



Multi-country study on multilingualism and bi/plurilingualism in schools in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger

Summary report

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Objectives

Sub-Saharan countries have been working for many years to introduce local languages into their education systems, alongside the official languages inherited from their colonial history. This approach aims not only to adapt education and training to people's living environments, but also to improve the quality of education.

Critical analyses¹ of the 'traditional' monolingual system have highlighted that children who begin their schooling in a second language² without having acquired the basics in their first language³ face significant learning difficulties in all subjects.

By contrast, studies have shown that bilingual teaching (in the students' first and second languages) presents many cognitive, identity and economic advantages for students, their families and their countries.⁴

In some cases, this 'bi/plurilingual' approach even seems to improve access to education, as the school is no longer perceived as a foreign entity but as an institution that values local cultures and customs.

Nevertheless, the following factors make it difficult to draw unambiguous conclusions that could more clearly guide public policy:

- A shortage of longitudinal and comparative studies of achievement in bilingual schools (local language/French) and in mainstream monolingual French schools.
- Limited use of national or regional evaluations or inability to translate their results into remedial action.
- Field reports on bilingual pilot projects that include too much narrative and too little analysis.
- Lack of use of these reports to generate instant changes in the classroom.

There is scientific consensus on the benefits of taking learners' first languages into account at school. However, although the countries of French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa have conducted bi/plurilingual pilot projects for decades, this type of teaching has rarely been rolled out more widely.

This is true in the three countries covered by this study: Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

All three countries are in the Sahelian belt, have French as their official language, have each been equipped for instruction in about 10 local languages, and **began to introduce local languages into their education systems in the 1960s and 1970s.**

However, five to six decades later, the same thing can be observed in each country: bilingual education has not been scaled up. In many ways, it seems that this educational approach is still treated as a pilot.

It is true that multilingualism in society is recognized in legal texts and that bi/plurilingualism in schools is also enshrined in laws and in educational policy and programming documents. But in the classroom, still only a minority of students are receiving bilingual education.

What are the reasons for this gap? What is the current status of bi/plurilingual initiatives in these three countries?

To answer these questions, national studies were conducted in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger in 2019 and 2020.

¹ Doumbia, Amadou T., 'L'enseignement du bambara selon la pédagogie convergente au Mali :Théorie et pratiques', *Nordic Journal of African Studies* vol. 9. no. 3, 2000, pp. 98–107.

Cummins, Jim, 'Bilingual Children's Mother Tongue: Why is it important for education?', *SPROGFORUM* no. 19, 2001, pp. 15–20.
Noyau, Colette, 'Linguistique acquisitionnelle et intervention sur les apprentissages : appropriation de la langue seconde et évaluation des connaissances à l'école de base en situation diglossique', OAI, 2006.

Maurer, Bruno, 'LASCOLAF et ELAN-Afrique : d'une enquête sur les langues de scolarisation en Afrique francophone à des plans d'action nationaux', *Le français à l'université*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2011.

² French is the second language (L2) in the three countries covered by the study.

³ The first language is a local language, which may be the mother tongue or the language of the community.

⁴ Mignot, Christelle, 'J'apprends si je comprends : pour une meilleure prise en compte des langues premières des enfants à l'école primaire. Projet de documentaire long métrage et de kit audiovisuel à l'attention des enseignants de classes bi-plurilingues', *Édition des Archives Contemporaines (in press)*.

The objectives of these studies were to:

- Evaluate the various existing bi/plurilingual education initiatives in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, analysing the effectiveness of these initiatives and the learning outcomes for children (compared to teaching and learning in monolingual French language schools).
- Evaluate the various existing bi/plurilingual education initiatives in the three countries in terms of strengths, weaknesses, lessons learned and potential for scaling up.
- Based on lessons learned, propose strategies and tools to enable the roll-out of bi/plurilingual (first language/French) teaching in each of these countries.



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This summary presents the main findings from the country reports for Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. In addition, the annex contains an explanation of certain sociolinguistic and educational concepts related to bilingualism in schools, planning for implementation of bilingualism, and training for educators in these areas.



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Methodology

There were two complementary phases to this study.

- The first phase consisted of a literature review. This provided an overview of bi/plurilingual education in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger from 2010 to 2020, and also identified certain knowledge gaps in relation to bilingualism in schools.
- The second phase, which used a qualitative approach, was conducted between September and November 2020. This involved gathering the opinions and recommendations of 241 different educators on the use of local languages⁵ in the education systems of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

Phase 1: Literature review

The literature review was designed to provide an overview of bilingual education initiatives in each of the three countries, and focused on the decade 2010–2020.

Conducted between December 2019 and February 2020, the literature review resulted in:

- a preliminary report for each of the three countries, including a complete bibliography of the documents consulted
- summary tables containing the information found in the documents
- an inventory of missing information for each of the three countries, which was used to determine the research objectives for the field study.

Phase 2: Field study

The field study was conducted between September and November 2020 and used a qualitative approach. Representatives of actors and partners were asked for their opinions and assessments of the use of local languages in the education system. These opinions from the field were then compared with the research data in this area.

The country reports and the summary provide a set of recommendations to inform ministries of education and their technical and financial partners about efforts that could be introduced or strengthened.

Challenges encountered and limitations of the study

The literature review was carried out under fairly good conditions. However, the field data were collected in the specific global context caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In addition to the mental health impacts of the pandemic, the field research was constrained by the temporary or prolonged closure of schools, the lockdown of populations, the introduction of teleworking in public administration, and bans or restrictions on travel between cities.

In addition, reservations about the official position, lack of knowledge of the subject, or the absence of reliable data seem to have led to resistance or withdrawal by some actors, who did not answer the questions asked.

⁵ 111 in Niger, 65 in Burkina Faso and 65 in Mali.



Findings

1. Bi/plurilingualism in schools in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger: legal, policy and pedagogical frameworks

1.1 Languages of instruction in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger

Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, which are all in the Sahelian belt, have French as their official language and as the main language of teaching in their education systems.

In these three countries, bi/plurilingual education is seen as a vehicle for quality education, improving student learning outcomes, and as a way of adapting teaching to children's living environments. It is also guided and motivated by a widely shared desire to promote national cultures and languages.

While the number of state-recognized local languages varies greatly from one country to another,⁶ 10 languages are resourced in Burkina Faso, 11 in Mali and eight in Niger.

In terms of local languages that have been introduced as a medium of instruction in primary schools, there are 10 in Burkina Faso, 11 in Mali and five in Niger.

Table 1: Number of languages and their status

	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger
Number of languages recorded	60	Approx. 30	Approx. 25
Recognized local languages	60	13	11
Resourced local languages	10	11	8
Local languages used as medium of instruction in schools	10	11	5

1.2. Laws and official guidelines to support bi/plurilingualism in schools

The three countries studied have legal, policy and institutional frameworks that are conducive to the development of bi/plurilingual education. For example, in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger there are legal texts and official guidance that confirm the commitment of the countries to integrate learners' first languages better into primary school classrooms.

The main laws and provisions adopted by each of these countries in relation to bi/plurilingualism in schools are listed in Table 2.

⁶ Providing educational resources for teaching a language makes the language suitable to use in the design of teaching materials. Equipping a language with teaching materials/educational resources involves formalizing the rules for syntax, grammar and orthography.



Table 2: Legal, policy and institutional framework for bi/plurilingualism in schools in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger

	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger
Provisions in the Constitution	Art. 35 of the 1997 Constitution	Art. 25 of the 1992 Constitution	Art. 5 of the 2010 Constitution
Institutions responsible for multilingualism	Direction du Continuum d'Éducation Multilingue [Directorate for the Multilingual Education Continuum] within the Ministry of National Education, Literacy and Promotion of National Languages	Direction Nationale de l'Enseignement Fondamental [National Directorate of Fundamental Education] of the Ministry of National Education Malian Academy of Languages	Direction des Curricula et de la Promotion des Langues Nationales [Directorate for Curricula and the Promotion of National Languages] within the Ministry of National Education, Literacy and the Promotion of National Languages
Provisions in law governing multilingualism and bi/plurilingualism in the educational system	Law No. 013-2007/AN of 30 July 2007 on education policy (Art. 10) Law No. 033-2019/AN of 23 May 2019, laying down procedures for promoting and formalizing the local languages of Burkina Faso	Law of 1996, defining the local languages Law No. 99-046 of 26 December 1999 on education policy (Art. 10)	Law on educational system policy in Niger (LOSEN) of 1998 (Art. 10, 19 and 21) Law No. 2019-80 of 31 December 2019, laying down procedures for promoting and developing local languages
Legislative enactment (decrees and decisions)	Decision No. 14/MEBA/SG/ENEP of 10 March 2004 on including modules on transcription and teaching in vocational training schools. Decree No. 2008-681 of 3 November 2008 adopting the policy framework for the curriculum	Decree No. 92-073 P CTSP of 27 February 1992 establishing the framework for promoting and formalizing local languages	Decision adopting the document on policy framework for the curriculum (2006 and 2012)
Provisions in planning of the educational system	Programme de Développement Stratégique du Secteur de l'Éducation [Strategic Development Programme for Basic Education 2012–2021] (Programme 2, Strategic Focus 1) Programme sectoriel de l'éducation et de la formation [Education and Training Sector Programme – PSEF] 2012–2021 (Subprogramme 3, Objective 1)	Ten-Year Education Development Programme (PRODEC 1) 1998–2010 Ten-Year Education and Skills Development Programme (PRODEC 2) 2019–2028 Communication on education policy (2010–2012) Document on local language policy (2015)	Plan Sectoriel de l'Éducation et de la Formation [Sectoral Plan for Education and Training] 2014–2024 Plan de Transition du Secteur de l'Éducation et de la Formation [Sectoral Transition Plan for Education and Training] 2020–2022 Communication on education policy (2013–2020) (Measure 15)
Strengths of the institutional framework	Multilingualism is enshrined in the Constitution Bilingual education is enshrined in laws on education policy and in programme and policy documents There is a directorate dedicated to bilingual education within the Ministry of National Education, Literacy and the Promotion of National Languages	The Constitution recognizes the local languages. The roll-out of bi/plurilingualism in schools has been a priority for the Government of Mali since 2005	Multilingualism is enshrined in the Constitution Bilingual education is enshrined in laws on education policy and in programme and policy documents There is a directorate dedicated to bilingual education within the Ministry of Education

Notably:

- The three countries have regulations that codify the choice of plurilingualism in schools and mention it in the strategic plans of their ministries, with some degree of ambition to expand or roll it out.
- The ministry directorates take responsibility for plurilingualism as part of their remit to develop curricula and organize training.

1.3. Reforms to support bi/plurilingualism in schools

In Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, two types of reforms have been undertaken in parallel:

- Curriculum reform in all subjects, with adoption of the **integrative approach** in Burkina Faso, the **competency-based approach** in Mali and the **scenario-based approach** in Niger.
- Bilingual reform, which consists of integrating local languages into the education system, regardless of the curricular approach adopted.⁷

In relation to bilingual reform, **Mali and Niger have adopted a national curriculum geared towards bilingualism**. Mali launched its curricular reform in 2005 to introduce the new curriculum for basic education. In Niger the reform was initiated in 2012, in a small sample (500 schools) at first and then expanded to about 5,000 schools.

However, as will be explained in Table 3, the roll-out projects initiated 15 years ago in Mali and 10 years ago in Niger are still far from covering all public schools in the countries. Because of the lack of monitoring of bilingual schools, and of training and tools for teachers, bilingual schools tend to gradually revert to monolingual schools. The situation is therefore paradoxical: despite the widely held belief that bilingual education is good for both learning (including French) and the promotion of local languages and cultures, and despite the official commitments of the states to support bi/plurilingualism in schools, **reservations are starting to emerge about this approach to education because it is not gaining access to the operational measures necessary to achieve the quality that it inherently brings**.

In Burkina Faso, by contrast, the national curriculum for basic education is still monolingual, in French. The bilingual sector, which currently covers only 1.6 per cent of primary schools, is based on **two curricula** resulting from non-governmental organization (NGO) initiatives⁸ and taken on board by the state in 2007.

1.4. Main differences between bilingual curricula in the three countries

The bilingualism models in these three countries are not explicitly defined in the regulations or programmes.

However, it appears from discussions with teachers and principals of bilingual schools that the bilingualism at school implemented in the three countries studied is more of a transitional model, even though some educational leaders speak of additive bilingualism.⁹

For example, in all the bilingual schools in this study, the L1¹⁰ is introduced at the beginning of the primary school cycle, but it is gradually supplanted by the L2, which thus becomes the sole medium of instruction from Year 3 or 4 onwards.

However, numerous studies have shown that “language education models which remove the first language as a primary medium of instruction before year/grade five will facilitate little success for the majority of learners” and, conversely, “language education models which retain the first language as a primary medium of instruction for six years can succeed under very well-resourced conditions in African settings. Eight years of mother-tongue education may be enough under less well-resourced conditions which are the reality in many African schools.”¹¹

⁷ Bilingualism can be introduced into both objective-based and competency-based programmes.

⁸ Œuvre Suisse d'Entraide Ouvrière (OSEO)/Solidar Suisse and Tin Tua.

⁹ These models are described in the conceptual framework in the annex.

¹⁰ L1 here refers to the first language (local language); L2 refers to French.

1.5. Difficulties in applying curricula in the classroom

To be operational, the pedagogical framework for bilingualism must be made explicit through appropriate teacher training content and the production of associated teaching and learning materials.

However, the study conducted in the three countries showed that **training for teachers and supervisory staff** responsible for implementing bilingual education is inappropriate, insufficient or even non-existent in some of the regions involved in the pilot projects. This gap applies to both pre- and in-service training for those involved in bi/plurilingualism in schools.

According to the training content and modules that have been reported to us or that we have consulted, there are certain limitations to the training topics covered, which need to be remedied:

- Insufficient training in teaching the L1.
- An absence of thinking about the transfer from L1 into French.¹²
- A lack of tools and techniques to enable teachers to implement bi/plurilingual teaching.¹³

Similarly, there is a recurring lack of teaching and learning materials in bilingual classrooms in all three countries. In some cases, these materials do exist but there is insufficient production and dissemination. In other cases (for some languages or advanced grade levels), these resources do not exist.

Table 3 summarizes the main characteristics of the pedagogical framework for bilingualism in schools in each of the three countries, along with its strengths and weaknesses.

¹¹ Ouane, Adama and Christine Glanz, eds., *Optimising Learning, Education and Publishing in Africa: The language factor*, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and Association for the Development of Education in Africa, Hamburg and Tunis, 2011, pp. 165–191.

¹² See annex for an explanation of the concept of transfer.

¹³ In this study, we found that teacher training was often theoretical and detached from the reality of bilingual classrooms.



Table 3: Pedagogical framework for bi/plurilingualism in schools in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger

	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger
Teaching approach mainstreaming bilingual education at the national level	Integrative teaching approach, combining competency-based approach and objective-based approach.	Competency-based approach	Scenario-based approach (variant of competency-based approach)
Bilingual curriculum developed at the national level	The current curricular reform attempts to reconcile several bilingual approaches.	The bilingual curriculum for basic education, inspired by convergent teaching, is based on bilingualism.	The national curriculum incorporates the bilingual component.
Bilingual component in pre- and in-service training	Since 2004, bilingual education has been addressed by the Ecoles nationales des enseignants du primaire (National School for Primary Teachers – ENEP), but this only covers the transcription of local languages, not didactics (teaching). In-service training is considered insufficient and irregular.	No reflection of bi/plurilingualism in schools in pre-service teacher training. Plans to integrate bi/plurilingual teaching at teacher training colleges and at the Ecole Normale Supérieure [Higher Institute for Teacher Training] have not been carried out. In-service training is considered insufficient, irregular and inappropriate (too theoretical).	Training in bilingual teaching at the three pilot teacher training colleges is considered inappropriate and non-qualitative by both teachers and trainers. The plan to integrate bi/plurilingual teaching at the Ecole Normale Supérieure has not been carried out.
Production and availability of teaching materials	Numerous resources have been developed by technical and financial partners involved in bilingual education – Solidar Suisse, Tin Tua and National Schools and Languages in Africa (ELAN) / International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF). However, there are not enough teaching materials for all classes. Moreover, they are not available in all the local languages of the country.	Teaching materials are scarce, except in the first and second years of primary school, which are supported by the Selective Integrated Reading Activity (SIRA) initiative (in local languages).	There are teaching materials in five local languages, in French and in standard Arabic for the first stage of preschool, the first four years of primary school and non-formal education for adolescents aged 9–14. There is full availability of these materials for the first and second years of primary school. There is partial availability for the third and fourth years of primary school. However, these materials have not been evaluated. A study should be undertaken to analyse the quality of these resources.
Teacher supervision	Supervision provided by technical and financial partners (Solidar Suisse, Tin Tua, ELAN/OIF, Enfants du Monde). Reduction in supervision when pilot projects are transferred to the state.	Teacher supervision is mainly carried out by the principal and more rarely by teaching advisers.	National supervision provided by the Directorate for Curricula and the Promotion of National Languages at the start of the bilingual pilot project, supported by inspectors, followed by a reduction in this supervision when the project was expanded. Supervision is uneven across regions, and sometimes carried out by school principals.
Strengths of the pedagogical framework	The Solidar Suisse and Tin Tua curricula (transferred to the state) incorporate the bi/plurilingual approach. The drive to expand bilingualism in schools is supported by four initiatives (Solidar Suisse, Tin Tua, ELAN and Enfants du Monde).	Bilingualism incorporated in the curriculum for basic education. Implementation of the curriculum supported by two initiatives (SIRA and ELAN).	The 'Cadre d'orientation du curriculum' [curriculum policy framework] is the ultimate reference for multilingual reform in Niger, from primary to secondary school. Implementation of the curriculum supported by the ELAN initiative.
Weaknesses of the pedagogical framework	No national design for a bilingual curriculum, as there are two co-existing approaches by international initiatives. Different approaches to bilingualism can be an asset if they are implemented in limited pilot projects. However, when developing a language policy and a corresponding bilingual teaching approach at the national level, there needs to be a certain level of harmonization in methodology.	The (bilingual) curriculum is not yet fully operational (not implemented at teacher training institutes), nor is it finalized for the fifth and sixth years of primary school. In the field, there are a variety of teaching approaches (in particular SIRA and ELAN) and the differences between them can be hard for teachers to understand.	The curriculum policy document (DCOC) is not accompanied by implementing legislation, which poses a problem at the operational level. The local language and French-language programmes are identical: the contents are therefore repeated and there is no transfer from L1 to L2.

1.6. Analysis of pedagogical framework in the three countries

In terms of pedagogical framework, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger share a number of common features:

- All three countries offer bilingual education by combining French with recognized local languages in which materials/resources are available and in use (to varying degrees).
- Most bilingual models in these countries could be considered transitional (early or late exit). The most recent scheme, ELAN, which is being piloted in all three countries, could be considered a 'developmental model', in which both languages are carried through at least the first three or four years of primary school.
- All the initiatives implemented in these countries have developed a number of pedagogical tools and resources (which in many cases need to be added to).
- All three countries have received methodological and logistical support from international partners who have helped to implement bilingual initiatives in schools.

The three countries also share certain challenges in teaching, the main ones identified during the field study being:

- Lack of clarity about the curricula.
- Limited scientific validation of the teaching tools created.¹⁴
- Lack of training, toolkits and supervision for teachers in bilingual schools.
- Lack of training, toolkits and supervision for teacher trainers and supervisors.
- Lack of bi/plurilingual resources and problems with supply of these resources.

These challenges lead to:

- Lack of motivation among teachers.
- Lack of confidence in the science or methodology among educators, who do not know how bi/plurilingual teaching works in practical terms.
- Loss of support from local government authorities.
- Rejection of bilingual schools by parents, who due to all these operational problems see them as 'cut-price schools'.

2. Status of current bi/plurilingual projects in the three countries

2.1. Number of bilingual schools in the three countries

As shown in Table 4, local languages started to be introduced into the education system in all three countries in the 1970s. Nevertheless, bilingual education has still not been widely rolled out in any of these countries.

According to the data collected in this study, there are about **240 bilingual schools in Burkina Faso, 6,000 in Mali and more than 5,000 in Niger.**

However, during the field studies, it became apparent that many schools listed as 'bilingual schools' were in fact monolingual – they were only using French. Due to a lack of training, tools or supervision, many teachers of bilingual classes tend to conduct their classes as they had always done, in French only.

As a result, the number of schools that truly operate bi/plurilingually is lower than the 'official' statistics (presented in Table 4).

¹⁴There should be greater involvement of linguistic experts and educational specialists who are experts in bi/plurilingual teaching.

Table 4: Languages of instruction in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger

	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger
Date local languages introduced in schools (gap from 1984 to 1993)	1979	1979	1973
Number of schools reported as bilingual (primary)	240 bilingual schools (2019)	Approximately 6,000 bilingual schools (estimate)	Approximately 5,000 bilingual schools (2019)
% of total primary schools that are bilingual	2%	50%	30%

2.2. Current bi/plurilingual initiatives in the three countries

As previously stated, the education system in each country is managing bilingual reform by combining it with a cross-curricular reform of all subjects.

In addition to state-led programmes, private and public, national and international partners are developing initiatives under state supervision.

Projects currently being implemented in the three countries include the following.

- Projects that form part of the roll-out of bilingualism by supporting the implementation of curricular reform. An example is the **SIRA**¹⁵ project in Mali which supports no less than 4,500 bilingual schools.
- Regional projects to pilot and support the roll-out of bilingualism. An example is the **ELAN**¹⁶ initiative implemented in 12 countries in sub-Saharan Africa,¹⁷ including Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.
- Bilingual pilot projects at the national level, implemented by NGOs such as Plan International (Niger Education and Community Strengthening (NECS) project in Niger) or Concern International (in Niger).

2.2.1. The ELAN initiative in all three countries

2.2.1.1 Summary of the ELAN initiative

The ELAN initiative is supporting 12 countries in sub-Saharan Africa to carry out the necessary reforms for the joint use of African languages with French in primary education. It aims to create an international body within the French-speaking world to promote bilingual education in African countries by capitalizing on and sharing experience, expertise and training. The goal is to support the national action plans of the countries in specific ways that fit with their educational policies.

In educational terms, the goal of the ELAN initiative is to:

“improve the teaching and learning of basic skills (such as reading, writing and arithmetic) through equipping primary school students with better mastery of French, starting by teaching them in their first language.”¹⁸

Maintaining the learner's first language throughout primary school and enabling transfer from the learner's first language to French are at the heart of the ELAN project.

2.2.1.2 ELAN personnel

ELAN is piloting its approach in 110 schools in Mali, 30 in Burkina Faso and 10 in Niger.

¹⁵ The SIRA initiative, funded by USAID, began in 2016 and ends in 2021.

¹⁶ The ELAN initiative, financed by the Agence française de développement (French Development Agency – AFD) and OIF, started in 2013 – its third phase started in 2020. It is currently being implemented in 12 countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

¹⁷ Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo.

¹⁸ Source: <https://ifef.francophonie.org/node/227>

2.2.1.3 Analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the initiative

The ELAN initiative has a number of strengths that merit consideration in developing bilingual education, while addressing some of its weaknesses to further prove its relevance.

Strengths of this initiative

- + The approach is backed by an international scientific framework.
- + Partners consider the teaching supervision provided to schools to be of high quality.
- + It is a standard approach that can be adapted to any curriculum, as evidenced by its pilot projects in 12 different French-speaking countries.
- + The learning outcomes are considered satisfactory.¹⁹
- + It draws on expertise in L1 to L2 transfer.

Moreover, with a view to expanding bilingualism, ELAN has the advantage of providing varied teaching tools and training modules that can be used in training of trainers programmes.

Weaknesses of this initiative

- There is no consistent evaluation system. According to those interviewed for this study, this is preventing capitalization on achievements under the initiative.
- Disbursement of funds by partners is not regular, resulting in gaps in implementation of the approach.

2.2.2. Bi/plurilingual initiatives in Burkina Faso

The 240 bilingual schools operating in Burkina Faso include those with bilingual initiatives that have completed their pilot phase and have been transferred to the state:

- schools implementing the Ministry of National Education, Literacy and the Promotion of National Languages/Solidar Suisse curriculum (approximately 230 schools)
- schools implementing the Tin Tua curriculum (8 schools)

Of the former Ministry of National Education, Literacy and the Promotion of National Languages/Solidar Suisse bilingual schools, 60 are hosting new bilingual pilot projects:

- schools piloting the ELAN/OIF method (30 schools)²⁰
- other schools piloting the Enfants du Monde quality education programme (30 schools).

2.2.2.1 Summary of the Ministry of National Education, Literacy and the Promotion of National Languages/Solidar Suisse initiative

Solidar Suisse bilingual schools have the following defining features:

- During the first two years of schooling, the local languages are taught subjects and mediums of instruction, while French is only a taught subject.
- Once students have sufficiently mastered French (during the third year), it then becomes the medium of instruction.
- The local language continues to be taught as a subject throughout schooling.
- Bilingual education covers all subjects, not just 'language and communication' courses.
- The entire primary school curriculum is covered in five years in Solidar Suisse schools, compared with six years in mainstream monolingual schools.
- Solidar Suisse offers bilingual education at preschool and secondary level, creating a 'bilingual education continuum'.
- Before the Solidar Suisse schools were transferred to the state, students in bilingual schools were attaining higher grades than those in monolingual French schools.²¹

2.2.2.2 Analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the Ministry of National Education, Literacy and the Promotion of National Languages/Solidar Suisse initiative

Strengths

- + Bilingual basic education is seen as a continuum covering three levels of education: bilingual preschool education,²² bilingual and trilingual primary schools²³ and specialist multilingual secondary schools.²⁴

¹⁹ The results of these evaluations can be found in the country reports.

²⁰ The ELAN initiative is presented in detail in the previous section.

²¹ See details in the report on Burkina Faso.

²² 'Espaces d'Éveil Éducatifs' (bilingual preschool education – 3E).

²³ EPB: bilingual primary schools; EPT: trilingual primary schools (French, Arabic, local languages)

²⁴ CMS: *Collèges Multilingues Spécifiques* (specialist multilingual secondary schools)

- + When bilingual schools are properly monitored and supported, there is a reduction in school dropout and an improvement in students' attainment.
- + The time taken to complete primary school is reduced by at least one year.
- + The child's first language is maintained, alongside French, throughout primary school.
- + There is renewed appreciation of local culture.
- + Students' parents are involved in the schools.

Weaknesses

- The research reports consulted and the actors interviewed for this study indicate that the main weaknesses of the Ministry of National Education, Literacy and the Promotion of National Languages/Solidar Suisse bilingual primary schools are in terms of implementation in recent years (in particular since 2007–2008).
- However, some weaknesses intrinsic to the initiative have also been highlighted. In particular, the L1 is given much less focus than French from the fourth year on.

2.2.2.3 Summary of the Tin Tua initiative

The Tin Tua bilingual primary schools form the other bilingual model taken over by the Government of Burkina Faso in 2007, around the same time as the Solidar Suisse schools.

In addition to the first language becoming a subject from the fourth year onwards in Tin Tua schools, the main difference from the Ministry of National Education, Literacy and the Promotion of National Languages/Solidar Suisse and ELAN approaches is that Tin Tua favours immersion of the learner in the target language (L1 or L2) and bans use of the source language in oral form (except in early learning, reading and writing, where harnessing similarities between the L1 and L2 is encouraged).

2.2.2.4 Analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the Tin Tua initiative

The study did not collect data to evaluate this initiative, and we recommend that longitudinal and comparative studies be conducted to evaluate this methodology and identify strengths and potential areas for improvement.

2.2.2.5 Summary of the Enfants du Monde quality education programme

The programme objectives are to introduce educational methods that promote theoretical and practical ownership of knowledge, to understand and transform the reality in which learners are embedded. These methods are backed by an approach developed in numerous countries over a period of more than 20 years: Pedagogy of Text.

The programme in Burkina Faso is recent: it was launched in 2017.

During our field study, we were unable to gather any opinions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this programme. As with Tin Tua, we recommend that studies be conducted to evaluate this methodology and identify strengths and potential areas for improvement.

2.2.3. Bi/plurilingual initiatives in Mali

The system of bilingual schools managed by the state is supported by two initiatives by technical and financial partners:

- The ELAN project, launched in 2013 by the OIF. This involves 110 schools in Ségou, Mopti, Gao, Ménaka and Bamako, and incorporates four local languages (Bamanankan, Fulfulde, Songhai and Tamasheq).²⁵
- The SIRA initiative, launched in 2016 by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), supports 4,500 primary schools in the southern regions of the country (Koulikoro, Ségou, Sikasso and Bamako), with a focus on Bamanankan.

²⁵ Source: Call for projects launched by Enfants du Monde quality education programme in Burkina Faso.

²⁶ Presented in the previous section.

Œuvre Malienne d'Aide à l'Enfance du Sahel (OMAES), CowaterSogema International and Institut pour l'Éducation Populaire (IEP).

2.2.3.1 Summary of the SIRA initiative

The USAID/Mali SIRA initiative promotes a 'balanced approach',²⁷ aiming to equip students with a set of strategies and techniques to facilitate learning in reading and writing.

The SIRA²⁸ initiative – or 'path to reading'²⁹ – was launched in February 2016. It is receiving 30.5 billion CFA francs of funding from USAID over a five-year period.³⁰

2.2.3.2 Analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the SIRA initiative

Strengths

- + Educational materials, training and supervision are considered valuable by respondents.
- + Regular student evaluation is carried out.
- + Rapid progress is made by students in reading and writing in their first language.³¹
- + A community aspect is included.
- + There is close collaboration with the ministry, civil society and companies.

Weaknesses

- The first language is only introduced as a language of instruction for the first two years of primary school.
- Students going into their third year after two years in a SIRA school feel lost in a very different system (the French monolingual system).
- French is used very little and appears sidelined.
- One dominant language (Bamanankan) appears to be prioritized over the other local languages.

2.2.4 Bi/plurilingual initiatives in Niger

The scenario-based approach/bilingual school system managed by the Government of Niger is supported by several initiatives led by technical and financial partners:

- NECS project (completed in 2019)
- ELAN/OIF³² project
- Concern Worldwide project.

2.2.4.1 Summary of the NECS project

The NECS project is a continuation of another project called IMAGINE (Improve the Education of Girls in Niger) which was implemented in 2008 and interrupted in 2010 following the military coup.

Between 2012 and 2019, NECS covered 183 schools in all eight regions of the country, in two phases:

- NECS (four years)
- NECS+ (2-year extension).³³

The overall goal of the project was to improve access to educational opportunities by strengthening links between schools and community and state institutions. Specifically, it aimed both to improve the reading skills of primary school students and to improve access to quality schooling, especially for girls.

The project focused on the first and second years and involved piloting a new approach to reading and writing based on the use of local languages: the systematic reading approach.

2.2.4.2 Analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the NECS³⁴ project

Strengths

- + There is an innovative approach to teaching reading and writing, with the school curriculum reflecting recent scientific theories and with a strong emphasis on reading.
- + Learning outcomes are considered highly satisfactory overall.

²⁷ An approach that works equally on decoding and encoding – comprehension and production of texts.

²⁸ Selected Integrated Reading Activity.

²⁹ *Sira* means 'road' in Bamanankan; it is a term derived from the Arabic word *sirât*, meaning 'way' or 'path'.

³⁰ Programme implemented by the Education Development Center (EDC) and its partners School-to-School International, Save the Children, Œuvre Malienne d'Aide à l'Enfance au Sahel.

³¹ Details of the evaluations can be found in the country report for Mali.

³² Project described in the previous section.

³³ USAID, Plan International, NECS.

³⁴ NECS: Niger Education and Community Strengthening.

- + A significant volume of reading materials have been produced in four local languages.
- + The approach is being incorporated into the overall reform package.

Weaknesses

- The approach is limited to reading and writing and to the first two years of primary school.
- There is a lack of linkages between learning in the local language and learning in French.
- The materials produced are very expensive.
- There is insufficient ownership of the approach by state institutions.
- Activities have been suspended since June 2019, when the NECS project ended.

2.2.4.3 Summary of the Concern project

The NGO Concern Worldwide Niger has been working in 55 monolingual French schools in the regions of Tahoua, Tillabéri and Diffa for more than five years, introducing the ELAN³⁵ approach to reading and writing in the first two years of primary school.

Despite the quality of the tools produced, this project is of limited use in developing bilingualism, because its tools and methods are limited to reading in the local language, and because it only covers the first two years of primary school. It does indirectly help the transition to French, although this is through its methodology and not linked to the language itself.

2.3. Assessment of the current status of bilingual initiatives in the three countries

This summary of bi/plurilingual initiatives currently being implemented in the three countries shows that the coverage of bilingualism in schools in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger remains dependent on the programmes of technical and financial partners.

Moreover, an analysis of the history of bi/plurilingual pilot projects in these three countries (see country reports) shows that initiatives led by technical and financial partners tend to be interrupted when donors stop funding them. This lack of continuity works against bi/plurilingual education and can lead some parents

and educators (despite being convinced of the benefits of bilingualism at school) to prefer monolingual education in French to bilingual education that may be interrupted when the donors move on.

In addition, in some countries, project management and leadership is left to the initiative of the technical and financial partners, resulting in the same type of bilingual intervention being run in different ways (this is particularly true in Burkina Faso). These sometimes competing ways of operating threaten the clarity and implementation of bi/plurilingual reforms. When several bilingual methodologies are piloted at the same time and are not rigorously evaluated, how can we capitalize on lessons learned? How can we harmonize the programmes and fill the gaps? All these difficulties slow down projects to extend and/or roll out bi/plurilingual education.

Finally, there is the issue of monitoring and financing projects after technical and financial partners have left. In Burkina Faso, evaluations carried out in bilingual schools before and after their transfer to the state showed a considerable drop in the quality of teaching and learning from the year the projects were transferred.

The fact that projects are dependent on support from technical and financial partners, the limitations of the 'project approach' and the lack of harmonization in bilingual practices in the field do not bode well for a wider roll-out, and have the following consequences:

- Many educators are demotivated. When we asked them about their perceptions of bilingual education, some replied that it was "an elephant that had given birth to a mouse" (a great effort with precious little to show for it) or "a beautiful baby that refused to be born" (a great idea that never got off the ground) (Mali).

³⁵The ELAN initiative is presented in detail in the previous section.

- There is frustration among teachers who piloted bilingual projects that were deemed very effective and who suddenly had to change their bilingual method or go back to running their classes using the 'traditional' French monolingual approach.
- There is caution among parents, although they are convinced of the benefits of bilingualism, as they feel that the frequent interruption of these programmes affects their children's schooling too much.
- Some teachers find it difficult to manage these programme changes and to understand in practical terms what is expected of them in the classroom.³⁶

3. Obstacles to implementation of bi/plurilingualism in schools

As previously stated, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger are officially committed to expanding³⁷ (Burkina Faso) or rolling out (Mali and Niger) bi/plurilingual education, as evidenced by the legal and policy frameworks in these three countries. However, those interviewed for the study in all three countries identified many institutional gaps. Table 5 summarizes the institutional weaknesses.

Table 5: Weaknesses in the institutional framework in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger

	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger
Weaknesses in the institutional framework	<p>No explicit language policy.</p> <p>No implementing legislation for the principle of multilingualism stated in the Constitution.</p> <p>Insufficient implementing legislation for the 2007 policy law.</p> <p>Insufficient policy and oversight for bi/plurilingualism, resulting in inadequate ownership by the educational authorities (at central and decentralized levels), parents and communities.</p>	<p>No implementing legislation (decrees) to enforce the legislative guidelines.</p> <p>Failure to properly apply programme planning documents or sectoral policies on bilingual education.</p> <p>No dedicated body to coordinate and steer the bilingual reform.</p>	<p>No explicit language policy.</p> <p>No regulatory documents to provide a framework for multilingual education.</p> <p>No decree to establish the structure of the central administration and the responsibilities of officials.</p> <p>No independent body to scientifically validate the options selected.</p>

In addition, the survey identified other obstacles that are slowing practical implementation of these bi/plurilingual reforms in the classroom.

The analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the various initiatives has highlighted the disadvantages of what could be termed 'pilot' or 'experimental' approaches, which are often limited, particularly in time (limited duration of projects, but also initiatives limited to the first two or three years of primary school).

Where their objectives include supporting the state in implementing bi/plurilingualism, these initiatives only partially succeed in this, mostly by providing educational resources and teacher training. State initiatives are hampered by a lack of planning for language reform in schools and a lack of regulations for implementing bi/plurilingualism in schools.

³⁶ Mignot, Christelle, 'J'apprends si je comprends' : pour une meilleure prise en compte des langues premières des enfants à l'école primaire. Projet de documentaire long métrage et de kit audiovisuel à l'attention des enseignants de classes bi-plurilingues', *Édition des Archives Contemporaines (in press)*.

³⁷ Option currently preferred by the administrative authorities.

The main obstacles identified in the three countries include the following:

1. There is a shortage of educational resources in some languages.
2. There is a shortage of bilingual resources (especially in terms of knowledge transfer from L1 to L2).
3. Where resources do exist, there is a problem distributing them to bilingual schools.
4. Bi/plurilingual teaching is not sufficiently covered in pre- and in-service teacher training.
5. There are problems recruiting and assigning teachers for bilingual classes.
6. There is insufficient close monitoring of teachers in bilingual classes.
7. Initiatives/projects/innovations/pilots implemented to support bilingual education are not sufficiently evaluated to be able to capitalize on lessons learned.
8. There is no monitoring and evaluation system to demonstrate concrete learning outcomes from bilingual programmes.
9. There are obstacles to achieving transfer of powers to local government authorities as part of decentralization programmes.
10. There is no adequate and effective monitoring and support system for the scaling up of national reform.
11. There are insufficient reliable and up-to-date statistical data on bilingual schools.
12. There are no regulations designed to practically manage the implementation of bilingualism in schools.
13. There is no entity responsible for school language planning, steering, monitoring or coordination with other bodies involved in bilingual reform.
14. There is insufficient awareness raising on the benefits of bilingual education based on proven outcomes from bi/plurilingual pilot projects.

In addition, the following is lacking in Burkina Faso:

- applied curricular reform enabling achievement of a harmonized bilingual curriculum at the national level
- a procedure for transferring pilot projects to the state.³⁸

In general, many of these obstacles are primarily due to **the absence of regulations designed to practically manage the various interventions involved in implementing bilingualism.**

The educators interviewed for the study explained that there was no administrative act requiring centralized or decentralized services to apply the laws supporting bi/plurilingualism in schools. This lack of operational capacity considerably hinders the process of expanding and/or rolling out bi/plurilingual education.

4. Recommendations for rolling out or expanding bilingual education

4.1. Establish a targeted action plan for multidimensional planning of the roll-out

Legislative and administrative texts, sectoral policies and strategies for expanding or rolling out bi/plurilingual education have been established, demonstrating a political will to commit to bilingual reform in all three countries. However, this general legal and institutional framework needs practical momentum. It cannot function effectively or deliver results without an action plan based on an objective baseline study, with clear planning of the actions to be undertaken within the various components of the roll-out project.

4.2. Develop and promote a clear language policy for schools

A vital first step is to promote local languages as they are conduits of national cultures. This has been achieved in all three countries.

³⁸The plans to expand some pilot projects that were transferred to the Ministry of National Education seem to have stalled, and the decline in the outcomes achieved by bilingual schools following transfer to the state does not encourage efforts in this direction.

With a view to expanding bilingualism in schools, what is needed now is to streamline educational language policy and make appropriate choices about which local languages to teach, based on locations, language use in these locations, school mapping and the human resources needed to provide this education. This is clearly sensitive, because it concerns the identities and relationships between the various groups that make up societies. However, it is a necessary stage. These policy decisions could be an opportunity to clarify or reframe the status and academic role of the official language, particularly in relation to the local languages taught.

A school language policy must also provide clear guidelines and standards to ensure learning in the mother tongue is an appropriate tool for addressing the learning crisis in all three countries.

This recommendation has as a corollary the need to equip languages with teaching materials/educational resources, and complete this process for others, to make them true vehicles for schooling and to allow the trainer and the teacher to choose appropriate teaching materials. This will require new or strengthened collaboration both with the national academic bodies responsible for local languages (e.g. the Malian Academy of Languages) and, at the regional level, with the Académie Africaine des Langues [African Academy of Languages – ACALAN], which contributes to developing research into African languages and to promoting their use as operating languages in the African Union.

4.3 Introduce or consolidate a governance body for bilingualism with a view to implementing a roll-out strategy

Expansion/roll-out strategies or plans have been drafted as part of programming exercises and/or during curricular reforms (Niger and Mali). These should be supported and monitored by a national or regional governance body, which does not currently exist in any of the three countries.

This body should:

- Define the aims of bilingual education (which remain unclear to most educators) and oversee the achievement or updating of these aims, through evaluation and outcomes analysis.
- Confirm or adjust language choices, particularly at the regional or local level.
- Define the respective roles of the various actors: national and regional leads on bilingualism in schools, local authorities (in the context of decentralization), regional and local school administrators, and technical and financial partners.
- Undertake planning and monitoring of, and potentially make modifications to, the main activities related to implementing bilingualism in schools.
- Address the stumbling blocks or obstacles encountered in the course of the various pilot projects conducted so far in the three countries.

4.4. Establish a budgetary framework and planning to finance an effective roll-out of bilingual education

The roll-out of bilingual education or of curricular reform based on bilingualism must be seen as public policy and must be reflected as such in the state budget. This is an important factor in the sustainability of bilingual reform, as it would avoid the funding risks and uncertainties that arise from the time-limited presence of donors (technical and financial partners). Thus, funding would no longer be dependent on initiatives by external partners but would derive from a country-led initiative, firmly supported by the state.

An essential step is to develop a budgetary framework that synergizes contributions by the state, the local authorities (as part of the decentralization process) and the technical and financial partners. This budgetary framework must include a funding plan, based on scheduling of the actions in the roll-out strategy, along with the stages and components to be specified in financial terms.

4.5. Provide educators with adequate training to meet the requirements of a bi/plurilingual educational system

In all three countries, the studies revealed a number of shortcomings that make training for teachers, trainers and supervisors an operational priority.

The lack of a formalized training policy and a clear strategy to ensure quality training reduces the chances of establishing an adequate training system. Thus, once the prerequisite policies have been established and the roll-out strategy has been developed or readjusted, a training plan and corresponding content will need to be devised for both pre- and in-service training.

Before educators can be trained, all the languages selected for teaching must be properly used, which will require educators to be equipped with teaching materials and resources (see recommendation 4.2.). There also needs to be an established and operational teacher management system that covers both language aspects (languages spoken by the teacher, languages taught in their assigned schools, etc.) and pedagogical aspects (appropriate content).

4.6. Design or adapt teaching materials from a bilingual perspective and ensure adequate distribution

A key issue for roll-out is bilingual design and availability of adequate tools and documentation. However, our studies have unveiled shortcomings in terms of design and provision of pedagogical tools, which threaten the implementation of bilingualism.

All actors therefore need to be provided with quality teaching materials that are tailored to requirements and relevant to the training received, in sufficient quantity and distributed on time.

This material must cover all levels in line with agreed progression, cover the subjects in the programme and meet the needs of all actors: students, teachers and supervisors.

Moreover, textbooks in local languages would benefit from being designed from a bilingual perspective and focusing on teaching in the language of instruction, rather than being a translated reproduction of foreign language textbooks. French textbooks should take into account the principle of linguistic transfer from L1 to L2.

This requires planning educational, technical, financial and logistical aspects in a way that brings together all links in the editorial chain: design, editing, printing, packaging and distribution. As appropriate and depending on the age of the textbook in each of these countries, it is recommended that the textbook either be rewritten (if it has reached its lifespan – on average eight years) or adapted if a pilot version is being reprinted.

4.7. Improve monitoring in schools

Monitoring establishes linkages between training of main actors (teachers, supervisors) and their delivery of expected pedagogical activities in the field. In a context of insufficient or limited use of the capacity building provided to bilingual educators, monitoring is vital to tailor the training framework to needs in the classroom. However, the studies conducted in the three countries have demonstrated insufficient or even no monitoring in some regions or institutions involved in bi/plurilingual pilot projects.

4.8. Develop a strategy, system and tools for evaluating the bilingual reform

It is just as important to evaluate students' learning and teacher performance. However, evaluations are currently mostly conducted under initiatives led by external partners, whereas they should be embedded in the joint framework for bilingual education, in particular as part of a reformed bilingual curriculum.

Evaluations should certainly focus on the intrinsic effectiveness of the features of bilingual education. They should assess student achievement to evaluate how far the objectives of bilingualism are being met and to draw conclusions to inform policy regulations and adjustment.

Projects can be evaluated with reference to the objectives of the bilingual programme, but also with reference to regional standards such as the Programme for the Analysis of Education Systems (PASEC) by the Conference of Ministers of Education of French-Speaking Countries or the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA). This task can be assigned to the governance body for bilingualism.

4.9. Communicate to improve clarity about the effectiveness of bilingual education

The learning outcomes achieved under bilingual education initiatives led by the countries' technical and financial partners demonstrate the educational benefits of this approach. However, the general public seems insufficiently aware of these outcomes. For example, students' families are more aware of shortcomings in the implementation of bi/plurilingualism in schools than they are of the benefits. This is contributing to a negative perception of bilingual education among the population and ultimately hindering or even eroding national ownership of this educational approach.

To change this negative image of bilingual education, communication strategies will need to be developed, underpinned by a language policy and roll-out strategy driven by strong commitment from the highest levels of government.



Conclusion

The introduction of local languages into the education system alongside French is not new in Burkina Faso, Mali or Niger, but it is a fairly recent development. The first bilingual reform in Mali dates back to 1962, while initial reforms were introduced in Burkina Faso from 1979. The first bilingual pilot project in Niger dates back to 1973.

These three countries currently remain committed to bi/plurilingualism in schools. This is demonstrated by the legislative texts advocating the integration of local languages into the educational system, with the aim of expanding bilingual reforms or rolling them out more widely.

However, despite the enormous efforts made by various national and bilateral actors to build on Mali's experience in bilingual education, much remains to be done.

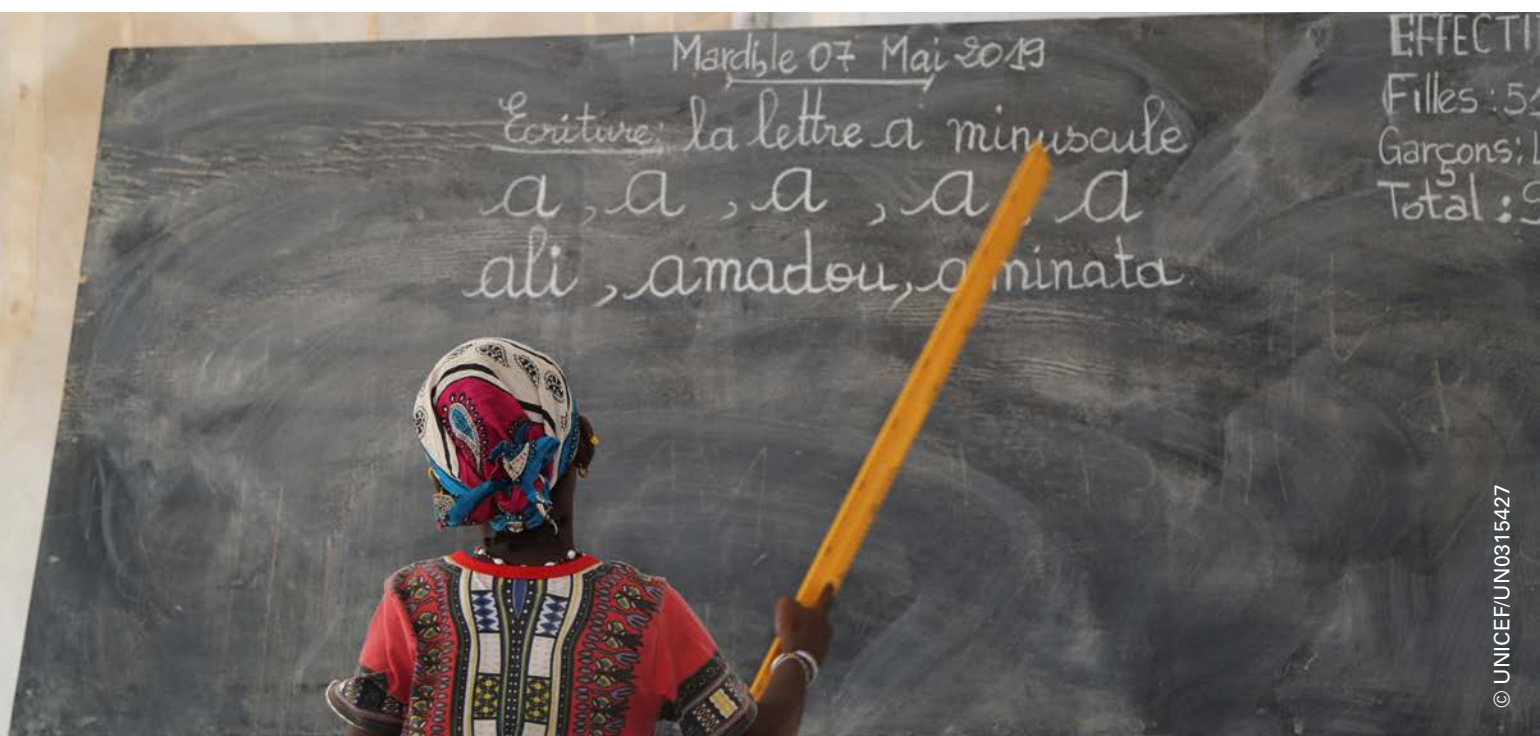
These laws are not supported by implementing legislation designed to plan the roll-out of bi/plurilingual education in practice. Consequently, there is a significant contrast between what is set out in law, on the one hand, and the reality in classrooms, on the other.

The state is also reliant on bilingual initiatives carried out by technical and financial partners. These bring real

added value at the institutional, educational, teaching and community levels, but they have limitations, not least the fact they are time-bound and do not cover all of the country's local languages.

To achieve a wider roll-out of bilingualism in schools, therefore, regulations need to be drafted at the national and regional levels, and a structure must be put in place to organize the various actions related to the implementation of bilingualism in practice. These include actions to train educators, equip languages with teaching materials/educational resources, produce educational and teaching resources for bilingual classes, manage and monitor bilingual class teachers, and evaluate, build on and harmonize bilingual practices.

There is also a need to roll out or improve communication and advocacy campaigns regarding the benefits of a truly bilingual education, targeting the various actors and in particular students' parents, since the study highlighted resistance in this group following the problems with implementing the bilingual reform. This advocacy will be most effective if it draws on objective arguments about the benefits of bilingualism, and if it is based on successful practices and positive outcomes of bilingual education.



Annex: Clarification of operational concepts and themes in bilingualism in schools

The purpose of this terminological and conceptual clarification is to harmonize the terms used, to relate them to the analysis carried out in this study and to see their implications in the recommendations.

These concepts, presented in the form of benchmarks, are also intended to provide guidance to those involved in bilingual education in the three countries.

Multilingualism and plurilingualism

- The term 'multilingualism' refers to the coexistence of several languages or language varieties in a sociocultural, political and institutional environment; it relates to a collective level, that of an entire society or country. These languages have varying geographic, ethnic, and functional reaches (their utility).

- 'Plurilingualism' relates to the language uses of individuals: one or more individuals are plurilingual in a multilingual country. This is the situation in the three countries covered by this study.

- The concept of 'bi/plurilingualism' refers to the point of view of the learner, for whom the school is bilingual. In the classroom, children are exposed successively and/or simultaneously to two languages (signified by the prefix 'bi'): their first or mother tongue and French. However, the children are studying in a school system characterized by the diversity of the learners' languages ('plurilingual').

Bilingualism

The term 'bilingualism' refers to the coexistence of two languages according to the status and functions of these two languages in society or for the individual.

- At the country level, we talk about societal bilingualism (this is deemed official when both languages are official languages).

- At the speaker level, we talk about individual bilingualism (whether the speaker lives in a monolingual, bilingual or plurilingual country). Note: Bilingual individuals may use words or statements from their other language when speaking their first language. This is called 'code-switching' (see below).

Where two languages are used in school, we use the term 'bilingualism in schools'. In the three countries studied, French is added alongside one of the local languages introduced into the education system.

According to Hamers and Blanc, a bilingual education programme is "a system of education in which, at varying times, for varying durations and in varying proportions, simultaneously or consecutively, instruction is delivered in at least two languages, one of which is normally the student's first language."³⁹

In some cases, the language of instruction may be the language most used in the child's environment (rather than the child's first language). Even if this language is, in principle, known to the child, it can pose certain challenges that the teacher will need to take into account.

We also employ the term '**bilingual education**' when both languages are used as mediums of instruction. In some contexts, and at a given stage of the programme, they split the taught subjects (for example, humanities are taught in L1, while the so-called exact sciences are taught in the second language).

The term '**trilingualism in schools**' is used in this study to refer to the situation faced by students in the Franco-Arabic education system, who enter school with a first language (L1) and learn Arabic AND French as second and third languages (L2 and L3), either as taught languages or as mediums of instruction.

³⁹ Hamers, Josiane F. and Michel Blanc, *Bilinguisme et bilinguisme*, P. Mardaga, Brussels, 1983.

Potential benefits of bilingualism (local language/second language)

Many research studies have highlighted the benefits of introducing first languages into schools and the positive impact of this on the quality of learning, including second language learning. This was reiterated by the actors interviewed as part of this study (bilingual education managers, trainers and so on).

Research has highlighted, in particular:

- Bilingual schools offer psychosocial advantages in terms of recognition of the community and family language as an upholder of national and local values.
- There are cognitive advantages in terms of expression and knowledge building in the child's language. This knowledge is useful for learning other languages and non-linguistic learning.
- There are educational advantages: ease of learning, better understanding of the different school subjects, possibility of comparing two linguistic and cultural systems, developing tolerance, etc.

Code-switching

This is a sociolinguistic concept (something which has a social use). It refers to a mixture of two or three linguistic codes (a first language and a second language) used by a bilingual or trilingual speaker in the same conversation, or even in the same sentence, associated with a social and everyday communication situation. It should be noted that words from the foreign language inserted into speech in the first language discourse are not borrowed vocabulary.

What should be the approach to code-switching in the classroom?

Teachers should be attentive to the use of this mode of communication in the classroom. It is imperative that teachers themselves do not use the two languages in a disordered manner. The use of L1 in a second/foreign language session must conform to educational practices aimed at facilitating the transfer from one language to another.

For students, the most important thing at an early stage is to promote language production, even if they switch from one language to another (code-switching). In this

context, the role of teachers will be to get learners to produce the same message in a richer way. The goal is to support learners by reducing potential language and emotional stumbling blocks.

It is worthwhile to rationalize the sociolinguistic phenomenon of code-switching and make use of it for educational purposes. The use of L1 in French sessions depends on the educational roles that can be played by this first language, which is taken into account according to the principle of transfer (see the following for more on the concept of linguistic transfer):

- A metalinguistic role: to explain a linguistic feature or compare two features in the two languages.
- A role in managing school communication, especially during the early period of learning.
- An unblocking role to help students experiencing language insecurity (when students are unable to express themselves in a second/foreign language).

Models for bilingualism in schools

There are two models for bilingualism in schools:

- **Simultaneous bilingualism in school**, when the first language and a foreign language are acquired at the same time.
- **Delayed bilingualism**, when the learning of the foreign language occurs some time after the learning of the first language. This chronological gap varies according to the educational system.

Delayed bilingualism can take various forms.

- **Additive bilingualism** occurs when the learning of a second language does not threaten maintenance of the mother or first language, and when there is an effective transfer of knowledge between the two languages (L1 and L2).

Hamers and Blanc⁴⁰ set out two conditions for the development of additive bilingualism: the child must have learned to manipulate language for complex cognitive activities (both languages are therefore mediums of instruction). These activities often include metalinguistic activities (even elementary reflection on the linguistic functioning of both languages).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Furthermore, both languages must be valued in the child's environment. Psycholinguists also believe that most of the positive impacts of bilingualism have been achieved in this type of acquisition context, where mastery of the second language is achieved without losing mastery of the first language.

- The **late exit transitional model** (also called the 'additive model' in French-speaking countries) is when the transition from L1 as a language of instruction to L2 as an official or foreign language occurs at the end of primary school (fourth and fifth years of schooling). L1 is sometimes maintained as a taught language beyond primary school (in middle and secondary school). This model is designed to promote additive bilingualism, since children have the time needed to reach a good level in both languages.

There is also 'balanced bilingualism', when learners have developed two (or more) languages to a similar level of proficiency or richness.

Many sub-Saharan countries have adopted an approach along these lines. However, it is important to distinguish between intentions and actions. In these countries, this additive model is a goal or an ambition that struggles to become a reality because it requires a full range of human and physical resources for the two languages.

- The **early-exit transitional model** (also known as the 'subtractive model' in French-speaking countries) is when the L2 replaces the L1 in the education system. It is based on the view that the introduction of L1 is purely a way of promoting the acquisition of L2. In this system, L1 is abandoned very quickly, as soon as the conditions for developing L2 seem to have been reached.

- In the '**developmental model' or relay model**', L1 is introduced at the beginning of schooling, but is gradually supplanted by L2 as the medium of instruction, with variations from country to country. The language of instruction also varies by subject (for example, mathematics is taught in French from Year 3 and science from Year 4, while social sciences are taught in the local languages).

- In another model, known as the '**dual model' (or 'two-way model')**, L1 and L2 are treated in exactly the same way. This means that throughout schooling (usually in primary but also in secondary school), both languages receive the same time allocation (50 per cent) and students are assessed from a formative perspective in both languages. This model is the most likely to facilitate balanced bilingualism, and thus to achieve a state where the two languages being mastered by the learner support each other in the learning process (additive bilingualism). The disadvantage of this model is that it requires all human and physical resources to be at the same level in both languages, to an even greater degree than is required in the late exit and development models.

In this study, we found no implementation of a dual model in any of the three countries, but we think it is worthy of note because much of the academic literature and research shows that it is an effective model for achieving the highest levels of bilingualism in children.

Language transfer from L1 to L2

Transfer of learning refers to a situation in which students use knowledge and skills available in their first language from their family and social environment and from what they have learned at school. Language transfer is a particular example of this transfer. Students learn L2 from the language skills built as they acquired the language via L1, both at school (in reading and writing, in speaking, in grammar) and outside school.

The transfer is considered:

- **From the institution's point of view:** as the choice of the year in which French and the corresponding areas (oral, written, and so on) are introduced, the transition from the first language of instruction (L1i) to the second language of instruction (L2i), which depends on the transition models in the various countries (for example, switching to L2i for mathematics in the third year and for science in the fourth year, keeping L1 as a taught language for the rest of the primary school programme, and so on). Some transitional arrangements refer to this as the 'transfer year', giving the concept a narrow meaning.

- **From the students' point of view:** as a cognitive process where the switch from L1 to L2 implies that students will have acquired knowledge and skills in their first language, which will be mobilized as they acquire the second language. Communicative acts have already been learned, alongside ways of doing and learning that are transferable to L2.

- **From the teachers' point of view:** in preparing and delivering their lessons in the second language, teachers can build on what students already know and can do.

The transition to L2 is made via:

- **A positive transfer of knowledge or skills acquired in L1** (for example, a narrative or argumentative structure, a grammatical concept with which the student is familiar in L1). In this case, there are similarities between the two languages (for example, the Latin alphabet used in the African language and in French).

- **A negative transfer generating mistakes** (we talk about interference where, for example, students reproduce the word order and gender used in their first language, although they are different in French).

Taking this transfer into account can lead to faster, more effective learning of French and, conversely, to better learning of L1. This is because there is no need to relearn in one language what has already been worked on in the other: the concept of chronology, reading by associating sounds with letters – these are skills that are internalized in L1 and can be used in L2. The teacher should show the student how these acquisitions can be made in L2.

The teacher will thus need a minimum level of knowledge about the two languages and their cultures to understand what is going on in students' brains when they are acquiring a first language and accessing a second. When training teachers and supervisors on bilingualism in schools, these aspects of content and the corresponding educational processes must be included (see the following for more details on training in bilingualism).

What activities can teachers lead to facilitate transfer?

For the average student, transfer is not inevitable; it does not happen spontaneously. The teacher must facilitate and develop it using two main educational processes:

- Working on simple comparisons without prioritizing languages by highlighting:

- Linguistic and cultural similarities or convergences between the two languages: the same grammatical form, the way of describing an animal and so on.

- Differences that pose obstacles for students who are discovering different linguistic forms specific to L2: in French, this includes, for example, the position of pronouns, a particular spelling rule or the difference between masculine and feminine nouns that does not exist in some African languages.

- Using reformulation from one language to another: for example, the teacher reformulates in French what the student says in L1. In the other direction, the L1 teacher can get students to reflect on linguistic features seen in French to help consolidate learning in L1.

Language education policy

This focuses on managing multilingualism in the country, i.e. the place and functions of local languages and the second language in the education system. It is set out in regulations, the curriculum and official guidelines. Sociolinguistic situations define language planning and adjustments in society and in the bi/plurilingual school system.

The language education policy includes equipping languages with teaching materials/educational resources at two levels:

- The description and orthographic and grammatical codification of the language, and the development of dictionaries and borrowings or neologisms.

- The design of pedagogical tools to be used in teaching as a taught language and as a medium of instruction.

The challenge for some policies is to introduce bi/plurilingual education in highly differentiated and sensitive multilingual contexts.

Language policy must therefore be clearly defined, and it must be devised as a preparatory stage before local languages are introduced into schools.

Planning for bilingualism in schools

The use of local languages in schools must be based on a clear language policy or plan that forms part of the management of a bilingual reform of the education system. This involves analysing and taking into account certain parameters in the choice of languages to be used in schools.

- **Sociolinguistic parameters:**

- demographic and geographic factors (frequency of use by speakers and in a given region)
- use in communication outside the community and at the subregional level.

- **Educational parameters:** its capacity to be used as a language of instruction with appropriate pedagogical tools.

Different steps to consider when planning

- **Preparation of the pilot project**

This early step involves:

- choosing the local languages to be introduced into schools according to language and educational criteria (equipping the language as a medium of instruction) and a criterion of the extent to which it is used
- advocating the introduction of local languages, using an updated argument that takes into account the successes and failures of bilingual pilot projects
- identifying a sample set of schools for the pilot project: these can be selected based on a previously conducted sociolinguistic survey mapping the schools in the pilot project
- preparing the pedagogical tools and planning appropriate training
- ensuring the necessary funding.

- **The pilot project**

The pilot project covers various aspects:

- delivering pedagogical tools to the training centres and schools included in the sample set
- training of actors
- field monitoring
- financial management of the various components
- evaluation of the pilot project followed by a regulation.

- **Expansion**

This depends on the evaluation of the pilot project and the regulation covering the tools and the system.

It requires appropriate planning, including:

- analysing the evaluation of the pilot project
- planning how the initiative will be expanded (by language, by region, by level)
- defining the sample
- preparing additional teaching tools
- organizing training for actors
- continuing and updating advocacy efforts
- ensuring that financial management is consistent with contributions from technical and financial partners.

- **Roll-out**

This depends on the evaluation of the expansion and also requires regulation of the tools and the system.

It requires the following planning:

- selecting the procedures for the roll-out (stages by region, by year, etc.)
- preparing additional tools and training
- planning funding, perhaps by seeking other technical and financial partners
- planning an interim evaluation.

Pre- and in-service training in the field of bilingualism in schools

An important factor in the successful implementation of bilingualism in schools is the training of the main actors. However, what is often prescribed in training programmes is either content that is not appropriate for bilingual education, or training that is compartmentalized and separated in the two different languages or in their corresponding teaching.

Training in bilingualism should therefore be aimed at the following four audiences, with differentiated content:

- those responsible for managing bilingualism in education
- those designing the bilingual curriculum
- trainers
- teachers.

This implies a pyramid training model.

Those responsible for managing bilingualism

The goal here is to train these managers to develop contextualized language education policies and to plan bilingual pilot projects.

The topics that should feature include:

- the most effective models of bilingualism in schools, based on current research
- how to advocate for bilingual education and the need to update this advocacy as pilot projects are run and initiatives are rolled out
- planning and management of a bilingual reform
- financial management of the programme
- the types of partnerships to be established in the field of bilingualism.

Bilingual curriculum designers

Bilingual curriculum and textbook/guide designers need training in the following areas:

- the institutional and sociolinguistic aspects of language teaching in the relevant country
- the status and functions of the languages (especially French) for which they will design the teaching content
- the development of a reference document setting out the bilingual competencies and the language and intercultural profile of a bilingual student (the bilingual competency framework developed by ELAN could be a source of inspiration)
- the clarification and implementation of convergence approaches (linguistic and methodological) to be taken into account when designing a curriculum or a textbook
- techniques for contextualizing tools with reference to regional and local language and data

- how to take account of the language of instruction when developing the curriculum and the most appropriate educational approaches for promoting and facilitating transfer in situations where L1 and French (L2) are mediums of instruction in the curriculum,.

Trainers of trainers (pre- and in-service training)

Trainers have two complementary roles: training teachers in bilingualism and providing close monitoring in schools, after the training sessions (in the case of in-service training) and during internships (in the case of pre-service training).

• To enable them to train teachers (or teacher trainees), the following training content could be offered, assuming that they have a sufficient command of French and the local language, the focus of training:

- the language and educational profile and skills to be acquired by teachers teaching a local language or French, or both at the same time
- an overview of institutional and sociolinguistic data (for French and local languages in schools) in the country
- the foundations of bi/plurilingualism teaching: guidelines and practices for teaching a local language and a second language (French), language transfer, etc
- examples of activities and materials that can be offered to teachers or student-teachers to train them on how to develop lesson plans and units of study according to bi/plurilingual approaches to teaching.

• To monitor teachers, trainers will need training in the following areas:

- planning field visits
- developing observation grids for a bilingual class
- using these observations to offer feedback and support where regulation or remedial help is required
- writing follow-up reports and using these to offer continuous support.

Teachers

Teachers play an important role in the dissemination of bilingual teaching practices. Ahead of the training courses, a set of professional competencies must be defined. In terms of bilingualism in schools, the following skills can be included:

- Master L1/French and describe them linguistically.

- Describe, in a simplified way, the context of bilingual education in the country.
- Explain the basic concepts of bilingualism in schools: bilingual education, language status, transfer, basic comparisons of two languages (local language/French).
- Argue for bilingual education (useful when in contact with parents).
- Education supervisors and teachers should be able to understand the arguments often put forward against the use of African languages in schools and to counter them with convincing arguments informed by the results of international research and especially by good practices in the country.
- Explain the focus of the national bilingual education programme.
- Prepare learning and evaluation lessons and units of study in L1, from a bilingual perspective (oral, reading and writing, grammar and vocabulary).
- Implementing these in the classroom.
- Take into account the local language when teaching French and vice versa.
- Evaluate students' performance in French and provide relevant remedial help, taking into account, in particular, the first language and first-language learning.

Training sessions will be incorporated into the institutional framework of language education training in the country, and will be appropriately planned. Larger-scale training schemes using multiplier tools should be considered, combining in-person sessions, tutoring and distance learning.



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