learn during their compulsory schooling. In other words, it is the minimum that all young people or all citizens are expected to acquire in terms of knowledge, capabilities and life skills so that they can continue to learn, develop as individuals and live with others in a particular society.

In situations where schooling is universal and education is effectively compulsory for six, eight, nine or ten years, the common core is intended for clearly defined age groups and schooling levels.

In Africa, millions of children are still excluded from school education. Of those who do enter school, about 60% complete primary education. On average, about 65% of those children move on from primary to secondary school. To whom, then, will the content taught be common? If it is confined to those attending school, over 30 million African children will have no access to such content, and the higher up the educational pyramid we go, the more their numbers will swell. Furthermore, the youth and adult illiteracy rate is 40%. For this reason, it would be advisable: (i) to find methods of imparting this common content to target groups that are not in school, following development of the common basic education for all curriculum, be it formal, non-formal or informal,

and covering children, young people and adults alike; (ii) to further develop the common curriculum in the post-basic-education stages while harmonizing African history-teaching syllabi.

That said, in developing common content, account must also be taken of local and regional peculiarities, for example by opting for a spiral approach to *GHA* problems of the (taking the immediate environment as a starting point and then progressing to broader and more abstract levels) that can be combined with a spatio-temporal comparison approach (a familiar environment compared to other environments evolving in different historical periods).

To conclude this brief survey of the challenges and issues involved in preparing common content, it is not superfluous to put safeguards and markers in place in relation both to the axiological and philosophical reference points emerging from the AU vision and to the pedagogical requirements that will give direction to *GHA* teaching.

What *GHA* teaching should not be:

- a manipulation aid for the purposes of ideology, propaganda or the promotion of ideas opposed to human and democratic values (racism, xenophobia, intolerance, violence, denial of human rights, etc.);
- a tool for spreading the falsification, distortion, negation or omission of historical facts for the sake of any cause or power whatsoever;
- a source of prejudice and mistrust and, still less, of discord and hatred among African groups, peoples and States;
- a compendium of encyclopaedic knowledge.

What *GHA* teaching should try to do:

- connect the history of the continent to that of its component regions and countries;
- train the young to consider history from the viewpoint of African integration;
- impart knowledge and understanding of the African past and its relationship to the continent's present and future;
- promote values that are rooted in African identity and universal values of humanistic progress;
- educate pan-Africanist citizens who are aware, responsible, active and demanding in regard to respect for and promotion of the values of freedom and democracy;
- disseminate an open, pluralistic and tolerant conception of the *GHA*;
- establish a common core of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes enabling the young:
  - to grasp and understand the historical milestones and foundational events of the common African heritage;
  - to develop powers of critical thought and reflection and a capacity for research, analysis and synthesis that will enable them to deal suitably with historical information;
  - to harness their historical attainments to the task of successfully addressing, each in his or her sphere of responsibility and collectively, the challenges facing the

peoples of the continent in their endeavour to construct a “unified, prosperous Africa”.

#### **4. Preparing a guide to the integration of common content into the education curriculum**

Once the common content has been developed and validated, the challenge is to integrate it successfully into the syllabus of all education systems in Africa. This is a task for every country, and to facilitate it, the Scientific Committee has decided to provide each of them with a guide to the integration of the common content into the countries’ syllabi. Group 3 of the Scientific Committee is responsible for compiling this guide. The conceptual framework contains the possible options and the challenges they raise.

Likely approaches to the integration of new content into the syllabi include:

- additive approaches;
- transformational approaches;
- extracurricular approaches.

Additive approaches consist in adding new content in the form of goals, themes or activities without any major reforms to existing syllabi, even if it entails reducing other content and/or increasing accredited hours. In the case of *GHA* teaching, it would entail adding common content either to current history syllabi or as an additional component of social studies without completely overhauling them. This supplementation can be effected by distributing new content in a way that reflects the structure and themes of the host syllabi (history or social science) so that it is spread across these or integrated into them as a teaching module to preserve their unity and consistency in relation to the objectives assigned to them. At the other two extremes, the new content could be subsumed into a multidisciplinary approach (with each discipline taking up topics of specific concern: languages, mathematics, science, civic education, arts, etc.) or a new discipline, the *General History of Africa* could be added to the curriculum. Obviously, such approaches would not contribute much to the goal of the project, namely the renewal of history teaching.

Conversely, transformational approaches sit well with the goal of renewal. They require integration of common content that necessitates reorientation, restructuring and reorganization of goals, content and accredited teaching hours, and indeed reforms to pedagogical organization and approaches (mastery or competence-based approach, for example). These changes of a systemic character can affect the structure and approaches of the one discipline adding new content, in this case history teaching, or other associated disciplines in a multidisciplinary approach to common content, such as civic education and geography, or indeed all other disciplines (inter- and cross-disciplinary approach).

It is not very likely that traditional curricula based on the transmission of a compendium of knowledge will be suited to such integration, as the common content will have been developed from differing pedagogical and educational standpoints.

Extracurricular approaches target activities organized around or in parallel with those of schools as the main or subsidiary hosts for new content. Where the common content of *GHA* teaching is concerned, it is clear that such activities can only extend or reinforce its core position in syllabi by way of exploratory activities in the local milieu, such as visits to historic sites, exhibitions and theatres.

In all cases, the nature and extent of the changes involved in integrating common content into current school syllabi in African countries will depend:

- on the place and role assigned to history teaching in curricula;

- on the place and role assigned to African history in the teaching of the subject;
- on the state of curricular and pedagogical reforms to the education system.

Criteria relating to these characteristics can be applied to measure the extent of the changes required in three categories of countries:

- countries that give a low priority to history teaching in their curricula must implement new strategic options if they are to be able to integrate *GHA* teaching satisfactorily, for example into their curricular and pedagogical plans;
- countries that give adequate priority to the teaching of history in general but not to African history must implement a Copernican revolution to put Africa at the centre of their history syllabi by integrating common content into them without losing sight of the curricular and pedagogical implications;
- countries that give adequate priority to the teaching of history and African history but still follow traditional curricular and pedagogical approaches must renew these approaches if they are to meet the pedagogical and educational requirements created by the common content.

The preparation guide must provide tools for analysing and evaluating the host syllabi and propose types of procedures for integrating common *GHA* content into the different categories with the appropriate measures and tools (methods of didactic transposition, content area frameworks and taxonomic levels, techniques for setting goals and defining competences, specification and integration tables, etc.).

## 5. Designing textbooks and other teaching materials for *GHA* teaching in primary and secondary schools

Textbooks are one of the most important inputs for successful school learning, as illustrated by the following table derived from a meta-analysis of the learning outcomes of African pupils, measured by the Education Systems Analysis Programme (PASEC).

**Table 3: The effects of educational equipment on school outcomes: a summary of PASEC regression results**

Number of regressions with a coefficient that is:	School textbooks			Other equipment		
	French	Maths	French & maths	Teacher's guides	Electricity	Basic equipment <sup>1</sup>
Positive and significant	16	5	20	2	4	1
Negative and significant	0	0	0	0	2	0
Non-significant	15	16	5	3	10	6
Total number of regressions taking this factor into account	30 <sup>2</sup>	20 <sup>2</sup>	25	5	16	7

<sup>1</sup> "Basic equipment" means that the school has all the following: a desk for the teacher, a blackboard, tables with desks for all pupils, chalk, pencils and notebooks or slates for at least 75% of pupils.

<sup>2</sup> The sum of the coefficients is greater than the total number of regressions because one of the regressions used two different variables, employing a different estimate of two coefficients.

N.B.: Significance is at a level of  $\alpha=10\%$ .

Source: Table A1, Annex.

The project provides for the preparation of three textbooks to support teaching-learning of the respective common content for the three age groups targeted: 10-12, 13-16 and 17-19.

In the light of the lessons from the critical analysis of history textbooks now under way in the African countries,<sup>12</sup> it is important for a number of criteria to be observed in the preparation of these three textbooks, including correspondence with the common content, scientific validity, consistency with the pedagogical principles advocated, suitability to learners' needs and capabilities, and accessibility.

According to the study mentioned above, most history textbooks, where any are available, do not match official syllabi. Textbooks thus really do undermine the stated aims and objectives of history teaching to the extent that classroom practices are based on the textbooks available. The textbooks to be prepared should rigorously reflect the common content and its underlying teaching and learning goals. This applies to their content (presentations, questions and exercises), structure and internal divisions and the sequencing of their content such as maps, illustrations and any other iconographic representations they contain.

The principle of scientific validity concerns the relevance and accuracy of the historical information and knowledge that textbooks should contain, as well as the choice of approaches to the continent's history. Where the latter is concerned, vigilance is essential to avoid giving a platform to outside viewpoints, such as Eurocentrism, which falsify or distort African history.

In the interests of consistency with pedagogical principles, textbooks should not be designed merely as aids in the memorization of knowledge, when what is advocated is active, participatory learning to enable pupils to engage, through textbooks, in observation, reflection, research, critical analysis and training activities, obviously without neglecting the need to acquire knowledge.

The principle of adaptation to learners' needs and capabilities raises the issue of the level of knowledge and understanding required by the content and exercises set for pupils in textbooks in relation to their learning capabilities, modes and motivations. Age as it relates to the psychopedagogical characteristics of the various stages of development is one important consideration here, as are the existing attainments and prerequisites expected of pupils given their level of schooling. The transposition of scientific content into teaching material in the three textbooks must be differentiated accordingly.

To ensure that these dimensions are all taken into account, multidisciplinary teams must be given responsibility for preparing the textbooks and a quality control system must be put in place to check both the scientific standards of their content and the appropriateness of their pedagogical thrusts and procedures.

This is not all, for experience shows that in Africa mere compilation of textbooks does not suffice. They also need to reach those for whom they are intended: pupils. The situation is extremely unsatisfactory even for what are generally regarded as the core disciplines of languages and mathematics, and thus all the more so for history. In some countries, there are simply no history syllabus textbooks, and textbooks intended for non-African pupils are used instead. In others, history textbooks do exist but are scarce because of small print runs or distribution or pricing problems. In short, textbook availability is a matter of major concern in the continent and the project must provide for corrective measures proportionate to the scale of the challenge, and of the learning issues stressed earlier. Thus, over and above the actual preparation of textbooks, the accessibility principle raises a number of more general publishing policy issues that concern the whole chain (textbook design, editing, printing, storage, distribution and pricing), given the necessary goal of providing each African pupil with a copy of the African history textbook that is intended for him or her.

While textbooks are a powerful factor in high-quality learning, the project must also provide for other teaching aids. It specifically mentions a historical atlas based on the maps contained in the different volumes of the *GHA* and a CD-ROM. The recommendations of the expert meetings aim to enrich the learning environment through greater diversity, specifically in the form of comic strips, interactive games, films, slides, posters and other audiovisual aids, illustrations and iconographic

representations. Since it is not feasible to introduce everything at once, a combination of criteria such as pedagogical utility, technical accessibility and affordability could be set and applied to determine priorities and plan for the development and production of such tools.

## 6. Teacher training and the teacher's guide

One of the first questions to be raised here is: what basic and specific professional teaching skills must be developed or strengthened to ensure that common content is taught and learned successfully? Without attempting to be systematic, the capacities that teachers in each country could develop may be outlined initially as follows:

- action taken deliberately and responsibly as promoters of African integration when teaching the *GHA*;
- mastery of key *GHA* components, particularly the common content to be integrated into school curricula;
- design and implementation of relevant, high-quality teaching-learning lessons based on common content, together with appropriate assessment procedures;
- organization of class work and use of teaching aids, including new information and communication technologies, in a manner that fosters active pupil participation in the appropriation of the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that the common content is meant to impart;
- work in collaboration with colleagues and local resource people in order to foster exchanges within and between schools and between schools and the local community when teaching the *GHA*.

These capacities may constitute a continuum in teachers' initial and in-service training. As to the pedagogical lines of emphasis of this training, the first point to be made is that while *GHA* teaching must impart the requisite knowledge, it aims not so much at the accumulation of information as at the development of historical thinking. Pedagogical traditions involving the transmission of knowledge through presentations, narratives and, at best, guided questioning (using questions to radio-control pupils, as it were) are firmly established in history teaching practices in Africa. Despite curricular and pedagogical reforms and official instructions based on these new approaches, history classes thus remain heavily dominated in practice by a stubborn pedagogical culture<sup>13</sup> that must evolve, and even be transformed, if the education and training goals assigned to the pedagogical utilization of *GHA* teaching are to be met.

The success of such an effort requires:

- stable and clearly defined pedagogical principles and options to guide initial and in-service teacher training;
- strategies, organization methods and implementation and evaluation procedures for this training, which have proved their relevance and effectiveness with regard to the pedagogical principles and lines of emphasis adopted;
- convergence of syllabi, teacher's guides and instructions, textbooks and other teaching-learning resources used in the classroom with the pedagogical principles and strategies advocated;
- systems and criteria for assessing the performance of pupils (including school examinations) and teachers (inspections) in keeping with the principles and goals of the new approaches.

What all this means is that the proposed change in pedagogical culture will be achieved by means of a systemic rather than a one-dimensional or piecemeal approach.

Integrating active methods of *GHA* teaching into teaching theory and practice implies more learning than teaching (“teacher-centred education”), more individual and group research by pupils than passive absorption and memorization of what they have heard from the teacher, more critical analysis and examination than unthinking recording of facts, more curiosity and initiative than instruction-taking, and more dialogue and discussion of different opinions between pupils than vertical teacher-pupil relationships.

In short, the idea is rather to educate and develop pupils’ minds than to teach, more to build capacities, skills, values and behaviour than to transmit knowledge, for while the latter is still necessary, it should be placed at the service of the former.

A pedagogical philosophy of this kind rests on transformational paradigms (qualitative changes) rather than cumulative ones, along the lines of “constructivism” and “socio-constructivism” and pedagogies of participation, discovery and integration more generally, the aim being to support learners and help them to learn to learn, develop their personal lives, live and work as autonomous individuals.

The still unresolved challenge is to know how to bring these principles alive in teachers’ professional practices and culture. “We teach as we have learned,” the saying goes. If this is so, then teacher training and providers of such training must be scrutinized closely. It suggests a need to subvert the traditional training of teachers, which is also governed by didacticist paradigms. Rather than giving “lessons of active pedagogy” in history, trainers need to create problem situations that engage future teachers in researching, analysing and reconstituting the principles, approaches and practice of an active method in history teaching. Experiential learning, pedagogies of error, self-assessment, dialogue with peers and other kinds of reflection will all further this active training.

Rather than concentrating on mastery of curricular content, trainers must help future teachers learn to use a variety of historical sources and methods so that they can appropriate and interpret historical events and information and explain and contrast the results of their research. They will thus be capable of actively appropriating suitable methods and tools:

- methods of historical research and inquiry;
- analysis of written historical documents (archives, historical texts), oral tradition (stories, tales, songs, legends, radio or television broadcasts, etc.);
- field trips (geographical landmarks, sites of memory, museums);
- historical reconstruction (stagings, comic strips, portraits, historical maps, audiovisual documents);
- interviews with people who can convey an understanding of the subject (local storytellers, the elderly, traditional historians, etc.);
- peer discussion groups.

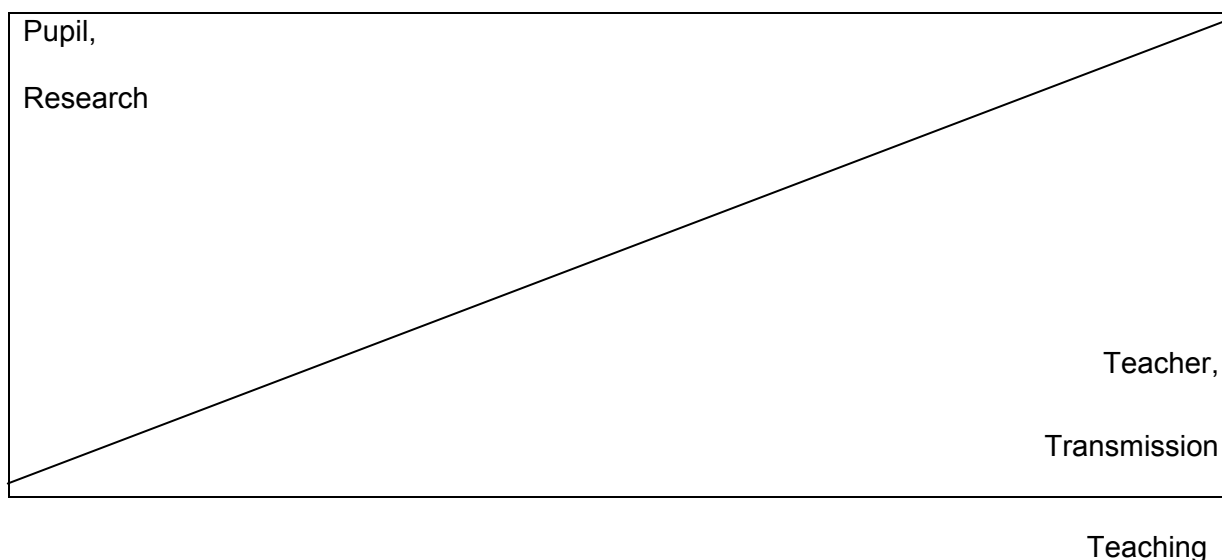
The attainments of future teachers must therefore be evaluated consistently, with emphasis on their capacity for reflection and analysis when dealing with problem situations rather than on tests of knowledge.

If teacher training is given this line of emphasis, future teachers will “teach” as they have learned. In other words, they will have learned how the *GHA* can effectively be learned, not how it is taught.

These principles and approaches can guide both initial and in-service teacher training strategies.

Giving priority to learning does not mean there is no place at all for teaching, however. In consideration of the official contexts within which teachers in Africa work, it could be more reasonable in teacher training to aim to tip the balance towards active pedagogies in the hope of a return to equilibrium when the impetus is removed. The point of equilibrium is mastery learning, situated around the middle of this rectangle.

Learning



To reinforce this process of change, which requires a re-examination of the training of teacher trainers, at least two additional requirements should be highlighted:

- enhancement of the training environment by providing the most recent tools, in particular new information and communication technologies (the Internet, CD-ROMs, interactive games, video montages), and by showing teachers how to use them;
- materials (particularly textbooks and learning aids), the procedures used to organize the school routine and the assessment methods and objectives employed, including school examinations, must be consistent with the pedagogical principles and approaches recommended to ensure that teachers find a propitious environment and working conditions once they take up employment in schools and the classroom.

On the basis of the above elements, the project could task a group of historians, trainers of trainers and education specialists with the development of initial and in-service training modules that teacher training institutions could integrate into their syllabi.

The teacher's guide must be designed on the basis of the pedagogical lines of emphasis set out below and must meet three types of needs detailed below as components:

- a scientific component to clarify concepts and provide teachers with indispensable information on terminology, bibliographical references and the relevant debates on disputed issues of African history so that they can provide an open, high-quality education in the *GHA*;
- a teacher-specific component to guide teachers in the organization and sequencing of learning and acquaint them with methods, procedures and tools that foster active participation by pupils in acquiring the common core of knowledge, for example by way of

problem situations requiring research and use of African sources of history, including the oral tradition;

- an assessment component providing teachers with procedures and types of tests and exercises that measure pupils' abilities rather than knowledge and place greater emphasis on criterion-referenced and formative assessment.

This guide, too, would be designed by the team mentioned above.

## **7. Non-school education strategies**

The issue here is to determine how non-school learners can be targeted by this inclusive education policy. As shown earlier, many African children and young people are not enrolled in education. Furthermore, the groups targeted are by no means confined to the young and extend from the elite to the grass roots of African societies. In view of the diversity of educational needs, a number of African countries are already trying to introduce multiple and diversified educational provision contexts, including formal, non-formal and informal systems. Project-mediated solutions are to be found by identifying and mobilizing all of a country's potential educational resources, whether they be latent or current, formal, non-formal or informal, or based on traditional or new media.

It should first be pointed out that the formal school system has a role to play here because it can also reach non-school attendees through evening classes or other outreach educational activities for the local community, such as public lectures, plays and exhibitions.

The question that then arises is: what resources and programmes are available to disseminate an educational message outside the school system.

The answer may well differ from one country to another, or even within the same country. Generally, however, one category is found extensively in Africa:

- alternative non-formal education programmes for children excluded from school;
- literacy and non-formal education programmes for young people and adults;
- a variety of educational programmes broadcast by radio and/or television.

Various methods can be used to teach the *GHA* in this category. Some involve following formal schools and the use of options designed for formal education. Functionally oriented literacy and basic education programmes for young people generally offer fewer opportunities but, owing to their awareness-raising approach and close links to the local community, the teaching of *GHA* components can be integrated consistently and effectively, particularly when adapted to an inter- and cross-disciplinary approach.

Educational radio and television programmes target the public at large. The teaching of the *GHA* can be integrated into such broadcasts through programmes that carry *GHA* content while dealing primarily with other areas such as civic education, culture, literature, arts and philosophy. Programmes devoted specifically to *GHA* teaching could also be produced, especially if the public authorities are supportive.

The second category that can be identified concerns traditional resources:

- religious and faith schools, including the many Koranic schools;
- traditional methods of social communication such as popular theatre, music, storytelling, festivals and fairs;

- the traditional learning methods used by most of the young people entering the world of work in Africa.

Available education and training opportunities leave little scope for systematic *GHA* teaching, but they can kindle interest in and desire to learn about the *GHA* by introducing the subject in ways consistent with their own objectives. Thus, informing and raising awareness of these traditional methods among leaders and practitioners such as traditional historians and storytellers and the elderly, so that they can motivate children to learn more, is an investment that could well pay dividends by increasing knowledge of the *GHA*.

New information and communication technologies constitute the third category. They open up great opportunities for reaching a huge audience unconstrained by national borders:

- distance education/information, e-learning and free learning;
- information sharing, pooling of resources, peer exchange, networks and discussion groups;
- coordination and capitalization, digital resource banks and centres of excellence.

The tools are many and various, comprising the Internet, email, CD-ROMs, teleconferencing, SMS, videos and others. They can be tailored to different audiences, from children to the elderly. Such tools provide numerous learning opportunities through observation, information, reflection, research, discussion, dialogue and training. They can be used in formal, non-formal and informal contexts for both teaching, initial and in-service teacher training and the training of trainers. The project-specific task of turning principles into teaching material and the production of educational messages, syllabi and tools to meet different needs could yield resources that would be available to a huge audience. The virtual university for *GHA* teaching could also be designed and established within this framework.

Collective organizations fall into the fourth category comprising:

- unions and professional organizations, including teachers' and historians' bodies;
- organizations representing youth, women and other social categories;
- cultural and language organizations;
- political parties and associations of parliamentarians or other opinion-formers.

These organizations can act as vehicles to bring the *GHA* to their own members or take initiatives to reach a wider audience as part of their programmes of activities. Forging partnerships with them, encouraging them to take initiatives, providing them with support and involving them in larger-scale initiatives are some components of the strategy that must be developed with them in mind.

This is not an exhaustive list of the resources that can be mobilized, particularly by informal education. Indeed, the possibilities are endless, comprising the written press, public information and awareness campaigns, mediatized visits to monuments and museums, celebrations of foundational events and eminent persons, film, comic strips, symposia, seminars, workshops, posters, leaflets, slides, documentaries, interpersonal communication and many others.

Besides surveying the possibilities, the strategy must coordinate the different educational resources to ensure that they transcend the diversity of their operating approaches and converge on the same educational aims and objectives.

## 8. Higher education

The objective is to strengthen the utilization and dissemination of the *GHA* in institutions of higher education while taking steps to harmonize the teaching of the *GHA*. The various components include: (i) teaching the *GHA* and training students to use sources for African history, including oral ones; (ii) ensuring that the volumes of the *GHA* widely distributed to universities and institutions of higher education; and (iii) developing multimedia aids and digital resources the better to disseminate the *GHA*.

The project proposes a harmonized distribution of the *GHA* in higher education: teaching the abridged edition in the first two years and the main edition in the third and postgraduate years.

The first major topic for reflection and reform must now be considered. Universities are often criticized for neglecting the teaching component because they have traditionally focused on conveying knowledge through lectures. This seems to be true of history teaching. The introduction of the *GHA* should be an opportunity to renew this teaching by making it more active. Training students in research would gear them up to learn to use sources of African history, including oral ones. *GHA* teaching could also build their capacity for observation, analysis, comparison and reconstitution of historical facts and information while developing a critical mindset. Apart from the teaching component, improvements to these research procedures could strengthen the role of higher education in renewing and producing knowledge in the field of African history. By using African sources of history, teachers and students would also establish links with grass-roots communities for a dialogue between academic knowledge and local lore, between book knowledge and indigenous people's life-based knowledge. Owing to such dynamic interaction, subject matter taught would be conceptually renewed and new narratives would be produced, thus enriching African history and its teaching.

If it is to contribute to this process of renewal, the *GHA* must be widely available throughout higher education systems. The first step is to provide the libraries of universities and institutions of higher education with volumes of the *GHA*. The next is to develop a dynamic publishing strategy based on the continent's own internal resources and actors. For example, partnerships with publishing houses and African universities that have their own publishing units seem to be a promising option. Agreements would consist in free licensing on condition that they undertook to sell the volumes of the *GHA* at locally affordable prices.

In addition to traditional channels, the new information and communication technologies, whose varied potential has been mentioned above, can be used to support dissemination of the *GHA*.

## Conclusion

The ultimate issue of the conceptual framework seems to be a blueprint for future project work. The main reasons for this apparent shift will now be explained.

First, the "pedagogical use of the *GHA*" approach has not been confined to the transposition of scientific knowledge into teaching and learning content by adapting it to the various stages of education. In the first instance, the project had to be placed within a development philosophy and an education policy (vision and cultural charter of the *GHA*), which provided a framework for the main lines of emphasis and structure used in developing common content.

Secondly, the project has been devised as a systemic curricular reform in that it does not deal in isolation with the changes that must be made to the primary and secondary education curricula that are to incorporate the new content, but integrates them into other system components such as school textbooks, other learning inputs, teaching-learning processes, assessment methods and teacher training. The systemic approach, a factor of the reforms' success, has also been taken in the Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education for Africa.<sup>14</sup>

Lastly, although it focuses on primary and secondary education, the project extends beyond those levels both vertically (higher education) and horizontally (linkages to non-formal and informal education).

This has somewhat led to a “sectoral” project approach.

With a view to the evaluation of the project’s implementation, it would also be advisable to identify the conditions, criteria and indicators against which attainment of the project’s objectives in the countries in the short, medium and long terms and its impact on the construction of African unity will be measured.

The field covered is thus a vast one, but none of the areas explored is unaffected by project issues been covered by the conceptual framework.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Charter for African Cultural Renaissance, Preamble

<sup>2</sup> Strategic Plan, vol. 1 “Vision of the future and mission of the African Union”, p.28

1. In the brochure on the “Pedagogical use of the *General History of Africa* project”, UNESCO, pp. 2 and 3.
2. This periodization of colonial education policy has been used by the author in a number of articles. First period: denial of the existence of African civilization and effort to “tame” the inhabitants; second period: recognition of an African culture inferior to that of the West – used to justify the assimilation project; third period: project for partnership between the two cultures, but with an apportionment of roles – that of the West being the scientific, rational partner, while Africa’s was creative and emotional.
3. See *Inventaire critique de manuels scolaires d’histoire en usage dans les pays de l’Afrique francophone*, Pierre Kipré, UNESCO, p. 6.
4. See conclusions and recommendations of expert meetings (Dakar 1986, Nairobi 1989, Tripoli 1989, Dakar 2001) and two studies (Dramani-Issifou 1999, Kipré 2002).
5. In Strategic Plan, Vol. 1, “Vision and Mission of the African Union”, p. 26.
6. In “Charter for African Cultural Renaissance”, Preamble, p. 2.
7. In Strategic Plan, Vol. 1, “Vision and Mission of the African Union”, p. 38.
8. See final report of the expert meeting, BREDA, Dakar, 26-28 November 1986, para. 3, p. 5.
9. See Final report of the expert meeting, UNESCO, Nairobi, 6-10 March 1989, para. 4, p. 5.
10. See P. Kipré, op. cit.
11. See P. Kipré, op. cit.
12. See Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education for Africa, in particular point 2.6 “Curriculum development and related issues of teaching-learning materials”, pp. 11 and 12.