

## CHAPTER SIX

# “THE IDEA WAS THAT THOSE WHO WERE TRAINED NEEDED TO TEACH OTHERS”: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE 2014 ZAMBIAN LANGUAGE OF INITIAL LITERACY POLICY CHANGE

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### 1. Introduction

Just before the opening of the school calendar in January 2014, the Zambian government announced a change in language in education policy from English to using a designated official regional Zambian language as the medium of instruction from nursery school to grade 4. Taking this language in education policy change in Zambia as a point of departure, this chapter is a critical reflection on language policy pronouncements in Zambia and in Africa generally.

We trace the history of contradictions and contestations surrounding language education policies in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) through missionaries, the British South Africa Company, the British Colonial Office and the emergent independent African government administrations. Thereafter, we use observation and interview data from teacher training college lecturers, primary and secondary school teachers of Zambian languages, and Zambian languages subject experts to evaluate the 2014 policy shift. The pedagogical implications of the language policy change are analysed considering language zoning, the monolingual/monoglot ideologies, teacher preparedness, material availability, and the apparent gap between the government-endorsed standard Zambian languages and varieties of the same language and the ‘unofficial’ languages spoken by teachers and learners in multilingual practices. We conclude that, although well-intentioned, the new policy is unlikely to yield the required results of promoting early literacy because it has been implemented before teachers were trained, before material was put in place and it ignored the multilingual dispensations in place.

In terms of classroom language practices, the new policy is not too different from those that have failed in the past in terms of its rigidity in application and in insisting on standard versions of Zambian languages when few teachers and learners speak them. Following Banda and Mwanza (2017), we argue that there is a gap between the official monoglossic ideology, which is reminiscent of colonial language ideology, and the multilingual (language) practices of Zambian learners. The chapter shows that contemporary language education policy shifts in Zambia and in Africa generally in reality mask underlying colonial language ideologies that seek to exclude the majority of African languages as legitimate languages of education. The colonial monoglot ideologies also promote concepts such as ‘mother tongue’ and ‘additive bilingualism’ in singular and autonomous language terms.

Banda (2010) criticises the distorting effects, in multilingual contexts of Africa, of concepts and language education policies designed for monolingual societies in Europe or elsewhere. These are (mis)applied in multilingual education contexts of Africa and to learners whose everyday language practices typically involve using more than one language or language blends. These language ideologies are designed to devalue or erase translanguaging and/or heteroglossia as a legitimate linguistic practice for language in education in multilingual and urbanising African societies. This leads to learners being *muted*, which according to Banda (2003) refers to multilingual learners having no linguistic form to express themselves due to the monolingual/monoglot (English) policy governing classroom language practices.

As stated earlier, at the beginning of 2014 the Zambian government announced that the language of instruction from nursery to grade 4 would be one of the seven zoned official Zambian languages. From grade 5 onwards, English would be the language of instruction up to university. It must be mentioned without fear of contradiction that the 2014 policy framework is not a new policy. The use of a Zambian language up to the fourth grade existed during the time of the missionaries. The current policy recommendation can be viewed as a revitalisation of the missionaries' policy.

However, looking at the changes and lack of consistency in policy formulation and implementation in Zambia, a number of questions can be asked about the 2014 policy. For example, how sound is the policy considering the multilingual contexts of Zambia? Was there wider consultation in the process of policy formulation? Zambian parents, like others in Africa, have favoured English as the language of education for their children. Were Zambian parents consulted about the change? What preparation in terms of materials and human resource was put in place at the dawn of the policy? These and many other questions ought to be asked and answered as we reflect on the policy change, even in the initial stages of its implementation.

The rest of the chapter is arranged in five main sections. The first section gives a historical account of language policy pronouncements in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). The idea is to showcase the fact that contradictions between policy and practice, the monolingual/monoglot ideology in language policy pronouncements and resulting contestations of local agency in evolving multilingual contexts, started way before Zambia became independent on 24 October 1964. In this section, we follow Banda (2009) to identify three phases in language policies, which relate to who was in charge of 'educating' the 'natives': the missionaries (before and after 1888), the British South Africa Company (until 1994) and the British Colonial Office (until October 1964). The second phase evaluates the various language education policy reforms that have taken place since 1964. The third phase coincided with Zambia's independence, with the pronouncement making English the official language of government and education.

We shall highlight the half-hearted attempts to reform this policy by having Zambian languages play a role in education. We argue that such attempts have been futile for socio-economic reasons in which English is associated with socio-economic mobility and modernity. The monolingual/monoglot dispensation that underpins the language education policy reforms also works against embracing multilingual language practices, which would make space for Zambian languages in classroom practices.

The second section of the chapter highlights the monolingual biases in secondary literature on the language of education in Zambia. We note that this literature has unwittingly supported the monoglot/monolingual policy in which education is thought to be better if one language at a time is used. In this connection, insisting on a singular 'standard' African language is seen as de-legitimising the other languages in multilingual contexts of Zambia. The multilingual repertoires that teachers and learners are competent in are seen as 'devious' and aberrations unfit for use in education.

The third section evaluates primary interview data with teacher training college lecturers, teachers and Zambia language experts on their views on the government's language education policy shift that English was to be replaced by the official Zambian language for each of the 10 provinces. We highlight the extent that the policy considered the multilingual contexts of Zambia; the kinds of consultations that took place in the process of policy formulation, and the kinds of preparation in terms of materials and human resources that took place before the policy was enacted.

The fourth section looks at the implications for language in education policy in multilingual Zambia considering recent developments in conceptualisations of translanguaging and heteroglossia as linguistic practice. The fifth section concludes and makes suggestions for comprehensive language policy changes that recognise the multilingual language practices and mobility of languages across regions and practices.

## **2. The monolingual orientation in language policy: Historical reflections**

A number of language-in-education policies and pronouncements have come and gone in Zambia since the missionaries established classroom education in Northern Rhodesia, which was to become Zambia in 1964. The

policies have all professed a monolingual perspective in which only one language is used at a time for classroom practices. What do we mean by language policy? Trask (1997) refers to language policy as an official government policy which regulates the form, teaching or use of one or more languages within the area controlled by that government. Language policy can also be explained as a set of interventions pronounced and implemented by states which are supported or enforced by law. Language education policy is that which governs the language(s) to be used for teaching and learning.

Banda (1996) has argued that for language education policy to be successful, it needs to be part of a larger language policy reform governing the use of different languages for government business and in public spaces. Language policy is so important that governments should consider all factors and stakeholders not only in its formulation but also in its implementation. This is because language policy by design or default may impact on the manner that citizens conduct their interactions in different domains. Language policies can therefore empower or disempower certain sections of the population not familiar with the designated languages of interaction.

We are mindful that language policy does not necessarily have to be legislated. It can be in place by default as noticed from people's language practices in different domains. It can also be the case that legislated language education policy takes place together with language practices that are not officially recognised. This can happen in the same school and region and the nation at large. For instance, although English was the officially prescribed medium of instruction from primary school to higher education level until 2014, classroom practices differed. Literature abounds that in some schools the teachers would use local Zambian languages or translanguaging between English and local languages. Some private schools and some schools in urban areas in particular used English as a medium of instruction from kindergarten to secondary school.

The failure to implement language education policy, poor language skills by teachers and learners, and contradictory language practices in and across schools have been blamed for the poor literacy practices of Zambian learners (Mwanza 2012;imba 2007; Simwinga 2006). In all these shortcomings, the use of English rather than Zambian languages has been isolated as the cause. Williams (1996), in comparing reading skills in Zambia and Malawi, blames the use of English for initial literacy and as the language of learning and teaching for poor reading skills in both Nyanja and English in Zambia. In concert with this observation, Muyebaa (1998, 2000, 2001), Sampa (2005) and Gordon (2014), to mention just a few studies, appear to blame the use of English as the cause. Successive government education reform reports have also pointed to language education policy that prioritises English over indigenous Zambian languages as the cause. Consider the following Ministry of Education (MoE) report, for example: "For over 30 years, (i.e. since the 1966 policy) children who have very little contact with English outside school but have been required to learn concepts through English medium have had unsatisfactory experience" (1996: 39).

Language diversity – that is, multilingualism – has been named as a factor contributing to low literacy rates among Zambian learners (see, for example, Tambulukani and Bus 2012). There are supposedly 72 indigenous Zambian languages spoken in Zambia but only 7 of these have been designated official languages. The MoE gives linguistic diversity as the reason for continuing with the policy of using English instead of indigenous Zambian languages: "It is generally accepted by educationists that learning is best done in the mother tongue. This situation is found to be impracticable in the case of every child in multi-lingual societies, such as Zambian society" (1996: 22).

The monolingual/monoglot ideology surrounding the language teaching and learning problems as well as the suggested solution – that is, the use of a singular mother tongue – are palpable in the majority of studies. In this conceptualisation of policy, English and Zambian languages are seen as autonomous and thus cannot be used together in the classroom. The 'solution' of using a Zambian language for initial literacy and as part of primary school education is to prepare learners for education in English. This is what Banda (2010) has called replacing English-based monolingualism with a Zambian-language-based monolingualism. The question is how do learners cope with this strict monolingual/monoglot orientation considering the multilingual language practices they are accustomed to? Given the government's lack of an implementation plan in the past, will the change from English to a Zambian language as the main language of initial and primary education work this time? Why not allow the use of multiple languages for initial literacy to mirror community language practices?

The monolingual ideology in language policy and practice in education is not entirely new. It is an inheritance from the missionary and colonial past of Zambia. Following Banda (2009), we want to identify three phases in the language in education policy in Zambia. In all these phases, English and Zambian languages were treated as separate and their use in education was also seen as successive rather than inclusive, in the sense of blending the languages in classroom practice. The first phase started with the partition of Africa in 1888 until 1924. The British South Africa Company ruled what was to become Zambia from around 1890 to 31 March 1924 on behalf of Great Britain. The British government took direct control thereafter until 1964 when the new African government under Kenneth Kaunda took the reins.

Whereas the missionaries who had arrived before the 1800s to set up mission posts and schools depended on local languages for their work, the British South Africa Company came with settlers and hunters who had English as their mother tongue. The missionaries used local languages for evangelism and for education in the schools they set up. Commenting on the missionaries' use of local languages, Manchishi (2004: 1) notes:

[T]he drive for evangelism proved extremely successful because the missionaries used local languages. The Bible and other Christian literature were translated into local languages. People chanted hymns in the language they understood best i.e. their own local languages, and even in the schools, the medium of instruction was in their own local languages at least up to the fourth grade.

To work in their homes and farms and also as administrative staff, such as clerks and support staff, English settlers and hunters, on the other hand, wanted African artisans and labourers who spoke some English. Thus, with the onset of the money economy, knowledge of some English slowly but surely started to matter to Africans. Even with the best of intentions, missionaries started offering English in some form after grade 4. At the very least, it can be said that missionaries instigated the beginning of a more or less formalised language policy in education involving the use of both English and local languages as media of classroom instruction.

During the phase of missionaries' direct control of schools, education was generally ineffectual and unsatisfactory, and as far as English is concerned, it did not feature prominently in the curriculum, if at all. It is not surprising that when the British Colonial Office took over control of the then Northern Rhodesia in 1924 from the British South Africa Company, one of the first things they did was to rein in mission schools and 'forced' them to improve the quality of education; particular with the infusion of more English in the curriculum (Banda 2009). Therefore, with the increase in British involvement in the running of the mission schools came more English in the curriculum.

As stated above, the second phase started in 1924 with the British Colonial Office taking direct control of the administration of Zambia from the British South Africa Company (Banda 2009). Aware of the poor education offered to Africans by mission societies, the British Colonial Office set up the Phelps-Stokes Commission and charged it with coming up with recommendations for the effective development of African education.

The Commission recommended that the colonial government should increase its expenditure on education in the form of grants-in-aid to the mission societies and predicted that such an investment would eventually "be reflected in better health, increased productivity and a more contented people" (Phelps-Stokes 1924: 265). With regard to the language of instruction, the Commission recognised the complementary roles that English and local languages could play in personal and national development. As a result, it recommended that English should become the official language in education and government business, while local languages were to be used for the preservation of African cultural values and ethnic identities. As a result of the recommendations, the government formally recognised four main local languages – Bemba, Cewa/Nyanja [henceforth Nyanja], Tonga and Lozi – as regional official languages to be used in the African government schools as media of instruction for the first four years of primary education.

This policy declaration was a major development in language policy formulation for Northern Rhodesia (to become Zambia in 1964) with regard to the medium of classroom instruction and, by extension, to the language of wider communication by zone. We would like to argue that even though the declaration gave legal status to and appeared to acknowledge the importance of local indigenous languages in education, it also inadvertently promoted English above these languages by pronouncing it the official language of government, business and education generally, after grade 4.

The zoning of languages not only entrenched the ideology of languages as autonomous phenomena; it was also arbitrary in the sense that it did not reflect the multilingual contexts in the different geographical locations. Thus, the implementation of language policy in 1953 created the problem of a three-tier policy. It was not uncommon for a pupil to be taught in a less dominant mother tongue for the first two years of primary education. Thereafter, the pupil would be taught in the more dominant regional official language for another two years and then in English from the fifth year onwards (Kashoki 1978: 26).

This problem, as will be clear, becomes critical again in the implementation of the new policy. What we see is the beginning of the situation in which African languages are being relegated to early literacies before learners are channelled to an English medium giving the ideological basis that these languages cannot cope with advanced and specialist content. Thus, "instruction through a local language was invariably seen as a transitional phase prior to instruction in English" (Ansre 1979: 12). The idea was that pupils would transfer the skills of reading and writing learnt through local languages to English. In principle, there was an attempt to start with what the pupils knew before moving gradually to English, which they were expected to have mastered by the fifth grade. This principle

has been the mainstay of Cummins's (2000) common underlying proficiency (CUP) and has been taken up by academics to argue that learners should first use one language – 'the mother tongue' – and then graduate to English after four or more years. The problem is that in multilingual contexts, people use multiple languages rather than a singular one as assumed in CUP, and the official Zambian language of education is not always spoken in the form it is used in books and other teaching material.

The third phase of the language in education policy coincided with Zambia's attainment of independence. Its highlight was the proclamation in 1966 of English as the sole official language at national level and as the language of classroom instruction from grade 1 to the highest level of education.

In essence, what has been called the legacy of marginalisation of African languages continued, but this time it was perpetuated by emergent African leaders. Emergent leaders in independent Zambia adopted English as an official language because they felt that the country had too many indigenous languages, none of which could be accepted nationwide. In addition, they felt there was no Zambian language at the time that was developed well enough to function as a medium of wider or international communication (Mwanakatwe 1968). English was seen as a neutral non-indigenous language that would be acceptable to all the divergent linguistic and ethnic groups in the country and thus would foster national unity. The first minister of education after Zambia's independence (John Mwanakatwe) confirmed this when he stated the following:

It is unity in diversity which must be forged without exacerbating inter-tribal conflicts and suspicions which have a disruptive effect. Because of this fact, even the most ardent nationalists of our time have accepted the inevitable fact that English – ironically a foreign language and the language of our former colonial masters – definitely has a unifying role in Zambia. It is the language used by the administration at all levels – central, provincial and district. In parliament, in the courts, at meetings of city and municipal councils, in the more advanced industrial and commercial institutions – the banks, post offices and others – English is the effective instrument for the transaction of business. (Mwanakatwe 1968: 212-213)

This thinking and the status quo between English and Zambian languages has not changed. As this chapter shows, not even the change of policy to use Zambian languages for initial literacy and primary education will change attitudes towards English.

Although it was clear by 1977 that the English-only medium of instruction was not working, the monolingual policy orientation can be gleaned in the 1977 education reforms. It recommended continued use of English as the language of education, while making provisions for the utilisation of the seven local official languages where necessary. In 1992, the MoE revisited and reappraised the language in education policy, and found that the English-only policy had weaknesses which included: downgrading of local languages, isolation of the school from the community, alienation of the learner from tradition and impairment of children's future learning. With these weaknesses in consideration, the 1992 policy document recommended that the MoE would institute a review of the primary school curriculum in order to establish the main local languages as the basic languages of instruction from grades 1 to 4. The 1992 recommendation provided teachers with greater freedom to determine 'the main local language' to be used as the language of instruction in primary schools and while at secondary schools; English was going to be a medium of instruction as well as a compulsory subject for everyone. But teachers continued to teach in English for various reasons: local languages had no materials and teachers did not always speak the 'standard' version of Zambian languages as found in written books and material.

In another reform initiative, the 1996 policy document "Educating Our Future" also retained the use of English as the official language of classroom instruction but, in addition, recommended the employment of familiar languages to teach initial literacy in grade 1. The policy states:

[A]ll pupils will be given an opportunity to learn initial basic skills of reading and writing in a local language ... officially, English will be used as a language of instruction but the language used for initial literacy learning in grade one will be one that seems best suited to promote meaningful learning by children. (MoE 1996: 27)

In 1998, another turn took place. The New Break Through to Literacy programme (NBTL) started as a pilot study in the Mungwi and Kasama Districts of Northern Province. The study involved an experiment of using a familiar language as a medium of instruction in grade 1 to teach literacy. The results showed that pupils were able to read by the end of grade 1 and that the level of reading for grade 2 pupils was equivalent to grade 4 pupils who had undergone the English medium. As a result, the project was scaled up to all schools in Zambia under the title

“Primary Reading Programme (PRP)” (Chishiba and Manchishi 2014). The notion of learning through a familiar language is potentially interesting only in the plural as in ‘familiar languages’. Considering the multilingual dispensation in Zambia, it is conceivable that such languages are not necessarily any of the seven official languages or those constituting the official linguistic zones. Since familiar languages in communities are not necessarily “standardised”, there is also an interesting prospect that the languages are not necessarily the formalised ones. The ‘success’ of the PRP led to the government announcing the shift of language policy in 2013 recommending the use of a familiar local language as a language of initial literacy.

However, in January 2014 there was another language education policy shift, in which the government announced that with immediate effect the language of instruction from nursery school to grade 4 would be one of the zoned seven official Zambian languages. The policy change noted in its introduction that from grade 5 onwards, English would be the language of instruction up to university. As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, it is the purpose of this paper to explore how implementable this policy is considering various parameters including the history of education in Zambia, the kinds of consultations with stakeholders (if any), teacher and learner preparedness for classroom practices in line with the new policy, and the availability of teaching material, among others. To get a clear picture of the language education policy change, below we review literature on language practices and policy in Zambia. We believe it is partly due to the monoglot/monolingual ideology underlying most of these studies that provided a motivation for language education policy change, the ideology of which is also to produce a monoglot/monolingual learner.

### **3. The monolingual biases in academic literature on language education policy in Zambia**

A number of studies have been conducted in Zambia unearthing the challenges that have been faced in implementing language in education policies. Other than the monolingual ideologies that surround most of these policies, there is an underlying theme that a mere switch from English to Zambian languages will not solve the problem of low literacy levels. One issue that keeps coming up in the literature is the use of ‘standard’ Zambian languages. These tend to be different from the ‘real mother tongues’ spoken by teachers and learners. For instance, the official Nyanja found in schoolbooks is based on Cewa, the version spoken in parts of Malawi and a few areas in Eastern Province of Zambia (Banda and Mwanza 2017). The choices and zoning of seven Zambian languages also appear to have been done arbitrarily in most areas. For Lusaka, Nyanja is the ‘zonal’ language of education, yet people in the surrounding areas speak Soli, Lenje and other languages.

As the review of recent literature on language education shows, it is not just government policy but also academics that see the replacement of monolingual education in English in the initial stages of a learner’s education with a singular Zambian language to be desirable. However, as the review below shows, literacy problems in Zambian schools are much more than mere choices between English and Zambian languages. More importantly, the use of a singular language, whether English or a Zambian language, would be contrary to multilingual practices that learners bring to school from their communities.

Mulenga (2012) conducted a study in which he wanted to establish grade 3 pupils’ preparedness to read and write in Bemba and English. These are pupils who were taught through a Zambian language in grade 1 and changed to English in grade 2. Most pupils in grade 3 were not able to read and write at the desirable level, including some who had supposedly broken through to initial literacy by the end of grade 2. Pupils faced difficulties spelling words in English and Bemba especially when the words were raised from one-syllable to three-syllables. Pupils could not write simple sentences that were deemed to be at their grade level. Mulenga (2012) concluded that those pupils who had not ‘broken through’ faced the most challenges as they had little or nothing at all to transfer from Bemba as a first language into English as a second language by the third grade. The Bemba that the majority of learners spoke was different from the ‘book’ Bemba found in the materials.

Mwambazi’s (2011) study set out to establish the factors and the nature of low reading achievement among grade 2 pupils in selected schools in the Mpika and Mbala Districts. Grade 2 pupils in the targeted schools were not able to read Zambian languages and English according to their grade level. Some of the factors that led to low reading levels included absenteeism; a shortage of suitable teaching/learning materials; a shortage of teachers particularly those trained in PRP methodologies; large classes; a poor family and educational background; poor and inadequate infrastructure; pupils not breaking through in grade 1; inadequate time allocated for literacy/reading lessons; and most importantly, the unfamiliar language of instruction.

Phiri’s (2012) study on teachers’ perception of factors which prevent some grade 1 learners from breaking through to initial literacy showed that the language of instruction to a larger extent was a barrier both to learners and teachers. The situation was more pronounced in urban and in peri-urban schools because of the factor of

multilingualism which made it impracticable to use a regional standard language (Kaonde) as the medium of instruction. In rural schools, on the other hand, language did not pose a threat to the learners because the language of instruction was almost the same as the regional ethnic language. Yet rural learners tended to do worse than those in urban areas due to the inadequacy of the materials which had made the learning and teaching process difficult. Learning through the 'mother tongue' did not help those in rural areas, while those in urban areas were hampered by the less familiar regional local language of education. Phiri's study revealed that overall the pupil-to-book ratio was as high as 5:1 or higher. The respondents attributed the situation to the lack of replacement of lost or worn out books. Other challenges included large class sizes, poor infrastructure and learner absenteeism. These problems are not unlike those found in other studies which were conducted in other parts of the country. The point here is that the whole country seems to be faced by similar problems that hinder pupils from breaking through to literacy.

Kumwenda (2011) sought to establish the initial reading performance in Nyanja in multi-ethnic/multilingual Chipata (the capital of Eastern Province of Zambia) urban areas. Specifically, this research sought to find out the reading performance of pupils for whom Nyanja, the regional language of education, was not their first language in comparison with those for whom it was. Findings showed that the latter group of pupils performed better than the former. The analysis of the quantitative data revealed that the difference in performance in reading between the two groups of pupils was significant.

Matafwali (2010) observed that even after the use of an official regional language as the initial language of instruction was introduced in 2000, the reading levels of the majority of Zambian children were still low in 2005, especially in Lusaka Province. She concluded that a lack of proficiency in the language of instruction explains difficulties in becoming a conventional reader in a Zambian language and English. Lusaka, the capital city of Zambia, is more multi-ethnic and multilingual than Chipata. Nyanja, the proclaimed regional language of education and local administration, is described in the literature as the 'mother tongue' or a familiar language for the majority of pupils in Lusaka. This is misleading as so many languages are spoken in the area. Moreover, the Nyanja used for academic purposes, as already noted, is not exactly the same as the one spoken by the majority of Lusaka residents. Evidently, the regional language or 'mother tongue' in reality was not so familiar.

Similarly, Kalindi (2005) studied reading problems in Bemba of 60 grade 2 students who were poor readers (as identified by teachers) from selected basic schools in Kasama and Mpika urban areas in Northern Province. According to the study, only 13% could read two-syllable words and only 8% could identify 20 letters of the alphabet. The study showed that even with excellent and intensive instructions in place, some children still failed to make satisfactory progress in reading. It turned out that the exclusive use of 'standard' Bemba was a barrier to initial literacy. The variety of Bemba used in multi-ethnic/multilingual classes was not the 'mother tongue' or familiar language to a good number of pupils, and hence they struggled to learn to read and write in it.

In another study, Zimba (2007) established that the use of the regional official language, Nyanja, was ineffective as a medium of initial literacy in communities that were predominantly Tumbuka-speaking in Lumezi District in Eastern Province. The study revealed that pupils consistently performed below expectations in literacy skills because they could not understand Nyanja which was used to perform classroom tasks.

There is a sense that, the misrecognition of the standard language aside, the imposition of regional languages as official languages of education has negative effects on initial literacy development. Has the government learnt anything from this? It is also interesting that none of the reviewed studies hold any views about using multiple languages and features of languages as language practice. The ideology appears to be about replacing one language, the official regional language, with a non-official local language. The other languages and the multilingual repertoires that learners and even teachers depend on in their everyday interactions are made illegitimate and undesirable for education.

#### **4. Design and methodology**

For our primary databases, the study involved four of the ten provinces: Lusaka, Central, Copperbelt and Eastern Provinces. The specific districts are: Lusaka (Lusaka Province), Mufulira and Chingola (Copperbelt Province), Kabwe and Serenje (Central Province) and Petauke and Lundazi Districts (Eastern Province). The study was qualitative. This is because the intention was to get detailed information from respondents through detailed interviews. The target population was primary school teachers, primary school college lecturers, language experts and curriculum developers in the country.

A total of 20 respondents were sampled and interviewed in the study. Of the 20, ten were teachers who were divided into groups of five rural and five urban primary school teachers. Five lecturers from five different colleges of education were also sampled. Four language experts and a Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) officer were

also part of the 20 respondents. Purposive sampling was used to identify the respondents. This is because the intention was to interview people who were specifically relevant to the topic under investigation.

Four different interview guides were used. These were for teachers, lecturers, language experts and the CDC officer (henceforth language experts). The interview guides consisted of the main research questions to guide the discussion. However, follow-up questions were also asked in order to get clarification and other details depending on the issues that were raised in the interview.

Data collection started with the teachers. This was followed by interviews with the lecturers in colleges of education. Thereafter, the language experts were interviewed.

The data was analysed qualitatively and thematically. This involved grouping and categorising the data according to identified themes. In fact, the grouping was mainly guided by research questions. After grouping the data, analysis was performed. Some of the responses from respondents are quoted verbatim as a way of providing evidence to the analysis.

Academic and research ethics were observed. The researchers explained the purpose of the study to the respondents and gave them reasons why they were sampled. Further, the researchers informed the respondents that the findings of the study were purely for academic purposes and that no name or identity would be published or associated with the findings. Respondents were also informed of their rights in the study, which included the fact that they had the right to refuse to participate and that they could choose to withdraw from it at any time. Participants signed the informed consent form.

#### **4.1 The 2014 Zambian language policy: Critical reflections on consultations during policy formulation**

Lecturers and teachers were unanimous that they were not consulted during the process of policy formulation. They said that they were surprised when they heard on television and radio that the policy had changed. The respondents added that it was the habit of government not to involve them when new policies were being formulated although they were the ones to implement the policy. One college lecturer said the following:

*But I wouldn't say they did [consult us]. If they did, maybe a sample of colleges, not all. Our college was not consulted.*

There are 14 teacher training colleges run by the government (Beyani 2013). Given the small number of colleges, one would expect that the government would involve at least one member from each of the colleges. On the contrary, the findings show that lecturers were not consulted and, in most cases, the whole college was not involved. Note that as trainers of teachers who would be implementing the policy in schools, lecturers are central to the success of the policy. The new policy implies that lecturers should change their curriculum in colleges and doing so requires that they have a full understanding of the policy. Lecturers felt that the MoE was using a 'top-down' approach to policy formulation. Consider the following response:

*No. We were not consulted. There was no consultation whatsoever. UNZA says ministry is trying to use top down method. But I don't know that they meant.*

All the five lecturers from five different colleges said the same. Therefore, one wonders how these lecturers will prepare teachers who should perform according to the expectations of the policy. As one of the respondents stated above, the government used a top-down approach when coming up with the policy. No doubt, this type of policy formulation is faulty as implementers may resist the policy or simply fail to implement it since they did not have a full understanding of it.

All the teachers who were interviewed also stated that they did not know anyone who was consulted. Each teacher suspected that perhaps teachers from other schools were consulted, yet no teacher from the sampled schools could confirm that they were. Some of the teachers were categorical when they stated that there were no consultations at all, with some suggesting that politicians decided the policy on their own without involving teachers. One teacher said: "It was just among politicians themselves." To add on to the suspicion that politicians decide policies on their own without involving implementers, two teachers stated the following:

*(1) No consultations with teachers. Bamacitila kumwamba kwamene kuja [they do it from the top], us we just receive.*

*(2) Personally, I am not aware. But maybe teachers from somewhere. But when I attended a workshop at DEBS [District Education Boards], even Head teachers expressed ignorance. So, there was no consultation.*

It is an anomaly not to involve teachers in policy formulation that directly relates to classroom practices. They are the ones who are now expected to use local languages for the first four years of primary education. Since they have been doing the same for the first grade only, their experiences and challenges in the NBTL programme would be useful when strategising for the new policy. Thus, excluding them from a policy which they will have to implement is a recipe for failure on the part of government. Sadly, this appears to be the way that the government has approached policy formulation and implementation as noted in the literature above. Studies undertaken on previous policies have shown that part of the cause of policy failure is the lack of consultation by government.

The subject experts interviewed had similar sentiments as the teachers and lecturers. Two of them stated that they knew an expert who was involved in the process of policy formulation. However, they were not sure about the criteria that was used to select the said experts. We are mindful that it is logical that not all experts can be consulted. Nevertheless, the problem still remains of involving experts but not teachers and lecturers who would have shared their practical experiences so that the experts could give their contributions not only based on their theoretical understanding of pedagogy but also based on the realities of the factors surrounding schools. Without teachers and lecturers, we cannot be too sure of the quality that will come from colleges and how teachers will effectively implement the policy for which they have no input and little knowledge about.

One expert stated the following: "I was not consulted but they say they made consultations. They also read research reports." While it is a good idea to think that policy makers read research reports, we wish to argue that actually perhaps they did not, as they would have known that consultation with stakeholders and those who implement the policy on the ground is critical.

Most of the studies conducted on the language of initial literacy have stated the factors affecting implementation and have suggested what could be done to improve the situation. The elements of the new policy which reflect previous research in Zambia are the monolingual/monoglot biases (only one language at a time for classroom practice) and the extension of local language use from grade 1 to grade 4. However, as noted in the literature reviewed above, the problem goes beyond choices of language. There are issues relating to, among others, unfamiliar Zambian languages as the medium of instruction, a lack of teaching and learning materials, the poor language background of teachers, poor teacher training and insensitive teacher/classroom allocation where a teacher who cannot speak the language of instruction is asked to teach grade 1. With this background, one can argue that, in fact, research reports were not read or that if they were read, then, they were not taken seriously.

#### **4.2 Teacher training before policy implementation**

Respondents said the new policy was initiated first and thereafter attempts to train teachers ensued. Teachers we interviewed revealed that only one or two teachers per school attended the training. However, some schools were not represented as none of the teachers from them were invited to attend the training workshop. It was also the case that the majority of teachers who attended the training were from urban areas. In fact, some teachers from rural areas did not even know that there was any training and expressed shock when they learned that there was.

Further, respondents stated that government facilitators had told them that the idea of inviting few teachers was that those who attended were supposed to go back and share their knowledge with those who remained at school. The government had no funds to run countrywide training workshops. Those who attended training workshops were supposed to hold their own workshops at the school level so that everyone would have the knowledge and skills to implement the new policy. It is not clear how such workshops would take place without funding and material support from government. Moreover, teaching through a particular language assumes that one speaks it competently and it takes years to build such ability and confidence. As noted in the literature, teachers and learners are not usually conversant with the versions of Zambian languages that the government wants them to use. Certainly, there is no way that a 3- to 4-day workshop would produce such competence.

The following excerpts are some of the responses from selected respondents. Evidently, it is not just that the training of teachers started only after the policy was already under implementation, but some of teachers who attended were not clear as to what the training was about:

*The training was not done. We went for training afterwards. We were told to start teaching. Then, they organised workshops. When we started, we did not know.*

More problematic is that it is unlikely that the teachers the government used for such training received training themselves as college lecturers were caught unawares of the change of policy. Since the majority of teachers were from urban areas, it is also unlikely that they spoke the 'standard' version of the language as envisaged in the policy. The haphazardness with which the training was done is captured in the quote below in which some teachers did not attend the training because the call up was too sudden:

*Some [teachers] went, especially those in urban area. The government got teachers from nearby schools and went to give training in zones. But some teachers did not attend. For example, I did not attend because I had other commitments. The training was for three days.*

It is also interesting that the government itself did not have adequate resources to fund the training, and resorted to inviting teachers "from nearby schools". It is also interesting that in some cases the government invited school administrators to attend training instead of the teachers who needed it most:

*(1) Yes, the last week of April holiday. It [training] was at district level at DEBS office. It took 3 to 4 days. Because of resources, only grade 1 teachers attended and deputy head teachers. The idea was that those who were trained needed to teach others. But it has not happened yet even at our school because schools are saying that they do not have resources.*

*(2) Some people went. One teacher and Deputy teacher. Us, we don't know, we were just briefed in the staff room during the staff meeting.*

The problem here relates to how and when training of teachers was done. Firstly, the timing of the training was wrong. The ministry was supposed to train teachers before the commencement of the school calendar in which the policy was to start functioning. The government should also have separated those who spoke the zonal language competently and the majority who did not. The two groups do not need the same type of training. This would have efficiently prepared teachers in advance for what they needed to do in the classroom from the first day of the 2014 school calendar. Thus, starting to implement the policy before training or before teachers understood the content and implications of the policy was a risk on the part of government. As it turned out, every teacher was left or allowed to do whatever they thought was the right way to do it. The policy was rushed. The government was supposed to take time to educate teachers and college lecturers and to produce material before the policy was implemented.

The next section discusses the availability of materials in detail. It should, however, be argued that when policy makers work in isolation of people who implement the policies as established in the section above, the result is normally failure. If the government consulted teachers on how best they thought the policy could be implemented, perhaps they would have suggested teacher training before the policy was implemented. Since it is reported that some experts were consulted, one expects that the government should have been advised on the logical steps to take towards the implementation of a new policy. Commenting on the alleged rush by the government to implement the policy, one expert stated the following:

*There is a mismatch between policy and preparation for that work. People are being sensitised now [when the policy is under implementation]. So, we have implementation and sensitisation going on. Government is mishandling the issue. They are handling it as a political issue, not as a pedagogical issue.*

The danger here is that experts who are supposed to 'own' the policy and see to its effective implementation disown it as a political ploy. There is no doubt that the government rushed the implementation of the policy and it appears doomed to failure. It also appears that the government did not learn from the past mistakes described at length above, which led to failures of previous policies.

The second challenge relates to how the training was done. From the findings, only grade 1 teachers attended the training. This is not progressive because it appears that the focus is still on grade 1 as was the case under the NBTL programme. The new policy proclaims that a Zambian language should be used up to grade 4. This means that teachers of grades 1 to 4 were all supposed to be trained. Thus, inviting only grade 1 teachers is an indirect resistance to the new policy, initiated ironically by policy makers themselves. It is a serious contradiction within the MoE.

Another problem regarding training is that, contrary to expectation, most of those who attended it did not actually teach those who did not attend. Briefing teachers during staff meetings, as happened in some schools, amounts to a lack of seriousness on the part of school managers and the respective teachers who attended the training. The importance of training cannot be overemphasised and should not be reduced to a mere morning briefing. One of the reasons given for lack of feedback was the lack of materials in schools which could be used. At this point, one wonders whether the MoE did not give any handouts to teachers who attended the training. These handouts would have helped the teachers to train their colleagues back in their own schools. This argument aside, one can agree that a lack of materials can affect training. However, it is not enough to justify the negligence.

#### **4.3 Availability of materials for the policy**

All the teachers complained about a lack of teaching materials. While some said that the materials were not adequate, others said that they did not have any materials at all. In cases where the schools had some materials, these were delivered after the programme had already started being implemented. Consider the following responses:

*(1) We have books just for grade 1. We don't have materials ... even for grade 1, we just have for literacy. We are using old books for NBTL and we just improvise old books.*

*(2) As at now, [we have] syllabus and also books for grade 1. Materials are not yet in schools. For other classes, we just have syllabi. For ICT, we have done research and we have information which is relevant to the syllabus. We come up with the content.*

As was captured in the literature, materials are not enough. Some schools only have materials for grade 1 and teachers improvise materials for grades 2, 3 and 4. Professionally, teachers are expected to be creative and resourceful in their lesson preparation and teaching. Thus, it is commendable that teachers are taking the initiative in researching, sourcing and creating their own materials. However, there arises a question as to whether there is uniformity in the standard of the materials that are being produced by teachers. A situation like this where each teacher creates their own material is not conducive to effective teaching and learning.

Moreover, what is happening in schools is not necessarily because teachers are creative and resourceful but because they are under duress as the MoE has not provided the needed materials. It is an intervention by teachers in a situation where the government has enacted a policy without providing materials and resources that are needed to implement the policy. In one of the quotes above, a teacher said that they only received syllabuses and they were developing the content on their own. This situation raises many questions. For example, how accurate, rich and responsive is the content that teachers are developing to the objectives of the syllabus? Is the content being subjected to review by experts or people from the MoE? These are important questions which the government should answer because if they are ignored, such practices might become reasons why a well-intended policy does not succeed.

As part of the new language policy initiatives, teachers were told to embrace the use of ICT, or computers, to teach. In one school, teachers said that they were given a tablet by a non-governmental organisation (NGO) to use in teaching. They stated that the NGO got permission from the MoE. The tablet was said to have a syllabus, schemes of work and lesson plans. This was actually a project and the school was chosen to pilot it to test how effective the use of ICT in teaching would be. In other schools, teachers said that although they did not have any computers in school, they were still encouraged to use computers to teach.

Note that the use of ICT in teaching is commendable and in line with modern practices in the world. Thus, embracing technology is responding to the 21st-century way of teaching. ICT is not just fashionable but is also believed to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in teaching. However, one tablet is not enough for one classroom, let alone a school. There is no way the change of language education policy can be implemented when the software and programs on tablets, and on computers generally, are not in local languages.

Three problems arise in Zambia regarding the use of ICT in schools generally and the implementation of the new language policy in particular. Firstly, schools do not have ICT equipment. Practically, this means that teachers cannot use ICT in their teaching. Secondly, the majority of teachers cannot afford computers from their salaries. Those who manage to purchase computers and tablets have them for their personal use. Thirdly, most teachers, especially those in rural areas, are computer illiterate. This implies that even if they were given computers or other gadgets such as tablets, they could make use of them because they do not have the knowledge and skills to use technological equipment in teaching. To substantiate this argument, here is what one teacher said:

*We were told to use computers to teach. But for me, I don't know computer. So how can I teach using computer when I haven't learnt?*

The concerns raised by teachers are genuine. In this context, we wish to argue that the lack of computer literacy among teachers also points to the fact that teacher training programmes in Zambia are generally weak. Teachers are not trained in how they can apply ICT in teaching. It can be argued that every modern teacher training programme should have components on ICT and how teachers can embrace it in their daily classroom practices. Evidently, the new language in education policy, with its lack of material support and training components, will not make teachers adopt the use of ICT in delivering the curriculum.

## **5. Translanguaging and heteroglossia as language practice: Implications for language education policy**

In this section, the basic premise is that there is a need for the re-orientation of language education policy that takes into account the extent of the multilingual practices in communities. Otherwise, there is a risk that language policy is enacted for a child who lives in a monoglot/monolingual community that no longer exists. Although the two notions were conceptualised at different times, we see translanguaging and heteroglossia as related in that one portends the presence of the other.

We want to state that an effective language policy is one that takes into account the socio-economic, cultural, educational and literacy imperatives of learners. These imperatives are multi- rather than mono-dimensional. For instance, in multilingual and multicultural contexts, learners necessarily have to acquire and appropriate multiple cultures and languages to be useful citizens in their communities, nation and the world at large. However, successive language education policies in Zambia, starting from the missionaries to recent and current government's policy pronouncements, are based on the monoglot/monolingual and monocultural citizen. This is based on the European conceptualisation of 'one nation/region, one language ideology'. The language policies not only de-legitimise so-called non-official languages through selective language 'zones', but they also disaffirm multilingual practices in favour of monoglot classroom practices. Since only one Zambian language can be used per region, meaning there are seven exclusive linguistic zones, the use of the seven Zambian languages is therefore restrictive and limiting. Children are restricted from utilising an extended multilingual repertoire to engage in and access cognitively demanding practices and knowledge.

Recent developments in the study of language reject the notion of it as stable and discrete with bounded entities. Language is conceptualised as a socially, culturally, politically and historically situated set of resources and its use as a social practice (Heller 2007; Pennycook 2010; Blackledge and Creese 2010). This new thinking accepts multilingualism as a linguistic dispensation and, hence, so-called hybrid or blended language use as a legitimate multilingual practice. Language policy pronouncements in Zambia and other multilingual countries in Africa and elsewhere have been slow in embracing multilingualism as a linguistic dispensation in classroom practices. Banda and Mwanza (2017) argue that the problem is exacerbated by the fact that the language deemed the standard Zambian language is not often used by teachers and learners, who often speak related dialects or use it in multilingual blends with other languages, including languages that are official in other regions.

Therefore, there is a gap between the official monoglossic ideology which champions one 'standard' language at a time and place, and the diverse multilingual practices of Zambians. The academic knowledge and competences embedded in learners' multilingual cognitive processing and problem-solving strategies are discarded as illegitimate. Heteroglossia as a linguistic practice (Bakhtin 1981) is an advantage that multilingual learners have over monolinguals. In this case, they are expected to take an unnatural monolingual disposition even in contexts where adopting a multilingual disposition would be to their benefit.

In multilingual contexts as found in Zambia, a comprehensive and effective language education policy needs to recognise that learners and teachers alike come from multilingual homes. The policy needs to allow the use of multiple Zambian languages including hybrid forms and (Zambian) English in classroom practice. The policy needs to recognise what is now called translanguaging in Zambian classrooms. Translanguaging has been conceptualised as "the purposeful pedagogical alternation of languages in spoken and written, receptive and productive modes" (Hornberger and Link 2012: 262; see also Baker 2003, 2011; Williams 1994). This enables learners to use their extended linguistic repertoire for academic purposes, which is often denied under the current policy as already noted above. We give more specific examples below.

We follow Garcia (2009) and Hornberger and Link (2012) among others in recognising translanguaging as a new approach, which is different from code-switching. The difference between the two notions, according to Hornberger and Link (2012: 263), is that code-switching "tended to focus on issues of language interference, transfer or

borrowing”, while translanguaging “shifts the lens from cross-linguistic influence” to how multilinguals “intermingle linguistic features that have hereto been administratively or linguistically assigned to a particular language or language variety” (Garcia 2009: 51). Almost without exception, the literature we reviewed on Zambian language policies above, as well as the teachers we interviewed, do not see the value of alternative use of linguistic forms. As Mohamed and Banda (2008) have shown for Tanzania, and even during our interviews for this chapter, teachers would blend English, Nyanja, Bemba and other languages while stating that they did not allow their learners to ‘mix’ languages.

In essence, interviews showed that regardless of the policy on the use of Zambian languages for initial literacy, some teachers apply not just the one language policy but also the English only policy. This is applied so strictly that it prevents learners from participating in classroom activities. Consider the following comment from a teacher:

*The problem here is that pupils speak Nyanja and Bemba. Some speak Lenje and Tonga even at school. They don't speak English. You ask them to speak English, they are quiet ... They can't communicate. They like the local language. Their background has spoiled them.*

Mentioning Bemba, Tonga, Lenje and Nyanja is interesting as it tells us the extent of the complexity of the multilingual/multicultural mix of the learners. Nyanja is the recognised official regional language for the province. In terms of the 2014 government pronouncement, Nyanja is supposed to be the language of teaching and learning. Bemba and Tonga are among the seven recognised official Zambian languages, but for different regions, while Lenje is an unofficial local language. This teacher effectively wants learners to use English only. He takes their inability to linguistically operate in monoglot English as an inability to communicate and indeed a reflection of their general incompetence. Yet, it is the language education policy as reflected in the monoglot classroom practice that *mutes* learners by not allowing the use of heteroglossic language practices (Banda 2003).

Taking a lead from the monoglot dispensation in the language education policy, the following teacher also perceives multilingualism to be a problem. In particular, he does not see any role for Zambian languages in teaching and learning. He does not condone the use of Zambian languages, and would rather learners remain quiet and not participate than use Zambian languages:

*These children like local languages. I can't allow pupils to speak the local language in the classroom. I can just ask another pupil to speak. It's better for a pupil to keep quiet than to speak in vernacular.*

Over the years, the word ‘vernacular’ has acquired negative connotations, starting from the missionaries and colonial administrators and teachers who used the term to describe African languages as inferior to English in all spheres of human endeavour. In their view, African languages were only good as vehicles of African cultures and tribal rituals, some of which were banned by missionaries and colonial governments. In any case, the very few Africans deemed to be ‘clever’ were often encouraged to learn English in preparation to be used as ‘office boys’, clerks or *Kapitaos* (‘Captains’), that is, leaders of farm labourers on white-owned farms or of groups of African miners in white-owned mines. The rest had to make do with the ‘vernacular’. The streaming of learners has continued in which ‘weak’ students are told to learn the ‘vernacular’ while the ‘intelligent’ ones learn sciences and French, for example.

The teacher in the above quote denies learners the chance to competently discuss content at high cognitive levels, which wouldn’t be the case if they were allowed to use their extended linguistic repertoire. This involves translanguaging practices blending a number of local languages with English. Language education policy needs to allow for translanguaging as a classroom practice to engender multilingual and multimodal literacies. As Garcia (2009: 44) notes, translanguaging is about “engaging in bilingual or multilingual discourse practices [and] not on languages as has often been the case, but on the practices of bilinguals that are readily observable.” The language policies that have been pronounced over the years have failed to draw on the learners’ multilingual competences and knowledge. Our contention, therefore, is that successive language policies have sought to substitute one form of monolingual education – an English-based monolingual education – with a mother-tongue-based monolingual education (and vice-versa). As Banda (2010) argues, even the so-called mother-tongue-based bilingual programmes are effectively monolingual as the mother tongue is replaced by an English-based monolingual education after four, five or six years. The problem is that a language policy that purports to promote multilingualism through use of African languages in education and other spheres is based on the colonial and inherited ideology that languages are discrete and autonomous systems that ought to be kept apart. In this conceptualisation, the promotion of multilingualism is a case of promoting multiple monolingualisms (Banda 2010).

The problem of the use of monolingual/monoglot models of education is that concepts and language practices that do not reflect the multilingual contexts of Zambia are advocated and thus create a distorted reality for learners and teachers alike in so far as language practices are concerned. The consequence of this, as Banda (2003) has argued, is that learners' linguistic experiences and expectations of literacy practices are in direct conflict with, and alien to, the experiences and expectations of the monoglot English-based programme in place. A learner's inability to effectively ask academic questions and involve themselves in meaningful learner–teacher roles and interactions is a reflection of distorted and conflicting social practices. The learner's *mutedness* is therefore a result of a language education policy that denies learners the language(s) or language blends through which they can literally and metaphorically express themselves (Banda 2003).

Translanguaging needs to be the mainstay of classroom practice in multilingual contexts so as to allow learners to access and engage in various cognitively demanding tasks and knowledge. Banda (2003, 2007, 2010) has shown how high school and university multilingual learners, through translanguaging practices, are able to discuss complex assignments and seminar topics, which they later rewrite in 'standard' English with the editing/proofreading help from other students or academic writing services. Without translanguaging, such students would not be able to participate in generating complex ideas and arguments, which are found in the resultant academic essays. Translanguaging enables these learners to participate as multilingual citizens in their own education.

## 6. Conclusion

We can conclude that although leadership and control of what happens in the classroom has changed over the years – from missionaries, the British South Africa Company and the British Colonial Office to emergent Zambian leaders – the language education policies have changed very little. The policies all have one thing in common: they have a monolingual/monoglot bias in which either a Zambian language or English is proclaimed the language of initial literacy. The either/or ideology only works to the advantage of the English language, as it eventually becomes the main language of education. It works to the disadvantage of the majority of learners who find that they cannot draw on their multilingual language practices for their education.

Regarding the new language policy, teachers and college lecturers were not consulted when the policy was initiated and formulated. Teaching materials were not prepared. After the policy had already started being implemented, grade 1 materials were then provided to a few selected schools, while others did not receive any teaching materials. Some schools only received syllabi for grades 2, 3 and 4. Teachers were the ones researching and developing the content.

Further, the message coming from the findings is that training took place in a haphazard manner. The selection of who was asked to attend appears to have been by word of mouth. In a number of cases, administrators such as deputy headmasters attended training at the expense of teachers. The training also started after the policy was implemented. For example, some attended the workshop in April, meaning that one term had already passed before they were trained. Most of the teachers who attended the workshop did not give feedback to those who did not attend. Thus, most teachers currently implementing the policy are not trained and therefore not prepared to effectively teach under the new policy. The lecturers were also not trained and there was no time for teacher trainers and colleges to revise the syllabus and curriculum to be in line with the new policy. We would like to argue that these problems are not peculiar to this particular policy change; it appears that the government has not learnt from past mistakes.

We have a situation where it is not only the voices of critical stakeholders such as lecturers and teachers that were silenced by the lack of consultation during the process of policy formulation, but the policy of enforcing a regional language also reflects the colonial heritage which sought to stratify language, with the colonial language (English) at the top followed by a regional official language and the unofficial African languages at the bottom. The colonial ideology of 'one language, one nation' or 'one region, one African language' is also at play. In Zambia, this means the majority of African languages are erased from classroom practice (Banda and Mwanza 2017). At the same time, the learners' voices are also silenced as the familiar heteroglossic practice is disallowed and replaced by the not so familiar monoglot English or standard regional African language. Therefore, it is not just that certain languages are erased (in Zambia, it is 65 out of 72 languages) as possible languages of education and government business, but learners are forced to use unfamiliar regional languages or English. Moreover, learners' voices are further silenced as the colonial monoglot ideology still governing education excludes heteroglossic language practices.

In terms of what needs to be done to ameliorate the situation, we suggest that only a policy that draws on learner and community strengths will work. The policy needs to acknowledge translanguaging, that is, heteroglossic (multilingual) language practices as legitimate discourse practices for initial literacy development.

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