

"Search for Dignity"

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Search for Dignity by implementing African languages in school

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Abstract:

My paper will explore the policies and practices of language choice in education for human dignity. Tanzania made an early choice to use Kiswahili as the language of instruction (LoI) in primary grades. Zanzibar (part of Tanzania) retreated from its Kiswahili LoI policy from Grade 5 in Mathematics and Science subjects in 2014. The rationale behind this change was to decrease dropouts. These dropout rates have been attributed by many researchers to the continued use of a non-contextualized curriculum using a foreign LoI. In Tanzania, as elsewhere in former British colonies in Africa, English language still monopolizes national educational policies and goals. The recent poor results from 'Form Four' examinations are evidence that use of a non-local LoI leads to poor performance (MoEVT, 2013). This paper will critically examine the arguments for considering the use of a local language in education as a right in education. It will explore the reasons behind the lack of acknowledgement of this right in Africa. A central question in this critical examination is whether the change in curriculum in Zanzibar satisfies children's rights to a quality education and inclusive development. The results of this paper will have relevance for researchers examining the synergy between informal and formal learning; language and cultural identity; and rights in education for inclusion. It will also be relevant for frontline workers, researchers and makers of policies concerned with developing inclusionary measures for resisting the processes of exclusion and marginalization impacting on the lives of so many today in the wake of globalization. This paper will elucidate the importance of local curriculum and local language to cultural identity and human dignity to the development of the capacity for achieving national education goals and locally-directed development.