

Preservation of local languages-in-education: Why not in Africa?

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This paper will explore the relationship between the language used in education and preservation of culture heritage. It will argue that use of a local language is a right in education as well as necessary for insuring the preservation of human dignity in educational systems. The paper will draw on results of recent studies of language, learning and culture in Africa. The argument will be made that language and culture are intimately related and that the best way of retaining local culture is by using a local language in educational curriculum. School should use and affirm culture in order to assure student's success rather than wipe it over. International development and commercial interests are pressing for English in education, but schooling can be a place to anchor the culture through the language. This language choice could be encouraged by development agencies, which until now have supported the penetration of English into African education. An important component of this strategy should be a wide-scale educational campaign to inform developing communities of how language choice in education can affect personal and economic development. In addition to this, to make any change possible, one would need to question both the causes and the effects of these language and educational policies, at every level, from government officials and policy makers down to the poorest participants in education. Policy makers are in a position to work towards a high quality education for all as part of a more comprehensive right-based approach, what we owe to children in order to achieve social justice in the society and in the world.

The paper will explore how can we encourage the use of local languages in African schools and thereby contribute to the preservation of Africa's cultural heritage and human dignity.