

# The History of Educational Language Policies in Uganda: Lessons from the Past

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**Abstract** Education language policies in Uganda are traced way back in 1890's during the first missionary activities. Since then, Uganda has had several commissions which tried to sort out the issues of language in education. This paper makes a collection and commentary on those commissions. The commissions are presented in different sections in this paper according to the period of occurrence. The sections are: (1) The Colonial Period 1894-1960, (2) The Post World War II Period 1944-1961, (3) The Post-Colonial Period 1963-1988 and (4) The 1989 Kajubi Education Policy Review Commission. In all the debates, arguments were rotating around the use of English only, mother tongue / vernacular only, or both. To date, similar debates are still going on in Uganda. For a multilingual country, the most appropriate language policy in education would be of a multilingual nature.

**Keywords:** Uganda, language policy, language planning

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## 1. Introduction

Uganda is one of the African countries located in the Eastern part of the continent. The latitude and longitude denominations of Uganda are 1 00N and 32 00E. It covers 241,550.7 square kilometres of land: 41,743.2 square metres of these are open water and swamps ([1]: 1). It is bordered by South Sudan in the North, Kenya in the East, Tanzania in the South, Rwanda in the Southwest and the Democratic Republic of Congo in the West. The country's population is about 32 million people with over 65 indigenous languages [2,3,4]. Ladefoged et al ([5]: 19) cite some of the indigenous languages of Uganda. These, among others, include: Luganda, Lusoga, Lugisu, Lugwere, Lunyole, Lusomya, Runyankore, Rukiga, Rutooro, Runyoro, Runyarwanda, Rulundi, Rukonjo, Rwamba, Lango, Acholi, Alur, Dhopadhola and Kumam, Ateso, Ngakarimojong, Kakwa, Kupsabin, Lugbarati and Madi.

In a broader perspective, Tollefson ([6]: 358) informs us of the pioneers of Language Policy and Language Planning (LPLP) in remarkable series of influential publications which were between 1966 and 1974. Such scholars are but not restricted to; Haugen [7,8,9], Fishman [10,11], and Jernudd [12]. The major concerns of that group were the many social, economic and political problems of developing nations, Uganda inclusive. These scholars argued that language decisions were at the core of the social (education inclusive), political and economic challenges facing newly created states in South Asia,

South East Asia and Africa. So, their arguments included educational language policies as well.

Educational language policies can be properly understood when related to the philosophy and ideology held by the political system and the politics in regards to the society [13]. The decisions made about issues such as; which language to use in basic education, when and how to teach the vernacular, how to manage a multilingual classroom, and what type of curriculum material to be adopted are dictated by the ideology of the political system. At the level of the classroom and school environment, the practices are surrounded and underpinned by a set of beliefs and attitudes about languages and language use. Educational language policies are, therefore, directly or indirectly interwoven into politics and grounded in the ideology and power structure of the nation and the society, at large.

Historically, Uganda is no different from other African states which were under the British colonial rule. The position of English goes back to the fact that in 1894 the British Government took over rule of the area from the Chartered East African Company to proclaim a British Protectorate. After Uganda was proclaimed a British Protectorate, an agreement was signed with the kingdom of Buganda in 1900 to demarcate the land in the protectorate. The special status of Luganda, the mother tongue of the Baganda who collaborated with the British, has its roots in this agreement in which special status was accorded to Ganda practices and political institutions. The power and influence of the Baganda under the patronage of the British ensured the high status of their language and its position as a language of administration ([5]: 23). That

caption makes Luganda the most commonly used local language in Uganda although not necessarily desired by all Ugandans.

Ricento ([14]: 9) informs us that there are mainly three factors that influence language policy and planning. These are; (i) macro sociopolitical events and processes that obtain at the national or supranational level (events and processes such as state formation, wars, migrations, globalization of capital and communications), (ii) epistemological frames (i.e. paradigms of knowledge and research such as structuralism and postmodernism, rational choice theory and neo-Marxism and so on), and (iii) strategic factors which concern the end goal.

Most language policies remain primarily or only nation-state oriented. Spolsky [15] informs that language policy, in the past, was concerned with issues related to nation building and modernisation in postcolonial third world countries. Furthermore, they are often formulated in a top-down fashion. This has led Spolsky ([15]: 5) to define a language policy as a set of managed and planned interventions supported and enforced by law and implemented by a government agency. In the same vein, Christ ([16]: 75) suggests that language policy is “the sum of those “top-down” and “bottom-up” political initiatives through which a particular language is or languages are supported in their public validity, functionality and dissemination”. To the extent that language planning refers to control, it does not leave anything to the individual to decide since the governing body determines not just what the person will know but also how he/she will arrive there [17]. The different languages in education policies of Uganda yet to be looked at were likely to have been influenced by such factors.

Basing on such a background, I have categorised the history of Uganda Education Language Policies into four distinct eras; (1) the colonial period 1894-1962, (2) the post-World War II period 1946-1961, (3) the post-colonial period 1963-1988 and (4) the present policy 1989- to date. It is important to note that despite these aforementioned categories, there have not been new policies but rather statements of existing practices which are largely a heritage of early missionary activities.

## 2. The Colonial Period 1894-1960

The large policy in the schools of Uganda as defined by the Ministry of Education in 1965 ([5]: 87) was not a new policy but a definitive statement of existing practices of the missionary activity in Uganda since 1877 ([18]: 4): their work was in partly educational. Most protestant missions required basic literacy as a condition for baptism. Although the Catholics did not have the same requirement for baptism, they too included some literacy training in their missions.

Ladefoged et al [5] talks about the Language in Education Policies in Uganda during the colonial period being with many features; the missionaries were instrumental in developing a written form of many of the indigenous languages in order to translate the Bible. One of the early missionaries, Alexander MacKay, began his work of teaching the fundamentals of reading and writing

to the Africans while he prepared and printed a translation of St Mathew’s Gospel into Luganda.

Language in Education Policy was tied to one of the fundamental aims of Protestant mission educational policy which was to establish literacy in the language in which the Bible and prayer books were translated (<https://www.wdl.org/en/item/7774/>). The language of the schools was the language of worship. It was the preferred policy to use the local language, but in mixed vernacular areas like Bukedi, Luganda was used. Only in the very early years of missionary activity was Kiswahili used by the Protestant missions. A translation of the Bible into Kiswahili had been done in Tanganyika.

According to Oldham [19], EAST [18] and Callahan [20], the British colonial policy regarding language was generally to provide primary education in the local vernacular language and post-primary education in English with English taught as a subject in the primary schools. In 1928, Governor Gowers of Uganda, discussing the multilingual nature of the country, recommended the adoption of Kiswahili as the educational and administrative language of the Uganda Protectorate instead of Luganda, but the unpopular nature of the decision was seen in the reaction of the Joint Parliamentary Commission on Closer Union which met in May 1931. It was also referred to as the East African Commission. The commission recorded that “It would be desirable to encourage a gradual change from Kiswahili to English after hearing Africa witnesses” ([18]: 11) who were unanimously in support of English rather than Kiswahili [20].

In 1927, a memorandum was subjected to the existing language situation which had not been considered in the Phelps-Stokes Report in 1924 [18]. Although the report was not concerned with language policy issues, shortly after its publication, the colonial government began to take more active interest in education and more specifically look into the language policy issue which was ill defined during this period. This first memorandum recommended very strongly that:

The vernacular should be the medium of instruction for primary schools with English introduced as a subject after the third year or after children had attained a fair degree of reading and writing in their own vernacular ([5]: 89).

In general, this meant that the first three or four years of primary school were conducted in the vernacular language with no English taught at all during that time. It should be noted that the memorandum did not mention any languages specifically although it defined vernacular as the language in which a pupil has learned from infancy to name the things he sees, hears and handles. The only exception to this policy which the memorandum recognised was in the case where small groups were surrounded by dominant vernaculars, but this again was not defined. In addition, it is not mentioned anywhere in the memorandum whether the teachers were trained in colleges to teach in the various vernaculars by then with the various orthographies involved and neither is the issue of teaching/learning materials mentioned anywhere. No wonder, the memorandum was followed by another report.

In 1937, a report of the Commission on Higher Education in East Africa was put forward with the

following recommendations made regarding language teaching: [18].

- a. The teaching of English at all stages should be the subject of a special inquiry both locally and by the colonial government;
- b. The production of suitable textbooks in both English and the vernacular should be taken in hand
- c. and it would involve the inclusion of a competent teacher of English on the staff who, on account of his qualifications, might be in receipt of a much higher salary than the ordinary elementary teacher (p. 11).

As it appeared in the memorandum earlier, this report did not specify the language meant by vernacular! Unfortunately, the years that followed the report of the Commission of Higher Education in East Africa were the years of World War II (1939-1945). It is important to note that, the report did not reap its fruits. Besides, the education reports were greatly abridged in the interest of war-time economy. A series of general recommendations formulated in the early 1940's could not be implemented until after World War II due to lack of both funds and personnel. Let us now look at the period after the Second World War and analyse how language in Education issues were handled.

### 3. Post -World War II Period (1944-1961)

According to Wikipedia [21], World War II (WWII or WW2), also known as the Second World War, was a global war that lasted from 1939 to 1945. It involved the vast majority of the world's countries including all the great powers forming two opposing military alliances: the Allies and the Axis. In a state of total war, directly involving more than 100 million people from more than 30 countries, the major participants threw their entire economic, industrial, and scientific capabilities behind the war effort, blurring the distinction between civilian and military resources. World War II was the deadliest conflict in human history, marked by 70 to 85 million fatalities. Tens of millions of people died due to genocides (including the Holocaust), premeditated death from starvation massacres, and disease. Aircraft played a major role in the conflict, including in the use of strategic bombing of population centres, and the only uses of nuclear weapons in war.

World War II is generally considered to have begun on 1 September 1939, with the invasion of Poland by Germany and subsequent declarations of war on Germany by France and the United Kingdom. From late 1939 to early 1941, in a series of campaigns and treaties, Germany conquered or controlled much of continental Europe, and formed the Axis alliance with Italy and Japan. World War II changed the political alignment and social structure of the globe. In the wake of European devastation, the influence of its great powers waned, triggering the decolonization of Africa and Asia. Uganda, the point in case, was a British colony and participated in the World War by sending its able bodied men to fight on the side of Britain. I anticipate that what followed after World War in in education planning had to be in favour of the British just in case of any other war or conflict.

After World War II, the outline Scheme of Development for African Education (1944-1954) as mentioned by MUSAZI [22] was fronted to run for ten years and it touched language policy but only briefly [5]. It stated;

“.....rapidly increasing numbers will enjoy a vernacular education.....and offers as one of its goals in 10-year period, ...to raise enrolment from 90,000 to 247,000 and to increase the numbers learning English from approximately 12,000 to nearly 70,000”.

Looking at the last statement of the scheme, the target language was English. It is not clear whether the need for English was realised in the World War II, or there were plans to educate the African population such that in case of another war, there would be English speaking worriers, or it was the learning of English which meant development; if one knows English then that person is developed. If that is true, the proponents of the language section in the scheme and in their notion of Linguistic Citizenship did not have knowledge of how mother tongue education can favour development and how language is a political material and a global resource [23]. If they, in any case, had the knowledge, then majority of the members on the scheme committee were either not Africans or were “converted Africans” who wanted to privilege English, a foreign language which was a clear sign of colonialism.

In 1944, as summarized by Ladefoged et al ([5]; 90), the Makerere Conference on Language was convened by the Director of Education to consider which of the many African languages should be used as languages of instruction in the schools. The conference decided on Luganda, Acholi, Runyoro, Ateso and Lugbarati. It also accepted the view that English alone deserved recognition as the inevitable lingua franca of the future. It recommended the use of English as a medium of instruction from the seventh year onwards with its introduction as a subject in the third or fourth year of primary school. However, the committee was divided in its opinion of when to begin teaching English due to the recognition of inadequacies of existing conditions. This conference tried to consider the multilingual nature of the country, at least considering a bilingual policy to permit a local/ common language in the area in addition to English. This kind of bilingualism with a local language is backed up by renowned researchers [24-32] and it has been proved to be successful.

In 1945 [33], the report of the Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies, made recommendations regarding the Language in Education policy for colonial universities. The report mainly supported the teaching of English as a foreign language using mother tongues as the foundation, start the teaching of vernacular languages in colonial universities and start carrying out research in linguistics. It states in one of the sections that:

The study of English as a foreign language is much facilitated if the pupil also makes some study of the phonetic and linguistic forms of his own mother tongue (p. 91)

In 1947, the publication of the Colonial Office Memorandum (African 1170) on Language in African territories made the following recommendations regarding language policy:

1. That the main vernacular in each area should be the sole medium of instruction throughout the primary

range (I-IV) if it was sufficiently developed and widespread to justify the provision of the necessary textbooks.

2. That local vernaculars, spoken in smaller areas only, should be used as the medium of instruction in the first class in their areas, after which children should be taught in one of the main vernaculars.
3. That, since for most children not more than four years' schooling was available, there was considerable doubt about the advisability of introducing English as a subject below grade V.
4. That it was desirable to intensify the teaching of English in the seventh year to make its use as an effective medium of instruction possible from the end of that class onwards ([5]: 90)

This memorandum put minor languages, as well, under consideration and extended the teaching of English to the 7<sup>th</sup> year of school. This memorandum had four layers of language in education at that time; (i) the minor language for the first year of school, (ii) main vernacular or area language for the next six years, (iii) intensifying the teaching of English in the seventh year, and (iv) after seventh year, English was to be used as the medium of instruction. This memorandum tried to involve as many languages as possible, however, it did not mention when the teaching of English was to be started before it could be intensified. One wonders whether teaching it for one year, the seventh, was enough for learners to have mastered it to enable learning through it thereafter.

Probably, due to the gaps above, one year later, the language in education policy of Uganda was revised in 1948. It was in the 1948 Education Report where the language policy of the schools was further scrutinised and was stated by Ladefoged et al ([5]: 91) as summarised below:

The language policy of the Department with regard to the use of major vernaculars has remained the same, namely that six African languages are accepted as educational media in the primary school. These are Luganda, Runyoro, Lwoo, Ateso, Lugbarati, Kiswahili. From the point of view of the production of literature, it is clear that no further vernaculars can justify a claim to be regarded as a media throughout the primary school system, but the use of Runyankole dialect of Runyoro has been conceded in the first two years of the primary school in Ankole. This concession to the mother tongue has been made to the Kumam dialect in that area of Teso district and to Karamojong in the Kraal schools of Karamoja. The use of any language other than those included in the six listed above has not, however, been conceded in anything but the first two years of the child's school life.

In 1948, the Advisory Council for African Education reversed the decision of 1947 whereby English might be taught as a subject in class V or VI only. The Council agreed that English should not be used as a medium of instruction in the primary schools except in exceptional cases. However, they felt that no restriction should be imposed on the teaching of English before class V provided that it had no detrimental effect on general education. This report noted that the teaching of English in the lower classes was the greatest attraction in these schools although the advantages were not apparent.

Ladefoged et al [5], goes further to educate us that, four years later, in 1952, there was a decided change in opinion as stated in the 1952 Education report:

There is a very widespread desire for English to be taught at an earlier stage and for it to be used as a medium of instruction, even in the senior classes of the primary schools. The main obstacle to progress on these lines is the shortage of men and women who can teach English, but if this could be overcome, it would seem that the policy of introducing English as a school subject at an early age has much to recommend it. In the first place there are now a great many simplified readers for beginners; secondly, those responsible for teaching in the schools at post primary levels all say that standard of English is too low for satisfactory progress to be made in the English medium in academic or professional subjects (91).

Another important language policy decision reached at was that Kiswahili was no longer a recognised vernacular in Uganda schools, with exception of the schools for the police and their children. The other five vernaculars accepted in 1952 were the same as in the 1948 report.

In the same year, 1952, there was the deBunsen Committee which realised a wider use of English in primary schools. It mentioned the need to train teachers to teach English, a detailed study of the content, methods of English teaching in schools and training colleges. It recommended the continued use of the five vernaculars which had been accepted by the Education Report of 1952. The recommendations of the deBunsen Committee were reflected in the Education Report of 1953:

Educational theory still maintains that it is necessary for the child to be taught in the early stages in its mother tongue. The difficulty in most parts of Uganda is that the multiplicity of vernacular very often means that though a child does start instruction in a vernacular, that vernacular may not necessarily be its mother tongue ([5]: 92).

In addition to the Education Report of 1953, in the same year, was the UNESCO report which says, 'We take it as axiomatic that each child should begin his education in his mother tongue' ([5]: 92). This indicates that UNESCO has encouraged mother tongue instruction in early childhood and primary education since 1953.

In view of that, the report decided to experiment the use of English as a medium of instruction. This was done in Jinja European Primary School where non-English speaking children of workers were given six months of special instruction in English and were then placed in regular classes. The children were found to be able to proceed to the regular class with no difficulty.

In 1956, the first primary school was built for children of all races at Entebe. The purpose of the school was to provide places for all children of African ministers who came to Entebe from all parts of Uganda. Parents were responsible for providing private tutoring in English for their children to prepare them for school entry.

In 1957, a special project to experiment the use of English as a medium of instruction in lower primary was started in Nakawa-Kampala. The aims of the project were:

- a. to provide a planned and balanced curriculum;
- b. to use the normal curriculum and activities of these classes as a basis for teaching English;

- c. to provide teachers with instruction in languages and teaching methods ([5]: 93)..

The project was undertaken with help from the Special Centre in Nairobi. The 1960 Education Report calls the experiment 'a marked success'.

As the Special Centre in Nairobi was going on, the Nuffield Research Project in the Teaching of English was in progress. It was concerned largely with the problem of changeover from vernacular to English medium of instruction in the primary schools. The rationale behind the work is summed up in the extract from the report by Peter Wingard:

It is useless to hope that merely by giving a daily English lesson for a given number of years; we can prepare children adequately for the use of English as the medium, and switch over completely when we think they know enough English. In most parts of Uganda, children have little immediate use out of school for the English they learn in school. One or even two daily lessons of English do not in themselves produce a high degree of skill and command of the language ([5]: 94).

The conclusions of the project were that there should be a gradual introduction of English as a medium and that the subject in which the changeover might best be made is, probably, Physical Education where the teacher does most of the talking and the grammatical structures are commands accompanied by demonstration. The situation is not very different even now as we are later to see in this paper.

In 1961, the Common Wealth Conference on the Teaching of English as a Second Language was held at Makerere. The recommendations of the conference were intended as guidelines for all of the commonwealth countries, not only Uganda. The report notes the many problems involved in implementing an English language teaching policy, but acknowledges the growing trend that where a decision has been reached to use English as the medium of instruction, 'the earlier the language is introduced the better'. The report then lists the topics below for investigation:

The psychological effects of a second language medium, including motivation; needs and demands of the learner and community from the point of view of practical bilingualism; the influence of career prospects; the advantages of and disadvantages of simultaneous and sequential bilingualism in the education process; the age of introduction of English as a subject and the subjects to be taught through the vernacular; and the influence of the English medium on the failure rate of students in other subjects than English ([5]: 94).

One may question on what basis the conference made its recommendations; and considering the magnitude of the problem, whether it had any clear justification for them. The 1961 conference marks the end of that section and leads us to the post-colonial period, after 1962, when Uganda got her independence.

#### 4. The Post-Colonial Period (1962- 1988)

The post-colonial states according to Tollefson ([6]: 358) faced major language planning decisions: should colonial languages continue to be used as media of

instruction in schools? Should vernaculars undergo terminological development and standardisation processes in order to replace colonial languages in official domains? In multilingual states, which varieties should be selected as lingua-francas? What programmes of language teaching and learning should be undertaken at various levels of education? Should new writing systems be developed for previously unwritten varieties or for varieties with multiple orthographic alternatives? In many African states, Uganda inclusive, such questions were at the centre of the process of nationalism and nationism as well as modernisation and development. By the weight of the matter, LPLP specialists often with the support of the Ford Foundation and other non-governmental organisations took on an important role in the policy making processes of many newly created or independent states.

Uganda got independence from the British on 9th October, 1962. The influence of the British colonial language in education policy did not end with them. In 1963, the government of Uganda set up a commission to look into the education system that would cater for the needs of the newly independent Uganda. The commission had 19 members chaired by E. B. Castle. Ssentenza Kajubi being one of them later chaired other subsequent commissions. The Castle commission noted that Uganda's education context was one of overwhelming illiteracy, massive unemployment and poverty, had greater demand for education, shortage of teachers and needed employable educated people. Given that unpleasant context, the commission recommended setting priorities including improvement of the quality of primary education, raising the level of teacher education and expanding the secondary school sub sector to produce the required workforce to replace the expatriates who were departing at that time ([5]: 95).

Considering the historical perspective, Ladefoged et al [5] says that, there is nothing surprising in the Castle Report of 1963. The use of English increased and there was an expansion on the number of vernaculars from five to six adding Runyankore/Rukiga. It is also not clear what the committee meant by taking a pair of languages such as Akarimojong/Ateso regarding them as one vernacular but at the same time recommending that children should be taught in their own vernacular in the early years of school except where circumstances make it impossible. For example, where classes contain children of different race, tribe and language, and in situations where lack of reading material in the local language makes the achievement of literacy in that language too difficult, English was recommended as a medium of instruction in primary V and introduced as a subject in primary I.

More so, however, the evidence presented to the committee was by no means in agreement with some of the issues; Roland Hindmarsh had suggested that 'English as a medium should be used either from Primary I or VII. This means that the first six years of education shall be given through the medium of one language only-either English or vernacular'. Peter Wingard recommended the use of vernacular in primary I to teach reading and writing while beginning oral English and using English as a medium for Physical Education and Arithmetic from the beginning.

The Castle committee stated that its suggestions are “somewhat in the nature of a compromise between conflicting views” ([5]: 95).

Despite the cautionary note, Ladefoged et al [5] goes ahead to mention that, the major recommendations were adopted by the Ministry of Education and incorporated into the primary syllabus of 1965. English was introduced as a subject in Primary I and continued as a subject for all seven years of primary school. In primary IV, Mathematics and Physical Education were taught through the medium of English. English as a medium of instruction gradually extended to Science, Geography, Art, Craft and Music in the fifth, and by sixth and seventh year all subjects were taught in English.

Furthermore, the prominence of English continued. By 1967, English was a compulsory examination subject in secondary school despite the frequent changes of staff and variability in school programmes where each school was responsible for the development of its own syllabus and scheme of work. The other languages which were studied but not compulsory for learners to take on the school certificate examinations were: Luganda, Kiswahili, French, Latin, Gujarati, Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu and Arabic. There was an increasing prestige of learning French and other European languages. Latin was generally limited to seminaries. Gujarati, Punjabi, Hindi, and Urdu were largely offered at Asian private schools.

In the Grade II teacher training colleges, all students studied one Ugandan language as a subject. The choice of language was determined by the location of the college. The primary school teachers trained in the Grade III teacher training colleges did not study any Ugandan language ([5]: 96).

Unlike now, at the university level then, only French and German were taught. Teachers for secondary schools who studied at Makerere University College had a one-year course in language methods and methods for teaching Kiswahili, Luganda, French and German. There was also a new subject of Linguistics and African Languages with a one-year course. English was taught at Makerere in much the same way as at any British University ([5]: 97). There were many variations from the official policy which needed to be considered in both planning and implementing the language policy.

The issue of multilingualism with its complications was in place by then. Ladefoged et al ([5]: 98) has it that the official statement on language policy is not an accurate description of the situation in actual practice especially in those districts with the greatest diversity. In several districts, the official vernacular language does not coincide with the major vernacular language spoken in the area. In the whole country, about 40% of the population are not native speakers of any of the officially approved school vernaculars. The problems involved in considering the needs of many of these small groups and the difficulties of teaching a child from a minor group in a language that is totally unfamiliar to them contributed to the demands of both teachers and parents that English became the language of instruction as early as possible, even in Primary I. In other words, if the child has to learn a new language when he goes to school, it might just as well be English right from the beginning instead of having

them first learn a new vernacular and then switching to English further on in their studies.

To sum it all, the major aim of the policy was to have pupils able to read anything written in simple English by the end of primary one and the skill had to be permanent. However, it was not clearly indicated what was meant by simple English.

In the 1970's, Kiswahili was widely used in Uganda especially among the armed forces [34]. By then, Uganda was under military rule. Kiswahili was declared the National language for Uganda. By the time of this study, about 30 years ago the decree had not been repealed.

In 1977-1978, there was the education policy review commission chaired by Professor Ssentenza Kajubi. The purpose of this commission was to examine and assess the system of education in the country which was undergoing change. This report was not published because of the war against the president of Uganda by then; Idi Amin. However, it remained the basis for educational policy in the country until 1992.

In 1986, the National Resistance Council (NRC), the parliamentary body then, decided that Kiswahili would be one of the official languages in addition to English and would be used in NRC. By the time of the current study, no single deliberation in parliament had ever been carried out in Kiswahili.

Furthermore, just as the 1928 Governor Gowers recommendation for Kiswahili as a language of education and administration lacked support then, it is currently the same situation. The majority of Ugandans, especially those outside the armed forces, have never embraced Kiswahili. There are several reasons for this, including the fact that having come from the coast of Tanganyika and brought mainly by foreigners, just like English, it lacks the grip that a native language would have. Secondly, the armed forces misused it in the 1970's. It was always used in domestic violent robberies, at roadblocks and in many pain-inflicting situations to such an extent that it still carries that stigma. Thirdly, a good percentage of the population would rather learn the prestigious English [34].

## 5. The 1989 Kajubi Education Policy Review Commission

In 1987-1989 another Education Policy Review Commission was put in place chaired by Professor Ssentenza Kajubi. This commission, among other things, recommended the introduction of Universal Primary Education. It is from the recommendations of the 1989 Kajubi Education Policy Review Commission that the Government of Uganda issued the 1992 Government White Paper on Education; this was done in response to the recommendations of the commission.

The 1992 Government White Paper on Education (pg; 16-17) highlights which language(s) should be used for instruction. The key elements of this policy in relation to this study are:

1. In rural areas, the medium of instruction from P 1 to P 4 will be the relevant local languages; and from P 5 to P 8 English will be the medium of instruction. [P 8 has not come into existence to date].

2. In urban areas, the medium of instruction will be English throughout the primary cycle.
3. Kiswahili and English will be taught as compulsory subjects to all children throughout the primary cycle, in both rural and urban areas.
4. The relevant area languages will also be taught as a subject in primary schools; this applies to both rural and urban areas. However, students may not offer this subject for PLE examination. Uganda National Examinations Board will, nevertheless, provide for examination in all five Ugandan languages (Luo, Runyakitara, Luganda, Ateso/ Akarimojong and Lugbara) in Primary Leaving Examination for those who study any of these languages as a subject for examination. [By the time of this study, no Primary Leaving Examination had ever been prepared by Uganda National Examinations Board in any of these languages]
5. English will be the medium of instruction from senior one [the first year of secondary school] onwards.
6. Kiswahili and English will be compulsory subjects for all secondary school students. Students will be encouraged as much as possible to take another foreign language so as to increase their own and the national capacity to communicate at international level ([34]: 19).

The Government white paper goes further to say that; “the diversity of local languages in Uganda makes it difficult for the country to achieve rapid universal and democratized education, literacy for all, intellectualization of all people as well as the attainment of the much needed national unity” (pg,15). It continues to state that;

Government has considered, from a scientific point of view and with a flexible attitude, the traditional arguments concerning the ease with which children are supposed to learn in their mother tongues. Government regards the issue of language and educational instruction in a much more dynamic, realistic and progressive manner. It has noted the capacity of many Uganda children - particularly in the growing urban centers where most of the good schools are located - to learn quickly and enthusiastically when they are taught in English, even if they learn it for the first time in schools; and that children at the most malleable stage of their childhood have the highest capacity and desire to learn new languages (p.16).

The statement above denies the learners in Kampala and other urban areas a chance to learn in their mother tongues/ local languages. The government is using the argument that children learn languages effortlessly to counter the ‘traditional argument’ about the importance of the mother tongue. However, as far as the findings in this study are concerned, the argument should not be taken as gospel truth.

In summary, the Government White Paper aims are to promote citizenship; moral, ethical, and spiritual values; scientific, technical and cultural knowledge, skills, attitudes and literacy; and more importantly equip individuals with basic skills and knowledge. In short, it aims “to contribute to the building of an integrated, self-sustaining and independent national economy.” From 2008, the Ministry of Education had new ideas in the curriculum which are

vital in relation to language. These cannot be looked at in a single paper. I will scrutinise them in another publication which will fully consider the language issue in the Revised Lower Secondary Curriculum (S.1- S.4) of Uganda.

## 6. Lessons from the Past

From the above discussion of the previous language in education policies of Uganda for more than a century ago (1890-2008), there are many lessons which can be drawn. Despite the fact that several committees, schemes and reports were put across, up to now reviews are still being made on the language in education policy of Uganda. This indicates that, possibly, no lessons have been taken from the earlier policies. It may be high time committees advising on language issues in education in Uganda first carefully studied the previous policies to avoid repeating the same mistakes. Lessons taken from some of the mistakes made include but not limited to:

### 1. Introducing a foreign language on the curriculum when teachers and other implementers are not involved/trained

This was an issue in the 1927 memorandum and 1952 education report where English was desired to be taught from earlier stages but the country had no men and women who could teach English. The same case happened in 1986 when Kiswahili was recommended as one of the official languages of Uganda in addition to English.

Although language policy and planning has been variously defined as a government level activity [35,36], the anticipated benefits take a long time to be realised, if at all. While the bottom-up approach may be deemed difficult for government to apply, it ensures ownership of policy by the target community as well as those mandated to implement it. More so, successful development of multilingual education in Africa requires sensitivity to the real needs of the communities and should not remain a top-down political process as it has been in the past [37]. There has been very little involvement and input from the people at the grassroot level such as teachers, applied linguists, researchers, and members of society as a whole. In addition, success will also depend on initiatives from the local communities and institutions such as nongovernmental agencies, linguistically heterogeneous groups, small organisations, local departments of education and other local institutions. Nankindu ([38], 174) recommended that, teacher training in Uganda, particularly at the primary level, needs further investigation and need be put under consideration before a new or a revised bi/multilingual education policy can be implemented.

### 2. Policies changed without proper consultations from all stakeholders thus leading to a top-bottom approach

Many proponents of policies think that a policy is done by the learned and many a time the population is not consulted. This affected almost all the past policies on language in education: the 1927 memorandum, 1944 scheme of development, 1952 education report, 1953 deBunsen committee, 1957 special project on English teaching and the 1986 National Resistance Council.

The notion of language as social practice places more emphasis on the importance of bottom-up, actor-related

perspectives on multilingualism. This opens up for an understanding of a less planned activity of everyday issues of language. Fettes ([39]: 15) notes that "a great deal of language policy-making goes on in a haphazard or uncoordinated way, far removed from the language planning ideal", and other scholars in the field such as [35,40] concur that policy is not necessarily the outcome of planning because language planning is first and foremost about social change, which does always lend itself to detailed prediction. The works of Cooper [35] and Tollefson [40] which proposed new theoretical directions have greatly contributed to an understanding of language policy and planning in terms of social change. In more detail, Cooper's ([35]: 98) accounting framework which was organised on pertinent questions on policy implementation; "What *actors* attempt to influence *behaviour* of which people for what *ends* under what *conditions* by what *means* through what *decision-making process* with what *effect*" sums up the state of language policy and planning as a descriptive endeavour, while at the same time proposing the need for a theory of social change in order to move language policy and planning ahead.

### 3. Policies put in place with no proper arrangements for study materials to be used in the teaching of the mentioned languages

The 1944 Makerere Conference, the 1947 Colonial Office memorandum, the 1992 Government White Paper, proposed a more inclusive language in education policy of a multilingual nature with five Ugandan main vernaculars. However, the main challenge was inadequate books and materials needed to teach a language or use it as a medium of instruction. The materials talked about are mainly for local languages with a central focus on the promotion of bi/multilingual education. This was in many cases used as an excuse for teaching English against other languages of Uganda.

Recent developments in the examination of linguistic justice show that granting a privileged status to natural languages gives its native speakers a considerable advantage. For example, they can translate and interpret, edit, teach and produce various educational materials in this language. This amounts to a considerable saving of costs which is a common argument in the context of promoting multiple languages. Obanya [41] refutes the argument that costs for training teachers and producing materials are unavoidable. Adds that materials are not necessarily books; teachers need to be innovative and creative to be able to use societal resources. Nankindu [38] complements how important it is to develop large-scale materials with a central focus on the promotion of MT/local language education. The issue of cost is routinely singled out as a reason for abandoning the principle of full multilingualism in favour of another regime. Mda [42] asserts that most people fear the cost implications of recognising many languages and argue that recognising only English would be cheaper and more sensible since English is a 'world' language.

In addition, Stroud's [43] twelve principles for educational language provisions in multilingual settings, suggests Principle 8: *Production of materials should be decentralised to the language communities as much as possible*. Stringer and Faraclas [44] put forward a method that can be

considered. It is called Multi-Strategy Method. They claim that it can enable people to create relevant mother tongue literature at the local level in such a way that educational impact is high yet financial impact is low. They suggest that teachers may be trained in this method to increase production. Stroud goes on to say that decentralisation of materials production will increase materials availability and cut production costs. In general, teachers could be trained in developing materials as the outcome of the teaching process rather than working with published materials at the outset. Teacher training institutes might also find it worthwhile to train teachers in materials production and bilingual textbook design. Decentralisation of materials production can potentially contribute to local language maintenance and restorative activities.

### 4. Confusion with no clear definitions of terms, interpretations and justification of the use of specific languages in the proposed policies

Usually, the people who are involved in policy design and development processes are highly educated at a consultancy level. They sometimes use a language which not all teachers and the teams which develop guides can understand. What then happens is that the implementation process gets stunted and eventually the policy remains on paper. More importantly is the decision to have specific languages and leave out others with reasons missing in the outline of the backup documents. This is the problem which affected the 1927 memorandum, the 1944 scheme of development which targeted to increase numbers learning English from 12,000 to 70,000, the 1948 advisory Council which recommended the teaching of English for purposes of attraction (without mentioning who was to be attracted) and the 1952 education report which later noted that the standard of English in the country was too low.

A related point concerning the 'unpredictable' nature of language in education policy is made by Spolsky ([15]: 15) who elaborates the fact that the existence of an explicit policy is not a guarantee that it will be implemented, nor does implementation guarantee success. He points out how all language planning activities take place in particular sociolinguistic settings and how the nature and scope of the planning can only be fully understood in relation to the setting. Spolsky adds that political scientists assume a policy making system, a decision system and an organisational network which co-exist in an environment with physical, political and socioeconomic components. In these components reside the conditions relevant to the policy development. On the other hand, the sociolinguistic situation and the attitude to it are the nature of political organisation which explains the main outlines of language policy. A good reason for the attention accorded to political units is the association of language policy with power and authority.

It is also crucial to note that policies that favour linguistic pluralism do not always have the promotion of greater social and economic equality as their goal. Ricento ([14]: 2) notes that a rationale for a particular language policy might appear to be 'liberal' while the hidden agenda could be quite reactionary or chauvinistic; for example, for economic exploitation, socio-economic gate keeping, increasing of political power among certain segments of the population and so on. This is a useful perspective to hold in mind when approaching formation



of policies everywhere. A particular language policy can be used to achieve very different ends for different groups within a nation state. For example, Ricento ([14]: 75) found out that the promotion of English in North America from the colonial period through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century had as its aim the acculturation of some groups for the purpose of structural assimilation and the deculturation of other groups for the purpose of subordination without structural incorporation. Ramanathan's [45] ethnographic study of English and vernacular medium education in Gujarat, India, highlights strategies whereby LPLP can address issues related to global inequities. Ramanathan argues that language policy and planning should pay attention to grounded local realities that provide space to address how humans and institutions claim authority to re-think, re-envision, and re-enact their realms.

Considering the examples of the mistakes above as the documented history heightens, language planning and policy is an important process in any education system. Bamgbose [46] observes that language policies in Africa are generally characterised by avoidance, vagueness, arbitrariness, fluctuations and declarations. Language policies are, thus, treated with both lack of serious concern and even downright levity. Bamgbose refers to this as 'implementation avoidance strategies' typical of language planning in Africa. Continued use of the pre-independence and former colonial language policies is catastrophic to many people who, because of the foreign languages used, are not in a position to participate in the democratic processes of their countries.

## 7. Recommendations

This publication has implications for the implementation of a language in education policy at the macro or micro level, particularly with respect to the three types of planning; status, corpus and acquisition planning [35,47]. The three types of planning correspond to the uses of language, the language itself and the user respectively. First, planning for LiEP's needs to take into account MT/local languages. The status of these languages has to be raised to be accepted as viable languages fit to be considered as medium of instruction. This means that the functions of local languages need to be expanded to enhance their status. This is important as it impacts the language ideologies of the different stakeholders towards MT/ local languages as media of instruction, as addressed by Stroud and Wee [48]. Furthermore, corpus planning, which pursues status planning, requires the development of orthography as well as the elaboration of vocabulary in order to respond to the expanded functions of the local languages to be able to facilitate bi/multilingual education. Additionally, in multilingual contexts, acquisition planning is important as this necessitates promoting the language through its use. To this end, policy makers need to be well informed of current research on literacy acquisition and the promotion of multilingualism. This publication underscores the need for policy makers to seriously consider the three types of planning. The same implication would call for curriculum changes to facilitate MT/ local language based teaching, learning and assessment. Beyond the curriculum, there is a need for freedom for the teacher to decide and

act. At the same time, teachers need to be trained to increase their confidence in teaching using many languages.

Although language policy and planning has been variously defined as a government level activity [35,36], the anticipated benefits take a long time to be realised, if at all. While the bottom-up approach may be deemed difficult for government to apply, it ensures ownership of policy by the target community as well as those mandated to implement it. This paper indicates that the needs and investments of the target population are critical, and, therefore, policy makers need to collaborate actively with diverse stakeholders in policy implementation. Kaplan [49] insists that consent of parties involved in changes of language policy is needed (see [50] on South Africa). Therefore, given the linguistic diversity in Uganda, the characteristics of the community need to be taken seriously [51]. Hornberger [47] reminds us that language planning, especially concerning acquisition and development, does not occur in a vacuum. Learners, in acquiring literacy in one language, might compromise literacy in another. Therefore, the social conditions that advance English, such as its symbolic value, may undermine promotion of the indigenous languages [52]. Recommendations from this paper can be used to address this challenge.

## 8. Conclusion

A language in education policy formulated in terms of a monoglot notion for a multilingual situation has been proved inappropriate by this publication. Such a scenario calls for a review of the language in education policy for Uganda. In my understanding and in the interest of this publication, the Language in Education policies in Uganda have come unfolding from 1877 during the missionary activities. It cannot be predicted whether the issue can be finally sorted out because even the current plan is still subjected to reviews. The examples of schemes, reports and other documents analysed in this publication do not come to a permanent conclusion on language in education thus the debate is not yet ended. I concur with Blommaert [53] that the terms 'end' or 'closure' are not particularly suitable in the context of ideological debates and language politics, because of what we might perceive as the stupendous conclusion of a debate, may instead prove to be a temporary moment of stasis that preludes future uptakes. In another publication, I will analyse the debates on language in education in Uganda currently.

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