

The authors conclude that the key drivers are market forces rather than a desire to achieve social cohesion and the remaining chapters then elaborate on inequalities within the education system within the UK.

The focus of the sixth chapter is the influence government policies have had on teachers' professional practice through central control and accountability. Once again the recent historical developments are clearly and concisely outlined with the influence of Ofsted, QCA and the National Strategies cited as key drivers in change.

A further chapter is dedicated to the educational policies which have shaped and changed teacher training which rather surprisingly I found lacked the depth of other chapters. In Chapters 8 and 9 the authors turn to issues relating to gender, race, religion and social cohesion in the education. It illustrates inequalities: how policy has attempted to cope with our increasingly diverse population, inherent racism and social tensions. While the authors acknowledge that boys and girls have won an entitlement to the same curriculum their own choices remain gendered.

The final chapter confronts some of the most intractable issues of government educational policy: social class, deprivation and poverty. The Every Child Matters policy is arguably one of the most influential policy initiatives introduced in recent years and is discussed here in detail and with strong critical viewpoints. As in so many areas of the book the authors are able to present this complex issue with authority with clarity. It is an effective final chapter since policy in the end radically affects people and particularly those people in areas with greatest poverty and lowest social class. Finally the authors end with the gloomy reality that social class and deprivation remain, despite huge efforts of policy-makers, the strong influences in determining pupils' lifelong achievement.

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**Languages and education in Africa: a comparative and transdisciplinary analysis**, edited by Birgit Brock-Utne and Ingse Skattum, Didcot, Symposium Books, 2009, 356 pp., £32 (paperback), ISBN 1-873927-17-5

The debate on what is an appropriate national and official language is an emotive one in Sub-Saharan Africa. There are disagreements as to whether the use of the so-called colonial languages – English, French, and Portuguese – are a form of neocolonialism or simply practical ways of providing a uniting language. Within the education sector, this debate has been focused on what languages should be used as media of instruction. There are those who argue that African languages should be the basis of teaching and learning throughout the education sector, and there are those who oppose the idea, claiming it is impractical, and would be wildly costly: which is the African language, they would ask, that should be used in multilingual countries? For example, in Nigeria there are nearly 200 languages, with Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba tribes and their languages being dominant; and in Kenya there are nearly 40 tribes – which is to say that there are nearly 40 languages. The dominant Kenyan tribes are Kikuyu, Luo, Kamba, Luhya (who speak a mixture of dialects, and some cannot understand one another), Kamba, and Kalenjin. The same story repeats itself in many African countries.

Chapter 1 of this book sets out its main thrust, arguing that Africa has no basis for using colonial languages. These languages, claim Brock-Utne and Skattum, are a burden to African

children, undermine learning, and are simply an extension of colonisation. African countries should use the mother tongue of the child for education: after all, even a tiny European country like Iceland, with a population of only 300,000, uses the Icelandic language, compared to 30 million Yorubas who still stick with colonial English. This, however, is to oversimplify a complex issue with a simple comparison – but this exemplifies the book's approach. There is no debate, but instead an unwavering advocacy that African languages must be used for education. How this should be done in practice is less of an issue of interest to the editors and the authors whom they have assembled for this volume.

The rest of the book is organised in four parts. Part I includes a lament over Tanzanian parents' and policy-makers' insistence on what the author calls the use of 'foreign languages' as medium of instruction in the Tanzanian education system. The author argues that this insistence has restricted access to quality education, and raises the question of who actually benefits from this insistence. A later chapter provides an overview of language issues in relation to education in several African countries, though not in a consistent comparative manner, to make the case for the 'intellectualisation' of African languages. Another chapter focuses on Niger, and makes the claim that 'in spite of all the reforms undertaken by African governments, the reality is that the educational system has not drastically departed from its colonial roots' (107). The author blames socio-historical and hegemonic forces for undermining the use of African languages, but concludes with a hope of cross-fertilisation between what is formal and what is informal, so as to lead to the integration of African languages into the education system. The final chapter in this section focuses on South Africa's tertiary education and the language issue. The author makes a number of interesting observations, seemingly the most practical and objective of all the arguments in the book, by stating that the call for the use of African languages in the education sector will face obstacles 'including a plethora of practical difficulties pertaining to textbooks, resources, teachers, and the diversity of languages of students' (148).

Part 2 examines what is happening in Francophone countries. In a chapter on Mali, the author notes that there is a serious challenge towards what is termed the national language (NL). (This chapter is written in French.). The chapter concludes by calling for a harmonised African national language to be used as medium of instruction (MOI), instead of what the authors throughout the book refer to as colonial languages. Another chapter claims that Mali's modernising Islamic schools, the madrasas, are a true example of how a national language can be fused with African languages. Based on field observations, the author notes that 'the madrasa present us with an original, and little-understood, model for the study and assimilation, to a high level, of a foreign language' (171). The author goes on to assert that 'the process of learning Arabic is fundamentally unlike that of learning a second or third West African language' (171). In a chapter focused on the island of Madagascar, the author discusses the teaching of the national language and how this relates to learners' integration into globalization. The author argues that young people need to be 'comfortable with their own language' (184) and be proficient in one or two international languages. This, according to the author is the roadmap to 'self-confidence and [being] better equipped to face competition within the context of globalisation' (184–5).

A later chapter examines language issues in Ethiopia, and attempts to discuss the implications of the use of mother tongue versus English as languages of instruction for academic achievement. The chapter takes as its starting point a 1994 education policy reform which recommended a shift from English into mother tongue as language of instruction (LOI) in Grades 7 and 8. Based on data on achievement, the author concludes that 'the use of mother tongues in education is an objective advantage for students' performance while the use of a foreign language is an objective disadvantage for students' performance' (197). The chapter uses statistical means to lend support to those who argue that African countries should abandon the use of English-medium teaching. In other chapters, the same story about the colonial nature of English is lamented over

and over again, with the author insisting that these languages do not constitute a core part of the pupils' daily lives. There is an attempt to bring into the discussion language issues in Zambia and Botswana in relation to the training of teachers. This chapter concludes that, in both countries, the training of teachers of African languages is not taken as seriously as that of teachers of English, and the author is concerned about the teaching of African languages using English.

Part 3 of the book shifts focus to language standardisation and harmonisation. One study is on the 'impact of monolingual lexicography on language standardization and trends towards the harmonization of the Bantu languages in post-colonial Africa' (237). This chapter notes the importance of African languages standardisation focusing on Shona through a review of the ALLEX dictionaries. The discussion is extended to the harmonisation of the Shona language as cross-border language. The author argues that only 25% of Africans understand the so-called foreign languages well enough to be able to use it for their well-being. The idea of harmonisation would reduce costs and make the different dialects of the same language standardised. It indicates that these cross-border languages offer hope for African languages, and can replace the colonial languages.

Part 4 of the book discusses what the editors have called 'beyond formal education'. Here, an author laments the dominance of French in Senegal, in spite of political pronouncements calling for the use of African language. The author uses research in chat and SMS to make the case that Wolof is gaining ground, and argues that the new technologies may influence positively the use of African languages. A chapter on Mali offers a case study of code-switching in notebooks in rural Mali: the focus is on bilingual education, and the author notes the potential of code-switching in enhancing the use of African languages, even among those in rural schools. In the final chapter in this voluminous book, the role of sign language in South Africa is considered. The author also argues that there are multiple South African sign language communities: it is a complex chapter to follow, but it does turn the focus onto sign language and the plight of deaf people in the linguistic discussion.

Put together, these chapters offer interesting discussion. The book could have been organised in a more helpful way, with cases that focus on a particular country brought together. But the core contradiction of the book lies in the apology the editors make for writing the book in the so-called colonial languages of English and French, which they are so vehemently against when used by Africans. While the call to give African languages a chance to develop is worthwhile, the book ignores the practical impossibilities of achieving this on mass scale and within the present scientific domain. Only one chapter takes a pragmatic and objective stand in highlighting the plethora of challenges that will be faced. And it is not true to say, as this book claims, that there have not been attempts to use African languages seriously in the education system: Tanzania experimented unsuccessfully with Kiswahili, for example. What makes the authors believe that there is an African language that will be quickly developed? Even if the call for standardisation of the Shona and Nguni in South Africa were to happen, many obstacles would remain. But despite my serious reservations about many aspects of this book, it does lay the ground for a discussion of language policy in African education systems.

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