An Investigation Into The Impact Of Teaching In Local Languages On Pupils And Teachers (Advantages, Challenges, Opportunities, Etc) In Selected Primary Schools In Kitwe District Of The Copperbelt Province Of Zambia

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Abstract: The study assessed the impact of teaching in local languages on pupils and teachers of grades one (1) to four (4) (advantages, challenges, opportunities, etc) in selected primary schools of Kitwe District of Zambia. Recently, in response to poor educational outcomes and political pressure, a number of Sub-Saharan African countries including Zambia have taken measures to include local languages in their formal education sectors, a practice often referred to as mother tongue instruction (MTI). Theoretically, the effect of MTI is ambiguous and a number of studies argue that MTI is superior to second language instruction in facilitating effective classroom communication, thereby increasing access and quality of education. In view of the aforementioned, the objective of the study was to find out the impact of using local language as a medium of instructions to pupils of grades one (1) to four (4) in terms of advantages, challenges and opportunities. A survey design which used both quantitative and qualitative aspects of research was used in the study. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect data. The sample included forty five (45) respondents from 20 Primary Schools of Kitwe Districts. Three categories of respondents were identified: (i) Twenty (20) Headmasters (School Managers) (ii) Twenty (20) Teachers and (iii) Five (5) Grade 4 and below pupils. The methods used included three sets of structured questionnaires and personal interviews. The data was analysed using statistical software called STATA. Data was checked for validity, reliability, identification outliners and normality. The findings of the study revealed that issuing instructions in local language is more beneficial as the pupils grasp things faster, pupils' participations in classroom improves greatly however some pupils may face language barrier more especially to pupils who come from transfer from other regions and one issue that come out strongly was the lack of teaching and learning materials. This calls for the school administration and the ministry of education to stock the schools with the teaching and reading. The significant challenges were the lack of teaching materials in local language, language barrier to pupils and teachers who come on transfer from other regions while the main advantages were fast learning of the pupils, contribution and participation of pupils in class will be high, pupils continue with the language of play and that makes them acquire knowledge fast. The using of local language to issue instructions in class is a good development that will improve the performance of pupils in all areas of study.

Key Words: Advantages, challenges, Impact, local languages, opportunities, pupils, teachers, teaching.

1.0 Introduction

Language of instruction is one of the primary determinants of effective classroom communication. Globally, many countries with multiple languages have required a single language to dominate their education sectors (UNESCO, 1953, 2003). This phenomenon is particularly prevalent in Africa. Depending on different estimates and definitions, the number of languages spoken in Africa ranges between 1,000 and 2,500 (Gadelii, 2004). However, only 176 of these African languages are used in education, and for many languages, their use is often limited to informal education programs (UNESCO, 2010). In formal education, most African countries use the language of their historical colonizers or the language of a dominant ethnic group. The use of unfamiliar languages as a medium of instruction is often mentioned as an important source of low enrolment rates, retention rates, literacy levels and academic achievement (TihtinaZenebeGebre 2014).

The colonial language policies either adopted the use of English from the first grade or only used indigenous languages as a medium of instruction in the lower classes of the primary school. Postcolonial language policies have maintained the status quo, thus perpetuating the existence of an elite group, which is characterized by relatively high economic status, high educational level and high competence in English (Robinson, 1996; Granville, Janks, Joseph, Mpahlele, Ramani, Reed and Watson, 1998). Therefore, African nations remain "prisoners of the past" since they are so overwhelmed by established practices to such as an extent that it is virtually impossible to break away from them (Bamgbose, 1991). Hence, the colonial and neo-colonial subjects tend to undermine their own language, as mentioned by Adegbija (1994:33) who says: This attitude of denigration towards one's own language and the exaltation of European languages have not been easy to remove in Africa. Its scars are still very visible today, particularly in the education system. At primary school level, there are basically three types of pilot projects: initial or early medium in an African language, bilingual medium, and full medium for the entire primary education. Experiments in early or initial medium have been reported in Sierra Leone, Senegal, Niger and Nigeria (for languages with small school-going populations). An example of this is the Rivers Readers Project in Nigeria, which is designed to introduce initial literacy in about twenty so-called minority languages/dialects through their use as media of instruction in the first two years of primary education. Since one of the

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main objections to mother tongue education is cost, one important lesson from the project is that costs can be minimized through the use of uniform formats and illustrations for primers as well as cheaper methods for producing reading materials. It is instructive that, in this 40 publications were produced in project. languages/dialects between 1970 and 1972 at a cost of 20,000 US dollars. These publications include primers, readers, teachers' notes, orthography manuals and dictionaries. Another lesson is that by harnessing community interest and participation, an enabling environment is created for the project (LaxmanGhimire 1990) The notation employed for indicating type and level of language use in education is straightforward and easily understood. There is, however, the vagueness of medium of instruction when coupled with level of education. For example, several languages are marked as 1M, meaning that they are used as medium of instruction in primary education. In actual fact, it is only in a few countries and in certain pilot projects that African languages are used for the entire duration of primary education. In most cases, they are only used as languages of learning and teaching from one to four years. The negative attitudes that impede the use of African languages for teaching and learning are shown to be unwarranted, particularly when it is demonstrated in practice that many African countries are either already using, or planning to use, them by embarking on experiments and pilot projects. One of the problems often decried in language educational policy is the dearth of information on what is going on in different countries (Ayo Bamgbose 1991). Zambia is widely claimed to have over 72 languages, although many of these might be better regarded as sublanguages. All of Zambia's vernacular languages are members of the Bantu family and are closely related to one another, together with English, which is the national language and the major language of business and education. Seven vernacular languages have official status. Together these represent the major languages of each province: Bemba (Northern Province, Luapula, Muchinga and the Copperbelt), Nyanja(Eastern Province and Lusaka), Lozi (Western Province), Tonga (Southern Province), and Kaonde, Luvale and Lunda (Northwestern Province) (Ayo Bamgbose 1991). However, from 2000 census report, Zambia's most widely spoken languages are Bemba (spoken by 52% of the population as either a first or second language), Nyanja (37%), Tonga (15%) and Lozi (11%) (CSO 2000). A retrospective look at the use of African languages as languages of instruction in schools will show that much progress has been made over the years. From outright opposition or grudging acceptance, there is now a realization that, if education is to be meaningful for most of the African population and to have a value that goes beyond the school, there is no alternative to mother tongue education. Attitudes are changing and this is borne out by more pronouncements in favour of African language instruction, pilot projects with an African language medium, increased research and teaching of African languages as a subject in Universities and Colleges of Education, and emergence of associations of African language teachers. Areas in which further efforts need to be made include awareness campaigns (particularly among parents and guardians, who tend to consider language instruction in an imported European language as superior)

(Ayo Bamgbose 1991). A recent matter of interest is the introduction of the main Provincial Zambian languages as the vehicle for all primary school teaching until Grade 4. This was met with some resistance mainly in the urban and periurban areas where other Zambian languages are spoken at home and outside the home by sizable minorities whose mother tongue is not that of the majority in the Province. This research investigated the impact of teaching in local languages on pupils and teachers in terms of advantages, disadvantages, challenges, and opportunities in Kitwe District of Zambia. It is hoped that at the end of this study the partners in the education of the children in the District will understand the role the local language plays in the learning process of the pupils at primary school.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In the globalized world, international languages such as English are generally valued higher than indigenous languages. The inclusion of indigenous languages in the school system is therefore a tricky and sensitive issue since English is associated with socio-economic and political upward mobility (Coleman 2010, 2011). As such, parents and other stakeholders would argue that what an African learner needs is an international language such as English, and not the so-called 'good-for-nothing' African languages. Such people would normally press for more English in the school curricula so that schools are able to produce learners who are able to face the globalised world from a point of linguistic strength and/or advantage. In addition, there is also a fear that mother tongue education would frustrate learners' efforts to gain competence in English. In addition, there is fear that the use of mother tongue education would lead to the lowering of standards in education. Such fears have been expressed in Botswana, Malawi and other African countries with respect to English and mother tongue education (Hamish McIlwraith 2013). For Zambia, linguistic diversity has presented a problem with regard to the selection of languages for official and educational use. It is estimated that Zambia has about 73 language groups which could be collapsed into 30-40 mutual intelligible linguistic families (Miti and Daka 2007: 2). This was one of the main factors that persuaded the government to adopt English as Zambia's official language; there was a fear that the choice of one language over another might promote ethno-linguistic rivalry and be a recipe for divisions across the country. It was therefore assumed that the use of a neutral, non-indigenous language as the official language would foster national unity hence English (Hamish McIlwraith 2013). It is against this background that the research was formulated to establish the impact of issuing instructions in local language to pupils with the main focus being advantages, challenges and opportunities.

1.3 Significance of the study

Many research studies have acknowledged the importance of teachers in ensuring high quality education for learners, regardless of the country (Carr- Hill, 1984; Riddell, 1998; Motala, 2001; O'Sullivan, 2020; VSO, 2002; UNESCO, 2005). In spite of this important fact, very little is known about Zambian teachers, especially first grade teachers of literacy and their competences in local language as a medium of instruction. This study is therefore designed to contribute to this limited body of knowledge. It is hoped that the information generated in this study would contribute to current literature on factors that contribute to the use of local languages as medium of instruction. The study was important because the findings provided very important information that would be useful to school administrators, teachers, pupils, the Ministry of General education and the government at large. The findings would further help educators, policy makers and other stakeholders strengthen strategies and policies of transforming the education sector from using English to local languages as medium of instructions.

Literature review

2.0 Introduction

2.1.1 Education for All

Local languages are not only introduced into the educational system to increase their chances of survival; they are also introduced as the medium of instruction to help students succeed educationally. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts that "everyone has a right to education" (United Nations 1948). But statistics in the 1980s were disappointing:

- More than 100 million children, including at least 60 million girls, have no access to primary schooling
- More than 960 million adults, two thirds of whom are women, are illiterate...
- More than 100 million children and countless adults fail to complete basic education programmes; millions more satisfy the attendance requirements but do not acquire essential knowledge and skills (UNESCO 1990).

Basic education, in many countries, especially the least developed ones, was suffering setbacks rather than making progress. In response, the World Declaration on Education for All and the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs were adopted by the World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990. Each country was to determine what actions would be necessary to turn the situation around. One of the issues to be reconsidered was which languages should be used in education. At a follow-up conference held in Dakar in 2000. the Dakar Framework for Action was drawn up. There were six goals to be achieved by 2015. Basically they related to universal primary education, gender equality and reducing adult illiteracy rates by 50%. Clearly, those who do not know a language that is already in use in education would be disadvantaged and vulnerable to continued discrimination. The second of the six stated goals was: "Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality" (UNESCO 2001). Desiring to remedy this situation, several nations have changed their policy regarding the use of minority languages in education. For example, Papua New Guinea (PNG), with 820 living languages (Gordon 2005), abandoned its 'English only' policy. By 1995, more than one fourth of PNG's languages had three-year initial vernacular literacy programs in their elementary schools (Litteral 1999). It is instructive to note that Malaysia has recently overturned its policy of teaching mathematics and science through English from primary one and has reverted to using Malay for the teaching of these subjects. The government's reasons for abandoning the policy of using English as a medium of instruction for mathematics and science in primary schools were twofold: first, many rural children were failing in these subjects, as their English proficiency simply was not high enough for them to be able to engage with cognitively complex subjects such as science and mathematics; second, there were not enough mathematics and science teachers who were proficient enough in English to be able to teach these subjects through English (Gill in press) (Hamish McIlwraith 2013).

2.1.2 Research on Quality Education

In 1996 government of Malawi announced an extension of the existing school language policy. In a letter that was circulated to all Regional Education Officers, District Education Officers and heads of other educational institutions, government stated that "... with immediate effect all standards 1, 2, 3 and 4 classes in our schools be taught in their own mother tongue or vernacular language as a medium of instruction." According to a follow-up government press release on this new school language policy, vernacular language and mother tongue was defined as "language commonly spoken in the area where the school is located" (Ministry of Education: 1996). The reason that was given in this press release for making this extension to the school language policy was twofold. It was stated that this new language policy would give children an opportunity to participate fully in classroom discussions using a language that they are more familiar with than to struggle in a language that they are just learning (Henri G Chilora 2000). A separate study by the Zambian Ministry of Education under the auspices of the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) in 1995 (report published in October 1997) showed that only 25% of Grade 6 pupils could read at defined minimum levels and only 3% could read at defined desirable levels. It was evident that the first thirty years of English medium had been less than satisfactory. Teaching and learning in an alien language had meant that, for the vast majority, school was unrelated to real life. Rote learning was the only way to approach a situation where understanding was absent from school, with mindless repetition replacing problem solving and inventiveness. By 1995, there was a growing awareness within the Ministry of Education that reading and writing were better developed first in a language with which children were familiar.

- it follows the basic principle of working from the known to the unknown, i.e. learning first in a known language (L1) and later moving into the unknown (L2);
- ii) it enables pupils to express themselves in a meaningful way and therefore participate in their own learning processes;
- iii) it prevents cognitive overload in pupils, since they are concerned with only one thing at a time, that of learning to read and write in a familiar language instead of having to negotiate both the reading skill and the new language;
- iv) it reinforces pupils' self-esteem by validating their cultural identity.

The implementation of bilingual education is very complex. It not only requires materials and favorable policy, but also enthusiastic teachers and the approval of parents. And to risk stating the obvious: teachers need to know the language of their students. Unfortunately, teachers are often assigned without due consideration of their linguistic resources. Briggs (1985), in reporting on bilingual education programs in Peru and Bolivia, offers principles for successful bilingual education programs. High on her list were parental involvement and good teacher preparation, including some training in the basic linguistics of the official language and of the language of the students (Elke Karan 1996).

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 The Research Design

A descriptive cross-sectional survey was utilised because it provides an accurate portrayal or account of the characteristics, for example, behaviour, opinions, abilities, beliefs, and knowledge of a particular individual, situation or group. The research used a cross-sectional survey design adopting qualitative methodology to a smaller extent and quantitative method to obtain evidence to answer research questions. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1997:162), the design describes the procedures for conducting the study, including when, from whom, and under what conditions the data will be obtained.

3.2 The Research Population

The target population comprised of Headmasters (School Managers), Teachers and Grade 4 and below all from 20 selected Primary schools of Kitwe District in Copperbelt Province.

3.3 Sample strategies

The probability sampling called Simple Random Sampling (SRS) was used in the study, so that the selection of elementary units depended purely on chance and no personal bias was involved, (Sharma, 1983). White (2005) also stated that the probability random sampling technique ensures that every element in the sampling frame has an equal chance of being included in the sample. The sample of 20 primary schools was drawn from a total of 45 primary schools which were selected by the researcher in Kitwe District. The names of the primary schools were assigned a three digit number from 001 to 020 on the cards and these were mixed thoroughly, and then 20 cards were drawn one after the other which constituted the sample.

3.4 Data Collection

Secondary data for the research was obtained through the use of sources such as; the public documents, such as Educating our future, journals, past researches and the internet. Primary data was collected from the field using three sets of survey questionnaires. The three sets of questionnaires were administered to three categories of respondents in primary schools of Kitwe District: the Headmasters, teachers who teach grades 4 and below and the grade 4 and below learners.

3.5 Research Instruments

The data collection instruments used in this phase of the study was a set of three (3) survey questionnaires for the

respondents (Headmasters, Teachers and grade pupils) developed by the researcher. The research also carried out personal interviews informally as a way of collecting information for the research.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data that was collected was systematically entered on Microsoft data excel sheet and later analyzed using the statistical package (STATA) a software programme which interpreted the quantitative data into tables, frequencies and graphs while qualitative data was analyzed following the emerging themes and sub-themes which were objectively described analyzed and interpreted.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

In order to establish whether the impact of issuing academic instructions in local language to pupils of grades one (1) to four (4) in terms of advantages, challenges and opportunities in primary schools respondents were asked to give their views of the matter and below are the views respondents.

Table 4.1: Views held by Headmasters and Teachers on the advantages of pupils learning in local language

Easily understands the instructions due to the familiar language
Pupils understand better and faster than foreign language
Because is the language of play which is easily understood
Because pupils who know their local language will do better even
when they use foreign language
Pupils will easily understand the concepts
Pupils learn very fast
Pupils are able to grasp and understand the concepts easily
Pupils are able to relate what they learn in Bemba to English
Pupils are able to understand better
Some pupils can only understand better in the local language
Learners learn better in the language spoken at home
Pupils will be able to read by the end of grade 1
Slow learners would be able to understand the concepts and be part
of the learning exercise

Source: Field data 2016

4.2 Views held by Head Masters and Teachers on the challenges of teaching in local language to teachers

Table 4.2 Views held by Headmasters and Teachers on the challenges of teaching in local language to teachers

Some words are difficult to know their meaning in local language
lack of teaching materials
Some teachers may not be familiar with the local language
Explanation of some terms in local language is difficult
Certain instructions and lessons cannot be taught in local language
Some terminology may be difficult to explain to pupils such those from science
Teachers who come on transfer from other regions my face language barrier
Some words are difficult to translate in Bemba
Some concepts cannot be easily translated in local language
Some words may be wrongly spelled due to language barrier
Some parents think that English is better than local language

Planning for teachers is a challenge as the books are written in English

A lot of Bemba will make teachers forget English grammar

Source: Field data 2016

4.3 Views held by Head Masters and Teachers on the challenges to the pupils of learning in local language

Table 4.3: Views held by Headmasters and Teachers on

 the challenges of learning in local language to pupils

Some pupils may not be familiar with the local language
Pupils who come on transfer from other provinces face commination challenges
Lack of reading materials for pupils
It may be difficult to break through in English, hence it take time for learners to learn English
If the teacher is not conversant with the language then pupils will lose out academically
Some pupils may face pronunciation challenges of some words in English
Pupils may not learn English faster
Adjusting to English is not always easy when they cross from grade 4 to grade 5
Pupils who come from private schools my face challenges as they are taught in English
Learners who have had the exposure of English at an early stage i.e. pre-school in the private school have challenges
Reading becomes a challenge to some pupils due to the challenge with the language
Local languages are not internationally recognised, so are not very beneficial to some extent
Source: Field data 2016

Table 4.4: Views held by the Headmasters and Teachers on the opportunities of learning in local language to pupils

Fast learning and good interaction by pupils
Continuity with the first language
Pupils learn fast and feel part of the learning activity
Explanation of some terminologies would be much easier
Pupils feel like part and parcel of the lessons
Learners are able to communicate and understand easily
Pupils will develop skills of analysing issues broadly
They do not forget easily what they learn
No communication barrier between the pupils and the teacher
Most parents think English is better than local language, therefore, they do not use local language at home

Source: Field data 2016

The advantages of issuing instructions in local language as suggested by the respondents were that pupils learn better and faster in their mother tongue than in a foreign language. They as well believed that pupils participate fully in class and contribute to the learning activity effectively. Even the pupils themselves believed that the local language can help them improve their academic performance as the fully understand the materials taught to them by the teachers. Some of the advantages included; good communication between teachers and pupils due to the language, learners will be learning from known to unknown, pupils able to understand a given instruction faster, Pupils have a sense of belonging since it is their language that is

being used. Reading becomes easier because they read English easily in their language and they also believed that pupils can easily remember what they learn in class. On the hand most of the respondents had a view that the teaching materials were no readily available in local language which was very difficult to teach in local language. They believed that teachers have to translate the teaching materials from English to local language which was a big task and time consuming to most of the teachers and they observed that translation of these teaching materials posed a great challenge as some words were difficult to translate into the local language. They also believed that some teachers were not familiar with the local language hence teaching was very difficult to such teachers due to language barrier. Some of the views held by Head Masters and Teachers were that teachers from other Provinces who come on transfer would be unable to teach well due to language barrier and that also applies to pupils who come on transfer from other regions. Some pupils may not be familiar with the local language used to issue instructions at school because they may have been using a different language at home. The other major challenges were lack of reading materials in local language to pupils, the local languages are not recognised internationally hence may be received by most of the parents with mixed feelings, too much of local language to some teachers will make them be very poor in English grammar and pupils may face difficulties to change from local language to English. The district administration acknowledge the lack of teaching and reading materials which they attributed to be in short supply and they hoped that the Ministry would supply the district with enough materials. From the findings it was also reviewed that the views held by both Headmasters and teachers was in support of the use of local language to pupils as they believed that the language of play was continued from home to school that will allow the pupils to fit easily in their new environment. Use of a familiar language to teach beginning literacy facilitates an understanding of sound-symbol or meaning-symbol correspondence. Learning to read is most efficient when know the language and can employ students psycholinguistic guessing strategies; likewise, students can communicate through writing as soon as they understand the rules of the orthographic (or other written) system of their language (Carol Benson 2005). They also had a view that pupils find the school environment friendly as they are able to express their feelings freely and interact with everyone.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSSION

6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study. The study sought to investigate the impact of teaching in local language to pupils and teachers (opportunities, challenges, and advantages) in Kitwe district of the Copperbelt Province. The research has highlighted a good number of the findings. However it was not an easy task as each and every respondent had his or her own view on the subject matter. Never the less most of the respondents believe that it was a good move to take in order to improve and add

value to the education in Zambia as they know that the use of local language will in hence pupils' understanding.

6.1 Recommendation

Further research needs to be carried out on a larger population and sample size to increase the generalizability of the findings. Though there are a large number of studies on use of local language to issue instructions in class a research should be carried out on nationwide. It will be very important that the in-service training is provided to the teachers for them to fully understand and appreciate what they are supposed to do and also the college training must as well incorporate the local languages. Teaching and learning materials should be delivered to schools on time and the Standards Officers should be touring the schools regularly to check on the progress and requirements.

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