



United Nations Educational, Scientific
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The Newsletter
of UNESCO's
Education Sector

Education TODAY

THE MOTHER-TONGUE DILEMMA

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Educators are increasingly convinced of the value of multilingual education, and studies show that children learn better in their mother tongue. Focus, a four-page report, highlights how emotional this whole issue is and outlines the huge political and economic obstacles.

EDITO

Language and identity are linked – as the term ‘mother tongue’ implies. A healthy identity balances different aspects of our personalities. A community expresses part of its identity in its languages of instruction and a healthy society makes choices that promote harmonious communities and confident individuals. Fortunately these goals are usually congruent.

Years of research have shown that children who begin their education in their mother tongue make a better start, and continue to perform better, than those for whom school starts with a new language. The same applies to adults seeking to become literate. This conclusion is now widely implemented, although we still hear of governments that insist on imposing a foreign language of instruction on young children, either in a mistaken attempt at modernity or to express the pre-eminence of a social dominant group.

UNESCO continues to publicize these research results, most recently in our position paper *Education in a Multilingual World*. The sobering events of the early years of this new millennium are also teaching governments that seeking social harmony produces happier and more productive nations than trying to preserve hierarchies of influence.

Real life, however, is not always so simple. Some languages do not have the range of vocabulary and concepts to be useful beyond the early stages of schooling without additional codification and the invention of new words, which can take years. My father's family is Welsh-speaking and years ago I remember my uncle telling of his frustration at teaching geography in Welsh because the children spent more time learning newly invented words than learning geography. Today the language has developed to cope and Welsh education is in good shape.

In today's diverse world giving individuals confidence also means giving them the ability to communicate outside their own language group, either in another national language or in an international language. I was an adult before I became fluent in French, but juggling two working languages, in Canada and at UNESCO, has since enriched my life. I am also delighted that my two grandsons have learned Gaelic since moving to Scotland's Isle of Skye and can use this language to keep secrets from their parents!

John Daniel

Assistant Director-General for Education

Going to school, not to war

1,500 children who once lived on the street are now in school

When he was 11, Fiston used to trudge the dusty streets of Bujumbura barefoot, tightly clutching a tin can of live fish caught in nearby Lake Tanganyika. They would be his only meal of the day.

The first time Laurence Bimpenda from the UNESCO office in the Burundian capital, came across him, he had been living on the streets for four years. These days, Fiston is doing better than his friends. Former neighbours took him in and he now goes to primary school, though he is several years behind his age-group.

Fiston's story could be that of Cassius, Juvéna, Maurice or any of the 5,000 other children surviving on the streets of the country's major towns. The war between the Hutus (85% of the population) and the ruling Tutsis (15%)—as well as the ravages of

social action and women's affairs, is trying to get them into school.

The enrolment effort, launched three years ago, is the brainchild of Dorcela Bazahica, the human rights programme chief at UNESCO Bujumbura. "There were always four or five kids begging outside the office," she says. "One day, I saw our boss giving one of them a coin. I told him that it wouldn't be of any real help and that next day they'd be back for more. He told me to come up with a solution, and that's the scheme I run today."

Education wanted

Bazahica asked the young beggar children what they wanted. Most said to "go back to school." But before that happened, those without a roof over their heads had to be found somewhere to live.

The result after three years is that some 1,500 children all over the country are being looked after. Some have rebelled against the elementary discipline at the centres, but most are heading towards completion of all six years of primary school, giving them a good basic education. Some have passed the national exam to get into junior secondary school. A few others have even managed to graduate to secondary school.

"Small-scale street trading, begging and the worldly wisdom that goes with it means they know some French and are very good at numbers," says Yacouba Sow, head of UNESCO Bujumbura.

But incorporating into a school environment children who are used to tough surroundings and being left to their own devices for sometimes years on end is not easy. Teachers do not always welcome troublesome children in their overcrowded classrooms.

Learning discipline

"Street children are often a year or two behind," says Virginie Niziyimana, who teaches at Ngozi's biggest primary school. "They're bigger and stronger and hit the others with sticks. If they have support from the centres or their adoptive families, it's OK. But they need to be better disciplined there."

The UNESCO scheme, initially designed for street children, has had to expand its activities to look for families and centres for the children and help them out financially. UNESCO has programmes but is not a funding agency. An agreement with the WFP means it can provide food but the school enrolment programme depends on outside funding sources too.

UNESCO is now trying to involve more donors to sustain and further expand the project.

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Children have to adapt to the classroom after years on the street

HIV/AIDS (which has infected 40% of Burundians) – have produced numerous orphans, abandoned youngsters or children separated from their families. Many only know their first name.

Now UNESCO, with the help of civil society groups and the ministries of education,

So the first priority was to find families to adopt them or centres to take them in, like the one in Ngozi, which shelters about 400 orphans. UNESCO pays for their schooling, provides them with a school uniform of blouse and brown shorts, and with meals thanks to the World Food Programme (WFP).

A new start for Guatemalan street girls

A project to rehabilitate young girls puts an end to a life of begging, prostitution and drugs

©Anne Pascal



Most girls have been to school very irregularly and need to refresh their knowledge

Paola, a young prostitute, lives in a park a stone's throw from the National Palace in Guatemala City. Her 3-year-old son runs around her while a dirty baby girl sits on her lap. Paola can hardly answer when addressed. She is on drugs, using everything from marijuana to glue and crack.

Doctor Rudy and Claudia, a young social worker, former drug addict and prostitute, approach Paola. They work for the Education Centre *Solo Para Mujeres* (only for girls), a non-governmental organization that cares for girls and young mothers living on the street. They invite Paola to one of the organization's two centres where she and her two children get food, clean clothes, psychological support and literacy courses.

Escaping families

Paola's situation is similar to that of the 600 other girls aged between 8 and 20 who have passed through the centres in the past ten years. "These girls' family situation include abuse of alcohol and drugs, prostitution and physical and sexual violence," says Betty Rueda, Director of *Solo Para Mujeres*. "The girls are basically chased out of their homes. "Without an education, their only means of survival is begging, prostitution and drugs."

It is this vicious circle that *Solo Para Mujeres, Les Trois Quarts du Monde*, a French non-profit organization, and UNESCO, is trying to break. "Our main concern is to restore the self-confidence and dignity of these girls," says Anne Pascal of *Les Trois Quarts du Monde*.

From sex worker to educator

Only girls and their babies are allowed into the two centres. The first one opened in 1991 and today counts some forty-five girls and ten babies. The number has doubled in two years. Their daily chores are caring for their babies, washing and cooking. They get psychological help and learn about contraception, HIV/AIDS and sexual abuse.

Literacy classes are organized every morning. Most girls have attended school very irregularly and need to refresh their reading and writing skills before continuing their education. Nine girls have enrolled in the local primary school. "One of them is now working as a commercial secretary and another would like to become a nurse. Their success inspires other girls," says Anne Pascal. The fact that four of the six educators in the centres are former drug addicts and prostitutes gives them confidence.

Learning activities, including games and music therapy, are also organized for babies and children staying at the centre. "It's important to educate the children as early as possible to avoid yet another generation on the street," says Pascal.

The second centre, situated close to the bus station, opened in 2002 to cater for young girls with long and traumatizing experience of street living in this high-risk area. Drugs are forbidden in the centre but the girls, even when heavily drugged, are allowed in. They receive medical and psychological help and food and breathing space for a little while. Sick and pregnant girls can stay overnight. HIV/AIDS is an increasing problem.

Security is another. Armed men have attacked the centres several times and threatened the girls. "These girls are no saints," comments Pascal. "It's mostly about settling of scores and the police have no means of handling the problem."

A springboard

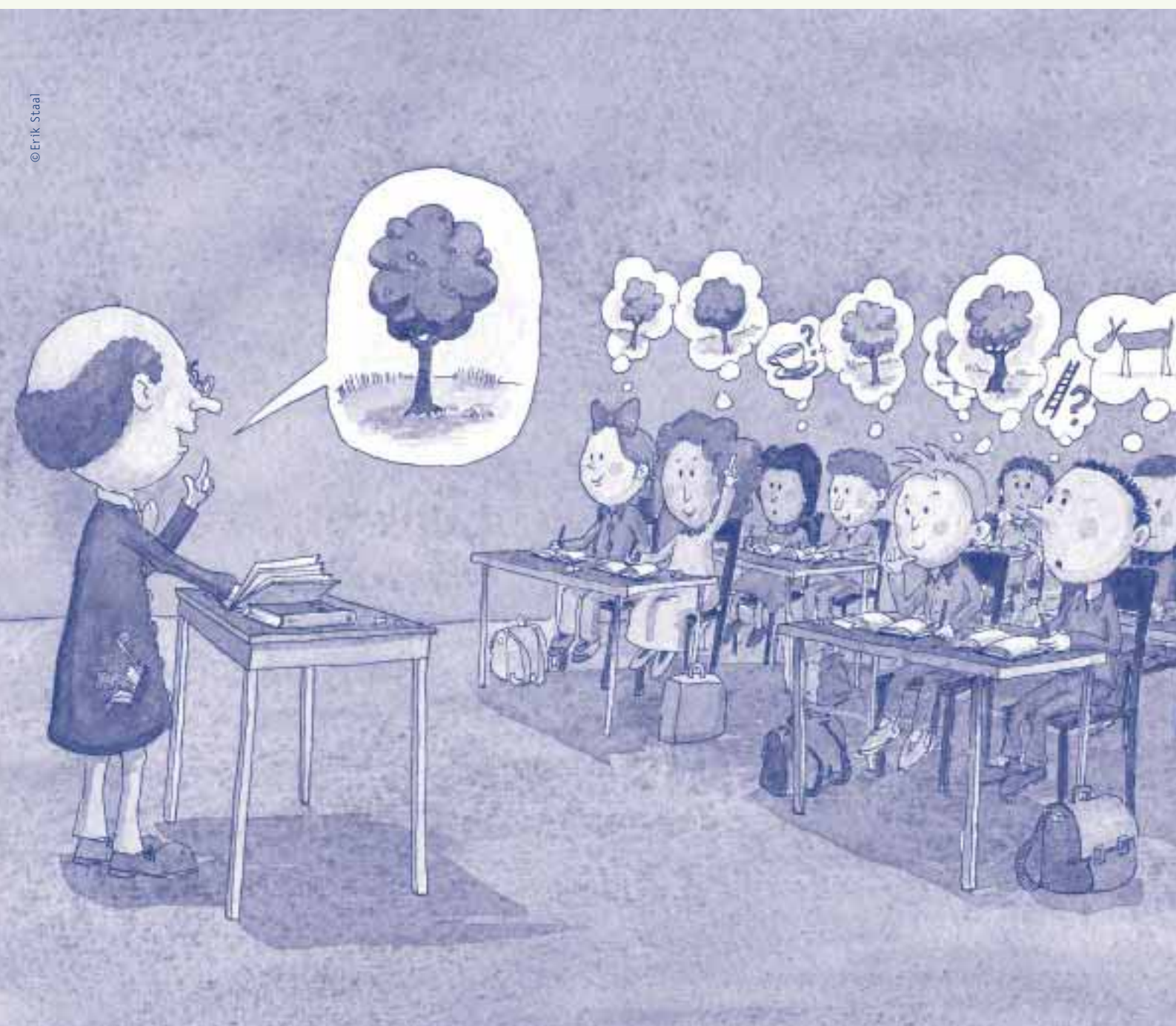
Statistics confirm the girls' chances of escaping misery. A third die young, another third revert into drugs and prostitution, but a third actually manage to break the vicious circle. "When a girl has been on the street since the age of 7, at 15 she has already lived a life of moral decline. There is no self-esteem left," says Betty de Rueda. "But it's fantastic when they discover that they have values and qualities and that another life is possible."

The lack of attention given to this particularly vulnerable group of street children is alarming, says Florence Migeon of UNESCO's Programme for the Education of Children and Youth Living in Difficult Circumstances. "Street girls may be less visible than street boys, but they are often more exposed to violence, sexual abuse and prostitution," Migeon comments.

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The mother-tongue **dilem**

Studies show that we learn better in our mother tongue. But then it has to be taught in school, which minority languages. More convinced than ever of the value of multilingualism, certain countries are trying a number of languages. However, the political and economic obstacles are enormous.



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Many were outraged in 1998 when Californian voters, by a 61% majority, imposed English as the state's sole language in publicly-funded schools despite opposition from a coalition of civil liberties organizations.

Approval by referendum of Proposition 227, as it was called, meant resident foreign-born children, mostly Spanish-speaking, could no longer be taught in their own language. Instead, they would have an intensive one-year course in English and then enter the general school system. The move was watched closely nationwide because 3.4 million children in the United States either speak English badly or not at all.

The episode was not trivial. First of all, it showed the passions that anything to do with language stirs up. It also reversed a decades-long trend towards acceptance of the mother tongue and, more broadly, the benefits of multilingualism.

"Teachers have known for years the value of teaching children in their mother tongue," says Nadine Dutcher, a consultant with the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington D.C.

Better results

Many studies have shown children do better if they get a basic education in their own language. This is important because about 476 million of the world's illiterate people speak minority languages and live in countries where children are mostly not taught in their mother tongue.

In New Zealand, a recent study showed that Maori children who received basic education in their own language performed better than those educated in English only, notes Don Long, who produces books and teaching materials in the country's minority languages.

In the United States, a research unit at George Mason University in Virginia has monitored results at twenty-three primary schools in fifteen States since 1985. Four out of six different curricula involved were partly conducted in the mother tongue. The survey shows that, after eleven years of schooling, there is a direct link between academic results and the time spent learning in the mother tongue. Those who do best in secondary school have had a bilingual education.

"Learning in the mother tongue has cognitive and emotional value. Minority pupils feel more respected when it is used," says Dutcher. Clinton Robinson, an education and development consultant and former head of international programmes at the Summer Institute of Linguistics in the United Kingdom, says "children who learn in another language get two messages – that if they want to succeed intellectually it won't be by using their mother tongue and also that their mother tongue is useless."

Revising language policies

Some rich countries have become more aware of the issue and have started revising their language policies. The idea that integration means giving up your mother tongue is no longer sacred. "The Jacobin tradition of punishing children for using dialect languages at school has changed," says Michel Rabaud, head of the French government's inter-ministerial task force on mastering the French language. "Speaking a language other than French, regional or otherwise, is no longer a handicap for a child."

The countries of the North are taking in more and more immigrants and have to adapt to their presence. In 2000, more than a third of the population of Western Europe under 35 was of immigrant origin, according to a recent UNESCO report on linguistic diversity in Europe.¹

It quotes a study done in The Hague (Netherlands) showing that in a sample of 41,600 children aged between 4 and 17, about 49 per cent of primary and 42 per cent of secondary school pupils use a language other than Dutch at home, such as Turkish, Hindi, Berber or Arabic. This makes it hard to continue with the old policy of linguistic assimilation.

"Despite this, there aren't many laws about immigrant languages, unlike with regional ones," says Kutlay Yagmur, a researcher in multilingualism at the Dutch University of Tilburg and co-author of the study. "But this will change because population patterns are changing." →

1. Language Diversity in Multicultural Europe, Comparative Perspective on Immigrant Minority Languages at Home and at School. For more details: www.unesco.org/most/discuss.htm

The mother-tongue dilemma

Some countries have already responded. They include the Australian state of Victoria, where bilingualism has been steadily introduced in all primary schools over the past twenty years. In 2002, compulsory courses in “a language other than English” involved forty-one languages in primary and secondary schools. Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, German and French are the most popular.

Huge obstacles

Mother tongue education and multilingualism are increasingly accepted around the world and speaking one’s own language is more and more a right. International Mother Language Day, proclaimed in 1999 by UNESCO and marked on 21 February each year, is one example. Encouraging education in the mother tongue, alongside bilingual or multilingual education, is one of the principles set out by UNESCO in a new position paper (see box).

On top of this, languages are now regarded as an integral part of a people’s identity, as shown in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), which recognizes the importance of languages in promoting cultural diversity.

Yet, despite this growing awareness, many obstacles remain, especially political ones.

UNESCO and Multilingualism

Bilingual and multilingual education means using two or more languages as mediums of instruction. UNESCO adopted the term “multilingual education” at its General Conference in 1999, to mean use of at least three languages in education – the mother tongue, a regional or national language and an international one. This is noted in a just-published UNESCO position paper called *Education in a Multilingual World*.

Several declarations and conventions adopted by UNESCO Member States set out guidelines for this and for education. The 1976 Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education, for example, calls openly for education in the mother tongue. The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) mentions the importance of languages in promoting cultural diversity.

These documents all detail UNESCO’s position, which can be summed up as:

- 1 Promoting education in the mother tongue to improve the quality of education.
- 2 Encouraging bilingual and/or multilingual education at all levels of schooling as a means of furthering social and gender equality and as a key part of linguistically diverse societies.
- 3 Pushing languages as a central part of inter-cultural education.

“Every decision about languages is political,” says Linda King, Senior Programme Specialist with UNESCO’s Division for the Promotion of Quality Education. “But technical issues of how to teach them are involved too. The main thing is to respect local languages and legitimize them within the school system as well as giving pupils access to a national and foreign language.”

French author Louis-Jean Calvet puts it bluntly in his book *La Guerre des langues et les politiques linguistiques* (Hachette, 1999). “The war of languages is always part of a wider war,” he says.

A political decision

Minorities are usually the victims and the first thing they get hit by is typically a ban on using their own language. Just one example is the systematic repression of Indonesia’s Chinese community during President Suharto’s regime, when use of Chinese was officially forbidden.

But encouraging the mother tongue is usually a calculated political decision. After independence in Africa, one of the first steps by the new governments was to rehabilitate local languages. Swahili became Kenya’s official language in 1963 and Guinea launched a linguistic decolonization by proclaiming the country’s eight most widely used languages to be official ones and launching literacy campaigns.

But when General Lansana Conte seized power in Guinea in the mid-1980s, he restored the use of French only in the education system. Kenya’s ruling class today speaks English more readily than Swahili. “A symbolic decision is not enough,” says Annie Brisset, who teaches at a translators’

The world’s most widely-spoken languages

(in millions)



Source: Population Data.net, 2000.

→ and interpreters' school in Ottawa and is a UNESCO consultant on language issues. "In some African countries, the old colonial language still carries such prestige that parents prefer their children to be taught in French or English because it still means going up in the world."

Robinson says that "for a multilingual approach to work, governments must see linguistic diversity as a boon and not a problem to be dealt with. The speakers of those languages must also support it."

Revival of local languages

The Mali-based African Languages Academy was founded in 2001 to encourage use of the continent's languages. Since 1994, Mali has been applying "convergence" in its schools, which means teaching children in their mother tongue for the first two years of primary school.

More recently, Senegal has launched a scheme to revive local languages and, since the 2002 school year, children in 155 classes throughout the country have been taught in Wolof, Pulaar, Serere, Diola, Mandingo and Soninke, which were chosen from among the twenty-three languages spoken in Senegal. Children are to be taught entirely in their mother tongue at pre-school, 75 per cent of the time, during the first year of primary school and 50 per cent of the time, during the second and third years of primary. After that, French will become dominant.

But technical obstacles can add to political ones. For countries such as Nigeria, which has more than 400 languages, the task is more difficult. Which languages should be chosen for teaching and why? The ones chosen must also be adaptable to modern life.

Adapting languages

"To be teaching tools, they must go beyond just describing the legends of the forest and be able to handle things such as scientific plant evolution and the greenhouse effect," says Ibrahim Sidibe, a programme specialist with UNESCO's Division of Basic Education. But how can a language come up with new words to describe a computer programme or an Internet browser when it is kept out of the mainstream and confined to daily conversation?

The languages spoken in the former Soviet republics had tough competition from Russian for about 70 years and today lack suitable words and terms to describe the modern scientific and technological world.

"Azerbaijani became the official language of Azerbaijan in 1992, for example, and the first step was to replace the Cyrillic alphabet with the Latin one," says Brisset. "Now it's only used for daily conversation. So terminological databases had to be compiled to review all the words and expressions in it and invent new ones to describe the legal, commercial, diplomatic and technological aspects of modern life. That's essential before using it as a teaching language."

The job is huge and costly, as Peru discovered in 1975 when it declared Quechua an

official language. This involved translating all official documents and teaching it in schools. The government reckoned it needed 200,000 teachers to do this. The scheme has gradually been abandoned. But pressure for widespread bilingual education is now coming from the indigenous people themselves.

"They're increasingly aware of their rights and demanding recognition of their culture," says Juan Carlos Godenzi, who teaches at the Université de Montréal (Canada) and is former head of the bilingual education department of the Peruvian education ministry.

Such recognition requires above all promoting a culture's language, the foundation of building any people's identity. ●

Languages in danger

Every year, at least 10 languages disappear. Of the 6,000 currently spoken in the world, about half are threatened.

A 1999 survey by the University of North Dakota's Summer Institute of Linguistics, in the United States, showed that more than 3,000 languages are each spoken by fewer than 10,000 people. Linguists reckon that a language is in danger when fewer than 100,000 people speak it.

Languages have always been disappearing and at least 30,000 are thought to have disappeared since human beings started speaking. Only a few – such as Chinese, Greek, Hebrew and Sanskrit – have lasted more than 2,000 years.

What is new, though, is how fast they are dying off nowadays. There are several reasons. Colonial conquests alone are estimated to have disposed of 15 per cent of the languages of the time. Then from the 19th century, with the rise of nation-states, territorial unity has been partly based on a shared language.

More recently, the internationalization of world financial markets and the growth of electronic communication have speeded the process up further. Just one example: English is spoken by less than 20 per cent of the world's people, but 68 per cent of the Internet's web-pages are in English.

If nothing is done, half of the languages spoken today will vanish over the century. This is all the more serious because when the last speaker of a language dies, it is very hard to revive it. Only a determined effort, such as that made in Japan to preserve the Ainu language, which was spoken by only eight people on Hokkaido Island in the late 1980s, can save them.

The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity attaches great importance to languages. Several of them, such as the tongue spoken by the Garifuna people of Belize, have since been put on UNESCO's list of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, started in 2001.

The Fast Track picks up pace

But the initiative has several weaknesses, say critics

The Fast Track Initiative (FTI) is considered a major breakthrough for education for all. Launched in April 2002 by the World Bank and its partners¹, it is a funding scheme to give poor countries the wherewithal to provide full primary school completion by 2015.

“It’s the awaited response to the promise at the World Education Forum that countries with credible education plans would not lack for funding,” comments Abhimanyu Singh, Lead Manager of the Dakar Follow-up Unit at UNESCO.

A first batch of seven countries that fulfil two principal criteria – commitment to poverty reduction and a sound education sector plan – will receive FTI funding. This is the case of Burkina Faso, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Mauritania, Nicaragua and Niger. At a donors’ meeting in UNESCO on 25 March, The Gambia, Mozambique and Yemen were added to the list.

According to many, FTI’s greatest merit is getting governments to develop plans to enrol every child in school, and forcing donors round the table.

Harsh criticism

Some Fast Track opponents, mainly NGOs, strongly criticize the scheme for its slow progress. To this, Barbara Bruns of the World Bank’s FTI Secretariat replies that funding will be flowing for the first ten countries by July 2003.

Other critics pinpoint several weaknesses in the FTI approach, particularly its lack of consultation with civil society. This is the case of ActionAid, an NGO, in its publication, *Fast Track or Back Track*. Christophe Zungrana of the Africa Network Campaign for Education for All (ANCEFA), regrets that in his country, Burkina Faso, a debate was not held on the kind of education the nation wanted. “Funds will come into the country and be used to reinforce an education system that is decried by everyone,” he says. “We should first stop and discuss what we want to teach and why we want to teach it.”

How to provide quality education and open up classrooms to larger numbers is a major concern for some and how teachers are treated is central to this debate. FTI recommends that their pay be calculated at 3.5 times GDP per capita. In Burkina Faso, this is half of what teachers were getting, according to Christophe Zungrana. “I’m not sure that in future we’ll have young people motivated enough to go for careers in education,” he adds.

Funding gap

But perhaps the most systematic criticism is levelled at donors’ perceived reluctance to back it financially. For instance, the FTI price

tag was reckoned at \$430 million over three years for the first seven countries. By March 2003, more than \$200 million had been mobilized, according to the FTI Secretariat. “This amount” says Bruns, “is based on a careful analysis of countries’ implementation capacity over the next three years and represents a 40 to 60 per cent increase over existing aid commitments in most of these countries.”

Another bone of contention is the narrow focus of the FTI. “EFA comprises six goals,” says Abhimanyu Singh. “Exclusive focus on primary school completion, may mean that other Dakar goals concerning for instance adult literacy, gender and quality get overlooked.”

1. European Community, UNESCO, UNICEF, multilateral development banks and 15 bilateral agencies.

3 questions to Amina J. Ibrahim

The national EFA Coordinator for Nigeria talks about the Fast-Track Initiative in her country.

1 Nigeria is slated to benefit from the Analytical Fast Track Initiative. How does this differ from the regular Fast Track?

The Analytical Fast Track Initiative (AFTI) is for countries that don’t have poverty reduction strategies or education sector plans. AFTI funds will help us prepare these plans and lay the groundwork for future participation in FTI. Nigeria has been chosen as one of the five countries with the largest out-of-school populations. We signed up with the World Bank eight months ago and have been negotiating ever since. Contrary to the regular FTI, the analytical version gives us much more scope to agree on conditionalities with the donors.

2 Do you see the AFTI as an opportunity or a risk for Nigeria?

Very clearly it’s an opportunity. Unlike the regular Fast Track, AFTI is about guidelines.

It’s not a straightjacket. I believe that the AFTI is a much-needed response to the donor commitment made in Dakar. The funds-on-the-table are still miles away from a serious effort, but the intention is there and we must support it.

3 Can Nigeria maintain quality learning while opening up schools to larger numbers?

In the 1970s we had this experience when we embarked upon universal primary education. We tried to go for quantity but sacrificed quality, and this is something we’re paying for today. It’s a great concern for our country in this planning process. We want to avoid children leaving school with certificates, but being basically “qualified illiterates.” We have until 2015 to put all children into school. This gives us some time.

EFA Week reaches new heights

The third EFA Week, celebrated from 6 to 13 April 2003, was an unqualified success. Devoted to girls' education, the Week called on governments to open the doors of learning to women and girls.

On 9 April, at the initiative of the Global Campaign for Education, a stunning 1.8 million people broke the record of the largest number of people taking the same lesson at the same time. In his message to the organizers, Kofi Annan hoped that the event would be "a lesson the world will never forget".

Following up on this success, a web-based petition to the G8 meeting at Evian (France, 1-3 June), initiated by NetAid, reminded world leaders of their promise to fund EFA generously.

A host of other events were put on around the world. UNESCO field offices and EFA partners organized elaborate awareness-raising activities in some fifty countries: inter-school essay competitions, roundtables, radio and TV debates, articles in the press and marches. More innovative perhaps were the press conference (Dakar) where young domestic workers described their struggle to access learning, and a girls' football match (Ghana).

Many countries launched the UN Literacy Decade nationally, and Brazil promulgated a Decree to kick-start the event.

More about EFA Week on www.unesco.org/education/efaweek



Children at Khomasdal and St. Andrew's Primary Schools in Windhoek, Namibia, sing an education song during EFA Week.

World tour

→ Forty education planners and statisticians from twelve Central Asian countries met from 4 to 8 May in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The workshop, organized by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, focused above all on how reliable data can make a difference to national policies on education.

→ Since January 2003, Kenya's new government has embarked on free and compulsory primary education. The number of new entrants to Grade 1 this year rose from 5.9 million to 7.4 million. The Kenyan Education Ministry has provided schools with KSh 519 million (roughly \$7.7M) to buy basic learning and teaching materials. The World Bank has pledged a \$50 million grant to support the initiative.

→ The Ministerial Meeting of the South Asia EFA Forum, Islamabad, 21-23 May, brought together Education Ministers from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka and developed strategies for financing EFA, reducing the gender gap, and sharing best practices in quality education.

→ Regional offices of UNESCO, FAO and the Centre de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Educación (CIDE) in Latin America are working on a plan for the Regional Education Programme for the Rural Population. This initiative was launched by UNESCO and FAO in Johannesburg in September 2002.

→ Some forty statisticians from eighteen Latin American countries came together in Quito, 6-10 April, for the 4th Regional Education Statistics Workshop. Discussions revolved around international data collection, developing indicators on teachers, early childhood education and how to measure primary school completion.

Fund for EFA

Thanks to its new fundraising approach, UNESCO has mobilized \$3.5 million from Denmark, Finland and Norway for EFA activities in needy countries and regions.

The funds collected will support a wide range of activities, such as educational planning in Afghanistan, building capacity of Sub-Saharan African NGOs and EFA planning in the Caribbean.

According to this "basket-funding" method, UNESCO decides on the specific activities to be financed in line with its own programme and with broad criteria agreed with the donor countries. Previously donors decided which projects to fund and in which countries.

"Prompted by the donors, UNESCO developed an integrated EFA programme of technical assistance to countries", explains Svein Osttveit of UNESCO's Extrabudgetary Section in the Education Sector. A selection committee, after examining over 80 proposals, recommended twenty-two for financing. "Together they represent a coherent EFA programme of technical assistance for 2003," comments Osttveit.

A first progress report is underway and a full evaluation of the programme will be conducted at the end of the year. "These Nordic donors are pioneering a new approach," says Osttveit, who hopes to convince many others to follow suit.

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5 million Arab girls out of school



© A. Couturier/UNESCO

Some 5 of the 8 million primary-age children who do not go to school in the Arab world are girls. Yet when girls do go to school, they fare better than boys, repeat fewer academic years and have a higher pass rate at both primary and secondary level.

This is reported in a regional survey, published by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), of 19 countries – Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahirija, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen – and the Palestinian Territories.

It says that 35 million children were in primary school in 1999/2000 (54 per cent of them boys) and that 20 per cent of all children (including 25 per cent of girls) were not. Djibouti came bottom, with only 30 per cent enrolled, and also had the biggest enrolment gap between boys (35 per cent) and girls (26 per cent).

Parity has been achieved only in Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories and the United Arab Emirates.

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More religion in the classroom

Public education systems are teaching more religion these days, according to a report on the number of hours it is taught in schools in 140 countries, cited in the June 2003 issue of *Prospects, Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*.

Published by UNESCO's International Bureau of Education (IBE) in Geneva, the provisional figures in the report show that religious education is compulsory in 73 of the countries surveyed at least once during the first 9 years of schooling.

In 54 of them, an average of 388.4 hours was spent on such classes over 6 years – 8.1 per cent of all teaching time. This was a clear increase since the previous survey 10 years ago, the report's authors say, noting that only 4.3 per cent of class time was taken up with religion between 1970 and 1986.

The report says the two countries devoting the most classroom time to religion were Saudi Arabia (31 per cent – 1,458 hours) and Yemen (28.2 per cent – 1,104 hours).

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Father Emil Shufani honoured

The UNESCO Prize for Peace Education went this year to Father Emil Shufani, an Israeli Arab who runs the Greek-Catholic St Joseph's College in Nazareth.

Nicknamed "the priest of Nazareth", he set up a project in 1988 for "Education for Peace, Democracy and Coexistence," which he has implemented at his school, where he has been headmaster since 1976. He has tried to bring Arabs and Jews together by twinning St Joseph's with the Jewish Lyada School in Jerusalem and organizing pupil exchanges.

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Sports for all in Afghanistan

"Playing sport is every citizen's right," said Afghan President Hamid Karzai at the opening of the UNESCO-backed National Conference to Promote Sports for All in Kabul on 3 May.

The conference aimed to encourage sport through giving everyone access to it and stressing tolerance and nation building. Karzai said that reintroducing physical education for women was an integral part of reconstructing the school system after years of a total ban on sports. He urged women not to be put off by any threats to them for engaging in sports, either from local leaders or family members.

"Sport is a vital part of a nation's social fabric," said Martin Hadlow, head of UNESCO's Kabul office. The conference ended by adopting a Declaration on Sports for All in Afghanistan, based on the principles of the Olympic Charter.

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The 2003 Literacy Prizes

Programmes in Bangladesh, Zambia and South Africa, as well as an international network of 350 NGOs, won the UNESCO literacy prizes in 2003.

The International Reading Association Prize went to the *Dhaka Ahsania Mission* (DAM), a group in Bangladesh which since 1980 has promoted informal education. The Noma Prize was won by Zambia's *Panuka Trust*, which since 1997 has enabled girls and women in the country's rural south to learn to read and write.

The two King Sejong Literacy Prizes went to the *Tembaletu Community Education Centre* in South Africa and the *International Reflect Circle* (CIRAC), a network of 350 NGOs in 60 countries.

→ The Tembaletu centre is honoured for its programme for training schoolteachers and basic literacy instructors both in the mother tongue and in English. CIRAC is an unusual candidate for a literacy prize since it is a network. Formed in 2000, NGOs use it to exchange experiences, teaching material and written matter about literacy.

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Textbooks for Iraqi school children

UNESCO will make 5 million science and mathematics textbooks available to Iraqi primary and secondary students for the forthcoming school year under a \$10 million programme supported by, and undertaken in co-operation with, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The textbook programme is part of UNESCO's activities directed towards the reconstruction and reinforcement of a quality education system in Iraq. "A strength of the programme is that it will involve Iraqi and international specialists in reinforcing local capacity to assess the degree of bias in textbooks," says Mary Joy Pigozzi, Director of the Division for the Promotion of Quality Education.

As indicated in UNESCO's recently published *Situation Analysis of Education in Iraq (2003)*, Iraq's education system before 1990 was considered by education experts as one of the best in the Arab region. Education was free, enrolment and literacy rates were high. However, the 1990-91 Gulf War and subsequent economic sanctions led to the rapid deterioration of the education sector. According to a recent UNESCO survey of education in the Arab States, Iraq's literacy rate is now amongst the lowest in the region.

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JULY

1-4

Regional Meeting on Scientific Education

Organized by UNESCO Santiago and Ministry of Education of Chile • Santiago, Chile

Contact: Beatriz Macedo; b.macedo@unesco.cl

21-24

Regional Meeting on Secondary Education Reform

Organized by UNESCO Paris, Santiago and Santo Domingo Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Contact: Sonia Bahri; s.bahri@unesco.org

22-23

The Fourth Meeting of the Working Group on EFA

Organized by UNESCO Paris • Paris, France

Contact: Abhimanyu Singh; abh.singh@unesco.org

AUGUST

3-9

UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network 50th Anniversary International Congress

Organized by the New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO in co-operation with UNESCO Apia and UNESCO Paris Auckland, New Zealand

Contact: Sigrid Niedermayer; s.niedermayer@unesco.org
www.unesco.org.nz/home/asp/

11-15

Seminar on Adult Education for Indigenous Peoples

Organized by the UNESCO Institute for Education Cochabamba, Bolivia

Contact: Ulrike Hanemann; ulrikehanemann@gmx.de

SEPTEMBER

3-5

Consultation Meeting on Family Support Policy in Central and Eastern Europe

Organized by UNESCO Paris and the Council of Europe • Budapest, Hungary

Contact: Yoshie Kaga; y.kaga@unesco.org

5

Meeting of the Heads of UN Agencies on the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

Organized by UNESCO Paris • Paris, France

Contact: Daphne de Rebello; d.de-rebello@unesco.org

6-11

CONFINTEA Mid-Term Review Conference on Adult Education

Organized by the UNESCO Institute for Education and UNESCO Bangkok • Bangkok, Thailand

Contact: Werner Mauch; w.mauch@unesco.org

8

International Literacy Day

Contact: Namtip Aksornkool; n.aksornkool@unesco.org

16-19

International Seminar on Financing and Implementing Education Development Plans

Organized by UNESCO, National Commission for UNESCO of the Republic of Korea and SunMun University • Asan, Republic of Korea

Contact: Mohamed Radi; m.radi@unesco.org

16-19

Regional Conference on Early Childhood Care and Development Policy

Organized by UNESCO Beirut Beirut, Lebanon

Contact: Hegazi Idris; h.idris@unesco.org



● **Universities and Globalization: Private Linkages, Public Trust**, edited by Gilles Breton and Michel Lambert. Seventeen higher education experts including UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Education John Daniel have contributed to this book, which describes the effects of globalization in universities in rich and poor countries. The diversity of perspectives and wide range of themes presented in the book provide an insight into the key questions and challenges facing tertiary education today. UNESCO Publishing*, 244 pp., 23,80 €

● **Lifelong Learning Discourses in Europe**, edited by Carolyn Medel-Añonuevo and Gordon Mitchell. This book contains a selection of papers presented during the regional conference on lifelong learning in Europe held in Sofia, Bulgaria, last November. It features the viewpoints of governments, non-governmental organizations, research institutions and academia. Contact: UNESCO Institute for Education, 216 pp., 10 € uie-pub@unesco.org

● **Towards a Multilingual Culture of Education**, edited by Adama Ouane. Based on research carried out in thirty African, Asian and Latin American countries, this book advocates the use of local languages and the mother tongue in formal and non-formal education. It shows the often striking failure of linguistic policies inherited from colonial times and highlights the numerous advantages of multilingual teaching. Contact: UNESCO Institute for Education, 490 pp., 12 € uie-pub@unesco.org

● **Institutional Approaches to Teacher Education within Higher Education in Europe: Current Models and New Developments**, edited by Bob Moon, Lazăr Vlăsceanu and Leland Conley Barrows. Based on fourteen national studies, this book analyses current models and new developments in teacher education in Europe. It describes the historic origins of teacher education, its institutional structures and the role of government in regulating both the structures and outcomes of training. Contact: UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education cepes@cepes.ro

● **Enfants de la Rue, Drogues, VIH/SIDA : les réponses de l'éducation préventive**. For many street children, drugs and HIV/AIDS represent no danger as drugs "help" them cope with street life and HIV/AIDS seems rather hypothetical, faced, as they are, with more immediate problems to deal with. This 38-page study describes the problem of drugs and HIV/AIDS among street children and how to reach them effectively with preventive education.

● **The Report on the High-Level Group on Education for All** outlines the conclusions of the Group's second meeting, in Abuja, Nigeria, 19-20 November 2002. As a platform for debate and a springboard for action, the High-Level Group presents opportunities for governments, international agencies, donors and civil society to consider priorities and come to a common understanding of the next steps in the drive towards EFA. (UNESCO ED-2003/WS/7)

● **The Literacy, Gender and HIV/AIDS Series**. The following four booklets are part of the Literacy, Gender and HIV/AIDS Series. *Nangi's Broken Dream* tells the story of a young schoolgirl in Namibia who was raped because of the myth that sex with a virgin cures AIDS; *Who Is the Real Chicken?* is about how multiple partners increase the risk of HIV/AIDS; *Hérite moi, Hérite mon SIDA* describes the consequences of widow inheritance; and *Etre chez soi, c'est le meilleur remède* promotes family support and home-based care for people living with AIDS.

● **HIV/AIDS Preventive Education in Cambodia**. Published by the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport with the financial support of UNESCO and UNICEF, this document seeks to strengthen the capacity of primary school teachers to address HIV/AIDS issues. It is being distributed to teacher training colleges in Cambodia. Contact: Fabrice Laurentin; E-mail: f.laurentin@unesco.org

● **Ten Steps for Establishing a Sustainable Multipurpose Community Telecentre**. UNESCO Bangkok has published a series of ten booklets to inform communities about the various steps involved in setting up a Multipurpose Community Telecentre. The booklets explain how to get started, how to organize open community meetings, how to manage the centres, which services and programmes to offer and the centres' overall benefits. Available from UNESCO Bangkok bangkok@unesco.org



● **Statistical Document of MINEDAF VIII**. This report, presented at the Eight Conference of Ministers of Education of African Member States in December 2002, examines the current trends in primary education in Africa and the huge challenge of reaching universal primary education by 2015. It is co-published by the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Africa, the World Bank and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

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