Educational Publishing in African Languages, With a Focus on Swahili in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues the case for more educational publications in Swahili as a good medium educational and national development. It acknowledges that education is not only a capital investment in the development of human resources but it also immensely contributes to the development of a nation. However, educational development cannot be achieved without support services such as books in all fields and in a language that is readily understood by many people. This paper shows that Swahili, the national and co-official language of Kenya, can play an important role in the production of educational publications. It explores the extent of publishing in Swahili and other African languages for various educational levels in Kenya, namely children's books, school textbooks, tertiary level, special education, adult education and fiction. While appreciating that there exist few publications in Swahili, this paper argues that Kenya stands to gain a lot if she assigns Swahili a larger role, but it at the same time cautions against downplaying the international significance of English.

Keywords: Swahili, publishing, education, African languages

INTRODUCTION

Third world countries such as Kenya need to rethink their development strategies since they have to survive in the present millennium in a world that is becoming increasingly competitive by the day. Although development is usually associated with economic growth and is commonly measured by success indicators such as Gross National Product, per capita incomes, industrial and infrastructural growth in general, it also includes social development. Social development is a widely participatory process of change in society and is intended to bring about social and material advancement (Chakava 1988). This includes increased equal opportunities, freedom, effective participation in democratic discourse and other valued qualities, for the majority of the people. One way of achieving social development is through education. In Kenya, many parents take their children to school with the hope that they will be able to manipulate their environment so as to fend for themselves and probably be rewarded with good jobs. Education is thus seen as an escape route from poverty, a means to the personal development of the literate person and perhaps

the development of the material lot of the relatives of the educated young man or woman.

However, education, especially formal education, requires support facilities, for which books, for reading in all subjects and disciplines and at all levels, are important supplements (Nyoro 1998). The production of book manuscripts requires more than paper and pen. It is a serious undertaking that requires research. The results of research are disseminated to the populace in print and non-print form. It is notable that the non-print media are not readily accessible to a large population in third world countries when compared with published works. Thus, research, publishing and education are inextricably interdependent in the third world. Subsequently, published materials should be for both formal education clients and also for those not involved in academic work.

A published work makes a lot of sense if it can be widely read. This implies that it should be written in a language of wider communication, especially in a multilingual context like Kenya. Publishing in a language of wider communication will not only reduce its cost of production but it will also reach many people. The fact that Swahili is widely spoken as a second language by at least 65% of Kenyans (Kembo-Sure 1991), than any other language, may tempt one to conclude that it is the ideal language in which to publish in Kenya. However, a combination of the prevailing sociolinguistic situation, bookmarket potential, and most authors' and publishers' aims represents a dilemma, as Altbach (1999:1) has aptly summed up:

Few would argue with the value of making books available in indigenous languages. It would seem obvious that books should be available in languages spoken by large proportions of the population of a country or region. Yet relatively little attention is paid to indigenous language publishing, and in many developing countries, in Africa and elsewhere, most books are published in foreign languages. The large majority of books published in Africa appear in English, French, Portuguese, or other non-African languages.

Although it is obvious that both English and Swahili are spoken in Kenya, two sociolinguistic realities must be borne in mind. Firstly, there are 42 indigenous languages, including Swahili, in Kenya. English is the medium of instruction at all levels of education while Swahili is only a taught and examined subject up to ordinary level, and an optional subject afterwards. In such a scenario, one wonders if most Kenyans sufficiently master Swahili and therefore have the ability to enjoy reading in Swahili. Secondly, whereas English is an international language, Swahili is merely a regional language[1] (Amidu 1995; Mazrui & Mazrui 1995). The two sociolinguistic realities give rise to a number of questions. Since Swahili is not a global language and perhaps few Kenyans enjoy reading in Swahili, are authors (researchers) and publishers investing in it? If so, to what extent are they investing in it? If the world market is limited for

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[1] Mulokozi has argued that Swahili is an international language. However, the evidence he advances does not portray Swahili as an international language in the reading domain. For details, see Mulokozi's (2002) article on the internet.

works in Swahili, is the Kenyan market large enough to justify publishing in Swahili? If not, what is the problem with publishing in Swahili? Of what educational significance is publishing in Swahili?

The motivation for this article is an attempt at answering these questions. The paper argues that publishing in Swahili is integral for educational and also national development, but publishers are not readily receptive to Swahili manuscripts. First, however, it is in order to put in perspective the concept of publishing, which is central to this paper.

1. PUBLISHING

Publishing is the national intellectual bank from which books and all resourceful publications originate (Okwanya 1988). Chakava (1988) further expounds that publishing is a component of the book industry where other players include authors, printers, booksellers, distributors and librarians. Researchers are the authors of manuscripts that publishers deal with. Hence, the two entities (authors/researchers and publishers) are interdependent but their work must be communicated in a recognised language in order to reach their target. This paper focuses on the authors, the publishers and the language of publishing in Kenya. In order to use these players to develop our arguments, we will first sketch the literacy level and reading culture of Kenyans.

2. LITERACY AND READING HABITS IN KENYA

Conducting research, authoring and publishing books presupposes the availability of consumers consisting of a literate population. Formal education and the adult literacy education programmes have raised the literacy level in the country. Kenya has a fairly large literate population although the level varies according to the source one is citing, i.e. 54% (Makotsi & Nyariki 1997), 75% (Callaghan 1997), 69% (Article 19 1999) or 70% (Republic of Kenya 1999). In spite of the differences, it is evident that the level of literacy is high. However, it has been noted that reading habits are largely underdeveloped amongst a majority of Kenyans (Chakava 1988, 1996; Makotsi & Nyariki 1997; Rotich 1997). One possible explanation for this eventuality is that Kenyans read only for examinations (Odaga 1997), although other factors also exist.

To begin with, the reading habit was not cultivated when the British first introduced it into their colony in the 19th century. The goal at that time, as it still is even today, is to acquire education so as to get jobs, and once this is achieved people stop reading (Odaga 1997). Second, and this is very crucial, are the living standards. Living standards are still low, with unemployment and underemployment persisting. Per capita income in 1996 stood at US$ 250 (World Bank 1996) and the economy has continued dwindling in recent years.

With meagre incomes, the people need to budget for basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter before they possess a surplus to buy books, which are considered a luxury. This is an impossible feat. Public libraries could be an alternative but they are poorly stocked (Chakava 1996; Callaghan 1997). Notwithstanding the foregoing, it is clear that there exists a literate population to warrant research and publishing. What is required is a concerted effort to encourage reading.

3. PUBLISHING HOUSES IN KENYA

Publishing houses in Kenya fall under two broad categories: transnational/multinational and indigenous publishers. The multinationals are the large and established publishing firms, usually owned by western publishers with branches in several countries. The indigenous firms are those owned by the government or private individuals. This categorisation also reflects the history of these publishers. That is, the establishment of multinationals has preceded the indigenous ones.

At the advent of publishing in East Africa, publishing and printing were inseparable (Mulokozi 1999). That is, the publisher and the printer were one and the same entity. Callaghan (1997) observes that the Church Missionary Society printed the first books published in Kenya in 1894. These were hymnbooks and Bible translations. However, Makotsi and Nyariki (1997) cite 1887 as the year when Christian missionaries set up the first printing press at Freretown mission near Mombasa to supplement imported reading materials. This mainly produced materials in English and local languages. The next publishing landmark came in 1940 when Ndia Kuu press was established as a response to African demands for quality education (Callaghan 1997). Then, in 1948, the East African Literature Bureau with its headquarters in Nairobi and offices in Dar es Salaam and Kampala was initiated. It was set up by the East African High Commission as a result of a call from Kenyans for indigenously published African reading materials (Callaghan 1997). However, real publishing was done in London, where selected quality manuscripts produced in Kenya were sent for printing. By so doing, the economic and cultural progress was hindered since all the profits accruing from such publishing were pocketed by the parent companies overseas while Kenya did not benefit.

The period between 1950 and 1965 saw the advent of more exotic publishers through a number of multinationals, i.e. Longman Green (1950), Oxford University Press (1952), Heinemann (1965), Thomas Nelson (1952), Evans Brothers (1952), Macmillan, Pitman, and Cambridge University Press.

Meanwhile, it has been observed that before independence political documents were printed by small nationalist printers, notably Henry Muoria (Callaghan 1997). This printer offered an alternative to what the missionary presses produced. Callaghan (1997:2) further notes that at "this time there was

little material being published which could aid cultural development". Real indigenous publishers appeared on the scene from 1965. This was when the East African Publishing House came into being through the East African Institute for Social and Cultural Affairs. The institute aimed at aiding cultural development by producing a journal containing East African opinions on many areas of life in society.

In addition, following recommendations of the Kenya Education Commission (Republic of Kenya 1964), the Jomo Kenyatta Foundation (JKF) was established to work alongside the East African Literature Bureau (later, the Kenya Literature Bureau – KLB) in producing educational materials for the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE). In the same year (1964), a state corporation, the East African Publishing House, was started. Since that time a number of private publishing houses have sprung up, including Equatorial Publishers, Comb Books, Shungwaya Press, Mowa Publishers, Lake Publishers, Gazelle Books, Foundation Books, Bookwise, Transafrica Press, Phoenix Publishers, Guru Publishers, Dhillon Publishers, Jemisik Cultural Books, Shirikon Publishers, Central Arts Promotion, Focus Publishers, Maillu Publishing House, Single Publishers, Midi Teki, Gakaara Publishing Service, Mohans Publishers, Sasa Sema Publications, Herald Publishing House, Moi University Press and the University of Nairobi Press. In addition, two former multinational companies have now been indigenised, i.e. East African Educational Publishers (formerly Heinemann) and Longhorn Kenya (formerly Longman Kenya Ltd).

This catalogue shows that Kenya has no scarcity of publishers. Although some of the indigenous publishers have fizzled out largely as a result of mismanagement and lack of funds (Chakava 1996), their number is still high. Makotsi & Nyariki (1997) report that between 1977 and 1997 the number of publishing houses increased by 60%, of which 95% were indigenous. In addition, Mulokozi (1999) notes that more than 130 publishers are registered in Kenya. Mulokozi (2002:7) further affirms that Kenya's publishing and distribution network is intact. We should, therefore, like to examine the kind of literature that such a large number of publishers produce and in what quantities they do so to meet the needs of some of the various educational categories, with particularly close emphasis on Swahili.

4. EDUCATIONAL PUBLICATIONS IN SWAHILI

It is difficult to write accurately about the performance of the publishing industry in meeting the needs of various readers. This is because some publications can be classified under materials for more than a single category of readers. However, for purposes of clarity, this article discusses the publications under the following categories: children's literature, school textbooks, tertiary institutions, special education, adult literacy and fiction.

4.1 CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

It is notable that until the 1980s there were few books for children published in Kenya and so children had little opportunity to learn to read and develop a reading habit from an early age (Callaghan 1997). However, publishing for this category is now growing fast, with many publishers developing series for children. In spite of this, it appears that many indigenous publishers have provided for children's needs in both English and Swahili, but most multinationals publish them either in English or in Swahili, but not both. Those publishers with publications in the two languages appear in Table 1 with a summary of the titles[2].

Table 1. Children's books by various publishers as of 1999.

Publisher	No. in Swahili	No. in English	Series Title
East African Educational Publishers	4		Paukwa Pakawa Vitabu vya Nyota Vitabu vya Mkuki Vitabu vya Sayari
East African Educational Publishers		3	Junior Readers Sparrow Readers Sunbird
Oxford University Press	4		Hadithi za Chiriku Hapo Kale Hadithi za Allan Paka Jimi
Oxford University Press		1	Rhino Readers
Longhorn		1	Anchor Series
Phoenix Publishers		1	Children's Storybooks
Jacaranda Designs	1		Mchesi Series
Sasa Sema Publications	5		Abunwasi Macho ya Mji Gitonga Safari ya anga za Juu Manywele

From Table 1 it appears that the thirst for children's educational books and especially in Swahili is far from being satisfied. This is based on the fact that there are over 130 publishing houses in Kenya (cf. 5.1) and in 1999 only six had publications for children.

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[2] The main source of the quantitative information cited in this article is the various catalogues produced by some of the firms in 1999.

4.2 SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS

It is a fact that school textbooks play a major role as the prime developers of education (Callaghan 1997; Makotsi & Nyariki 1997 Brock-Utne 2000). The school textbook category is the most profitable and safest category of books for both publishers and authors to invest in. It constitutes 90% of Kenya's publishing industry (Chakava 1996). Unfortunately, until 1997 the Ministry of Education used to release a list of recommended books and their sourcing every year (Muita 1998). Usually, these were books developed by KIE and published by the state corporations – KLB and JKF. Until that year, KIE used the services of subject panellists to author and produce school textbooks cheaply. This was a cheap alternative because panellists were paid salaries but not royalties. They also had no copyright on the books whose manuscripts they prepared. The fact that the books were the ones recommended by the Ministry of Education made it mandatory for everybody to buy them. Hence, no efforts were made either to market them or to improve their quality. Subsequently, the state had an edge over the private publishers.

Be that as it may, most private publishers invested in school textbooks in Swahili. However, to date, there are no Swahili books in other subjects apart from those for language and literature, because English is the medium of instruction (cf. 1). Swahili became a mandatory subject taught and examined at primary and secondary levels in 1985. However, at the tertiary level, where critical thinking is developed, Swahili is not compulsorily taught. This policy and practice has a negative impact on the language in general and on publishing in particular.

Talking about school textbooks is incomplete until one refers to policy complications in publishing for lower primary school education up to grade 3. Publishing for this level has to be done in English, Swahili and mother tongues. In the 1970s an attempt was made to publish the *Tujifunze Kusoma Kikwetu* Series (TKK) in each of the 42 languages spoken in Kenya. This attempt did not flourish as publication was achieved only in 17 languages (Republic of Kenya 1999). Although UNESCO argues that teaching a child in her/his mother tongue is the best strategy (UNESCO in Rubanza 1999), there is a counter-argument from the publishers' perspective. Chakava (1995) asserts that publishing in African languages is not possible because they are numerous and translators are needed, orthographies for some are undeveloped, and it is expensive to publish in every language. However, Chakava (1995) notes that exceptions exist in the case of Swahili in East Africa. He observes that it is spoken by a lot of people and that if it is given more support at every level of its usage – social, educational, cultural and economic - it can play an immense role in education. However, English enjoys a special advantage over Swahili and other native languages as it is the medium of instruction from grade 4 upwards and books in English stand a better chance of commercial success (Chakava 1996). Therefore,

a large amount of publishing is done in English. For instance, between 1985 and 1989 English could be seen in more publications than all of the other languages, as Table 2 shows:

Table 2. Summary of school textbooks published.

National Languages/Year	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	Totals
Swahili	28	38	30	54	69	219
Others – Local	2	5	3	9	25	44
English	82	110	161	161	263	777
Others – Foreign	3	-	-	-	2	5
Total	115	153	194	224	359	1,045

Adapted from Chakava (1996:32)

4.3 TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

Tertiary institutions include middle level colleges and universities. Candidates at these levels usually pursue a professional course leading to a specific career, and the medium of instruction is usually English. However, Swahili may be used to expound on a lesson in technical and vocational institutions that offer technical courses. Thus, except for people taking careers leading to Swahili studies and teaching, the domain of Swahili is limited at the tertiary level. Hence, the market for Swahili books is small and few publishers invest in Swahili books. For instance, Amidu (1995) observes that writing in Swahili at university level is scarce. He continues by saying that between 1984 and 1988 it was difficult to get a well-known Swahili book on the market. But he notes that the situation has changed for the better since 1991. A glance at the catalogues distributed by a few publishers reveals that in 1999 Nairobi University Press had 4 titles and OUP had 2, while JKF and Longhorn Kenya Ltd. had one each. If these statistics are compared with publications in English, the picture becomes appalling. In addition, Kiswahili authors writing tertiary-level books are also discouraged by the length of time that it takes for a Swahili manuscript to appear. For instance, the principle author of the present article has been waiting for his manuscript on *Mbinu za mawasiliano kwa Kiswahili* (Communication Skills in Kiswahili) to be published by Moi University Press since 1999. In brief, publishing in Swahili for tertiary levels is unimpressive.

4.4 SPECIAL EDUCATION

Special education means a programme designed to meet the unique needs of people with special education needs. Learners receiving special education have

educational handicaps such as physical, hearing, visual, mental, emotional, language, learning disabilities and multiple handicaps (Republic of Kenya 1999). The Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) founded in 1986 trains teachers for this category of people, where previously it was Kamwenja and Highridge teacher training colleges that trained such teachers. Special education units have been established in many regular primary and secondary schools, although there are also specialised schools, albeit too few, for this category of learners. For example, there are only 497 special education programmes, which include 385 units and 94 schools, including vocational and technical institutions (Republic of Kenya 1999) in a country where 10% of the population suffers from handicaps (Kenya Society of the Physically Handicapped 2001).

The language policy that obtains for the regular educational system also prevails in special education (cf. 1). Subsequently, Swahili publications are also paid little attention. In addition, it is doubtful whether the learners and teachers have a positive attitude towards teaching and learning Swahili, according to a recent study (Bota 2002). The study reports that both teachers and learners found Swahili burdensome, time wasting and difficult to learn, especially among the deaf population. Both learners and teachers recommended that Swahili should be removed from their curriculum. The study was confined to western Kenya and the investigator recommended that a more encompassing national study could establish the authenticity of the learners' and teachers' claims. Despite this recommendation, it is evident that Swahili publications for the special needs of special education do not exist.

Swahili publications are particularly lacking in Braille. Visually-impaired students, especially at university, rely on the philanthropy of sighted students to read books to them. To make matters worse, the visually-impaired students taking Swahili have to listen to their colleagues reading for them the literature that is published in English, so that they can then analyse it and write their assignments in Swahili. It might have been fairer if these books had been published in Swahili.

4.5 ADULT LITERACY

An interesting scenario unfolds in adult education. One might argue that the government of independent Kenya has been consistent in its efforts to eradicate illiteracy. Two major campaigns (in 1967 and 1979) have been launched, in addition to the normal adult literacy programmes. In 1967, the government used the same books prepared for teaching in primary schools for teaching adult literacy classes. This experiment was a flop. But some progress was made when Swahili was introduced in the second attempt in 1972. This new policy was, however, rescinded because learners and teachers found it difficult to use Swahili. To date, 17 mother tongues, namely Ateso, Dholuo, Ekegusii, Gikuyu, Igikuria, Kalenjin, Kidawida, Swahili, Kikamba, Kimeru, Oluluyia, Maasai,

Pokot, Sabawoot, Ngaturkana, Al Somaali, Kiembu, Borana and Rendile, are being used to introduce literacy. Thus, even the publications used are in these languages. However, Swahili and English are introduced for post-literacy classes. It is doubtful if this language-use practice is achieving the goal of adult literacy, which is to produce a literate population that will participate in national development.

In addition, a clear-cut government statement on language for post-literacy is lacking both in policy and practice and, by extension, publishing. For instance, since 1996, and in collaboration with the DAE in the Ministry of Culture and Social Services, the GTZ has been sponsoring a technical co-operation project which includes the development, production and dissemination of post-literacy materials in 15 districts in the country. The GTZ works in collaboration with non-governmental organisations such as the Literacy and Evangelism Fellowship and the Kenya Bible Society, and the Ministries of Health, Information, Agriculture, Labour and Education. The GTZ's primary objective is "to enhance the capacities of individuals and organisations by conveying or mobilising knowledge, skills, or by improving the conditions for their application" (GTZ in Thompson 2001:10). Learners are involved in the discussion and production of learning materials that are useful to their needs. This is done through tapping into indigenous knowledge. Under the theme 'Talk a Book', learners facilitate documentation of their knowledge in a variety of thematic areas such as animal and crop husbandry, irrigation, beekeeping etc. This idea will recognise the richness of indigenous knowledge and traditional culture, including the oral traditions of the populace. The project plans to publish these manuscripts as post-literacy materials in English, Swahili and local languages.

It is, however, surprising that the local languages have on some occasions been omitted. For instance, a report from Korr, Marsabit District, shows that of the six draft booklets prepared in the year 2000 for use among the Rendile speakers, none was in Rendile, while five were in English, and only one in Swahili. A recommendation made at the end of the writing workshop stated that Rendile should also be used in the booklets in future. As Ogechi (2001) claims, the manuscript writing programme should not have used English at all because the publications' indigenous knowledge targets the Rendile, who do not need English in their day-to-day activities. The only other language that should have been used is Swahili since some of the extension workers with whom the Rendile interact do not speak Rendile, but use, instead, Swahili. It may be safe to conclude that the trend in Marsabit is also experienced in all the participating 15 districts, and the proposal for Marsabit could, therefore, be applicable to them, too.

Since Swahili has to be used to unite all Kenyans and the native languages have to be used in teaching Swahili at the initial stages, it might be both advisable and feasible to print bilingual books, as has been done successfully in Namibia (Brock-Utne 2000:184-209). That is, a book should have a local language version on one page and Swahili on the other. This would then be

killing two birds with one stone: the single title would have been used for the vernacular and the Swahili versions at the same time, and secondly, it would be possible, whenever the need arises, to use such a title in interlibrary loan between libraries located in regions where speakers use different mother tongues. In the past, works by vernacular authors such as David Maillu are reported to have failed to sell well, which has prompted him to turn to English (Pugliese 1994). However, the same author has been exploring how well bilingual books also involving Swahili could sell in Kenya.

4.6 FICTION

The fiction category consists of people who read not only for academic purposes but also for pleasure. Regarding fiction, Callaghan (1997:3) notes:

> There is a wide range of different material which would appeal to a diverse market. If there is a large selection of reading material the market is more likely to find something of interest which will provide them with more motivation to read, especially if the works are also published in their native languages.

Unfortunately most fiction is imported or written in English. In addition, as earlier noted (cf. 3), Kenyans (especially the older generation, for whom education was for academic, economic and social achievement and not for life) are not known to read for pleasure. Thus, even if the fiction books were produced locally, they might still not attract many readers. Regardless of that issue, publishers have continued to develop fiction books for general readers, although the number of publishers involved is too small. For instance, catalogues for 1999 in the following firms revealed the picture thus:

Table 3. Fiction titles per publisher as of 1999.

Publisher	Number of titles	Series
Phoenix	6	-
OUP	6	Hadithi za Chiriku
EAEP	42	Waandishi wa Afrika
Amref	1	
JKF		
Total	55	

The table shows that a lot needs to be done about publishing Swahili fiction in Kenya.

5. CHALLENGES FACING EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING IN SWAHILI

Thus far our discussion has discovered that there exist some educational publications in Swahili in Kenya. However, it also appears that the number of titles and areas/levels of publications in foreign languages (English) far outnumbers Swahili publications. The reasons for this state are many. Although we have alluded to some in the preceding sections, we wish to single out the following cardinal challenges which educational publishing in Swahili faces.

The genesis of the problems involved in publishing in Swahili is Kenya's language policy in education, which is biased towards English. Up to grade 3, ethnic languages are the medium of instruction in rural areas, while Swahili and/or English is/are used in towns, depending on the town concerned. For example, in Nairobi English is preferred to Swahili, while the latter is the choice in other towns with multiethnic populations. In spite of this, nationally speaking, English is a subject of instruction from grade 1. It takes over as the medium of instruction from grade 4 and beyond, while Swahili (since 1985) remains a taught and examined subject up to ordinary level. This policy has a negative influence on Swahili reading. Neither primary nor secondary school leavers, especially the great majority of university graduates, have a sufficient command of Swahili that would enable them to enjoy reading in the language (Republic of Kenya 1981). The lack of a sophisticated Swahili reading market deprives publishers an important field of activity. In consequence, they prefer English language publishing, which has a wider market.

The Swahili readership outside the classroom is minimal. Most books in Swahili are either school textbooks or fiction that has the potential to be selected as set books; if not, then, they are children's literature (Okwanya 1990). This causes publishers to lack the motivation to accept too many Swahili manuscripts. Even newspapers and magazines in Kiswahili are few. Mulokozi (2002) correctly observes that the Kenyan Swahili print media (newspapers) has not expanded. Only two newspapers have a national circulation, namely *Taifa Leo* and *Kenya Leo*.

As mentioned earlier, individual ordinary Kenyans cannot afford to buy books since the price of books is beyond their reach. For publishers, the high cost of paper, and other production materials and services makes the final cost of producing a book high. This cost is passed on to the purchasers, who have to strain to read such publications in a language they have only poorly mastered.

It has been noted that the purchasing power of people who read in African languages, Swahili included, is limited (Altbach 1999; Pugliese 1994; APNET 2001). Although the number of speakers of Swahili is large, it is doubtful if the number of these speakers who can read and afford to buy books is equally large. Economic power is concentrated in the hands of those literate in English. In consequence, lack of purchasing power is viewed as an integral problem for publishing in Swahili. It is not possible to publish books in a given language if

no market exists. Public and school libraries that could buy books and provide the publishers with the financial base necessary for staying afloat are either poorly stocked or non-existent.

Besides economic problems, Kenyan society is largely an oral one, as has also been noted in the case of neighbouring Tanzania (Mulokozi 1999) and Uganda (Magoba 2002). Morton (1998) notes that "Kenya is a land where the storyteller is revered and folk memory powerful", while the written word remains peripheral.

Further, Swahili-publishing by indigenous publishing houses demotivates authors who are paid too little in royalties, which again are highly taxed. The companies can only invest in Swahili texts, especially non-school textbooks and pay good royalties, if they use profits earned from school textbooks. In principle, no level ground for business competition existed between the state-owned corporations and private publishers in the lucrative school textbook market until 1998. In practice, however, the problem still persists, since some private publishers have an edge over others. For example, in June 2002 the Ministry of Education launched a new curriculum for schools to be implemented from January 2003. Publishers were requested to present new titles reflecting the new syllabus to the KIE by October 2002 for vetting, selection and the compilation of a list of approved books. However, publishers were reportedly complaining that some KIE staff who have been privy to the impending new syllabus leaked it to some publishers in advance[3]. Those publishers had therefore already started preparing manuscripts for the new syllabus. Publishers with such advance information will in consequence had had a good chance to beat the October 2002 deadline for submitting their new recommendations. This means that they will have undue advantage over their business competitors. The companies without this kind of advance information may, for their part, eventually run out of funds with which to publish in the unlucrative Swahili language.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this paper was to unravel the language dilemma in educational publishing in African languages in Kenya with close reference to Swahili. There is ample evidence to show that publishers do not hold a brief for publishing in Swahili. The language policy regarding the medium for education is skewed against Swahili. The educational system adopted at independence has continued to use English as the official language and medium of instruction in schools. If

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[3] Newspaper reports in the *Daily Nation* and the *East African Standard* for June 18, 2002 contained complaints about unscrupulous KIE staff who had smuggled out copies of the new school syllabus and were already preparing manuscripts in cahoots with some publishers long before the new syllabuses were officially released on June 17, 2002.

the use of Swahili had been promoted, it would have necessitated local educational authorship and publishing. This would have ensured a better mastery of the language and a bigger market for books in Swahili. It is clear that there is no widespread market for Swahili publications in Kenya because of the inability of a majority of the population to enjoy reading in Swahili, combined with a lack of purchasing power amongst the poor.

In spite of the problems it should be emphasised that, since education is central to development, its planning, including the development of reading materials, should be conducted very systematically to ensure that all areas of study are catered for and in a language that the majority understands. The nature, content and worthiness of the literature produced, together with its relevance to Kenya's educational and cultural development, should be cautiously considered. This is because books are crucial for the preservation of a people's culture. The language in which they are written is equally crucial. Language embodies the cultural values of a people. English can indeed be used to express African cultures in Kenya. However, the African cultures are best expressed in an African language, namely Swahili. This does not in any way imply that we are advocating the abolition of English from the curriculum and publishing; rather, what is required is a careful injection of more Swahili publications in all fields, especially through translations. The net result of this approach will be increased literacy. For instance, by using Swahili, Tanzania has achieved very high levels of literacy, i.e. 85% (Chakava 1996) or 90% (Amidu 1995; Mulokozi 1999). Swahili could be turned into an educational asset in Kenya through increased publishing in the language. Above all, it could enhance national unity and cohesion, which are essential prerequisites for national development. It is this development which Kenya so badly needs in order to be able to compete effectively in the twenty-first century. Hence, besides using English in educational publications, there is need to take advantage of the natural endowment and heritage - Swahili - to enhance social development.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DAE	Department of Adult Education
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Society for Technical Cooperation)
JKF	Jomo Kenyatta Foundation
KIE	Kenya Institute of Education
KLB	Kenya Literature Bureau
OUP	Oxford University Press
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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