



EdQual

A Research Programme Consortium on
Implementing Education Quality in Low Income Countries



Language of instruction and quality of learning

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Background Concerns 1: language of instruction

We initially constructed a number of hypotheses about L2-medium education in African schools:

With the exception of schools with middle-class intakes, education in a European language (L2) tends to depress school achievement:

- Teachers' ability in L2 may not be high enough to allow them to teach effectively
- Learners' ability in L2 may not be high enough to allow them to learn effectively
- Learning with low ability in the language of instruction (Lol) is slow and ineffective
- Access to the curriculum is restricted

Background Concerns 2: multilingual education

Learning in L2 is not sufficiently acknowledged in the system

- Teachers are not taught in ITE to teach subjects to learners with low ability in L2
- Textbooks are published as if they were to be read by English-fluent users and are therefore difficult to read

Education in 2+ languages is not sufficiently acknowledged

- Formal practices of bilingual education are not recognised
- Status of initial education in African languages (L1) is low
- Initial education in L1 may not be long enough to allow learners to develop necessary academic language skills for later use in L2
- No legal right exists to education in a language learners understand

Background Concerns 3: academic language skills

Academic language skills in L2 and L1 are under-developed

- Skills of dealing with academic information through reading, writing, talking, listening, visuals, notes etc – in L2 and L1 – are under-emphasised in curriculum and teacher education
- There are not sufficient classroom opportunities for reading, writing and talk about subjects in L2 and L1

Project Objectives: to study...

- Characteristics of classroom interaction in subject lessons in L1 and L2
- Teachers' competence in using L1 and L2 for teaching
- Learners' competence in using L1 and L2 for learning
- Difference in the nature of classroom interaction between boys and girls especially with respect to the roles of L1 and L2
- Perceptions of learners, teachers, teacher educators, parents and education authorities of the roles of L1 and L2 in education
- Accessibility of L2-medium textbooks to learners of L2

Study

Sample:

- urban and rural schools: in Ghana 3 primary schools (2 state and 1 private); in Tanzania 8 schools (4 primary, 4 secondary; all state schools)
- Lessons immediately before and after the switch of medium: years 3 and 4 in Ghana, primary year 6 and secondary form 1 in Tanzania
- Subjects: English, African languages, science and maths

Data

- Video observation data
- Interviews with/Questionnaires to stakeholders
- English Language tests
- Textbooks

Structure and Analysis

Structure:

- Baseline study – intervention (short teachers' workshops) – main study

Analysis:

- Video data analysed using an instrument aimed at capturing a wide range of teaching strategies and classroom events
- Interview data analysed by searching for key themes

Outcomes 1: Lol and academic language skills

Teaching strategies

- Teachers used a wider range of pedagogical strategies in lessons conducted in African languages
- Professional development increased the range of pedagogical strategies in both languages

Learner talk

- Learners had more opportunities to talk when working in an African language
- Professional development increased opportunities for learner talk in both languages.

Outcomes 1: Lol and academic language use

Writing

- Learners had limited writing opportunities in both languages,
- Professional development increased the amount of classroom writing in both languages.

Reading

- Learners had very few opportunities to read textbooks in either language
- Professional development made little difference
- In Ghana, stakeholders criticised the absence of textbooks in the African language of instruction.

Outcomes 2: textbooks

Many English-medium textbooks are difficult for learners to read:

- Most readability measures relate to L2-fluent readers. Even for these readers, some textbooks are difficult to read; e.g. A Tanzanian biology textbook for grade 1 secondary (year 7) is readable at year 9-10 by English-fluent readers.
- Some textbooks are therefore very difficult to read for low-L2 readers:
- Textbooks are often not written with low-L2 readers in mind; they are written as if learners were fluent English speakers. This increases reading difficulty.

Outcomes 3: survey

Variety of opinion depending on country, stakeholder, and (in G) state/private institution

Support for the value of both languages

- English is important since it is the key to global functioning (T, G)
- English is important as Lol in private and multilingual primary schools (G)
- African languages make learning understandable (T, G)
- Kiswahili is the language of culture, community and national unity (T)

Concern over the drawbacks of both languages

- inadequate levels of teacher English (T)
- low levels of pupil understanding in English-medium lessons (T)
- Kiswahili is 'undeveloped' (T)
- Absence of textbooks in African languages (G)

Solutions?

- Early start English (G, T)
- Primary education in L1 (T); in both languages (G); Secondary education in L2 (T, G)

Summary of outcomes

Language of instruction

- Teachers offered richer pedagogy in L1
- Learners talked (and understood) more in L1

Textbooks

- Textbooks in L2 were difficult to understand

Academic language use

- Relatively little talk and writing occurred in both L1 and L2
- Very little reading occurred in both L1 and L2

Teacher education

- Brief PD in language in education increased the amount of talk and writing in both L1 and L2

Emerging priorities 1: education in L2

Develop L2-medium pedagogy in teacher education

- Design, trial and implement ITE and INSET modules for teaching subjects in L2 in selected ITE centres

Develop L2-medium pedagogy in textbook publishing

- Construct, trial and implement textbook design protocols for textbooks tailored to the needs of learners with low L2 ability
- Train writing teams in textbook design for L2-medium education
- Apply these principles to ICT-based educational publishing in Africa

Emerging priorities 2: multilingual education

Develop expertise in multilingual education (education in 2+ languages) in African schools

- Set up, run and monitor a small number of experimental bilingual schools to demonstrate raised achievement in both languages
- Develop expertise in MLE within selected centres of teacher education
- Campaign for the recognition and formalisation of education in 2+ languages by governments and agencies

Provide longer initial education in African languages

- Strengthen and extend high-quality initial education in L1

Emerging priorities 3: academic language skills

Raise the profile of academic language skills

- Design, trial and implement ITE and INSET modules for developing academic language skills (esp. reading and writing) within subjects in L1 and L2 in selected ITE centres
- Highlight the importance of academic language skills amongst governments and agencies