LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION: BARRIERS AND BRIDGES

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ABSTRACT: *This article explores the implementation of Ghana's local language in education policy; how it has been received and practiced in public basic schools, and the major challenges and implications. Through the study, the author highlights critical issues within local education practices that suggest a mismatch between education language policy and classroom practice. It is suggested that one of the primary reasons for the poor performance in schools lies in the oral orientation to classroom practices at the foundation stage at the expense of literate ways of thinking and reasoning and that an emphasis on literacy in the mother tongue at the foundation stage may help to shift the focus on student academic development where it belongs.*

KEYWORDS: Language policy, implementation, literacy, mother tongue, English language.

INTRODUCTION

The choice of languages for education in Africa South of the Sahara in general and Ghana in particular is replete with legacies of the past, mainly the historical experience of colonialism. Most African countries are multilingual. The less multilingual a country is, the easier it has been to develop a national language policy. As Bambose (1991) points out, it is unusual for language policy to be explicit in African societies; instead policy has to be inferred from dispensations made for education. The language of education policy in Ghana has been in operation since the colonial era. Ghanaian language was to be used as the language of learning and teaching at the foundation stage (lower primary level 1-3), with English used thereafter. After independence in 1957, the use of Ghanaian languages as the language of learning and teaching at the lower primary level has had a chequered history (Ansah, 2014). Ghana as a multilingual society is still grappling with which language to use as the language of learning and teaching in the lower primary school.

The current language education policy states that in the first three years of primary education, the Ghanaian language prevalent in the local area is to be used as the medium of instruction, while English is studied as a subject. From primary four, the use of the English language would take over as medium, and the Ghanaian language is studied as a subject. Both these measures can be seen as positive steps to provide a three-year window of opportunity that will prepare pupils for transition to English as a language of learning and teaching in Grade 4. This 'early-exit model' (the end of the use of the local language as language of learning and teaching in primary 3) assumes that teachers themselves know the local language of the area in which they teach, have a good command of the English language, and have adequate knowledge of English-teaching and language acquisition methodologies.

The use of the English language in Education

The English language is not only the language of learning and teaching especially at the upper primary, secondary and tertiary level of education but also the language of text-books (Aina, Ogundele & Olanipekun, 2013). It is through the English language that students access knowledge in other subject areas (Oluwole, 2008). In Ghana, as it is in Nigeria, a credit pass in English is a prerequisite for admission into all tertiary institutions (Iroegbu, 2006). Many local groups recognise the importance of the English language for economic and social mobility and believe it to be one of the most important aspects of schooling (Watson, 2007). Considering the priority given to the English language both internationally and locally, and especially in academic discourse, it is understandable that a successful English-medium education should be regarded as the principal determinant of upward and outward mobility.

The general attitude towards English has been very favourable. Parents indicate that they send their children to school so they will learn to read and write the English language. Education is often equated with literacy in the English language. Andoh- Kumi (1992) notes how in schools, both teachers and learners have very high respect and admiration for those who are able to express themselves fluently in the English language, while teachers and pupils of Ghanaian languages are looked down upon. In tertiary education, the attitude is equally negative towards those who teach or study Ghanaian languages as university subjects. There is no doubt the English language is beneficial. However, there are indications from several studies that learning through a foreign language which is not sufficiently acquired may negatively affect student achievement (Andoh-Kumi, 1992). On the other hand, the use of the local languages reflects pupils' background and can positively influence their educational achievement, especially at the foundation stage.

The use of the local languages in education

Practical opportunities for student-centred learning are made possible through exploratory talk (Barnes, 1976), as informed by a Vygotskyan view of the centrality of language as a social tool for learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Classroom interaction between teacher and learners and among learners is at the heart of the educational process. This requires a language which is meaningful to learners. Rasool and Edwards (2010) point to the findings of research over 30 years which "show beneficial effects" on children's linguistic, cognitive or academic growth if initial schooling is done in their local languages and if it continues to be valued in the educational context. Besides cognitive/linguistic advantages, the transmission of cultural knowledge, and the preservation of indigenous language communities, support education in the local language. UNESCO (2014); Benson (2010); Benson (2004); Spolsky (2004); and Cummins (1993) concur that the use of a language the child is familiar with allows for the transfer of cognitive skills as fluency in the local language facilitates the acquisition of a second and third languages and as such provides a sound basis for multilingualism, a process Lambert (1977) describes as additive bilingualism (the second language is gained as a bonus without detrimental effect on the first language). In contrast, when children begin primary school in a foreign language, such as English, the second language is learned at the expense of local languages in a manner that may result in the learner being at risk of a restricted communicative range in the first language (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1998:29), and indeed, of failing to learn very much at all through inadequate competence in either language which is referred to as subtractive bilingualism (Skutnabb-kangas, 1981).

While there seem to be theoretical and empirical convergence on the value of education in the local language, Pretorius (2015) draws attention to the fact that many of the studies were done in the context of affluent countries in North America where literacy levels in the general population are high, the schooling systems have a strong literate basis, schools tend to be well resourced with print based material, teachers are well trained and qualified and they have high literacy levels. In most of these studies, she notes, children participated in programmes designed to develop both language and literacy skills in their local languages and the dominant language of school. These, she reckons, are factors that often tend to be glossed over when education in the local languages is applied to education in the African context, and as a result, the language-literacy distinction gets overlooked (p. 51). Goldenberg (2008) observes that successful bilingual programmes are ones that promote reading instruction in the local language, which in turn also promotes reading achievement in English. While one might agree with Gibbons (2009) that the quantity and richness of linguistic input that children receive impacts on the richness of their language and literacy development, the strong reliance on oral activities in the classroom that require the repetition and recall of cognitively undemanding information does not serve the learners well. There is the need to ensure that education through the local languages develop vocabulary and comprehension abilities of learners in both oral and literate ways of thinking and reasoning.

An epistemological perspective
How teaching is done conveys a message of what is valued and what counts as learning. Graham (2010) refers to studies from African classrooms which show an oral orientation to education that involves the transmission of information, questions that require set answers relating to content rather than reasoned thinking, choral responses, repetition and rote learning with minimal use of texts. In the absence of extended and elaborate interaction and opportunities for the mediation and construction of knowledge, teaching and learning occur at a literal level as shown in studies in classrooms in Nigeria and Kenya (Abd-Kadir & Hardman 2007, Bamgbose, 2005); Zambia, Malawi and South Africa (Nchindila 2012; Williams 2006); Cameroon (Trudell, 2005), Ghana (Akyeampong, Pryor & Ampiah, 2006). Although this method of teaching is attributed to teachers' lack of proficiency in the English language (Abd-Kadir & Hardman, 2007), this approach to teaching is also pervasive in classrooms where the local languages are used. This alludes to social and cultural perceptions of what counts as learning, which in turn shapes teaching practices. Pryor and Crossouard (2008) concur with Abd-Kadir and Hardman's (2007) suggestion that "teachers often view knowledge as fixed, objective and detached from the learner so that they see it as their role to transmit this knowledge to pupils" (p. 11). Pretorius (2015) observes that in such situations opportunities for children to be exposed to rich linguistic input and the modelling of enquiry and meaning construction are limited as books and literate activities of reading and writing become peripheral. The impression created as a result is that listening in class and chorusing answers is what counts as learning and that books are not really important.

CONTEXT OF STUDY

Language represents a primary means through which people build their awareness, stock of knowledge, and capabilities. In a discussion about the poor performance of students in the 2016 West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), the two main teacher unions, the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) and the National Association of

Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT) pointed out that addressing problems at the basic education level is key to solving the problem of poor performance of students (Bonney, 2016). While recognising the value of research findings that the use of the local language as the language of learning and teaching opens up the world of learning at the foundation stage (Rasool & Edwards, 2010), like Prestorius (2015) and Gibbons (2009), I share the view that simply using a language in the classroom does not make children literate. The strong reliance on oral activities does not orientate children/learners to literacy. If learners cannot access information and learn through the written medium, the opportunity for success in formal education is jeopardised, irrespective of whether the language of learning and teaching is their first or second language. This study therefore examines the educational language policy in Ghana and the relationship between educational language policy and classroom practice at the foundation stage (primary 1 – 3). The study is guided by the following questions:

How is the educational language policy received by teachers in public primary schools?
How is the educational language policy practised in public primary schools?
What are the major implementation challenges of the educational language policy?

METHOD

A case study (Yin, 2009), of teachers on the Bachelor of Basic Education sandwich programme was undertaken. This involved teachers in public primary schools. Teachers in public primary schools were chosen for this study because of the strong support for education through the English language in private schools. Three colleges of education from the northern, middle and southern sectors of Ghana which run the Bachelor of Basic Education sandwich programme with a population of 1,736 students were purposively sampled for the study. This is because students on the programme are classroom teachers and by virtue of their position are implementers of the pedagogical language policy. All teachers on the sandwich programme are Diploma in Basic Education Certificate holders. They are therefore professional teachers who have enrolled on the programme to upgrade themselves. They are affiliated to the colleges of education where they undergo a two year further professional training during basic school holidays. They are awarded Degrees in Basic Education by the University of Cape Coast upon completion of their training programme.

A mixed method approach which involves a descriptive survey and focus group discussions was used to lend breadth and depth to the study and to allow for the triangulation of findings. A descriptive survey that involves collecting data to describe the implementation of the pedagogical language policy allowed access to thoughts, opinions, and attitudes of the population from which the sample was drawn (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister, & Jeanne, 2011; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Focus group discussions encouraged participants to talk freely about their experiences of teaching at the foundation stage and to allow their perspectives to unfold. Through discussions, participants' shared, compared, clarified, extended and reviewed their understanding in the process of co-constructing knowledge (Cousin, 2009).

Contacts were made with the Coordinators of the programme in the 3 colleges of education for their assistance. Participants were approached at the end of regularly scheduled lectures and questionnaires were administered in the classroom. A total of 746 teachers who teach in

the lower primary level (primary 1 to 3) were purposively sampled to participate in the study. Section 'A' of the questionnaire sought information on the demographics of the participants. Sections 'B' consisted of both closed ended and open ended questions that asked participants to tick the appropriate responses and explain their choice of responses. Three focus group discussions comprising 20 participants (two each from the 10 regions of Ghana) were conducted in the 3 colleges to ensure a mix of experiences and to elicit more variation in perspectives. Focus groups were guided by semi-structured interview schedules. The interviews were structured to the extent that each group of interviewees was asked the same questions, and interviewed under the same conditions. They were semi structured to the extent that the researcher was free to probe and explore in depth participants' responses to each of the questions. Group discussions on average lasted between 25 and 35 minutes. Participation was voluntary and respondents' identities remain anonymous. Statistical Package for Service Solution (SPSS) version 20 was used to analyse the quantitative data. The constant comparative method of data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used to analyse qualitative data. Data generated was triangulated to allow for refinement of interpretations and solidification of findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Participants from the 3 colleges were made up of 360 males (48.3%) and 386 females (51.7%) from the 10 regions of Ghana as shown in table 1:

Table 1: Regions in which respondents teach.

	N	%
Ashanti region	120	16.1
Western region	63	8.4
Volta region	141	18.9
Central region	100	13.4
Eastern region	114	15.3
Brong Ahafo region	13	1.7
Northern region	82	11.0
Upper East region	22	2.9
Upper west region	10	1.3
Greater Accra	81	10.9
Total	746	100.0

Most (18.9%) of the teachers were from the Volta region. However, the Ashanti and Eastern regions, which are Twi speaking regions, followed with 16.1% and 15.3% respectively. This accounts for a majority of 31.4% of respondents being teachers in Twi speaking communities. The three northern regions presented 15.2% respondents. However, when respondents were asked to indicate their mother tongue, the majority (46%) checked Twi and 18.6% checked Ewe, the language spoken in the Volta region as shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Mother Tongue (local language) of respondents.

Language	N	%
Ewe	137	18.6
Akan/Twi	346	46.9
Ga	13	1.8
Mampruli	9	1.2
Gurune	14	1.9
Talen	2	.3
Kasem	16	2.2
Buili	16	2.2
Dagare	30	4.1
Brosa	1	.1
Kusaal	21	2.8
Dagbani	27	3.7
Krobo	1	.1
Fante	5	.7
Frafra	6	.8
Ga	1	.1
Bimoba	2	.3
Dagbali	2	.3
Sehwi	1	.1
Sissali	3	.4
Gonja	8	1.1
Komkomba	7	.9
Guan	10	1.4
Kussase	3	.4
Nafaara	1	.1
Dangme	2	.3
Ntrubo	1	.1
Nawuri	1	.1
Bassari	3	.4
Chokosi	4	.5
Dagomba	1	.1
Kotokoli	2	.3
Larteh	1	.1
Sefwi	3	.4
Pantra	1	.1
Ahanta	2	.3
Nzema	6	.8
Bussanga	1	.1
Mamprusi	2	.3
Moar	5	.7
Banda	1	.1
Waale	1	.1
Hausa	1	.1
Sissalin	1	.1
Nanumba	1	.1
Likpakpaln	3	.4
Ada	1	.1
Dangme	8	1.1
Kakye	1	.1
Akuapem	1	.1
Ntumuru	1	.1
Total	737	100.0

Data from Table 1 and Table 2 suggest that teachers from the Volta region (18.9%) whose mother tongue is Ewe (18.6%) tend to stay in the region to teach, while 31.4% out of 47.9% Twi speaking teachers teach in Twi speaking communities. An indication that 17% of Twi speaking teachers teach in non Twi speaking regions. Looking at the regions in which participants teach (Table 1), and their mother tongue (Table 2), one can say that almost half of the teachers teach in regions where the language spoken is different from their native languages. Teachers in the focus groups indicated that they get to "choose the region in which they want to teach, and they are posted to schools in the region". Since only 11 out of the 51 mother tongues spoken by participants (see table 2) are officially recognised and taught in schools, one can say that the majority of teachers are forced to study one of the 11 languages. This explains why only 57% and 55.6% of participants respectively indicated that they could read and write effectively in the language in which they teach.

This implies that one cannot be sure of the level of competence of participants in the language of the locality in which they teach. Moreover, the school system requires learners to study a Ghanaian language up to the basic level (primary 4 to junior secondary school). In the senior secondary school, however, the study of the Ghanaian language is not mandatory, an elective subject. Those who find themselves in teacher training colleges are supposed to study a Ghanaian language in the first year of their three year course, thereafter the study of the Ghanaian language becomes optional, an elective subject. This implies that teachers who do not offer Ghanaian language as an elective subject in the secondary school and in the training colleges after the first year have limited exposure to the language as an academic subject, yet if they find themselves in the classrooms of primary class 1 to 3, they are expected to use the Ghanaian language as the language of learning and teaching. For example, of the 746 participants in this study, only 128 have registered and are studying a Ghanaian language. Yet, they are teachers in primary 1-3 who are supposed to teach through the Ghanaian language. Indeed, details obtained from the Institute of Education of the University of Cape Coast, the examining body of colleges of education throw light on teacher trainees' lack of interest in studying the Ghanaian language. Out of 12,751 second year regular students on the Bachelor of Basic Education Degree programme, only 2,048 (16%) registered to study a Ghanaian language. This implies that the study of Ghanaian languages in schools needs to be reviewed if the local language in education policy is to be implemented effectively.

In focus group interviews, participants indicated that "the head teacher asks whether you can speak the local language of the area before you are assigned to primary 1 to 3 (the foundation stage). One might argue that being able to speak a language does not necessarily mean one is literate in it. Spoken and written languages are different, though related and they serve different purposes. Considering the fact that some of the teachers might have only studied a Ghanaian language up to the basic level and only in the first year of teacher training college, it is not surprising that the majority of participants (78%) rated their level of competence in the Ghanaian language through which they teach, at point 5 on a scale of 1 to 10. This implies an average competence in the language of learning and teaching. The majority of respondents (66%) have been teaching for between one to five years and 20.1% for between six to ten years. Only 14% of participants have been in the classroom for over ten years. The findings of this study are therefore influenced by the experiences of teachers with between 1-5 years

of teaching experience. The substantive findings are discussed in line with the research questions.

How is the educational language policy received by teachers in public primary schools?

All participants acknowledged the value of education in the local language, and recognised the pedagogical and cognitive/linguistic advantages noted by UNESCO (2014), Benson (2010), Benson (2004), Spolsky (2004), and Cummins (1993) of using the local languages as the language of learning and teaching. In focus group interviews, participants explained how the use of the local languages "enabled pupils to acquire concepts quickly and much more easily and relate them to their own experiences". They described the use of the local language as enabling as "pupils feel free to ask questions and participate more in classrooms, making lessons more lively and enjoyable". Some of the participants however pointed out that the Ghanaian language they speak is not authentic. "We have lived in cosmopolitan cities all our lives and we cannot speak our mother tongue very well." "There is a gap between the Ghanaian language we speak and what we are expected to use to teach" some explained. They therefore find themselves "wanting in the use of the Ghanaian language". Others talked about engaging "facilitators" to put their ideas across. While teachers acknowledged the value of using the local language in initial schooling, they acknowledged they fall short of delivering effectively in the local language.

How is the educational language policy practised in public primary schools?

From all indications, teachers are familiar with the language policy. However, only 13.9% of respondents say they use the local language in teaching. Twelve percent say they use English language in teaching and the majority (74.3%) use both the Ghanaian language and the English language in teaching. This is not surprising considering that participants acknowledge their lack of competence in the Ghanaian language. Martin-Jones (1995) observes the use of two languages side by side or code switching/code mixing as a characteristic of bilingual discourse of classrooms where there is a considerable disparity between the respective proficiencies of the teacher and students in the language of learning and teaching. However, he notes that teachers themselves view code switching negatively, as a wholly compensatory strategy, rather than as a creative response to communicative and learning needs within the classroom. In focus group interviews, participants talked about the language and literacy lesson which involves "reading a big picture book in the vernacular and getting learners to repeat after the teacher". The vernacular is subsequently translated into English. This may have its advantages, but could also be fraught with problems.

Goldenberg (2008) points to the transferability of reading skills from the native language to the second or foreign language but notes that successful additive bilingual programmes are ones that promote reading instruction in the local language, which in turn also promotes reading achievement in English. Second language reading researchers favour this approach. Furthermore, it seems educationally sound to begin from the known to the unknown. That is, to introduce reading in the native language, the language children know best, before providing instruction in English. Since children have oral comprehension and speaking abilities in their native language, reading becomes meaningful and interesting if teachers have a high level of commitment to addressing their needs and adopt the right teaching and learning strategies such as "whole word", "phonic", "syllabic", "sentence, and "story methods". For example, at the picture-reading stage, children should be given opportunities

to express their views on what the pictures convey. They should be encouraged to support their opinions, relate events to what they know, predict what is likely to happen as a sequel to the events depicted in the picture. After the text has been read, the teacher can engage children in discussions to help them clarify their thoughts and summarize the reading. The use of the local languages mainly for oral interactions in the classroom that require the repetition and recall of cognitively undemanding information does not serve the children/learners well (Gibbons, 2009). The four strategies of questioning, predicting, clarifying and summarising can be encouraged irrespective of the stage and the length of material involved; a two-sentence, single paragraph, or whole story texts. These strategies can be taught in the local languages and must be continued when children begin to read English.

In view of participants' preference to code switch/code mix, the study sought to find out differences between genders in relation to this preference.

Table 3: Differences in teacher language preference based on gender.

Gender	M	SD	*T*	Df	*P*
Male	2.58	.718	-1.844	712.16	.066
Female	2.67	.651			

The descriptive results show that the mean value of the male respondents (2.58) is less than the mean value (2.67) of the female respondents. This indicates that female respondents prefer to use both the English language and Ghanaian language to teach at the primary level than their male respondents. To determine whether the differences between the male and female respondents are statistically significant, an independent sample t-test was run. Levene' test of homogeneity (F = 10.286, p = .001) showed that equal variances was not assumed for the distribution between the genders. The result showed that there is no statistically significant difference between the male respondents (mean = 2.58, SD = .718) and the female respondents' preference for the use of both English language and Ghanaian language in teaching at the foundation level (mean = 2.67, .651), *t* (712.16) = -1.844, *p* = .066; (two tailed). It can therefore be concluded that both male and female respondents prefer the use of both English and the Ghanaian language in teaching at the foundation level. The study further sought to find out differences in respondents' language preference in terms of teaching experience as seen in table 4.

Table 4: Differences in teacher language preference based on teaching experience.

Nature of Experience	M	SD	*T*	Df	*P*
More experienced	2.80	.410	1.896	22.17	.071
Less experienced	2.62	.692			

The descriptive results show that there is a marginal difference in the mean values between experienced, participants with more than 5 years teaching experience (mean = 2.80) and the less experienced, participants with between 1 and 5 years teaching experience (mean = 2.62) respondents. Based on the means, it can be said that the more experienced teachers prefer to use both English and Ghanaian languages in teaching at the foundation level. In order to determine if the difference is statistically significant, an independent sample *t*-test was run. The levene' test (F = 7.331, p = .007) showed that equal variances between the more experienced and the less experienced was not assumed. The results show that there is no statistically significant difference between the more experienced teachers (mean = 2.80, SD = .410) and the less experienced teachers in terms of their preference in using both Ghanaian language and the English language in teaching at the foundation level (mean = 2.62, SD = .692); *t* (22.17) = 1.896, p = .071, (two tailed). It can be concluded that both the more experienced and the less experienced teachers equally prefer to use the English language and Ghanaian languages in teaching at the foundation level. These findings imply that the local language educational policy is not being implemented by teachers in the lower primary classrooms (foundation stage). If teachers use both the Ghanaian and English language in teaching as they claim, then it is necessary for them to gain an understanding of processes by which children become competent in a second language so that they can play their part in the development of good practice in the area of bilingual learning.

Taking into consideration the 51 native languages spoken by the sample of 746 respondents, and the fact that the 11 languages officially recognised and studied at the colleges of education are mandatory only in the first year, not to mention that these languages are also mandatory only at the basic school level, and optional at the secondary school level, and the fact that the majority of teachers grew up in cosmopolitan areas and therefore their level of competence in the mother tongue cannot be described as high, one can anticipate difficulties in the effective use of the local languages as a teaching medium. There is evidence to suggest that where two languages are taught incompetently or partially, it hampers and impairs the learning process. The second language is learned at the expense of the local language in a 'subtractive manner' (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1998), that puts the learner at risk of a restricted communicative range in the first language and of failing to learn very much at all through inadequate competence in either language (Skutnabb-kangas, 1981).

The findings show that the language policy is not being properly implemented. But one might ask whether the policy adequately specify what, besides use of the Ghanaian or English

language "proper implementation" entails? Rather than assume that educating the child in the mother tongue drives school achievement, what we need to do is to specify more fully what determines success in the educational context, and then consider how the mother tongue in this context contributes to success, and how this can be maximised within the constraints of our educational context. Although there is a fundamental truth to the assumption that the use of a mother tongue as the language of learning and teaching opens up the world of learning, this implies becoming literate in the mother tongue. This distinction is important because although the implementation of a local language policy may initially improve learning and although oral interaction in the mother tongue can support the development of literate skills, ultimately children need to be immersed in reading and writing activities in order to become literate. Simply using a language in the classroom does not make children literate whether in a mother tongue or in a second language if classroom activities do not engender literacy. Literacy does not derive from everyday oral proficiency in a language. Literacy emerges from focussing on and discussing texts, and the assigning of reading and writing activities in class and for homework. This implies teachers who are competent in the language of learning and teaching. It is exactly these practices and resources that are typically lacking in our public primary schools and classrooms.

What are the major implementation challenges of the educational language policy?
The use of the mother tongue means in multilingual societies it requires resources in terms of teacher training in the various mother tongues, developing grammars, orthographies, producing and translating textbooks and supplementary materials. As the two main teacher unions in Ghana, the GNAT and NAGRAT note, there is the need to train and retrain teachers so they can deliver (Bonney, 2016). Building the capacity of teachers is seen as key to educational success. If we are to maintain the use of the mother tongue as the language of learning and teaching at the foundation stage, then the study of the local languages in schools needs to be reviewed. Teaching of and through the mother tongue is a task for which teacher training should be concerned with. The educational language policy requires teachers who can teach through the local languages at the foundation stage, and thus concerns should be directly related to teacher language proficiency in the local languages to meet this need. This implies obvious consequences with regard to training and posting of teachers to schools. Any policy, however educationally and pedagogically sound, is likely to fail if classroom teachers and supervisors do not give of their best. It has often been pointed out that though most private schools do not adhere to the educational language policy, their products are academically superior to those in public schools. The disparity in the level of achievement of these two groups of learners might be attributed to the differences in the level of commitment and enthusiasm with which teachers and supervisors in the two types of schools approach their work.

The provision of teaching and learning materials and improving the school environment are conditions that will drive success. However, the lack of textbooks and reading materials in the Ghanaian languages and in the English language was considered a major impediment by 89% and 74% of participants respectively. In such classrooms there is likely to be a strong reliance on oral activities. The teachers' words become authoritative sources of learning, whole class chorusing becomes the means of signalling that learning is happening (Pryor & Crossouard, 2008; Abd-Kadir & Hardman, 2007), literacy activities become almost

peripheral and pupils do not orientate to literacy or value the role of the printed word in learning and knowledge acquisition. As Prestorius (2015), Madiba (2012), and Gibbons (2009) observe, in successful contemporary education systems, there is a strong orientation to literacy and the development of skilled reading is seen as the means by which children become independent learners, mediated by teachers.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion drawn from this study is that teachers are familiar with the language policy but it is not being properly implemented. It is not being properly implemented because teachers' level of competence in the local languages is low, and as such, they are not able to deliver effectively. If teachers feel comfortable code switching/code mixing, this raises questions around teacher proficiency in these languages. The focus on an oral orientation to teaching and learning renders literate activities of reading and writing peripheral. A local language policy or an English language policy that focuses on literacy development will serve children/learners better than one that relies on the use of the local language or the English language as language of learning and teaching in and of itself. Secondly, unless pupils have access to print based resources in the language of learning and teaching and teachers use these resources in daily classroom activities, the language/s used is/are unlikely to lead to meaningful educational achievement. The strongest determinant of success at school worldwide is literacy in whatever language schooling is done. Any language in education policy needs to make early reading and writing development the core component of its programme. This implies good practice and quality teaching that orientate learners to literate ways of thinking and reasoning to make it successful; investment in the development of literature, texts, instructional materials at all primary levels; and above all professionally competent and well-trained teachers to close the gap between policy rhetoric and classroom reality. Discussions about the role of language in education should thus be articulated in terms of how literacy can best be developed within the framework of existing language policy, and within the context of financial constraints.

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