

## ADEA 2022 Triennale

### OVERALL CONCEPT NOTE

#### 1. Introduction

The ADEA Triennale on Education is one of Africa's seminal high-level forums for political dialogue and sharing of knowledge and fruitful experiences. It focuses on critical themes that transform Africa's education systems for sustainable social and economic development. Through the Triennale, ADEA fosters continental, regional and cross-country interactions, in support of peer learning and knowledge exchange. Beyond the Triennale, ADEA facilitates education sector peer review processes, including national EMIS, through Ministries of Education. It also has the Inter-Country Quality Nodes (ICQNs) that provide platforms for peer learning and knowledge exchange among countries with similar challenges. Additionally, ADEA has the Learning and Knowledge Management Hub, which is being linked to platforms of other partners such as the UNESCO Teacher Task Force Knowledge Platform.

The 2022 Triennale follows the first two held in Ouagadougou and Dakar in 2012 and 2017. It is structured around Africa's key priorities of foundational learning, the impact of COVID-19 on the continent's educational systems in terms of policy and practice responses, matching demand with supply in technical and vocational skills development, and reimagining higher education in Africa. Technology, and particularly digitalization, is a critical component in the current quest to build back better resilient education systems for the continent. It therefore cuts across the four focus areas (the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, foundational learning, Technical and Vocational Skills Development, and Higher Education), in addition to the cross-cutting themes of gender, equity, inclusion and climate change.

Embracing this framework, the proposed theme of the 2022 Triennale is **“Reflecting on the impact of COVID-19 on Africa’s educational systems, and how to build resilience to sustain the development of skills for the continent and beyond.”** Under this theme are four proposed subthemes:

1. **Impact of COVID-19 on Africa’s educational systems;**
2. **Foundational learning;**
3. **Technical and Vocational Skills Development; and**
4. **Reimagining Africa’s Higher Education and Scientific Research.**

As part of accelerating progress towards SDG 4 - and CESA 16-25 for Africa, the UN Secretary-General is convening a Transforming Education Summit (TES) in New York in September 2022. The aim is to rally education actors to commit to "mobilizing action, ambition, solidarity and solutions". This is critical in transforming education in the remaining period, and beyond, for SDG4 and CESA 16-15. The outcomes of TES (renewed commitments, greater public engagement, and summary and call to action) will be disseminated and further discussed at the ADEA 2022 Triennale in Mauritius in October.

#### 2. Background, initiatives and issues

##### **Impact of COVID-19 on Africa’s educational systems:**

Interventions that are likely to be impactful are those that are anchored on sound policies and strategies and backed by evidence. The interventions also need to be well-planned and resourced, efficiently executed, and effectively monitored and evaluated. The COVID-19 pandemic brought to

the fore the inadequate level of preparedness, especially for the education sector. The policy and practice responses by African countries aimed at [delivering education at home](#) during the initial stages of the pandemic were largely reactionary as the knowledge about the pandemic continued to grow. Forward planning with crisis situations such as COVID-19 in mind is, therefore, imperative. ADEA's engagement with African countries at the policy and implementation levels on [strategies for continuous learning, reopening of learning institutions, and the future's "new normal"](#) based on the COVID-19 pandemic experience revealed valuable lessons.

Among the key recommendations for the new education delivery model is a review of the overall policy and regulatory guidelines to mainstream digital technology, strengthening teacher professional development, exploring alternative funding models, and revisiting existing norms and standards. Among the ongoing initiatives is the development of toolkits that enable countries to benchmark their remote education systems and to institute necessary mitigation measures for effective and inclusive provision of education during crises. Equipped with a gender, equity and inclusion lens, the [KIX Observatory on COVID-19 Responses in Educational Systems in Africa](#) provides evidence from [40 GPE partner countries](#) in Africa, on how governments quickly responded by changing policies and practices to mitigate the impact of the pandemic in terms of the continued operations of education and the well-being of learners beyond education.

Building on past experiences from the pandemic, and informed by its challenges that have become clearer, the discussions under this sub-theme will focus on (1) financing education recovery in a post-COVID-19 era, (2) developing the environment for teachers (capacity and policy needs) and learners, and (3) using infrastructure, technology and connectivity to increase access and diversity to education.

### **Foundational Learning:**

Achieving foundational literacy and numeracy is necessary for children to reach further learning levels as well as higher order skills for decent and fulfilling work. According to the World Bank, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, close to 90% of students in Sub-Saharan Africa could not read with comprehension by age 10. These low results are due to insufficient effective reading instruction happening in classrooms in most countries. Learning how to read is a complex and unnatural process that requires re-wiring the brain. It requires systematic evidence-based instruction and for students to be taught in a language they use and understand. This is not happening in many countries today. The COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent school closures it generated has only made this crisis worse.

Evidence from countries like Kenya show that progress is possible in training teachers to improve their teaching practices at scale and improve student learning. Effective strategies include structured pedagogy – an approach to support teachers that brings together structured lesson plans, teacher coaching and student materials, differentiated instruction tailored at the level of the student, and increasing instructional time to make up for all the classroom time that has been lost during the COVID-19 pandemic (cf. this recent UNICEF-UNESCO-World Bank [report](#)). Added to this is the need to focus on aspects of social and emotional learning, play-based STEM for early learning, and family literacy. Related to this are the costs involved and the required conditions, including the political economy. Strong political will is likely to bring the much-needed salience for foundational learning. If implemented well, these proven solutions may enable countries not only to recover from COVID-19 learning losses, but also make significant progress to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for all by 2030 and contribute to achieving the goals of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

### **Technical and Vocational Skills Development:**

A holistic approach to skills development encompasses features such as continuous and seamless learning pathways; development of core and higher-level skills; transferability of skills and

employability; and putting in place sustainable mitigating measures against unforeseen emergencies such as COVID-19. Common core skills, Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD), and the acquisition of scientific and technological knowledge and skills are critical skill areas necessary for lifelong learning and accelerated and sustainable development in Africa. Although most of the challenges around skills development identified nearly 10 years ago remain, new dimensions have emerged. They include the advent of accelerated digitalization within 4IR (Fourth Industrial Revolution), renewed focus on TVSD, alternative financing models, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Interventions need to address several issues that impede the transformation of TVSD to better align the skills supplied with the skills demands of the labour market. One is blending of digital skills and 4IR to strengthen the integration of technology in traditional TVSD programmes. There is also inadequate financing and poor-quality training in public and private TVSD systems, including insufficient training and continuous professional development of TVET personnel. A third issue is the limited recognition/ accreditation of informal systems as part of dealing with the large numbers of unskilled out-of-school youth. Lastly is the issue of expanding access to vocational skills development in remote or disadvantaged areas to support improved livelihoods and poverty alleviation, a move that is strongly linked to having adequate funding.

### **Reimagining Africa's Higher Education and Scientific Research:**

Africa's development hinges on a higher education system and research that plays a key role in knowledge-based economic growth strategies, contributes to the constitution of human capital, supports innovation, and validates scientific knowledge. Although some countries have adopted higher education governance structures and initiated innovations in training (university, vocational) with quality diversification, there is a clear case of insufficiency in these efforts. This deficit is linked to financing methods and limitation and, above all, lack of effectiveness and efficiency in the use of resources. Research remains poor, as a priority, in the policies of many African countries, with infrastructure, equipment, personnel, and funding having greater focus. Africa's contribution in the diagnosis and research of vaccines against the COVID-19 pandemic was comparatively minimal, accounting to only 1% of the results of research in the world, according to the World Bank (2020). In addition, there is a mismatch between existing research and potential areas of needs where the research results can be applied. For example, there is little research conducted in the continent in fields of STEM, accounting for only 29% of scientific research in sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2014).

Africa must improve the governance of national research, promote African-led research, and adapt thereresearch results to meet its needs and priorities. Developing the right policies for national research systems, ensuring they have the right capacity and capabilities for coordination and collaboration are also key interventions. It is also important to identify innovative and alternative financing options that can be used to expand higher-level teaching and learning mechanisms. Partner involvement in this endeavor is key. This sub-theme will look at the factors, conditions, and drivers promoting African-led research, and interrogate the role of the different actors, including existing Centers of Excellence in the continent. The discussions will explore how research can positively impact Africa's agriculture and food industry, the skills required to produce qualified manpower for the industry, the role of universities and research institutions in promoting land use and value addition as part of limiting reliance on imports, and how technology can support productivity and competitiveness.

### **Cross-cutting themes:**

Initiatives that support data availability could be harnessed to demonstrate how countries use evidence and analysis to move systems, policies, and budgets in support of education. Leveraged effectively and efficiently, digitalization can promote data and evidence generation to inform such decision making. As part of supporting greater inclusivity of vulnerable populations, there is need to allocate more domestic resources to create sustainability in financing emergency responses and demonstrate how these address gender issues and enhance equity and inclusion in education.

Additionally, governments need to engage with key partners to support major investments in education technology and remote learning infrastructure in hard-to-reach areas as well as in countries in transition.

The well-being of children, especially girls and young women, encompasses several interlinked issues inside and outside the learning environment. As such, mitigating interventions require a holistic and multistakeholder approach involving governments and active partners, including the local communities, to be successful. They also need to be contextualized to the prevailing socio-cultural, socio-emotional, and socio-economic situations. As an example, governments should embrace actionable school continuation and re-entry policies and legal frameworks for teens who fall pregnant to adjust in the new normal and promote their re-entry back to school. This is in addition to preparing teachers to support vulnerable children and those affected by gender-based violence and mental health issues. Resources can also be provided to the youth to stimulate critical thinking, with greater focus on regions and communities where the youth have little or no access to the right digital tools.

### **3. Goals and expected outcomes of the Triennale**

The 2022 Triennale will complement existing knowledge sharing and learning platforms that enable education and training actors in Africa and beyond to assess the level of progress in implementing the recommendations of the 2017 Triennale in Dakar. Participants will also discuss the issues and challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic with a view to building consensus around a common forward-looking education and training agenda for the continent. This agenda will inform the ADEA's strategic focus for the next five years.

#### **Overall goal:**

To provide opportunity for stakeholders to take stock, learn and share fruitful experiences on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education and to collectively commit to develop the necessary drivers and conditions necessary for a resilient education system that sustains the development of skills in Africa and beyond.

#### **Specific Objectives:**

- Reflect on Africa's educational systems before and during the COVID-19 pandemic to inform strategic directions towards building resilient educational systems to prepare for future crises.
- Promote the sharing of knowledge and experience around practical and innovative solutions in specific areas such as integration of digital technologies in teaching and learning, teacher professional development and remote education.
- Interrogate, validate, and adopt new/emerging trends in evidence, good practices and innovations that support the rebuilding of the future workforce in Africa through education and training.
- Identify and define strategies, tools, capacities, resources and the other necessary factors for the operationalization and the successful implementation of the envisaged forward-looking reforms.
- Build consensus, commitment, and partnerships among the Ministries and other educational stakeholders in Africa around the successful implementation of the proposed reforms, aligned to the TES commitments and call to action.

#### **Expected outcomes:**

- Evaluated reforms in Africa's educational systems made since the 2017 Triennale and annual high-level policy dialogue forums organized between 2019 and 2022.

- Shared understanding of mechanisms for building a better resilient education and training system that focuses on foundation learning, TVSD, and higher education and scientific research in Africa.
- Shared knowledge, experiences, good practices, and solutions to inform policies and programmes aimed at improving the use of digitalization in resilient education systems building process.
- Fostered partnerships among key stakeholders to advance policy and strategy development and implementation.
- A final declaration that stipulates the commitments of the stakeholders, in particular Ministers of Education, for the attainment of the set goals under each of the four sub-themes and the main theme, as well as the commitments and call to action message from TES.

#### **4. Methodological approach to the preparatory work**

The Triennale will be held in a hybrid arrangement comprising in-person and virtual participants, and the duration is three days (the first day is dedicated to partners meetings and the launch of the exhibitions, while the second and third days are dedicated to the main events in plenary and breakout sessions).

##### **Format:**

- Introductory plenary sessions where the discussions create room for shared understanding of the main theme.
- Breakout sessions; these provide space and time for in-depth discussions on the four sub-themes.
- Summary plenary sessions where all the ideas expressed are considered and adequately reflected.
- Exhibitions on the Triennale theme organized by ADEA or partners.

##### **Participants:**

The Triennial will be organized in hybrid mode with 600 participants in person and the other participants will have the opportunity to follow virtually. The expected participants will include policy makers, stakeholders including the private sector and civil society, development partners in education and training in Africa.

##### **Venue and date:**

Le Meridien Hotel, Mauritius, 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> October, 2022.

**ADEA Secretariat, June 2022**