



CONGRÉS MUNDIAL SOBRE POLÍTICAS LINGÜÍSTIQUES
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Workshop 2: Synthesis of conclusions

Case studies on the management of linguistic diversity in urban, semi-urban and rural communities

General observation

Given the numerous specific and peculiar situations identified in the different cases presented during the workshop, it seemed relevant to gather the collected data and sort them out according to their use value for the whole of the participants. Consequently, this synthesis will intend to report all that can be used and exploited in differentiated contexts and will only give a secondary importance to all that is too specific and peculiar.

This synthesis covers fourteen presentations concerning the socio-linguistic and socio-educative situations prevailing in the different countries represented. The names of the speakers and the title of their communications are listed on the general leaflet of the congress.

Point 1

One of the first lessons to draw from the communications we heard is that the issue of linguistic management in urban environments is not the same in all the countries represented.

Actually, it is not possible to compare the acuteness of this problem as it is identified in the European countries with how it imposes itself in many African countries.

In African states, the need for the most homogenous possible civil service implies the need to gather state employees from different ethnic groups in urban centres. As a result, the composition of classes in African schools shows great disparities at the linguistic level. This means that, as far as the language of learning is an African language, all pupils do not have the same status in front

of this language of learning. This also means the teachers who are from different linguistic areas do not have the same command of the mother tongue.

Which are the concrete pedagogical and didactic implications of this situation?

- 1.1 First, take an inventory of the different status of pupils in relation to the taught language (this goes beyond the African framework)
- 1.2 Design methodological elements adapted to the different cases identified.
- 1.3 Design textbooks and teachers' guides corresponding to the real situations in classes.
- 1.4 Adapt the training programmes for teachers and future teachers (initial and permanent training) to optimise the exploitation of these teaching materials and to make the teaching appropriate for the real situations encountered.
- 1.5 **Effectively** apply these initial and permanent training programmes: that requires a previous training of trainers' trainers.

Point 2

Another important lesson is that the use of mother tongues (even if they are minority languages) is an obligation stemming not only from cultural, economic or other demands but it is also a psycho pedagogical obligation as far as the mother tongue is the only one helping in the transition between the environment and school and allowing to continue the acquisition of the first learnings that will pave the way for knowledge, know-how and 'savoir-être' that are the aims of education.

Which are the concrete pedagogical and didactical implications of this situation?

- 2.1 The need to provide children with a communication language can by no means be an excuse to suppress children's right to use their mother tongue at school.
- 2.2 Education officers have the obligation to grant mother tongues (including minority ones) a legal status in the official education and training programmes.
- 2.3 Any reform in this sense cannot go without an awareness campaign at all population levels making sure that favoured socio-professional classes – often hostile to minority mother tongues- respect the official national programmes that open school to children's mother tongues.
- 2.4 It is imperative to plan a blueprint for linguistic planning including incentive and supportive ancillary measures (take account of the knowledge of mother tongues in examinations and job recruitments) and allowing "bridges" from a type of education to another.

Point 3

Another strong point imposed upon the group: the respect for linguistic diversity, i.e. the respect for all mother tongues, minority or not, contributes to avoid conflicts caused by the contempt that some states feel for a determined part of speakers.

The whole of the participants agreed that the rejection of a mother tongue inside a State engenders resentment and distrust and will lead, sooner or later, to violent conflicts.

The exclusion of mother tongues from the school context creates frustration and traumatism. It generates an inner conflict to the individual that will inevitably lead to an external conflict since how can one be at peace with the others without being at peace with oneself first?

We deemed this idea to be fundamental because it is at the basis of the Linguapax philosophy consisting in creating the conditions for peace through the respect for all languages, minority or not.

Which are the concrete pedagogical and didactic implications of this situation?

3.1 As citizens, set out the issue of languages to superior authorities as an element of social peace.

3.2 Request these authorities to consider the linguistic component as a major element of their social peace programme.

3.3 Make the whole population aware that far from sowing the seeds of conflict the promotion of linguistic diversity at the national scale guarantees social peace and socio-economic development and contributes to sustainable human development.

Point 4

Introducing mother tongues in an education system does require conditions of minimum applied research in the linguistic, didactic, psycho-pedagogical and socio-linguistic fields, but the non-fulfilment of research can in no case justify the continual postponement of the reform on the pretence that this research is not exhaustive or complete.

Which are the concrete pedagogical and didactic implications of this situation?

4.1 The designers and editors of textbooks in mother tongues can start working even though not all normative instruments related to texts (grammar, vocabulary, spelling) are available yet.

4.2 The exploratory and experimental phases of the reform can be started before all the desirable didactic instruments are available.

4.3 Nevertheless, the phase of awareness and motivation for mother tongues until then excluded from school programmes remains a prerequisite and a necessity.

Conclusion

In addition to the above ideas, the following arguments retained the attention of the participants:

1. It is really urgent for States to define clear and coherent language policies in their education systems.

Effectively, it appeared completely inconsistent to advocate the promotion of partner languages outside the territory while refusing to recognise as partner languages the minority languages inside the own country.

2. Besides, it is obvious that turning to international cooperation in the field of promotion of mother tongues is one of the conditions of success.

In this sense, we are all conscious that international organisations such as UNESCO must not slacken in their effort to promote mother tongues, and particularly the weaker ones. On this point the Linguapax Institute bears great hopes.