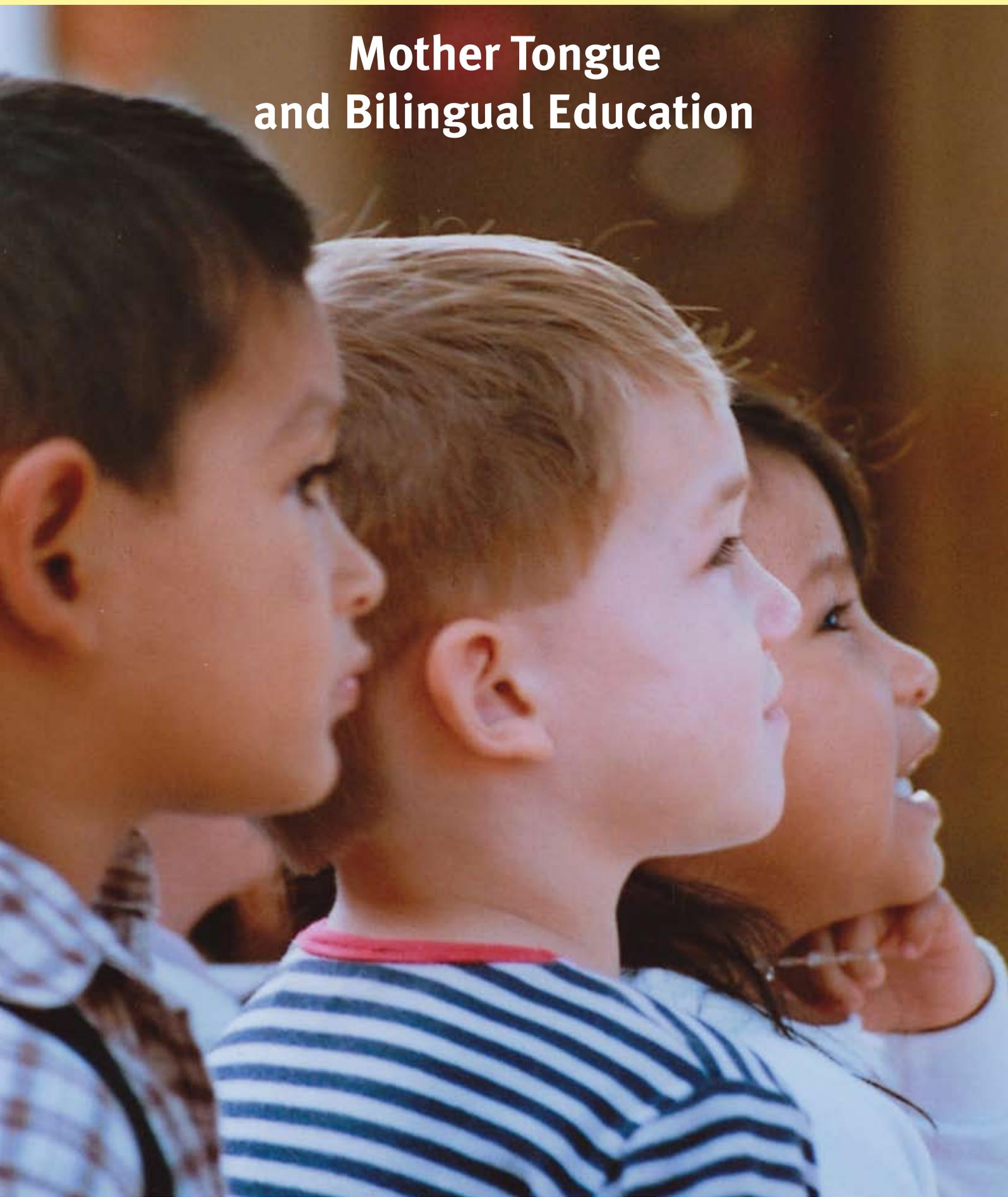


A COLLECTION OF CONFERENCE PAPERS

# Mother Tongue and Bilingual Education



Mother Tongue and Bilingual Education:  
A collection of conference papers.

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# CONTENT

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>THEME 1: PEDAGOGICAL ASPECTS OF MOTHER TONGUE AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION</b>	<b>5</b>	
Background paper from Martha Qorro: Prospects of mother tongue and bilingual education in Africa: with special reference to Tanzania	7	
<b>THEME 2: ASPECTS OF CITIZENSHIP IN RELATION TO MOTHER TONGUE AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION</b>	<b>20</b>	
Background paper from Patricia Oliart: Citizenship and bilingual education: current challenges in Andean societies	21	
Background paper from Birgit Brock-Utne: Democracy in a multilingual and multicultural society	33	
<b>THEME 3: ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF MOTHER TONGUE AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION</b>	<b>43</b>	
Background paper from Francois Grin: Economic aspects of mother tongue and bilingual education	44	
<b>THEME 4: POLITICAL ASPECTS OF MOTHER TONGUE AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION</b>	<b>54</b>	
Background paper from Marianne Schulz and Stephen Carney: Danida's policy and practice in relation to mother tongue and bilingual education: a preliminary mapping	55	
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CONFERENCE ON MOTHER TONGUE AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION, COPENHAGEN, NOVEMBER 28TH - 29TH 2007. (69)</b>	<b>69</b>	



## ABOUT THE PUBLICATION



This publication is based on a conference held by the Danish Education Network, November 28th–29th, 2007 in cooperation with The Danish University of Education and The University College (Copenhagen & North Zealand): *CONFERENCE ON MOTHER TONGUE AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION: Myths, realities and consensus?* 125 people took part in the conference, including NGOs, Danida, teachers, students, researchers, consultants and local politicians.

In this publication we have put together a collection of papers presented at the conference (focusing on education in the South), as well as the recommendations on mother tongue and bilingual education made by the participants. The theme of the conference was mother tongue and bilingual education both in Denmark and in the South. A full conference report was compiled and edited by consultant Lene Timm, which included papers presented in Danish and summaries of workshop discussions and recommendations in Danish (this report is available on the website of the Education Network ([www.uddannelsesnetvaerket.dk](http://www.uddannelsesnetvaerket.dk))).

The aim of the publication is to primarily serve NGOs working with education programmes, encouraging them to include strategies for mother tongue and bilingual education in their programmes.

# INTRODUCTION

Most countries in the world are multi-ethnic and made up of different language groups. Therefore, educational systems face a number of ‘language-options’ to choose from: should education be in the citizens’ mother tongue – or in the official language of the country? Does it pay in the long term to offer both mother tongue and bilingual education as students will do better in school and society?

The language politics of many countries are linked to the ideas political decision makers have concerning citizenship and the meaning of cultural identity. These are notions that are not necessarily founded on research based knowledge. Often the consequences of political action are policies that focus on learning the official language, whereas mother tongue education for minorities is limited or left out completely. However, pedagogic research points out it is a myth to believe that a second or foreign language is learned better without learning the mother tongue first.

*“Successful education programmes require [...] a relevant curriculum that can be taught and learned in a local language and builds upon the knowledge and experience of the teachers and learners.”* (The Dakar Framework for Action, 2000 - part of Goal no. 6: Improving all aspects of the quality of education).

2007 marks the halfway point to reaching the 2015 goals and the fulfilment of Education for All – an education of good quality. More children are in school today all over the world, but the quality of education has not necessarily progressed. In the World Bank’s World Development Report 2007 it is stated that:

*“The dramatic recent progress in the numbers of children completing primary schools, a Millennium Development Goal, does not fully address country needs because the children are not learning as much as they should. Many, even those who reach*

*lower secondary levels, can hardly read or write and are unprepared to cope with the practicalities of daily life.”* (World Development Report, 2007, p. 6)

One of the causes for low performance is that many children throughout the world are being taught in a language that they do not understand. This complicates learning and removes the content of the education from the child’s – and in many cases also the teachers’ – own experiences and everyday life. A new study of mother tongue and bilingual education in Africa shows that introductory education in the child’s first language, for a minimum of 6-8 years, and gradual introduction of the first second language:

*“Will not only increase considerably the social returns of investments in education, but will additionally boost the social and economic development of African nations and contribute to the improvement of the continent to knowledge creation and scientific development.”* (Optimizing Learning and Education in Africa – the Language Factor, Working Document Draft, ADEA, UIE & GTZ, 2006, p. 7)

As mentioned in international documents, there is an increased focus on the influence of mother tongue and bilingual education on schools results of bilingual students; however, developments in Denmark move in another direction. Here, political decisions are influenced by two simultaneous movements: first, an international orientation, which raises a discussion about how an educational system, through more foreign language education and exchange programs, can increase students’ opportunities to succeed internationally. Second, there is a national orientation, which has caused a strengthened national, mono-cultural and one-language curriculum that excludes minority languages. Since 2001, legislation on mother tongue education for bilingual students in Denmark has made distinctions between children

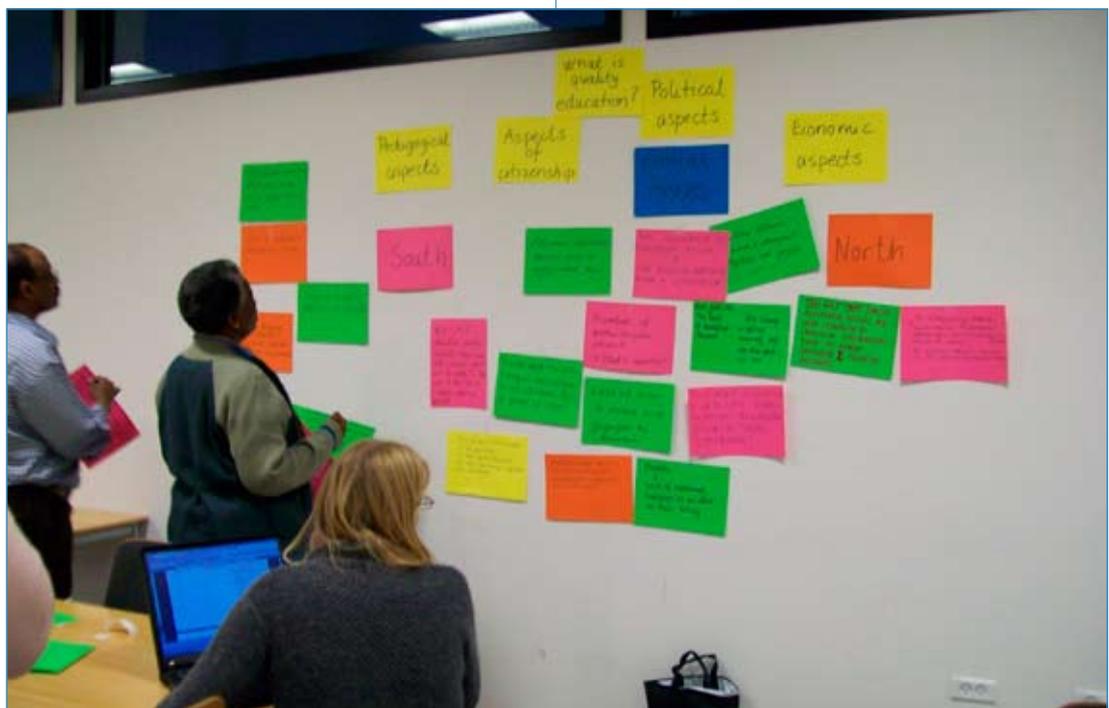




from the EU and EEC (countries included in the European Economic Community) and children from so-called “third world countries.” The first group has the right to publicly financed mother tongue education, while children from third world countries do not - thereby discriminating against them according to existing law (Krisjansdottir, 2005). Researchers in Denmark - as well as language researchers in other parts of the world - emphasize that bilingual education strengthens the personal, social and cultural identity of minority children and, at the same time, improves their education as a whole (Holmen 2006). Thus, the research points in one direction and the political practise in another.

The conference held by the NGO Education Network aimed to stimulate exchange of knowledge, experience and positions among NGOs working with education in South, researchers and experts from South and North, as well as decision makers and people working with mother tongue and bilingual education in Denmark.

The goal was to contribute to creating a more qualified knowledge base for future decisions and practises. The conference took its starting point with researchers from North and South sharing their views on myths and realities concerning mother tongue and bilingual education. This led to debates between the participants with experience from working in the field and decision makers, who are responsible for the task of reaching a common consensus on some of the central questions relating to mother tongue and bilingual education.



Eva Iversen:  
Brainstorm in workshop.

# THEME 1: PEDAGOGICAL ASPECTS OF MOTHER TONGUE AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION

According to many pedagogical researchers it is a myth that a student learns a foreign language better without learning their mother tongue first. The focus of this theme is pedagogical research and facts about how to create the most favourable learning conditions for children and adults. What is the impact of mother tongue education on learning and performance, and for how many years should children receive mother tongue education? In addition, we will look at the recommended balance between mother tongue education and the introduction of the second language when both should be mastered.

The danger of not offering mother tongue education is, according to some research, that students will end up not mastering any of the languages sufficiently for use in a school based learning situation. This is because it is necessary for the child to develop an understanding of the language and a mastery of concepts at a certain level within the known language before learning a new one. If the student – child or adult – does not master the mother tongue, then it is increasingly difficult to learn another language. The child will not develop the necessary understanding of more advanced concepts and will face difficulties when learning other subjects, such as history and math in the second language. Thus, there is a risk that children who have not learned any of the languages sufficiently will perform at a lower level in school and, as a consequence, have lesser opportunities in the labour market.

In order to create the optimal conditions for students, it has to be examined how long mother tongue education is necessary for and what type of balance needs to exist between the second language and the mother tongue if the students are to master both languages. Often, insufficient language education will be ‘invisible’ in the first years: migrant children are able to speak Danish fluently

from an early age and some African children speak 2-3 local languages, but it doesn’t necessarily mean that they have a sufficient level of language skills for school use. Since languages engage many aspects, it is important to examine the relation between spoken and written language. Not all languages are written languages, and in these cases, language education will have to be organised in a particular way.

In addition, if students are to be offered quality language education, it involves available teachers with the right pedagogical and cultural training.

Therefore, it has to be considered what it takes for teacher education to ensure a good quality mother tongue and bilingual education.

### Central questions for discussion:

- Does mother tongue and bilingual education increase students’ performance in school and in society?
- For how long is mother tongue and bilingual education necessary?
- What kind of teacher education is needed to provide qualified teachers in mother tongue and bilingual education?





Lene Godiksen:  
Children in Tanzania.

## BACKGROUND PAPER FROM MARTHA QORRO

### Prospects of mother tongue and bilingual education in Africa: with special reference to Tanzania

**Martha Qorro:** Senior lecturer in the Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), Tanzania, where she has been teaching Communication Skills in English since 1983 and acts as the Associate Dean (Practicum) of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Additionally, she has conducted research in the area of language in education in Tanzania and has co-edited several books, four of which were from the Language of Instruction in Tanzania and South Africa (LOITASA) project. She has also co-authored a book on Language Crisis in Tanzania, published in Dar es Salaam by the Mkuki na Nyota Publishers.

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There is ample research showing that students are quicker to learn to read and acquire other academic skills when first taught in their mother tongue. They also learn a second language more quickly than those initially taught in an unfamiliar language. "[...] Early mother tongue instruction is a key strategy to reach the more than [...] million children not in school – and help them succeed". (UNICEF 1999)

#### 1. Introduction

Most African countries do not practice much mother tongue education worth writing home about, save for the first three years of schooling. That partly explains why this paper focuses on the prospects of bringing mother tongue and bilingual education into focus. Occasions like this conference on *Mother Tongue and Bilingual Education* give those of us who come from Africa a chance to learn from other countries as to how they conduct mother tongue and bilingual education in their respective education systems.

In many former British colonies, especially in Africa, education was initially offered in the mother tongue for the first three years of schooling before transitioning to a European language (English, French or Portuguese). In some countries, African languages of wider communication – Kiswahili in the case of Tanzania<sup>1</sup> and Amharic in Ethiopia, have been used in education at least for the first five to seven years of primary education. English language was taught as a subject starting from the fifth year, and was made the language of instruction from the last two years of pri-

mary school (Std 7 and Std 8) up to the end of the school period in secondary or teacher education. This system of education turned out people who were bilingual, i.e. proficient in both an African language and a European language.

Today, with the influence of liberalised economy and globalization, the tendency is to introduce European languages in the first year of school, with the intention that children become bilingual or multilingual in these languages while they are still young. Comparing students' performance in those days with that of today's students, one finds that students in the old days performed better in learning both the African language and a European one, such as English, in the case of Tanzania. It is not clear why policy makers thought it necessary to start teaching foreign languages in the first year of school. What is clear, is that this early start seems to make the learning of English more important than education itself. The focus of policy makers has shifted from how best to offer education to how best to learn/teach the English language. This shift is clear in the arguments made by policy makers and those who support the continued use of English as the language of instruction who rarely mention education; instead they point out that English is a very important language that we cannot afford to abandon. The myth that the best way to teach/learn English is to use it as the language of instruction is quite prevalent. The myth seems to be based on the (seemingly) simplistic reasoning that the more students exposed to English the better their English will become. This reasoning does not seem to take into account the kind of English that students are exposed to.

<sup>1</sup> In Tanzania, where ethnic languages amount to more than 120, most of which are not written, using all or selecting some of them is not a viable option. This mainly explains why Kiswahili was, and is seen as, the best alternative language of instruction since most Tanzanians understand it well.



However, research in recent years has consistently shown that the continued use of English as the language of instruction has not helped students learn English language, nor has it enabled students to attain a good quality education. In the next section, the paper briefly examines the dangers of offering education in an unfamiliar language. The rest of the paper dwells on possible misunderstandings between language teaching and using a language for instruction. The impact of (the little practised) mother tongue education in Africa is highlighted along with studies conducted elsewhere. Why mother tongue and bilingual education have not been successfully implemented in Africa is another area discussed in the paper and finally, the paper focuses on pedagogical research about how to create the most favourable learning conditions for children and adults.

## 2. Dangers of using foreign languages as a medium of instruction

Observations in some secondary school classrooms in Tanzania show that most students, and the majority of teachers, are seriously handicapped when using English as the language of instruction (Mlama and Mattered 1978, Rubagumya, Jones and Mwansoko 1998, Qorro 1999, Brock-Utne 2005, Vuzo 2005). Only a handful of students take part in active learning. To illustrate the point Mlama and Mattered (1978) asked a Form 2 student the question: 'How will your secondary education be of use to you and to Tanzania?' the student responded as follows:

### Example 1:

My name secondary education is a treat secondary school for education in Dodoma region in Tanzania. The student are paying fees this school is not spend the sam thing for the education off like the subject for year. (Ibid. 39)

They asked a Form 3 student the same question; the response was:

### Example 2:

In my secondary education used to find the political in swahili. I dont know why dont you find all subjects in secondary in Swahili. They find others in swahili others in English. I think if the subjects we can find in swahili the secondary it is their happy to enjoed the subject except eny reason. (Ibid. 40)

When the students were asked the same question in Kiswahili: 'Unafikiri elimu ya sekondari utakayopata itakunufaishaje wewe na nchi yako Tanzania?'

The response was:

### Example 3:

Elimu nitakayopata katika shule ya sekondari itaninufaisha mimi pamoja na taifa langu. Nitashiriki kikamilifu katika kazi ya kujitolea nafsi yangu kuondoa ujinga, magonjwa, nitashiriki kikamilifu kuwafundisha wazee ambao hawakupata nafasi ya kusoma. (Ibid. 39-40).

[Translation: the secondary education that I will get will benefit me and my country. I will participate fully in volunteering in person to remove ignorance, disease, I will participate fully in teaching the old who did not get a chance to study (authors' translation)]

These examples show not only how badly students perform when they respond in English, but also, how much better they respond in Kiswahili.

Another classroom observation in a study by Rubagumya, Jones and Mwansoko (1998) reveals the following interaction between the teacher (T) and the students (SS) in a Biology lesson in Form III, (i.e. the third year of secondary education):

### Example 4

T: When you go home put some water in a jar, leave it direct on sun rays and observe the decrease of the amount of water. Have you understood?

SS: (silence)

T: *Nasema, chukua chombo, uweke maji na kiche kwenye jua, maji yatakuwaje?* (I say take a container with water and leave it in the sun, what will happen to the water?)

SS: *Yatapungua* (it will decrease)

T: *Kwa nini?* (Why)

SS: *Yatafyonzwa na mionzi ya jua* (it will be evaporated by the sun's rays)

(Rubagumya, Jones and Mwansoko 1998: 17)

Example 4 shows that the teacher's instruction is not clear when it is given in English. It is difficult to tell whether it is the teacher's instructions or students' lack of understanding that results in students' silence.

In a study by Qorro (1999) it was found that the majority of students simply sit and copy notes that their teachers have written on the blackboard (Qorro 1999). In cases where the teacher's handwriting was not legible, students did not ask but simply copied words incorrectly and seemed unable to distinguish correctly and incorrectly spelled words. The next extract is taken from History notes by a Form III student:

#### Example 5

##### EXPANSION OF STATE SYSTEM

By the end of 18<sup>th</sup> some at the States had become beig sertralised king doms. By the middle at 19<sup>th</sup> C states such as Buganda, Bunyoro, Ankole, Rwanda and Burundi had become powertul through trident and military conquest.

The relaction at poriduction in the states was feudal. The forms of these relations varied from one area to another in the intrlacustrine area the powerruler was based on his ownership and controlover land the major meams of prduction. The ruling classes (feudl lords) apportioned arable lan d to the peasunts. From the feu-

dal lords collected tribute. The Nyarubanja system in karagwe, and Nyunjo and Busolo system in Buganda were variation at these feudal relations.

Another form of feudal relation was Ubagabice which clevdoped between the Tustsi and Hutu in Rwanda, Burund, and Buha. Here feudal plaction revolved cattlo ownership. The Tutsi wduld some at thes cattle toa Hutu family. Land lord (master) mass cattled sebuja and his subject was called Mugabbi.

(Source: Qorro 1999)

The student from whose notes this extract was taken was in the third year of secondary education. He/she has one more year before completing secondary education. It is clear from the student's notes that the history lesson has not been learnt.

The last example is from a study by Vuzo (2005) who, in a classroom observation, found that teachers, like students, face problems when it comes to using English as the language of instruction. This extract is an example from a Commerce lesson in Form II where the teacher (T) and the student (S) interact:

#### Example 6

T: Goods must be remain in the store... to be ready for a changing of weather...it is a danger to sell all goods in the store...The dangerous of selling all the goods in the store... When goods are scarcity... and sales are increase... (*T mixes language to elaborate what he was teaching*)  
Nina maana kuwa bidhaa zikipungua...we need time for a preparation. Time to ask for a new goods...(*in the course of the lesson he posed a question*)

T: How can we do before to sell all goods in the store?

S: You must be care with that changes...and making time for a preparation...

(Source: Vuzo (2005:68-69)





Example 6 clearly illustrates that very little learning, if any – both in the subject matter (Commerce) and in the English language is taking place when the teacher uses English as the language of instruction. Considering that for every class there is one English language teacher and up to nine teachers of subjects such as Commerce, History, Geography, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Civics, and so on. The implication is that students will learn very little of the content subjects, very little or poor English and very little mother tongue or first language during the six years of secondary education. If that were not bad enough, it will be difficult for students who come from such school background to gain proficiency in English, even if they specialise in English language teaching.

These examples illustrate the dangers of using unfamiliar language as medium of education. The dangers are that students do not learn their mother tongue or their first language; secondly, they fail to grasp the content of what is taught because the low level of proficiency is a barrier to learning; thirdly, in this kind of learning environment, students' ability to learn the second or foreign language, such as English, is hampered. Overall, these examples show that it is, in fact, impossible to offer education without using the language of instruction in which teachers and students are proficient. Thus, I see education in the medium of an unfamiliar language as the best recipe to learn nothing. However those who argue for the continued use of English as the language of instruction believe that by using it, students eventually learn it in the process. That is, they are applying the wisdom: 'practice makes perfect.' The trouble is no one has asked what kind of model is being practised. It therefore seems that there is a misunderstanding of what to practice, which is the topic of the next section.

### 3. Misunderstanding language teaching and using a language as medium of instruction

In a study on parents' views on the language of instruction in Tanzanian secondary schools (Qorro 2005), the majority of parents admitted that they were aware that when taught in English, students (their children) understood very little of what was taught. But when they were asked which language (between Kiswahili and English) they preferred their children to be taught in, the majority of parents (64.6%) still preferred English. The reasons they gave varied, and some of them are:

1. English is an international language; it enables us to communicate with people from more countries.
2. If Kiswahili is used, the children will fail to get employed and to communicate with foreign companies.
3. Kiswahili is a young language and its terminology is not sufficient especially for science and technology.
4. English is more useful than Kiswahili in this era of science and technology and also to understand the issues of globalization.
5. If students are taught in Kiswahili, they will fail to do their final examinations which are set in English.
6. If Kiswahili is used, children will fail to continue with their studies outside the country.
7. An English medium is better in secondary schools because a lot of universities in the world use English as LOI.
8. The books and syllabuses currently used are in English, it will take a long time to change from this language. Our economy is still weak to handle the switch of LOI.
9. (Qorro 2005:102)

Some of the parents in the sample (35.4%) had different views; they preferred Kiswahili as the language of instruction and their views were:

1. Kiswahili should be used because it is the nati-

onal language and it is the language understood by most students.

2. The majority of students fail examinations, especially in subjects that require self-expression, because they don't understand English.
3. There are a lot of countries in the world that use their own languages and have done well. (Qorro 2005:102)

The reasons given to support English as the language of instruction are good for English language teaching, and not for using it as the language of instruction. It is highly likely that parents, especially those who think that English will die if it is not used as a medium, misunderstand English language teaching and using English as the language of instruction. They misunderstand the concepts and believe that English medium and English language teaching are synonymous. No one objects that English is an important language and that it should be taught effectively for students to learn it. English language teaching and using English as the language of instruction are two different things, each of which can, and in fact should be, conducted separately.

The other misunderstanding is that students are expected to learn all subjects in English even when their level of proficiency is still very low. In a study that tested students' ability to learn through English in the first year of secondary education (Qorro 2006) it was found that more than three quarters (77.1%) of students in the sample scored a D grade or below. Only 15 out of 388 students scored a B grade and none scored an A grade. These students have no option except to memorise whatever is taught in English. It is my strong belief that certain levels of proficiency in the language of instruction is necessary if students are to understand what is taught. Levels of proficiency in a language (highly simplified) can be elaborated in many ways. For lack of a better model to express students' different levels of profi-

<sup>2</sup> The levels are a continuum and there are certainly more than 3. The stages are an abstraction just to show proficiency levels as low, medium, and high; other levels (sub-levels) in-between exist.

ciency and applying personal experience of teaching English and Kiswahili in Tanzania secondary schools, I have attempted to describe different levels/stages of proficiency that students go through and the approximation of language functions that they can perform at each level.

### 3 Language proficiency<sup>2</sup> levels: Conversational and academic proficiency

1. Extremely low level of proficiency: is a level at which the student can use the language only for the simplest functions. When forced to use language at this stage he/she learns by heart almost every word before speaking it out. It takes time to understand simple issues or instructions. Relationship between what is taught and the life he/she lives is not seen. Lessons are a bore and thoughts tend to shift away from classroom activities. At this stage quality education is impossible.
2. Medium level of proficiency: is a level at which the student is able to give a person directions on where to go, or how to reach a certain place. At this level the speaker has a superficial understanding of what he/she hears or what is taught in the language. The tendency to memorise persists, although is greatly reduced. The student is able to write short simple sentences and to ask simple questions. Chances of not understanding at all or misunderstanding the intended meaning exist. Language is still a hindrance in active participation during teaching/learning and normal conversation.
3. High level of proficiency: is a level at which the student is able to use the language to think, discuss, debate, analyse, and assess various issues and concepts that are pre-





sented in class. The student is able to use the language to discover new thoughts, and can use the language independently to understand challenges that face him/her and address them. Language is not a hindrance in any kind of understanding. He/she does not need to memorise and instead applies his/her understanding to respond to challenges. It is at this stage of proficiency that a student can effectively and efficiently use the language of instruction to attain good quality education.

Numerous research (Mlama na Matteru 1978, Criper and Dodd 1984, Roy-Campbell and Qorro 1987, Rubagumya, Jones and Mwansoko 1998, Qorro 1999, Mwinsheikhe 2003, Puja 2003, Brock Utne 2004, Vuzo 2005) has shown that most Tanzanian secondary schools students fit the description given under level 1 above while most of those in tertiary education fit the description given under level 2, above in as far as the language of instruction, English, is concerned. Thus, the continued use of English as a language of instruction classifies them as deficient and bound to be failures. Most of these students learn to not be creative/inquisitive, to not ask questions, to not think and instead they copy, learn by heart/memorise, are afraid, have no confidence, accept everything without questioning, are apathetic and easily give up. In other words, most students in Tanzania's secondary schools and higher learning institutions do not receive the education intended for them because of their extremely low proficiency in English, the language of instruction. Therefore, instead of education fighting/eradicating ignorance, it in fact nurtures ignorance. Since there is very little mother tongue education in Tanzania, except for students whose mother tongue is Kiswahili, we need to learn from other countries that practice mother tongue education. The next section examines mother tongue and bilingual education in South-East Asian countries through studies funded by UNESCO.

#### 4. The impact of mother tongue learning

##### 4.1 Studies on mother tongue education in Africa

Since launching the LOITASA project in Tanzania and South Africa, more research has been conducted in the area of language in education (Brock-Utne (2005a), Brock-Utne and Desai (2004), Galabawa and Lwaitama (2004), Galabawa and Senkoro (2005), Malekela (2003), Nomlomo (2003), Qorro (2003), Vuzo (2005) and others). In a comparative study of learners' writing skills in English and Kiswahili in Tanzania and English and isiXhosa in South Africa, Brock-Utne and Desai (2005) in which students were given pictures to describe in English and isiXhosa (in the case of South Africa) and in English and Kiswahili (in the case of Tanzania), it was found that students' description in Kiswahili had an explicit correlation between what the students wrote and what was found in the pictures.

All 60 students who participated in the exercise reflected quite clearly what was shown in the pictures. The stories in Kiswahili were much longer and clearer. With regard to meaning, most of the students related the meaning of the story well and selected appropriate words. Expressions were used suitably showing creativity, which was lacking in the English stories. There was consistency and coherence in the stories written in Kiswahili. There was evidence of rich vocabulary in Kiswahili, which was lacking in the English versions of the story. As for grammatical ability, in the Kiswahili versions, sentences were well formed and had appropriate sequential organisation. Connecting words had been used creating interest and increasing the narrative flavour of the story. There was proper sentence construction and no grammatical, spelling and no tense errors in the Kiswahili stories (Brock-Utne and Desai 2005: 243-244).

In the case of isiXhosa students, the stories written in English were largely incomprehensible and often not linked to the pictures while the isiXhosa version

was much more clearly expressed though a descriptive rather than narrative mode. Although the English used by students in Grade 7 learners was much better, it did not compare favourably with their isiXhosa. When asked how they experienced the task, all pupils said they enjoyed the task but simply did not have the proficiency in English to express themselves clearly (Brock-Utne and Desai 2005: 228).

In an earlier study (Mkwizu 2002) the same pictures had been used and students asked to describe them in Kiswahili and English. The same trend was observed where students did very well in Kiswahili compared to their writing in English. In the English versions, the sentences were simple, short and uncoordinated. Students lacked vocabulary with which to name and describe what they saw in the pictures. Due to these weaknesses, it was sometimes difficult to comprehend what students wrote in English. Compared to the Kiswahili stories, the English ones lacked detail (Mkwizu 2002:57).

Another comparative analysis of performance in Kiswahili and English as languages of instruction at the secondary school level in selected Tanzanian schools of Galabawa and Lwaitama (2005), found that students' performance was much better when taught in Kiswahili than in English. Both the minimum and maximum scores were higher in Kiswahili than in English. Dispersions within the group were generally lower in the group taught in Kiswahili than those obtained in the English group, a finding which suggests that teaching in Kiswahili tended to make students' achievements and performance more homogenous. The within group dispersions obtained in the group taught in English tended to be high, suggesting wide learner performance differences when teaching is done in English (Galabawa and Lwaitama 2005:155-156).

Brock-Utne (2005b) on a study of the African Girls Education Initiative supported through UNICEF, recounts her experience of sitting at the back of classrooms in six African countries including Uganda,

Swaziland, Namibia, Niger, Mali and Guinea as tragic. She observed children and teachers having great difficulty in expressing themselves in English (or French) because they rarely had exposure to these foreign languages. She believes, and I agree with her, that such situations require teaching effectively the European languages as subjects and using African languages of wider communication as languages of instruction. Parents, policy makers, educational planners and all other stakeholders of education need to assess and understand the situation that prevails on the ground before they argue and make decisions on language teaching and the language of instruction.

Beyond the African continent researchers like Cummins (1979, 1981) and Krashen (1985) further show that poor performance in the language of instruction results in poor performance, not only in subject matter teaching, but also in overall poor performance in the second or foreign language. These findings have been confirmed by studies in Tanzania by Roy-Campbell and Qorro (1987 and 1999). In other words, when students have a firm grasp/understanding of their specialized subjects that understanding gives them a firm ground on which to build the foundation for learning a second or foreign language, in this case English. However, this firm grasp or understanding, which is key to the quality of education, can only be achieved when teachers and students understand the language of instruction.

#### **4.2 Research on mother tongue and bilingual education elsewhere**

Sufficient research on bilingual education provides a rational and credible basis for use of the child's home language in bilingual education. Generally, research shows that the mother tongue is an essential foundation for all learning. It is important that all children use their mother tongue when they enter school for the first time. Learning through the mother tongue helps children learn about the nature of language, itself, as well as, about how to use language to make





sense of the world (UNESCO 2005: 90). Findings of international research show that bilingual education starting in the learners' mother tongue can provide many pedagogical advantages. Comprehensive reviews on these issues can be found, for example in Baker (2001), Baker & Hornberger (2001), Cummins (2000) and Skutnabb-Kangas (2000).

While revisiting his *Threshold and Interdependence Hypotheses*, Cummins (2000: 173) quotes at length from Elizabeth Thomson's Introduction to Robert MacDougall's book, *The Emigrant's Guide to North America*, published as far back as 1841 and republished in English translation in 1998 as follows:

"Not all regions in Scotland had schools, even well into the nineteenth century. And where schools existed, students and educators alike faced another dilemma: largely for political reasons, English was the preferred medium of instruction, despite obvious problems in communication. Worse, many schools ignored Gaelic entirely, both because it was politically expedient and because there were no Gaelic texts to use. Fortunately, by the early nineteenth century, attitudes had softened somewhat; the Scots had not risen against the English recently, and *educators discovered that Gaelic students learned to read English more easily if they had a basic grounding in Gaelic grammar and literature*. The fluency of MacDougall's written Gaelic indicates that he was one of the lucky ones, taught in both Gaelic and English." (Quoted in Cummins 2000: 173)

Cummins points out that the "interdependence hypothesis was proposed to address exactly the same type of observation Thomson refers to as early as 1800s in Scotland: that academic language proficiency transfers across languages such that students who have developed literacy in their L1 will tend to make stronger progress in acquiring literacy in L2." (Ibid)

The interdependence hypothesis may partly explain why, in Tanzania, students who start learning English from the first year of primary school do worse than those who started learning it from the third year, and much worse than those who started learning English from the fifth year of primary school. Current thinking and practice in Tanzania seem to go contrary to Cummins' interdependent hypothesis, and the result is poor acquisition of both Kiswahili and English and poor performance across the curriculum.

In the case of South-East Asia, Kosonen, while giving an overview on the use of local languages in education, points out that a significant proportion of the population in these countries speak a local language as their mother tongue. He further points out that not all speakers of these languages have sufficient knowledge of the languages used in education. This means that by implication they are underprivileged in terms of access, retention and achievement.

With such a positive impact on education when offered in mother tongue, why have there been very few, if any, successful attempts to extend the use of mother tongue education or African languages of wider communication like Kiswahili, Hausa, IsiXhosa, Wolof, etc., as languages of instruction for higher education in Africa?

##### **5. Why mother tongue education has not been implemented: Who fears literacy in Africa?**

The attitude of policy makers in Africa is very telling and accounts for the lack of political will to support language policy that is pro mother tongue and bilingual education in Africa. After independence, in the case of Tanzania, policy makers felt that the teaching of English language should start much earlier, and in 1961 English language teaching started in the third year of primary school. Today English is taught from the first year of schooling, with some negative effects on students' performance in both English and other subjects. The teaching of English

has mostly been monolingual; that is, it is taught with the exclusion of all other languages. This is because some pedagogical researchers and most policy makers in Africa strongly believe that the best way to teach English is to prohibit the use of all other languages in the schools. This belief is probably based on the (seemingly) simple logic that the more students are exposed to English, the better their English will become. This logic does not seem to take into account the kind of English that students are exposed to. Contrary to the said belief, research in recent years has shown that students learn a foreign language better when they have a strong foundation in their mother tongue or first literacy language.

Like many other educationists in Tanzania, I believed that using English as the language of instruction in African countries, for example Tanzania, helped students to learn English. It sounded logical, straight forward and simple over time, experience and reading literature and findings of research on bilingual education has made me change my mind. I have learned that it is not so much a matter of straightforward and simple logic and issues in life do not always go in straightforward logic, as it may seem initially. I have come to learn that using English as the language of instruction not only bars students from acquiring knowledge of subject content, but it also bars students from learning the English language itself. The important question is what kind of English students are exposed to.

In the case of Tanzania, none of the mother tongues (amounting to more than 120) have ever been used in the formal education system. The government has been concerned with the use of Kiswahili and English as the only official languages. However, Kiswahili is the most widely spoken indigenous language in the country and the medium for the full circle of primary education in government schools. Since 1967, the government has kept a position of ambivalence on whether to switch to Kiswahili in

secondary schools and higher education or to retain Kiswahili at primary school and English for the rest of the education system. This situation has resulted in the deterioration of both languages, and the loss of most of the mother tongues in Tanzania.

A few individuals in Tanzania have attempted to start Kiswahili medium primary schools (Rubagumya 2003). These individuals have expressed they are under pressure from parents who threatened to transfer their children in the event Kiswahili was to be introduced as LOI. Thus, efforts to start schools for Kiswahili as LOI have been countered with resistance either from policy makers or from parents. In a research report by Qorro (2005) on parents' views on the language of instruction issue, the majority of parents in the sample admitted they were aware their children learned very little when taught in English; however, they objected the proposal to change the educational medium to Kiswahili. Policy makers, as well as parents give various reasons in support of the continued use of foreign languages, in this case English, as the medium of instruction in Africa.

As far as parents are concerned, they probably fear for the future of their children. They genuinely wish to see their children learn English for future economic gains. But, for policy makers, the fear might lie elsewhere as Silue (2000: 140) points out "[...] there are more covert motives indicating that the weakness or sheer lack of a language policy in Africa should not be blamed on a kind of sincere ignorance on the part of the leadership." Once literacy programmes raise consciousness among the general public, people will be in a better position to know and demand their rights. I do not want to believe that our politicians are not aware of research findings on the language of instruction issue, or that they do not understand the importance of education to the extent that they allow the current situation to continue. It is this situation that





forces researchers to believe that our politicians (in the whole of Africa) and particularly in Tanzania have vested interests (contrary to the interests of the majority) in the continued use of English, French and Portuguese as the language of instruction in post-primary school education.

Silue (2000) further points out, “[...] ruling leaderships in Africa are suspicious about the use of national languages because they can effectively bring the message of development to the majority. When the message comes out effectively, the leadership would not be prepared to sustain the populations’ demands.” In other words, foreign languages are used as languages of instruction to contain the majority and keep them ignorant. If this is actually the case, then it is not likely that governments in Africa would ever allow mother tongue or bilingual education. The responsibility to liberate the majority of Africa’s population thus lies with non-governmental organisations, civil societies, and other private institutions that are genuinely interested in the development of the majority in Africa.

Brock-Utne (1997) proposes that in order to bring in the education system and especially the language policy, Africans must first liberate their minds. Obaro (1997) also agrees with Brock-Utne that Africans must recognise the importance of changing the system of education that they offer to their youth and that it should be more “African” than the inherited Western model. For example, African professors need to write books for African schools so that schools do not depend entirely on books imported from Western countries.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has examined the way mother tongue and bilingual education have been sidelined in the African educational system and the resulting dangers where students end up learning very little, if

anything. It is argued that this has come about because of the myth that students learn a foreign language better when it is used for instruction. There are also beliefs that once students acquire a low proficiency in a foreign language they are able to use it to learn other languages and continue learning it in the process. Research findings; however, point towards the opposite direction, that students learn a foreign language best when they have a strong foundation in their mother tongue. The impact of mother tongue education has also been examined citing various studies in Africa and elsewhere. One of the reasons as to why mother tongue and bilingual education have not been implemented in Africa, despite the positive impact on students’ performance, is proposed to be that governments are not ready and prepared to contain or handle a literate population.

From research findings it is obvious that mother tongue and bilingual education are possible, viable and sustainable in Africa, and that they will have a positive impact on the development of the continent. There is a need, therefore, to raise awareness among the African population about the critical role of mother tongue and bilingual education. There is, in fact, the need to strengthen mother tongue and bilingual education in Africa. I believe the responsibility to raise awareness lies with NGOs, CSOs, CBO, researchers and educators who believe in mother tongue and bilingual education. All these need to join hands all over the world (a benefit of globalisation) to provide what is best for our people.

Educators do always not agree on the issue of mother tongue and bilingual education, but this should not be a problem. Different educators hold different views on many other issues, but what is important is to agree on who we are, where we are, where we want to go, and what we need in order to get there. Education is a process that facilitates our transformation from who we are to who we want to be. The lan-

guage that is understood by most of us is a tool through which we can dialogue, discuss, inquire, debate, and critically evaluate, assess, and understand each other in the process of this transformation. If we understand each other, then we are likely to succeed in improving the quality of education.

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## THEME 2: ASPECTS OF CITIZENSHIP IN RELATION TO MOTHER TONGUE AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION



Citizenship is about being part of one's society. Individual identity, as well as the cultural identity of ethnic groups, is important for a sense of citizenship; and the mother tongue is a key element in both. In a multicultural society the question is whether individuals and groups should maintain their cultural characteristics or if minorities should be assimilated into the majority culture. One could also opt for models between the two extremes. All societies pose the questions: what kind of citizens would we like to have, and who are regarded as citizens with equal rights?

The arguments behind a country's language policy are, among other things, based on ideas about the 'ideal' citizen and theories about how such an identity is formed. The discourses that exist in different countries about identity and language are reflected in ideas about mother tongue and bilingual education. Because of this, neither of these issues should be considered in isolation.

Citizens are also people with rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child states that: *The education of the child shall be directed to [...] the development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own.* (Article 29)

Consequently, it is integrated in the right to education that education should strengthen cultural identity and language, but also contribute to intercultural understanding in multicultural contexts. These rights are also used in discourses about mother tongue and bilingual education in different cultural and political contexts.

In many developing countries, there are a number of indigenous language groups/ethnic groups

within the same nation and the discourses presented reflect differing beliefs about how to sustain national unity and avoid ethnic conflict by focusing on the development of a common national culture and language. On the other hand, different ethnic groups have their rights to cultural identity and wish to use their own local languages - also to sustain identity and self-esteem.

Furthermore, the emphasis on maintaining original cultures is often joined by a strong reaction against the colonial heritage and the use of colonial languages. In Denmark, the integration of immigrants is discussed. Particular discussions focus on the extent to which immigrated minorities should adapt to the Danish culture, and what rights they have to keep their cultural identity. It is also debated which balance between adaptation/diversity will contribute to the most peaceful coexistence. These discussions are also reflected in the language education policies.

Central questions for discussion:

- Should the state offer mother tongue/bilingual education for all citizens because they have the right to it?
- Is mother tongue/bilingual education desirable in order to strengthen and maintain the cultural self-esteem and identity of minority cultures?
- Is mother tongue/bilingual education necessary for different cultures to co-exist in a multicultural society?

## BACKGROUND PAPER FROM PATRICIA OLIART

### Citizenship and bilingual education: current challenges in Andean societies

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In the next pages I will try to make evident the complexities that come with teaching in the mother tongue in a situation of historical subordination and oppression of indigenous cultures. First I will explain briefly how the idea of teaching in the mother tongue developed into the ideal of intercultural education. Then, I will provide some examples of my research to illustrate the complexity of issues involved in implementing changes to teach in the mother tongue and to finalise with some general thoughts about the relationship between language and citizenship.

During the 1940's, some Latin American intellectu-

als had identified that the states' homogenizing approach to education had reproduced and reinforced exclusion, instead of playing an integrating role regarding indigenous populations who spoke indigenous languages. Later, in the 1950s the United Nations defined the need to develop literacy campaigns in the mother tongue as an efficient way of lowering illiteracy rates. But it was only in the mid-seventies when some bilingual education programmes were revised and moved away from the emphasis on linguistics and literacy, and cultural differences were taken into account. The concept of intercultural education was developed to present the ideal of an educational system that was aware of the diverse contributions that multicultural contact brought into the school system. These could be



Eva Iversen:  
Patricia Oliart (guest  
speaker) and Michelle  
Fay (student at DPU)



achieved by acknowledging the diverse cultural contributions brought into the school environment by members of different cultures.

The idea, originally formulated in Venezuela, became rapidly popular in the rest of Latin America where educators, some indigenous intellectuals and anthropologists, then criticized the limits of the bilingual education approach to schooling, and proposed the integration of diverse cultural aspects of education, through the incorporation of indigenous knowledge in the curriculum. The new notion was that school and indigenous education could complement each other, and it was developed and first put into practice in some independent initiatives in the low lands of the Amazonia in Peru, and then in Ecuador and Bolivia, as part of national state-led literacy campaigns (Lopez 1998, Ansi3n and Zúñiga 1997, Trapnell 1996).

By the late 80's most programs on bilingual education had attached the intercultural adjective to their denomination. This implied that the focus on language learning had been broadened to include questions and reflections about culture and contact with the Western world, as well as, conflict between hegemonic national society and indigenous cultures. This seems to be simultaneous with the influence of the trans-national indigenous movement, which has an influence or resonance in the United Nations (Brysk 2002).

The debate to better define this approach was mainly academic, but some general ideas filtered into the formulation of educational politics and became part of the World Bank Educational reform "package" for Latin America in the early 1990's. Given that I will concentrate on the Peruvian experience, it is interesting to note that Peruvian intellectuals are among the main theoretical contributors to the debate on intercultural education and policy making in Latin America. Some pioneering initiatives in intercultural education led by indigenous

peoples, took place in Peru curtailed reform initiated by the Velasco Regime in 1972. This was the first educational reform in the region to integrate important linguistic and cultural issues for urban and rural areas (Howard, 2004). Later experiences took place in Bolivia, Brazil and Ecuador, involving intense discussions about the best ways of carrying an intercultural education reform with indigenous organisations and social institutions.

However, the changes implemented in the Peruvian Education system in the 1990s did not include the participation of indigenous peoples, teacher's organisations, or their leaders. The design of the new strategy to impart bilingual education was done among specialists and the Ministry of Education without much consultation and that has brought up some difficulties (Hornberger 2001).

In fact, large communities have rallied against bilingual education or EBI (Educación Bilingüe Intercultural), as specialist Vilma Unda from the Direccion Regional de Educacion showed me in Cusco (1998). She had a cabinet full of petitions signed by different communities asking to be removed from the EBI areas. The main argument was that they did not want the state to teach Quechua to their children (Garcia 2005). They wanted the schools to teach how to read and write in Spanish. I will try to unravel this paradox in the time I have in this presentation using different examples from my research.

### **Mother tongue and citizenship**

Behind Europe and North America, Latin America ranks next in the world in its reach and educational coverage of most of the population. According to a combination of statistical sources, approximately 92% of Peruvian children of school age register in school at least once in their lives. What is still problematic is the gap between quality standards in pri-

vate and public schools, and years of schooling in urban and rural areas. Thus, the average number of school years for boys in urban areas was 9.2 years according to the last national census, against 5.1 years for rural boys. Urban girls attended an average of 8.3 years, and rural girls 3.7 years. On the other hand, Peru ranks second to last on test results in Maths and Spanish applied to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students in Latin America. The lowest scores come from rural schools where children speak languages other than Spanish, as their mother tongue.

The colonial situation of ethnic and cultural domination of the indigenous peoples of Peru created a situation of diglossia between Spanish and Quechua, so that becoming bilingual in Peru is usually a process that goes from Quechua to Spanish and rarely in the other direction (Escobar, 1990). Learning Spanish is a very complex process and usually asymmetric. The efforts done by Quechua speakers to learn Spanish are not recognized as such by society, but instead discouraged and even used as a marker of a condition of inferiority.

An example from my research fieldwork on male students of rural origin at the San Cristobal de Huamanga University in Ayacucho illustrates this tension. A well known fact to everybody at Huamanga University is that students from education and agricultural engineering come largely from rural areas. Every October the UNSCH celebrates its anniversary, and each school has a delegation in a colourful parade. The one from the school of education is usually hailed by the audience as 'Idocashón, idocashón!' mimicking the possible pronunciation of the word 'Educación' by a Quechua speaker, usually assumed to come from the rural areas. In the same fashion, once I was watching a volleyball game where female students from the Education department were playing against Social Work students, the

latter one's audience was hailing the rival team yelling 'A Bi Ci Chi!, A Bi Ci Chi!', again pronouncing imaginary rural teachers saying the alphabet with their Quechua accent.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the associations between Quechua speaking and being indigenous and rural, backwards, or ignorant, on the one hand, and Spanish speaking, urban, white or mestizo on the other, still hold currency. These associations are also different for men and women. Some sociolinguistic studies about the Andes, point at evidence of the deep relationship between masculinity and linguistic competence in Spanish, in both in rural and urban spaces. Penélope Harvey (1989), Aurolyn Luykx (1989, 1996 and 1998) and Alison Spedding, among others, have shown how linguistic competence in Spanish, and particularly in registers adequate for certain public spaces that demand certain degree of formality, becomes a highly valued and sought after skill among men.

The Peruvian population is highly sensitive in perceiving and identifying the different phases of the process to bilingualism that monolingual Quechua rural speakers go through. According to Ana María Escobar (1990), in Peru there are the native bilingual, and the non-native bilingual; those who were born monolingual and learned to speak a vernacular language and have acquired Spanish in a context different than home. Escobar identifies several levels of command of Spanish among non-native bilinguals, so that the characteristics of the Quechua interference in the Spanish spoken by anyone, becomes crucial for the treatment they will get in urban settings.

For example, among urban girls in Huamanga, the quality of Spanish that the men they go out with speak is of high importance. Whether it is for fun,

<sup>3</sup> There is an ongoing discussion about how many vowels can be recognised in Quechua phonology, but in fact, for Quechua speakers the acquisition of the Spanish sounds for e and o takes a long time, and they are frequently used as the Spanish sounds for l and u, thus revealing their Quechua origin. Likewise, Quechua speakers would probably change the 'ción' ending of Educación for something closer to 'shon'.





or to establish some long term relationship, girls will choose a man who has a solid command of Spanish, in order to be respected among their peers. Very few will probably be ready to be criticised for having a boyfriend 'who does not even speak proper Castilian'.<sup>4</sup>

As a result, people who have Quechua or Aymara as a native language, and who move around beyond their communities, have very strong reasons for feeling vulnerable. Indians are the marked category, and there is close surveillance over them to avoid the transgression of the permissible limits to be considered mestizos. If they want to break the borders of these segregated spaces they have to do so by positioning themselves in a subordinated, dominated position. This includes for instance, having to tolerate offensive, humorous remarks and nicknames, related to their indigenous appearance, with barely masked discomfort.

### Learning Spanish in rural schools

The rural population in Peru (27% of the total) is distributed in 75,000 small villages. Only 875 have 500 to 1999 dwellers. The rest of them have less than 500 people and tend to be in very remote areas of the highlands and the Amazonia (Montero and Tovar, 1999: 13). To provide at least one teacher in all of these villages them is no easy task. On one hand, the system produces more secondary school teachers than elementary school teachers and - unlike Bolivia for example, where recent graduates from rural teacher colleges are automatically allocated to teach in rural schools for at least two years (Luykx, 1999: 51) - in Peru graduates have no obligation towards the state to teach anywhere. On the other hand, while coverage in rural areas is high, most schools only offer the first six grades of primary education.

Working conditions for teachers in those remote areas are truly harsh. In 1997, while visiting a rural school in Santa Eulalia, in the highlands of Lima, a female teacher told me she had been there for 9 years, and it was about time for her to 'go down' (to the Coast): 'Si pues señorita, todos tenemos derecho a bajar,' she said. Another teacher I met in a rural school in Calca said that when she was first appointed to work in a rural school she cried every night for the first three months. She found the community in the mountains inhospitable, she felt lonely and she spoke very little Quechua, so she could not communicate fluently with her students. But most striking, were the words of the Student's Union president at the Instituto Pedagógico de Tinta. This is a very special rural Teacher Training Programme in the province of Sicuani in Cusco, run by a group of nuns inspired by the Liberation Theology, and is characterized by their openness to pedagogical innovation and quality, and one of the very few in which Quechua is taught to students. Most students there are of rural origin, or from the nearby towns. I was asked to speak about 'gender and the hidden curriculum in rural areas' and had a moment to chat with the students afterwards. Basically, the Students' Union president did not find my talk pertinent for him, because he was not interested in teaching in rural schools:

*I have learned to sleep in a sheeted bed here. I eat at a four legged table, with decent plates and cutlery; I can read, listen to the radio, or watch TV until the late hours because I have electricity. I am a different person now, and that is why I came here in the first place. I don't want to go back to where I came from.*

For him, studying in a rural teachers college did not mean that he was bound to teach in rural areas<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> In contrast, some students of bilingual origin, predominantly male, would use Quechua as a social divider in a reverse fashion. They feel very comfortable when they know that they can switch codes without having to provide any explanations. Sometimes they deliberately use Quechua to exclude some people from their circles, by joking and laughing so that the non-Quechua speaker feels excluded.

<sup>5</sup> This is consonant with the position of the Mexican teacher's union who refuse to teach in rural areas, and have forced the Mexican government to solve the demand for rural teachers with high school students and university volunteer workers.

This lack of motivation to work in rural areas creates a very tense situation in the local branches of the ministry, granting local officers an opportunity to make high personal profit while exercising their attributions to assign teaching posts in their regions. Every year, during the six or seven weeks prior to the beginning of the school year in late March or April, the corridors or patios of the local and regional branches of the Ministry of Education<sup>6</sup> are packed with teachers queuing, waiting for a reply to their applications for 'asignaciones' (the decision to assign a post for a new teacher), 're-asignaciones' (change of school, usually from rural to urban areas, or from a one-teacher school to a bigger one), or promotions. Teachers under temporary contract also need to find out if they have been 'racionalizados' (transferred to other schools even if they did not ask for it).

In a very casual way, as if they were talking about the price of books or shoes, comments about a US\$300 or \$250 bribe, to be admitted into the system or to be transferred to another school, are common in the queues. Less openly told, but also frequent in my years of experience in working with teachers, are the stories of female teachers of all ages, being asked sexual favours from local officers to grant what they are asking for.<sup>7</sup>

In 2000, I was asked to perform an external evaluation of the first five years of the Rural Schools Project run by Fe y Alegria<sup>8</sup> in Quispicanchis, Cusco. The project at that moment had 29 primary schools, and 110 teachers serving 4,500 students. Some of the results of this consultancy show the consequences of all the abandonment and corruption in a very concrete way.

I learned about two most arresting facts during my evaluation: the high mobility of teachers and the waste of human and economic resources this meant, not just for the project but for the healthy life of any school and for the state itself as provider of a public service. The project started in February 1995 with 29 schools and 110 teachers<sup>9</sup> who were duly re-trained in Fe y Alegria's teaching methods in multigrade schools and in bilingual education. In August 2000 there were only 7 teachers left out of the original group. The rest have been moved by the Ministry office to other areas. Those movements had occurred at an incredibly fast pace. In 1999 alone, 56 out of the 110 teachers were moved from their schools during the school year and, according to the project director, those figures were similar every year. Alarmingly, those school transfers occurred at any moment during the school year. When I did my evaluation, 85 out of the 110 teachers have been working with the project for less than one year. All this traffic would pose a serious threat to the pace of work anywhere, at any school, making it even worse for the schools with only one teacher for all grades.

In 1999, the project organised another set of training sessions for their new teachers and opened it to teachers in other areas of the province, this time concentrating on bilingual education methods for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students. They trained 105 teachers, but the local office of the Ministry only allowed 25 of them to teach those age groups that same year, rendering the training useless.

Two facts grounded in extra-technical reasons help explain the logic behind these chaotic situations.

<sup>6</sup> Most regimes like to change the names of these State offices, but basically they have the same attributions, distributing human and material resources in their regions, and implementing the Ministry's commands regarding the school calendar and the curriculum.

<sup>7</sup> I have heard stories that range from an invitation for lunch, to direct physical advances during the interviews.

<sup>8</sup> Fe y Alegria is a Catholic institution working in Latin America since 1956. In Peru they have been there since 1966, and it is run by the Jesuit Order. They have their own pedagogical approach developed by the Misioneras de Santa Teresa de Jesus (known as the Teresianas) that they use to train the teachers they select to work within their projects. They build their own schools, and have control over the organization of their schools, but depend on State funds to approve the assignment of teachers and to pay for their salaries.

<sup>9</sup> Currently they have one more school and have been granted 32 more posts by the state.





The first one is that 69% of rural teachers apply every single year for a transfer of school to go 'further down' to the cities, or closer to their own towns (IMASEN, 1998). The second reason responds to a legal loop that public officers systematically take advantage of. There is regulation (RS-020) that was created during the Alan Garcia regime in 1986, which has conveniently remained untouched since then. According to this regulation, the directors of the local offices of the Ministry of Education are allowed to have discretionary use of their unused budget by the end of the fiscal year 'to improve their working conditions'. In Peru, public employees on duty in the same post during 12 months are granted a total of 13 months of salary getting paid one half of the 13<sup>th</sup> salary in July and the other one in December. The more employees (teachers in this case) working for less than 12 months in a post, the more remaining money there will be to distribute between the director and the supervisors in office during that year. Thus, for every teacher transfer, officers could probably profit from the bribe charged to the applicant teacher, and the money coming from his or her saved salary. But the loss for the families and their children, with all the chaos and instability created in each affected school, are hard to account for.

This example shows clearly how the predominance of private interests on the part of teachers and state officers, together with the absolute disregard for the users of a state service, negates the investment done on training in bilingual education, rendering it useless. It becomes therefore inefficient and parents do not trust it.

### **Disseminating bilingual education**

The following material was collected between 1998 and 2000, in different locations in the Andes and the Selva Central during sessions of the in-service teacher training programs called PLANCAD and PLANCAD-EBI (the plan for training teachers in bilingual education). I will describe two different

situations as examples of the problematic aspects I identified in this process, which are hardly ever discussed in Peru. First I will describe fragments of one of these training sessions in Satipo, Junin, in Central Amazonia, with a group of Ashaninka teachers, and then I will describe the way in which one school teacher used what he learned in his training. I will try to show how the discourses and rationalities, I've described above, were acted upon and embodied in these different experiences.

### **1. Satipo**

Satipo is a frontier town between the Andes of Junin and the Peruvian rainforest. Very near is Mazamari, a modern base for the anti-drug police, who are fighting the alliance of the Shining Path and coca dealers. The Asháninka, the largest indigenous group in Peruvian Amazonia with close to 40,000 people, live in the surrounding communities.

I wanted to go to this particular version of PLANCAD-EBI because I had only seen it in the Andes, with Quechua or Aymara teachers, and also because of the good reputation of the institution in charge of the training. I was also looking for contacts with school teachers for the research I was involved in at that moment. I was first surprised when I met the trainers on Monday morning for breakfast. For a moment, I truly believed I was in the wrong place as they were revising the list of participants and referred to the teachers they were about to train as 'the little girl' (la chiquita) or 'the little boy' (el chiquito) from this or that community when they recognized their names as former students of a training institution where the three of them used to work. During breakfast it was also evident that the three trainers were just meeting to organize the week they were about to start one hour ahead. They work in different areas of the Amazonia, and a previous meeting for them was not in the budget.

Once in the venue, there were rumours among participant teachers about how they had not received any money from the ministry for their per-diem expenses, so some of them were sleeping on the floor with relatives and others in very cheap lodgings. All they had been given was the equivalent of 20 pence per day, enough for the cheapest breakfast consisting of a glass of cocoa and oats and a piece of bread. On the other hand, the Ministry had not given the money to buy the trainee's lunches, so the trainers would have to pack the whole training programme into just a few hours; from 8a.m. to 1 p.m., in three days, instead of what was supposed to be a 40 hour week of training. After 1p.m., teachers had to manage on their own, and find where to eat and figure out how to cover their expenses. It is important to note that those training sessions were compulsory, and that teachers would have money taken away from their meagre salaries if they missed the sessions. It is also relevant to notice that nobody would really investigate what happened with the money and why it did not arrive. The trainers took a quick, practical decision, but one that laid the solution in the teacher's pockets, personal networks, or physical endurance.

The training took place in a one-story cement building, with corrugated iron ceilings and little ventilation, in an area where the temperature can get as high as 38C degrees, and where it rains frequently, causing a deafening din with water pouring down over the tin roofs. Six classrooms were at the centre of a 600m<sup>2</sup> rectangle, with only double plywood separations dividing them. The plywood walls did not reach the ceiling, so there were no sound barriers between rooms. The air was humid and thick inside the building, and the level of noise coming from every space inside was really high.

The training was planned for 140 teachers from indigenous schools, serving mostly the Asháninka, Yanesha or Amuehsa communities, and many of

them multiethnic, including Quechua speaking children of the 'colonos,' migrants from the highlands. But the language training was only done in Ashaninka. The range of ages was great, from 24 to over 50 years of age. There were no childcare facilities, so teachers with children had to bring them to their classes. A couple of young mestizo teachers took both their children. One was only 15 days old, and the other was 18 months. During classes, several teachers spent considerable time in the corridors entertaining their children, breastfeeding them anywhere they could, and those who kept them in their classrooms did not pay much attention to them either.

The trainers had separated the participants into three groups to match the three instructors for Maths, languages and sciences. The voices of the three trainers talking at the same time made each session very confusing and extremely demanding. Two trainers had prepared songs for their training sessions, so the singing and the sound of children roaming around, or crying, seriously affected the effectiveness of the training. Only students from the first and second rows could hear the teachers, and the rest hardly heard anything, only activities like singing or jumping could summon everybody's attention.

According to the training routine designed at the Ministry, the training week should have started with a self produced agenda for the week, useful to identify the participant's concerns, and needs, and at the same time to make evident what their 'prior knowledge' and skills were. None of the three trainers did this and directly started the activities planned by them.

Indigenous peoples from Amazonia have acknowledged the right to have teachers who speak their languages. This is not always honoured but at least communities have a legal instrument to back their





claims when this does not happen. Most teachers in the country come from the Sierra<sup>10</sup>, and in this area many of them have had to learn Asháninka in order to be accepted by the communities. I perceived a certain tension around this issue during the language class, as participants had to produce speeches in Asháninka and some of the Asháninka teachers laughed at one of the mestizo teachers who seemed to be having problems while making his presentation in Asháninka.

The three instructors treated participants very warmly but in a fashion I found rather patronizing, like the common attitude Peruvians have towards children, employing vertical and protective language and physical attitude, and providing close to no explanations or allowing no room for discussion. Therefore, the main task was to get the trainees closely involved in the observation so that they could repeat the same class with their students.

The Maths trainer was introducing a new tool for teaching counting and basic arithmetic operations. She showed students a bucket full of plastic coloured bars so that they would recognize it if they ever got it, and then distributed the coloured bars saying: 'Please do not eat them, they are plastic, not sweets'. If that was meant as a joke, nobody laughed.

She then started the presentation of the kit. 'If we use these little bars, we will have the best resource to teach children how to think in a concrete way. Children have this bad habit of counting with their fingers, but if they use these bars they will not have to use their fingers to count anymore.' She went on with the same kind of statements, without providing any reflection whatsoever, and casually dismissing any previous knowledge or techniques teachers might have used to teach Maths. She did not present the 'new' methods as an improvement, or a

suggestion, nor did she provide an explanation as to why this could be better. She acted as if she was applying the correct way of teaching, establishing first that the previous teaching methods were wrong and obsolete. She would take this as far as to say: 'do not use groups of objects anymore. This method with the bars is better'. She continued: 'Let's have an example so that you learn how to duplicate. Please set the bars in ascending order. Or... maybe you do not know what ascending is?' Most of the class replied: 'De menor a mayor' and they kept manipulating the bars for more than an hour, and practicing ways to add and subtract. My impression was that many of the teachers were very bored. I also found the instructor's approach to be very aggressive.

In general, the whole organization and set up of this training was clearly distant and indifferent of the concrete situation of the teachers. In my view, it was useless as a way of promoting any learning or desirable change in the work they were doing. There was no dialogue, no space for communication. Their concrete material situation was ignored, not only the one they experienced during that week, but the circumstances under which the teachers worked in the Asháninka communities overall. There was a stark contrast between the quiet, indifferent and distant attitude they had during the classes, and the intensity of their emotions in the afternoon when we sat to talk and I asked them about their working conditions.

According to the *Truth Commission Report*, the Asháninka are the people with more victims of atrocities done to them by both Sendero Luminoso and the army, even after the capture of Abimael Guzman in 1992. The region in which they live is very poor, with serious erosion in the rainforest. During the collective interview it took the form of a very intense conversation, even without me asking, and they were eager to communicate their working

<sup>10</sup> 67% of teachers working in rural areas in the three regions come from the Highlands.

conditions, the remoteness of the areas in which they work, the lack of food for the children they teach and the fear felt among the families. We contacted one teacher to visit his school later in the month. We saw him writing on the blackboard using his wet finger, as he had no chalk to write.

## 2. Calca

Laureano is the sole teacher in his school in a small community in the heights of Calca. There were less than 40 children in his school, which only goes to third grade. Those who want to go any further in their schooling must attend a school in the district capital, a distant 2 to 3 hour walk from the community. Laureano had been trained by PLANCAD-EBI, but as I could see with many of his colleagues, he had not grasped the main point of the training. He was rather critical about the methodologies; he found them useless, ineffective, and confusing. He decided not to use them, first of all, because although he can speak Quechua, he has never learnt how to write it, so he feels humiliated when his students correct his spelling in the blackboard. He also feels the pressure of the parents in the community, who want their children to learn Spanish. To date, they are not content with Laureano's results. The children about to leave the third grade cannot speak any Spanish and Laureano blames it all on PLANCAD-EBI.

In one of my observations in Laureano's classes, I saw him using a workbook I had seen at the Ministry. There, they had explained to me how this should work, and Laureano made completely different use of it. He opened it (I would dare to say randomly) on a page that had 8 drawings with no text at all. The workbook, as I had been taught at the Ministry, allowed flexibility and freedom so that teachers could assign different tasks to children according to their age group, using the same pages in the book. They explained to me that if the teacher asks ques-

tions individually or to pairs of children, this gives an opportunity for them to produce, discuss, and rehearse writing in both languages. The drawings were just plain but detailed sketches of everyday life scenes, so that children could colour them, and under every drawing there were blank lines so that they could write descriptions of the pictures, full sentences, or simply new words. The workbook is designed to promote individual verbal and written production in both languages and include children from several levels. With a clear understanding of the material and some preparation, this could have been a useful class.

This is how Laureano used the page. First of all, he distributed one workbook for every two children and asked them *not to write* or paint in them. Then, he addressed the children in a combination of Quechua and Spanish: 'You will tell me what you see in the drawings. Do it first in Quechua, then in Spanish'. He started pointing at each picture asking 'What is this?' in Quechua. He addressed the whole class and waited for a collective answer. Then he translated the answer he considered best into Spanish. He did not allow the children to produce answers in Spanish or in Quechua. He would not comment on the only answer he allowed the class to produce, nor did he elicit other possible answers looking, for example, at the detailed drawings that could yield a wide exploration of vocabulary. He modelled the answer in Quechua and then translated it into Spanish, asking the children to repeat what he said, so he did not allow them to produce results in Spanish either.

First and second year children were very bored during this exercise. They were lost and Laureano was physically distanced from them, addressing only third year students most of the time, even though he had given workbooks to the whole classroom.

He repeated the exercise, this time talking to the





children in Spanish with the same question: What is this? He then demanded a quick collective response in Spanish and if he did not get it, he would give it to the children in a rather impatient tone. Once he finished this exercise, he collected the workbooks.

Laureano's poor grasp of the training he had received was not unique. After many occasions of observing these training sessions I could substantiate that a clear problem was the lack of arguments that could help teachers fight their own prejudices against indigenous languages. My interviews with teachers in the province of Quispicanchis in the year 2000 showed that for teachers who had already been through two years of training in bilingual education, Quechua was the 'children's obstacle' to learning. Even in pedagogical terms, it was not seen as a condition from which their work departed, but rather as a problem. In a more defensive fashion, I also had responses stating that Quechua was 'the ancestral language' that they had to rescue by including it in their classrooms, in areas where the language is alive and well, so much so, that children do not use Spanish outside of school. It seems that a training programme that omits important aspects from its contents and methodology, together with resistance from teachers towards changing their views about their students, will not produce the expected results. Consequently, parents' protests against a monolingual Quechua school they most certainly do not need are clearly understood. According to the EBI programme, Quechua should only be used up to the second year, with the gradual introduction of Spanish as a second language, which does not occur. This is because when children get to the third grade, in some cases, they do not try to use Spanish anymore, thereby producing the parents' uneasiness with the project.

### Final thoughts

A very provocative and important agenda to study

processes of pedagogical change in the context of globalization and educational reform comes from the questions posed by Harvey Graff (1982) to study literacy programs. I consider this agenda useful to analyse the impact of any fabricated neutral technology, as their effects must be studied, taking into account the contexts for their dissemination, identifying the agents who take them on, their motivations, and the concrete spaces in which these disseminations occurred. Graff also suggests that it is crucial to examine the meaning that was assigned to the new knowledge and their usages, the progressive changes it produced, the access to the services created, and the real and symbolic differences that emerged from their acquisition.

Graff belongs to the *New Literacy Studies* group. They have criticized previous orientations on literacy studies because of their exclusive attention to the technical aspects of it and for developing a myth about the effects that literacy is supposed to bring to those who achieve command of the written word. Instead, *New Literacy Studies* emphasize the need to study the contexts in which technical skills to read and write are disseminated, as well as, the ideological implications of that process. For many decades it was thought that writing and reading could bring about changes to the peoples who adopted them, but authors like Street, Graff (1982) and Olsen warn us about those myths. Their arguments are useful because just like it happened with literacy programs implemented since the 1950's, the need for change in informal and formal education itself is hoped to produce miraculous solutions for very pervasive and serious problems.

It is therefore important to look at the context in which bilingual education is promoted, and at the agents in charge of the dissemination of the ideas and new methods. It is also of crucial importance important to look at social inequality as actively produced and reproduced and linked to everyday

practices that become evident in the educational system. This is even if it happens alongside ideas for innovation and change in the classroom space, as in the case of teaching in the mother tongue in the context of intercultural bilingual education programmes.

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Morten Blomquist/IBIS:  
Children in Milange,  
Mozambique.



## BACKGROUND PAPER FROM BIRGIT BROCK-UTNE

### Democracy in a multilingual and multicultural society

**Birgit Brock-Utne:** Professor of Education and Development at the University of Oslo, Norway, and Director of the M.Phil. in Comparative and International Education. Her research interests include education in Africa, language in education, higher education in Africa and donor influence on education in the developing world. From 1987 until 1992 she was a Professor at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania where she learned to speak Kiswahili. She is the Norwegian coordinator of the NUFU project LOITASA (Language of Instruction in Tanzania and South Africa) and has co-edited four books from the project (2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 with Zubeida Desai and Martha Qorro). Her publications further include *Whose Education for All? The Recolonization of the African Mind* (2000, republished by africanabooks.org in 2006) and *Language of Instruction for African Emancipation* (ed.2005, with Rodney Kofi Hopson)

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#### Introduction

In order to be able to exercise basic civil and political rights in the country in which one goes to school, lives and works, it is necessary to understand the language of instruction, the language used in courts, Parliament, the media and the language in which political messages are communicated.

It is not easy to treat the situation of migrants from poorer countries to our more affluent countries, and the situation of people in developing countries, under one heading though, in both cases, the language used as the language of instruction, and to convey political messages, is of central importance. Also is the culture immigrants bring with them into our societies and the culture in a developing country. In a book edited by a researcher at Oslo University College and myself (Brock-Utne and Bøyesen (Eds.) 2006), we have tried to combine an analysis of this type within the same volume. The first third of the book deals with the situation of pupils coming from other cultures and speaking other languages than Norwegian at home and their integration into the Norwegian school system. The next third deals with international achievement tests like PISA and TIMSS, what they measure and what they reward. The fact that such tests are now also used in developing countries partly as conditionality for poorer countries to get development aid in the education sector is also discussed. Three of the chapters are written by researchers who have constructed the Norwegian version of the tests,

while two are written by critics of the test. The third part of the book deals with the schooling problems in developing countries, especially in Africa. The fact that African children normally do not understand what the teacher is saying is discussed. We see this as the most important educational question there is (see also Brock-Utne and Hopson (Eds.) 2005). In the introduction to the book, Liv Bøyesen and I try to look at the differences and similarities in the situations discussed in the various chapters. This will, to some extent, also be done in my talk at the seminar though I shall concentrate mainly on the situation in developing countries, especially in Africa.

#### Democracy in an affluent country for immigrants from poorer countries

Immigrants coming from poorer countries in the South will meet a situation where the language of instruction, the language of the courts, of Parliament, the media and government is the language they hear around them all day long. It is not their home language, but it is a language they can relatively easily pick up, especially if they make friends among the people living in the country they come to. It will be an advantage for them pedagogically and culturally to have instruction in their own language, but they will have to learn the language of their immediate surroundings. This of course is especially important if they intend to stay in the country they have migrated to. There is a powerful connection between language and socio-cultural identity. The language you learned your first words in, the language your mother and father spoke to you, the language that was used in your nearest sur-





roundings and the language you use with your closest family and friends will always be a part of your identity as a person. When the language one uses in daily communication is denigrated, for instance not deemed fit as a language of instruction, a child may feel that a part of him or herself is also being denigrated. When it comes to linguistic minority children in Norwegian schools, Astri Heen Wold (1992: 247) notes:

*“You do not accept a child when you convey a message saying that one of the central characteristics of the child, her or his language, is of no worth. When the Norwegian school enables the existence and further development of the minority child's vernacular it signals the following: Your language is important and precious and so are you.”* (My translation)

We know that children learn a new language better if they are instructed in their own language up to a high level. This is important not only for learning but also for them to be able to retain their culture and identity. For immigrants to our countries to exercise their civil and political rights in the new country, they will, however; have to learn both the language and the culture of the new country.

### **Language and Culture**

Language and culture are, however, different entities (Brock-Utne 2007a). The interrelationship between language and culture has long puzzled me. Some authors claim that language is culture. Though cultures partly exist through language, culture is more than language. Language is also more than culture. Those of us who work in another culture, particularly in an African culture, need to reflect on the interrelationship between language and culture. In learning the language of the people we deal with, this will help us grasp more of their culture, but it is not synonymous with knowing the culture. Working at the University of Dar es Salaam

for four years (1987 – 1992) I learned to speak Kiswahili rather easily, but it was much more difficult to understand the cultural norms regulating communication between people. I had to learn that the direct and sometimes rather confrontational approach often used in western societies was regarded as impolite and insulting; a behaviour to be avoided. I had to learn to be less time conscious, and that the various greetings and forms of small talk have an important function. I had to learn the importance of age in African society, the need to pay respect to older people. I had to learn to understand the role of the dead in the lives of the living. In many ways it is easier to become bilingual than bi-cultural.

In Europe there has been a lot of debate around some customs that immigrants into our societies bring with them like arranged marriages, killings of disobedient daughters to preserve the honour of the family, women wearing shawal kameez, hijab and burka, the clitoridectomy of young girls and the segregation of boys and girls in school or at least in certain school subjects like gymnastics and swimming. It is claimed that these customs are part of the traditional culture some of the new groups coming to our countries have grown up with and feel are part of their identity.

To what degree should the host country insist on the immigrant groups abandoning their culture when they come to our countries? These are difficult questions, though for some, there are more obvious solutions to than for others. Traditions that violate human rights and are outlawed in the country the immigrants come to should not be practised. These are traditions like honorary killings and clitoridectomies. When it comes to other traditions like segregation of boys and girls for certain subjects or wearing a shawal kameez or hijab, there are reasons to be more lenient and seek compromises.

One of my students who studied at the Norwegian

University of Sports made a study looking at the problems young Muslim girls face in Norway. Mostly of Pakistani descent, she observed what occurred when they were confronted with when having swimming lessons at a regular Norwegian school. The school they went to accepted that these girls would not be allowed to have co-educational swimming lessons and separated the class according to sex, something they did not normally do. The swimming teacher also allowed the girls to enter the pool in a long dress instead of a bikini or swim suit which was what the students of Norwegian descent wore. Yet, the Muslim girls were not allowed by their community to participate. The student who wrote about this interviewed the Imam about this case. He said that there had to be a guarantee that boys had not been swimming in that pool on the same day as the girls! This wish was something the Norwegian school could not accommodate.

In the *World Declaration on Education for All*, education through the mother tongue is mentioned just once and in the following sentence: "Literacy in the mother tongue strengthens cultural identity and heritage." (WDEFA 1990: Article 5) In this sentence it looks like the main reason why children should learn to read their mother tongue is to maintain culture. Enabling children to use their mother tongue to obtain literacy does not only have to do with retaining cultural identity however. It also has to do with facilitating the process of learning to read and write. Language is more than culture and culture is more than language. Many African educationists have, for many years, been concerned about the fact that using African languages in education makes children learn better. In 1980, Pai Obanya, who was then the Director of the UNESCO office in West-Africa, BREDA, in Senegal noted that:

*It has always been felt by African educationists that the African child's major learning problem is linguis-*

*tic. Instruction is given in a language that is not normally used in his immediate environment, a language which neither the learner nor the teacher understands and uses well enough. (Obanya 1980: 88)*

Obanya is not primarily using the cultural argument as justification for retaining African languages. He is using an educational argument, as he is concerned with facilitating learning, with communication between teacher and pupils. If the African child's major learning problem is linguistic, and I tend to agree with Obanya that it is, then all the attention of African policy-makers and aid from Western donors should be devoted to a strengthening of the various African languages as languages of instruction, especially in basic education. The concept "education for all" becomes a completely empty concept if the linguistic environment of the basic learners is not taken into account (Brock-Utne 2000). One of my Tanzanian students in the introduction to her master thesis recalls her own school days:

*I can recall from my school days about my Chemistry teacher who every ten minutes or so he would ask us: "Any question students?" Nobody answered and he would conclude: "If there are no questions, then you have understood everything!" We did not understand him at all, not only because he taught in English only, he spoke American English!- he was a Peace Corp. The issue was language, as it is in our contemporary schools. (Mwingsheikhe 2001)*

Studies in Tanzanian secondary schools where the same teacher has been teaching the same topic, one week in Kiswahili and the next week in English, show how active, critical and clever the students are when the teaching is in Kiswahili and how passive and afraid they are when the teaching is in English (Mwingsheikhe 2007, Vuzo 2007, Brock-Utne 2007b).





### Culture is more than language

Will the use of an indigenous language as a language of instruction in school be a guarantee for the survival of threatened cultures? Foreign thoughts from foreign cultures in an artificially created environment can be conveyed through local languages. Indigenous culture and curricular content can likewise be conveyed through foreign languages. In an article on the impact of formal education on the Huaorani of Amazonian Ecuador, Laura Rival (1993) argues against those who think the cultural heritage of children will be preserved solely by providing literacy in the mother tongue. "No culture can be reduced to its linguistic expression," she claims (Rival 1993: 131). I have argued that languages should be preserved not only to retain culture. Language is more than culture, but likewise culture is not only language. Rival shows what the norms deeply enshrined in the institution of western schooling do to forest life when a school is introduced among a hunter and gatherer group like the Huaorani in the middle of the tropical forest. The institution of schooling itself separates children from their parents, reduces the time they have to learn from older community members about what is necessary and valuable in the kind of society they live. It breaks up the day in a hitherto unknown way and forces a community into a more sedentary life than what they normally have led. She is concerned not only with the foreign content children have to learn but also with the useful local content they do not learn when time is spent in schools.

In my talk the following four models will be examined:

Examples of the four models will be given; including their strengths and weaknesses, as well as, the frequency in which they are used in Sub-Saharan African schooling will be discussed.

### Democracy and language in multilingual and developing countries

The situation for people living in developing countries, especially Africa, is very different from the one we meet among immigrants to our societies in the North. Most people in Africa are in a situation where the language of instruction, the language used in courts and in Parliament, in the media and the language in which political messages are communicated is different from the language they hear around them all the time. The majority of the population in Africa are treated as minorities in countries in the North.

Additionally, the minority population in Africa, the five percent who are fluent in an ex-colonial language and often have it as a mother tongue, have political power that exceeds their proportional number. They often do not bother to learn the language of the majority population around them as they often keep to their own circles. The fact that most people in Africa do not know these foreign languages of power well is a threat to their participation as active citizens in a democracy. Tanzania is the only country in Africa in which most of the newspapers are written in an African language, in this case Kiswahili. On a consultancy mission in the north of Namibia I was told that people in the area were very annoyed at their politicians who came to the area and spoke to them in English, though they could have spoken to them

	FOREIGN LANGUAGE	LOCAL LANGUAGE
FOREIGN CONTENT	A) Textbooks written and published abroad in a foreign language adopted for use without any modification	B) Direct translations of e.g. textbooks and curriculum material made abroad
LOCAL CONTENT	C) Some well known authors write from Africa, e.g. in the ex-colonial languages	D) Texts taken from the local culture written in the local language

directly in a local language. Often they would bring an interpreter to interpret for them into the local language but the interpretations were often full of mistakes and they slowed down the process.

The actual achievement of justice is very often determined by the language conducted by actors in the judicial theatre. There is still a near monopoly in the use of English and Afrikaans in the legal system of South Africa, which leads to the alienation of a bulk of South African society. This is in contrast to Tanzania, where Kiswahili is used as the judicial language in the primary courts. The bills come to Parliament in English; however, they are discussed in Kiswahili whereupon the law is then written in English. In lower courts, both English and Kiswahili are being used, but the sentence is written in English. In 1980, Kiswahili was used in the lower courts 78 per cent of the time. In the High Court only English is being used (Temu 2000). In South Africa; however, while the use of indigenous African languages was allowed in the black homelands, Africans who found themselves with legal matters to settle within the so-called “white South Africa” had to endure the conduct of their proceedings in either English or Afrikaans. If they were not conversant in either language, translation services were provided for them. The Magistrate’s Court Act 32 of 1994, places the duty on a magistrate to call upon a competent interpreter if he is of the opinion that the accused is not sufficiently conversant in the language in which evidence is given. Ailola and Montsi (1999:135) note: There can be no doubt that the exclusive by-passing of indigenous languages in enacting laws and conducting legal proceedings create enormous obstacles for the native speakers of those languages.

In spite of the formal recognition of the eleven official languages in the Constitution of South Africa, there is to date little evidence of actual court processes or proceedings taking place in languages

other than English and Afrikaans. Section 35 of the Constitution states that “every accused has the right to a fair trial which includes the right to be tried in a language that the accused person understands or, if it is not practicable, to have the proceedings interpreted in that language.”

Interpretations do not always work well; however. Through a concrete example Ailola and Montsi (1999) show that even when translation facilities are available, fatal mistakes can occur because there are certain expressions which are, at best, incapable of an exact interpretation. Others simply cannot be translated. While most Bantu languages have a term for “killing,” they have no equivalent for “murder.” Thus, according to a story which was told them by a Zambian legal practitioner, a client of his nearly incriminated himself in a crime of murder on account of an improper translation of the term. In that case the accused had been asked in the Tonga vernacular whether he admitted to killing the deceased. He replied in the affirmative. Thereupon the translator turned to the bench and reported: “My lord, he says he murdered him.” Had it not been for the defence lawyer’s knowledge of the local language and alertness in spotting the difference between “murder” and “killing,” the matter would have ended there and then a conviction would have ensued and the accused could possibly have been hanged for the offence. In reality what the accused meant to say was that he killed the deceased, but there were extenuating reasons for his deed. Killing per se without the requisite unlawful intent or malice aforethought is not tantamount to “murder” (Ailola and Montsi, 1999). Sometimes it is not even unlawful. Thus “killing” in self-defence or in the defence of one’s family or property is often lawful. Similarly no criminal offence attaches to a killing which is effected during war, civil strife, or lawful suppression of a crime. In cases where the rest of the court does not understand the language of the accused the interpreter plays a semi-autonomous role.





Aiola and Montsi (1999) claim that the interpreters often play a subservient role in relation to the court administrators. The interpreters frequently internalise the values and attitudes of their court superiors. They refer to a study by Nico Steytler (1993) from what was then Zululand showing the unsatisfactory nature of the quality of interpretation exacerbated by the fact that the rest of the court members were not conversant in Zulu. There was no effective means for checking the veracity of the actual interpretation, given that only the English and Afrikaans languages are recorded. There is a great need in South Africa today for lawyers and judges who speak the languages of the majority population of the country.

In a publication I have described the strong interest of the former colonial powers in Africa in retaining their own languages as languages of instruction and the threat this presents both to the learning potential of African learners and to democracy and the protection of civil and political rights of the masses of Africans (Brock-Utne 2002). In the Seychelles, which I visited in February 1992, the language of instruction in elementary school is Creole. In secondary school it is English. French is taught as a foreign language (Brock-Utne 2000). The leading party was a promoter of Creole. Officials in the Ministry of Education, with whom I had several conversations with about the language policy of the Seychelles, claimed that their studies showed the switch to Creole had been of benefit to the masses of children. Members of the elite, with whom I also spoke, preferred to have English and French as official languages as they saw the introduction of Creole, a language they looked down upon, as an imposition by the leftist government with which they were in disagreement. They wanted their children to be educated in English or French. Some of the new parties coming up wrote their party programs in English. They wanted to reduce the use of Creole, especially as a language of instruction. They argued that the use of Creole prevented the Seychellois

from participating in world culture. Mr. Ferrari, who was the leader of the new Institute for Democracy, which was formed to distribute information on democratic methods of governance, told me that he had asked for financial help from a development agency in France to further the work of the Institute. He was 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 in French! He declined the offer.

Donors to Africa are currently very concerned about democracy and "good governance" in Africa. It seems paradoxical, in such a situation, that most of them are not more concerned about the fact that some 90 percent of the people in Africa have no knowledge of the official language of their country, even though it is presumed to be the vehicle of communication between the government and its citizens. Many African leaders have been concerned with social justice; yet, few of them have, at the time when they were in power, been concerned with social injustice arising from the fact that the language used for instruction means a barrier to knowledge for the masses of African children. The use of a language of instruction and a culture most children are familiar with would signify, on the part of governments, a willingness to embark on the necessary redistribution of power between elites and the masses. Professor Kwesi Kwaa Prah (2000: ii), originally from Ghana and now the Director for the Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS) located in Cape Town, maintains that the developmental transformation needed to eradicate poverty in Africa is only possible if "we can take knowledge and modern science to the masses in their own languages." (Prah 2000: ii)

After independence in Tanzania, President Nyerere himself started to work on the educational policy of an independent Tanzania. He was proud of his earlier

training and work as a teacher and was often called “mwaliimu” (meaning “teacher” in Kiswahili). His policy document “Education for Self Reliance” - ESR - (Nyerere 1968) is counted as one of the most important texts for all students of education in Africa. The declaration spelt out the values of the *Ujamaa* society. “Ujamaa” means family hood in Kiswahili and the idea was to extend traditional African values of kinship across Tanzania as a whole. The word is often heard in connection with the ujamaa villages, settlements that were built in order to allow people to access water, electricity and schools more readily. The ujamaa villages were to be governed by those living in them and Kiswahili was made the language of instruction for all seven years of primary schooling and the subject “*Elimu ya Siasa*” was introduced. A ministerial circular from 1968 spelt out the aims of the new subject. The aims were to correspond to those of Education for Self Reliance. The circular was issued in English to last temporarily between May to December 1968. In 1969 another circular was issued with the aim of stressing the importance of understanding the ruling party’s objectives and what the Arusha Declaration had put forward. In July 1970, a circular was issued to secondary school teachers instructing them to use the term “Elimu ya Siasa” instead of “Civics” and to use Kiswahili language in teaching instead of English. The aim of teaching *Elimu ya Siasa* was said to foster among pupils a sense of commitment to their country. The circular mentioned that apart from the necessary commitment to the country on the part of teachers, the subject could be best taught by teachers who had knowledge of history, economics and political science. A former teacher of siasa, who for a couple of years was my student at the University of Oslo, Mary Mkwizu (2002), wrote her master thesis on the changes that took place when the subject of “Civics” in 1968 was changed to “*elimu ya siasa*” (in daily speech often just called “siasa”) and when the subject in 1992 was changed back from siasa to Civics.

In the years between 1987 and 1992, I sat myself for many hours in the back of secondary school classrooms and observed the teaching of siasa going on. It was a subject that both students and teachers enjoyed. It was a subject where the students were actively involved, where they discussed and argued and where they were taught in Kiswahili. I sometimes observed the same class in the following lesson where they might have geography, history or mathematics. It was difficult to believe I was observing the same group of pupils. In these lessons they were passive, hardly saying a word. The teachers were struggling with the English language; their vivacity and their enthusiasm were gone. When I spoke with the teachers about the changes I had observed, they admitted that the use of English as the medium of instruction was a great barrier to them. They also mentioned that the syllabus for the siasa subject was not as detailed as for the other subjects. For example, it just said in only five lines all that was expected to be covered in Form one. This called on the creativity of teachers. They would often use texts from the newspaper and continue discussions they had heard on the radio.

The secondary school syllabus from 1970 says that in siasa Form I, pupils were to learn about the Arusha Declaration, Education for Self Reliance and socialism in rural areas. In Form II they were to be taught about TANU (Tanganyika National Union), ASP (Afro-Shirazi Party), the government and ESR philosophy. The syllabi for Form III and Form IV were a bit more exhaustive; and there was no syllabus for Form V and VI. There was only the instruction that students should learn about “recent” books written by, then President of Tanzania, Julius K. Nyerere. They should also study other books like *Afrika Inakwenda Kombo* (Africa is going astray) by Rene Dumont and *Kilimo Baada ya Azimio la Arusha* (Tanzania agriculture after the Arusha Declaration) by Leonard Banes (Mkwizu 2002).





In March 1973 another syllabus was issued, which lasted until 1976. This had a bit wider coverage in comparison to the previous syllabus and explained in more detail all that was found in the 1970 syllabus. This syllabus was written in Kiswahili. Analysing the syllabi of siasa from 1968 to 1991 Komba (1996) in his doctoral thesis, points out that the aims of siasa assumed that there was consensus about the *Ujamaa* ideology itself. This was not always so. Teachers had to grapple with this false assumption as they attempted to abide by the overall requirements of the ESR philosophy. Komba notes that the aim of siasa was said to be to create critical awareness of political phenomena by open, balanced discussion and analysis through making use of a range of evidence and opinions. If this aim should be fulfilled, then ambiguities, inconsistencies and contradictions within the *Ujamaa* ideology itself, according to Komba (1996:10), should have constituted an important part of the syllabus rather than being simply glossed over.

Changes from *Elimu ya Siasa* back to Civics can be traced back to the political changes in the country from the once dominating single party system CCM, to the introduction in 1992 of a multiparty system (CCM is an abbreviation of Chama cha Mapinduzi – the Party of the Revolution. In 1977 TANU in mainland Tanzania and ASP in Zanzibar formed CCM). The Nyalali commission called upon the education system to plan strategies in order to make people the subject of political reform rather than passive consumers. As mentioned, the commission recommended changes in the subject they continued to call “*siasa*.” It wanted the subject to create critical awareness of political phenomena through open, balanced discussion and insisted that the subject be detached from any particular party. Mary Mkwizu (2002) comments: “It is surprising to see that the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Institute of Curriculum Development opted for the name Civics.”

The Ministry of Education and Culture issued a circular No. ED/OKE/S.4/25 in May 1993 to introduce changes in the subject “*siasa*.” The circular can be seen as an attempt on the part of the Ministry to cope with the newly introduced multiparty system:

*Mada za somo lililokuwa likiitwa Elimu ya Siasa zimerekebishwa ili kuendana na mfumo wa demokrasia chini ya vyama vingi vya siasa nchini. Somo hili sasa litaitwa Civics katika shule za sekondari na litafundishwa kwa kiingereza.*

(Translated: Topics of the subject that was called *Elimu ya Siasa* have been changed in order to cope with the system of multiparty democracy in the country. From now on the subject will be called Civics in secondary schools and it will be taught in English – italics added)

The change in the content of a subject that had been so closely related to the philosophy of the one party system is understandable. The change of language of instruction in this subject is, however, less understandable. In interviews that Mkwizu conducted with teachers who used to teach *Elimu ya Siasa* they all complained that they were not consulted to give their views on the change of language of instruction. Several of the teachers explained that they had enjoyed teaching *Elimu ya Siasa* but could not teach Civics since their command of English was not good enough for that. Others told about the lively discussions they could have when they were teaching *siasa* and the passivity of the pupils when they had to teach the new subject in English. They felt that this had more to do with the change in medium of instruction than with change in content. One teacher who had previously taught *siasa* in Kiswahili and was now teaching Civics in English instead told Mkwizu that previously, she had to be so well prepared for the lessons because the students would have so many questions and mastered the subjects so well. Now

she did not have to prepare much because no one would come up with any questions. Now, it was like teaching dead stones she said. A subject that should educate a new generation about democratic thinking and citizenship had become a subject they could not master because the language of instruction had become a barrier to learning the subject matter.

The teachers felt that the change in the medium of instruction was done in an undemocratic manner since the teachers who taught siasa had not been consulted. Several of the teachers also mentioned the problem of undemocratic participation in the classroom since those who are proficient in the English language (though few and coming from the better “equipped” homes) dominate in discussions when they are supposed to be held in English.

This result was confirmed in the doctoral theses of Mwinsheikhe (2007), Vuzo (2007) and Nomlomo (2007). When children were taught in a familiar language, a language they mastered well, Kiswahili in the case of Tanzania, isiXhosa in the case of South Africa they all did better than when they were taught in English. In the latter case, the spread in examination scores was much larger with some pupils of well-to-do parents getting high scores and most of the other students getting lower scores, some extremely low. These results carry a message for everyone concerned with equality in education, democracy and poverty reduction.

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## THEME 3: ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF MOTHER TONGUE AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Economic aspects of language and education are not only a question about the cost of mother tongue and bilingual education; it is also about the long term cost for the whole society if mother tongue and bilingual education is not offered. If mother tongue and bilingual education is a condition for good performance it will have a large influence on how the students perform later in life; whether or not they succeed in the classroom. The key element is whether they acquire a feeling of identity and a sense of self-esteem that enables them to be a part of society and to contribute to it financially.

If both education in mother tongue and the second language are introduced, it involves an immediate increase in expenses. It requires the education of teachers, development of text books and extra hours. This is often a considerable barrier to mother tongue education being offered. However, an education system based both on mother tongue and bilingual education is not necessarily more expensive once it is established. Furthermore, the actual expenses for society if mother tongue and bilingual education is not introduced have to be considered.

If students have to repeat classes, drop out of school or do not get the necessary knowledge, it can lead to unemployment and social problems. These expenses for society have to be taken into account, when examining whether or not mother tongue and bilingual education pays off.

When economic choices are made, it is important to find the balance between how many languages should be offered in schools, how long the students are to be educated, how the curriculum is planned and how teachers are trained. Such decisions should be based on findings from pedagogical research concerning mother tongue and bilingual education and also on the political/ethic ideals a society has about citizenship.

### Central questions for discussion:

- What are the economic benefits of offering mother tongue and bilingual education?
- Should mother tongue and bilingual education be offered in all the languages spoken in a country – and for how many years?
- Should mother tongue and bilingual education pay off at all - or should it be offered no matter what?



## BACKGROUND PAPER FROM FRANÇOIS GRIN

### Economic aspects of mother tongue and bilingual education



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#### 1. Introduction

Some seventeen years ago, an Australian linguist named Nicholas Thieberger published in the scientific journal *Multilingua* an article provocatively entitled: “Language Maintenance: Why Bother?” (1990). The question raised by Thieberger remains a relevant one to this day, because it epitomizes a very widespread perception that multilingualism is cumbersome, too expensive, and ultimately, not *affordable*.

The form of multilingualism I am referring to here is, of course, societal multilingualism as opposed to *individual* multilingualism. There is generally no problem with individual multilingualism: most people agree that mastering two or three languages or more is a good thing, because a multilingual person can interact with more people, and will sometimes have an edge on the labour market because of these language skills. Thus, the value of individual multilingualism is not contentious. What is being hotly debated, by contrast, is the value of societal multilingualism (which, for the purposes of this talk, I will refer to equivalently as “linguistic diversity”).

The perception that societal multilingualism, or linguistic diversity, is in itself a *problem* is deeply entrenched, despite the political and ideological legitimacy that multilingualism has gained in recent years.

Of course Thieberger’s question that we might rephrase as “Multilingualism? Why bother?” is a rhetorical one. He meant to lambaste the callousness with which many commentators dismiss the efforts made in many countries of the world to maintain, and sometimes promote, linguistic diversity. However, some perfectly legitimate scientific issues do lie behind this type of question, because the relevance of engaging in the promotion of societal multilingualism is not a forgone conclusion.

This question is more complex than it seems. In this talk, I shall attempt to parse the problem, in order to side-step some often heard lines of arguments and to propose instead an approach resting on basic principles of economic analysis.

I shall first attempt to tease apart four different levels in this question, namely the moral or “rights-based” argument; the “feasibility” argument; the “resource allocation” argument; and the “resource distribution” argument.

I will then take a closer look at the third one — that is, the quintessentially economic question of *resource allocation*, which is crucial to the formulation of a reply to the challenge contained in Thieberger’s question.

Finally, I will try to move on from broad principles to the actual, measurable costs of multilingualism, showing that these costs are generally low, and that bilingual education is a way to make these costs even

lower. This gives rise to a strong presumption that, even from a narrow economic perspective, multilingualism is quite affordable — and ultimately well worth the effort, and that it is a good idea to encourage bilingual education.

## 2. Four different debates

Suppose that you are having a heated argument

with somebody who says that he (or she) is definitely against multilingualism and asks, precisely, “why bother?”. But this question can mean rather different things. Let’s first characterise them briefly, before looking at them in more detail.

- First, if a person rejects multilingualism, does not see it as a worthwhile social goal, and therefore views support to multilingualism as an ill-advised policy, this stand may be challenged



Lene Godiksen:  
Girl in Tanzania





by way of a moral argument, giving rise to a moral or “rights-based” debate. This argument is generally quite popular among lawyers, political theorists and, interestingly, sociolinguists.<sup>11</sup>

- Second, even if multilingualism is considered morally “right” and is endorsed in mainstream political and legal discourse, it may be rejected on grounds of *feasibility*, giving rise to a (mostly) sociolinguistic debate about language dynamics — where the core question is whether language dynamics is a phenomenon that society can influence, or if it is entirely outside any kind of social control, and therefore beyond the reach of public policy.
- Third, even if multilingualism is considered morally *and* politically right, and practically feasible, it may be rejected on the grounds that it is a waste of resources that would be better spent on other pursuits, for example in health, transport or education policy. This gives rise to a third debate — this time, on the appropriate allocation of scarce resources (what we would call, in economics, a question of “allocative efficiency”).
- Fourth, even if multilingualism is considered morally and politically right, practically feasible, *and* a good allocation of scarce resources, the question still arises of the sharing of this burden — what we would call, in economics, a question of “distributive fairness.”

Let us examine in turn the important issues that lie at the heart of each of these debates.

#### (a) *The “rights” debate*

Very often, advocates of multilingualism rely on morally based political arguments to justify their position. In fact, moral or “rights-based” arguments, often invoking minority rights, probably are those most often used, and the amount of literature on language rights (or even “linguistic human rights”) dwarfs the literature devoted to other ways of dealing with this question.

<sup>11</sup> See e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000).

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with moral arguments, — quite the opposite as any position that we take should pass ethical tests. However, moral arguments have one major weakness; namely, they usually fail to impress those who do not share the same moral views. Let us think of an argument such as “it is just and fair to recognise all the language communities that shape our country, and therefore we *must* promote all their languages.” This may be a perfectly consistent stand and ethically sound position. However, being an essentially moral argument, it may fall on deaf ears, and it often comes down to preaching to the converted. The problem is that not everyone is already a convert and the views of opponents of multilingualism cannot be simply ignored. More precisely, from a liberal standpoint, it is difficult to simply dismiss the sincerely held opinion of persons who are *opposed* to multilingualism.

Furthermore, even a well-turned normative argument in favour of multilingualism can be dismissed on the grounds that it does no more than formulate its author’s subjective tastes, and therefore is not worth more attention than the possibly less sophisticated formulation of opposite tastes.

Let us remember that to this day, and despite the legitimacy gains made in most public discourse by multilingualism and minority languages, ensuring the survival all languages is not a legal obligation of states. The protection of one’s language is not recognised as an absolute individual right, and it is not enshrined in any binding international instrument. Whereas few people nowadays would speak *against* state intervention to prevent expressions of racism, many people still argue against intervention in favour of multilingualism or in favour of minority languages; and their arguments cannot just be shrugged off, if one is going to sway public opinion. These arguments *have* to be engaged. But as we shall see later, the analytical weakness of these

arguments against multilingualism can be exposed without resorting to moral considerations.

Of course, the issue can still be pursued on this very plane, combining political theory, political philosophy, and, of course, law. However, it may be just as effective to keep clear from this debate, because there are other ways. From an economic standpoint, the discourse of law is, by definition, *normative* (despite the fact that lawyers do talk about “positive law”); as to for political scientists, they recognise the normative orientation of their work (they speak of “normative political theory”), and my aim here is not to engage in what is already well-trodden normative ground,<sup>12</sup>; let us therefore move on and edge closer to a more economic perspective on the issue.

#### (b) *The feasibility debate*

Let us now say a few words on the second debate, which revolves around the feasibility of promoting multilingualism or the stability of multilingualism in the long term.

Several authors, including noted commentators in the fields of law, political philosophy or even language policy (such as Brian Barry, Philippe van Parijs, or Abram de Swaan)<sup>13</sup> have dismissed efforts to foster, or even merely preserve linguistic diversity, on the grounds that such efforts are ineffective and that they may even run counter to the wishes of the communities whose languages are at stake. This, apparently, is the argument put forward by Edwards (1985). What I call the “internal effectiveness” argument actually only focuses on the first part—no matter what we do, languages come and go, some are doomed to extinction, and we are inexorably gravitating towards a linguistically less diverse world.

This is largely an empirical question, which we do not have time to address, But let us just mention a

<sup>12</sup> See Kymlicka (1995a, 1995b); May (2001); etc.

<sup>13</sup> See Barry (2001), van Parijs (2001, 2004), de Swaan (2001).

<sup>14</sup> The paradox there may only be apparent; see Grin and Rossiaud (1999).

few facts that should alert us to the complexity of the processes at hand.

Let us not dwell on the eternal (and somewhat contrived) example of the rebirth of Hebrew.

Nevertheless, we may observe that in recent years, languages dismissed as moribund have been doing rather well under the circumstances — let us for example think of Welsh — and that the conditions are more favourable now than they have been in a long time, given, not only, the increased *legitimacy* of minority languages, but the renewed interest for them that appears to accompany “globalisation.”<sup>14</sup>

It is also interesting to note that technological development, far from being a force that only serves the spread of English, puts many more languages in evidence.

For example, the growth of the presence of English on the internet over the past seven years, at 158%, is much lower than that of Arabic (941%), Chinese (470%), French (385%) or Spanish (311%), and English now makes up less than a third of cyberspace (using as an indicator the language of users<sup>15</sup>). Or to add yet one more example from my own country, Switzerland, where we have four national languages (French, German, Italian and Rumantsch), a recent study has shown that contrary to many people’s expectations, commercial contact between companies located in these different language regions does not take place in English, but in our national languages.

Language dynamics certainly is a complex topic; but, there is abundant evidence (and plentiful anecdotes) showing that despite the rapid rate of extinction of small languages, linguistic diversity is an ongoing reality, that it is not antithetic to technological and economic development, and that it is something that can be strengthened through public policy — if we want to.

<sup>15</sup> See <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm> (last consulted 21 November 2007).





*(c) The allocative efficiency debate*

Now, do we *really* want to? This leads to the third debate.

Even if the two preceding questions have been settled in favour of multilingualism (that is, “it’s morally and politically right” and “it’s practically feasible”) many will contend that this is a bad idea, and an inappropriate use of scarce resources. This view is quite popular among people from my discipline, namely, economics (if they worry about language issues at all). It has been the object of a restatement by Jones (2000) who starts out by claiming that mankind needs a “common language.” This is, in itself, a legitimate starting point for a scientific argument, but he progressively slips into a dismissal of efforts to promote linguistic diversity, even though this is a logically distinct question. Yet, this very slip from one line of discourse to the other is, in my view, indicative of the unconsciously supremacist agenda of many advocates of a world language (on this question, see Phillipson 2003).

The argument is well-known and it is one that cannot be countered on moral grounds. Put differently, moral or rights-based considerations are simply not relevant, because persons who consider multilingualism an ill-advised allocation of resources typically do not consider that there is a justification, let alone a “right” to the survival of languages generally (and their subjective views are no less valid than those of advocates of multilingualism). They put the question on a different plane, namely: “Does it make sense, in terms of the welfare of society as a whole, to engage resources in multilingualism?”, and *they* answer in the negative.

We shall return to this question in a moment and devote an entire section to it, because this is where, ultimately, key issues for the future of linguistic diversity are nested. For now, let us briefly turn to the fourth debate, which is not about the allocation of resources, but the distribution of resources, and hence the issue is distributive justice or “fairness.”

*(d) The distributive justice debate*

Let us now assume that multilingualism is recognised as morally right, practically feasible, and a good use of society’s resources, just like protecting the environment ultimately turns out to be a wise choice. Now, the question still remains of who should pay for it or, more precisely, how the costs involved in protecting and promoting multilingualism should be shared. The problem arises to the extent that the resources necessary may be levied on people who do not stand to gain directly from the endeavour, or who feel that they will not benefit. Therefore, the promotion of linguistic diversity may be rejected on the grounds that it entails unjustified *redistribution*.

Redistribution is a core question in all public policies. Consider, for example, free (or low-tuition) university education (still the general rule in Switzerland, Germany, France, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria and across Scandinavia, for example). It may be rejected because it implies a subsidisation of the upper-middle class, who sends its offspring to university, by the entire mass of taxpayers. This therefore amounts to a transfer from the relatively poor to the relatively rich.

In the same way, the debate about the pros and cons of multilingualism may focus on the implied redistribution of resources and on the appropriateness of this transfer. This question does, in a way, return us to the initial normative problem (that is, the “moral” debate), yet from a completely different angle, which does not involve the notion of undisputable entitlements, but the notion of fairness.

This is a relatively little-explored (and sometimes very technical) aspect of language policy (see however Pool, 1991; Grin, 2005; de Brie and Van Parijs, 2002), and one which I shall, unfortunately, have to eschew in the rest of this paper. Let us simply say that there is no *fundamental* problem there,

because adjustments can, in principle, always be made to ensure that through transfers between initial winners and losers no-one is left worse off by a policy; there would be, however, significant political problems of implementation.

### 3. Allocative issues: diversity as a good and as a public good

Let us now take a closer look at the third debate: *should* resources (including tax revenue) be allocated to guarantee multilingualism in society? Again, the problem has to be parsed in two distinct questions. One is whether the result is *worth* the resources invested; another is whether it is incumbent upon the state to invest those resources, or whether this might not be left to private initiative. However, as a brief detour in the direction of economic theory will show, these two questions are closely linked.

One could indeed argue, following a standard “laissez-faire” ideology, that government should not intervene and that maximum welfare will proceed from the uncoordinated actions of people (individuals, firms, thirdsector organisations), allowing market mechanisms to regulate, as it were, the “production” of diversity.

This is a fairly credible line of argument for simple goods such as tomatoes, television sets or car tires. Unfortunately, it does not work of more complex commodities such as education, health, or the environment—and, of course, *languages* as components of our linguistic environment.

Even mainstream economics acknowledges that there are some cases where the market is not enough. These cases are known as “market failure.” When there is “market failure,” the unregulated interplay of supply and demand results in an inappropriate level of production of some commod-

ity, where “inappropriate” can mean “too little” or “too much.”

According to economic theory, there are essentially six sources of market failure, which we will not discuss here. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that in the case of linguistic diversity, market failure emerges through more than one of these six channels. One of them is particularly important, namely the “public good” nature of diversity, or of the languages that make up this diversity. The intuition behind it is the following: linguistic diversity has many features in common with biodiversity, which is generally recognised as a type of public good (and let us note in passing that this parallel can be drawn without engaging in debatable biological metaphors). Much like the quality of air and water, languages constitute an environment that presents the core characteristics of “public goods,” which the market, if left to itself, will not provide in adequate amounts. This holds, in particular, for smaller, usually non-dominant languages. It is important to point out that the case for state involvement in the protection of linguistic diversity can, therefore be made not on the basis of political arguments or of an appeal to human rights or minority rights, but on the basis of economic theory.

Readers will have observed, however, that whole line of argument is predicated on the assumptions that linguistic diversity is essentially a good rather than a bad. Some people are prepared to assert that diversity is intrinsically a bad thing, just like the pollution of air and water are bad things (at least for most people). But generally, people will be reluctant to claim that linguistic diversity is bad *per se*. Hence, if they are not prepared to make such a claim (that they would then have to back up with convincing facts) it follows that they are ready to concede that *all other things being equal*, linguistic diversity is a good.

Typically, the fall-back position of enemies of multilingualism (at least, those who are unwilling to





state explicitly that they see diversity as a social *evil* rather than as a social *good*) will then be to say that “yes, linguistic diversity is a wonderful thing, but it is too expensive.”

Now, is it, really? This is the question we shall now turn to.

#### 4. Is linguistic diversity worth the effort? From benefits to costs

A case in favour of multilingualism essentially rests on the notion that promoting multilingualism is an efficient allocation of resources. It is logical to expect proponents of this view to offer proof that resources spent on multilingualism are well-spent. This means showing that the *benefits* of promoting it so are higher than the *costs*.

While a joint evaluation of benefits and costs of diversity would take us too far, it stands to reason that a positive difference between benefits and costs is more likely to arise if benefits are high, *or* if costs are low — *or*, of course, both.

Typically, benefit evaluation is the more difficult side. I shall content myself with saying once again that linguistic diversity ought to be looked at in the same way as our natural environment. It is increasingly being recognised that a higher environmental quality results in a higher quality of life, even if the nature of these benefits may appear quite elusive. The fact that an unspoilt landscape may be pleasing to the eye is a benefit, but why do we accept to incur the corresponding costs, if not because we are willing to devote scarce resources to some complex, and possibly undefinable, notion of “quality”? The same can be said about our linguistic environment: many people would agree that there is a positive correlation between the diversity of our linguistic environment and our quality of life, particularly when confronted with the bleak alternative, that is, uniformity.

Even though this view, which I personally subscribe to, may be gaining ground, it often remains a hard sell. It is; however, easier to focus on the other side of the coin, and to show that even if we cannot be quite sure of the amount of the benefits generated by minority language promotion, its costs are quite low — much lower, at any rate, than many commentators appear to assume, usually on the basis of little or no evidence whatsoever.

It is true that at this time, the amount of evidence available about the costs of minority language promotion is limited; however, it generally points in the direction of moderate costs. To clinch this point, I shall look at three distinct issues in the economics of language and education.

#### *Moving from a unilingual to a bilingual system*

Let us consider the case of an education system moving from a one-stream (dominant language only: Y) to a dual-stream system with two languages (X+Y), in which both languages are used as a medium of instruction.

As a general starting point, we must remember that states have a general responsibility to provide (and to finance) compulsory education. Given this responsibility, there is a certain cost to it. Hence, the real cost of bilingual education is the cost it entails over and above the alternative — that is, a unilingual education system. Calculations have been made in the case of the teaching through Basque in the Basque Country in Spain, or through indigenous languages (particularly Maya) in Guatemala. Independently produced studies arrive, in these cases, at surprisingly close estimates, all around 4%. Such figures probably represent upper-bound estimates, because of the evolution, in the long run, of some of the terms that go into the estimation, particularly the training of teachers to enable them to teach through a non-dominant language: ultimately, there is no reason why training teachers to teach through language X instead of language Y should be more expensive. A difference between the two educational models

may however persist in the long term if some or all teachers are trained to teach through two languages.

### *The issue of mother tongue education*

In some countries, usually in post-colonial contexts, the education system has relied heavily on the languages brought by the former colonists, usually under the assumption that they were the only ones capable of (or at least much better suited to) providing an efficient transmission of knowledge. The result has often been that learners speaking their own language, but with limited skills in a dominant language such as English, were given no choice but to receive formal education in English, even if this meant that for lack of mastery of the language, much of the contents being taught were lost on them. It is therefore reasonable to consider the possibility of offering instruction in hitherto neglected languages, such as “native” languages—for example, in the South African context, Zulu, Southern Sotho or Xhosa, instead of English only.<sup>16</sup> At this time, no full-fledged costing exercise has been carried out, but simulations with very conservative assumptions indicate that the likely decline in repetition rates will result in such savings that introducing mother tongue education will very quickly pay for itself, even if some costs also rise because of a (welcome) decline in drop-out rates (Grin, 2005b; Vaillancourt and Grin, 2000).<sup>17</sup> In addition, it is very plausible that moving from a unilingual to a bilingual school system means that pupils will be able to get education in a language that they understand well, instead of a language that they understand poorly; this will generate additional benefits.

### *Assessing CLIL*

Let us now consider the case of bilingual education, often called CLIL for “content and language integrated learning.” Whether it is called “CLIL” or

“bilingual education”, however, it can literally mean dozens of different things, and combining very basic distinctions (for example, between compulsory and optional schemes; between high or low intensity systems; between early or late bilingual education, etc.), one easily comes up with no less than 216 different forms of bilingual education (Grin, 2005a). This implies that providing general, synthetic assessments of the virtues of bilingual education is a daunting task; at this time, most of what we have is based on very case-specific assessments. However, a “meta assessment” is possible, showing in particular that:

1. a bilingual education structure allows for better language education than traditional language instruction, while still ensuring equal achievement in the subjects taught through the L2;
2. bilingual education at primary school only lays the groundwork for later native-like fluency in the learners’ L2;
3. minority languages or threatened languages require additional support—that is, CLIL must be complemented by other protection and promotion measures for the language, some of them outside the educational context;
4. bilingual education can be very successful at secondary II level (ages 15 and on), even with a small previous basis acquired through traditional language instruction and with subsequent bilingual education accounting for only about 25% of the weekly schedule. This result; however, is observed among the upper half of achievers; lower achievers would certainly need more immersion time in the target language.

Even if one should recall that context appears to have a significant impact, mainly through students’ motivation, on the effectiveness of CLIL, and refers not only to sociolinguistic dimensions, but also to

<sup>16</sup> *The role of Afrikaans as a language of learning and training (LoLT) in South Africa is currently declining, although it is the mother tongue, not only, of White Afrikaners, but of the majority of the numerous “coloured” communities in the country.*

<sup>17</sup> *Recent research in other African countries, particularly Ethiopia, confirms that the move towards English as the sole or main language of instruction is due to a poor allocation of resources resulting in reduced performance of the education system; see Heugh (2006a, 2006b).*





cultural and, possibly, geopolitical ones, the chief result remains: significant learning gains may be achieved at a low cost, even if precise and integrative cost estimates for CLIL are still carried out.

### 5. A (provisional) conclusion

Further developments on the cost assessment of promoting multilingualism through education, particularly through mother tongue instruction and bilingual streams, are of course necessary. Our very sanguine view of multilingualism in education should therefore be seen as a provisional conclusion, since a considerable amount of theoretical and empirical work remains to be done in order to increase our knowledge of the costs of promoting multilingualism and ensuring it in the long term. However, on the basis of what we know, we can say that multilingualism is certainly affordable.

This gives us something to answer to the question “Multilingualism? Why Bother?” — the logical reply must simply be: “Why? Because it’s morally right, technically feasible — and well worth the cost.”

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## THEME 4: POLITICAL ASPECTS OF MOTHER TONGUE AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION



This theme is about Danish policy for mother tongue and bilingual education in Denmark and the South. Denmark has a policy on mother tongue and bilingual education for Danish citizens, and Denmark also supports education in a number of developing countries in South where choices about mother tongue and bilingual education is part of the collaboration. What should be the Danish policy on mother tongue and bilingual education?

Danida is generally supportive of mother tongue and bilingual education in South as part of the aid to education, and so are Danish NGOs working with partners in the South in supporting education. Danida is cooperating with education ministries in developing countries and has had the opportunity to put language choices on the agenda. The NGOs, with their partners in South, have also had the opportunity to develop alternative models for language education and they can also support NGOs in South with lobbying and campaign activities to promote good language policies.

Language policies are often politically sensitive and contain many different aspects (pedagogical, cultural and economic). As a result, it is important to take into account the national context and to consider which models for language education are the most optimal, and how Danida and Danish NGOs can cooperate in this field.

In Denmark, the state no longer provides financial support to mother tongue and bilingual education, which means that it is up to local authorities (municipalities) if they wish to facilitate and pay for this. This means only few local authorities are offering free mother tongue and bilingual education. Is this the optimal model for language education in Denmark?

### Central questions for discussion:

- How can Danish NGOs and Danida best support the most optimal models for mother tongue and

bilingual education in South?

- How should Danish policy on language in education in Denmark be modelled?
- How can Danish researchers, people working in the field and authorities cooperate for better policies on language education in Denmark and the South?

## BACKGROUND PAPER FROM STEPHEN CARNEY AND MARIANNE SCHULTZ

### Danida's policy and practice in relation to mother tongue and bilingual education: a preliminary mapping

**Stephen Carney:** Associate professor of comparative education in the Department of Psychology and Educational Studies at Roskilde University (RUC) in Denmark. His primary research area is education policy in a comparative context. He has undertaken studies of teacher education in England, school leadership across the Nordic countries, community involvement inschooling in Nepal, and higher education reform in Denmark. In addition to on-going studies funded by the research council of educational practices in Denmark, Nepal, India, Tanzania and Zambia, he coordinates a Danida funded teacher education development project in Tibet, China.

**Marianne Schultz:** Master in International Development studies and Educational Anthropology focusing on education policy, citizenship, and the relationship between political initiatives and practice – both in the North and in the South. She has, in addition, experience with challenges related to bilingual education both from studies in Africa and from work with refugees and immigrants in Denmark

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#### Summary

This short paper seeks to provide insights into the nature of Danida's support for language policies in the eight sector countries comprising the bulk of Danish development assistance to education. First, the paper outlines a way to conceptualise language policy before applying this to the main policy documents that outline Danida's over-all vision for mother tongue and bilingual education. The paper then goes on to explore this vision in the context of five case study countries.

Danish development assistance to support language development in the education sector faces a number of challenges. First, language policies are deeply influenced by political considerations and these create a framework for what is possible in any given country. Rather than imposing an ideological position or standard set of policies and interventions, Danida emphasises that its engagement in the South in this respect is pragmatic, flexible and supportive of local efforts to improve educational equity and quality. This gives rise, necessarily, to a range of *different* strategies in these *different* contexts. Second, the nature of Danida's work in these different contexts is affected fundamentally by resource constraints of many different types, some of which require interventions and capacity building initiatives in related but different



Stephen Carney:  
School children in Nepal

fields (i.e., teacher training and placement, curriculum planning and development, professional development in ministries of education and in other parts of the education sector etc).

Danida's vision and strategies for promoting language development in the South are clearly dependent on a range of factors outside their immediate control. Whilst improved aid co-ordination has undoubtedly created new synergies within the sector, there was some evidence to suggest that language considerations remain peripheral in some programme countries.

#### 1. Introduction

In 2003, the Danish government decided to intensify its support to the field of education and this led to the establishment of five new 'sector-programmes' in the Southern hemisphere. New programmes in Bolivia, Nicaragua, Benin, Burkina Faso and Bhutan comple-



ment existing programmes in Zambia, Nepal and Mozambique, giving Danida a broad and geographically diverse portfolio of activities in the field of education. These sector-programmes have poverty-reduction as their overall objective, although Danida views education as essential, not only in the fight against poverty, but in terms of universal rights as well. Whilst the countries presently receiving support from the Danish Government are very poor in economic terms, they all enjoy a wealth of linguistic and cultural diversity. Indeed, a particular challenge for Danish support is to harness linguistic diversity in circumstances where it has often been under-resourced, ignored or, even, systematically denied.

The complexity and richness of the contexts presented by these countries provides many lessons as governments in the North attempt to support developing nations with the aim of modernising their economies and social and political processes. Whilst domestic education policy in Denmark has taken a particular direction, Danish government policy in the field of development assistance is quite different. The aim of this paper is to outline some of this diversity, explore the reasons behind it, and pose a series of questions and issues that may be taken further by those concerned with improving educational performance and relevance, irrespective of the context.

The terms of reference from the 'Danish Education NGO Network' (a network of Danish NGOs engaged in supporting education in the South) sought insights into the nature of Danida's support and its relationship to local ministries, programme implementers and NGOs. There was also an interest to elucidate more fully the ways in which language policies relate to national education strategies in the eight sector countries. Finally, the terms of reference sought insights into the challenges and dilemmas facing Danish development assistance in the area of language and education reform.<sup>18</sup> In order to explore

<sup>18</sup> The terms of reference are attached as appendix 1.

these issues, data have been collected through a desk-study of central policy-documents, as well as, via interviews with Danida's central educational advisors and personal communication with key actors connected to Danish embassies in chosen sector-countries.

## 2. Conceptualising language policies

Language communities are rarely, if ever, stable. Whilst some languages become stronger, others decline or even die. Language must be seen as constantly on the move (cf. Baker 2001) and affected by a wide range of variables. Some of these variables are beyond easy control: the rapid growth of mass communication, information technology and migration movements being contemporary examples. Other variables are the focus of direct policy intervention: curricula, textbook design and teacher training for example. Education policies are thus powerful tools but ones which must take account of the wider social, cultural and political context. Policies themselves express certain choices regarding the language of instruction and the options available for second or third language learning. Education policies are tools that can engineer linguistic landscapes. With this in mind, education policy can be seen as part of the process of *language planning*, which refers to 'deliberate efforts to influence the behaviour of others with respect to acquisition, structure, or functional allocations of their language codes' (Cooper 1989 in Baker 2001: 55, see also Spolsky 2004).

For some, the term *language planning* emerged as an arena of sociolinguistic enquiry in the 1960s when newly independent nations in Asia and Africa had to make decisions about national languages (Awasthi 2004: 117). Here, governments often practiced what Baker has called 'piecemeal pragmatism' rather than carefully structured planning. In such cases, political and economic considerations governed decisions about language (Baker 2001:58). Activities relating

to language planning may, therefore, be emphasised with different weight by different political stakeholders. This underlines the point that mother tongue and bilingual education practices are related to choices made by certain groups and people. As such, these modes of education are not neutral but *contested* activities. By introducing the notion of language planning as a theoretical meta-concept for a wide range of planning activities, we also wish to stress this aspect, as well as, the complexity connected with language policies in educational contexts. For instance, mother tongue education in a previous oral language is closely connected with *corpus planning*, which deals with the internal structure of language, for instance spelling, grammar and, above all, standardisation (Awasthi 2004: 117). Furthermore, language planning implies *status planning*, i.e. different efforts undertaken to change the use and function of a language, as well as, *acquisition planning*, which comprises the efforts organised in regard to learning a language. Some theories also highlight the necessity of *prestige planning*, while others underline language planning as both an outcome and an arena for *power struggles* (ibid. 118-119).

Language policies are thus connected both to global and local power structures, and acknowledging the diverse theories of language planning, may help to highlight that formulation and implementation of language policies are embedded in specific historical and social contexts. This means that different settings influence the outcome of specific language programmes. Thus, supporting specific planned language interventions may require mapping of the material and human capacities available, but it may also require identifying the origins of the pressures that drive certain kinds of planning initiatives. A weight on second language learning may, for instance, stem from technological and labour markets changes, but they might also stem from powerful interest groups such as donors, local elites or coalitions of indigenous peoples. Such analyses require studies that are much

more comprehensive than this one, but the issues raised here highlight the urgent need to ask certain types of questions: who plans or does not plan *what for whom and how?* (cf. Spolsky 2004).

In this regard, certain ways of speaking may also be scrutinised. For instance, Richard Ruíz has suggested that three basic orientations towards language - language as problem, language as right and language as resource - influence the nature of planning efforts in particular contexts (Ruíz 1984). According to Ruíz, these orientations are competing but not incompatible, though, Ruíz himself also shows how certain perceptions do not fit very well together (Ruíz 1984). For example, a perception of language diversity as a *problem* that might undermine social cohesion has often been deployed to justify 'monolingualism' as an ideal which, in turn, has justified transitional bilingual education models directed only at language minorities. In contrast, a perception of language as resource could highlight the importance of developing more and better language skills for all citizens that could help to enhance the status of subordinated languages. Certain language orientations can be identified in Danida policies, with some being more evident than others.

### 3. Danida's vision for mother tongue and bilingual education

Based on a review of policy-papers, this section attempts to understand Danida's vision for mother tongue and bilingual education. As a point of departure, it is important to bear in mind that Danida's general approach to education is based upon the Millennium Development Goals and the various policies aimed at achieving Education for ALL (EFA).<sup>49</sup> Additionally, the harmonisation of donor support in the South (e.g. by 'basket' or 'pooled' funding where groups of donors combine resources and make these directly accessible to





recipient governments) is leading a new policy landscape where agencies such as Danida must balance between local and international agendas in policy-formulation. For one central Danida advisor, such policies and practices ‘limit(ed) the individual aid agency (from) pushing its own agenda’ and framed the possibilities for a distinctive ‘Danish’ approach (Interview, 14.08.07; central Danida advisor). One country advisor explained succinctly:

*‘As the money to the education sector will be channelled through pool-funding, one of the only options donors have, with regards to attaching importance to certain areas, is asking questions at meetings with the Ministry. Or donors can discuss amongst themselves certain areas so that the Ministry is helped with [the area] or becomes aware of the areas that are priorities for donors’. (Interview, 31.10.07; country advisor, African case study country 1, author’s translation).*

Circumscribing Danida’s room for manoeuvre further was the Danish government’s commitment to a range of international conventions and treaties. As one central advisor noted, ratification of the ‘Convention of the Rights of the Child’ indirectly supports the right of children to be taught in their mother tongue. In all of these cases, education policy visions imply a certain vision of education: the school, the teacher and pupil, without elaborating this explicitly. Other areas, though, are covered less thoroughly in international charters and agreements and thus find their way directly into Danish government policies for education. While a full analysis must attempt to excavate both types of policies as they relate to language planning (i.e. those dealt with implicitly as part of broader, more-encompassing, but often vague, international agreements, and those detailed explicitly as part of a

distinctive Danish approach) the latter are clearly easier to trace in policy texts.

Statements related to mother tongue and bilingual education are present in only two of the seven major documents that provide the framework for Danida’s overall vision for education.<sup>20</sup> The first of these, ‘Education- Danida sector policies’ (2001), presents what Danida refers to as the ‘policies and principles governing Danish support for education’ (Danida 2001:4) and signals areas of priority for support to the education sector that are, in themselves, aligned to the broad vision of EFA adopted by the government: access to schooling; equity and educational quality; and effective financing and management in education.

The document considers education as a tool that ‘may serve to strengthen cultural identity, language and values’ (Ibid: 7). Importantly, language is mentioned three times in total, but in all cases it is presented as a ‘problem’ that could affect the fulfilment of EFA goals. This is explained in terms of the challenges of teaching in a second language that are perceived to threaten educational quality, as well as, access. In relation to this latter concern – access to education – the document considers instruction in an unfamiliar language to be potentially alienating both to pupils and parents, thereby causing the withdrawal of children from school (Ibid: 8, 22). On this basis, it is suggested that ‘mother tongue instruction in the early grades could be a response to this dilemma’ (Ibid: 22).

The vision to encourage mother tongue education, especially in the first years of primary school, needs further exploration. Though unclear in official documents, this could indicate a preference for

<sup>19</sup> The EFA policies are outlined in the Dakar Framework for Action, which was adopted at the World Education Forum in Dakar 2000 by an extensive range of countries. This framework contains six comprehensive goals: better and earlier childhood education; access to free, compulsory education for all children; meeting the learning needs of young people and adults; halving adult illiteracy; eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary school; and finally, improving the quality of education.

<sup>20</sup> The documents are: 1) ‘Partnerskab 2000’ (2000); 2) ‘Education. Danida’s Sector Policies’ (2001); 3) ‘Support to Indigenous peoples’ (2004); 4) ‘Children and Young People in Danish Development Cooperation. Guidelines’ (2004); 5) ‘Ligestilling i Dansk Bistand’ (2004); 6) ‘Strategi for Danmarks støtte til bekæmpelse af hiv/aids i udviklingslandene (2005); 7) ‘Vilje til Udvikling’ (2006).

early-exit models where learners may begin learning through their mother tongue, but at the end of grade three, or even earlier, shift to instruction in the official language. This is the case in many African countries. In contrast, an emerging consensus amongst language experts is that children should be taught in their mother tongue for a more substantial period (e.g. with some suggesting between 6-8 years) if they are to gain the cognitive and conceptual skills necessary to master other languages and subject matter (Alidou, Hassana et al., 2006).

The 2001 Sector Policy document makes clear that "Danish support hinges on the situational need and strategic priorities of the country. [...]". Where it 'is therefore not possible to prescribe a standard formula for Danish bilateral support to education' (ibid: 21). The lack of a uniform vision for supporting the use of language in education also emerges from the second document: 'Support for Indigenous peoples' (2004). Interestingly, the notion of mother tongue is missing here and replaced instead by the notion of bilingual teaching, which is linked to supporting the needs of marginalised groups. By evoking the plight of marginalized and indigenous peoples, Danida links the language of instruction with the notion of rights. For example:

*'...the right to self-determination as distinct peoples is regarded as the fundamental **right**, which is the basis for a broader recognition of culture, **language**, religion and other issues.'*

(Danida 2004a: 11 – own emphasis)

And

*'...sector programme support (SPS) can influence structural reforms, benefiting otherwise marginalised groups such as indigenous peoples, for example through **bilingual teaching** in the national education sector.'*

(Ibid: 21)

Thus, Danida acknowledges the importance of bilingual education, even though this is only men-

tioned briefly, and the term is not explained further. Furthermore, this term is only linked to the needs of disadvantaged peoples and, in contrast to the notion of mother tongue education/instruction, bilingual education is neither related to access nor quality in education. When combined with the limited focus on language in the reviewed policy-papers in general, one could argue that Danida's vision for mother tongue and bilingual education is blurred and this lack of clarity raises a number of questions. For example, should mother tongue education be a general right for all citizens? Should bilingual education be provided for indigenous people alone? Are there inherent dilemmas embedded in any overarching vision?

The next section attempts to understand Danida's vision in context, first by introducing some of the complexities and tensions built into language planning processes, and then by illustrating these in the context of practices in a number of sector programme countries.

### 3.1 Understanding language policies

Centrally positioned educational advisors acknowledge that Danida's vision for language is not easy to distil into a simplistic statement. As one advisor suggested: 'we don't have a defined vision for language with regard to our support to the education sector' (Interview, 14.08.07; central Danida advisor). As a group, the three centrally placed education advisors acknowledged that in practice bilingual and mother tongue education programmes often overlapped in terms of practices, even if different terms were being used to define them. How are such ambiguities – indeed the absence of a clear and defined vision – to be understood? How does this vagueness take form as policies and programmes in the various sector countries? Is it even significant that Danida supports educational initiatives with a focus on language when its technical





vocabulary and conceptual tool box are so hard to specify? For some researchers and practitioners, concepts such as ‘mother tongue’ and ‘bilingualism’ have been defined in a multitude of different ways. A popular definition of mother tongue is in terms of the language first learned. The language researcher Skubnabb-Kangas, though, distinguishes between four criteria when defining mother tongue: origin, identification, competence and function (Awasthi 2004:128). From this perspective, the same person can have different mother tongues depending on the definition used; a complexity that is equally relevant to bilingualism. Here, the same criteria are commonly used with different weighting. Indeed, the level of competence required to be a ‘real’ or ‘genuine’ bilingual speaker may vary greatly according to the definition used (Ibid: 131). From this perspective, the various models of bilingual and multilingual education seen in practice may become more understandable (see for instance Awasthi 2004, Alidou et. al. 2006). Nevertheless, language scholars such as Awasthi have highlighted the importance of defining the terms to be used for educational purposes as this provides a foundation for the evaluation of how education systems have reached their goals (Ibid).

When asked, Danida’s central educational advisors defined mother tongue education in terms of policies where one has the ‘right’ to be taught in one’s mother tongue. Bilingual education, by contrast, was seen as a ‘mode’ of education that combines a local language with an official language. For these advisors, it was less important that particular levels of competence be specified in order to assess one’s status as a bilingual speaker. This openness creates considerable space for countries to define these terms themselves, and raises further challenges for how certain interventions can be clearly assessed and benchmarked .

While the notion of ambiguity seems to dominate the analysis thus far, it should be made clear that the cen-

tral advisors saw logic in this. One suggested that it was ‘perhaps a wise thing not to have a well formulated strategy, because of the complications involved in these issues’ (Ibid). A prime example was described as language policies that were embedded in state building projects where national governments were fearful of encouraging ethnic differences or distinctions through the use of vernacular languages.

Resource constraints posed another major challenge: limited budgets for education intensify the political conflicts that shape governing processes in the South and language politics is one particularly volatile arena for identity displays and political posturing. Adherence to a loose policy script thus enables Danida to maintain a high degree of flexibility in its cooperation with partners in the South. Central advisors insisted that Danida’s work in the South be seen not as a process of imposing specific Western visions and strategies, but as a process of supporting local initiatives. As one remarked, (we) ‘are not supporting our own strategy. We are supporting the strategy of the nation we work with’ (Ibid). Contextualised support and local ownership are thus important concerns for maintaining loose policy frameworks and statements about the language factor in education.

The complexities of implementing language policies in diverse sector countries seemed limitless. One country-based advisor highlighted the perennial problem of resistance to mother tongue instruction from parents themselves, and therefore the pitfalls of enshrining stringent definitions and visions into policy documents. The Creole speaking ethnic minority in Nicaragua was presented as an example here, where a Creole Commission is now conducting outreach work to diminish parental fears that their children will be left behind by schooling solely in a small language that they themselves see as ill-equipped to meet the challenges of the modern economy. In other cases, the scarcity of policy documentation in the education sector was an indica-

tion not of failure on behalf of Danida and its partners, but a sign to look into the policies of other sectors. In Nepal, for example, language policies find form in other priority areas such as ‘indigenous people’, strategies for ‘social inclusion’ and programmes aimed at reducing ‘marginalisation.’

Finally, and perhaps of most importance, the central educational advisors suggested that the benefits of linguistic diversity and the significance of language in education are ‘emerging perceptions’ which, while having a longer history in the academic and policy literature, were only recently taking form as mainstream development practice. For one advisor, Danida was ‘behind’ in this field and could ‘definitely improve our work in this issue’ (Ibid.). For another, issues surrounding mother tongue instruction had dominated policy thinking and this had been reinforced by Danida’s overwhelming focus on primary education and the needs of early learning. As such, Danida’s central advisors stressed the need for more thorough analyses of its language policies and practices, especially those that focused on the political and economic aspects of language policy. Such work will need to explore the tensions and dilemmas built into supporting language in the education sector. The next section introduces some of these issues.

### **Embedded tensions**

As will be made clear from the previous section, Danida’s central educational advisors are quite sceptical about committing themselves to certain universal models of mother tongue or bilingual educational. Decisions, such as whether to treat mother tongue as a subject or as the language of instruction, are guided as much by pragmatic and resource-orientated concerns as they are by educational theory or notions of universal entitlements.

However, this pragmatism appeared to obscure a number of more principled issues. For one advisor,

‘small languages are very often related to marginalisation and isolation from the rest of society, as well as (a source of) poverty’ (Ibid). Whilst indicating a desire that minorities find clear places within the modern (mainstream) sectors of the economy, such viewpoints expose embedded hierarchies of languages where size, in particular, dictates which languages are worthy of maintaining. Such concerns – essential to development planners charged with the task of maximising value from limited aid budgets – puts pressure on the ‘rights’ discourse that frames Danish assistance. One may legitimately ask: Who should determine which languages are worth maintaining and investing in? This was an important question for Danida’s central advisors as they themselves are obliged to assess the extent to which rights issues are being adequately addressed in their discussions with partner countries.

This tension between a rights-based ideal and the resource-constrained reality is further heightened by the cost implications of providing mother tongue and/or bilingual education to the many smaller language communities that characterise Danish sector partners. For one advisor, therefore, Danida was ‘obliged to prioritize’ (Ibid). What, then, might constitute an acceptable balance or trade-off between a rights-based approach and resource-orientated considerations? Are there certain planning activities or new ways of speaking that can bridge these two concerns? Such questions are not easily answered, but because of its very vagueness, Danida’s vision might set the stage for such debates. Here, one must bear in mind that even if a rights-based approach to educational development may constitute a dominant discourse in the field of international development, every orientation towards language needs be scrutinized. In the case of language policy, honouring a commitment to the dominant rights-based discourse may come at the cost of educational quality and effectiveness, and threaten the political objective of many govern-





ments in the South to deliver fast and meaningful development.

#### 4. From vision to country level

The following section moves beyond Danida's overall vision for mother tongue and bilingual education to consider how these are placed on the agenda, and operationalised, in collaboration with partners in the South. Five countries have been chosen in order to illustrate Danida policy in context. Bolivia and Nicaragua, both of whom are fairly new sector countries, represent South America. Zambia and Mozambique, long-term recipients of Danish education sector support, represent Africa. From Asia, Nepal has been prioritised where Danida has been active since the early 1990s.

Typically, a Danida country sector-document spells out support to certain national sector plans. Sector programmes all take their starting point in the national educational strategy of the country in question, thereby building on the official national agenda. Additionally, the general commitment to international policies like EFA also shape the basis for dialogue between Danida and the Ministries of Education in sector countries. According to Danida's central advisors, it is 'routine' to ensure that national educational policies are aligned with international commitments to EFA, and on this basis, negotiation may be initiated in certain areas, including language. Negotiations regarding the specific shape of support to an education sector may include certain conditionalities from the Danish side, and may also accommodate suggestions from local partners for smaller components and activities considered to be of strategic importance. Often, areas not explicitly centred in national education plans and programmes may find form as projects and activities carried out through, for

example, Danish or local NGOs. The central advisors thought that language policies must be understood in this context. As one remarked, 'there are possibilities for putting language on the agenda, but this is not a very strong agenda, which is being pushed' (Ibid).

Does donor harmonisation, and increasingly similar international policies, lead then to sector-documents having very uniform views on mother tongue and bilingual education? A review of the sector-documents from these five countries shows that this is not the case, as a broad range of practices are expressed in policies. Indeed, some of the documents manifest quite nuanced understandings of language issues in education, while others are much less clear.

Nicaragua and Bolivia are the countries where language, in the shape of *intercultural bilingual education* (IBE), is given most weight in sector-documents. In Bolivia, Danida promotes IBE by supporting the government's educational policy referred to as POMA, which has a number of comprehensive bilingual modalities. Danida also promotes IBE through civil society by supporting the Native Populations Education Counsels (CEPOS), which, for instance, have been active in promoting IBE in rural areas. However, rather than being isolated to rural Bolivia, this approach, and the influence of CEPOS, are now widespread, with IBE a fully integrated aspect of the national education system (04.09.07, personal communication with programme officer at the Embassy in Bolivia).<sup>21</sup> In Nicaragua, Danida also supports IBE through the national education policy known as PROASE and, in particular, support IBE through the implementation of the educational system SEAR in the Autonomous Regions. Here, six languages of instruction are involved. To sustain this commitment, Danida have an advisor in post, to help especially with the implementation of SEAR (01.09.07, personal

<sup>21</sup> As a component of the first phase of the Indigenous Peoples' Program, Danida supported a specific programme of IBE in the Low Lands (PEIB-TB). This program, which ended in 2005, is currently being integrated into the MoE with funding from the 'basket' created by donors.

communication with local advisor in Nicaragua). In these ways, Danida takes its point of departure in existing attempts to implement and expand bilingual education in these two countries. Through its sector-documents, Danida stresses the importance of children developing both mother tongue and Spanish skills, as ‘bilingual education allows the students to develop skills in their mother tongue, and also to fully take part in society by gaining command of another language’ (Danida 2004e: 18). IBE is thus seen as part of citizenship education, but it is furthermore seen as a way of solving problems related to exclusion: ‘indigenous peoples often are kept out of the educational system in Nicaragua and offered poorer conditions because of insufficient bilingual education’<sup>22</sup> (Danida 2004d: 8).

The introduction of IBE has been considered a milestone with regards to indigenous peoples in Bolivia (Danida 2005a: 7). In both countries, IBE is considered as a right, as well as, an instrumental strategy ensuring the quality of education and on this basis, the spread of IBE becomes a ‘measure of educational efficacy’ (Danida & MoE Bolivia 2005). Thus, in the Latin American context, it seems that a rights-based approach and an instrumental approach to languages support each other and Danida has high ambitions that ‘transforming a current monoculture schooling system into a intercultural and bilingual one will bring educational relevance and quality to the population’ (Danida 2004e: 17). A number of risks and challenges are also outlined in the relevant sector-documents. In Nicaragua, for instance, political instability, a lack of goal agreement between the Ministry of Education and the regional governments, budget shortcomings, a lack of capacity in the administration, inadequate numbers of trained teachers and relevant textbooks are all seen as threats to successful implementation (Danida 2004e).

The comprehensive weight given to bilingual education in the above mentioned sector programmes stands in sharp contrast with sector-documents relating to Zambia. Here issues of language in education are almost absent. Instead, Danida’s main sector document from 2004 highlights a concern for the ‘quality’ of education, especially in terms of ‘the high number of untrained teachers in the system and lack of relevant textbooks’ (Danida & MoE Zambia 2004: 16). While test scores in English and Mathematics have improved considerably in recent years, there has been little shift in Zambian languages with continuing low levels of literacy and numeracy. Indeed, the current Sector Programme Support Document suggests that many pupils are ‘functionally illiterate at the end of their schooling’ (Ibid). Notwithstanding this critique, the document fails to clarify Danida’s policy goal, or indeed the Zambian government’s policy goal - in relation to literacy; not least in terms of the relation of English to Zambian languages. In general, Zambia is an example of a country where the language factor is conspicuously absent in sector-level documents. Nevertheless, language is taken seriously in Zambia, albeit indirectly. A ‘Primary Reading Programme’ funded by donors (principally the British) has proven very successful in addressing rural children’s initial literacy needs via instruction in seven Zambian languages while at the same time introducing a special programme for English language learning to be taken prior to teaching in English. This programme is provided throughout the basic education cycle of seven years. Danida, however, views the programme as a ‘highly visible exception’ of successful reform in a Country that is suffering from low quality teaching, not least in terms of capacity problems in teacher training colleges, and learning materials, and especially regarding inadequate competences at the national level within the area of curriculum development (Danida & Zambia MoE 2004: 21).



<sup>22</sup> Translation of: “Oprindelige folk holdes ofte ude af uddannelsessystemet i Nicaragua og tilbydes ringere vilkår som følge af mangelfuld flersproget uddannelse.”



In Mozambique, high illiteracy and lack of quality are also seen as severe challenges, and the main emphasis of Danish support is *'the priority given to basic education with a special focus on equity and quality'* (Danida & MINED 2001: 28). Like the situation in Zambia, sector-documents in Mozambique highlight the need for educational quality but are less clear about the role of mother tongue or bilingual education.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, the *new National Curriculum for Basic Education (1-7 grades)* introduced in 2004 comprises a *Bilingual Education Programme*. For one Danida advisor, a rights-based logic was important for policy makers who saw mother tongue instruction as an effective means to 'preserve cultural identity and self-esteem.' The aim is for children to learn all subjects in their mother tongue or local language from grades 1 to 3, with Portuguese taught as a second language. The 'transition' to Portuguese takes place from grade 4 with the local language/mother tongue taught as a subject. (5.11.07, personal communication with local advisor). This early exit approach involves a total of 11 local languages and implementation is currently taking place in a cross-section of provinces. Mother tongue and bilingual education initiatives are also being included in the new curriculum for teacher training institutions where (a small number of) hours have been allocated for the introduction of Bantu languages.

In spite of these commitments, progress remains slow. Danida staff suggests that the results to date have been positive in relation to children's progress, retention and parental support; although authorities are concerned that wider implementation will be hampered by inadequate capacity in terms of trained teachers, relevant textbooks and teaching materials. In Tete Province where Danida are active, only a handful of schools have been

affected. Here, one Danida advisor suggested that the initiatives have an air of 'piloting' about them with funding allocation problems limiting progress (25.10.07, personal communication with local advisor). Nevertheless, Danida remain an active and committed partner. In association with INDE (an institution responsible for research and curriculum development) and a local NGO, Progressio, Danida have supported the provincial teams via the organisation of short-term training sessions and the production of teaching materials (5.11.07, personal communication with local advisor).

From these cases one might conclude that Danida's sector-policies signal *either* a very comprehensive focus on bilingual education, or a minor and/or indirect one. A glance at Nepal suggests a third path. Here, the language factor is explicit in sector-level documentation, although the terminology is quite different from the one used in the Bolivian and Nicaraguan cases. Here, the term 'mother tongue education' is used not least because this is seen as a means to fulfil one of Danida's main goals for the Nepalese education sector: 'securing equal access for all' (Danida 2004f: 7). As one national ministry official explained:

*'Although in (a) technical sense the terms mother tongue education and bilingual education are different things, in Nepal's education system both of these terms appear to serve the same purpose. Mother tongue education is more meaningful and enrichment-oriented than bilingual education. Bilingual education may mean a medium of instruction through two languages (e.g. English and Nepali) without recognizing the role of children's mother tongue. (28.10.07, personal communication with MOES official, Kathmandu).*

In documentation supporting the Sector Programme,

<sup>23</sup> It should be noted that the Mozambique sector-programme document reviewed here expired officially in 2006, and a new document is currently being developed. While the previous document provides little insight into the status of language in educational reforms, programme-appendices do suggest that policy makers are at least aware of the key issues. For instance, one appendix suggests that provincial profiles be updated, especially in terms of the status of language (Danida & MINED 2001: 108). The appendix also encourages study visits to other African countries in order to gain further knowledge about African language development (Ibid: 110).

Danida suggests that: 'An increased effort will be initiated in regard to mother tongue education, among other things, through appointing teachers with knowledge of local languages. Mother tongue education is expected to result in increased enrolment of children from indigenous peoples, where parents have kept them from schools due to linguistic reasons'<sup>24</sup> (Ibid). Mother tongue education is also supported through the Nepalese education policy, EFA 2004-2009, which describes mother tongue education as 'a positive step towards addressing the instructional needs of indigenous and linguistic minority children across the country' (MOES 2004: 22).

Danida's official Sector-Programme Support document does not explicitly mention mother tongue education as a priority for Danish support. Instead, 'inclusive education', 'teacher education and development', 'textbook development', 'education planning', and 'non-formal education' are the focus (Danida 2004g: 14-15). Here, a national strategy for inclusive education is meant to address linguistic diversity (see MOES 2003: 23-24). In this way, Danish support for the official Nepalese educational plan provides implicit support for language education, although it is unclear if this refers to strategies to support mother tongue education, bilingual education, or a combination of the two as both terms are used by the Ministry without clear distinction.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, similar to the situations in Bolivia and Nicaragua, Danida sees mother tongue education in Nepal as mainly important for the primary education cycle.<sup>26</sup>

Progress, however, has been slow, with a number of factors affecting the implementation of effective language policies. First, whilst the Country's Curriculum

Development Centre translates primary school texts into a number of local languages, mother tongue instruction has not been employed to utilise these resources fully. A recent initiative to introduce multi-lingual education in the early grades (and certainly from grades 1-3), in addition to an emphasis on mother tongue instruction in the new School Sector Reform (to be implemented in 2009) suggests, however, a heightened awareness of the issues at hand.

Secondly, even though Danida, as a major and long-term donor in Nepal, is in a strong position to influence the government to prioritise language policies more fully, the 'pooled' funding modality and focus on social inclusion and equity in Danish assistance have led to a loss of focus on this most critical of concerns. For one MOES official, Danida was 'not against' mother tongue medium instruction, but does not emphasise it sufficiently. This was peculiar given that high quality education and the universalisation of primary education were considered 'unthinkable' without it!

Thirdly, and deeply connected here, ambitions to provide children with instruction in their own languages is compromised by a national mindset that views Nepali and, increasingly, English as 'synonymous' with 'education.' 'Linguistic imperialism' must be countered by strong policies and Danida needed to make mother tongue medium education a 'principal' aspect of its agenda for development assistance (28.10.07, personal communication with MOES official, Kathmandu).

In general, the review of sector-programmes undertaken here shows that mother tongue and bilingual education is centred predominantly on the early

<sup>24</sup> Translation of: "Der vil ske en øget indsats på modersmålsundervisning bl.a. gennem ansættelse af lærere med kendskab til lokale sprog. Med modersmålsundervisningen forventer man at opnå stigende indskrivning af børn fra oprindelige befolkningsgrupper, hvor forældrene af sproglige grunde har afholdt sig fra at sende dem i skole."

<sup>25</sup> As it is written: "The Ministry of Education and Sports has emphasized the need for mother tongue medium education in primary schools" (MOES 2003:22). On the same page, though, it suggests that "the role of the stakeholders and linguistic minorities is crucial in designing instructional materials and implementing bilingual education programs." (Ibid. – own emphasis)

<sup>26</sup> As it is written: "Learning in a "foreign" language [...] is of less relevance to children entering lower secondary school as it might be assumed that to progress beyond year five students will have achieved a certain level of fluency in Nepali. However, it will still remain the case that their parents will be unable to support their education indirectly." (Danida et al. 2002: 30)





years of schooling. Further, the review suggests that the weight given to mother tongue and bilingual education varies widely across sector-programmes and countries and suggests that increasingly standardised foreign support is channelled through, and shaped by, national education programmes in quite different ways. A thorough analysis of Danish support requires a much more grounded investigation into local/national educational visions and policies, if indeed, the trend towards aid harmonisation makes less relevant the task of isolating and analysing bilateral support as an entirely national phenomenon. Finally, it must be kept in mind that even if policies signal a commitment to mother tongue and/or bilingual education, many challenges in relation to implementation still exist. For instance, research on mother tongue education in Nepal clearly shows that, in spite of the abovementioned policy statements, monolingual school practices are very widespread (Awasthi 2004). A similar conclusion could be made in relation to the other cases presented here where successes are either patchy or uneven, or only now beginning to be realised.

### 5. Challenges perceived

Danida advisors and country-level informants raised a number of challenges affecting the implementation of mother tongue and bilingual educational policies. Some of the major issues raised by respondents can be summarised as follows:

**Politics and culture:** language policy formulation and implementation is embedded in a complex system of political, cultural, pedagogical and economic aspects, which must be taken into consideration. Elites, for example, may favour their own groups and interests; national governments may be concerned about encouraging ethnic revitalisation; parents are often sceptical about programmes they see as being potentially marginalising etc. Often, these issues are a driving force behind actual

implementation. One country advisor explained this succinctly, suggesting that poor countries sometimes emphasise areas such as language and inclusive education not because of any deep commitment to such issues, but ‘because they know this is what donors wish for’ (Interview, 31.10.07; country advisor, African case study country 1).

A number of those involved in the study suggested Danida needed to make clear policy decisions about the role of language in educational reform, and be prepared to constantly keep this on the national agenda with governmental partners in the South.

**Aid philosophy:** Notwithstanding the above, a rights-based approach is now seen globally as a force driving development intervention in general but also in terms of language policies. In practical terms, universalist thinking of this type meets multiple challenges as donors and national governments attempt to meet the aspirations of diverse groups of citizens. Often, a rights-based approach is used to justify interventions in the field of language but a range of practical concerns take over when it comes to implementation. Donor efforts need to be understood as a compromise between general value-positions and local realities.

**Aid structures:** While donors must make pragmatic and realistic decisions, it is a theme throughout this short paper that agencies such as Danida are currently undergoing transformations that are not fully within their power to influence. The strong commitment in development assistance to local ownership and empowerment are driving policies towards sectoral support via the pooling of donor resources for disposal by recipient governments. Old project modalities are disappearing, as are long-term advisors in the field. The possibilities for national development agencies to affect policies in the South may not be diminishing, but they are certainly changing form. Danida may need to revisit its

structures and organisational forms and consider ways in which national implementation processes in recipient countries can be better supported by civil society in general.

**Capacity:** Danida advisors point out that local capacities are needed at both the micro and macro levels. This includes analytical capacity at universities and in ministries of education. As one centrally-positioned advisor remarked: ‘we don’t have a policy [on language] that we would like to sell in that sense, but we would like to encourage and support the development of national capacities in these fields.’ Furthermore, it became clear during the study that capacity needed to be improved in local teacher training colleges, many of which had vested interests in maintaining the status quo, or a lack of capacity to serve the national reform agenda.

**Infrastructure and Resources:** Infrastructure problems are extreme and threaten the best plans. Many communities in need of support in the field of language often live in isolation in rural areas, thereby complicating capacity-building initiatives driven from the centre. One pressing shortcoming is the inability of schools to recruit native speakers of minority languages. In many of the case study countries, there are inadequate facilities not only to translate teaching materials, but to redesign them in such a way where local people conceptualise complex phenomena. It appeared that the cases drawn from South America typified societies committed to a new contract between dominant and minority peoples and that here, language policies were ambitious and being implemented. Nevertheless, there was no suggestion from those interviewed that the resources currently allocated were sufficient to realise these ambitions. In the other case studies there were unresolved issues of political will and funding.

## 6. Final Remarks

The challenges outlined above were those mentioned

primarily by Danida staff and were generally of two broad types. First, language policies are deeply influenced by political considerations and these create a framework for what is possible in any given country. Rather than imposing an ideological position or standard set of policies and interventions, Danida emphasises that its engagement in the South - in this respect - is pragmatic, flexible and supportive of local efforts to improve educational equity and quality. This gives rise necessarily, to a range of different *strategies* in these *different* contexts.

Second, the nature of Danida’s work in these different contexts is affected fundamentally by resource constraints of many different types, some of which require interventions and capacity building initiatives in related but different fields (i.e., teacher training and placement, curriculum planning and development, professional development in ministries of education and in other parts of the education sector etc). Danida’s vision and strategies for promoting language development in the South are clearly dependent on a range of factors outside their immediate control. While improved aid co-ordination has undoubtedly created new synergies within the sector, there was some evidence to suggest that language considerations remain peripheral in some programme lands.

Finally, though not advocated explicitly by Danida staff, it emerged during the study that much benefit could be gained by a more thorough review of Danida’s work in this field. This might include the following: elaborating upon and critiquing the Danish vision for language development and educational quality in the South with a view to supporting Danish efforts to develop a more consistent and better articulated policy; identifying the key processes and linkages in establishing effective aid partnerships in this field; identifying more fully the challenges confronting local actors as they implement programmes, and highlighting models of good practice





from various sector programmes. The small study presented here should be seen as a call for more substantial work in this field, rather than a resource with which to improve policies and practices in itself.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CONFERENCE ON MOTHER TONGUE AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION, COPENHAGEN, NOVEMBER 28TH – 29TH 2007.

At the end of the conference, a long list of recommendations were presented – including arguments for the recommendations and a number of dilemmas in relation to the themes discussed during plenary sessions and workshops. The discussions from all 16 workshops have been summarised into the four main recommendations listed below.

minority languages/local languages and intercultural pedagogy was also part of the recommendations. Furthermore, it was discussed whether it is possible to identify how much mother tongue education is needed throughout a child's schooling; and participants recommended mother tongue education throughout the entire period of schooling.



Eva Iversen:  
Conference participants

### Recommendations concerning pedagogy

The first workshop focused on the importance of mother tongue in the learning process – mainly in relation to linguistic development and communication. The overall recommendation from this workshop was:

*Mother tongue education should be offered to all pupils as an integrated part of the teaching taking place in schools, because it enhances the pupils' learning conditions and overall results.*

The need for education and further training of teachers was central in the discussions in this workshop. Improving teacher training with regards to

The question of minimum standards; however, will always depend on the goals set for learning. Has society set the goal for the school to develop competent bilingual pupils – or is the goal for the bilingual pupils to switch languages, so that they are only competent in one language at the end of schooling? Thus, the pedagogic efforts required with regards to mother tongue and bilingual education can not be defined in general terms, but only in relation to the concrete goals identified for education.

### Recommendations with regards to citizenship

The second workshop focused on the fact that language – in addition to facilitating the learning process – also has an important influence on identity.



Questions were discussed that related to: the development of self-esteem, mutual respect among groups of pupils and equal opportunities for all to access the curriculum and develop the competences necessary to act as a citizen. The overall recommendation from these discussions was:

*The school shall recognize, include and set high goals for the pupil's competence in mastering their mother tongue, as well as the majority language(s) of power in society, as it increases equal opportunities in school and, therefore, the possibility to develop a democratic citizenship.*

Generally, all workshops on this theme were in agreement that mother tongue language is very important for cultural self-esteem and identity; though it was underlined that access to the 'language of power' in a society is just as crucial from a citizenship perspective. However, the discussions also revealed disagreement on how this goal should be reached. One perspective was that including mother tongue education in schools presupposes that it is recognized as a right that all children have. Another perspective was that questions relating to mother tongue education should be integrated into the struggle for high quality education for all. According to this view, making mother tongue education a right in itself, could lead to division amongst minority groups, who would be better off standing together and fighting against poverty and repression.

#### **Recommendations regarding economics**

The third workshop placed a focus on the economic analysis that highlights the economic expenses and gains for society when education programmes are changed from monolingual to bilingual – thereby allowing more pupils to take part in communication and learning processes. The overall recommendation from this workshop is:

*Economic analysis should be undertaken, including the short term expenses - related to introducing mother tongue and bilingual education of high quality - and the long term gains for society.*

This overall recommendation from the participants is connected to other recommendations, namely: long term experiments should be undertaken with bilingual education programmes and they should be documented and evaluated using cross-sectoral research methodologies. The economic issues discussed in this workshop should be part of the analysis and the documentation and research should follow the development of different models. These models should be tested over time in order to learn more about the effect of bilingual education programmes – both in Denmark, and in the work that Danida supports in the South. This recommendation was backed participants in all the workshops, using the argument that mother tongue and bilingual education will contribute to strengthening the economy in society.

#### **Recommendation with regards to policy**

The fourth and final workshop focused on which actions, at different levels, can lead to the proposed changes in education policy choices – both in Denmark and in development aid given to the South. In developing countries and Denmark, the majority language is kept as the dominant language of instruction. With reference to the 2007 EU "Year for Equality," and the 2008 UN "Year for Language Rights," the participants in the conference recommend:

*NGOs, Danida and other actors in Denmark should spread the message that mother tongue education is a necessary condition for learning. The message should be spread through popularisation of research and the sharing of best practice.*

**In the South,** NGOs and Danida are recommended to support information campaigns directed towards

parents and other key actors in civil society who can put forward demands to alter national education policy. Danida and NGOs working in education are recommended to engage in a conceptual strengthening of the language policy in relation to education, in order to:

- Define how mother tongue education should be included in quality education.
- Identify any lack of knowledge in the field.
- Coordinate the production of evidence based knowledge and good practice.
- Influence the Danish and international agendas in this field.

***In Denmark***, it is recommended that staff in day-care institutions and schools should shift from monolingual policy to a bilingual policy and use the language of the child throughout the entire development and schooling of the child. The state is recommended to introduce the legal framework for the development of a bilingual practice. The recommendations are founded on the following arguments: according to Danish law concerning primary and lower secondary school, teaching should take into consideration the child's development, including one's linguistic and cultural background. An intercultural/bilingual education policy reflecting the multicultural reality is therefore necessary. Such a policy should pay respect to all the languages represented in Danish schools – both with regards to the legal framework, the curriculum, the learning materials and teacher training. In this process, it is recommended that the minister of education look into the recommendations also made by the OECD review of the Danish primary and lower secondary school in 2004, and undertake a new study of existing documentation of teachers' use of mother tongues – both in Danish lessons and other subjects.

#### **Concerning cooperation among NGOs, Danida and the Danish education sector**

The participants find that an agenda concerning

better education by developing mother tongue and bilingual education – as advocated at this conference – presupposes a strengthening of a national knowledge-base, academic capacity and professional networks, as well as media and civil society organisations working in this field. Such a strengthening could consist of organising annual conferences such as this one, and though establishing a network with the purpose to raise awareness of the role of language in education both in Denmark and in the South. This network could meet on a regular basis with representatives from North and South, education authorities, researchers, individuals and organisations working in the field. To succeed in this endeavour, what will be needed is research in mother tongue and bilingual education, pilot projects, integration of knowledge about language education and instruction in journalist education/ further training.





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