Chapter 12
Linguistically–Responsive Educational Framework for Multilingual Contexts:
Supporting Children's Academic Achievement

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ABSTRACT

It is estimated that 221 million primary-aged children from remote rural areas, linguistic minority, and ethnic communities who speak a different language at home and have no contact with the instructional language outside of the classroom do not have access to education and have the biggest problems in learning and understanding of the language taught at school. UNESCO notes that Africa is the only continent, where the majority of the children start schooling using a foreign language. For instance, in Zambia, where English was the educational language (among non-English speakers), it was found at the end of primary schooling that children were unable to read fluently or write clearly, and they failed examinations because they could not understand the instructions. The chapter focuses on the important issues of multilingual contexts in education and spread light to the factors that influence inclusion and academic achievement.

INTRODUCTION

Educational policy-makers are confronted with the challenge to ensure language educational standards for the whole population of a country and to protect the rights of those who belong to specific linguistic and ethnic minorities to ensure inclusive education for all. Mother tongue is the principal means used by human beings to communicate with one another, the most powerful form of symbolization and a divine gift bringing them a sense of solidarity in their culture. Moreover, it is well-established now that mother-tongue is crucial for their early success and better learning outcomes, resulting in higher retention, increased achievement and enrolment. In fact, in schools where mother-tongue based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) is promoted, children are able to convert and activate their funds of knowledge, identity, social capital by enabling them to learn in an environment where they can understand, expand and contribute their ideas, and situate themselves independently, linguistically and culturally within the wider educational and communication context. So, for mother tongue-based multilingual educational programs, regular training and seminars for teachers at teacher training institutions are essential to implement methodologies and pedagogies to orient and guide them on how to handle learners with different languages - to acknowledge the importance of linguistic diversity. Moreover, the educational basics - textbooks, learning materials – should be available in mother-tongue languages as well because the unavailability of appropriate literature and instructional materials is often identified as a constraint in the development of a localized curriculum.

Strong political and financial will, therefore, is necessary to support various mother-tongue based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) to effectively deliver a multi-language policy in our schools. Moreover, allocation and access to local budgets towards supporting and facilitating investment in mother-tongue teaching and learning is crucial. We also have to build a supportive community environment so that communities and families understand the necessity of mother-tongue learning and cultural values.

BACKGROUND

'When pre-established pockets of marginalization, poverty, or poor teaching quality intersect with schooling in an unknown language, children may never make it to school, or if they do, will find little meaning in the classroom to keep them there' (Pinnock, 2009)

In today's world, providing quality education for all children implies taking into account many varied cultural and linguistic contexts that exist in our societies. In fact, educational policy-makers are confronted with the challenge to ensure language educational standards for the whole population of a country, while at the same time protecting the rights of those who belong to specific linguistic and ethnic populations because ensuring inclusive education, guaranteeing all children's right to education, involves providing education to minority groups in their own language or mother tongue. Hornby (2010) defined mother tongue as the language you first learn to speak when you are a child i.e., a primary language; or the language one identifies with or is identified as a native speaker of by others, or the language a child first learns in the immediate community (Hawkins, 1995). It is the principal means used by human beings to communicate with one another, the most powerful form of symbolization and a divine gift, bringing them a sense of solidarity in their culture (Appelbaum & Chambliss, 1995). Moreover, Bonny Norton (2013) posits that mother language "serves to construct our sense of selves - our subjectivity, and medi-

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