

EDITORIAL—SPECIAL ISSUE

## Language-in-Education-Policies for Sustainable Development

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### Introduction

The inspiration for this Special Issue emerged at the Comparative International Education Society conference in Vancouver, Canada during a meeting with Professor Steve Azaiki, the Editor-in-Chief of the ISCES Journal. As part of the CIES-Language Issue SIG, we discussed the opportunity to publish some papers delivered at previous meetings of the CIES in sessions organized by the Language Issues SIG. The contributions to this Special Issue demonstrate the linkages between Language-in-Education-Policies for Sustainable Development in Africa and elsewhere. The authors' papers reflect the increasing awareness that language is central to all education and therefore that what languages are used and how they are used is an essential consideration in quality education for sustainable personal, community and national development. The key contributions of the seven papers include:

**1) The Use of Local Languages and the Context of Learning in African Education as a Human Right.** *Zehlia Babaci-Wilhite and Sam Mchombo of University of California-Berkeley* push the boundaries of the continued debate against the use of colonial languages (English, French and Portuguese) as the predominant languages of instruction in sub-Saharan Africa long after the putative end of colonialism. Babaci-Wilhite and Mchombo are pointing out that the use of languages not known by children or in many cases by teachers constitutes a restriction of their right not only to their identity, but also to a quality education. They argue that the right to quality education cannot be assured in Africa without much greater reliance on learners' mother tongues.

**2) The Effects of Using Digital Technology on Language Anxiety with Japanese Adult ELLs.** *Khalil Homsy of University of San Francisco* takes us to the issue of the compulsory learning of English as a foreign Language by speakers of a dominant

national language, Japanese, from the learning of non-dominant heritage languages in Africa in competition with an internationally dominant language whether English or French. Homsí examines how need to maintain status in front of the group and the resulting performance anxiety might inhibit learning and whether the use of technology as a learning aide can reduce anxiety and promote learning.

**3) The diversity dimension in policy: Examining perspectives of Indigenous youth in Bolivia.** *Martina Arnal of University of Minnesota* continues the discussion introduced by Babaci-Wilhite and Mchombo on linguistic rights in education by examining the case of rural indigenous youth in Bolivia who in recent years have been able to experience a shift from colonial to decolonizing education. Arnal highlights the complexity in a decolonizing Bolivia of the relationship between languages, culture and the controversial balance of identities based on its multiple indigenous languages and a more broadly-based hybrid consciousness, a Spanish-based *meztizaje*.

**4) Teaching Anglo-American Academic Writing and Intercultural Rhetoric: A Grounded Theory Study of Practice in Ontario Secondary Schools.** *Amir Kalan, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of University of Toronto* explores a little understood aspect of second language learning, the interplay between first language and second language rhetoric as understood by teachers who are speakers of the second language of learners who, while unaware of details of their students' "mother rhetorics" seek to accord them a place in their students' learning as a valued and valuable resource.

**5) Heritage Language Instruction: Student Motivation and Curriculum.** *Veronika Rozhenkova of University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)* examines the experience of students who are learning their own heritage language at university together with foreign language learners. What motivates this little-studied group to take up their heritage language at this later age and how they differ from more typical foreign language learners is the intriguing focus of this study, which parallels the case of students who have not acquired the community language and are participating in language revitalizing initiatives aimed at reversing language shift.

**6) Complexities of South-African-Chinese Educational Collaboration: Decolonising or Recolonising?** *Brad D. Washington, of University of San Francisco* provides an overview of educational policy in South Africa and China, and in particular, the tension between their economic, political and educational collaboration, raising the interesting question of the effect on the learning in school of South Africa's multiple indigenous languages of the entry of Mandarin as a Foreign Language under Chinese government sponsorship into the South African curriculum.

**7) Teacher Education and Community Based Support for Students with Disabilities,** *Catherine Lipson of University of California, Berkeley* argues that teacher education and professional development programs have struggled to prepared qualified teachers to support learners with disabilities within multilingual communities worldwide. She explains the challenges encountered when providing special educa-

tion services for students from diverse language communities, using examples from several different regions. She shows evidence provided by examples from native Yup'ik areas of Alaska, bilingual communities in San Diego, CA, and multilingual communities in South Africa with implications for practice that include the benefits of learning from and building upon insights from teachers working within developing countries and the effectiveness of “bilingual interventions for children with communication disorders”.

**Our closing statement** with this special issue argues that insuring quality education in education not only in Africa but elsewhere in the world – Japan, China, Bolivia, USA, Canada, Russia requires extensive case studies that link theory and practices in a comparative framework. The contributions of this Special Issue form a basis for a reevaluation of education policies, emphasizing the richness of languages and culture, inclusive education and the aim of realizing social justice. Following Charles Taylor, we see language not simply as a neutral instrument within a society of atomistic individuals that can be picked up or changed at will according to purely utilitarian considerations, but view language and language practices as constitutive of individual and group identities, whose inclusion or exclusion therefore is not properly a simple technical matter for experts but a decision of monumental consequence for students, families and communities. The contributions review and assess the challenges and the consequences of current educational language policies for quality learning as well as underlining the importance of human rights, including language rights, in education, drawing on theories addressing formal and informal education, local versus global education, education for self-reliance, development and democracy.