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Teaching our Ways of Knowing: A Cultural Imperative for Integrating Indigenous Languages in Zimbabwe's School Curriculum

Mthokozisi Moyo

7.1 Introduction

Until 2013, indigenous languages (except Shona and Ndebele) have been given very little vitality in education and the knowledge of these languages has always been ignored even in communities where they are dominant. However, an education that legitimises the cultural norms of only one culture within a pluralistic society robs learners from other cultural backgrounds of their self-esteem and the potential of pursuing different careers. The decision to integrate indigenous languages into the education curriculum is a step towards full-blown multiculturalism and linguistic pluralism in the country, creating numerous opportunities for cultural industries and the overall knowledge economy. This diversity in knowledge development dissects the normative monolithic approach to education that alienates and disadvantages some groups of students and their communities. It, therefore, becomes fundamentally important to campaign for an education that recognises the linguistic potential of students of different cultures; such an education contributes to the knowledge economy underpinned by unique ways of understanding and experiencing the world.

7.2 Background

Section 75(1) of the Zimbabwean Constitution provides for the right to state-funded basic and progressively state-funded education for everyone. Such provisions reflect an anchoring of the constitution on various United Nations (UN) treaties that foreground the importance of indigenous languages in education, to which Zimbabwe is a signatory.

Although earlier UN treaties on education did not initially include the right to mother tongue education, the Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples (DRIP) highlighted and affirmed that the right to education cannot be fully enjoyed without the use of the mother tongue.

The UNDRIP includes linguistic rights and the right to education in the mother tongue. It further states that indigenous peoples have the right to develop and promote their languages, including a literary language, and to use them for administrative, judicial, cultural, and other purposes. Indigenous people also have:

...the right to all forms of education, including, in particular, the right of children to have access to education in their languages, and to establish, structure, conduct, and control their educational systems and institutions (Ricento and Hornberger, 1996).

The philosophical underpinnings for such a declaration are grounded in the belief and realisation that education is communication and information sharing as well as knowledge transfer. As such, it can only be effectively conducted and shared in the language familiar to the recipient. The use of the mother tongue in education finds particular relevance in that it can be strategic in the preservation of the language and traditions of the culture conveyed (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981). Through the use of the mother tongue, education can easily impact the emotional, cognitive and socio-cultural development of the learners. In this regard, the use of the mother tongue for educational purposes becomes a conduit that facilitates equal access to quality and relevant education with equality of opportunities without marginalising any group to avoid any disadvantages in future. In line with the preservation of mother tongue proficiency, additive bilingual education models have been developed and adopted. This also ensures that second language learning does not occur to the detriment of mother tongue proficiency.

Currently, the majority of indigenous languages, which are now considered official languages, are being taught in schools, however in a more or less idiosyncratic manner. Tonga is being taught mainly in Binga. It is the only language, apart from Ndebele and Shona that is currently being taught throughout all levels of primary and secondary education. Nambya and Venda are being taught in Hwange and Beitbridge Districts respectively up to Ordinary Level, while Venda is also being taught as a major subject in teacher training at the Joshua Mqabuko Polytechnic. In recent years, the Government conducted an in-service teacher training course under the auspices of UNICEF at Great Zimbabwe University. The programme covered 6 of the 12 previously marginalised languages, *viz*, Tonga, Nambya, Sotho, Kalanga, Venda and Shangani. While this is a good starting point, the numbers of teachers being trained tell a gloomy

future for these languages. The exclusion of some of the indigenous languages in the teacher capacity development programme speak of the government's noncommittal attitude towards affirmative action and restitutive measures to ensure that all languages are used in education equally while elevating their statuses and advancing the development and use of these historically diminished languages.

As it stands, one can conclude that the teaching of these marginalised languages is a dead-end affair as learners can only pursue these languages up to Grade Seven and Form Four in the majority of cases, save for Tonga which is offered up to university level. Another dilemma in the teaching and learning of these languages is their confinement to specific homelands. Peresuh and Masuku (2002) note that one of the main features of Zimbabwe's sociolinguistic landscape is that indigenous languages are rooted in the physical environment of the local community. This makes it very unattractive to take up those languages even at primary school. The fact that Nambya is a language of Hwange and Tonga is a language of Binga means that those who might consider attending school outside their homelands cannot 'risk' learning a language which can only take them as far as the district boundary. As much as the learning of these languages has been received with so much hype in the communities, such realities often create cracks and crevices in the whole project as foresighted learners often shy away from taking up these languages due to the limitations that they come with.

Languages such as Tonga and Nambya tend to be marginalized and are often considered by their speakers as being of no value for social or economic advancement (Batibo, 2005). It is due to the personal devaluation that comes with the loss of one's culture and language as the first language speakers of these indigenous minority languages have lost loyalty to their languages as they learn and use the dominant language at the expense of their mother tongue (Maseko and Moyo, 2013). This has been exacerbated by the design of the curriculum that has been, for a long time, highly centralised and elite-culture oriented; thus, insensitive to the cultural and linguistic concerns of the sub-cultures of the various linguistic groups (Peresuh and Masuku, 2002).

7.3 Indigenous Languages and the Constitution of Zimbabwe

Section 6(1) of the Constitution officially recognises 16 languages namely, Chewa, Chibarwe, English, Kalanga, Khoisan, Nambya, Ndau, Ndebele, Shangani, Shona, Sign Language, Sotho, Tonga, Tswana, Venda and Xhosa. Nonetheless, there is no definition or clarity of what is meant by *officially recognised languages*. Inasmuch as the constitutional recognition of language rights aids the preservation of the identity of

linguistic minorities (Maja, 2017), this leaves these constitutional provisions with some deficiencies that negatively impact the development of these languages. Although the constitution states that the Government through its departments and agencies should promote the use of these languages, there is no clarity regarding the nature of measures that the state should take to promote the use of all languages. There are no clauses that bind the state to take particular action or create specific conditions for the development of these languages. This, in turn, makes it very difficult for the language rights standards provided for in the Constitution to be effectively implemented because there is no clearly laid down implementation strategy to ensure the realisation of these rights.

The Education Amendment Bill (2019) repealed Section 62 on Languages to be taught in schools and replaces it as follows:

Every school shall endeavour to—

- (a) teach every officially recognised language;
 - (b) ensure that the language of instruction shall be the language of examination;
 - (c) ensure that the mother tongue is to be used as a medium of instruction at early childhood education.
- (2) school curricula shall as far as possible reflect the culture of the people of every language used or taught in terms of this section.
- (3) the use of any language in terms of subsections (1) and (2) shall be subject to—
- (a) the availability of resources to the State for giving effect to these provisions; and
 - (b) the availability of teachers, examiners, textbooks and other educational materials necessary for instruction in and of any of the languages.”

This amendment leaves a lot to be desired as it carries over the contradictions inherent in the constitution. These constitutional provisions are subject to unclear conditions that give room to noncommittal attitudes and complacency in implementation. This amount to what Bamgbose (2003) refers to as avoidance or declaration without implementation as the policy remains covert and can only be inferred from observed practices (Kadenge and Nkomo, 2011). It should be noted that without a clearly articulated language-in-education policy in which these newly recognised languages can be adequately integrated, and without a model of support coupled with sound monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, the implementation of the whole policy becomes less feasible.

Section 6(1) of the Constitution suggests that the official recognition of sixteen languages is contradictory. Section 6(2) states that “[a]n Act of Parliament may prescribe other languages as officially recognised languages and may prescribe languages of record”. When such loose and

permissive clauses become constitutional, the fate of these languages is left at the mercy of politicians; hence, the political agenda will always override the linguistic one. Before we can see them as equals, common sense dictates that adequate resources are allocated to the development of these languages to enable them to grow out of their years of functional seclusion.

Section 6 of the Constitution neither defines an official language nor explains the phrase “*Officially recognised language*” making vague and unclear the legal implications of “recognition” affording official language status to a language. There is no language rights jurisprudence within the constitution to help clarify these aspects. This is particularly the case as the Government has not put in place administrative mechanisms such as the proposed National Language Board, which would guide, co-ordinate and oversee the drafting and implementation of the National Language Policy. The need for these administrative institutions cannot be overemphasised. Zimbabwe needs agencies that will monitor and regulate the implementation of the use of official and non-official languages in government and the development of all languages. Language issues are too important to be left in the hands of activists and well-wishers who are at the mercy of external funders and donors who are often few and far between.

7.4 Teacher Training Programmes and Deployment

In language revitalisation programming, teachers are the front-line and primary social actors of any language learning programme. The lack of trained teachers has been identified as the main cause of failure for most language teaching and learning programmes (Warde and Coffey, 2001). Historically, indigenous languages have been taught by co-opted teachers who are fluent and first-language speakers of these languages. This practice has remained commonplace in many schools across the country notwithstanding that it is not a sustainable solution but a stopgap measure. The remedy to this is for the Government to expedite the specialised training of teachers in indigenous languages to enable the efficacious implementation of integrating indigenous languages into the education curriculum. Teacher deployment would have to take cognisance of the first language linguistic abilities of the teacher in relation to the school or area s/he wants to work in (Peresuh and Masuku, 2002).

It is not enough for the Government to give the formerly marginalised indigenous languages constitutional recognition without commitment to action. There is a need to move beyond being permissive to a point where there are practical steps to promote these indigenous languages, particularly within the school curriculum, and one of the key steps is

teacher training. Without commitment to action, the institutionalised marginalisation of languages such as Tonga and Nambya remains in place. Van Heerden (2004) argues that it is only through a positive commitment to progressively eradicate socially constructed barriers to equality and to root out systematic or institutionalised under-privilege that the constitutional promise of equality before the law and its equal protection and benefit be realised.

Maseko and Moyo (2013) argue that the lack of trained teachers and pedagogic materials was also identified as negatively affecting the Tonga language programme. They further submit that teachers argued that they were not well-equipped to teach the language and are in dire need of pedagogic materials such as teaching manuals and reference books (Maseko and Moyo, 2013). This underscores the need for the Government to adequately train and meaningfully deploy indigenous language teachers to specific communities around the country. In essence, this is one of the ways of showing commitment and part of the monitoring and evaluation of the programme. There is also a need to keep a national database of the indigenous languages teachers so that the Government can meet the demand of specific language communities. If not carefully planned and monitored, trained indigenous language teachers will be misplaced as those who deploy teachers may not seek to meet specific language needs of particular communities partly due to ignorance or their lack of interest in language issues. In this regard, teacher training should not be seen as the final solution; rather it should be followed up with premeditated deployment of these teachers as per the need of specific language communities.

7.5 Material Production

The need for materials development in indigenous languages cannot be overemphasised, especially in a country such as Zimbabwe, given the constitutional recognition of fourteen indigenous languages and the desire to integrate them into the education curriculum. Books disseminate ideas, educate and entertain. Books and other materials published in indigenous in particular have an important role as a transmitter of knowledge.

The need for materials in African languages is highlighted by Prah (1999) who argues that be our languages need to be transformed and developed to handle science and technology. This starts with the publishing and production of educational and instructional books that will facilitate the efficacious teaching and learning of these indigenous languages at an early age. Currently, there is dearth of these materials in indigenous languages and to think that indigenous languages will be taught in schools without carefully planned programmes and concerted

efforts by the Government to stimulate the production of these educational materials is wishful thinking. Declaring these languages as officially recognised does not lead to the automatic production of instructional material. Neither does it guarantee the meaningful teaching and learning of these languages in the various levels of the education curriculum. Thus, there is a need to establish government-sponsored programmes that will guarantee the sustained production of quality and appropriate adequate instructional materials for the teaching of these languages in the school curriculum. This, in the words of the former Tanzanian president, Benjamin Mkapa (1997: 11), is because “[b]ooks will, in Africa, continue to take over the role of the parents, grandparents or village elders as repositories of knowledge, value systems, and skills needed to perpetuate life and the way of life”.

Through its various agencies and relevant ministries, the Government needs to work closely with language communities, committees, activists, linguists and publishers to roll out a comprehensive indigenous languages materials production. Writers associations need to be formed and specific publishing houses can be established and dedicated to the publishing of educational materials in indigenous languages. Pursuant to the Education 5.0 fundamentals, the Government through the Higher Education Ministry is investing in innovation hubs in various state universities across the country. These universities may develop language centres that will become a nerve-centre for the development of indigenous languages through literature production and scientific research on these languages.

7.6 Teaching Indigenous Languages

When teaching indigenous languages, every attempt must be made to extend the world of learning beyond the school walls and bring the world of the indigenes into the classroom (Battiste, 2000). These attempts draw on concrete, real-life and perhaps every day and sometimes taken-for-granted knowledge which is part of the learners' lived experiences. Such attempts facilitate transdisciplinary learning and movement away from out of context learning. As a result, the teacher should rely on the learners' immediate environment for content. The teacher is working in close association with the language community. Beyond the teacher reaching out to the community, intermediate level and higher education students can be involved as student researchers and become involved in gathering and documenting local knowledge (Snively and Williams, 2012).

Within the Zimbabwean context, there is a plethora of challenges that the teaching of these indigenous languages is faced with. In this regard, teachers need to anticipate these hurdles to adequately prepare themselves

to mitigate them if the meaningful teaching of these languages is to take root.

7.6.1 The Starting Point and Sources of Content

Faced with a multiplicity of challenges, the integration and efficacious teaching of indigenous languages in the school curricula needs a starting point. The school is fertile ground for the propagation of positive attitudes towards indigenous languages. As postulated by Cantino (1997), the school must become a strong promoter of minority language preservation and transmission instead of continuing to be one of the main agents of its endangerment. The school together with other institutions of learning such as teacher training colleges and university should be drivers of the efforts to revive indigenous languages. This is because they provide better opportunities for the institutionalisation of language programmes while offering a conducive environment that can guarantee the longevity of language programmes because language activists and committees come and go but institutions stay longer and often outlive individuals.

7.6.2 Dealing with Attitudes

Currently, in Zimbabwe, learners and teachers of indigenous languages may no longer be subjected to ridicule and overt resentment; however, they are often the target of other, more subtle forms of rejection and ostracism from teachers, administrators, and peers. This is the case when one language has more prestige than the other, and whenever we talk about prestige, we are dealing with attitudes, and these are much harder to correct (Cantino, 1997). These attitudes should be dealt with systematically to protect the cause of indigenous languages, particularly within schools. This indicates the dire need for a change of attitude among teachers, learners and administrators in schools regarding indigenous languages. Studies in language learning have shown that the acquisition of more than one language is an asset and not a liability in cognitive development in learners (Saunders, 1988); as such, any fears of confusion and other perceived problems associated with the promotion of indigenous languages should be dismissed wholesale. This is corroborated by Lessow-Hurley (1990) who notes that bilingual children perform better than monolinguals on tests of linguistic skills, divergent thinking, sensitivity to communication, and general intelligence, because of a strong understanding of the arbitrary nature of the symbols of language, which enhance their problem-solving skills.

There is a lot that needs to be done to diffuse negative attitudes towards indigenous languages at institutional level. Within schools, all

educators should be encouraged to show greater respect and appreciation for the cultures of their students' parents and refrain from criticising those who use, teach and learn the indigenous language(s) in school. This will take away the stigma that is often attached to indigenous languages as languages of the home that play second fiddle to official languages and languages of wider communication. Further, perceptions that English is better than the indigenous languages should not be tolerated or transmitted while looking down with disdain the people who use, teach and learn the indigenous languages. Educational institutions should develop and pursue overt institutional language policies that compel all educators (including the administrators) to learn and use the indigenous language of the community for specific and designated purposes within the school and community. Even if they do not become very proficient, they will have indicated a certain degree of interest and respect and it is only in this way that educators will realise that, although they alone cannot be responsible for the intergenerational transmission of a language, they can do much to encourage positive attitudes towards them.

This school-wide approach would be easy, as schools could use the same common language, which is indigenous to their areas (Peresuh and Masuku, 2002), as a starting point. Attitudes cannot just go away overnight. It needs time and commitment to action before they can be a thing of the past. Extreme measures such as reverse or counter discrimination where indigenous languages are given agency through preferential treatment and granting them a protected status in specific school-wide activities as way of compelling everyone to learn and use them could be adopted.

7.6.3 Preconditions for Teaching Indigenous Languages

Regarding the availability of content and the possible starting point for the teaching of many of the indigenous languages, questions are often raised by pre-service and in-service teachers. These questions provide a starting point for creating a more relevant indigenous language education for all children. The absence of printed instructional materials is often cited as the biggest hindrance. The argument advanced here suggests that only three things are extremely important and can stop the teaching of these languages if any one of them is missing. These are; the teacher, the learner, and the syllabus. With these three, learning can commence notwithstanding the challenges that are characteristic of all learning areas. If such subjects such as Science can be taught without laboratories and basic apparatus, surely our indigenous languages can fare much better than Science whose concepts are often far removed from the learners' experiences.

Possible considerations for teachers include adopting a heritage based education curriculum that valorises indigenous knowledge systems, bringing indigenous languages to the core of the school curriculum; developing instructional materials and lesson plans that address concepts around indigenous languages and cultures; and using special speakers as resource persons in the language classroom. In addition, teachers may integrate topics and content from other fields of knowledge such as science, astronomy, geology, security, food production and processing within the language classroom to assist the learners to understand the place and value of indigenous knowledge in today's world and how it interacts with modern science; develop questioning strategies that encourage active listening and the identification of indigenous beliefs and the relationship between indigenous cultures and other disciplines of knowledge. Further, tasks can be developed to allow learners to bring to the language classroom prior knowledge of their mother tongues as the teachers develop lesson plans and teaching units around cultural and historical themes of interest to children of specific home places and cultural groups.

7.6.4 Resourcing and capacitating the teaching of indigenous languages

The decision to start the teaching and examination of indigenous languages without printed materials calls for a rethink and redefinition of the role of the teacher in the indigenous language classroom. What it means is that the teacher needs to assume new roles such as those of being a content and materials developer, writer, researcher and life-long learner. It is only through assuming such roles that the teacher can guarantee the meaningful learning and teaching of indigenous languages with minimum printed instructional materials at their disposal.

Gathering, compiling and preparing Indigenous language materials will undoubtedly take more time, creativity and effort than anyone can imagine. Primary school teachers will need to identify materials and resource persons, whereas, at the intermediate and secondary school levels, teachers can also engage students in collecting information. Students of these languages at tertiary institutions can also be involved in the production and design of instructional and pedagogical materials for the various levels of education. Possible sources of content may include resource persons from communities, researchers (independent and within various institutions), students as researchers, universities (Faculties of Education, Languages and Literature, History, Archaeology, and etcetera), Traditional Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), Interviews with the elderly and community leadership various government

departments, biographies of elders in the communities, field trips and excursions, documentary films the national archives and other records.

Accessibility to these resources varies between communities, as such the teachers at the different levels of education should strive to make use of those that are within reach and are best suited for the type of learners. The aim should, however, be to create, over time, a repository of teaching and learning resources that would facilitate efficacious teaching and learning of indigenous languages as well as their successful integration into the education curriculum.

7.6.5 Responsibility for the Government

The responsibility of the two Ministries of Education is to include meaningful education and academic degree programmes of indigenous languages, as a way of strengthening the human capital base in indigenous languages education and research. Other Ministries and government agencies such as Broadcasting and Information, Home Affairs, Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs should have buy-in and support the teaching of indigenous languages in education by providing rewarding career opportunities to those who are proficient in these languages. The speakers and non-speakers of these languages will not be encouraged to learn them as long as they do not see any rewards in doing so. Even those who are mother-tongue speakers of these languages will shun them in favour of those languages that offer a wide range of opportunities and rewarding careers. It is the responsibility of the Government to give these languages agency by creating an enabling environment that allows them to flourish and shake off the stigma, in the long run moving them out of the precarious position of marginalisation and the fringes of the sociolinguistic milieu. Without the administrators' interest and leadership, and adequate funding, teachers feel unsupported.

7.7 The Way Forward

Going forward, if we are to get beyond teaching students numbers, colours, and names of animals, teacher education will be critical concerning school programs designed to revitalize indigenous languages. There is a large body of experience with second language teaching that can inform teachers of indigenous languages. There is a need to consider the requirements for professional indigenous language teachers. One such step is to consider an in-service training model for promoting indigenous language teaching and integration. Over and above the activism around linguistic rights, language learning experts and linguists need to venture into thorough research to determine the current status of these indigenous languages and then set realistic goals for language revitalization efforts.

7.7.1 The Three Ms for Indigenous Language Education

Reyhner (1999) proposes three M's for indigenous language education and argues that the way programme designers handle these three M's determines whether indigenous language programmes succeed or fail. Even though these goals should include literacy, once goals are established, language activists need to concentrate on the methods, materials, and motivation they will use to achieve their goals.

7.7.1.1 Methods

These are teaching techniques and approaches that will be used at different levels. How are the indigenous languages going to be taught in the various levels? Consideration has to be made on the appropriate and most effective methods and approaches to teaching these languages at the various levels of education taking into account the contextual factors that surround each of the specific language. The language syllabi at the various levels of education need to be explicit on the methods and approaches that are recommended for teachers and instructors.

7.7.1.2 Materials

These are resources that are or will be available for teachers and learners to use, including audiotapes, videotapes, storybooks, dictionaries, grammars, textbooks, and computer software. If these are not readily available, the questions to be answered here are: where will they come from? At what cost? Who will provide these? What is the suitability of these materials? A comprehensive programme takes into cognisance the action that needs to be taken to guarantee the provision of these materials.

7.7.1.3 Motivation

This refers to the reasons that might drive or encourage people to be part of the indigenous language learning programme. It answers the following questions: Is there any prestige (including giving recognition and awards to individuals and groups who make special efforts) and usefulness of the indigenous language in the community and beyond? What career prospects do these indigenous languages present to the learners? How are materials and methods used to encourage participation and so that learners enjoy so they will come back for more indigenous language instruction. How else can participants be motivated to be part of the programme? Learners need to find relevance in learning the language both in the immediate and long term. There should be ways of making them understand that their learning of the language is for here and now as well as for the future. Community-wide activities can be organised

periodically where the languages are given agency and this will motivate learners thereby driving the programme.

What this means is that there is need to work toward the sustainable teaching and use of indigenous languages in education throughout the years of schooling to change the perception of the current model that has often been despised in public opinion as a dead end. There is a need to debunk the existing belief that indigenous language education is a waste of time and a dead-end affair. This belief is, however, not without basis as in the majority of these cases, mother language education programmes lack longevity as they are often abandoned during the school cycle, paving way for the official language which is often a foreign language. It is this kind of early-exit or a subtractive bilingual model that presents a major drawback as it is significantly contributing to a lack of motivation among the stakeholders. These subtractive or early-exit (transitional) models do not facilitate the conduct of summative assessments in mother languages, a drawback that contributes significantly to a lack of motivation on the part of the entire educational community (for example, learners, parents, teachers, etc).

This reliance on a single-prong mother-tongue based education strategy accentuates the extensive work that remains to be done to adopt a comprehensive, structured and representative model that reflects the educational continuum and that must form the basis of any successful pedagogical project.

7.7.2 Towards a Comprehensive Indigenous Language Education Model

The country needs to adopt a comprehensive language education model that will guide the teaching of indigenous languages in the school system, particularly at elementary level. This will also regulate the Government's effort in the promotion of these languages, forcing the Government, through the relevant agencies and line-ministries to commit to the development of these languages. The Government needs to move away from the permissive policy stance to a promotional one that will see the languages in question receiving support.

The constitutional recognition of the indigenous languages is a good starting point. The authorities and concerned language communities should see it as the beginning rather than the final destination. The languages do not grow or survive due to mere official recognition; instead, more work has to be done. In this regard, the adoption of an explicit language policy that recognises the value of mother language education is, for example, an essential element in the framing of decisions on educational reform. There is thus a need for explicit language policy

and language in education policy that directs and binds decisions regarding educational reforms. Such a policy can serve as both an incentive and a stimulus for research, while at the same time, promoting accountability among various stakeholders. There is a need for ownership of language planning activities and initiatives by language communities, the administrative as well as political authorities to expedite the process of integrating indigenous languages into the educational system.

It cannot be overemphasised that indigenous languages are the starting point for acquiring knowledge of any kind that can then be subsequently enriched by the knowledge of other languages or by familiarity with other multicultural and multidimensional realities of the world today. Contrary to a popularly held belief by many parents that mother-tongue proficiency is a barrier to learning English, children can learn any international language such as English along with their mother tongues. It is too heavy a price to purchase English with one's mother tongue; a mother tongue that carries both culture and identity. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 of the 2030 Agenda specifically recommends that “bilingual and multilingual education should be encouraged by imparting early education in the children's first language or in the language that they speak at home.” This is attested to by the 2015 Global Monitoring Report on Education for All that highlights the fact that multilingualism and linguistic policies in education are key factors in achieving effective learning outcomes. In that regard, Zimbabwe is in serious need of a clear language policy that recognises and promotes linguistic pluralism and indigenous language rights by advocating for sound indigenous language education.

One of the encouraging notes in these times is that despite all manner of idiosyncrasy and wilful neglect by the Government, linguistic pluralism at a community level and the integration of indigenous languages within education has gathered momentum in many of Zimbabwe's communities. This derives impetus from the conviction that bilingualism in learners is an important attribute that results in mental flexibility, greater skill at forming concepts, and a more diversified set of mental abilities (Cantino, 1997) in contrast with monolinguals who often have rather unitary cognitive structures, which restrict their problem-solving ability. It is up to the communities, language experts and activists to support the initiatives being done in education to help sustain these indigenous languages teaching programmes.

7.8 Conclusion

Linguistic diversity creates challenges in areas such as teacher recruitment, curriculum development and teaching materials, and

policies for bilingual education are often not fully implemented. It should also be understood that education can be both the reason that indigenous languages can die as well as an avenue to revive them. The meaningful inclusion and efficacious teaching and learning of indigenous languages in the school curriculum will not be accomplished overnight. Regardless of the formidable forces militating against the efforts, there are success stories within the education system where much progress has been made. While many educational institutions pay lip service to the cause of indigenous languages, particularly the former minority languages, in practice, the constitutional provisions are often ignored. It is without a doubt that the resolution lies in people who are motivated to explore ways of meaningfully integrating indigenous languages in the education curriculum.

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