Moving towards bilingual education in Mali:

bridging policy and practice for... improved reading instruction
At the Ministry of Education, Literacy, and National Languages (MEALN) in Mali:

- The Planning and Statistics Unit (CPS)
- The Unit for Support to Decentralisation (CADDE)
- The Directorates of Pedagogy (DNP)
- The Directorate of Basic Education (DNEF)

Colleagues deserving special mention:

- M. Abou DIARRA (MEALN/CADDE)
- Dr. Youssouf M. HAIDARA (USAID/PHARE)
- Aude Vescovo DIARRA (USAID/PHARE)
Plurilingual Instruction in Mali

Highly favorable policy environment:

- 1979 - 1st schools teaching in national language
- 1987 - «Pédagogie convergente»
- 1999 - Bilingual instruction in 13 languages
- By 2005 - Bilingual instruction introduced in 2550 public schools

In 2009-2010, all Malian schools should have been offering bilingual instruction.
Study Objectives

- Establish a linguistic mapping for the administrative region of Mopti
- Examine the material available for teaching the bilingual curriculum
- Determine whether the teachers in that region were trained/prepared to teach the bilingual curriculum
- Determine whether the teacher training institutes in those regions were able to prepare teachers to teach in national languages
- Evaluate the degree of implementation of the bilingual curriculum in the schools
- Develop recommendations to better support that implementation
Study Sample and Implementation

- The administrative region of Mopti
- 12 teams active for 3 weeks ($25 thousand)
- 949 schools (96% of targeted schools)
- 97% of these schools were geo-referenced
- 3 focus groups per school in each of the 949 schools
- 2846 teachers (out of 3287, or 87%)
- 2 teacher training colleges (IFM), one in Koro, the other in Sevaré
- 10 teacher training professors, 333 student teachers
Perceptions that Surfaced During Design

• Languages map with precision to a certain geographic area of a country.

• It is important for the system to tailor instruction to a child’s *mother* tongue.

• A system can not (or should not) offer bilingual instruction until sufficient resources exist in all languages concerned.

• If a school is listed in our database as teaching in a given language, then it is teaching in that language.

• If a teacher speaks a language, he/she is confident that he/she can teach that language.

• Adults are the best source of information about languages spoken or used by children.
Majority Language and Language in Common

- A majority language is the language spoken by the majority of the members of a group.
- A common language is a language that children of different ethnic groups use together to communicate.

Teachers’ mother tongue and language best spoken by that teacher

Teaching in national language and instruction of the national language
LINGUISTIC DEMAND IN THE SCHOOLS OF MOPTI

Mapping language Use in the Region
Linguistic Demand in the Mopti Region

- In 68% of the region’s schools, the children speak the same language (592 of 869 schools for which student linguistic data was available).

- In these **homogeneous** schools, determining the language of instruction is not a problem.

- In the other schools, **heterogeneous** schools, how can a ministry determine what should be the language of instruction?
Homogeneous (592) and Heterogeneous (277)
Choosing the Language of Instruction

- This study had four sources of information for determining students’ common language:
  - Languages spoken by the students (collected by the MEALN/CPS)
  - The directors’ input on his/her students’ language in common
  - The teachers’ input on his/her language in common
  - The information from the focus groups with the students

- In 95% of the cases, the different sources of data are consistent.
- In 3% of the cases, they are not; in this scenario, the focus group data is selected
- In 2% of the cases the common language values were missing (ND)
Common Language - All Schools (949)
For the entire region, 4 languages enable the ministry to teach the bilingual curriculum in over 90% of the schools: Dogon, Peul, Bambara and Bozo.

How can the roles of decentralized structures and centralized ministry offices be brought into balance to meet language demand in a region such as Mopti?
THE SUPPLY SIDE OF THE EQUATION

Studying in National Languages in the Mopti Region
How Many Schools Were Teaching in National Language?

228 of the 949 schools surveyed were actually teaching in national language, according to the information provided by their directors.

This is only 24% of the schools in the region.
Matching Demand to Supply: Curriculum

• 91% of the 228 écoles teaching in national language were teaching in the language identified as the language in common.

• The 9% of schools where this was not the case encompassed all of the major groups (Dogon, Peul, Bambara, Bozo, Songhai).

• Data from directors (official information) and teachers was not always coherent: according to teacher data, 24% of the schools where the common language was the stated language of instruction were not offering a single national language class.
Matching Demand to Supply: Bilingual Teaching Materials

- Schools had access to some national language materials.

- According to data collected, which was somewhat problematic:
  - On average, schools possessed 102 to 150 manuals in national languages, for all subjects and class levels; (average school has 230 students);
  - The levels with the fewest materials were levels 2 and 3;
  - If it is considered that schools not having responded to the questions on manuals do not possess any, a manual is shared, on average, by 2,1 students.
Matching Demand to Supply: Pre-Service Teacher Preparation

- 2 teacher training colleges surveyed

- Neither had enough teacher training college professors competent to teach in national languages.

- Only Bambara was taught in the Sevare IFM, although this is not the most prevalent language in common in the majority of schools surveyed.

- Only 1 to 2 hours a week were accorded in each institute to preparing prospective teachers to work in national languages in their classrooms.
Matching Demand to Supply: In-Service Teacher Preparation

- 81% of teachers using the bilingual curriculum were trained to teach in the «language in common» of their school.

- Just 52.4% were trained to teach both in the target common language *and at the level at which they were teaching*.

- 19% of teachers in bilingual classrooms had **no training** for teaching in any national language.
• 64% of teachers working in national language said that the target national language in their school was the one they spoke the best.
Matching Demand to Supply: The Bottom Line

We examined the «match » between demand and supply in relation to:

- the program of study of each of the schools surveyed
- availability of materials in national languages
- the fit between the language of instruction and the language in common of the students
- the effective use of the bilingual curriculum in the schools
- teachers’ competencies in national languages
- teachers’ preparation for teaching in national languages

1% of the 945 schools in the region can be said to offer: bilingual instruction in the most appropriate language for their student population and according to the curriculum from grades one to six, taught by a teacher trained and prepared for this task.
MEALN Conclusions about Supply and Demand

- In Mali, demand far outstrips the supply of bilingual instruction founded on solid teacher professional development programs and availability of materials.

- In other words, the implementation of the bilingual curriculum has been partial at best.

- The lack of attention to teacher preparation is a main cause of this demand-supply imbalance.
Which Brings Us Back to Reading and Writing...

More than 83% of 2nd graders tested in a national EGRA sample in 2009 in six languages were unable to read a single word, in any language.
## Summary of Findings and Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDY OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>RESULT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish a linguistic mapping for the administrative region of Mopti.</td>
<td>➢ Mapping established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examine the material available for teaching the bilingual curriculum.</td>
<td>➢ Material somewhat available, but not necessarily in the right languages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine whether the teachers in that region were trained/prepared to teach the bilingual curriculum.</td>
<td>➢ Teachers not sufficiently trained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine whether the teacher training institutes in those regions were able to prepare teachers to teach in national languages.</td>
<td>➢ Teacher training colleges not sufficiently equipped to prepare teachers for teaching in national languages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate the degree of implementation of the bilingual curriculum in the schools.</td>
<td>➢ The implementation is partial at best.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop recommendations to better support that implementation.</td>
<td>➢ Recommendations developed; see next slide.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Selected Study Recommendations

• Choose the language in common as a language of instruction in a bilingual school.

• Integrate data collection on the «language in common » in the annual statistics and planning exercises undertaken by the CPS.

• Use GPS data for school language mapping across the entire nation of Mali.

• Create pre-service programs tailored to facilitate bilingual instruction.

• Match the linguistic abilities of IFM professors and prospective and current teachers to the language needs revealed through the school mapping.

• Conduct regular updates of the degree of implementation of the bilingual curriculum.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSUMPTION</th>
<th>INSIGHT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Languages map with precision to a certain geographic area of a country.</td>
<td>Not always. Visit the school in person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important for the system to tailor instruction to a child’s <em>mother</em> tongue.</td>
<td>Untrue and sometimes impossible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A system can not (or should not) offer bilingual instruction until sufficient resources exist in all languages concerned.</td>
<td>Untrue. In most areas, a few languages will distinguish themselves as frequently used common languages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If our school is listed in a database as teaching in a given language, then we are teaching in that language.</td>
<td>Untrue. What a school is listed as doing on paper and what it is doing in practice may not at all be similar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a teacher speaks a language, he/she is confident that he/she can teach that language.</td>
<td>Untrue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults are the best source of information about languages spoken or used by children.</td>
<td>Not always. Discrepancies in almost 10% of the schools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thoughts to Inform Future Practice

Adopting a « language in common » perspective and a demand-supply framework while conducting on-site language mapping can help a ministry and its donors:

• Identify high density languages for short-term, intensive resource allocation;

• Demystify and de-intensify the debates about language supremacy within the context of the school system;

• Validate children’s inherent linguistic abilities, which are never limited to only one language;

• Provide the systemic focus needed to address cross-language challenges in preparing teachers and creating materials for improved reading and writing instruction.
Aw Initié !

Nous vous remercions !