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Revitalizing African Languages for Transformation
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Abstract

Local languages are the repositories of the indigenous knowledge base of societies. Marginalization of certain languages is a form of devaluing not only the languages but the knowledge and culture embodied in those languages. This paper explores the effects the devaluation of African languages have had on the indigenous knowledge base and culture of African countries and considers possibilities for the transformation of Africa through re-valuing African languages.

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Résumé

Les langues locales constituent des dépositaires de la base de connaissances autochtones des sociétés. La marginalisation de certaines langues représente une forme de dévalorisation non seulement des langues mais aussi des connaissances et de la culture incarnées dans ces langues. Cet article explore les effets apportés par la dévaluation des langues africaines sur la base de connaissances et la culture autochtones des pays africains et considère les possibilités de transformation de l'Afrique à travers la réévaluation des langues africaines.

Mots-clés: Connaissance autochtone, langues africaines, culture africaine, langue d'instruction

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Introduction

This paper problematizes the view that African languages are not capable of being used for post primary school education, particularly in the areas of science and technology. It traces the construction of stratified ethnic and linguistic identities which informed colonial education policies and the use of African languages for schooling. Drawing on the work of Cheik Anta Diop, the paper considers the use of African languages prior to Africa's contact with the colonial world, highlighting the achievements of Africans during the age of Antiquity in mathematics, architecture, chemistry, astronomy and medicine, all areas which required technical vocabulary and conceptual frameworks. Against this backdrop the paper refutes the myth that African languages are unsuitable for accessing important school knowledge. The final part of the

paper considers ways of revitalizing African languages to create a new social reality as possibilities for Africa's future.

Constructing a History of Africa

The mythology about Africa, which Europeans presented as the early history of Africa, did not recognise the achievements of African societies in antiquity. They presented Africa as comprising of peoples speaking a multitude of tongues which did not have written forms. This is despite the fact that one of the oldest forms of written language - Ge'ez - was found in Africa, in the area currently known as Ethiopia. In addition, the earliest Mande inscriptions have been dated to 3,000 BC (Wulsin, 1941: 210) and this writing is still used, to this day, by members of the Manding secret societies (Winters, 1973: 942-945; van Sertima, 1991: 211). Discounting this history contributed to nineteenth-century European notions of "primitive" peoples who needed to have civilization brought to them.

In tracing the history of colonial education in Africa it is important to point out that an ideology informed by racial and gendered identities underpinned of many of these policies. Characterising Africans as children who could not master intellectual pursuits (Madden 1982), Europeans were able to appropriate knowledge or skills they found in African societies among African peoples, thereby increasing their own knowledge base, while portraying Africans as inferior beings with a low capability for learning new things. Walter Rodney (1972), in his description of the technologically and scientifically deskilling of Africans, referred to this as Europe underdeveloping Africa.

Cheikh Anta Diop was one of the foremost African thinkers who engaged in reclaiming an African past that had been buried under the European mythology that came to be accepted as the early history of Africa. He highlighted scientific contributions of the Black Egyptian world to Greece and the unacknowledged achievements borrowed from Egyptian science and philosophy. Despite his voluminous writings, most of Diop's work is not part of the curriculum of African universities. Ivan van Sertima, who, among others, has sought to develop Diop's work, has collected a wealth of material which documents the vast achievements of African peoples in areas of science, technology, mathematics, agriculture and other realms of human endeavours, prior to European contact with the African continent, that have been invisible to, or unacknowledged by, the West for centuries (van Sertima, 1986).

This history is a testament to the vast capabilities of African peoples manifested through the indigenous African languages. However, through negating these achievements, attempting to erase them from the history of

African peoples, Europeans have been able to construct an image of Africans as uncivilised peoples, with no history or comprehensible language before the missionaries arrived on the continent. Samir Amin (1977: 164) characterises this as part of the process of "the destruction of traditional systems of on-the-job training and education which has led to the gradual deterioration of African languages as they are actually used."

While ancient China, India and Bagdad were cited as contributors to the dissemination of knowledge in a treatise on Translators Through History (Delisle & Wordsworth, 1995), Africa was barely mentioned. Discussion about Africa related to the translation of the Bible into African languages. Nama (1995) points out that translation aided the dissemination of knowledge as knowledge in one language was imported into another language. It would appear from the aforementioned treatise that Africa did not have anything to contribute to human knowledge; instead Africa was a mere recipient of the wisdom of other societies. Diop's and Rodney's work, and van Sertima's collection, however, negate this myth.

European appropriation of African languages

Most African societies were rooted in oral traditions which relied on passing on wisdom of the society through narratives, by word of mouth from one generation to the next. Although there is evidence that some African narratives were transcribed into Arabic characters dating back to the seventh century (Wordsworth, 1995), African languages were only rendered in a form accessible to Europeans when missionaries scripted them using Latin orthography.

One of the first initiatives undertaken by some of the missionaries in Africa was to develop orthographies for some of the unwritten languages they encountered or transliterate existing orthographies into the Latin script so they could translate the Bible into these languages to aid their proselysation. The rendering of African languages into written forms by different groups of missionaries has resulted in what has been termed the invention of ethnicity and languages (Chimhundu, 1992; Makoni 1996). Chimhundu has documented the case of Shona in Zimbabwe, where five dialects were created in the process of different groups of missionaries working in isolation from each other rendering the language they heard into a written form.

Disparate transcriptions of the same spoken language, resulting from different groups of missionaries hearing the same language differently occurred across the African continent, resulting in a multitude of dialects of the same language and different languages being created from what was one language (Chimhundu, 1992; Zeleza, 2006). The difficulty in putting a definite figure to the number of African languages on the continent can be attributed to this

process, as contention has arisen over whether certain language forms are indeed languages or dialects. In Zimbabwe, for example, Zezuru, Manyika, Ndau, Karanga and Korekore are recognised as dialects of Shona, whereas in South Africa, and bordering countries, Ndebele, Swati, Venda, Xhosa and Zulu, are seen as different languages while they share many commonalities. There have been various suggestions for harmonising these languages into one (Alexander, 1989; Chumbow, 2005; Nhlapo, 1944).

The absence of a written tradition for most African languages, at least one which the missionaries could access, provided opportunities for European missionaries to construct African languages according to their own specifications. It fed into the view that Africans did not have a history before the Europeans arrived and rationalised the imposition of an educational structure for the Africans. Once the missionaries rendered African languages into script, they embarked on producing dictionaries and grammars for these languages. Europeans appropriated and constructed some of the African languages for their own purposes. Chimhundu (1992) discusses this in the case of Zimbabwe and Shona. He describes how the ethno-linguistic labels that are now taken for granted were created.

South Africa provides one of the clearest examples where African languages were developed by the colonisers to serve a particular function—as media of "Bantu Education". These languages, which existed before Afrikaans, were never developed to the level that Afrikaans was in the early years of the 20th century. At the turn of the century Afrikaans was said to offer "no scope for intellectual training, for it had no literature and a very poor vocabulary" (McNab 1957: 11). By the time the Afrikaners came to power in 1948, Afrikaans had progressed to the extent that it could replace English as the medium in institutes of higher education, e.g. Stellenbosch, Pretoria, Potchefstoom, Bloemfontein. Regarded by some as the greatest single linguistic and cultural achievement on the African continent in recent times (McNab, 1957), this was in stark contrast to what happened with African languages.

Even though Europeans created Language Boards in South Africa to expand the vocabularies of African languages for education, the colonial government sought to limit the development of African languages to use within the family, cultural group, the Bantustan and the school (Cluver, 1991). Whereas the Afrikaner government used the power of the state to provide resources to develop Afrikaans, they used the same power of the state to minimize the development of African languages. Since Africans were not actively involved in the development of their languages, the efforts to utilize these languages for education were perceived by African leaders as an "attempt to keep Africans in tribal bondage" (Benjamin, 1994: 101). This view was not limited to South Africa. The low level of development of

most African languages during the colonial era suggested to many Africans that their languages were not capable of serving as vehicles for advanced knowledge. Many Africans carried with them into their newly politically independent states this conception of African languages and it has provided the ideological underpinning for educational languages policies in post-colonial states.

African languages in the post-colonial era

The Africans who assumed the reigns of political power in African countries at political Independence were educated during the colonial era through the colonial language. For most of them African languages had been discouraged beyond a few years of schooling. Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) recalls the humiliating punishments African children in Kenya received for speaking their indigenous languages within the vicinity of the school. In addition, no one could advance from primary school to secondary school without passing English, no matter how well they may have done in their other subjects. This was not unique to Kenya, as incidents of sanctions being levelled against children for speaking their mother tongues have been recalled in Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, as well as other African countries. Katupha (1994) points out that in colonial Mozambique, because Africans were punished for speaking their own languages in school, their languages were associated with humiliation. It is not surprising, then, that many Africans would associate education with English, or the former colonial language.

Ngugi (1986: 16) asserts that the "domination of a people's language by the languages of the colonising nations is crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised." The low regard with which African languages have been held in many African countries, despite the predominance of these languages in the lives of most African peoples, is a clear illustration of this. Whenever the issue of use of African languages as a medium of instruction beyond an initial few years is broached, many Africans invoke a litany of opposition to this notion. Tanzania is a prime example of this, although by the 1970s Tanzania had gone further than most other African countries in indigenising the language of instruction.

In Tanzania, Kiswahili, one of the 120 indigenous languages spoken in the country, was made the language of instruction for all government primary schools in 1967, with plans made for use of Kiswahili as the medium of instruction for secondary schools during the 1970s and 1980s. Despite the development of the terminologies and other forms of language elaboration, preparation of textbook manuscripts for some subjects by the curriculum developers, the policy makers were unwilling to follow this planning to

its logical conclusion and make Kiswahili the medium of instruction for secondary schools (Roy-Campbell, 1998). Fifty years later, English remains the language of instruction for secondary school and beyond and has found its way back into primary school education in Tanzania.

A plethora of studies have highlighted the problems of the continued use of English medium at the secondary school level in Tanzania (Brock-Utne, 2007; Mlama & Matteru, 1977; Mvungi, 1982; Qorro, 2015; Roy-Campbell 1990, 2001; Roy-Campbell & Qorro 1998). One study, commissioned by British Council, highlighted the problems of English medium instruction in secondary school, but recommended that the teaching of English be improved (Criper & Dodd, 1985). Following the recommendations of this study the British government allocated funds for the improvement of English language teaching in Tanzania (Lwaitama & Rugemalira, 1990). When one considers that English was spoken by less than 15 per cent of the Tanzanian population, it would appear that switching to Kiswahili medium would have been a more viable option.

One of the greatest apprehensions to the change of medium for secondary schools was openly expressed by none other than the former President of Tanzania, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere. Ironically, this is the same person who addressed the first Parliament in independent Tanzania in Kiswahili and who translated several works of William Shakespeare into Kiswahili in the early 1960s. In the 1980s, when expectations for the medium change was high among educators, Mwalimu Nyerere stated that if Kiswahili were made the medium for secondary education, "English would die". An assumption underlying this statement is that English is more important to Tanzania than Kiswahili. Other Tanzanians have expressed concerns that Tanzania would become isolated and that Tanzanians would not be able to study in England and the United States if Kiswahili becomes the language of secondary education and above (Mulokozi, 1992). A major misconception was that Kiswahili was not equipped for use as a language of instruction at post-primary school levels. This is despite the advances made by the Institute of Kiswahili Research and the Kiswahili Council by the 1980s.

These concerns are not unique to Tanzania. In Nigeria, during the 1970s educators mounted an experimental Six Year Primary Project in Yoruba, one of the three major languages in that country. Experimental and control groups were used to test the hypothesis that students educated through the medium of the mother tongue would not perform academically worse than those who followed the conventional route. Data from this project indicated that both the experimental and control group were of equal intellectual ability (Fafunwa et al, 1989). The findings of this project were that those students who learned through Yoruba medium instruction for the six years

of primary school performed better, even in English language, than those who were educated under the conventional system of Yoruba medium for the first three years followed by English medium for the other three years.

This was a clear indication that education in the mother tongue throughout primary school was possible and that it did not sacrifice proficiency in English. Tracer studies to follow up the products of this experiment have shown that, whatever criticisms might be levelled against the project, it cannot be denied that "the foundation laid with instruction in the mother tongue has not turned out to be detrimental to the children's progress at higher levels" (Fafunwa et al., 1989: 141). Despite the overwhelming success of the project, policy makers did not see it fit to allow for Yoruba medium instruction throughout primary schools in the Yoruba-speaking region of Nigeria or indeed extend this experiment to other regions.

Experiences of Tanzania, Nigeria and Somalia have shown that it is possible to develop African languages to serve as media of instruction. Somalia in the 1970s even went further, to use Somali medium for the first two years of secondary school education (Andrzejewski, 1979). Unfortunately, due to the disintegration of the Somali state as a result of civil war, this policy was interrupted. Linguists and educators in the three countries were able to develop the terminologies and prepare school textbooks for instruction in indigenous African languages. Nevertheless, many Africans still maintain that their languages are not suitable for use as media of instruction beyond the initial years of primary school.

Frantz Fanon (1967) describes ways in which language and its uses serve to reinforce the subjugated position of the black colonial which is in turn facilitated by "the death and burial of its local cultural originality." By continually invoking the inadequacy of their languages for use in certain domains Africans are impugning their own adequacy as human beings with a culture worthy of respect. Many African societies have become outward-looking, valuing cultural artifacts produced or used outside their countries over and above those produced locally, by their own people. This can be seen in many spheres of the society—dress, television, cinema, music, literature, and even education. The continued use of a language for which the majority of the population lack proficiency is a clear indication of this trend.

The colonial experience has had a great impact on the psyche of many Africans, particularly those who were educated during the colonial era, but even younger members of society who have been influenced by their elders. Despite the closeness that many Africans feel to their language and the obvious unease exhibited in the use of English by many Africans, most African leaders advocate for the continued use of English in the educational sphere. In Tanzania, young people who could barely sustain a conversation in English insisted that English should remain the language of instruction

for secondary school (Roy-Campbell, 1998, 2001). A similar situation exists in Botswana, where Setswana is the language of more than 90% of the population. Jansen & Tsonope (1991) described the official attitude to Setswana as one of "benign neglect".

Afolayan (1978) aptly captured this sentiment with his contention that,

> Formal education in post-colonial African countries has so characteristically been given through the medium of a foreign language that scholars, educationalists, and experts have tended to accept the equation that education for the African is equal to knowledge of the European language.

It is this social reality within the African continent that has contributed to the reification of the myth that African languages are unsuitable for accessing important school knowledge.

Transforming the myths to create a new social reality

Understanding how the hegemony of European languages has marginalized African languages is a precondition for the reconstruction of African languages as media of education and other formal aspects of life in African countries. Due to the influence of language in shaping our world view Spender (1980: 142) maintains that

> those who have the power to make symbols and their meanings are in a privileged and highly advantageous position with the power to construct a language, a reality, a body of knowledge in which they are the central figures, the potential to legitimate their own primacy and to create a system of beliefs which is beyond challenge, so their superiority is 'natural'.

In the context of Africa, Europeans controlled the language on two fronts— through the imposition of their language as a language of power and through the development of the African languages by constructing grammars and dictionaries and producing books.

Development of monolingual African language dictionaries, e.g. Kiswahili, ChiShona, siNdebele, Setswana, by African linguists, mother tongue speakers of the languages, is a step towards Africans re-appropriating their own languages. This is an indication that African languages do not need to be interpreted through European languages. In developing these dictionaries African linguists can go back to the village communities, among some of the custodians of indigenous knowledge, to record this knowledge, and bring it into the sphere of knowledge reproduction.

Reconstructing the great civilisations of the African past through works of Diop, van Sertima and other anthropological historians is not

simply an exercise in glorifying the achievements of Africans in an age when African peoples are viewed globally at the bottom of a socially constructed racial hierarchy. It is an effort towards refuting the myths surrounding the "backwardness" of Africa and African peoples, towards re-appropriating African languages to recognise the advanced uses to which these languages had been put in areas of science, mathematics, technology, medicine (Diop, 1981; van Sertima, 1994). If African languages were capable of expressing concepts in these areas at one point in its history, why are they less capable of serving as languages of science and technology in the present era?

Languages develop through usage. They are socially constructed within the context of a given social reality. All languages have the capacity to serve whatever purposes a society requires them to serve. The colonialists who developed orthographies for African languages, and constructed grammars and dictionaries, circumscribed these languages for limited functions. Just as colonial education was "education for domestication" (Freire, 1970), African languages were used by the colonialists as instruments for mental servitude. Bantu Education in South Africa and Namibia, through the use of African languages, was part of an endeavour to socially imprison Africans within a limited world view. Although other African societies did not have the crude form of Bantu education inflicted upon them, through the devaluation of their indigenous languages their mental universe was dominated.

One reason for the predominance of the European language in official and educational spheres of most African countries after regaining political independence was the view that countries should have one national language in order to achieve national integration and unity. The European language was ostensibly retained as a "neutral" language since the multilingual nature of most African countries would have made the choice of one language above the others problematic. Although one might accept this as a valid concern at the time, it does not explain why countries like Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Rwanda and Burundi retained the colonial language when at least 90% of their societies speak a common indigenous language. However, the 1990s began offering new possibilities. South Africa, with its 11 official languages policy, Zambia with its 7 national languages, Namibia with its 10, Angola with its 6, Ghana with its 9, Guinea with its 8, Burkina Faso with its 8, and Niger with its 5, began to debunk the notion that one African language is desirable. The notion of the nation state unified around one language has become outdated. Even countries like the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, which were politically united as sovereign states each with a common language, have now fragmented into linguistic and ethnic cleavages. However, despite enshrining 11 languages in its New Constitution in 1994, the education sector does not totally reflect the multilingual nature of South Africa as more can definitely

be done towards the promotion of mainly the African languages in South African schools (Olivier, 2009).

Whenever the question of the wider use of African languages, particularly in education, is broached, the issue of economics invariably rears its head. With the multiplicity of languages, many of which have not been sufficiently developed for use in a variety of domains, including education, there is a great expense involved. Resources are necessary for standardising orthographies, elaboration of the lexicon of the languages, preparation of dictionaries and grammars and production of books and other forms of literature in these languages. These are not insurmountable tasks as illustrated by the experiences of Afrikaans and Somali, and to some extent Kiswahili.

What is often ignored is the cost to the nation of the continued use of European languages. This is probably more pernicious as it contributes to the marginalisation of the majority of its population. Problems encountered in learning through European languages have been outlined in the case of Tanzania and referred to for other countries (Brock-Utne, 2007; Roy-Campbell 1998, 2001). One cannot overstate the damage being effected upon the psyche of African children, being forced to access knowledge through a language for which they lack adequate proficiency, and upon the nation, which produces a majority of semi-literates who are competently literate neither in their own language nor in the educational language.

Martha Qorro (2003) spoke of "unlocking language forts", enabling knowledge contained in English and other languages to be made available to a wider population in Africa by using African languages as media for reproducing this knowledge. Another dimension to this metaphor of language forts is to view African languages as vehicles for producing knowledge for creating, encoding, sustaining, and ultimately transmitting indigenous knowledge, the cultural knowledge and patterns of behavior of the society. Through lack of use of African languages in the educational domain, a wealth of indigenous knowledge is being locked away in these languages and is gradually being lost as the custodians of this knowledge die out.

Considering the wider effect of using foreign languages in African countries, Fafunwa (1990: 103) has contended

> We impart knowledge and skills almost exclusively in these foreign languages while the majority of our people, farmers and craftsmen, perform their daily tasks in Yoruba, Hausa, Ga, Igbo, Bambara, Kiswahili, etc... The question is: why not help them to improve their social, economic and political activities via the mother tongue? Why insist on their learning English or French first before modern technology could be introduced to them? In most developing countries, a few towns and cities operate in English, French, etc..., while many rural villages

and hamlets operate in the mother tongue. Those countries that chose to translate and popularize foreign techniques in their languages are catching up with and becoming competitive with European countries, e.g. Japan, India, Korea, Malaysia.

Kwesi Prah (1995) maintains that the performance of students and their ability to employ their expertise meaningfully to the problems of development in Africa will be greatly enhanced when and if they operate in languages which are close to the mainsprings of their thinking processes and close to the wider society in which they are directing their attentions and solutions. Unless the generation of knowledge, discourse and knowledge transfer is effected in the language of the masses, the conditions of the masses cannot be transformed.

African Languages for Science and Technology

Khombo Mateene (1980) has asserted that African languages are underdeveloped in scientific and technical expression because they have not been used in these fields. It is only through active use of these languages in various spheres that they can become further developed. The poverty or underdevelopment of African languages, Mateene explained, is quite voluntary. He contends that

> These languages are poor because we do not want to enrich them, by not wanting to use them in certain fields such as education, translation, which are all factors of language enrichment and development.

The multiplicity of African languages is often referred to as a constraint to the further development of these languages, i.e. there are too many languages and to provide written materials in all of them would be a practical impossibility. This point in particular relates to the fact that many of these languages lack a written tradition. In this regard Fafunwa (1990) points out that when one language has been elaborated and enriched, the process becomes easier for other languages.

The economic factor is a major issue in considering the wider use of African languages in education. However, economic cost must not only be viewed in monetary terms but also with respect to the long-term effects on African countries resulting from the continued use of languages which disadvantage a large section of their populations. Rather than predicting the death of the European language with the more widespread use of African languages in education, African leaders and educators could be concerned with how to merge the use of African languages with the use of the European language. Emphasis in the first instance, however, must be on elevating the status of African languages, illustrating to Africans and others alike that African languages are equally as capable of functioning in the production

and reproduction of knowledge which can propel the development of the African continent (Brock-Utne, 2012, 2013). As Prah (1995: 71) points out "no society in the world has developed in a sustained and democratic fashion on the basis of a borrowed or colonial languages."

As I noted in 2006, The Register of Best Practices on Indigenous Knowledge documents numerous projects in Africa where local knowledge is being tapped and serves as the foundation into which improvements are gradually incorporated, while the local people invest their own resources in the development activities and organize the means for sustaining them. It is the interface between local knowledge and global scientific knowledge, each drawing on the other, which can effect sustainable adaptation to changing natural and socio-economic environments. The indigenous languages are repositories and means of transmission of this knowledge and the related social behaviors, practices, and innovations (Roy-Campbell, 2006).

Within the past 20 years several African countries have developed centers for indigenous knowledge, in particular Ghana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Madagascar and Nigeria. However, very few African universities have established such centers. The University of Botswana and Universities of North West, Limpopo and Venda in South Africa are among the few. Mkhize and Ndimande-Hlongwa (2014) note that the cognitive, philosophical, and other frameworks of the local people are embedded in these languages and that African languages and Indigenous Knowledge Systems are indispensable to the transformation of the higher education landscape. Chumbow (2005) maintains that the use of African languages in education will democratise access as well as contribute to the development of the nation's human resources.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) Language Plan of Action, 1986, affirmed the premier place of African languages as instruments of national communication and all national economic and social development. But this did not translate into indigenous languages being used more widely as media of instruction beyond early primary school in African countries.

The African Union went a stage further when in 2006 it established the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN) as its specialised continental language agency. In 2010 it issued a Policy Guide on the Integration of African Languages and Cultures into Education systems (ADEA, 2010). This policy addressed 8 areas, including curricula and training (production of materials and teacher training, publishing in national languages and book policies, and research to lay the foundation for the development of teaching and learning materials in the languages. The conclusion to the document notes that the success of multilingual and multicultural education depends on consultative, participatory and democratic decision-making and optimal use of all national skills and translating this policy in action by integrating it into countries'

planning and development programs, particularly their education budgets.

To actively address the issue of multiplicity of languages the Center for Advanced Study of African Societies (CASAS) based at the University of Western Cape, in Cape Town, South Africa, has spearheaded research on the harmonization of African languages. This research has revealed that that 85% of Africans speak no more than 12-15 core languages (clusters of mutually intelligible speech forms, dialects of the same language). CASAS has been working towards the harmonization of orthography between mutually intelligible clusters at a technical level. In this respect, Chumbow (2005) argues that the use of zonal languages that are closely related to the language spoken by the learners, are better than the use of foreign languages that have no relation to the learners' language.

Within the past 10 years, the East African Kiswahili Commission has been established by means of a protocol in 2007 (EAKC, 2007) with the responsibility of coordinating matters within the partner states for political, social, cultural, educational, scientific and technological development. In 2016 The East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) recognized Kiswahili as the lingua franca of the East African Community (EAC). This protocol still stopped short of suggesting the Kiswahili serve as the medium of instruction for education.

Conclusion

At one time in the history of Africa, African languages were capable of expressing advanced scientific knowledge. Taking this as a starting point, with the realisation that all languages are capable of expressing all forms of knowledge, African leaders, educators, linguists must work together to revalue African languages. Many Africans remain mental prisoners of the past; although they have attained political decolonisation, mental colonisation remains. African leaders must move their countries beyond education for domestication to develop education for liberation of the continent beyond the strictures of drought, famine, disease, war and devastation. Amilcar Cabral spoke of "returning to the source". Indigenous languages provide a window to that source.

The period of the 19th going into the 20th century was marked by the appropriation of African languages by Europeans. Missionaries scripted some of the African languages and produced grammars and dictionaries for these languages. As part of their colonial enterprise they decided the limit to which they would develop these languages. In the twenty-first century Africans are re-appropriating their own languages. Monolingual dictionaries are being prepared by indigenous speakers of African languages who are also linguists. Language elaboration, vocabulary expansion, standardisation of orthographies, and a range of other corpus planning activities are being

undertaken by locals in various African countries. There are language committees, boards and research institutes in many African countries and regional bodies. Through conferences and other fora organized by the regional bodies, experiences of the participating countries are shared. Educators in Africa also need to join together regionally and continentally to consider ways of indigenising the school curricula, bringing into the curricula aspects of indigenous knowledge which can help propel the continent into the 21st century. The major challenge that faces African educators is how to transform the inherited systems of education, drawing on aspects of the Western inherited system, pre-colonial system as well as other models, such as the Japanese and Chinese (who educate their children in their own languages) to construct educational systems that address the needs of their societies.

Throughout the 20th century and into the 21st century most African countries have been beset by dependency. Even after achieving political independence African countries have remained economically dependent on former colonial powers as well as newer colonisers through the donor syndrome. Much of this dependency could be related to the education for domestication that Freire spoke of. As long as African countries continue to educate the continent's future leaders primarily through foreign languages, they will remain dependent. Education for liberation for self-reliance must begin with use of languages that do not impede the acquisition of knowledge and that enable indigenous knowledge to blossom. This is a challenge for the 21st century.

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