

16 (10) Use of mother tongue as medium of instruction

16 j) 633
Report of
Native
Economic
Commission

" a further implication of these ^(see Sec. 7) views is the essential need for using the vernacular as a medium of instruction. Proper comprehension of the fundamentals is of more importance than the learning of a single accomplishment, like a European language. Owing to the short school life of a Native, he learns the accomplishment badly - the fundamental not at all.

634 " From the purely economic point of view, therefore, the attempt to educate the Native through a strange medium involves a large amount of waste of the short time which he spends at school".

NB - Govt schools work through vernacular, now.
State-aided schools do as they please.

OFS Code for Primary Schools.

- 7 a) up to & including Std 4 the medium of instruction for all subjects, excluding Afrikaans & English, shall be the mother tongue of the pupils.
- b) where there is a mixed group the mother tongue of the majority shall be used as medium.
- c) -
- d) It is strongly recommended that the mother tongue be used as medium of instruction in Stds 5 & 6. Concerning the subjects where the mother tongue is not used as medium of instruction one-half of such subjects shall be taught through the medium of English - the remaining half through the medium of Afrikaans.

Cape Primary Schools

20 all instruction should be given in the language best understood by the pupils. The medium of instruction up to & including Std II in all subjects (except the official languages) shall be the home language of the pupils. where the home language is a native language, it may be necessary gradually to substitute an official language as chief medium of instruction in classes above Std II, but it is desired that teachers will conduct experiments in the use of the Native language as a medium of instruction, beginning with subjects of which their knowledge is sufficiently thorough to make them independent of the terminology of the official languages.

Vol. Primary Schools.

In order to ensure that every step in the learning process is fully grasped by the pupils, it is necessary to proceed methodically from the known to the unknown. "The great known which is of foremost importance in the education of all races is the child's mother tongue as medium of instruction.

Education of the Native for his present needs must be based upon & grow out of his home-life, & the chief link with the child's experience of every day activities is his mother tongue. The first step in education must, therefore, necessarily be to make use of the child's knowledge of - through his own language. --- To learn how to read & write this spoken language well is the first major step in every sound educational system. --- It is of vital importance that the ideas built up in the process of education should become perfectly clear by being interwoven with the ideas already possessed by the pupils, & these are rooted in the vernacular ---

The medium of instruction in the Native schools is to be the home language of the pupils for the first 12 school years, that is, up to & including Std II. In certain subjects such as religion & hygiene, where the subject matter is familiar, it is advisable to retain the vernacular presentation throughout.

Enterprising teachers who know their subject matter sufficiently well to be independent of the English terminology, should conduct experiments in the teaching of the higher classes to ascertain whether instruction through the home language would not accelerate the learning process as a whole without ~~interfere~~ affecting unduly the standard attained in the first official language.

Inter-departmental Committee on Native Education 1935-36

439.

"The application of the principle of mother-tongue medium in S. African Native schools is however a matter of grave difficulty. As has been shown in previous sections of this report the number of officially recognised Bantu languages in S. Africa is seven: Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana, Southern Sotho, Northern Sotho, Thonga & Venda; & the difficulties arising in the matter of medium in Native schools in multi-~~lingual~~ vernacular areas are, as may be imagined, very serious. Further, it is to be remembered that the literature of most of the Bantu languages of South Africa is of the slightest, & that in several languages, of Venda,

Thonga, Tsoana & Northern Sotho, there are not even complete series of Readers available for primary classes; that text-books in Native languages in such subjects as arithmetic, history, geography, hygiene & nature study are practically non-existent; & that agreed terminologies in most subjects of instruction included in the primary school courses do not exist in any of the 7 languages of the Union."

441

The Committee recommended that the mother-tongue should as a general rule be the medium of instruction at least during the first 4 years of the child's school life.

446

The problems of multi-vernacular areas arise in most acute form in urban areas, particularly the Witwatersrand. Of 24 Witwatersrand schools, in 1935, "none had fewer than 5, & fifteen had 7 or 8 different home-languages represented on their rolls".

449.

The Committee recommends "that where such re-organisation is practicable (problems of accommodation & of denominational interests may sometimes prove insuperable) ----

- (i) That in multi-vernacular areas Native schools should, wherever possible, be organised on a language basis;
- (ii) that, where the provision of separate schools for pupils speaking each of the main Bantu languages is impracticable, experiments should be made in re-organizing Native schools on a language-group basis, the schools ~~should~~ to be classified as either Zulu-Xhosa or Sotho-Tsoana schools;
- (iii) that, ~~whether~~ where neither of the above solutions is found practicable, schools in multi-vernacular areas might, subject to the approval of the Provincial Superintendent of Native Education, be allowed to introduce an official language as the medium of instruction at an earlier stage than is ordinarily permissible; & if no satisfactory arrangements can be made for the teaching of a Native language or languages as subjects, the teaching of the other official language as a subject in lieu of a Native language should also be permitted."

Extract from Para 451

% of pupils speaking each language
 (OFS - Zol - from statistics supplied by Ed. Depts.
 Cape - Natal - estimated).

	OFS	Zol.	Cape	Natal.
Southern Sotho	59	6.3	0.3	1
Isoana (Western Sotho)	23	28.7	0.6	
Northern Sotho	-	29.6	-	
Zulu	10	15.7	-	99
Xhosa	5	5.1	99.1	
Venda	-	3.7		
Tsonga	-	4.9		
Afrikaans	3	3.9		
English	-	0.6		
Other.	-	1.5		
no of pupils involved	26,841	92,767	169,000.	54,500.

Educational Adaptations in a Changing Society

The Social Psychology of Bilingualism Prof. J. Hughes.

"Dr Saer was the first to explore the problem (of bilingualism) on a large scale. He considered that it should be referred to the 'Cool arbitrament of Science'. He subjected to the technique of intelligence testing thousands of school-children of all types of intellect. His work, therefore, should be of considerable applicability for the purposes of educational statesmanship ---

He never said that bilingualism, per se, was a disadvantage, neither did he say that bilingualism in the early years of childhood was invariably, or necessarily, a disadvantage. He did say that the premature formal study of the second language, before the mother-tongue was firmly established, seemed, under certain conditions of school instruction, to impair the child's intellectual development, but he made an exception of cases where the child picked up the second language in play or informally by play-way methods ---

The bilingual nations of the world -- usually occupy a territory for the possession of which they have disputed in the past --- the wounds are still there, psychologically speaking, both in the ex-victor - in the ex-vanquished"

Bilingualism & its Problems (Prof. Pierre Bovet - Switzerland)

"Confirmed by researches of Frank Smith & John Hughes, Saer's enquiry had an immediate effect on Welsh schools; the use of English as the only vehicular language of teaching was delayed until the age of 9

a Welsh School Inspector.

1917
Binet's Intelligence Scale used.

16(11) Future role of Native Languages in
Education & in the Community

(various of ...)

16K) From "Adult Education in SA", 1945.

(Chap. II para 23)

"Some Natives declare that should they exert themselves to develop their own language & culture alongside our Western civilisation, this would lead to intellectual & economic inferiority. Many of their leaders, however, do not agree with this point of view & are of opinion that they will be able to make progress intellectually & materially without losing their national character. However this may be, there can be no doubt that the various written Bantu languages will have to play a very important part in the education of those who speak them"

Tol primary school code

The following is a table of the languages which would be taught, with their dialects: -

Zulu - Swazi, Ndebele.
Northern (Transvaal) Sotho - Pedi, Ilôkwa, Matlala, Molete, Kôpa, etc.
Western Sotho (Isoana) - Kôna, Kgalla, Fhurutri, Ilhaping, Rolong, Ngoato, etc.

See 16(10)

FB.

4 main groups - Sotho, Nguni (Xhosa & Zulu), Thonga & Venda.

Languages studied & used as medium, & which have been standardised, are used as medium are: -

Southern Sotho - Basutoland, Transkei (along borders of Basutoland), Eastern & Northern OFS, Southern Tol, & enclaves in Natal.

Isoana or Western Sotho - Western Transvaal, Bechuanaland Protectorate, Bechuanaland, Griqualand west, Western OFS, Shaba Nkhu
(NB in 1936 there were 2 sets of publications in different orthographies)

Northern Sotho - Eastern & Northern Transvaal.

Xhosa - Transkei & Arkei, Griqualand west & Cape Town.
Enclaves in OFS & Transvaal.

Zulu - Natal & Zululand, SE Transvaal, NE OFS (along Natal border).

Thonga - NE Tol bordering on PEA.

Venda - N. Tol up to Rhodesian border.

See 16(12)

Native Languages

Transoceanic Primary

The Native languages taught in a school will, as a rule, be the standardized form of the language of which the children's vernacular is a dialect. --

Generally the child's home language shows any or all of the following defects:

- (i) It may be narrowly dialectical & thus limited in its vocabulary to the range of a single dialect;
- (ii) It may be impure in that it contains to a greater or lesser extent unwarranted borrowings from European languages or from Bantu languages of different clusters;
- (iii) It may be unrefined in that it contains slang or uncultured expressions. ---

"It will be found that while the rural child's vocabulary is as a rule much purer than that of the urban child, it is more limited dialectically & in the ideas relating to European civilisation. The vocabulary of the urban child though it is more extensive in ideas relating to European civilisation it is more impure!"

"The teaching of the grammatical & linguistic structure of the language should not be based on the grammar of a European language --- What the pupil needs is to learn the function & use of words -- It will be found that the parts of speech in the Native language are not necessarily the same as those of a European language & if they are the same, their respective functions do not necessarily agree. The ideal, therefore, is to build up a grammar of the Native languages from the study of the languages themselves. It will also be necessary to build up a simple school grammatical terminology & the terms used should be self-explanatory. It is hoped that the quarterly magazine will be used for exchange of ideas upon this subject. ---"

Pupils & teachers should not be limited to the vocabulary of the language as distinct from the dialect. "Good dialectical words should be cultivated to increase the range of the vocabulary of the standard form. But, where certain grammatical forms or letter symbols have been adopted as standard then dialectical variations should be banned."

16 (12) Possible grouping, or amalgamation of
Native Languages

Irak - Sept 6th 1946.

article by "Nomnganga".

--- " Dr Nkhlapo & his disciples claim that Zulu & Xhosa, Ndebele, Shangaan, & perhaps Swazi could easily be united (into Nguni), inasmuch as they do not differ radically from one another; while Sotho (Southern & Northern), Pedi, Chuana, etc would be brought under one head to form the Sotho language. ---

" Today the African is forced to learn English & Afrikaans because they are the key to the pantry & the gateway of knowledge, especially English with its vast literature. Necessity, it has been said, is the mother of learning. But when it comes to the question of Bantu linguae franca in the Union, one comes up against a number of difficulties which the Amalgamationists have apparently overlooked, the main one being the absence of the need to create a new language, for the Bantu find they can get on well with one another if they speak English or Afrikaans. In Johannesburg it is not uncommon to find people conversing in all the four dialects of Bantu; nor does a Zulu find it difficult to understand Xhosa, nor a Mosotho Sechoana. In fact, so close is the relationship between the dialects within each of the two major groups as to justify the hopes of the Amalgamationists. But so was, & still is, the relationship of standard English to other English dialects.

" The Amalgamationists overlook yet another very important factor in language, - that is, that language is organic, is something dynamic, alive & growing, - that behind it is weighted the tradition of past generations. Once an artificial thing like that suggested by them is put into operation, it is dead, ... for it is divorced from the traditions of the people ... neither does it serve the needs of the people, which are being efficiently met by another language. With the advent of English & Afrikaans, the Bantu languages came into contact with many new things for which the Bantu had no names " - thus words were taken over from other languages as they were, or were modified to suit the Bantu mode of speech.

" The purists object even to this simple

Borrowing & incorporation of words from other languages even though (they are not usually aware of this) their own languages can hardly be regarded as "pure". Xhosa, for instance, has borrowed from Hottentot & Bushman languages (which are non-Bantu) the clicks which now form a substantial part of its sounds. English grew by borrowings - - -

"Another difficulty is the people themselves, who will, in spite of the Nguni & Sotho of the Amalgamationists, stick to their own dialects." - ^{every} 1 of introduced in the schools they would not spread to the people generally. - - -

"The Amalgamationists ... feel that the problem of having so many orthographies would be solved by ... linguistic unification. Actually, orthography & unification are two different questions which bear little relation to one another." - - -

"... The subject is academic. The languages will resolve themselves as our society develops & as our needs increase. What is most likely to happen is that the most advanced of them will be the standard language of each group - - - In the meantime, let us cultivate our English & achieve in this way the understanding we so desire; the Bantu languages can well look after themselves."

Reply by Dr JM Nkomo, Trick, Sept 20th 1966

"The writer - - - (of the above article) - - - agrees with the 'Amalgamationists' that the African babel of tongues militates against our unity - - - It is quite clear that Nongqanga has more faith in the adoption by the Africans of the English language as their lingua franca. The 'Amalgamationists' are, of course, not antagonists to this particular way out of the difficulty - - -

"The amalgamation of kindred Bantu languages is not as fantastic as it seems to Nongqanga - his allies, for it is actually taking place to-day in such areas as the Rand, where Xhosa & Zulu are borrowing words & expressions freely from each other, & where there is a definite mingling between Pedi & Southern Sotho. - - - The simple creed of the Amalgamationists is that language mixture is actually taking place; let us encourage it. - - -

"We agree with 'Nomnganga' that there is an absence of the need to create a new language. That is why we do not advocate the 'creation of a new language', but the crystallisation of the fusion of the existing languages which, as we have pointed out, is taking place daily. This suggestion is "no artificial thing" as ~~suggested~~ implied by Nomnganga. - - -

"We agree with him & his satellites that 'orthography = unification are two different questions which bear little relation to one another'. What we do stand for in our struggle for amalgamation is the removal of all artificial differences between the writing of one Bantu language & that of another. The same word should be spelt the same way in all the dialects in which it occurs - - -

Question 16 (13)

Official languages

Action Committee 12/9/49

Both official languages must be taught.
The one started first depends on the area,
employment opportunities, etc.

16(13) Place of official languages in Curriculum

OFS Primary Schools

mother tongue used as medium up to Std 4 & where possible above.

Both official languages taught.

In Stds 5-6, where mother tongue is not used as medium, half of subjects in English & other half thro' medium of Afrikaans (see 16(10))

Cape

mother tongue used as medium in lower classes (see 16(10))
This language & one other taught, & other off. l. where poss.

17 - "Every pupil shall be taught his home language, but one of the official languages (or where the home language is an official language, the other official language) must be introduced from a very early stage & thereafter taught in accordance with the syllabus."

19 where teachers are qualified to do so "the 2nd official language (or where both official languages are already being taught, a native language) should be introduced at the Std 3 or Std 4 stage".

Transvaal

Of the two official languages the one which is more generally spoken by the European living in or near the area from which the pupils of the school are drawn must be studied as the first official language. Oral instruction in this language is begun in the first school year.

Formal teaching of the second official language must be introduced in the fourth year but this should be preceded by oral exercises in the lower classes.

Strenuous effort to be made to encourage children to love Afrikaans.

where NE children talk Afrikaans at home or at school with those who talk a Native language, parallel classes to be run if possible.

Question 16 (14)

Relapse into illiteracy

Action Committee 12/9/49

Refer to Dr Cook's evidence.

mention statistics of length of time African children remain at school.

Bloufontein Joint Council (Page 82)

If education is made compulsory to Std 4, there will be little danger of a relapse. Adult education classes & a good library system should also help.

16(HL)

Relapse into illiteracy

If go to Std 3 only & don't use what learned,
probably relapse into illiteracy in 2 yrs.

See ~~on 1st page, 16(10)~~

Collection Number: AD1715

SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS (SAIRR), 1892-1974

PUBLISHER:

Collection Funder:- Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation

Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive

Location:- Johannesburg

©2013

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document forms part of the archive of the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), held at the Historical Papers Research Archive at The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.