Report on issues discussed and actions proposed during the session on "Rethinking the Curriculum: The Need for Endogenous Education in the 21st Century," (Part A) held at the Transforming Knowledge for Africa's Future International Forum of UNESCO Chairs and Partners convened by the African Union Commission and UNESCO.

FROM 1ST - 2 ND OCTOBER 2024 AT ADDISA BABA

SCO Chairs and Partners forum on 'Transforming Knowledge for Africa's Future'. The tat hinges on the principles of endogenous knowledge. Knowledge that is rooted from the African societies' local and learner contexts and paradigms is believed to prepare better the

f learning contexts and the labour market. This approach to learning requires rethinking knowledge as a social construction, linked to previous learners' background and cognitive

bed education disciplines especially because of the decontextualization of the alien foreign curricula that tend to undress the realities of Africa's richness in education, curricular,

apacity building should move away from the use of a single 'cascade model' into

Questions the stakeholders' understanding of curriculum processes from informed.

1. **Multilingualism in Education**:

   - **Svein Oesttveit (UNESCO)** emphasized the importance of incorporating a **multilingual approach**, particularly teaching in **mother tongues** to improve learning outcomes.
   - 8 out of 10 children in Africa start school in a language they do not understand, which affects their ability to learn effectively.

- Although politically challenging and costly, multilingual education is critical to improving educational systems.

2. **Decolonizing the Curriculum**:

- The curriculum must be **rooted in local and national contexts**, moving away from Eurocentric and colonial content to reflect African realities and histories.
- This process has already begun, but efforts must continue to ensure **systematic curriculum reform**.

3. **General History of Africa**:

- Integrating the **General History of Africa** into various subjects such as history, civics, geography, and literacy was discussed as essential for fostering cultural pride and identity.
- The historical knowledge must be present in all national curricula.

4. **Education for Peace**:

Education should promote **peace at local, national, and global levels**. A curriculum rooted in local culture should also connect students to global issues to develop a broad perspective on peace and development.

5. **Inclusion and Gender Equality**:

A curriculum focused on endogenous education must include elements of **inclusion**, particularly addressing **gender inequalities** and ensuring equal access to knowledge for all learners.

6. **The Nature of Knowledge**:

- **Sheik Manssour Bin Mussallam (OSC)** pointed out that the definition of **legitimate knowledge** must be expanded to include **endogenous, popular, and traditional knowledge**.
- While traditional knowledge can contribute significantly, it should be critically examined to avoid perpetuating inequality.
- Endogenous knowledge should be **connected to scientific knowledge** to ensure its relevance and integration into modern education systems.

7. **Economics of Knowledge**:

- There is a stark **inequity in funding** for research, with 90% of research funding focused on the needs of only 10% of the world's population.
- African countries must ensure that research funding supports **local priorities** and that the **fruits of knowledge** are distributed equitably.

8. **Geopolitics of Knowledge**:

- Knowledge from the **Global South** is often **marginalized** and not visible enough in international academia.

- Researchers from the South face **mobility barriers** and limited access to international journals and databases, which hinders global collaboration and knowledge exchange.

9. **Transdisciplinary Curriculum**:

- Current educational systems are overly focused on **separate disciplines**, such as history and economics, with little connection between them. However, real-world problems require a **transdisciplinary approach**.
- A fragmented curriculum leads to a fragmented understanding of the world. A **problem-posing curriculum** is necessary, where learners are taught to **articulate the right questions**, rather than just finding answers.

10. **Intercultural Education**:

- A **humanity-centric approach** to education that highlights the contributions of diverse cultures to global progress should be adopted.
- It's important to develop **cultural pride** through a curriculum that reflects **interconnected histories** and **mutual contributions** between cultures.
- The erasure of women's contributions from history was highlighted as a key issue that should be addressed in the curriculum.

11. **Relevance to Local Contexts**:

- Education must not be **alienating** but should adapt to local realities and national priorities.
- The disconnection between education systems and local communities hinders the **relevance of knowledge** to everyday challenges, such as climate change, water issues, and hunger.

12. **High-Stakes Assessment**:

- **Paul Mushi (UNESCO)** criticized high-stakes assessments as disconnected from the **local knowledge systems** and the richness of the environment.
- Such assessments fail to evaluate the full range of students' knowledge, particularly that acquired from local and traditional practices.

Actions Proposed:

1. **Curriculum Reform**:

- **Multilingual Curriculum**: Implementing mother-tongue education in early learning is crucial for improving outcomes. Governments should take **political steps** to integrate **multilingualism** into the national curriculum, despite the challenges.

- **Decolonization**: The curriculum must be systematically decolonized to **embed local knowledge** and history into mainstream education, ensuring the **General History of Africa** is included in all subjects.

2. **Teacher Training and Pedagogy**:

   - **Teacher Training** should be enhanced to prepare educators to teach in local languages and engage students with **indigenous knowledge**.
   - A shift toward **problem-posing pedagogy**, where students are trained to articulate problems rather than simply solve them, was strongly recommended.

3. **Research and Knowledge Systems**:

   - **Funding** for research should prioritize **local needs**, ensuring that research generated in Africa responds to African contexts and challenges.
   - **Visibility of Southern Research**: Initiatives like **GreSIS** (Greater South Information System) were highlighted as crucial tools to **democratize access to knowledge** and make African research more visible.
   - **South-South Cooperation**: Strengthen partnerships between countries in the Global South to **exchange best practices** and support **linguistic diversity** in education.

4. **Inclusion of Endogenous Knowledge**:

   - Engage local communities in curriculum development to **bridge the gap** between indigenous knowledge and formal education.
   - Integrate **self-directed learning** and **community-based learning** into the curriculum to empower learners with **practical knowledge** from their own environments.

5. **Political Will**:

   Political will is essential to successfully integrate **indigenous knowledge** into national education systems. Policymakers must commit to aligning education with **national development goals**.

6. **South-South Educational Programs**:

   - Initiatives like **FREYRE** (Framework to Reinforce Exchanges between Youth and Regions through Education) were emphasized as key tools for **building bridges** between countries in the Global South, fostering **South-South cooperation** beyond governmental agreements.

7. **Cross-Disciplinary Curriculum**:

   - Introduce a **transdisciplinary curriculum** that connects various subjects like history, economics, and philosophy to help students understand and address complex global and local challenges.

- Develop **intercultural education** to foster pride in local cultures while recognizing the contributions of others.

Report on issues discussed and actions proposed during the session on: Rethinking the curriculum: the need for Endogenous Education in the 21st century (Part B), held at the Transforming Knowledge for Africa's Future International Forum of UNESCO Chairs and Partners convened by the African Union Commission and UNESCO held on October 2 2024

1. Key Issues Discussed

1. **Cultural Integration in Education**:

   - African countries face the challenge of embedding their cultural heritage and knowledge systems into their educational curricula.
   - The integration of indigenous knowledge is crucial for shaping a future that is deeply connected to African traditions, language, and culture. This approach counters the ongoing dominance of external (exogenous) education models that fail to address the cultural and societal needs of local communities.

2. **Endogenous Education Principles**:

   - **Holistic Development**: Endogenous education seeks to nurture individuals intellectually, emotionally, socially, and spiritually, addressing the full spectrum of human development.
   - **Contextual Curriculum**: Educational content must reflect the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental realities of the community to which learners belong, making the curriculum more relevant and practical.
   - **Cultural Preservation**: Future generations should be equipped with knowledge of local languages, traditions, and values to ensure cultural continuity and identity preservation.
   - **Community Involvement**: Active participation by local communities in shaping and implementing the curriculum fosters a sense of ownership and ensures that education meets local needs and aspirations.

3. **Challenges Facing Endogenous Education**:

   - **Globalization and Western Influence**: The overwhelming influence of Western educational systems diminishes the perceived value of indigenous knowledge, creating resistance to changes toward endogenous education.

- **Resource Constraints**: Many African communities face significant challenges due to a lack of resources, including culturally relevant teaching materials, adequately trained teachers, and necessary infrastructure.
- **Language Barriers**: The limited use of indigenous languages in formal education systems hinders the transmission of cultural knowledge and contributes to the erosion of local identities.
- **Policy and Governance Gaps**: Education policies often emphasize international benchmarks, limiting the room for indigenous and locally relevant curricula.

4. **Resistance from Elites**:

   One key concern raised was that elites may continue to enroll their children in private schools offering Western curricula (e.g., Cambridge education), leading to a two-tiered education system. This creates a barrier to the widespread acceptance and implementation of endogenous education models, as these elite schools are seen as gateways to upward economic mobility.

5. **Balancing Indigenous and Global Knowledge**:

   - While the importance of decolonizing education and integrating indigenous knowledge is widely acknowledged, it was emphasized that not all indigenous knowledge should be accepted without scrutiny. Conservative ideas disguised as indigenous knowledge, particularly those that perpetuate inequality (gender, social), must be carefully evaluated to ensure they align with inclusive and progressive values.
   - It was also noted that some elements from global education models can be useful and should be thoughtfully integrated, provided they are contextualized to meet local needs.

6. **Regional Disparities and Inequality**:

   - Within countries, there are stark regional inequalities in access to education and educational outcomes. Well-developed urban centers often have superior educational resources, while rural areas remain underdeveloped, with limited access to quality education.
   - This internal disparity is often more pressing than external challenges like colonization. Addressing these gaps is critical for achieving equity in education before looking at broader, global influences.

7. **Entrepreneurship and Indigenous Knowledge**:

   - Many African countries have integrated 21st-century skills, such as entrepreneurship, into their curricula. However, these skills are often taught without reference to local, indigenous contexts. For example, children may be taught financial literacy or entrepreneurship skills, but the curriculum fails to

connect these lessons to local markets and practices, limiting their practical value.

- The real-world application of entrepreneurship education within indigenous cultural contexts, such as local market practices, negotiation skills, and indigenous trade knowledge, remains underdeveloped.

8. **Disconnection from Local Communities**:

- A recurring theme was the disconnection between formal education and local communities. Education often alienates students from their communities, as they are trained to seek opportunities far from home, rather than applying their skills and knowledge to improve their local environment.
- In countries like Cuba, students are required to sign a contract to work in their local communities upon completing their education. This kind of initiative was suggested as a way to ensure that education remains locally relevant and contributes to community development.

2. Actions Proposed

1. **Curriculum Reform**:

- Revise national education curricula to integrate indigenous knowledge, traditional practices, and local content. Curriculum reform should prioritize making education relevant to the local socio-economic and cultural context, promoting skills that reflect the realities of learners' communities.
- Curriculum development must also emphasize practical application, such as integrating indigenous knowledge with modern challenges (e.g., sustainable agriculture, environmental conservation).

2. **Teacher Training**:

- There is a need to train educators to effectively integrate local knowledge and cultural practices into their teaching. Teachers should be equipped to deliver a curriculum that fosters holistic development and cultural preservation while balancing global knowledge.
- Teacher training programs should emphasize the value of indigenous knowledge and encourage educators to be cultural advocates in the classroom.

3. **Policy Advocacy**:

- Governments must be urged to support policy reforms that promote endogenous education systems. This includes aligning education policies with local development goals and prioritizing the integration of indigenous knowledge into national curricula.
- Policies should also address the inequalities in education access and outcomes between urban and rural areas, ensuring that marginalized regions receive the resources and support they need.

4. **Addressing Equity in Education**:

   - A major focus must be on achieving equity in education, especially in addressing regional disparities. Ensuring that rural and underdeveloped areas receive equitable educational opportunities is crucial for the broader success of endogenous education models.
   - Governments and education authorities should strive to create a unified education system that serves all citizens equally, regardless of their socio-economic or regional background.

5. **Community Involvement and Engagement**:

   Encourage greater involvement of local communities in education reform. Communities should be given a role in shaping curricula to reflect their cultural and knowledge systems. Initiatives such as local contracts, where students commit to giving back to their communities after completing their education, can help bridge the gap between education and local development.

6. **Research and Documentation**:

   - Invest in research to document indigenous knowledge systems and educational practices. This research must be disseminated widely to inform curriculum development and policy decisions.
   - Establish partnerships between academic institutions, local communities, and international organizations to ensure the preservation and promotion of indigenous knowledge.

7. **Cross-Cutting Issues**:

   Address the intersections between education and other societal influences, including religion, politics, and cultural practices. Any reform to the curriculum must take these factors into account, ensuring that education promotes inclusive values, such as gender equality and social justice.