



# Local Languages as a Human Right in Education: Comparative Cases from Africa

*Zehlia Babaci-Wilhite*

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There seems to be general agreement that children learn better when they understand what the teacher is saying. In Africa this is not the case. Instruction is given in a foreign language, a language neither pupils nor the teachers understand well. This is the greatest educational problem there is in Africa. This is the problem this book discusses and it is therefore an important book. The recent focus on quality education becomes meaningless when teaching is given in a language pupils do not understand. Babaci-Wilhite concludes that any local curriculum that ignores local languages and contexts risks a loss of learning quality and represent a violation of children's rights in education. The book is highly recommended. Birgit Brock-Utne, Professor of Education and Development, University of Oslo, Norway Zehlia Babaci-Wilhite's illuminating African case studies display a mastery of the literature on policies related to not only language policies integrally related to human rights in education, but to the relationship between education and national development. The book provides a paradigm shift from focusing on the issue of schooling access to the very meaning education has for personal and collective identity and affirmation. As such, it will appeal to a wide audience of education scholars, policy makers and practitioners. Robert F. Arnove, Chancellor's Professor Emeritus of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA A very important and timely book that makes crucial contribution to critical reviews of the policies about languages of instruction and rights in education in Africa. Brilliantly crafted and presented with great clarity the author puts into perspective issues that need to be addressed to improve academic performance in Africa's educational systems in order to attain the goal of providing education for all as well as restoring rights in education. This can be achieved through critical examination of languages of instruction and of the cultural relevance of the curricula. Definitely required reading for scholars of education and human rights in general, in Africa in particular, as well as for education policy makers. Sam Mchombo, Associate Professor of African Languages and Linguistics, University of California, Berkeley, USA This book contributes to enlighten a crucial academic as well as a democratic and philosophical issue: The right to education and the rights in education, as it is seen in the dilemmas of the right to use your local language. It offers a high-level research and the work is both cutting edge and offers new knowledge to the fields of democracy, human rights and education. The book is a unique contribution to a very important academic discussion on rights in education connecting to language of instruction in schools, politics and power, as well as it frames the questions of why education and language can be seen as a human right for sustainable development in Africa. The actuality of the book is disturbing: We need to take the debate on human rights in education for the children of the world, for their future and for their right to a cultural identity. Inga Bostad, Director of the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, University of Oslo, Norway

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