



# DTE - DC - INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

## FURTHER READING

### THE UN AND UNESCO'S VIEW

An indigenous or community language is the language that nurtures the child in the early years of his or her life. The United Nations (UN) actively supports the preservation and revitalisation of indigenous languages, recognising their critical role in cultural identity and diversity. The UN has, consequently declared an 'International Decade of Indigenous Languages' from 2022 to 2032 to focus global efforts on this issue. Previously, 2019 was designated as the 'International Year of Indigenous Languages' by the UN General Assembly to raise awareness about the urgency of protecting these languages.

Furthermore, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) underscores the importance of educating children in their mother tongue because children are more likely to enroll and succeed in school if they are instructed in the language they best understand. Such a language enables them to transition smoothly to a second language such as English. In addition, UNESCO notes that an education that is packaged in a language which the child does not understand is simply difficult for the child.

The UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, (2016) asserts that everyone has a right to learn in their own language. Hence, indigenous languages are a channel for enhancing learning outcomes as well as social emotional development. Nonetheless, 40% of the world's population cannot access education in a language they speak or understand.

According to the UNESCO Institute report (UIS, 2017), there are over 190 languages that are either extinct or endangered. This explains the growing global recognition of indigenous knowledge systems, and the hope that indigenous languages will thrive and spread in spoken and written forms.

This calls for the need to begin instruction, from pre-primary to Grade 3, in a language children are familiar with. This facilitates learning of concepts, skills and attitudes better. As learners sing songs and recite poems in their familiar languages, it makes learning fun, thereby enhancing retention in school and transition to the next grades. Use of a language other than the one learners speak in class hinders learning especially for children from poverty-stricken families.