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## UNESCO policy decision on multilingualism

European Journal of Language Policy, Volume 6, Issue 2, Autumn 2014,  
pp. 219-221 (Article)

Published by Liverpool University Press



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# Interventions

## UNESCO policy decision on multilingualism

At the 194th meeting of its Executive Board,<sup>1</sup> meeting in Paris on 14th April 2014, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) passed the following decision on multilingualism.

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Item 29 Language teaching in education systems (194 EX/29 and 194 EX/29 Add.)

20. After considering this item, the Programme and External Relations Commission recommended that the Executive Board adopt the following draft decision:

The Executive Board,

1. Considering that multilingualism contributes to achieving the attainment of the objectives set out in the Charter of the United Nations and the Constitution of UNESCO, fostering dialogue and mutual understanding, the spirit of tolerance, respect for identities and cultures and cooperation among nations, and that education plays a fundamental role in achieving these objectives,
2. Acknowledging that the needs of a multilingual and multicultural world can only be met by substantially increasing the ability of individuals to communicate with each other, beyond linguistic and cultural boundaries, and that this objective requires the implementation of ambitious and proactive language and educational policies,
3. Recalling the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of 2 November 2001 that highlights the importance of “encouraging linguistic diversity [...] at all levels of education, wherever possible, and fostering the learning of several languages from the earliest age” as well

1. UNESCO Document 194/EX 35, pp. 18–20. The original is in English. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002274/227451e.pdf> [accessed 16 July 2014].

as “promoting through education an awareness of the positive value of cultural diversity and improving to this end both curriculum design and teacher education”,

4. Also recalling the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions of 20 October 2005, adopted by UNESCO, which states that “linguistic diversity is a fundamental element of cultural diversity”, and reaffirms “the fundamental role that education plays in the protection and promotion of cultural expressions”,
5. Recalling 30 C/Resolution 12 of the General Conference entitled “Implementation of a language policy for the world based on multilingualism” and taking into consideration the specific mission that has been entrusted to UNESCO, within the United Nations system, of fostering peace, economic, cultural and individual development through cooperation, education and the promotion of cultural and linguistic pluralism, reaffirms the following principles and decides as follows:
6. Linguistic diversity is a common good of humankind. It falls primarily to education to provide the broadest possible access to several languages;
7. Learning and mastering several languages develops intercultural understanding and the spirit of tolerance. This contributes to the economic, social and cultural development of societies by promoting exchanges, cooperation and international mobility. They should be made available to all categories of the population, especially the younger generations;
8. Calls for additional efforts to implement educational policies promoting multilingualism by diversifying and raising awareness of the range of languages taught in appropriate educational establishments, encouraging both children and parents to learn several languages and enhancing students’ language skills;
9. Encourages Member States to take the appropriate steps to promote the teaching of mother-tongue languages;
10. Invites Member States to engage in an effort to promote the teaching of at least two languages in addition to the main language of instruction within their respective educational system;
11. Encourages Member States to work for improving the quality of the linguistic education including through: training of language teachers; developing teaching materials; promoting the exchanges between the education systems of different States; and encouraging the use of digital technologies in the training of language teachers and students;

12. Invites Member States to endeavour to further develop existing indicators for the measuring, certification and mutual recognition of language levels, in order to facilitate educational and professional mobility, particularly among younger generations;
13. Encourages Member States to promote the safeguarding and enhancement of linguistic heritage by promoting the teaching and the use of indigenous languages, where they exist.