

Working paper

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Does Language of Instruction Affect Quality of Education?

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By Martha Qorro²

1. Introduction

Various studies have been undertaken in Tanzania on the language of instruction at the post-primary education level since the late 1970s. However, most of these studies do not relate the language of instruction to the quality of education. This paper attempts to make up for this shortfall by raising some questions. What do we mean by quality education? Who sets standards for quality education, and according to whose criteria? Is quality education universal/global or local/societal? The terms *quality education* and *quality of education* have sometimes been used interchangeably but treated as slightly different. In this paper quality education refers to the state of education a society strives to attain; while quality of education focuses on quality that we strive to improve. The paper begins by defining key terms and then addresses the question of quality of education as an issue that is inseparable from the language of instruction factor.

1.1 Defining Education

Education is a development process that often includes a particular understanding of the nature of knowledge. This understanding is given expression in a particular social or ideological context with its particular policy and implementation agendas. It is an expression of how human learning and development occurs and how they can be encouraged. Education is seen as a developmental process of change for the better in the interest of the society that designs it and the individual that receives it.

Education can be informal or formal. Different societies may have different views about what formal education is, which in turn determines how curriculum is seen or viewed by different societies. For example, those who see curriculum mainly in terms of content see education primarily as a process of transmitting that content. Those who see it as mainly concerned with a product see education primarily as instrumental towards the achievement of that product. And those who see curriculum primarily in terms of a process see education primarily as developmental. In this paper education is viewed as carrying elements from all these three perspectives.

In this sense education builds on, or strengthens what learners already know and “prepares young people to become better members of their society” (Nyerere 1968). It is meant to make learners knowledgeable about issues, enable them to understand the world and be more efficient members of their society, caring for humanity and life in general. Education is not merely a preparation for maturity, but a life-long process. It is a continuous growth of the mind and a continuous illumination of life. Schools thus equip learners with instruments of mental growth that they are expected to use throughout their lives.

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1.2 Quality of Education

The word quality has a long history. It comes from the Greek word “*qualitas*”, meaning the distinguishing characteristics of a thing. The original meaning did not imply any normative label of “good” or “bad”; however, as time passed the usage of the term quality has been associated with properties that are considered valuable and important. Applied to education, as in quality education, it addresses the levels of achievement. This may raise a number of questions, such as: What do we mean by quality education? What type of education is it? Who sets the quality? Is quality education universal or societal? Quality education can be viewed in terms of the correspondence between the goals, or expectations of society and changes that take place in the learners, the education system and the society as a whole. Expectations of society, according to Mmari (2000), are expressed in terms of educational goals that can broadly be classified into three categories, namely: (i) learning goals, which focus on equipping learners with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes as defined in a given curriculum; (ii) system goals, which relate to measurable inputs and outputs that keep the system working; and (iii) educational goals, which are based on the dominant ideas within society. Since every society has its dominant ideas, it follows that the goals of education between societies will naturally differ; and to that extent the meaning of quality of education will also differ.

The discussion about the quality of education in a particular society, therefore, needs to be closely linked to the goals and objectives of education in that particular society. For example, if the educational goals are defined in terms of learning goals, where the focus is on achievement levels, then quality of education in this respect would be measured in terms of achievement of skills, knowledge, values and attitudes. This also means that the quality of education has to address the issue of relevance, that is, the relevance of educational goals to the needs of a particular society. This includes, among other things, the need to improve what already exists. Quality education is not just about learning new ideas but also understanding how those new ideas relate to those that we already know. It does not disorient or alienate students from their society, but rather gives them a new perspective on it, and thus makes them better members of their society.

1.3 Societal Objectives of Education

As noted earlier, the discussion about the quality of education in a particular society cannot be divorced from the goals and objectives of education in that particular society. Hence, as we discuss quality of education in relation to the language of instruction in Tanzanian secondary schools, we need to bring into the picture the goals and objectives of secondary education. The current policy guidelines for the secondary schools in Tanzania (Education and Training Policy of MoEC, 1995:6) give the goals of secondary education as follows:

- To consolidate and broaden the scope of baseline values, knowledge, skills and principles acquired and developed at the primary education level;
- To enhance further development and appreciation of national unity, identity and ethic, personal integrity, respect for and readiness to work, human rights, cultural and moral values, customs, traditions, and civic responsibilities and obligations;
- To promote the development of competency in linguistic ability and effective use of communication skills in Kiswahili and in at least one foreign language;
- To promote opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and understanding in prescribed or selected fields of study
- To prepare students for tertiary and higher education, vocational, technical and professional training
- To inculcate a sense and ability for self-study, self-confidence and self-advancement in

new frontiers of science and technology, academic and occupational knowledge, and skills

- To prepare the students to join the world of work

The quality of education in the case of Tanzania is thus the extent to which these objectives are attained. It is the kind of education that is capable of bringing about the desired change in the learners as set in the objectives of the current education system. As such it is transformative in the sense that it changes learners into more knowledgeable individuals who understand their surroundings and can, in turn, transform them for the good of their society.

Knowledge and understanding are expected to give those who receive education a strong sense of security and confidence with which to explore into new areas of knowledge and be introduced to other ways of doing things. Quality education is the kind of education that gives learners the ability to learn and discuss abstract ideas, liberates learners' minds from ignorance, opens up new perspectives and extends their horizons by widening frontiers of knowledge. Quality education requires that learners take an active part in knowledge creation through critical thinking, discussion, dialogue, asking questions and solving problems. However, learners can only actively participate in knowledge creation if they are allowed to use the language they understand very well, which, in most cases, is the language they usually speak in their day-to-day life. This is where the language of instruction factor comes in.

1.4 The Language of Instruction Factor

Just as the discussion of quality of education cannot be divorced from goals of education, it is equally important not to divorce the question of language of instruction from quality of education. This is due to the role that the language of instruction plays in determining the quality of education. Language of instruction is a vehicle through which education is delivered. The role of language of instruction can be likened to that of pipes in carrying water from one destination to another or that of copper wires in transmitting electricity from one station to another. Just as a pipe is an important medium in carrying water, and a copper wire an important medium for transmitting electricity, the language of instruction is an indispensable medium for carrying, or transmitting education from teachers to learners and among learners.

As a matter of efficiency and efficacy, only the language which teachers and students understand can effectively function as the language of instruction. Only when teachers and students understand the language of instruction are they able to discuss, debate, ask and answer questions, ask for clarification and therefore construct and generate knowledge. These are activities that are a pre-requisite to learning and whose level determines the quality of education. Thus, the language of instruction is an important factor in determining the quality of education.

However, in Tanzania the language of instruction factor has been ignored for a long time and this has had a negative impact on the quality of education. Although the policy states the need 'to promote the development of competency in linguistic ability and effective use of communication skills in Kiswahili and in at least one foreign language' (in which case it implies English), the emphasis is placed on English as the language of instruction. It would seem that those who argue for English medium believe that the best way for students to learn English is to use it as the language of instruction. The emphasis on English is illustrated through policy statements and the media as shown in the newspaper extracts below:

1. "Tanzanians being part of the global family, we cannot ignore English." (Daily News, March 5, 1996)

2. “During this era of globalization of information, trade, economy, and technology even nations which took pride in using some native languages such as Cuba, China, Russia and Japan are rushing to get to the mainstream of international trade and communication, often conducted in English or French. They are paying dearly for that.” (The Guardian, April 5, 1999).
3. “In international communication English is the most important language. Even those countries which do not need English to access the world’s knowledge offer their children English courses to enable them to communicate with the outside world. For Tanzanians English is a key to large parts of the mass media such as radio, newspapers, TV, internet and several others. Job applicants who know English have better chances than others.” (The Guardian, April 13, 1999)
4. “Actually for us (and many other people) knowledge is English... English is still the leading academic language of the world.” (The Guardian, February 16, 2000)
5. “We will regret if we abandon English.” (The Guardian, February 16, 2000)
6. “As everybody knows there is no problem of English books in the world and this can easily be verified even by the open air bookshops in the streets of Dar es Salaam – the point is that those who study in English have all the books in the world and those who study in Kiswahili have an acute shortage of books.” (The Guardian, February 19, 2000).
7. “English... is widely spoken almost throughout the world and is Number One in commercial transactions. Many nations use it widely in international commerce, the legal system and in both space and marine sciences.” (The African, August 7, 2003)

These arguments are actually good reasons for *teaching English*, but not for *teaching in English*. Many have missed the point! *Teaching English* and *teaching in English* are two different things. While we all see the importance of *teaching English* as an international language and believe that it should be taught thoroughly as an additional language and as a school subject, some believe that the best way to *teach English* is to *teach in English*. Some do not believe so. In the next section we will see how the language of instruction factor has an impact on the quality of education.

2. Language of Instruction and Educational Performance

In Tanzania studies by Andersen (1975) and Mvungi (1982) show that proficiency in the language of instruction is an important factor in educational performance. The corollary of this is that lack of proficiency in the language of instruction, in our case English, results in poor performance in subjects taught in English. Elsewhere, studies by Cummins (1979, 1981) and Krashen (1985) show that poor performance in the language of instruction results in poor performance not only in other subjects, but also in overall poor performance in the second or foreign language. These findings have been confirmed by studies in Tanzania by Roy-Campbell and Qorro (1987) and Qorro (1999). In other words, when students have a firm grasp of their specialized subjects, that understanding gives them a firm ground on which to build the foundation for learning a second or foreign language, in this case English. However, this firm grasp/understanding, which is central to the quality of education, can only be achieved when teachers and students understand the language of instruction. In Tanzania secondary school classrooms and higher education the language of instruction is not well understood by the majority of teachers and most students. The next section of the paper examines the classroom situation in secondary schools in Tanzania.

2.1 The Classroom Situation

Observation in some secondary school classrooms in Tanzania shows that most students and the majority of teachers are seriously handicapped when it comes to using English as the language of instruction (Qorro 1999, Brock-Utne 2005). Only a handful of students take part in active learning. The majority of students simply sit and copy notes that their teachers have written on

the blackboard. If the teacher's handwriting is not legible students do not ask but simply copy words incorrectly since they are not able to distinguish correct from incorrectly spelt words. Below are examples of classroom interactions in some secondary schools in Tanzania. These examples from 1970s to the present day show how long our education system has been wallowing in the problem.

In Example 1, Mlama and Matteru (1978) illustrate how teachers (T) and pupils (P) or students (SS) attempt to interact in the process of using English as the medium of instruction.

Example 1

T: What do you stand when we say animals of the forest?
T: What the meaning of decided?
P: Decided means to ask others
T: Who can use in a good sentence a word decided?
P: Our teacher decided all children come in the morning to school?
T: Good. What the meaning of a well?
P: A place which water are not walking.
T: The word clapped (pronounced /krap/). It is the past tense of which word?
T: Understood class?
T: Quiet please (pronounced /kwait pliis/).
P: Clapped is the past tense of clap (pronounced /krap/)
(Source: Mlama and Matteru 1978:19)

In Example 1, the teacher uses incorrect English sentences and does not make any effort to correct pupils' incorrect sentences either because he/she is not aware of the errors or he/she is not sure of what the correct forms of the sentences are. Research by Mlama and Matteru (1978) shows how, over time, this situation where teachers who have not specialized in English language teaching are forced to teach in English and therefore pass incorrect English on to their students. This point is not meant to condemn or berate teachers; it is meant to illustrate that teachers are not the cause of the problem but rather a products of a bad language policy, who have, over time, become victims of the language problem.

Another classroom observation in a study by Rubagumya, Jones and Mwansoko (1998) reveals the following interaction between the teacher (T) and the students (SS) in a Biology lesson in Form III (third year of secondary education):

Example 2

T: When you go home put some water in a jar, leave it direct on sun rays and observe the decrease of the amount of water. Have you understood?
SS: (silence)
T: <i>Nasema, chukua chombo, uweke maji na kiache kwenye jua, maji yatakuwaje?</i> (I say take a container with water and leave it in the sun, what will happen to the water?)
SS: <i>Yatapungua</i> (it will decrease)
T: <i>Kwa nini?</i> (Why)
SS: <i>Yatafyonzwa na mionzi ya jua</i> (it will be evaporated by the sun's rays)
(Rubagumya, Jones and Mwansoko 1998:17)

Example 2 shows that the teacher's instruction is not clear when it is given in English It is difficult to tell whether it is the teacher's instructions or the students' lack of understanding that results in students' silence. The question is: does the way in which teaching is conducted really improve the quality of education? Does it help in the teaching of language(s), be it English or

Kiswahili? Looking at more examples might help to further illustrate the point. The next extract is taken from History notes of a Form III student.

Example 3

EXPANSION OF STATE SYSTEM

By the end of 18th some of the States had become being centralised kingdoms. By the middle of 19th C states such as Buganda, Bunyoro, Ankole, Rwanda and Burundi had become powerful through tribute and military conquest.

The relation of production in the states was feudal. The forms of these relations varied from one area to another in the interlacustrine area the power ruler was based on his ownership and control over land the major means of production. The ruling classes (feudal lords) apportioned arable land to the peasants. From the feudal lords collected tribute. The Nyarubanja system in Karagwe, and Nyunjo and Busolo system in Buganda were variations of these feudal relations.

Another form of feudal relation was Ubagabice which developed between the Tutsi and Hutu in Rwanda, Burundi, and Buha. Here feudal relations revealed cattle ownership. The Tutsi would own the cattle of a Hutu family. Landlord (master) owned the cattle and his subject was called Mugabbi

(Source: Qorro 1999)

The student from whose notes the extract in Example 3 is taken was in the third year of secondary education. He/she has one more year before completing secondary education. Has this student really consolidated his/her baseline knowledge of history that he/she has learned in primary school? Does this kind of learning prepare the students for tertiary, higher, vocational and professional training, or prepare him/her to join the world of work? On the other hand, since the argument for using English as the language of instruction is to enable students to learn it, is it true that students are learning English in the process of using it as the medium of instruction? On graduating if this particular student happens to join the teaching profession he/she would be teaching English at primary school level because of the mere fact that he/she has completed secondary education. This means the language problems of this student are passed on to the subsequent generation of pupils who will inevitably turn out with poorer English compared to that of the earlier generations. It is through this process of recycling poor English into the school system that the level of English language proficiency has kept on falling over the years. Again we go back to the assumption made by those arguing for English medium: are students actually learning any English by being taught in the medium of English?

The last example is from a study by Vuzo (2005) who, in a classroom observation, found that teachers, like students, face problems when it comes to using English as the language of instruction. This extract is an example from a Commerce lesson in Form II:

Example 4

T: Goods must remain in the store... to be ready for a changing of weather...it is a danger to sell all goods in the store...The danger of selling all the goods in the store... When goods are scarce... and sales are increased... (*T mixes language to elaborate what he was teaching*)

Nina maana kuwa bidhaa zikipungua...we need time for a preparation. Time to ask for a new goods...(*in the course of the lesson he posed a question*)

T: How can we do before to sell all goods in the store?

S: You must be careful with that changes...and making time for a preparation...

(Source: Vuzo 2005:68-69)

Example 4 compels one to ask: is this quality education? Are these students learning Commerce? By using English as the language of instruction, are these students learning English? Deducing

from the language that the teacher in Example 4 uses, one can safely conclude that the teacher is not capable of correcting students' bad English since his/her own English is just as bad. If this is the kind of English that students are exposed to, how could one possibly argue then that using English as the language of instruction helps students to learn English. Instead of receiving quality education, students in such classrooms are likely to lose on three fronts: first they do not get quality education; secondly, they do not learn English; and thirdly, they do not learn Kiswahili. In other words, the objectives of education – in terms of consolidation what has already been learnt, learning new knowledge, or promoting communication skills in two languages, namely Kiswahili and English – are impossible to attain for the majority of students.

Some may think that these examples are few and isolated or exaggerated cases. Unfortunately, this is not the case. These four examples are not isolated cases. Reports from teaching practice supervision in the Faculty of Education at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania show similar classroom episodes. In addition, at the first Language of Instruction in Tanzania and South Africa (LOITASA) Conference in April 2002, one of the participants who was also a Headmaster of one of the Secondary Schools in Dar es Salaam reported that his school has 50 teachers out of which only three (6%) teachers were proficient in, and used correct English while teaching. This means that the remaining 47 teachers (94% of all teachers in the school), taught in the kind of English displayed in Examples 1, 2, and 4 above. Even if the three teachers (6%) had the best materials and were highly qualified and motivated to teach English and taught it well, it is clear that the effect of their teaching will be wiped out by the way English is used as the language of instruction by teachers teaching History, Commerce, Civics, Geography, Mathematics and all other subjects in incorrect English.

Let us assume for a moment that the three teachers in the cited school are English language teachers (normally there would be more than three per school), and that they teach English for 80 minutes to each class everyday. This means that the students learn some good/correct English for only one hour and 20 minutes in a full school day of eight hours. In the remaining six hours and 40 minutes students listen to incomprehensible subject matter, related to them in an incomprehensible form of English. Thinking of the objectives of secondary education as stated by the policy document while keeping in mind the classroom situation illustrated in the examples given earlier, it is difficult to see how quality of education can be improved in Tanzania without addressing the language of instruction factor. In fact, it does not make sense to talk of quality of education until the language of instruction factor is addressed.

The qualifications that the education system aims at are normally in line with the guiding societal philosophy. For example, in Tanzania during the mid 1960's, the philosophy of Education for Self Reliance had a lot of impact on education and education outputs. It was at this time when the language of instruction in primary schools was changed from English to Kiswahili so that pupils were able to understand what was taught, and that they were being prepared and expected to serve their society after they completed primary school. One wonders what kind of qualifications the current secondary and tertiary education is preparing in the form of future workforce.

Brock-Utne (2005) explains that the qualifications the workforce receives through the educational system can be divided in three different types:

- *Skills or proficiency qualifications* are general skills that are pre-requisites for an individual to be able to acquire more advanced and specific qualifications.
- *Adaptability qualifications* are certain qualifications that have to do with attitudes desirable in the labour force. They may be divided into *active adaptability*, which enables one to carry

out a work process with the greatest possible intensity (qualifications such as diligence and perseverance) and *direct accepting adaptability qualifications*, which enables one to carry out work process one is given to do with willingness and to one's best ability. The typical qualifications here are obedience and sense of duty; or *indirectly accepting adaptability qualifications*, which for instance prevent one from becoming involved in activities that may lead to less profit for the employers (e.g. strikes). The typical qualifications here are indifference and apathy.

- *Creative qualifications* are qualifications needed for the development of productive forces necessary to capital. To develop the means of production, qualifications are needed that are also required for scientific work, such as critical sense, independence and openness, creativity and the ability to enter into constructive cooperation with other people.

From the examples of classroom interactions that we have observed earlier on it is clear that the education system in Tanzania gives students neither *proficiency qualifications* nor *creative qualifications*. It does not give students the former because they do not understand the language in which the subjects are taught, nor does it give them the latter because, as a result of the former, they have very little to discuss or be creative for. That means the education they receive is of such a poor quality that thinking becomes a very difficult task. The language of instruction puts limitations on teachers and students to an extent that classroom activities such as critical thinking, critical sense, independence, openness, problem solving and the like become impossible.

Instead the classroom environment gives students *adaptability qualifications*. That means they are being prepared to be diligent and to persevere, to work willingly to their best ability, to obey and have sense of duty. In addition, students learn to accept to adapt, to avoid being involved in activities such as strikes, or not to take any action at all, and therefore to fall into indifference and or apathy. In her classroom observation research Brock-Utne (2005) has the following to say:

The students were silent, grave and looked afraid. They were trying to guess the answers the teacher wanted. The student who came up with the answer bird when the teacher asked for an example of a fish did either not understand the word fish, the word bird or neither of them. He was trying to look in his book for an answer which would have made it possible for him to sit down instead of having to stand as a form of further punishment. Using qualification analysis we may now ask ourselves what qualifications the teacher in this lesson is giving the students, the prospective labour force. Students are hardly given any general proficiency qualifications at all and certainly no creative qualifications. The qualifications given are adaptability qualifications, both directly and indirectly accepting ones. They learn to obey, learn to keep quiet. They learn that if they do not answer the way the teacher wants, they get punished. They learn to memorize. Some sink into apathy and become indifferent. Some learn that they are dumb, that they are unlikely to succeed and may give up all together. They are learning to fail and become losers (Brock-Utne 2005).

Brock-Utne's observations are corroborated by the behaviour of some of our graduates and school leavers; further research in this area may be conducted for those who might think that these observations are exaggerated. So far a host of classroom observation and most research findings attest to the situation described above.

As pointed out by Brock-Utne (2005), if we analyze these aims according to qualification categories, it is clear that the education system in Tanzania is meant to give students proficiency qualifications, largely general proficiency qualifications which will prepare them to acquire special proficiency qualifications. Secondary education in Tanzania is also meant to inculcate self-

confidence in students and enhance creative qualifications needed to make advancement in new frontiers of science and technology. Is this what is happening in the secondary schools in Tanzania today where English is the language of instruction? It is interesting to note that the first of the specific aims mentioned in the policy objectives is to broaden the knowledge, skills and principles acquired and developed at the primary education level where the language of instruction is Kiswahili. It is also interesting to note that one of the specific aims is to “promote the effective use of communication skills in Kiswahili and in at least one foreign language.” Nothing is said here about communication skills in English. The communication skills in Kiswahili in secondary schools in Tanzania are hardly promoted since all emphasis is placed on English, and school compounds are littered with notices saying: “*English Only*,” “*Speak English*,” and “*No English, No Service!*” Sometimes students get punished for speaking Kiswahili, although Kiswahili is the national language. This means that the policy objective of promoting communication skills in Kiswahili is mere lip service.

3. The Way Forward: Improving Quality of Education

As was said in the earlier part of this paper, quality education is that which is capable of bringing about *change* in our learners - change from less knowledgeable to more knowledgeable individuals, from less confident to more confident individuals, from dependent to independent individuals, from job seekers to job creators, and so on. We can achieve this change by making a concerted effort to have education that encourages learners to take an active part in the learning process, by insisting that education should allow and actually foster creative learning and creative thinking, and that it gives learners the responsibility to construct and generate knowledge through discussion rather than through transmission and rote learning.

Change, according to LeRoy and Simpson (1996), can be achieved by a combination of concerted efforts that bring together various elements to work in harmony towards a common goal. These elements are *vision, skills, resources, incentives and an action plan*. We briefly explain what each of these elements entails and how they all function together towards achieving educational change.

A *vision* gives the goal and the direction based on societal philosophy (of education). For example, in Tanzania the guiding philosophy is self-reliance. This vision has to be understood and shared by all stakeholders of education so that all work towards realizing it.

Skills are the classroom practices, techniques, methods or approaches that teachers must possess in order to achieve the goals and objectives of education. In the case of Tanzania the skills teachers use should help impart the guiding education philosophy of self-reliance.

Resources are of two types: human and non-human. The first include qualified teachers and competent school management. The second include non-human or material resources such as books and other reading materials, stationery, background knowledge, time, classroom space, and the language of instruction in which teachers and learners are competent.

Incentives are the positive benefits realized by all stakeholders of education that encourage them to work for positive change. For example, from the teachers’ expectations, incentives would include recognition of their efforts, a pay rise, availability of teaching materials, an environment that is conducive for teaching, and other personal emoluments like transport and housing allowances. From the point of view of students, incentives would be passing examinations, winning a scholarship, winning a school prize, and the promise of a good job after graduation. From the parents’ point of view, incentives would include things like employment and self-reliance of their children upon completing school. Education officials and prospective employers may have

varying incentives but more or less similar to those of parents. It is these incentives that motivate teachers and students towards achieving the set goals of education.

An *action plan* is the roadmap that guides educational stakeholders towards the goals set in the vision. It shows the kinds of activities that have to be performed, when they should be performed, and the duration. An example of the action plan is teachers' scheme of work or the syllabus for various school subjects.

A combination of these elements is necessary for bringing about educational change, which for the purpose of this paper, means improving the *quality of education*. Previous research (Knoster 1991, Hord et al 1987) has confirmed that a neglect of any one of these elements or variables in this combination results in emotional fallout, which can arrest the change process at that point. LeRoy and Simpson's model of managing complex change is adapted here to illustrate how the quality of education in Tanzania can be improved.

Figure 1: Elements Necessary for Achieving Quality Education

1. VISION + SKILLS + RESOURCES + INCENTIVES + ACTION PLAN = CHANGE
2. _____ + SKILLS + RESOURCES + INCENTIVES + ACTION PLAN = CONFUSION
3. VISION + _____ + RESOURCES + INCENTIVES + ACTION PLAN = ANXIETY
4. VISION + SKILLS + _____ + INCENTIVES + ACTION PLAN = FRUSTRATION
5. VISION + SKILLS + RESOURCES + _____ + ACTION PLAN = RESISTANCE
6. VISION + SKILLS + RESOURCES + INCENTIVES + _____ = TREADMILL

(Source: Adapted from LeRoy, B. and Simpson, C. (1996))

Figure 1 shows the necessary variables in managing change that will improve the quality of education. Change is assumed to be an additive process in which all the five elements or variables add up towards the expected change. The first combination shows an ideal situation where all the necessary variables are present, and the expected change is achieved. The second set of variables shows that if vision is neglected *confusion* is the resulting emotional fallout. *Anxiety* is the resulting emotional fallout when skills are neglected as shown in the third set. This could be due to lack or inadequate training of teachers. The fourth set of variables shows lack or neglect of resources, which results in *frustration* among teachers and students. The fifth set shows lack of incentives, which results in *resistance*; and finally, the sixth set, in which the action plan is lacking, the result is a *treadmill*.

The language of instruction is a resource. In the case of the Tanzanian education system, unlike those of other countries, Kiswahili is our natural resource. In term of improving the quality of education, Tanzania has a competitive advantage in Kiswahili compared to other countries in Africa which do not have a language in which the majority of school children are proficient. Using this language can immensely improve the quality of education and that of language teaching in the country. There are pedagogical/educational reasons for using Kiswahili as the language of instruction in secondary schools and higher education. These reasons are based on scientific research conducted in different parts of the world. We will examine some of these research findings below.

The first hypothesis is the Interdependence Hypothesis (Cummins 1979), which is based on the premise that the development of the learner's two languages is interdependent. The development

of proficiency in the second language (L2) is partially a function of the level of first language (L1) proficiency at the time when intensive exposure to L2 begins (Cummins 1979, Skutnab Kangas and Toukomaa 1976). In these studies it was found that the initial high level of L1 development makes possible the development of similar levels of competence in L2. However, for children whose L1 skills are less well developed in certain respects, intensive exposure to L2 in the initial grades is likely to impede the continued development of L1. This will in turn exert a limiting effect on the development of L2 (Cummins 1979: 233).

In addition, in more recent literature it has been observed that 'previous learning of literacy-related skills of L1 will predict future learning of these skills in L2' (Baker and N. Hornberger 2001:118). It is further asserted that 'the cognitive academic proficiencies underlying literacy skills (reading and writing) in L1 and L2 are assumed to be interdependent' (Colin Baker and N. Hornberger 2001:131) and that 'experience with either language can theoretically, promote the development of the proficiency underlying both languages, given adequate motivation and exposure to both, either in school or wider environment' (Colin Baker and N. Hornberger 2001: 132). What this implies in the case of learning Kiswahili and English in the Tanzanian education system is that the learning of English could have been based on learners' previous knowledge of Kiswahili. If Kiswahili is made the language of instruction and English is taught well as a subject, as we currently do for the teaching of French, learners could build the foundation for learning English on that knowledge base previously acquired in Kiswahili. Instead of the current situation whereby the two languages compete for the same function and learners end up as losers, the alternative situation could be using Kiswahili as a resource base for acquiring knowledge that will enhance the learning of the second or foreign language, thus creating a win-win situation for both languages.

Acquiring knowledge through a language teachers and learners understand means efficient use of time and resources. These are purely educational gains, but there are hosts of social, cultural and psychological gains; for example, if learners are forbidden to, or even punished for speaking the language of their community, what are the psychological implications? It means that their (or their parents') language is inadequate, and what follows then, is the spontaneous realization that their culture, its images and symbolic representation are of reduced value and significance. All that informs the learner and gives meaning and purpose out of school ceases to be valid. Why do we undermine our children and ourselves? How do we reconcile the language policy and its negative effects on learners' psychology with the educational objective that we read in the previous section? Is it possible to have quality education in a situation in which the education language policy does not allow the use of language of instruction which most learners and teachers understand? How are secondary school teachers supposed to reconcile the contradictory intentions of policy makers?

The second hypothesis is the Comprehensible Input Hypothesis (Krashen 1985) which asserts that it is the comprehensible input factor that is responsible for the success of second language learning programmes, not simply the fact that students are exposed to a great deal of the second language. He goes on to say 'programmes that succeed in teaching English as a second language provide solid subject matter teaching in the first language together with comprehensible input in English. Solid subject matter teaching in the first language provides the learner with 'cognitive academic language proficiency' (CALP), the ability to utilize language to learn and discuss abstract ideas (Krashen 1985). This ability...can be developed via any language and transfers to any other; once the person can use language intellectually; this ability can be utilized in any other language the person subsequently acquires. A good education in the language the learners understand also provides the child with subject matter information. This information, along with the learner's CALP, can be of great help in making English input more comprehensible'.

That is, students gain (instead of losing) on three fronts: first, they learn the subject matter (comprehensible input through the language they understand); secondly, they receive quality teaching in English as a subject by being taught only by the English language specialists; and thirdly, they strengthen their first literacy language, Kiswahili by using it as the medium of learning. This gain rather than loss justifies the switch of the language of instruction in Tanzania from English to Kiswahili.

Another important aspect of quality of education is *relevance* of the curriculum taught to the African situation. For instance: to what degree does the curriculum restore the dignity of the African people and build on the best elements of their culture? To what extent does the curriculum taught and the education organized reduce Africa's dependence on foreign aid, foreign "experts" and expatriates? To what degree does it aim at self-reliance and decreased dependence on the outside? According to Brock-Utne (1988), this way of looking at quality in education in an African context contrasts sharply with the way education in Africa is thought about by international institutions like the World Bank. The World Bank talks about imparting western knowledge and technology and its transfer to Africa and the importance of acquiring the concepts and knowledge produced in the west. In Brock-Utne's view, and I agree with her, if one wants to improve the quality of education in African countries like Tanzania, the most important thing to do is to restore the dignity and quality of teachers. The measures that need to be taken in order to achieve quality of education are as follows:

- *Increase teachers' salaries:* Most teachers in African countries cannot live on their salaries. Consequently, they have to use a lot of time outside class to generate an extra income. This makes them exhausted and gives them little time for preparation of instructional material, for instance.
- *Reduce the workload of the teacher:* Primary school teachers teach forty lessons a week in many African countries.
- *Tighten entry qualifications to teacher education:* It is important to get the best students to opt for the teaching profession. They are building the nation. "Best" here does not solely mean with high intellectual ability, but with good social and manual skills as well.
- *Improve teacher training:* Both the initial training and the in-service training should be improved. Two years will in most cases be too little for the initial training of primary school teachers. In-service training should include seminars with other teachers to work out plans for educational innovation in school and to construct locally based instructional material.
- *Reduce the number of pupils in a class:* The number of pupils should be reduced from the current level of 35-45 to 25-35 in primary school.
- *Introduce free or at least subsidized school meals* for both teachers and pupils. (Adapted from Brock-Utne, 1988: 21)

3.1 The Role of Educators

Educators do not agree on the issue of language of instruction, but this should not be a problem. Different educators hold different views on many issues and this takes us back to what was said in the introduction that education, and especially quality education, may mean different things for different communities or individuals. But what is important is to agree on who we are, where we are, where we want to go or be, and what we need in order to get there. Education is a process that facilitates our transformation from where we are to where we want to be. The language that is understood by most of us is a tool through which we can dialogue, discuss,

inquire, debate, critically evaluate, assess, and understand each other in the process of transforming ourselves.

If it is education, then let us teach it in the language that most learners and teachers understand. If it is English language then let us talk about how best to teach English, and assign this work to those who are trained to teach it. We can then assess and evaluate its teaching and focus on problems and challenges that teachers and learners face in the process of teaching and learning English. We can also address how those problems and challenges can be overcome. We can assess because we know who has been given the responsibility to teach English language, their capacity, and how much resources they have at their disposal to teach the language. By so doing, the little English that the learners will be exposed to will be quality English, and after some time it will be possible to prepare English language teaching specialists from among our own learners. Using English as the language of instruction does not solve the problem of English language teaching because what we are doing is to assign the role of English language teaching to all post primary school teachers irrespective of whether they are proficient in English. If we understand these issues, we are likely to succeed in improving the quality of education.

3.2 The Role of Students

Students have a role as well; they need to agitate for quality education through the language most of them understand so as to avoid chances of being misunderstood. Non-Governmental Organisations such as HakiElimu have been addressing the issue of quality education, and I think they have set a good example on that score. In this era of liberalized education, with learners coming from different educational backgrounds, one is not sure if those who have studied in English medium primary schools would see the importance of switching to the language of instruction that most learners understand.

My personal view is that when more and more learners receive quality education through the language most of them understand then the situation will be beneficial to all because we will all understand one another better. In other words, those who received more education should be willing to give more since by so doing what we know is not diminished but enriched. (We do not get more out of life by wishing others less). Therefore, whatever the educational background of students may be, they can still agitate together for quality education for the majority who have no means to access it through the use of English language

3.3 The Role of the Government

The government has been talking about education for all. If this is a genuine concern, why is it not in a language that most learners understand? I believe it is high time policy makers to refrain from treating education as a whole and schools in particular as their private property. Policy makers need to read and take into consideration issues that are raised regarding quality of education. Some of the issues raised come out of research findings. When leaders who deal with education matters refuse to take up researched findings one wonders what and where is the basis of their policy decisions.

4. Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to explain what education is and, particularly, quality of education in relation to the language of instruction factor. When it comes to the language of instruction two issues have been misunderstood, namely *teaching English* and *teaching in English*. The paper has also attempted to illustrate that the assumption made by many people in Tanzania on using English as the medium of instruction to give students a chance to learn it is false. Two language

hypotheses, Cummins (1979) language development Interdependence Hypothesis; and Krashen (1985) Comprehensible Input Hypothesis have been used to illustrate why the use of the first literacy language (Kiswahili in Tanzania), a language that the majority of students understand, is an important factor in improving, not only the quality of education, but also the quality of English language as taught by only those who are qualified to teach it. From these hypotheses we can deduce that insisting on using English as the language of instruction in Tanzanian secondary schools and institutions of higher learning does more harm than good towards the provision of quality education as well as language teaching. It is the hope of the author that the paper raises issues for discussion among education stakeholders.

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