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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**FIRST PAN AFRICAN CONFERENCE ON
CURRICULUM, LITERACY AND
BOOK SECTOR DEVELOPMENT:
REBUILDING EDUCATION IN AFRICA
DAR-ES-SALAAM, TANZANIA
24TH - 27TH MARCH 2009**

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**CONCEPT PAPER FOR THE FIRST AU PAN-AFRICAN
CONFERENCE ON EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING**

Education Division

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INTRODUCTION

Revitalisation of education in Africa is imperative for the attainment of the vision of the African Union, of a peaceful, integrated, prosperous Africa; an Africa driven by its own people to take up its rightful position in the global arena. Since we are what we are educated to be, education is perhaps the surest, most enduring means for ensuring attainment of a people-centred vision. In recognition of the value of education, and the need for rebuilding education systems, the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Khartoum in January 2006 declared 2006 – 2015 as the Second Decade of Education for Africa. Subsequently, the Plan of Action for the second decade was launched by the Conference of Ministers of Education of the African Union in Maputo in September 2006. The Plan of Action (POA) covers seven areas of focus identified by Ministers of Education as critical for revitalisation of education in Africa. These include the following:

- Gender and Culture
- Education Management Information Systems
- Tertiary Education
- Teacher development
- Technical and Vocational Education and Training
- Curriculum and Teaching and Learning Materials
- Quality in Education

All these areas of focus have implications for educational publishing, as appropriate educational materials have to be produced taking each of them into account. Conversely, the state of educational publishing will affect the efficiency and effectiveness with which all these areas are addressed. It is therefore necessary to consider the status of the African educational publishing industry¹, define the challenges facing it and develop a framework for revitalisation.

One basic requirement for the success of the Second Decade of Education is the availability of teaching and learning materials to back up revitalized curricula. Secondly the subject-specific material must be grounded in the understanding of context in which learning is taking place. For example, when teaching ecology/conservation in biology, lessons must be related to concepts of ecology from the African perspective, including practices and beliefs based on the notion preserving the environment, pointing out those that are at odds with scientific

¹ Educational Publishing Industry is used loosely to refer to the whole milieu of educational publishing, including public and private sector, from curriculum development, conception and writing educational materials, their publication and distribution, decision making concerning languages, prices and public access, and so on.



principles. Teaching and learning materials which provide African concepts and contexts can act as scaffolds to learning and help to demystify these subjects.

A major gap in the educational publishing environment in Africa is insufficient policy support for book development, beginning from national to regional levels. The need for balanced, responsive, relevant and culturally sensitive teaching and learning materials cannot be addressed in a policy vacuum. There is need for policies as well as supportive frameworks to train and nurture endogenous knowledge generation, and proper accounting of existing knowledge through appropriate writing. Other challenges include constraints in publishing for the national curriculum by local entrepreneurs, and a lack of a culture of publishing into local languages. Control of the African educational publishing industry by multinational concerns stifles local creativity and enterprise, and limits the potential for collaboration on the basis of an African vision in the area of educational materials.

A reading culture is necessary to stimulate the educational publishing industry. Challenges to an embedded reading culture include availability of relevant materials, limited materials in local languages, as well as access to library facilities, both in learning institutions as well as to the general public.

At the higher education level, the development and publishing of journals in Africa has been rather erratic. Although many universities started their own journals to solve the deficit of knowledge production after independence, most of these initiatives have proved to be unsustainable. Publications faced challenges in the areas of quality of research, availability of material to publish, constrained financial resources, number of journals per field, lack of publishing facilities and knowledge management systems. Other challenges include lack of researchers and selection of good content material. It will be necessary to establish the reasons for success or failure of academic journals.

Educational publishing can provide an essential link between higher and lower levels of education. Knowledge produced in institutions of higher learning and research should be used to upgrade and improve the quality to curricula and school texts and manuals. This is an area where little is being done.

I. OUTCOME OF FIRST CONSULTATION

It is within this context that the Commission of the African Union (AUC) organised an experts' workshop on Educational Publishing, which was hosted by the UNISA Centre for African Renaissance Studies (CARS) in January 2007. The objectives of the consultation were to identify main obstacles and challenges preventing the publishing industry in Africa from playing its role in knowledge production and sharing; establish a working framework to synergise existing relevant initiatives in this area; and to build partnerships with other stakeholders and role players, towards the consolidation of a network of African publishers.

Participants were composed of representatives from various sectors of the publishing industry including publishers, editors, and librarians from the DRC, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa and Senegal together with NEPAD Representatives, the African Union Commission and CARS representatives.

The following recommendations from the consultation provide a useful starting point for moving forward the reform agenda for African educational publishing:

1. Policy Issues

- a. Ensure political will to promote African languages by drafting statements on requisite policies for endorsement by Ministers and Heads of state e.g. book policies, preferential taxation systems on reading and writing materials, securing budget allocations, developing a campaign strategy for Ministers and Heads of State, lobbying all African countries to advocate common national and continental books.
- b. Review Intellectual Property Rights to protect individuals and communities in areas such as folklore and traditional knowledge.

2. African Languages

- a. Undertake a Pilot Project on African Language Promotion and Development. This may involve: creating a Language Translation/Interpretation and New word-coinage Units, auditing capabilities of language institutions, auditing trans-border language situations across the continent and creating/re-enforcing language academies.
- b. Modernise and promote African languages. This will involve working with other forms of texts outside the "book"; e.g. TV, radio, forming partnerships with educational publishers in Africa, providing resources for community writers, creating language observatories, translating and disseminating scientific knowledge and technology in local languages
- c. Promote Swahili as a language for African Renaissance through promoting its use in all African educational systems
- d. Carry out evidence based research for African languages mother tongue for education. Activities recommended here include integrating African language and terminology into science and technology education and reviewing work done by Japan and Nigeria for replication.

3. Promotion of Reading and Writing

- a. Promote a Culture of Writing and Reading by defining and adopting national policies on culture and readership, signing and implementation of the Florence Agreement and embracing the Nairobi Protocol, establishing community libraries, providing free access to libraries, reviewing outcome-based education, creating writers associations, book clubs, literary competitions and prizes. Other initiatives include using various cultural forms, including visual and audio, at all levels of education and all walks of life, and sharing best practices and experiences in publishing and distribution.

4. Promoting African Writers

- a. Promote African writers through various initiatives including appropriate websites, regular continental conferences and exhibitions of publishers and writers, conversion of scholarly writings into usable published learning materials, pilot writing projects in the use of science in local African languages, creating more incentives for writers at all levels and encouraging the training of editors through internship programmes with African publishers.

5. Promoting African Culture

- a. Develop Educational research especially in the area of African indigenous educational systems. Major role players here will be Ministries of Education and of Arts and Culture in cooperation with other research institutions
- b. Re-package Africa's image by designing and rolling out programmes depicting the African narrative in its entirety, with emphasis on Africa's historical contribution to world civilization and economy, on the unity of African peoples and cultures; and on African resistance against Slavery and oppression.

6. African Centred Curriculum and School Materials

- a. Harmonise an African-centred perspective in research and scholarship through reinforcement and dissemination of an alternative intellectual paradigm for scientific research and education, based on the works of the African school of thought inspired by such eminent Africanists such as Prof. Cheikh Anta DIOP; promoting close cooperation between African universities and research teams.

- b. Enhance the quality of teaching/learning materials with new knowledge from higher education/university journals incorporating culture, indigenous knowledge, common knowledge, gender issues and so on; and publish these materials in trans-border languages.

II. WAY FORWARD

To implement the Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education for Africa in the area of African educational publishing, the AUC is organising the first *AU Pan-African Conference on African Education Publishing* to be held in March 2009.

A Planning Meeting for the Conference was held in Nairobi on 15th to 16th May 2008 to discuss the concept paper and make decisions on the Agenda and Programme of Activities, as well as on key note speakers and facilitators of various sessions and workshops.

Consensus was reached concerning the following themes, sub-themes to be covered in the conference:

- (i) **Policy:** (This theme will be first addressed in a Plenary Session, in order to set the tone and vision of the conference):
 - a. AU Vision
 - b. Political issues about language of education
 - c. Status of African languages
 - d. Reconstruction of the cultural identity of the learner
 - e. Link between school and life
 - f. Reform of curricula for skills development
 - g. Partnerships between school and the community
 - h. Accessibility of books
 - i. Removal of government taxes on educational materials
 - j. Legacy of colonialism in the African education sector
 - k. Book policy issues
- (ii) **African languages**
 - a. African languages as media and subjects of education at all levels: challenges and perspectives for development
 - b. Writing and publishing in African languages
 - c. Scholarship in African languages
 - d. Policies for Language in Education
- (iii) **Promoting reading and writing**

- a. Readership development strategies, including reading tents, school and community libraries, book fairs
- b. Policy development with regards to reading
- c. Intra-African reading and writing projects including "Stories across Africa"
- d. Developing book policies
- e. African Language issues
- f. Relevant and appropriate content
- g. Quality and affordability of reading materials

(iv) Promoting African Writers

- a. Developing writers / capacity building of writers
- b. Censorship of writings
- c. Revitalising Pan-African Association of Writers through regional and national chapters
- d. Enhancing inclusion of African writers in the national curriculum
- e. Recognising African writers e.g. through awards
- f. Publicity of African writers in media
- g. Copyright and intellectual property issues
- h. Promoting African writers in other regions of the world

(v) African Centred Curriculum

- a. Use of UNESCO's General History of Africa, writings of Cheikh Anta Diop among others
- b. African values to inform curriculum
- c. African knowledge systems in curricula including Science & Technology
- d. Promotion of African Scholarship and African epistemological systems
- e. Experience of the Diaspora
- f. Harmonisation of curricula across African countries
- g. Oral literature
- h. Prescription of African published books at national and continental levels for schools

(vi) The Future of the African Publishing Industry

- a. Book policy issues
- b. Promotion of intra-African book trade
- c. Support for publishing in African languages and specialised need areas
- d. Professional training in publishing
- e. Promotion and capacity-building of African publishers
- f. Improvement of quality of books published in Africa



- g. International versus African copyright and intellectual property laws
- h. Cost-Benefit analyses in African publishing
- i. Links with Diaspora
- j. Academic and scholarly publishing in Africa
- k. Consortia of African publishers for enhancing bargaining power and competitiveness
- l. Advocacy for African publishers
- m. Co-publishing and licensing
- n. ICT in publishing

Conference participants will include but not be limited to the following:

- Educational writers of school books as well as academic journals
- Curriculum developers
- Relevant policy makers (Senior officials from Member States)
- Educational publishers
- Book distributors
- Subject Teachers (Language, African History, Science and Technology)
- Education researchers

EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THE CONFERENCE

One major outcome of the Conference will be a Continental Book Policy Framework, with guidelines for developing national and regional policies.

The Conference will also develop practical strategies for achieving the following:

- Strengthening African production and publishing of educational materials
- Ensuring quality text books and other teaching materials
- Enhancing African content in Curricula as it relates to book development
- Strengthening African languages in the education system
- Promotion of reading and writing and enhancing access of quality reading material
- Enhancing intra-African collaboration in the educational book sector
- Reviving academic journals in African universities

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