

The Use of African Languages and the Context of Learning in Education

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Abstract

The continued use of English, French and Portuguese for educational purposes in Africa monopolizes the control of national educational policies and goals. This article explores the constraints of these linguistic choices through the cultural agency of the United Nations report issued end of January 2014 about falling education standards in the world. The report pointed out that a quarter of a billion children worldwide are failing to learn basic reading and math skills in an education crisis that costs governments \$129 billion annually. The report made a far more dismal observation about education in sub-Saharan Africa. For that region the report noted that four in 10 African children 'cannot read a sentence'. This article involves an extensive review of theory and practices regarding the consequences of local languages in school for learning in order to explore the relationship between language choices and the context of learning. After several field visits over a period of many years, involving observation in classrooms and interviews, the findings examine how the use of local language affects the learning in Africa. The study finds that the use of colonial languages as languages of schooling, has been influenced by the still powerful notion throughout Africa that learning in a foreign language will promote development and modernization. Local languages and local curriculum need to be valued and children need to be prepared in order to be reflective, critical, knowledgeable and mobile in the world, which will support African development.

Keywords: Local languages, languages of instruction, Context of learning, African education, Linguistic choices, Educational policies

Introduction

The Western conception of education has dominated education theories and practices worldwide. In Africa, the Western approach conflicts with a long tradition in which children learned community knowledge and history through informal learning with adults in their community. The imposition of a Western-shaped curriculum, using a hegemonic alien language is at odds with African learning traditions (Babaci-Wilhite et al, 2012a). The focus on literacy as the crucial aspect of education has, unwittingly, contributed to degrading African indigenous knowledge systems, to say nothing of the use of African languages (Mchombo, 2014). The problem arose from the implementation of literacy as central to formal education in Africa, against the background of colonialism. The continued use of English, French and Portuguese for educational purposes in Africa monopolizes the control of national educational policies and goals. This article explores the need to incorporate local

learning and a local language of instruction (LoI) within local curriculum in Africa.

In January 2014 the cultural agency of the United Nations issued a report about falling education standards in the world. The report pointed out that a quarter of a billion children worldwide are failing to learn basic reading and mathematics skills in an education crisis that costs governments \$129 billion annually. The report made a far more dismal observation about education in sub-Saharan Africa. For that region the report noted that four out of ten African children ‘cannot read a sentence’. In this article, we argue that the prevalence of policies that impose the use of foreign languages as LoI in Africa undermine progress in learning. Foreign languages should be taught as foreign languages for mobility. Local languages and local curriculum need to be valued and children need to be prepared in order to be reflective, critical, knowledgeable and mobile in the world.

Local languages and local knowledge in schooling

At the onset of independence, African leaders had not only reviewed and rejected the logic or rationale of colonialism, but they also made efforts to re-assert the centrality of their languages and cultures to their societies. The linguistic plurality and diverse ethnicity of African countries is a topic that has received much commentary (Mazrui & Mazrui, 1998), and has led to different strategies for the adoption of languages as national or official. The most celebrated is the story of Kiswahili spread as trade and commerce made inroads into the East African interior from the coastal areas. Kiswahili gained the status of a *lingua franca* thus, with political backing, was poised for promotion to the status of national language (Brock-Utne, 2000), also one of the official languages of Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda, as well as the African Union. Kiswahili became the LoI in primary schools under the leadership of the late Julius Nyerere, the first president of Tanzania. Nyerere was elected President of Tanzania in 1962 and retained the office until his retirement in 1985. He was called Mwalimu, since he was a well-respected teacher with a strong vision of education and social action. One of the key objectives of President Nyerere’s development strategy for Tanzania was to ensure that basic social services were available equitably to all members of society. Nyerere was the first Tanzanian to study at a British university and to obtain a university degree outside Africa. He questioned the concept of schooling and understood that colonialism had based the schooling systems in their colonies on “western” educational curricula and concepts. His idea was to rethink the idea of basic schooling in an African context. The collectivisation of agriculture, villagisation (Ujamaa) was a part of his political vision and incorporated his educational philosophy for Tanzania. Ujamaa really means “familyhood” and can be translated as African socialism or socialism built on African roots. He wanted the whole nation to live as a family and to work together towards a common objective. He instituted a unique blend of socialism and a communal-based life (Nyerere, 1967). This vision was set out in the Arusha Declaration of 1967 with his view of Education for Self Reliance (ESR). According to Nyerere, knowledge should help citizens to achieve respect and freedom. But which kinds of knowledge do we recognize as important in the society? Nyerere believed that various forms for local knowledge were important and that the classical, European style education that had been instituted by the British did not account for this (Nyerere, 1967). In the educa-

tion sector, his new goals for education were translated into the 1974 Universal Primary Education Movement: to make primary education universally available, compulsory and to provide free of cost to users to ensure it reached the poorest segments of the population (URT, 2009).

The situation was decidedly different in the neighboring country of Malawi. There, Chichewa, a dialectal variant of Chinyanja, was elevated to national language because it was the language of President Kamuzu Banda's ethnic group, the Chewa (Mchombo, 1998a, 1998b). English retained the status of official language. Post-apartheid South Africa, in contrast to those two cases, addressed the language issue by declaring eleven official languages, nine African languages from its nine provinces, plus English and Afrikaans (Roy-Campbell, 2006, Desai, 2006). The national language policies of most of the other countries fall somewhere in between, with the colonial languages largely retained as official languages.

With regard to language in education policy, there has not been much shift from the use of the colonial languages, French, Portuguese and, especially, English, as the LoI. This was retained despite putative difficulty with the language. Recognition of problems with comprehension of English texts became evident when, in the early 1960s, Longman Publishing Company issued simplified versions of English literary works for non-native readers. The preface to the initial releases in the Longman Simplified English Series, explaining the rationale for the series, opened with a rather blunt statement. It said something along the following lines:

English books are written for the English, those who have spoken English since they began to speak, and have read English since they began to read. They are not written for the bilingual foreigner.

The preface remarked, further, that the foreigner would not appreciate the content due to lack of proficiency in the language emanating from inability to handle the complexities of English grammar accompanied by severe limitations in knowledge of English lexis. The simplified series tried to make the material accessible to the said foreigners. With regard to the content of the curriculum there were minor adjustments that did not radically alter the existing syllabuses. In Zambia, the move was to reform the educational program so that education could be instrumental to the development of the country. The program that was enunciated was that of Education for Development (Banda, 2008).

The enterprise of educational reform in Africa has been two-pronged. On the one hand, there is the question of LoI or, rather, whether the use of foreign, colonial languages remains defensible in the education of African children and youth. Secondly, there is the issue of content. What should the curricula consist of and to what extent, and how, should African cultures and African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS) be incorporated? The issues constitute part of the narrative about democratic practice and the institution of basic rights in education (see Babaci-Wilhite, 2015).

Language in the African context of learning

The advent of the written representation of language profoundly affected humans' ability to preserve knowledge. It is easy to gain access to the system of beliefs

that constituted Greek mythology because of the written records that have survived. Indeed, some of the major “modern day” religions such as Christianity and Islam, like much of knowledge in science and the humanities, owe their accessibility and diffusion to their preservation in the written form. The current state of knowledge in the domains of history, culture, legends, religious beliefs, scientific developments and technological advancement, is dutifully facilitated by the availability of the information in the form of written material.

Unfortunately, this has sometimes led to an unwarranted conflation of knowledge acquisition with literacy. Furthermore, to the extent that knowledge and its acquisition are identified with education in general. The inevitable conclusion is that education is to be identified with literacy and the acquisition of the knowledge represented in mainly written forms. This conclusion is unfortunate, especially for education in Africa. The written representation of language is but one medium. There is a crucial distinction between language and medium (Abercrombie, 1967). Language resides in the patterns that the sounds or the markings on paper or variants thereof represent. Those sounds or markings constitute the mediums for linguistic representation. They are different, and they appeal to different cognitive skills for production, perception and processing. Every human system of communication has manifested itself in the phonetic form. Only some forms for human communications have had writing systems or orthographic conventions developed for them. In Africa, while some languages had been represented in written form too (Prah, 2008), most of sub-Saharan Africa remains preliterate. Representation in the written form is laborious and demands the expending of much time and energy. Still, knowledge is independent of the medium of knowledge acquisition and, while it may be facilitated by the permanence that the written form represents, it is not crucially dependent on or determined by, that medium (Bruce, 2013). Just as linguists distinguish between language and medium, there is a distinction between form and content with the usual observation that the connection between the two is indirect, mediated by various rules or principles, collectively referred to as “grammar”. The study of grammatical structure has been central to linguistic investigation and linguistic theory in recent linguistic scholarship (Chomsky, 1981; Bresnan, 2001; Mchombo, 2004).

The unfortunate aspect of this conception of education, where it is identified with literacy, is that it has relegated the oral transmission of knowledge, and the education that is imparted in that format, to the status of inferior or non-existent. The knowledge systems that are transmitted through oral presentation, lacking specific authorship and intellectual property rights or copyright protections, does not receive the recognition that is preserved for the knowledge embodied in written literature. The tradition of literacy has even impacted the characterization of the terms ‘language’ and ‘literature’. For instance, Nurse & Hinnebusch (1993) report the following view about the distinction between ‘language’ and ‘dialect’:

One would define language as national and dialect as local. A second defines language as the standard, written form; dialect as the nonstandard, substandard, or unwritten form (Nurse & Hinnebusch, 1993, p. 37).

The characterization of language as “the standard, written form” exacerbates the situation through the conventional implication that unwritten (or recently written)

languages are less than languages, charitably referred to as “dialects”. Unfortunately this term is imbued with connotations of lack of political and/or economic empowerment, or intellectual acuity. The less charitable reading takes the term dialect as connoting ‘primitive’, characterizing signals for communication that consist in ‘squeaks and jibbers’, totally lacking in grammar (July, 1992). The term ‘literature’ fares no better. In fact, the written tradition has influenced its very definition. The fifth edition of the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language characterizes ‘literature’ as follows:

1. The body of written works of a language, period, or culture.
2. Imaginative or creative writing, especially of a recognized artistic value.
3. The art or occupation of a literary writer.
4. The body of written work produced by scholars or researchers in a given field.

Thus, ‘literature’ has to do with written material. Conversely, the body of knowledge that constitutes legitimate matter for education must be that which is accessible in written form. Alternative systems of education or embodiment of knowledge either do not exist or their existence requires lobbying.

This characterization of language and literature is, unfortunately, too narrow. Knowledge systems are, technically, independent of the medium used for their preservation or transmission. For instance, languages embody systems of knowledge that have cultural significance and practical utility. Their transmission in oral form has characterized the forms of education for all practiced by various societies where mastery of the norms, values, practical skills, is central to the upbringing of the youth. Fafunwa (1974) made the point forcefully in the observation that:

Every society, simple or complex, has its own system of training and educating its youth. Education for good life has been one of the most persistent concerns of men throughout history. What may differ from place to place, nation to nation, or people to people are goals and the method of approach (Fafunwa, 1974, p. 17).

The observation here is that many societies and, until the advent of the writing systems, virtually all societies engaged in education through the medium of oral transmission of knowledge. The independence of knowledge systems from the medium is accompanied by the observation that human systems of communication, languages in brief, are comparably complex in their grammatical structure. The intrinsic presence of grammar in human language means that education need not be identified with any particular medium, any more than it is better suited to specific languages. This does not, in any way, reduce the importance of the medium with respect to its utility in long-term preservation of knowledge, a property that correlates with reduction in dependency on human memory and the vicissitudes of that, not the least of which is the (untimely) death of the knowledge bearers.

Language, Science and Technology in Education

A particularly persistent view is that advocates of mother tongue instruction merely engage in obfuscation of the problem. The subterfuge has been to recast the issue in the form of claims that it is not that African languages could not be used as languages of instruction. They may indeed be good for poetry, singing and some kinds of conversation. Rather, it is simply that they are not suited to science, mathematics, and technology. Rugemalira et al. noted that the appeal to this view with regard to the suitability of Kiswahili in education is the observation that “a major objection to Kiswahili has traditionally been the supposed inadequacy of the language with regard to technical terminology...and, further, that the language does not have the same international role as English...” (Rugemalira et al., 1990, p. 30-31).

The inadequacy of African languages in the expression of knowledge embodied in science, mathematics, and technology is, really, more of an unsubstantiated axiom than anything that derives from empirical studies or theoretical validity. It is simply a conclusion based on the history of education in Africa, itself imbued with all the colonialists’ prejudicial views about Africans (Brock-Utne, 2000; Babaci-Wilhite, 2015).

Science and mathematics in particular, require the acquisition and coordination of three kinds of knowledge: *Conceptual Knowledge*, *Procedural Knowledge* and *Utilization Knowledge*. These comprise, respectively, “the ability to understand the principles that underpin the problem; the ability to carry out a sequence of actions to solve a problem; and, the ability to know when to apply particular procedures” (Cole & Cole, 1993, p. 482). Cole and Cole (ibid) further note that “...most children arrive at school with some of each kind of knowledge, and cross-cultural research reveals that even societies with no tradition of schooling and literacy use methods of counting and solving arithmetic problems...” (ibid). Clearly, the early acquisition of such knowledge is not dependent upon the child’s exposure to a foreign language.

The statement about the international role of English, a quality that has given English its global appeal, merely spells out its importance in international communication, highlighting the advantages of gaining functional literacy in it. English is perceived as the language of power, lending itself to language politics that get intimately connected with economics and resource planning. The profile of English as the global language and language of power does not, in and of itself, constitute a valid argument that African languages are unsuitable for instruction. It serves the politics of power and elitism, acting as the “gatekeeper” for access to the realms of power and economic advantages, rather than to the purpose of education (Mtenje, 2002, Brock-Utne, 2012; Babaci-Wilhite et al. 2016). The perennial negative results and lackluster performance of the non-English speaking students who learn in English is ample evidence of its unsuitability as LoI.

African Knowledge in African schools

The education in Africa was largely grounded in the history and ideas of western civilization, for example teaching about the rivers and mountains of Europe

and America, with little, if any attention given to African rivers and hills well known to African students (Nyerere, 1968; Warren et al., 1995). The near total exclusion of African studies in schools and colleges, led to a reaction referred to as African “renaissance”, spurring the rhetoric of self-government, independence, and equality. Africans began to ask how they could promote their values when knowledge acquisition remained oriented to that of foreign cultures, values, and systems of government, history, and literary traditions? This foreign-based educational program effectively lent credence to the view that African knowledge systems, religious beliefs, cultural traditions, values, history, legends, and literary traditions were all inferior. Commenting on the curriculum of the literature course at the University of Malawi during the 1970s, Moto makes the following, rather pointed criticism:

There was an obvious leaning toward the continued maintenance of the colonial legacy, seen in the promotion of foreign literature by such novelists, poets and playwrights as Jane Austen, T.S. Eliot and William Shakespeare. This is not to say that there is anything wrong in teaching and learning European literature, but in my view it is not acceptable to teach and learn a foreign literature to the total exclusion of one’s own literature in one’s own university, and one’s own country of birth (Moto, 2009, p. 146).

To redress this imbalance there have been efforts in recent years to have the curricula reflect local knowledge. For instance, at the University of Nairobi scholars like Kimani Gecau, Micere Mugo, Ngugi wa Thiong’o and others tried to establish studies of African literature. The idea of Education for Self-Reliance (Nyerere, 1968) or Education for Development has led to the engagement of African scholars in investigations of their cultures and technical knowledge, as well as traditional religions and literary arts, all of which had thrived in oral tradition. Drawing upon on-going discussions of the issue, Banda (2008) has come to advocate the incorporation of AIKS into the curriculum to counter-balance the Western influence. Banda (2008) envisages a curriculum that would constitute a “hybridization” of the two systems of knowledge the African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS) and the “World Knowledge Systems” (WKS). Building on previous scholarship on the content of African education (Pottier et. al., 2003) he seriously challenges educationists in Africa to address the question of Education for All (EFA). There are two aspects to the lobbying for AIKS in the curriculum. The first is that of being ‘reactionary’ in that it aims to counter the dominance of Eurocentric knowledge systems. Seepé (2000) states this as follows:

The African Indigenous Knowledge Systems is a counter-hegemonic discourse in the context of African renaissance. This discourse is a reaction against a Western, colonial discourse that completely dismissed African indigenous knowledge systems, as they were posited in reductionist terms and relegated to the realm of insignificance (online).

Emeagwali (2003) supports this view. She decries the disinformation embedded in Eurocentric colonial and post-colonial education that includes the selective omission of non-European achievements, inventions and technologies. The other aspect to

AIKS is non-reactionary. It is grounded in the realization that ordinary life in the villages provided an education for all. The knowledge acquisition involved learning technical skills that were task-related as well as general cultural values, legends and history of the society, religious beliefs and practices, sacred symbols or objects, power relations and societal organization for administration, literary activity (songs of different genres, riddles, proverbs), etiquette, food production, environmental and ecological conservation, modes of politeness, the nature and determination of one's role and responsibilities, socially constructed gender roles. The education included knowledge in specialized domains that contributed to continued survival and increased prosperity of the society. This related to knowledge in such fields as animal husbandry, metallurgy, meteorology, medicine, agriculture, and geography. Such informal education has the characteristic of coding the knowledge systems in a non-compartmentalized fashion. It is not divided into diverse subjects, a common feature of formal education. Msango et al. (2000, p. 20) elaborate on this arguing that:

Education covers all aspects of training and initiation into the life of society into which one has been born to live. Schooling, on the other hand, covers only the literacy aspects of training. It deals primarily with literacy and numeracy and the acquisition of knowledge in such disciplines as science, literature, geography, history etc. We learn to read and write and study various subjects in schools, but we are educated in the wider society. The school is only part of that society. Education is therefore bigger than schooling.

The hybridization would ensure that the children continue to be grounded in their cultural or indigenous knowledge while putting the new systems of knowledge in perspective, noting similarities with, and differences from, their own knowledge culled from the "traditional" education. This would reduce the "culture shock" arising from entering into formal schooling only to be straitjacketed into foreign norms and practices that are patently incomprehensible, delivered in a foreign language too. Banda, a Chewa from eastern Zambia, confronted the contradictions and experienced "culture shock" when he began formal schooling. He states the matter clearly as follows:

My struggle began when I was told I had to stand when talking to my teachers. This was a contradiction because when in the community, kneeling was the sign of respect and standing when talking to elders was a sign of rudeness. Speaking in my mother tongue, the language of my community, was a punishable offence as such languages were said to be primitive, which meant that everybody in my community was primitive (Banda, 2008, p. 12).

Those problems got compounded further:

I also learnt that while keeping quiet and looking down and listening when an elder is talking are ways of showing respect and signs of being attentive, they did not mean the same at school. The teacher would describe you as a passive learner and possibly dull (ibid).

The abrupt shift from traditional and cultural knowledge systems to foreign and contradictory norms negatively impacts self-esteem. The further realization that the use of African languages in school, the language of the community, is proscribed and might constitute a punishable offence on the grounds that such languages, hence their speakers too, were primitive and can lead to grave consequences.

The incorporation of AIKS into the curriculum merits serious review. It would contribute to robust development of African Studies in the educational programs and to the efforts to “decolonize of the mind” (Ngugi, 1986). It would boost the knowledge base of the African academy, eliminate the image of education as serving to produce culturally alienated elites, and would lead to cultural emancipation. Banda’s recommendation for “hybridization” of the curricula of formal education exploits the view that knowledge production is to be treated as “negotiated translation” rather than something that is “transferred” from one “superior” system of education to another “backward” education system. This is consistent with the Culture-based curriculum model (Barnhardt et. al., 2005) and contrasts with the positivist conception of the nature of knowledge, characterized in the following statement:

The positivist view that knowledge is unitary and systematized explains why scientists continue to regard science as superior to local bodies of knowledge, and why they believe that their superior knowledge can easily be transferred, indeed needs to be transferred, in order to replace ‘backward’ local [indigenous] Knowledge (Pottier et al., 2003, p. 15).

The formulation of culture-based curricula incorporating a hybridization of the knowledge systems would be a major step towards the achievement of education for all in Africa. A program that addresses the “hybridization” suggestion appropriately elaborated and promoted through policy formulation and financial support should enhance the achievement of education for all. Naturally, there is need for massive political will and economic investment for the program to get realized, not easily countenanced in the age of “globalization”.

Language-in-education Policies and Development Aid

Bamgbose (1991) claims that the policies of language in education in Africa provide the best illustration of *an inheritance situation*. This has to do with “...how the colonial experience continues to shape and define post-colonial problems and practices” (Bamgbose, 1991, p. 69). This is exemplified in the formulation of policies in education that merely carry out the logic and practices of the past. In the case of the language in education policies, Bamgbose ruefully observes, “all former British colonies have English, all former French and Belgian colonies have French, all former Portuguese colonies have Portuguese and the only former Spanish colony has Spanish” (ibid). In addition, those countries that had come under the influence of Arabs, leading to the establishment of Islam, tend to have Arabic as a school subject or as a medium of instruction, besides its status as an official language and, certainly, as the language of religion. Clearly, the inheritance situation must have some rationale for its perpetuation. In recent times “globalization” in its core usage reflects

the porousness of various nations in the world to the intrusion of foreign capital and the financial institutions' access to their local resources, human or material. Soros points out that:

The salient feature of globalization is that it allows financial capital to move freely; by contrast, the movement of people remains heavily regulated. Since capital is an essential ingredient of production, individual countries must compete to attract it; this inhibits their ability to tax and regulate it. Under the influence of globalization, the character of our economic and social arrangements has undergone a radical transformation. The ability of capital to go elsewhere undermines the ability of the state to exercise control over the economy (Soros, 2002, p. 3).

Globalization has power asymmetry built into it in that, the nations with the financial capital have the power to influence events and control resources in the weaker nations. In many respects colonialism constituted initial efforts at globalization. Although the immediate association of globalization has to do with economic and social arrangements that have allowed financial capital to move "freely" across nations, its impact is seen as extending to other social aspects as well. These have included sports (Giulianotte & Robertson, 2009), trade imbalances, and the destruction of culture in the weaker nations. Mazrui (2001) dichotomized globalization into 1) economics and 2) culture. The main players in the economics are the transnational and multinational corporations seeking to extend the horizons for their markets for raw materials. In culture, globalization contributes to the erosion of indigenous cultures and indigenous languages. In this quest, the form of education in the economically weaker nations has proved useful. Education requires massive financial investment and, for economically weaker nations facing a multitude of problems on virtually every front of state building and administration, international aid is a source of support. The aid normally comes with conditions, traditionally in the form of "Structural Adjustment Programs" (SAP) and, in some cases, the requirement that the receiving countries, especially in Africa, abide by certain stipulations about respect of "Human Rights" (Babaci-WilHITE et al. 2012b). The content of that is normally determined by the donor nations.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have, traditionally, been the organizations that have channeled the aid. As such the World Bank has certainly been viewed as one of the greatest agents of globalization (Mazrui, 2004, Babaci-WilHITE, 2015). The aid to education in Africa has, inevitably, had to go through the strictures of World Bank conditions. On the issue of language in education, while the World Bank has advocated the use of indigenous languages, especially in the lower levels of schooling, it still maintains the belief that the use of English as medium of instruction improves the quality of education. Mazrui notes that:

It is no coincidence that soon after Tanzania had submitted to the clutches of the World Bank and IMF in the 1980s, the British Overseas Development Agency (ODA) moved in, in full force, to launch the multi-million dollar English Language Teaching Support Project (2004, p. 49).

Colonialists have retained an interest in maintaining their economic and cultural presence in their former colonies. An effective method to achieve that has been through the financial aid provided to support the continued flourishing of their languages. Their assumed importance to the improvement of academic standards contributes to the realization of that goal.

The use of European languages is further boosted by local attitudes towards education, especially relating to the question of LoI. The arguments for retention of English as LoI include the view that it is the language of globalization; it is the language of opportunity and work; it eliminates isolation from the world; parents prefer to have their children taught in English because the language will give opportunities to gain employment; finally, that it would be costly to translate the books into the local languages (See Babaci-Wilhite, 2013; 2015). The arguments are not merely confined to English. The majority of them apply to the use of European languages in education in general. The situation has held for Portuguese in Mozambique. The situation there is, in principle and in practice, comparable to the attitudes towards English that the utility of English will prevent isolation from the rest of the world, which is of course a myth as many non-English speaking countries that use their own LoI are not isolated, for example Japan and China (Prah, 2013; Babaci-Wilhite, 2015). Henriksen has noted that:

One of the beliefs which still persists is that the schools should do all within their power to improve the standard of Portuguese language teaching and learning, instead of wasting the meagre resources on languages that are not going to lead anywhere in academic, professional and economic terms. The ideology is surely inspired by an assimilationist position, that is, the idea that everyone, regardless of his or her mother tongue should speak the official language of the country (Henriksen 2010, p. 22).

These arguments do not constitute a rational basis for the retention of the colonial languages as LoI. They point to the utility of the foreign languages for international communication, but as foreign languages. Their usefulness as languages of instruction is not predicated on their inherent quality to improve academic standards, although that might be incidental; but, rather, on the legacy of their centrality to upward mobility and access to arenas of power. The profile of English as the language of globalization and internationalism has led to the promotion of English education in various countries including those formerly under French/Belgian colonialism (Rwanda) and under Portuguese rule (Mozambique). The view is that the language will enhance equal participation in the globalization process. In reality the reasoning is fallacious. Globalization has to do with capital, access to markets, and extraction of raw materials. While capital has free movement, Soros (2002) does point out that the movement of people remains heavily regulated. Put bluntly, the advantages of proficiency in English or the European languages do not immediately translate into a leveling of the “globalization playing field.” The control on human movement deprives globalization of the free trade doctrine. As Chomsky has pointed out:

Free movement of people is a core component of free trade. As for free movement of capital, that’s a totally different matter. Unlike persons of flesh and blood, capital has no rights, at least by Enlightenment/classical

liberal standards. As soon as we bring up the matter of free movement of capital, we have to face the fact that although in principle people are at least equal in rights, in a just society, talk of capital conceals the reality: we are speaking of owners of capital, who are vastly unequal in power, naturally (Chomsky, 2006, p. 111).

In other words, the international role of English does not mean that individuals immediately get the advantage of traveling just because they are fluent in English even when they are lacking in knowledge obtained from the “right” education. The use of those languages in education merely serves the function of enhancing the influence of the former colonial powers (Carstensen, 2007). The Department for International Development (DfID) in the United Kingdom is, arguably, always on hand to promote studies and uses of English, more so given its admonition against a narrow focus on a minority language of instruction that “may reinforce social and economic marginalization” (Gacheche, 2010, p. 9).

There is an instructive story from the Seychelles about another globally dominant language, French. Brock-Utne (2007) tells of a Mr. Ferrari, the leader of a new Institute for Democracy formed to distribute information on democratic methods of governance. He revealed to her that at some stage he had sought financial help from a development agency in France to further the work of the Institute. The French agency promised the aid on the condition that the Institute would use French as the medium of communication and would work for the strengthening of the French language in the Seychelles, and distribute their brochures also in French! Mr. Ferrari declined the offer. In Tanzania, a statement attributed to a Minister responsible for Education in Tanzania that the government “...did not have money to do experiments and ‘waste’ the few resources on the language of instruction. ‘The little money that is available will be spent on improving the quality of education and not on the language of instruction’” (Brock-Utne, 2012, p. 6), must be viewed as defeatist. This is ironic especially coming from a Minister responsible for Education in the very country that set the example of promoting the use of an African language, Kiswahili, as LoI. Scheduling the reforms for the moment when the economic situation will improve, or there will be political support for them, amounts to deferment of the program to perpetuity.

Conclusion

It is time that African leaders seriously back up their stated commitment to reclaiming African identity and control over African education systems that were lost as a consequence of a colonial cultural. The need to acknowledge oral traditions in language and learning, the use of local language in curriculum is crucial. This should begin with a serious review of *the inheritance situation*. Other nations invest in the promotion of their cultural and linguistic heritage. African nations need to invest in the education of the youth and in a program of education for all. African development will be achieved when the education is not for the production of culturally alienated elites.

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