

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF STATE SCHOOL ORGANISATIONS
(ACSSO)**

The national voice of parents of children in Australia's public schools and their school communities

LANGUAGES EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

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<http://www.languageseducation.com/news1071212.pdf>

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Welcome to the **Languages Education in Australia Newsletter**. Produced by the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) jointly with the Australian Parents Council (APC), this Newsletter aims to inform school communities and other subscribers about events, activities and initiatives around the country related to languages education. **Contact us on:** info@languageseducation.com

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GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

American Council on Teaching of Foreign Languages

The American Council on Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) has adopted (2006) the following general principles that provide the foundation for implementation and expansion of language programs at all levels of instruction:

- All students should learn or maintain at least one language in addition to English;
- Learning languages should be a central part of the curriculum at all levels of instruction, from young learners through graduate school and adults (pre-K through 20); and
- Language learning should be offered in extended, well-articulated sequences that develop increasing levels of proficiency at each level of instruction by teachers who are well qualified in language proficiency, cultural knowledge and teaching skills

Read more at <http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=4743>

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PRIMARY SCHOOLING

Implications of the Australian Primary Principals' Association (APPA) "Charter on Primary Schooling"

The previous edition of "Languages Education" included an article by Professor Michael Clyne, which noted:

"As Luke Slattery reported (A Blinkered Approach to Languages, November 7), the Australian Primary Principals Association has drawn up a charter for Australian primary schools that removes LOTE from the core curriculum. The charter argues that substantial involvement in areas such as LOTE "depends on the critical and prior importance of ensuring that all children make satisfactory progress in the core areas".

"It is another example of the monolingual mindset condemning future generations of Australians to parochialism and monolingualism. It is another failure to understand the link between skills in all languages and to understand that many Australian children come to school with bilingual skills that can be built on.

"Likely outcomes of the APPA charter, if implemented, will be the disappearance or minimisation of primary LOTE programs and the dropping of relevant teacher training, which will further reduce the capacity of schools to offer it. There will be a spin-off detrimental effect on the participation and offering of language programs in secondary schools. Yet in a nationwide survey conducted by the Australian Council of State School Organisations, 70 per cent of parents surveyed wanted languages to be compulsory from prep to Year 10. "

To consider these issues further we invited the two other key stakeholders, the Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) and the Australian Federation of Modern Languages Teachers Associations (AFMLTA) to respond to those points.

Australian Federation of Modern Languages Teachers Associations

Lia Tedesco, President, 7th December

The Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations (AFMLTA) is the peak national body that represents teachers of all languages Australia wide, in all sectors of education, and across all levels of education – from early childhood to tertiary.

We understand that the Charter on Primary Schooling recently developed by the Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) was developed in response to two key inter-related issues that have been of concern to primary educators for some time:

- Firstly, that the primary curriculum has become 'too cluttered' as a result of increasing demands on schools
- Secondly, that resourcing of primary schooling is insufficient to support and enable the delivery of all 8 Key Learning Areas. The research commissioned by APPA indicates very clearly that resourcing of primary schools requires urgent attention; and that the resourcing of Languages – particularly in the area of teacher supply and demand, is also in need of attention.

The AFMLTA strongly believes that governments – at both national and at state/territory levels, must provide appropriate levels of resourcing, in order for schools to be able to provide the full range of Learning Areas as outlined in the National Goals of Schooling and as advocated in the Federalist paper 'The Future of Schooling in Australia' released in April 2007.

The AFMLTA holds the view that our society requires a population that is bi or multi-lingual, linguistically flexible and interculturally competent, in order for our nation to engage successfully with the rest of the world. The life choices and futures of our students will depend on the extent to which their education prepares them to live in a

world that is increasingly multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic – a world in which they will work, socialize and communicate with people from diverse backgrounds.

Many countries that lead the world in education give languages a high priority, (and accompany this priority with the necessary resources) – with their citizens being fluent in 2, 3, or even 4 languages. (e.g.

- All European Union countries except for the UK require primary school students to study a second language. (Many EU countries and Asian countries have 3 compulsory Languages)
- The Nuffield Report in the UK identified 4 core areas of learning: literacy, numeracy, languages and technology – as a result the UK plans to have compulsory languages in primary schools by 2010.
- Finland, where students consistently outperform Australia on international literacy and numeracy tests, and all children study 3 languages throughout schooling, 44% study a fourth language and 31% study a fifth language)
- The USA is moving towards making second language learning an essential part of primary schooling.
- The highly regarded International Baccalaureate includes as core the Key Learning Areas as defined in our National Goals.)

How can our children be equipped to actively engage in today's global society in the absence of an international education? How can our education systems compare on the world stage, when benchmarked against other countries where languages are considered core, and where students consistently outperform our students in international tests? The United Nations takes the stance that "in a globalised, interconnected world, multilingualism needs to be seen more as a way of life than as a problem to be solved."

Other international examples, affirmed in a recent OECD report on learning and the brain, show that it is not necessary to drop subjects to cope with a crowded curriculum – but that there are integrated and trans-disciplinary approaches that work. There is also very interesting research from the US Colleges Entrance Examination Board, which provides evidence that:

- the average mathematics score for individuals who studied maths and Languages for 4 or more years, is identical to those who studied twice as much maths and no Languages.
- Students learning outcomes in all areas of the curriculum are improved and extended through the study of a second language.

There is a wealth of research and evidence that Languages Matter – for students' cognitive, intellectual and social development; and for development of our nation as a whole. The Languages learning area plays a pivotal role in the development of literacy skills, in the development of a sense of identity, in the understanding of self as a part of a wider community, and in students personal and social development. These cannot be fully developed through a curriculum which excludes Language study. Importantly, too, research shows that the most effective Languages programs begin at primary level.

The importance of a broad, balanced and inclusive education to prepare our students for active and informed citizenship and participation in this 21st Century world has never been as sharply in focus as it is in this era of internationalization. The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry recognized this in its recently released Blueprint for Improving Education and Training – Skills For A Nation - where it states: 'To effectively participate in a globalised world there should be compulsory learning of a foreign language from 7 years of age or earlier.'

Our students deserve a quality, comprehensive education that includes the study of other Languages. Schools must be resourced adequately to enable them to be able to offer all 8 Key Learning Areas – otherwise we will ultimately sell our children short.

The AFMLTA is eager to work in collaboration with government agencies, APPA and all key stakeholders to examine how we can improve the provision, delivery and resourcing of all key learning areas for all students; in order to better provide the education to which our students are entitled and which they deserve.

Australian Primary Principals Association

Leonie Trimper, President, December 2007

APPA supports the teaching of LOTE in primary schools where schools are able to provide suitable LOTE teachers, gain access to sound instructional programs, acquire support from their local communities and have the prospect of offering the particular languages in their curriculum on a continuing basis.

In 2002 APPA undertook a survey of the teaching of Languages Other Than English in Australian primary schools. In 2006 APPA initiated a comprehensive review of the curriculum and resourcing of primary schools; the results of this study have been published in the report *In The Balance: The future of Australia's primary schools*.

APPA's research has shown that while many primary schools are able to offer excellent LOTE programs, about a third of schools cannot presently do so mainly because they do not have suitably qualified teachers, adequate resources or because there is insufficient time available to do a good job.

The research has also shown that many schools have trouble finding specialist teachers. More than three quarters of primary teachers say that they do not have the expertise to teach a language other than English. Unless schools can obtain a teacher on a continuing basis who has the language competence, as well as the necessary pedagogical skills, they would prefer not to offer a LOTE subject.

The research commissioned by APPA has also shown how the whole of the primary curriculum has expanded and become overcrowded, so much so that all aspects of it cannot be effectively taught in many schools. *In The Balance* notes that there is a constant demand from special interest groups to include new material and acquire more instructional time but never proposals about how instructional time in other curriculum areas can be reduced.

The problems of staffing and curriculum overcrowding are particularly problematic in schools with large numbers of challenging students and very limited community support. These schools are having to put in extraordinary effort and resources to offer effective programs in Literacy and Numeracy alone. Hence, in the current context, there is an obvious need to establish priorities in the primary curriculum, a task that APPA has undertaken in *The Charter on Primary Schooling*. The Charter has received an overwhelming endorsement from principals and teachers.

In establishing four core areas of the curriculum that all schools should offer – English, Mathematics, Science and Social Education – APPA strongly encourages schools to develop quality programs in other key learning areas, including LOTE, where they are able to do so.

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ONCE AND FUTURE

The Education Ministers' View of Responsibilities of Australia's Schools & School Systems for Languages Education

"Schooling provides a foundation for young Australians' intellectual, physical, social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development. By providing a supportive and nurturing environment, schooling contributes to the development of students' sense of self-worth, enthusiasm for learning and optimism for the future.

"Governments set the public policies that foster the pursuit of excellence, enable a diverse range of educational choices and aspirations, safeguard the entitlement of all young people to high quality schooling, promote the economic use of public resources, and uphold the contribution of schooling to a socially cohesive and culturally rich society.

"Common and agreed goals for schooling establish a foundation for action among State and Territory governments with their constitutional responsibility for schooling, the Australian Government, non-government school authorities and all those who seek the best possible educational outcomes for young Australians, to improve the quality of schooling nationally .

"These national goals provide a basis for investment in schooling to enable all young people to engage effectively with an increasingly complex world. This world will be characterised by advances in information and communication technologies, population diversity arising from international mobility and migration, and complex environmental and social challenges.

"The achievement of the national goals for schooling will assist young people to contribute to Australia's social, cultural and economic development in local and global contexts. Their achievement will also assist young people to develop a disposition towards learning throughout their lives so that they can exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens of Australia.

"... students should have attained high standards of knowledge, skills and understanding through a comprehensive and balanced curriculum in the compulsory years of schooling encompassing the agreed eight key learning areas:

- The arts
- English
- Health & physical education
- Languages other than English
- Mathematics
- Science
- Studies of society & environment; and
- Technology; and
- The interrelationships between them.

(From "The National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century" – Adelaide Declaration by all Ministers of Education 1999: at http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/policy_initiatives_reviews/national_goals_for_schooling_in_the_twenty_first_century.htm)

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2008 - NOT JUST THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF LANGUAGES....

'Together in diversity', the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008

Brussel - Bruxelles, Wednesday, 05 December 2007 by Davyth Hicks

With the slogan 'Together in Diversity', the European Commission launched the communication campaign for the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 yesterday.

At the launch event The European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Training and Youth, Ján Figel', was joined by 'European Ambassadors for Intercultural Dialogue', famous personalities from the cultural scene in Europe and beyond.

The European Year aims to contribute to mutual understanding and will explore the benefits of cultural diversity, active civic participation in European affairs and seek to foster a sense of European belonging. It is a joint initiative of the European Union, the Member States and European civil society. The Year has been allocated a EUR 10 million budget, supporting the information campaign, surveys and studies on intercultural dialogue, the co-financing of the seven flagship European projects and 27 national projects – one per each member state - on intercultural dialogue across the EU.

On the eve of the campaign launch, the Commissioner Ján Figel' said: "Europe clearly faces significant challenges that have their roots in intercultural relations. The European Year 2008 gives us a valuable opportunity to explore ways to improve our intercultural dialogue, and our intercultural relations. This may seem to be an extremely difficult task. But 50 years ago the idea of bringing our continent's diverse populations together under one umbrella, the European Union, also seemed to be beyond reach. Now we can see the achievement of the European Union, and its remarkable success in uniting Europe's countries. Therefore, we can and should face up to the challenges of our continent's cultural and religious mix. That is why we have chosen the slogan 'Together in diversity' for the Year."

The Commission invited to the campaign launch event a number of personalities from the cultural scene from across Europe and beyond who have offered their services as 'European Ambassadors for Intercultural Dialogue'. The European Ambassadors include Brazilian writer Paulo Coelho, Slovak conductor Jack Martin Händler, Romanian film director Radu Mihaileanu, Slovenian conceptual artist Marko Peljhan, Catalan bass viola player Jordi Savall, Turkish piano player Fazil Say, and Serbian Eurovision champion Marija Šerifovic.

Also present at the event were the promoters and representatives of the seven flagship projects which were recently selected to receive Community funding support following an open call for proposals earlier this year. The projects cover the areas of urban culture, popular arts, participation of young people, migration, media, exchange of local initiatives, video project or activities of immigrant communities. All include participants from several member states. The results of the projects will be presented in the second half of the year.

The campaign website www.dialogue2008.eu, which has been developed together with civil society organizations, aims to promote a joint European space for intercultural

dialogue. It includes a partner section, aimed at stimulating networking and exchanges of best practices at EU level. Already prior to the launch, it hosts more than 500 profiles of individuals and organisations working within the field of intercultural dialogue.

The European Year 2008 aims to establish a foundation for sustained European policy initiatives in the field of intercultural dialogue beyond 2008. According to a Commission press release it aims to be “an active expression of the impact of the new European agenda for culture in a globalizing world, in which promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue are one of three key objectives.”

Six Brussels debates (one every two months) will be organized during 2008. Each debate takes a specific sectoral view on intercultural dialogue, and will cover such topics as media, arts and heritage, the workplace, inter-religious dialogue, education and youth, migration and integration.

Read more at

http://www.eurolang.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2997&Itemid=1&lang=en)

In future editions of the “Languages Education in Australia” Newsletter we will provide updates on this complementary initiative. This is because the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue operates in a very real sense “sans frontieres” – and brings into its ambit people, families and communities right across Australia – who in turn have links across the world. To demonstrate this, one immediate example: a community organisation we have been talking with this week, which carries out a vitally important role of Intercultural Dialogue every day of every week on behalf of members of our richly diverse and multicultural community:- groups such as this play a vital linchpin role in our society, and we will feature other such groups around the country throughout the Year:

Russian Ethnic Community Council of NSW

The Russian Ethnic Community Council of NSW is a voluntary, not-for-profit representative organisation which operates since 1995 to:

- Organise and support charity work among people in need of Russian origin, including retired and recent immigrants to NSW
- Work with young people of Russian descent to preserve Russian language and traditions and to pass on their cultural heritage
- Preserve and develop Russian cultural legacy among people of Russian descent and familiarise wider Australian society with this, as well as to foster links between Australia and Russia in social, economic, sporting, educational and cultural spheres of activity and enterprise
- In carrying out this role, the Council provides a wide range of information, advisory and support services to the whole NSW community, in particular those of Russian background, including broadcasting and media services, information on community organisations and events, links to a range of services providers including languages learning and interpretation facilities. The Council also provides advice to Government agencies and service providers and conducts demographic and other research that will assist in effective planning and service provision to the community.

Read more at <http://www.russiansinaustralia.org.au>

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RECENT EVENTS

Canberra Region Languages Forum

This forum was held at the University of Canberra (UC) on 7 October 2007. It was organised by a community organisation, Canberra Multicultural Community Forum (CMCF), in cooperation with the UC School of Languages and International Studies.

The 50 participants who attended included teachers involved in languages education at preschool, school and/or tertiary level, community group leaders and members, service providers, parents and students.

After a preliminary overview of current language programs and resources in the region, the forum was addressed by Professor Michael Clyne from the University of Melbourne, and Dr Michael Kindler from the ACT Dept of Education and Training (DET).

Participants then discussed how to

- build on, and form better linkages between, current language programs
- raise awareness of the importance of languages amongst leaders and the general public
- make best use of the language resources in the local community (nearly one in five of the population speaks a language other than English at home).

An action plan was drawn up at a final plenary session. It was also decided to organise another forum in about 3 months to review progress, continue to discuss items of mutual interest, and decide on future meetings and action.

Action Plan

- Explore the possibility of establishing a School of Languages along the lines of those in other states. This could offer accredited programs in languages not otherwise available, especially at high school level.
- Suggest the ACT join the Collaborative Curriculum and Assessment Framework for Languages so a wider selection of languages can be recognised for university entrance
- Support existing bilingual programs from preschool upwards, and consider how these can be continued to secondary level
- Encourage cooperation between the ACT Department of Education and the University of Canberra to address the shortage of appropriately qualified teachers
- Consider how attendance and performance at weekend or after hours ethnic schools can be recognised on school reports or in school programs
- Increase awareness of the importance of languages in the general community by: promoting languages as a more integral part of the Canberra Multicultural Festival, organising activities to celebrate the UN Year of Languages (2008), encouraging employers to acknowledge the language skills of their staff, suggesting UC establish internships in which students can use their language skills, arranging regular story reading in languages other than English in public libraries
- Suggest strategies to enable multilingual Australians help monolingual Australians learn and practice a language
- Seek sources of funding for community activities from grants and sponsorships
- Cooperate with groups who work with elderly speakers of other languages to meet their language needs and/or see the elderly as resources to help others practice the languages

- Explore ways ethnic radio could help increase motivation to learn and use languages
- Provide support to families raising children bilingually

If you have any comments on the action plan, or would like to be kept informed of the Languages Forum's future activities, please contact Mandy Scott by email at mandy.scott@anu.edu.au or mobile on 0408 089 235

The Time has Come to Go Forward Together

Professor Michael Clyne AM University of Melbourne

Speech to Canberra Region Languages Forum, October 7, 2007

It is wonderful to see such a range of people from different backgrounds, who play different roles in the community together, and I think this a very important year.

For the last 10 to 15 years we have seen enormous cutbacks in the kinds of things that we used to take for granted in Australia, particularly in education but also in many other areas. We need to make sure that we don't lose any more of the initiatives that have made Australia a model for the rest of the world.

We certainly are not a model any more. Both internally and externally, we can't allow things to get any worse than they are.

The time has come for a grass roots movement similar to what happened in the early 1970s where people no longer wanted Australia to be an assimilationist, monocultural, monolingual country – they realised it wasn't really that any more. We want people all over Australia to do something about it.

It is our democratic right and even our responsibility to make sure that the kind of Australia we want comes about and that we don't lose those very important advances that have already taken place.

There is so much that we can build on. I think there is a need for a national coalition for languages and it is very good that this impressive activism in favour of languages is happening in Canberra. You have something like 15.2 per cent of the population of the ACT speaking a language other than English in the home. It is much more in Sydney (31.4 per cent) or in Melbourne (27.9 per cent) but why shouldn't Canberra, the National Capital, be the model and example for the rest of Australia? It is a smaller, more manageable place, where so much is possible.

I would like to try and address briefly some of the issues that Mandy has put forward. First of all it is very important for multilingual Australians to enable monolingual Australians to participate in our multilingual Australia.

After all, monolingualism is curable even though most of our decision-makers don't seem to think so. They seem to think that being an Australian citizen one has to be monolingual and if you aren't a monolingual, you should become one. We need to turn that upside-down and say we are a multilingual society and we want all Australians to participate in our multilingual society.

Read more at <http://www.languageseducation.com/clyne071212.pdf>

Download Dr Amanda Scott's PowerPoint introduction at
<http://www.languageseducation.com/scott071212.ppt>

We will keep you posted on further developments of this ground-breaking ACT initiative in future editions of the Newsletter

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VIEW FROM THE USA

Two is Usually Better Than One: The Benefit of Learning Two Languages

Post Independent (CO) December 7, 2007

A dual-language program works at a local school in which the student body is almost evenly divided between Latino and Anglo students.

According to Crystal River Elementary principal Karen Olson, the key idea is to have a program that integrates the students and doesn't separate them further.

The program focuses on academic achievement rather than a language program specifically for English language learners (ELL).

The way the dual-language program is incorporated into the school is that both native English speakers and native Spanish speakers learn both languages while they are learning their academics as well.

Read more at

<http://www.postindependent.com/article/20071207/VALLEYNEWS/112070041>

More Pre-school Students Learning Spanish

The Tennessean December 2, 2007

For the past five years, Ana Pasarella has been teaching Spanish to as many as 600 kids a week, many of them preschoolers, through her Ana's Amigos program in Nashville, Tenn. The demand for Spanish education targeting that age level is only growing.

Parents, schools and day-care centers are trying to expose children at an increasingly younger age to another language—most typically, Spanish. They're trying to take advantage of that age's almost effortless ability to absorb new tongues in hopes of giving children a leg up on later language education and to prepare them for an increasingly diverse world

Last year, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages recommended students be provided the opportunity to learn another language as early as possible in school. To do so not only aids pronunciation, but also proficiency, the council stated.

"Research corroborates additional benefits, including strengthening of literacy in students' first language, raising standardized test scores in other subject areas and developing comfort with cultural differences," the council statement said.

"Compared to an older student, a child's language learning advantage is greatest in the area of pronunciation, somewhat weaker in the area of grammar usage and slight when considering the size of their vocabulary," the report says. "Still, the apparent benefit overall of early learning is leading many to implement foreign language programs in elementary school or even earlier."

Read more at <http://www.news-leader.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071202/ENTERTAINMENT/712020337/1005>

No Language Barrier: Two Worlds Unite—Chinese and American Students Learn about Each Other's Cultures

Star Telegram (TX) December 3, 2007

Southwestern Christian School, a Texas secondary, is responding to the economic global demands of China by learning the language and more about their culture. According to Penny Armstrong, headmaster at Southwest Christian, a quarter of the world's population speaks Chinese.

Therefore, through a Chinese collaboration with American educators, Southwestern Christian School has formed an exchange program with Guilin Foreign Language School.

Recently six 14- and 15-year-old exchange students from Guilin, China came to Southwestern Christian not only to practice their English, but also teach young Texans a little bit about their culture. Meanwhile, their Texas counterparts will offer an inside look at American teen life.

Read more at http://www.star-telegram.com/metro_news/story/337566.html

Oregon Middle School Implements Dual-Language Program

Statesman Journal December 5, 2007

Walker Middle School from Salem, Oregon has launched a dual-language program for sixth-graders. The new program makes Walker Middle School the third in the Salem-Keizer School District to use two-way immersion. The program — offered in math, science and language-arts classes — puts English and native Spanish speakers in the same classroom, where they receive ample exposure to both languages.

Although the program has drawn some controversy by critics who state that this teaching strategy hinders English acquisition for non-English speakers, dual-language supporters say the program allows students to develop fluency in two languages while gaining an appreciation of another culture.

In addition, research has shown that two-way immersion helps native Spanish speakers learn English faster, perform better and have higher test scores than those in traditional English as a Second Language classes.

Dual-language programs began 45 years ago and recently gained renewed popularity.

According to the Center for Applied Linguistics, there are more than 330 similar programs in use in 188 school districts around the country.

In the Salem-Keizer School District, a combined total of 300 students are enrolled in the program, which also is offered at Harritt Elementary.

The elementary school began using a dual-language program in grades kindergarten through fifth when it opened in 2003. Students from the school advance to Walker Middle School, whose students feed into West Salem High School.

The high school currently does not offer two-way immersion. However, preliminary discussions have begun between parents and school officials about growing the program into the high school, said West Salem High School principal Ed John.

Read more at

<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2006712050386>

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INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN THE CLASSROOM

Focus on Bilingual Education in Guatemala

Inter Press Service December 4, 2007

In the Xepanil village school in Santa Apolonia, to the west of the Guatemalan capital, 20 children are learning both Spanish and the Mayan indigenous language Kaqchikel. Their teacher, Marta Lidia Rodríguez, one of thousands of bilingual education teachers in this country today, walks an hour a day to get to the school.

"There are children in the village who don't understand Spanish," Rodríguez, who teaches primary-level students between the ages of seven and 12, explained to IPS. "Speaking to them in their own language at school is elemental and productive."

In 1989, the literacy rate among indigenous people between the ages of 15 and 24 stood at 54 percent. By 2002, it had risen to 71 percent in this age group, according to the 2nd Millennium Development Goals Progress Report for Guatemala, released in 2006.

Bilingual education was initiated in 1980 through a Guatemalan Ministry of Education project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The project's objective was to promote access to schooling and reduce dropout rates among Mayan children.

The Directorate General of Bilingual and Intercultural Education (DIGEBI) was created in 1995, and the Vice Ministry was established in 2003. Guatemala's bilingual education teachers work in Spanish and in Guatemala's indigenous

languages, which include Quiché, Q´eqch´ı, Kaqchikel, and Mam, as well as 14 less widely-spoken languages.

Melida Xic´o, a teacher in the village of Xejol´on in western Guatemala, believes that teaching in the children's mother tongue as a first language and in Spanish as a second language 'helps them to develop and to participate more in activities,' as well as reinforcing their identity and values."

Using indigenous languages in the classroom, however, is not uncontroversial, according to Pedro Us of the Vice Ministry, and the transition from Spanish-only education has not always been easy.

Read more at <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=40344>

The Importance of Multi-Lingual Education for Africa

Adama Samassekou, president of the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN).

Education should enable people to take root in their culture as well as open them up to other cultures. Africa needs schooling that integrates its languages, history and social values.

The need to preserve each people's identity and singularity doesn't exclude the need for communication and exchange with the rest of the world. If, in every corner of the globe, we succeed in blending harmoniously a certain quantity of universal knowledge and a certain quantity of endogenous knowledge, this education enables humans to take root in their local cultures and also to become part of an international culture.

In my part of the world, Africa, the situation is sadly only too well-known. Who has described it better than the author of "Educate or Perish", the late Professor Ki-Zerbo (Burkina Faso), with his highlighting of what prevails on our continent: a culturally integrating education, which for decades has not respected the right of millions of pupils to have an identity; education that impoverishes, too, because it is disconnected from production; and finally a socially violent education, because it fosters the social exclusion of the less-privileged, who are handicapped by the preceding anomalies.

We need a school that is attached to society, not torn from it. A school that would give real actors back to society, and not victims of the cognitive violence represented by the repression of the mother language.

I am convinced that if we want to achieve education that is fairer in Africa, we must develop a multilingual education based on the mother language, an education in the African languages of the learner, in partnership with the European and international languages serving today as official languages in the greater majority of African states; an education that builds bridges between early schooling in the formal sector and literacy training for those who are past the age of starting school.

Education and culture are indivisible.

Most African countries continue to endure an unacceptable situation: as soon as they start school, children start learning in a language they don't speak at home.

Introducing African languages in the African school systems – as a vector of learning and as a subject of study – is one of the goals of the African Academy of Languages, which I head. We decided to undertake a genuine rehabilitation process for education at continent level, by reestablishing the link between education and culture and by including our languages and our history in school curricula.

It's what I call the re-establishment of the African educational system, characterized by three essential principles, like the three stones of the African hearth:

- rebuilding cultural identity of the learner by taking as a base the simultaneous use of the mother language and the official language;
- linking school to life, by restructuring curricula and promoting professional training, entrepreneurship and active educational methods; and
- promoting a dynamic of partnership around and for the benefit of the school, allowing the entire educational community to contribute to a school project in which participants can recognize themselves.

Read more at http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=41198&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

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