

PUBLISHING IN KISWAHILI AND INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES FOR ENHANCED ADULT LITERACY IN KENYA

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This paper argues a case for the preparation of reading materials in Kiswahili and other African languages in order to enhance adult education in Kenya. Adult education clientele are defined as those aged over 15 who (a) were either never enrolled in primary schools or dropped out before completing and (b) “graduated” and currently participate in community extension services. Cognisance of mothertongues as the best languages to begin basic literacy is taken. However, since the literacy so acquired should be useful to the individual at both local and national levels, one needs Kiswahili for wider communication. Therefore, reading materials, especially for post literacy and adult literacy teacher training should be in Kiswahili. This will not only guard against relapsing to illiteracy and misinformation but will also alleviate the scarcity of reading materials in the face of hard economic times in Kenya.

1. Introduction

There is need to address the problem of illiteracy in Kenya. The illiteracy rate now stands at 40% (Koech 1999). This is despite campaigns and programmes by the government to alleviate the problem. It has also been noted that “the campaign to enable adult Kenyans to acquire basic literacy and functional literacy has been less than successful” (King’ei 1999:409). This raises several questions: What is ailing adult literacy in Kenya? What can be done to revamp it? Are there any success stories in Kenya’s neighbourhood from whom she can borrow a leaf? What has (have) that (those) country(ies) done in terms of the language used as a medium of adult education and the preparation of reading materials? Do indigenous African languages including Kiswahili have any place in the efforts to salvage the “capsizing ship”?

This paper attempts to get possible answers to these questions. It argues that the past is a lesson from which to learn and make changes for a better future. Specifically, it acknowledges that, „the conditions of adult education have changed, and the objectives for learning and learning content are changing, in response to the changing needs and circumstances of the learners. Consequently, the legal and institutional framework has got to change in order to create a more enabling environment for the practice and provision of adult education” (Thompson 2001:11). The article shows that the programme has faced many problems one of which is inadequacy of reading materials. It supports the present practice of using basic literacy primers in indigenous languages and introducing Kiswahili and English later. However, it observes that it might prove practically effective to use more Kiswahili and avoid English at post literacy level.

2. An operational definition of literacy

The term has gone through semantic and operational changes over the years. For instance, in 1960 UNESCO defined literacy as „the ability to read and write in the mothertongue”. However, such a definition immediately plunges us into a problem whether this ability is just in English or it also includes national languages and whether literacy also entails orality. In addition, nowadays there is talk about cultural literacy, workplace literacy, environmental literacy, scientific literacy, political literacy, teaching of reading to children (literacy where reading and writing have a central role), oral literacy and adult literacy (teaching adults in special classes). However, when closely observed, most definitions relate, in some way, to an individual’s ability to understand print (oral) and to communicate through print (verbal) media.

Following Wagner (2000), this paper views no single level of skill or knowledge as qualifying one as ‘literate’; rather, there are multiple levels and kinds of literacy (e.g. numeracy, technological literacy etc.). It is assumed that literacy must have a bearing on real life situations and be sensitive to skills needed in and out-of-school contexts. Therefore, literacy is not just the 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic) but it also must include other knowledge, problem-solving and life skills. Subsequently, literacy includes both formal school based skills (such as ability to read prose text or to understand mathematical notations) and also the ability to manage functional tasks and demands, regardless of whether such competencies were developed through formal or nonformal education, or through personal experiences in diverse informal learning situations. In brief, literacy is that which enables the neo-literate and literate „formal” graduate to improve his/her way of life by empowering them to control their social, economic and political environment. It should make them self-reliant.

Effective teaching and learning necessitates both written and oral communication, which are coded in a language. Indeed (Bunyi 1999:432) has correctly noted that „literacy presupposes language; one becomes literate in a language or languages. At the same time, it is by means of that language that we recognize our life experiences and communicate our understandings”. This article emphasises the significance reading (published) materials and the language in which they are presented with special reference to Kiswahili and other native languages. However, let us first highlight the status of Kiswahili and other languages in Kenya.

3. The language situation in Kenya

Approximately 42 African languages including Kiswahili are spoken in Kenya. In terms of official policy, Kiswahili is the national language while English is the official language. An official language is one used in the business of government while a national language is a political, social and cultural entity. But real practice is not in tandem with this policy. Only about 5% of Kenyans understand English well enough while Kiswahili is the second langua-

ge to over 65% of Kenyans (Webb and Kembo-Sure 2000) and it can be heard and used in formal public service provision. In practice, therefore, Kiswahili and English have the status of co-official languages and function as *linguae francae*.

Kiswahili is the medium of instruction for the first three grades of primary school in the areas where it is the mothertongue; and also in urban areas in Kenya. Further, it is also the language of instruction in areas bordering the coastal region, where there are no written materials in various mothertongues. After grade three it is taught as an examinable subject. But this trend only started in 1984 with the introduction of the 8-4-4 system of education. Prior to that, the policy regarding Kiswahili in Kenya was ambivalent.

Approximately 41 other indigenous languages are spoken alongside Kiswahili in Kenya. They are mainly used for intra-ethnic communication. Conservatively, about 19 of them have orthography and are used as media of instruction up to Grade Three of education. Otherwise, some related languages like Gikuyu, Embu and Meru use Gikuyu for teaching while Maragoli is used among all the Luhya dialects speakers. But as already noted, majority of Kenyans also speak Kiswahili that is not necessarily learnt in school. They pick it as they interact in their day-to-day life. It is a language of solidarity. It brings together all Kenyans regardless of their ethnic, political and socio-economic background. They need it for purposes such as trade, politics and religion among others. It is even heard in homes between members of a family of both ethnically heterogeneous and homogenous marriages. In spite of the foregoing, it is possible to come across a Kenyan who only speaks her/his mothertongue.

4. Adult literacy in Kenya

The concept and practice of adult literacy in Kenya goes back to independence in 1963. The institutional framework under which adult literacy is presently¹ run is the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources Development. Specifically, the framework comprises the Board of Adult Education (BAE), created by an act of Parliament in 1966, and the Department of Adult Education (DAE). The DAE was set up following a presidential directive in 1979 during the launch of the second national literacy campaign. (The first national literacy campaign was launched in 1967). The 1979 campaign aimed at eradicating illiteracy by 1998 but this was not achieved.

The adult literacy programme has been on for long. But over 30 years after the promulgation of the BAE, changed circumstances of adult education necessitated a review of the BAE Act in 1996. Thompson (2001:11) reports that the main objective of the review was to identify and analyse the core functions and structural constraints of both BAE and DAE, with a view to enhancing their efficiency and effectiveness. One of the justifications of the study

¹ Adult Literacy has been housed under very many peripheral ministries since independence. They include: Ministry of Labour and Social Services, Ministry of Co-operatives and Social Services, Ministry of Social Services, and Ministry of Women and Youth Affairs

was that it had been observed that there were overlaps in the functions of the BAE and DAE, resulting in duplication of work and dissipation of scarce financial and human resources. Unfortunately, five years (this article was prepared in 2001) since the review was carried out „the Reviewed Act is awaiting parliamentary approval” (Thompson 2001:11) but the spread of illiteracy is not awaiting that approval.

The implementation of the programme

The general goal of adult education in Kenya is to promote literacy, encourage post-literacy and continuing education, and encourage learning as a lifelong process. The programme for those who cannot read and write is conducted in two phases – basic literacy and post-literacy.

Basic literacy

The basic literacy level education is offered at various centres spread all over the country. A policy statement concerning the medium of instruction in literacy classes is non-existent. However, the practise is to use various languages of the catchments, except in the coastal areas or urban centres, where learning takes place in Kiswahili (DAE 1987). Those previously zero literate in reading and writing are expected to be functionally literate in nine months (IIEP 1991). A certificate is issued after sitting an optional exam to certify their completion of the programme.

The reading materials – primers - are prepared and produced in the various mothertongues with government and donor funds. However, producing primers in all the local languages has been a problem thus adversely affecting the programme. For instance, the production of adult education materials at the College of Education and External Degree Studies dwindled since 1988 due to university double in take. DAE is unable to cope with the task using commercial firms and, to a limited extent, the existing facilities that lack most essential equipment (Koech 1999).

A second problem arises out of the type of teachers available. Full-time, part-time or volunteer teachers teach adult literacy classes. As Owino (1999) notes, there is a general lack of trained personnel to spearhead the struggle against illiteracy and manage lifelong education. Most of the full-time teachers were at the initial stages of the second national campaign, in 1978, given a short induction course or went through a correspondence course. Unfortunately, most of these trained few, found better paying jobs and left. On the part of part-timers, the majority of them are not inducted into the ways of introducing literacy to those willing to enrol. Concerning the environment, the learning conditions, especially in the remote Eastern and North Eastern provinces, are not at all conducive (IIEP 1991; Karani 2000) as there are no classrooms and lessons are conducted in the dusty, windy and scorching sun open grounds.

Post-literacy

After attaining the literacy proficiency certificate, there is provision for post-literacy for those adults wishing to continue with further education (DAE 1984; Rogers 1994). The objectives of the post-literacy phase are: to enable the new literate not to revert into illiteracy, encourage his/her personal development and the development of the family unit and finally, to enhance his/her role in national development. The core subjects that are recommended in this phase are those that can enable the neo-literate person to realize these objectives. They include the following: Kiswahili, People and Government of Kenya, and Family and Health Education. Optional subjects like History, Business Education, English, Maths, Geography and Agriculture also exist.

The choice of Kiswahili is very crucial here because one needs a language of interethnic communication in order to effectively participate in National Development. One also needs it to access information, which is deemed an invaluable asset in development. The purpose of the Kiswahili course, therefore, is to provide skills and knowledge in Kiswahili that will enable learners to interact and communicate with each other at all levels in order to participate more effectively in all aspects of Nation Development, on the one hand. In other words, the impact of the adult literacy programme is meant to penetrate and permeate across ethnic groups in Kenya. On the other hand, the argument behind teaching English is that it plays an important role in international communication since Kenya is part of the international community. It also paves way for continuing education. In brief, the practise at postliteracy level is to use three languages – mothertongues, Kiswahili and English.

However, post literacy is not about merely teaching. It should reinforce the possibility of the new literate to have access to information, decisions and responsibilities concerning their own development (Kessi 1979). The post literacy programme in Kenya was first addressed in 1979 and a workshop on the same was developed in 1980 but it was not fully implemented. According to an ODA survey report (Roger 1994), this was mainly due to lack of materials for post literacy (and also for initial literacy). In essence, however, the major problem seems to have been lack of funding. For instance, whereas a post literacy newspaper *Kisomo* was initially produced in several languages, production ceased when donor support ended.

Again, as of 1994 materials for post literacy were available in draft form (some with UNICEF) but most were not printed. Finally, from 1993, DSE funded a nine-month training programme on the development of writing skills for post literacy materials but it was unable to fund their printing. Therefore, the non-availability of funds meant that literacy materials, which were initially provided for free to learners, cost a substantial charge of Kshs. 300-400 (DM 9-10) according to the 1994 ODA report. These materials were prepared in three categories of languages i.e. mothertongue, Kiswahili and English.

On balance, the adult education programme in Kenya has multiple difficulties that DAE has to contend with (IIEP 1991; King'ei 1999; Owino 1999; Bunyi 1999). Among other drawbacks are: half-hearted commitment from the government, the housing of DAE in low

key ministries, low funding and donor withdrawal besides unfocused activities, lack of incentives to the adult learners, negative effects of the World Bank sponsored Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) reducing the number of children either enrolling in primary schools or dropping out and swelling the number of illiterate adults, low morale due to poor remuneration for adult educators, lack of adequate classes close enough to attract adults and non-availability of appropriate reading materials in some languages, and above all, lack of follow-up materials and an unfocused language policy. The next section, attempts to discuss how to pragmatically alleviate one of these problems, namely, the development of learning and teaching materials.

5. Publishing for adult education

Discussing this issue is indirectly attempting to answer the question: how can Kenya achieve and maintain high literacy rates of her citizens? It has been shown that plans are in place to address this issue. However, for the future, systematic planning and implementing changes are inevitable. Indeed „individuals and organizations which refuse to change, and by extension refuse to learn will wither away” (Thompson 2001:8).

It has been observed that a country must carefully consider the cost of specific components of education such as the language of producing learning materials and teacher training in the use of these materials (Vawda 1999:557). This is a crucial factor if Kenya is compelled to borrow the Tanzanian example because it is generally accepted that the latter is a success story in Sub-Saharan Africa worth emulating (Roger 1994). One of the reasons behind this success is the use of Kiswahili. The teaching, learning and support programmes for adult education in Tanzania are conducted fully in Kiswahili (Rubanza 1999). Whereas Tanzania has a successful African language policy (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas 1995; Brock-Utne 2000) vide Kiswahili, publishers in Kenya complain about the apparent lack of a clear-cut language policy (Chakava 1995). Although, it is possible to teach in mothertongues, they are not viable to publish in. Publishers may be willing to produce materials in a language of wider communication (Kiswahili) for there exists a larger market but they are also definitely not willing to produce materials that might not be affordable to the target market (Vawda 1999). Many of those who read in the native languages are the rural and urban poor (Mulusa 1978, Pugliese 1994, APNET 2000).

One of the reasons why adults in Kenya want to learn is to know Kiswahili so as to be able to read newspapers and listen to the radio (IIEP 1991). Therefore, Kiswahili should be heavily involved in the programme. But how can this be achieved? An attempt at answering this question zeros in on the published materials in Kiswahili for a successful adult education programme in Kenya first, before looking at prospects for the other local languages from several fronts.

Teachers

Teachers play a key role in the delivery of education, and the quality of instruction is to a large extent a function of whether classrooms are staffed with competent and well-trained teachers (UNESCO 2000). It is clear that many of those recruited to teach in the adult education programme at the basic literacy level are untrained and marginally passed their formal education exams. For example, recruited, at the height of the campaign in 1978, were 3,000 full-time teachers whose characteristics were as follows: 50 – EAACE; 2750 – EACE; 100 – KJSE; and 100 – CPE (Kirui 1999). Where they were trained, the programme was a brief induction course and much of their training was by correspondence. Hence, there was heavy reliance on publications i.e. lecture notes and handouts. Since their qualifications were/are not high, they could/may easily misunderstand and misinterpret information if it is in a language that they do not know well enough. If they misinterpret the literature, then they misrepresent information (information here is the lesson content) to the learners. If this happens, then, the adults are not likely to learn as expected. Subsequently, it is advisable that the teachers should be trained in a language they will teach.

However, at present, the materials - lecture notes and handouts – are prepared in English for adult education teachers. It is doubtful if these 'teachers' correctly interpret the information and present it to adults in their mothertongues. In view of this, there is need to change the existing language practice as rightly observed by Owino (1999:423):

As long as adult and literacy materials are prepared in the official language (English) and instruction favoured in this language because the instructors believe falsely that matters of education must be made in that medium, majority of adult learners will not sufficiently benefit from the programmes and the goals set will continue to be elusive.

It would be better if the materials were done in Kiswahili that is understood by over 60% of Kenyans unlike English that is understood by only 5% (Kembo-Sure 1991). In addition, if Kenya has to emulate Tanzania, she will realise that in the latter country, adult educators hold a teaching qualification for primary schools and their training is done in Kiswahili. This is because Kiswahili is the medium of instruction at that level and for daily activities (Rubanza 1999). Using Kiswahili would enhance the effectiveness of the programme as it would bolster the teachers' confidence in content delivery.

Primers

That reading and writing skills are rapidly and readily mastered in the mothertongue (DAE 1987; Rubanza 1999) cannot be gainsaid. Literacy primers 1 and 2 are prepared in mothertongues. This is encouraging. However, it could be better to use whatever little funds are available to prepare materials that are distributable to all parts of the country. Materials prepared in all native languages cannot be freely relocated to other areas where they are lacking. In fact, at present, there are no primers in all the languages. By 1999 materials in mothertongues covered only 22 of the 42 languages in Kenya (Koech 1999). One of the causes as

Chakava (1995:386) argues, is that „more than half of them are basically oral and do not have orthographies”.

However, this may not be a major problem if there are books published in Kiswahili. They can be easily distributed all over the country without any problems since many Kenyans understand Kiswahili. True, DAE recognises the cardinal importance of Kiswahili and has given it top-priority as a core-subject in post-literacy. Indeed the majority of follow up materials for the literacy learners is in Kiswahili. For instance, twenty out of the twenty three titles of post-literacy materials so far produced and distributed through the Kenya Post-literacy project being coordinated by the GTZ are in Kiswahili (Thompson 2001). Whereas this is encouraging, this article advocates for a more enhanced production of post-literacy primers and materials in Kiswahili.

Libraries

Literacy goes hand in glove with the availability of libraries - be they private or public. It is obvious that a majority of the target population of the adult and post literacy education are the impoverished adults living in the rural areas or the lowest salaried in urban centres (Mulusa 1978). Unemployment and underemployment are rampant (Pugliese 1994). Most literate people cannot afford buying books and do not go on reading after completing their formal education.

Public libraries – funded by the state, donors or the churches – come in handy given this scenario. Simple reading rooms scattered in rural areas would be more effective than the imposing public libraries presently being built per district basis (Chakava 1995). There is also need to maximise the use of existing facilities to which communities have contributed in putting up. These include school libraries. These libraries need to stock more than just primers which may contain useful information but which no longer interest the adult learners since they have already read them. They might prefer general readers. It is here suggested that the general readers be prepared in Kiswahili since it is advantageous. One, if general readers are done in Kiswahili, the costs of production per unit will be low for not only the public libraries, but also for individuals. Two, if the stocks held are in Kiswahili, then, it is possible to attempt an interlibrary loan system (it is practically non-existent presently) even if the stock titles could be limited. This is unlike the situation in which the books are published in various mothertongues. If such an attempt succeeded, there would be enhanced reading and consequently enhanced adult literacy.

Press and posters

The print medium is in a powerful position to promote participation in adult education and to monitor progress toward education for all and the spread of democratic values (UNESCO 2000). Indeed, „when properly used, newspapers and magazines can efficiently promote learning, critical thinking, creativity and resourcefulness in learners of all ages. Newspapers

provide a stimulating complement to textbooks, readers and reference books, and they help students establish lifelong reading habits. They can be used as 'living textbooks' to bridge the real world and the classroom, encouraging learners' involvement in their community and society at large" (Lakin 1998:5). True, the press has played an important role in Tanzania's adult education programme. It could also do the same in Kenya. In the 1980s UNESCO did sponsor regional newspapers in Kenya, which were published in Kiswahili. They included: *Sauti ya Gusii*, *Habari*, *Jicho*, *Nyota ya Mashariki*, *Nyota ya Magharibi*, *Sauti ya Kericho* etc. They were quite affordable to majority of the rural population since no printed copy remained unsold.

Many of the foregoing titles are no longer in print. But, the print and electronic media now are actively involved in the implementation of the GTZ sponsored KPL project (Thompson 2001:14). Members of the press have been sensitised on how to report issues in adult education. They report about adult education in general and the objectives and progress of the post-literacy project in particular. That is why the Kenyan press is now considered a partner in the provision of education for all. This should be encouraged.

However, since the alleviation of illiteracy and the retention of the acquired literacy skills should be done from all fronts, the existing daily, weekly and monthly newspapers need to establish a literacy page. All the existing newspapers except *Taifa Leo* (Kiswahili for „the nation today”) are in English. Since the cost of this Kiswahili paper is affordable to the average adult learner, the publisher should be urged to start a literacy page and aggressively advertise its existence. But it can only sell if its content is interestingly presented to the adults. As of now, it is not attractive to adult learners (Chakava 1995). Perhaps it could do better if the presentation is done in large and pictorially. The choice of content should also involve the adults for they know what they want. The content of the paper should tap indigenous knowledge and present it in an indigenous language - Kiswahili.

Civic education

Following from and closely related to the foregoing, is the current wave on civic education for enhanced plural democracy mounted by various agencies. There is intense public debate on constitutional reforms. The constitution review has gripped the attention of Kenyans and provided a unique opportunity for participation and learning (Thompson 2001). If people have to own and lead development action in their society, then, they have to participate in it. They need to contribute their views to the recently established constitutional review commission, to participate in elections and understand various political parties' policies so as to make informed choices. It is proposed that pamphlets and all materials used for civic education should not be drawn in English but in Kiswahili. Political parties could also sell their ideas better if they published their manifestos in Kiswahili. By so doing, they could communicate with all people instead of targeting an elite minority that uses English. Voter registration apathy could also be alleviated if all the agencies vigorously campaigned for franchise as

a basic human right and especially if they did it in Kiswahili. This could be besides doing it in mothertongues in linguistically homogenous communities.

Extra-mural studies

This is one of the adult literacy programmes managed by public universities. It is confined to urban areas, which are mainly multi-ethnic. The Institute of Extra-mural Studies, University of Nairobi was once in the past accused of being insensitive linguistically (Mulusa 1978). Courses at the institute were offered only in English. It is worth noting that the institute now conducts its courses in Kiswahili. However, it should not just present lectures in Kiswahili while preparing in-service course notes and handouts in English. The programmes will prove most effective if the language of instruction – Kiswahili – is also used in preparing the reading materials. This is the working language for majority of Kenyans and it would be better to have the materials in it. Otherwise, the community development officers including chiefs and their assistants, who take courses there, might misinterpret and misrepresent government policy.

6. The role of other African languages in adult literacy

It has been noted that „publishers are businessmen and must be so, but they are also part of the culture of their country” (Gedin 1992: 52). General readers manuscripts in mothertongues may never see the light of day until the publisher accepts them and invests her/his cash in them. The publisher can only do this when s/he is assured that the target of the book to be, is large enough. However, if the market for the book is limited, then, s/he needs surplus funds from a lucrative sector – school textbooks - or some source of funding in order to venture into non-profitable sectors. Some mothertongues have too few readers and therefore potential book-buyers, if at all they can afford, or some have no orthographies (Chakava 1995). In a way, publishing in mothertongues does not look viable and worth venturing into. Pugliese (1994) notes that the market size for vernacular publications is small unless they are primary school readers.

One way of raising the extra funds with which to produce adult literacy materials in mothertongues is to increase production and sales of school textbooks for lower primary education in mothertongues. This is possible following the launch of the national textbook policy in 1998, which ended the textbook market monopoly for the state owned corporations (Muita 1998). Private firms, too, can compete for the textbook market. How can this be achieved?

There should be a compulsory examination in indigenous languages at the end of the primary leaving examination. As a policy, indigenous languages are media of instruction in their respective catchments up to Grade Three. But things are different in practice. Some schools start teaching in English even from Grade One. This does not encourage demand for materials in mothertongues. Teaching in mothertongues should be seen to be going on and not to be

given half-hearted attention. Proper and thorough inspection of mothertongue teaching in schools should be done especially among the very many private schools that have mushroomed. The private schools drill pupils for exams since they are money-minded and they can only attract more clientele if they produce good end-of-the-primary-school exam results. They do not teach the mothertongues since the mothertongues are not at present examined. Examining mothertongues at the end of the primary school level will enhance their status. It may be argued that this will overload pupils but this is not always true. The pupils should be graded on the basis of the best scores in the number of subjects presently stipulated (4) although they may sit for more papers. But one of these subjects should be a language. If such a requirement were adopted, then even those pupils who "fail" exams not because they are weak but because they do not know the language of instruction - English - (Kembo 2000; Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000) will emerge successful. In the wake of this, parents/guardians and schools will invest in materials in the mothertongues. This will in turn boost their demand and sales; and the publishers will in turn have the required surplus capital to invest in materials in mothertongues for adult education.

In addition, shrewd publishers could take advantage of foundations wishing to guarantee them to secure loans from banks in order to raise funds for publishing in native languages. For instance, the *Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation* since 1988 established a scheme of serving as a collateral to indigenous publishers to secure bank loans. Through such a scheme, some indigenous publishers have been able to succeed notably Henry Chakava who used the loan to buy majority shares in a multinational publishing firm, Heinemann, which is now indigenised as East African Educational Publishers. With a successful past and a long backlist, Chakava can afford to invest in indigenous languages publication. But most publishers are not quick to strike when the iron is hot. Gedin (1992: 50) noted concerning one promising publisher:

A printer and publisher in the country, who publishes cheap books for the general reader, textbooks and children's books in the mother tongue - it is notable that this publisher did not initially apply for a grant, but the board found the company so interesting that we suggested a loan to allow the company to expand its activities.

It appears that funds, book market and local language policy may not always be the major problems; rather, the inability of publishers to swiftly act when an opportunity presents itself. If they seized an offer such as this by *Das Hammarskjöld Foundation*, the adult education sector would be flooded with adequate material in local languages by now.

A clear-cut government policy statement on language is crucial if foreign funding agencies have to join in footing the bill of producing materials in indigenous languages. The GTZ in collaboration with the DAE has since 1996 been sponsoring a technical co-operation project which among others, includes development, production and dissemination of post literacy materials in 15 districts in the country. The GTZ works in collaboration with non-governmental organisations such as Literacy and Evangelism Fellowship and the Kenya Bible Society, and the ministries of Health, Information, Agriculture, Labour and Education. The

GTZ's primary objective is "to enhance the capacities of individuals and organizations by conveying or mobilizing knowledge, skills, or by improving the conditions for their application" (GTZ in Thompson 2001:10). Learners are involved in the discussion and production of learning materials that are useful to their needs. This is done through tapping of indigenous knowledge. Under the theme 'Talk a Book', learners facilitate documentation of the knowledge in a variety of thematic areas like animal and crop husbandry, irrigation, beekeeping etc. This idea will recognise the richness of indigenous knowledge and traditional culture, including oral traditions of people. The project plans to publish these manuscripts as post-literacy materials in English, Kiswahili and local languages.

It is, however, surprising that the local languages have on some occasions been left out. For instance, a report from KORI, Marsabit District, shows that out of the six draft booklets prepared in 2000 for use among the Rendile speakers, none was in Rendile. Five were in English and one in Kiswahili. A recommendation made at the end of the writing workshop stated that Rendile should also be used in the booklets in future. In our opinion, they should not have used English at all because the publications' indigenous knowledge targets the Rendile who do not need English in their day-to-day activities. The only other language that should have been used is Kiswahili since some of the extension workers with whom the Rendile interact do not speak Rendile. It may be safe to conclude that the trend in Rendile is also experienced in all the participating 15 districts and the proposal for Marsabit could, therefore, be applicable to them too.

Since Kiswahili has to be used to unite all Kenyans and the native languages have to be used in teaching Kiswahili at the initial stages, it might be advisable and feasible to print bilingual books. That is, one book should have a local language version on one page and Kiswahili on the other. This will be killing two birds with one stone. One, the single title will have been used for vernacular and Kiswahili at the same time. Two, it is possible to use such a title in interlibrary loan if the need arose. Indeed works by vernacular authors like David Maillu are reported to have failed to sell well prompting him to turn to English (Pugliese 1994). However, the same author has been exploring how well bilingual books could sell in Kenya.

7. Conclusion

This paper has argued a case for enhanced publishing of reading materials for adult education in Kiswahili and other indigenous languages. In essence, the paper acknowledges and strongly supports the practice of starting basic literacy in the languages of the catchments in linguistically homogenous communities. However, Kiswahili is the national language and the majority of Kenyans know some form of Kiswahili which they need not have picked through formal education. Therefore there is need to teach it even at basic literacy levels instead of waiting until the post literacy level. Teaching it at that level is not equivalent to teaching new concepts and a new language at the same time. Truly speaking, it is not a new language to

many Kenyans. The teacher should gauge his/her students' proficiency in Kiswahili and decide how to introduce it. After all, the adult education programmes unlike formal school programmes are not strait jackets into which everybody must fit. The teacher's selection of content and methodology is crucial. However, the teacher cannot just teach without reading materials. Hence the need for reading materials in Kiswahili. One too has to be trained in Kiswahili if one has to effectively teach in it.

It is also recommended that all efforts should be made to avoid relapse to illiteracy by the neo-literates through providing affordable materials. Kiswahili can play a major role in achieving this as it has already done in Tanzania. By so doing Kenya is likely to achieve high levels of literacy as Chakava (1995:392) notes:

If Tanzania can achieve a literacy rate of 85 percent, as has been reported, then Kenya, which has more resources, can manage the same progress, if not more.

However, it has also been observed that it is necessary to intertwine these efforts with production of materials also in the other indigenous languages. It has come out that it will be wishful thinking to leave the indigenous languages out because these are the basic tools for teaching everything including Kiswahili. Indeed the fruits of adult education are first felt and spread in the language of the neo-literate before they are felt outside one's home. This alludes to the inevitability of teaching and publishing in indigenous languages. In a way, the paper argues that the roles and functions of Kiswahili and the indigenous languages in Kenya are not only complementary but also inextricably intertwined in nature.

List of abbreviations

CPE – Certificate of Primary Education

DAE – Department of Adult Education

DSE – Deutsche Stiftung für internationale Entwicklung (German Foundation for International Development)

EAACE – East Africa Advanced Certificate of Education

EACE – East Africa Certificate of Education

GTZ – Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Society for Technical Cooperation)

IIEP – International Institute for Educational Planning

KISE – Kenya Junior Secondary Education

ODA – Overseas Development Authority

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

UNICEF – United Nations Children's Fund

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