

Review Article

## The Motivation, Structure and Enforcement of the School Language Policy: Use of Kiswahili language within the school setting

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**Abstract:** Kiswahili is a very important language in Kenya. It is both a national and official language in the republic of Kenya. However, there are concerns that the poor performance in Kiswahili in national examinations is partially attributed to the laxity in the enforcement of the school language policy. The objective of the study was to assess how the motivation, structure and enforcement of the school language policy impacts on the use of Kiswahili within the school setting. The study was conducted in 30 out of 300 public secondary schools found in Bungoma County. The respondents were 360 form three students, 90 teachers of Kiswahili and 30 principals. Stratified, purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to sample the target groups. The questionnaire, FGD guide and document analysis guide were used to collect data. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics which included the use of frequencies, percentages and narrations. The study established that the sampled schools had language policy in place although it varied. Some schools had structured language policy while others had unstructured language policy. It was found out that motivation and punishment had an impact on the enforcement of school language policy. In view of the above findings, it was recommended all teachers regardless of the subject they teach should participate in the enforcement of the school language policy. The school administrators should ensure that their respective language policies should be fully enforced in order to meet its intended purpose and the school language policies should be well structured. It is hoped the finding of this study would help MOEST, principals of schools and teachers in formulating school language policy that aim at enhancing students achievements in languages offered in the curriculum.

**Keywords:** Motivation, Structure, Enforcement, Language Policy, School Setting.

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Chilora (2008) observes that the new school language policy adopted in Malawi in 1968 in Malawi made particular influence on the education system. For example, programmes for training teachers in the use of Chichewa as a medium of instruction were developed and implemented in all teachers training institutions. Additionally, attempts were also made to standardize the orthography of Chichewa. In 1989, the government approved that all pupils books for grades 1 to 4, except English, should be written in Chichewa. Mchazime (1996) reports that the teachers' guides were, however, written in English. Consequently, a problem was created by this new language policy. This is because it was being implemented by some teachers who could not speak Chichewa fluently for it was not their vernacular language. Ministry of Education (1996) reports that most of such teachers tended to present education in a neighborhood language aside from Chichewa which they had been familiar with and only

switched to Chichewa when the ministry of education officers entered their classroom.

Suzanne (2002) observes that the truth that maximum languages are unwritten, not identified officially, restrained to neighborhood network and home capabilities, and spoken through very small corporations of humans displays the balance of strength within the global linguistic market. She says that language policy is not an independent component and what appears to be ostensibly the same policy may also lead to different effects, relying at the state of affairs wherein it operates. Weak linkages among policy and planning render many policies useless. Anyways, policies have negligible impact on home use, which is essential for the continued natural transmission of endangered languages.

Nyongesa (2011) revealed in his findings that language policy is a contributing factor to performance

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in Kiswahili. In schools where Kiswahili was spoken three days in a week, performance was better in Kiswahili, than in mixed schools where it was restricted to only once a week. However, most of the girls were comfortable with their school language policy where it was spoken once in a week and performed better than their counter parts in the mixed schools. Regardless of the above finding, is Kiswahili correctly used? Does the number of days allocated for speaking Kiswahili influence its use in schools?

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Kiswahili was reaffirmed as the national language of the republic of Kenya and also declared an official language of the republic of Kenya alongside English (GOK, 2010). After becoming a co-official language, the effect of this new status on its use remains unknown. Omulando (2002) concludes that there is a disconnect between the national language policy and the practice at school. Kiswahili is a very important language. It is the most international of all the indigenous language of Africa. It is taught as a compulsory subject in all Kenyan schools. It is a key determinant to joining many careers after secondary education. It is widely used in the media, religion and politics. According to KIE (2007) the objectives of secondary school Kiswahili curriculum in Kenya are to enable the learners achieve a lasting ability to listen, speak, read and write in Kiswahili. Timammy and Odour (2016) opine that despite the fact that both English and Kiswahili are official languages in Kenya and also compulsory and examinable subjects, English is accorded higher status than Kiswahili. They reported that learners in many schools were penalized for speaking Kiswahili or mother tongue while in school.

### 1.3 Objective of the Study

To assess how the motivation, structure and enforcement of the school language policy impacts on the use of Kiswahili within the school setting.

### 1.4 Research Question

How do motivation, structure and enforcement of school language policy impact on the use of Kiswahili within a school setting?

## 2.0 PHILOSOPHICAL ORIENTATION

Philosophical stand is actually what determines the methodology to be used in research. The philosophical foundation deals with both epistemology and ontology. Epistemology is about issues having to do with the creation and dissemination of knowledge in particular areas of inquiries (Markosian (2019). On the other hand ontology refers to the nature of knowledge. The current study employed post positivist approach. Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011) assert that post positivist approach entails using multiple methods and that reality can never be fully apprehended but only approximated. Deena, R. & Ellan K. R. (2020), observe that post positivism relies on multiple methods as a way of

capturing as much reality as possible. The study has a theory triangulation whereby there are three complimentary theories advanced. This is in tandem with the post positivist paradigm. According to Creswell, J. W. & Plano, V. L. C. (2011), research should happen in a natural setting. In this case, the participants participated in a natural setting without manipulation. The study also used three different tools, namely: questionnaire, Focused group discussion guide and document analysis to collect data. The mixed approach qualified the study to adopt post positivism in order to explain the researcher's position and arguments in the study.

### 2.1 Target Population

The target population consisted of 16,588 from three students, 600 teachers of Kiswahili and 300 principals in Bungoma County. The principals were sampled for the study because of being the accounting officers and implementers of government policy at the school level. The teachers were selected because they are the enforcers of the language policy. The students were a suitable sample because they are targeted for enforcement of language policy.

**Table-2.1 Target Population**

| Code | Target Group       | Target Population |
|------|--------------------|-------------------|
| A    | Principals         | 300               |
| B    | Kiswahili teachers | 600               |
| C    | Students           | 16,588            |
|      | <b>Total</b>       | <b>17,488</b>     |

Source: CDE's office, Bungoma County (2017)

### 2.2 Ethical Consideration

A permit was sought from MOEST upon production of a letter from the Department of CIEM, Moi University, to allow the researcher proceed with research. The researcher treated the findings with confidentiality. Any imperative ethical aspect of any study involving the participation of human beings is that of informed consent, (Kvale, 2004). In this case therefore, the respondents who participated were informed of the main goal of the intended study and their consent obtained prior to conducting the research. They therefore had a right to withdraw at any time because it was completely voluntary. In ensuring confidentiality, the names of the respondents were not were not disclosed.

## 3.0 FINDINGS OF THE RESULTS

The objective sought to establish the motivation, structure and enforcement of the school language policy and its impact on the use of Kiswahili within the school setting. The teachers responses are presented in the following sections:-

### 3.1 Motivation for Observing the School Language Policy

In line with the students observation of the language policy in the first objective the study went

further to establish whether there was any motivational factors behind the adherence to the school language policy. From the qualitative data obtained from the

open question in the teachers' questionnaire the researcher was able to transform the data into quantitative data. The finding is presented in Table 1.

**Table-1: Motivation for Observing School Language Policy**

| Presence of language policy in schools | Frequency | Percent      |
|----------------------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Yes                                    | 60        | 66.7         |
| No                                     | 30        | 33.3         |
| Not sure                               | 0         | 0.0          |
| <b>Total</b>                           | <b>90</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

Findings in Table 1 indicated that majority of the schools as indicated by 60 (66.7%) teachers agreed that students were motivated in order to adhere to the school language policy. On the contrary, a few school as indicated by 30 (33.3%) showed that they did not motivate learners to participate actively in the language policy of the school. This findings show that when students were motivated they will abide by the school language policy.

**3.2. Forms of Motivation to Ensure Development of School Language Policy**

Following the teachers of Kiswahili responses which showed that there was motivation to students who observed the school language policy, the study went further to inquire on the varied forms of motivation that were used. Teachers of Kiswahili outlined different ways of motivating students who observed the school language policy. This included clapping for them on assembly, giving them presents, getting a chance of being elected as a member of the students council, going out on trips and visiting recreational centers The following excerpts present the various views of the teachers of Kiswahili:-

Teacher 39 from school 15 said that they give a wide range of gifts to students. This is indicated in the following excerpt:- The school gives student presents/gifts for obeying the school language policy. The presents includes captivating story books, revision material in English or Kiswahili subjects, pens and exercise books, counter books, badges and bread.

Further sentiments were made by teacher 32 from school 12 who said that they clap for the best student who complies with the school language policy. This is what he said:- Upon effectively complying with the school language policy the teacher in charge requests the other students to clap for the student as a show of appreciation. Another form of motivation was giving priority to students during elections. Teacher 75 from school 26 had this to say in regard to this motivation:-

Priority is given to those students who observed the school language policy during the election of the students' council. The school has reserved special positions such as the library secretary, secretary in charge of academic and the chief liaison officer to

students who comply 100% to the school language policy. This has gone a long way in enhancing the usage of English and Kiswahili in our school.

Teacher 11 from school 4 said that they rank classes and dormitory in order to appreciate the best complying students in those dormitories. The following excerpt explains this form of motivation:-

We rank dormitories in our school. Classes are also ranked in relation to how well they participate in observing the school language policy. After a specified period of time they are rewarded accordingly. This may include visiting educational centers outside school such as the national library, county assemblies and also university libraries at Kibabii university, Masinde Muliro university and Moi university.

Another form of motivation entailed students being taken for symposia in the neighboring schools as reported by teacher 16 from school 6:- We often take students for symposiums in English and Kiswahili to the neighboring schools in order to make them comply more and enhance the school language policy. We also offer recreational trips to students who strictly observe the school language policies, the best debaters and presenters in news reading on assembly to places like Mt. Elgon game reserve and Lake Victoria.

**3.3 Teachers Observation of the Language Policy**

An attempt was made to establish teachers' observation of the language policy. The responses are indicated in Table 2.

**Table-2: Kiswahili Teachers Responses**

|            | F         | %         |
|------------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Yes</b> | <b>36</b> | <b>40</b> |
| <b>No</b>  | <b>54</b> | <b>60</b> |

Finding in Table 2 indicated that majority of the schools 54 (60%) as indicated by the teachers, did not have teachers observing the language policy.

**3.4 Reasons for Teacher Failure to Observe School Language Policy**

Teachers of Kiswahili gave varied reasons for failure to adhere to the language policy. These reasons are indicated in the following excerpts:-

Teacher 77 from school 26 revealed; we don't have a structured language policy making us not to adhere to the language policy. Such non-inclusion implies that teachers indeed have contributed to the failure of the implementation of the language policy because of non-participation.

Teacher 50 from school 18 reported; sincerely speaking I don't know the school language policy. I arrived in the school just a month ago and I haven't been oriented on the school language policy. Its not written anywhere. So that explains my failure to adhere to the policy. I need time to acquaint myself to the policy. Later on I will be able to apply the policy into practice.

Teacher 19 from school 7 cited the following reason; There is a mismatch between the national language policy and the local school policy. This confusion has confounded the problem of my participation to this policy. For instance whereas the national policy stipulates that both English and Kiswahili are official languages in Kenya and can be used on the same pedestal during official functions of the school, English has been given an upper hand. This makes it difficult for some of us to participate effectively.

Teacher 7 from school 3 said that;- I have a negative attitude that impacts my participation in the language policy. Am poor in preparation thus making me not participate effectively in the policy.

### **3.5 Reasons for Teacher Adherences to Observe School Language Policy**

Teachers of Kiswahili reported that when teachers observe the language policy, they act as role models to the students. They emphasized that teachers should lead by example. Some of them reported that they are part of the team that formulated the school language policies in their respective schools. They also alluded to the fact that they are key in enforcing the school language policies in their schools

The following excerpts explain why teachers observed the language policy;

Teacher 89 from school 30 reported that;- I'm part of the success in the development and achievement of the language in my school. Therefore there is need to lead by example.

Teacher 42 from school 15 said;-Policies are important because they help a school establish rules and procedures and create standards of quality for learning and safety, as well as expectations and accountability. Without these, schools would lack the structure and function necessary to provide the educational needs of students.

Teacher 75 from school 26 had to say that:-

Students, teachers and staff members deserve to feel physically and psychologically secure in their environment. In order to create this environment policies are supposed to be followed by all especially the people behind the formulation.

### **3.6. Other Subject Teachers' Positive Comments on School Language Policy**

Teachers of Kiswahili reported that some of their colleagues who do not teach languages make positive comments about the school language policies. Some of the excerpts are as follows:-

Teacher 32 from school 12 reported that:-

Some non-language teachers always remark in staff meetings that school language policies are important because they help the school to establish rules and procedures and create standards of quality for learning. Ultimately, the language policies are necessary to the success of the schools.

Teacher 15 from school 6 indicates that:-

Some of the colleagues who do not teach languages are very good at supporting the school language policy. Some normally argue out about the importance of language policies in schools. They underscore the importance of language especially English in making students comprehend other subjects. They say that unless students improve in languages, they will not perform well in other subjects.

### **3.7 Other Subject Teachers' Negative Comments on School Language Policy**

Teachers of Kiswahili reported some teachers who do not teach languages make very sweeping statements about the school language policies. Some of the negative comments include issues like Kiswahili language is neither important nor hard for one to learn. Others say that they never had a language policy in schools that they attended yet they passed highly in languages. Some say that some students are very bright and they can still pass without observing the school language policies. Some comment that Mathematics does not require a lot of English nor Kiswahili. It was also reported that some of the teachers openly say that language policy Is meant for language teachers and enforcing it is none of their business for the students.

### **3.8 Enforcement of Language Policy in School**

An attempt was made to establish how the language policy was enforced and the responses are indicated in the following excerpts. Enforcement was a challenge in schools that did not have a structured language policy. The following excerpt from a teacher who was a teacher of Kiswahili and head of department pointed out the following:-

In my school where am the HOD and a key player in terms of enforcing the school language policy

I can say that there is no strict enforcement of the language policy. This is because the policy is informal and there are no basic guidelines or principles guiding the use of language in the school. The policy is just by word of mouth. I can only say that there is poor use of both Kiswahili and English to the extent that there is confusion. We lack motivation for teachers and students thus making enforcement to be theoretical and not practical. This has arisen from the lack of supervision. You can easily hear both teachers and students conversing in mother tongue because almost all of them come from the same region. The school administration has no elaborate plans for the enforcement of the policy. This has greatly impacted on the use of languages in the school.

**3.9 Effectiveness of the School Language Policy**

Teachers were asked to rate the effectiveness of the enforcement of the language policy and their responses are indicated in Table 3.

**Table-3: Effectiveness in the Enforcement of the School Language Policy**

|     | F  | %  |
|-----|----|----|
| Yes | 36 | 40 |
| No  | 54 | 60 |

Table 3. Indicates that majority of the teacher 54 (60%) were not effective in the enforcement of the school language policy. On the other hand a few 36 (40%) teachers were effective in the enforcement of the school language policy. This implies the purposes of the school language policy may not be maximally be met.

**3.10 Reasons for Effectiveness**

Among the reasons given for the effective enforcement was the cooperation among the various key participants in the school. 47 teachers reported that

their students were very cooperative in observing the school language policy. They reported that their students were disciplined and majority of them followed the school rules promptly. They also indicated that most students did not share their mother tongue because they were drawn from across the counties. 15 teachers reported that they involved their students in the formulation of their respective language policies. Teacher 10 from school 4 stated the following:-In our school all the people behind the formulation of the policy including the school administration, students, teaching work in harmony thus makes the enforcement effective.

Teacher 22 from school 8 cited the goodwill of students and their will to perform well. This is what she stated:- The students have the goodwill and the will to perform well. This is why the language policy is effectively being handled here in school. The students are willing to learn and better themselves by adopting the language policy.

**3.11 Reasons for Ineffectiveness**

Most teachers blamed the school administration for the ineffectiveness in enforcing the school language policy. They said that they had relaxed rules On the enforcement of the policy. Some reported that punishment given was not consistent hence did not yield good results. It was reported that there were cases of double standard in administering punishment in some schools. Non language teachers did not bother in helping to encourage students to observe the school language policy.

**3.12 School Language Policy and Usage of Kiswahili**

Teachers were asked to indicate the impact of school language policy and the usage of Kiswahili in school. The responses are indicated in Table 4.

**Table-4: School Language Policy and Usage of Kiswahili**

|                                                                                                        | SD |      | D  |      | N |     | A  |      | SA |      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|------|----|------|---|-----|----|------|----|------|
|                                                                                                        | F  | %    | F  | %    | F | %   | F  | %    | F  | %    |
| Students make grammar mistakes whenever they speak Kiswahili while in school                           | 29 | 32.2 | 25 | 27.8 | 4 | 4.4 | 12 | 13.3 | 20 | 22.2 |
| The school language policy practice helps to improve the use of Kiswahili in school                    | 41 | 45.6 | 35 | 38.9 | 2 | 2.2 | 8  | 8.9  | 4  | 4.4  |
| Students choose and use Kiswahili vocabulary appropriately when speaking it on a day set for Kiswahili | 29 | 32.2 | 35 | 38.9 | 8 | 8.9 | 10 | 11.1 | 8  | 8.9  |
| Students speak sheng instead of Kiswahili while in school                                              | 7  | 7.8  | 5  | 5.6  | 7 | 7.8 | 31 | 34.4 | 40 | 44.4 |
| Teachers make negative comments about the school language policy                                       | 12 | 13.3 | 15 | 16.7 | 7 | 7.8 | 25 | 27.8 | 31 | 34.4 |
| Students speak fluent Kiswahili while in school                                                        | 29 | 32.2 | 25 | 27.8 | 4 | 4.4 | 12 | 13.3 | 20 | 22.2 |

Table 4. indicates that majority of teachers 54 (60%) indicated that students did not make grammatical mistakes whenever they speak Kiswahili while in school while 32 (35.5%) agreed. This implies that perhaps the language policy had an impact on the usage of Kiswahili. Further information indicated that, majority of the teachers 76 (84.5%) disagreed that the

school language policy practice helps to improve the use of Kiswahili in school while a few agreed 12 (13.3%). Table 4. further showed that, majority of the teachers 64 (71.1%) disagreed that, students choose and use Kiswahili vocabulary appropriately when speaking it on a day set for Kiswahili, while a few 18 (20%) agreed. Further information showed that, majority of

the teachers 71 (78.8%) agreed that, students speak sheng instead of Kiswahili while in school, while a few 12 (13.4%) disagreed. Lastly information in Table 4.9 indicated a majority of teachers 56 (62.2%) agreed that, teachers make negative comments about the school language policy, while a few 27 (30%) disagreed. These findings indicate that school language policy had a varied impact on usage of Kiswahili.

### 3.13 Impact of motivation

According to teachers of Kiswahili, motivation drives the learners to like the school language policy and therefore improves in the daily use of languages. They reported that motivation leads to improved results in all the curricular and co-curricular activities. However, lack of consistency in motivation, demotivates the students hence poor use of Kiswahili. They reported that motivation creates competition hence good performance. Through motivation, students correct each other hence good use of language. It makes student become sensitive when speaking hence improvement in Kiswahili. Structured ways of motivation creates interests in the students and therefore better use of Kiswahili. Most teachers reported that intrinsic motivation was the best as compared to extrinsic motivation. They said that poor enforcement of the school language policy leads to poor use of languages in schools. They blamed the school administration for not doing the best in enforcing the school language policy. They said that the burden of enforcement was mainly done by few people, especially language teachers.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

The study revealed that motivation contributed to significant good use of Kiswahili. The structure of the school language policy in place had a lot of impact on the use of Kiswahili. For example, enforcement was more effective in schools that had structured language policy as compared to enforcement in schools where the language policy was unstructured. Motivation, structure and enforcement of school language policies have great impact on the use of Kiswahili in secondary schools. Lack of motivation negatively affects the enforcement of the school language policy and the use of Kiswahili. Structured school language policy is more significant as compared to unstructured school language policy.

## 5.0 POLICY RECOMMENDATION

The school language policy should be well structured and both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation should be used to enforce it in order to realize its effect on the use of Kiswahili.

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