Publishing for mother tongue-based bilingual education in Ghana: politics and consequences

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One often cited challenge to effective mother tongue-based bilingual education (MTBE) in multilingual countries like Ghana is the difficulty of developing curriculum and instructional materials in many languages. To explain this situation, factors such as shortage of writers and teachers in the local languages, lack of interest on the part of publishers in view of the wide availability of textbooks in multiple languages, as well as official support for dominant western languages, such as English, are cited. This paper discusses the veracity of these 'challenges', by examining pre- and post-independent governments' efforts at material development to support MTBE in Ghana. The paper notes that, while most educational policies and reforms have emphasised the importance of MTBE, there has, in fact, been no concerted attempt to design and implement a language-in-education policy incorporating the urgent need to develop curriculum materials for MTBE. The paper attributes this to the lack of political will, economic reasons and the general misconceptions about MTBE.

Keywords: mother tongue-based bilingual education; medium of instruction; L1; language-in-education policy; teaching and learning materials

Introduction

We set out in this paper to review and critically analyse efforts by pre- and post-colonial governments at promoting mother tongue-based bilingual education (MTBE) in schools in Ghana, focusing mainly on efforts at materials development. We try to understand the relationship between societal structures, especially the economic, political and ideological issues (Anderson 1990; Apple 1990), that either support or constrain and limit opportunities for promoting MTBE. We analyse the consequences for educational development, and, in particular, literacy.

The paper begins with a brief overview of the importance of what Alexander (2006) and others have termed mother tongue-*based* bilingual education, drawing on research findings on examples of good practices elsewhere to support our claims. This is followed by a discussion of the importance of teaching and learning materials (TLMs) in education in general, and in language and literacy development, in particular. The paper then outlines the main problem addressed in the study − the challenge of developing local language materials for MTBE − before summarising the language situation in Ghana, the language-in-education policies and efforts at materials development to support MTBE by pre- and post-colonial governments.

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Importance of MTBE

Research on MTBE suggests that substantial instruction using the child's primary language (L1) enhances the child's intellectual and academic resources (Cummins 2000; Malone 2003), and provides a conceptual foundation for long-term growth (Andoh-Kumi 1998; Baker 2001, 2006). The maintenance of the L1 helps the student to communicate with parents and grandparents; this, in turn, increases the active participation of parents in their child's school-related activities (Baker 2006). Using the language and cultural knowledge of the pupils affirms their identities and promotes their academic achievements (Cummins 2000).

Advocates of MTBE, including Alidou and Brock-Utne (2005), Baker (2006), Mwelwa and Spencer (2013), Edwards and Ngwaru (2014, 2012, 2011, 2010) and Kruger (2009), tend to share the view of Kraft (2003, 19) that:

> When children master the basics of literacy in the Mother Tongue, with trained teachers, *quality, age-appropriate books and instructional materials*, and sufficient time in which to master the basics, they can and do transfer easily into a second (international) language. They can more easily become the fluent bilingual, biliterate citizens every advanced country of the world so desperately seeks and needs.

Though Cummins (2000) asserts that in the last three decades close to 150 empirical studies worldwide have reported the benefits of mother tongue education, Malone (2003, 332) notes that 'ministries and departments of education in multilingual countries . . . have responded less than enthusiastically to calls for introduction of MTBE into the formal education system, citing complex linguistic, social, cultural, economic and political obstacles to its implementation'. In a similar vein, Ouane and Glanz (2010, 39) express concern that:

> Despite the good results achieved by bilingual programmes, many people doubt whether the limited resources of African countries should be spent on transforming the school system into a late-exit or additive bilingual education system, particularly in view of the linguistic heterogeneity of the classrooms and learning set-ups across the continent. Should this really be a priority, and what can be expected from this investment? Would it not be too expensive to produce teaching materials, train teachers and develop the languages?

It is certainly the case that, faced with limited resources, Ministries of Education tend to prioritise teaching and learning resources in favour of international (more powerful) languages at the expense of support for indigenous languages. Writers, such as Heugh (2006), in contrast, argue that this course of action represents a false economy and that the costs associated with school dropouts of students struggling with education through the medium of a less familiar language far outweigh those associated with producing materials in other languages.

Role of curriculum materials in MTBE

Effective MTBE, then, rests on a number of factors, key among which is the availability of and access to TLMs. TLMs raise social and political awareness, widen learners field of knowledge and promote continuous self-learning (Chatry-Komarek 2008; Montagnes 2001). A number of studies tend to suggest positive relationship between availability, access and use of books and positive academic achievements (Altbach and Teferra 1998; Heyneman et al. 1981; Heyneman and Jamison 1980). Physical access to books —

especially attractive, high-quality books − is of fundamental importance (Neuman and Celano 2001) and there is a strong case for the use of real books − 'well-produced, attractive stories that avoid the weaknesses of the artificial language of the "readers", constructed to teach key vocabulary or particular sounds to children' (Edwards and Ngwaru 2011, 591) − in African classrooms.

Chatry-Komarek (2008), Altbach and Teferra (1998) and Woodhall (1997) argue that the very limited amount of material available in the local languages is one of the principal reasons for the disappointing achievements of MTBE in sub-Saharan Africa. For example, in South Africa, Edwards and Ngwaru (2010, 7) note that 'English books make up 73.2% of sales to schools despite the fact that English is spoken as a first language by only 8.2% of the population. This compares with 9.89% of sales of books written in Afrikaans, spoken by 13.3% of the population, and 16.62% of sales of the other African languages combined, speakers of which make up 78.5% of South Africans.' Similar studies in Tanzania (Brock-Utne 2005), Ethiopia (Ambatchew 2010, 2008 cited in Edwards and Ngwaru 2010, 2011), Kenya (Bunyi 2005) and across the continent highlight the dearth of materials for very young children in African languages.

This challenge is, however, receiving growing attention (see, for instance, Mwelwa and Spencer 2013; Edwards and Ngwaru 2014, 2012, 2011, 2010; Kruger 2009). In Zambia, Mwelwa and Spencer (2013) describe a hugely successful bilingual (Bemba−English language) resource development project with teachers and learners involving the selection and transcription of 10 authentic Bemba radio narratives and the translation of these narratives into English. The materials were subsequently developed into bilingual Bemba−English teaching and learning resources. One particular narrative, '*The Hare and the Hyena*, for example, was used in literature classes to teach the concept of plot, traditional customs, and essay writing skills, story builds (creative extensions of the narrative) and prediction exercises' (Mwelwa and Spencer (2013, 60).

Also in South Africa, various assessments of the Concept Literacy Project (Wildsmith-Cromarty and Gordon 2009), which has developed bilingual resources for the teaching and learning of Mathematics and Science in secondary schools, show marked improvement in school achievements in these subjects. Edwards and Ngwaru, (2014, 2012, 2011, 2010) and Kruger (2009), too, make reference to valuable initiatives in materials development from organisations such as PRAESA (Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa), READ, Room to Read and Biblionef. Of particular note are two recent developments: the African Storybook Project and Nal'ibali. The African Storybook Project aims to stimulate the provision and use of openly licensed stories in local African languages for early reading and is currently conducting pilots in rural and urban sites across Kenya, Uganda, Lesotho and South Africa (www.saide.org.za/african-storybook-project#sthash.KEXIawEu.dpuf). Nal'ibali (nalibali.org) is reaching a mass readership in South Africa with stories for children in English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa, isiZulu and Sesotho in South Africa through supplements inserted in approximately well over 200,000 newspapers each week; the stories can also be downloaded from its website and by cell phone from its mobisite.

The language situation in Ghana

Ghana is a multilingual and linguistically heterogeneous country. Linguistically, Anyidoho and Dakubu (2008) divide Ghana roughly into two − the Niger-Congo

Kwa language family of the south and Gur language family of the north. The Kwa languages spoken in the south include Akan (in its many dialects), Nzema, Guan, Ga-Dangme and Ewe, and other smaller languages. The Gur languages spoken in the northern savannah regions of Ghana include Gonja, Dagbani, Dagaare and Wali among others.

Estimates of the number of indigenous languages spoken vary from 30 (Spencer 1971) to over 81 languages (www.ethonologue.org). Two languages − Hausa and English − serve as lingua francas throughout the country: of these, English is the official language of government, business, education and the media.

Pre-independence efforts at mother tongue education

Busia (1964, 13) described the situation before the advent of the Europeans in the following terms:

> The young were taught how to cope with their environment; how to farm, or hunt, or fish, or prepare food, or build a house, or run a home. They were taught the language, manners, and generally the culture of the community. The methods were informal; the young learnt by participating in activities alongside their elders. They learnt by listening, by watching, by doing. In many practical ways they learnt how to live as members of their community.

The early merchants and missionaries, keen to develop more formal education, were quick to see the potential of local languages for the purposes of trading and also for the conversion of indigenous peoples to Christianity (Graham 1971; McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh 1975; Mfum-Mensah 2005; Owu-Ewie 2006). Initially, the merchants, travellers and missionaries trained a small number of natives of the Gold Coast (now Ghana) to act as interpreters and intermediaries. However, they soon realised that knowledge of the native tongues, both written and spoken, was essential to progress in education, trade and evangelisation (Graham 1971).

The Basel mission schools, formal schools established by German missionaries in the nineteenth century, made the vernacular the medium of instruction. Between 1859 and 1871, Johann Gottlieb Christaller translated the *Four Gospels*, the *New Testament*, *Psalms and Proverbs* and then the entire *Bible* into Twi. Another German missionary, J.B. Schlegel, had also, in 1859, written the first Ewe grammar (Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany 2011). A Wesleyan minister who visited Basel-dominated communities in the Gold Coast was said to have lauded the works of the Basel missionaries and in 1873 wrote to the Secretaries to Wesleyan Church that: 'The children read the scriptures, studied their histories, learnt geography, ciphered, wrote and sang all in their respective dialects' (Graham 1971, 125). In due course, Wesleyan missionaries who settled along the southern coast where Fante is dominant used this language as the medium of instruction in their schools. The use of the vernacular by the missions, as has already been said, was not aimed at developing and promoting the languages and cultures of the people, but rather at converting local peoples to Christianity (Mfum-Mensah 2005). In addition, in 1883, the Basel missionaries introduced a trilingual newspaper − the *Christian Messenger*, written in English, *Ga* and *Twi*, which continues to this day (Chatry-Komarek 2008).

The recognition of local languages received a significant boost from the British colonial Governor of the Gold Coast from 1919 to 1927, Sir Gordon Guggisberg (Graham 1971; McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh 1975) who viewed education as the first and

foremost step in the social and economic development of the Gold Coast. In 1920, he appointed an education committee to 'investigate past educational efforts in the country and the reasons for their success or failure, and to report on the methods, principles and policy governing the progress of education in the country' (Graham 1971, 156). Guggisberg's vision to preserve the national characteristics of the people and to ensure that education does not alienate the 'educated Africans', served as the framework for the committee (McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh 1975, 54):

> We want to give to all Africans the opportunity of both moral and material progress…our aim must be not to denationalise them…for, without preserving their national characteristics and sympathy and touch with the great illiterate masses of their own people, no person can ever become a leader in progress, whatever sort of leader they may become.

The Guggisberg education committee recommended that English should be introduced as early as possible as a *subject* of instruction in primary schools, but that the vernacular should be the *medium* of instruction. They also made recommendations about the preparation of vernacular school books as a result of which a special Publications Officer was appointed (McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh 1975). In 1925, Guggisberg announced what became known as *Sir Gordon Guggisberg's Sixteen Principles of Education* (McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh 1975) to the Gold Coast Legislative Council. The 12th of these principles was that: 'Whilst an English education must be given it must be based solidly on the vernacular'.

Though efforts at genuinely developing the local languages by the missionaries and the colonial governments were minimal, some progress had been made and by the time of independence in 1957, foundations had been laid for further development of written versions of major local languages such as Twi, Fante, Ga and Ewe (Owu-Ewie 2006). Chatry-Komarek (2008), for instance, points out that Twi and Ga, in particular, owe their development precisely because of the availability of textbooks in these languages.

Attempts to develop vernacular education sometimes attracted largely negative attention from both Europeans and Africans. McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh (1975) write that a number of the early European travellers, missionaries and even Africans who had the privilege of studying in Europe could see no value in developing the vernacular as a written language. In addition, some Africans suspected that the encouragement of the vernacular might be a deliberate attempt by the British to provide Africans with inferior education, likely to hold back progress in secondary and tertiary education.

Language-in-education policy in post-independent Ghana

Ghana's language-in-education policy since independence in 1957 has been vacillating from English-only to early-exit MTBE (Owu-Ewie 2006). After independence in 1957, the first President of Ghana, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, advocated for a unitary government; as one of the requirements of that system of governance, he discouraged the elevation of any one particular local language to the status of a national language. Nkrumah preferred English-only language-in-education as well as the use of English for official business transactions and the media (Bamgbose 1991; Mfum-Mensah 2005). He saw the local languages as important part of cultural heritage rather than as tools for education and development (Mfum-Mensah 2005; Owu-Ewie 2006), and supported their maintenance predominantly through cultural displays, dance, drama and recitals during official public gatherings.

Language-in-education policies after the first republic

The government after Nkrumah in 1966 introduced an early-exit language-in-education policy which made the main Ghanaian languages − Akan in its three varieties (Asanti Twi, Akuapem Twi and Fanti), Dagaare-Wali, Dagbani, Dangme, Ewe, Ga, Gonja, Kasem and Nzema − the medium of instruction in the first three years of schooling (McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh 1975; Owu-Ewie 2006). These languages later became known as the state-sponsored languages.

Successive governments after Busia maintained the 1971 language-in-education policy until May 2002 when the government introduced a new English-only policy to be used at all levels of schooling in Ghana. While the aspiration remained that a Ghanaian language should be the medium of instruction for the first to third grades of primary education and that all pupils should study a Ghanaian language as a subject, operational challenges were acknowledged:

> . . . the difficulty of developing curriculum and instructional materials in many languages; the lack of infrastructural capacity; a shortage of writers in the local languages; the lack of local language teachers and the fact that textbooks are mainly developed in the dominant English language, and, also publishers' lack of interest in local language materials production, due to the smallness of the market.

For these reasons, an English-only policy was adopted (MoE 2002, 31−32).

The English-only language-in-education policy of 2002 triggered public protests and was debated in the Parliament of Ghana on a number of occasions. Non-governmental organisations, civil society groups, traditional leaders and many academics and stakeholders who favoured MTBE raised concerns about the new policy. Kraft (2003), an educational consultant, described the policy as tantamount to committing 'intellectual, cultural and educational suicide'.

In 2009, partly in response to these concerns, the government introduced the National Literacy Acceleration Programme (NALAP), an MTBE programme that will be discussed later in this paper.

Development of local language materials

We turn now to efforts by various post-independence governments of Ghana specifically to promote local language/mother tongue-based bi/multilingual education through materials development. As indicated above, pre-independence attempts included the seminal works of the Christian missionaries and merchants as well as efforts by the British colonial governments in the 1800 up until the 1950s when Ghana gained independence. These pre-independence efforts helped to develop orthographies for various Ghanaian local languages, and the publication of local language dictionaries and grammars.

Post-independent government efforts tended to build on the foundations laid by the missionaries. A number of institutions and structures as well as projects and programmes have been established to support MTBE. These include the establishment of the Bureau of Ghana Languages, with the remit to develop and publish local language materials, the Ghana Publishing Corporation and the Ghana Book Development Council. Over the years, the state has enacted book policies including the 1963 free textbooks scheme, and the 2002 textbooks development and distribution policy to support book development in schools. Other efforts include projects and programmes by donor agencies including the books scheme for basic schools which bought and supplied about four million

supplementary readers, including 1 million local language books to about 11,000 public primary schools nationwide in 1998 (Ofori-Mensah 2000). Other projects include the Breakthrough to Literacy project which equally provided local language TLMs to schools, and two mother tongue basedbilingual education projects: the Assistance to Teacher Education Programme (ASTEP), and NALAP.

The role and contributions of Bureau of Ghana Languages (BGL), ASTEP and NALAP are particularly relevant to the current discussion and are explored in greater detail below.

Bureau of Ghana Languages

The Bureau of Ghana Languages is perhaps the single most important institution in the development, publication and promotion of local languages. Formerly known as the Vernacular Literature Bureau when it was first established in 1951 (Bureau of Ghana Languages 2006; Djoleto 1985; Krampah 1996; McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh 1975), its mission has been to produce materials in the nine officially recognised local languages, including newspapers for adult and community education. Its functions also encompass research and documentation of the customs and cultures of the various ethnic groups and matters relating to the development of the orthography and grammar of the languages of Ghana. In 1961, following the introduction of the accelerated development plan for education and the subsequent introduction of the free textbooks scheme in 1963, the Bureau was given further responsibility to produce local language textbooks and teaching−learning materials for basic schools. It was also tasked to translate government documents, such as official speeches by the president, parliamentary proceedings, laws, acts and aspects of the constitution, into the various local languages.

The impact of the Bureau, however, has been minimal as government's past and present have not provided it with adequate resources. Records from the Bureau show, for example, that newspaper production ceased over two decades ago. In addition, work on the development and publishing of local language materials has been seriously affected by the government's English-only policy, which has diverted attention from and interest in local language materials. As a state institution, the Bureau is unable to take initiatives on its own. Every decision has to be approved by an overseeing body.

Another factor which affects the smooth functioning of the Bureau has been the frequent change of its mother institution: the Bureau changed from an independent statutory body in 1950 to a department under the Ministry of Information in 1958, and to the Ministry of Education (MoE) in the 1960s. In the 1980s and 1990s, it was placed under the aegis of the National Commission on Culture and the Ministry of Education, and, as of 2006, has been part of the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Culture (Bureau of Ghana Languages 2006). In addition, titles published by the Bureau have been pirated and sold by private publishers over the years (Djoleto 1979; Bureau of Ghana Languages 2006). Nonetheless, the Bureau continues to partner other institutions such as the Ghana Education Service, the Information Services Department of the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Traditional Affairs in the development of some official documents in some Ghanaian languages.

Assistance to Teacher Education Programme (ASTEP)

The ASTEP is another effort by the government of Ghana to use the mother tongue in literacy development. In 1995, the government of Ghana, with support from the German

Government through the German Development Cooperation, carried out a study to assess literacy teaching and learning in primary and junior secondary schools in Ghana. The study concluded that, even though Ghana uses an early-exit MTBE model, literacy levels were poor in both pupils' mother tongues and in English, the official medium of instruction in schools. The study equally identified the poor quality of teachers as a strategic weakness of the basic education system.

Based on these findings, a Ghanaian−German Project known as 'ASTEP' was started in 1997 in all 38 teacher training colleges (now colleges of education). ASTEP aimed at improving the quality of both teacher education and basic education by developing methodologies for teaching and learning core subjects in the first three primary grades through the use of pupils' mother tongues. The project was designed to serve the needs of the then language-in-education policy which stipulated that Ghanaian children were to be taught in the mother tongue during the first three years at school and that English was to be introduced systematically, and to become the sole language of instruction from primary grade 4 onwards. In line with this policy, the project was designed to achieve the following outcomes (Chatry-Komarek 2008):

- develop teaching methodologies in three core subjects: reading/writing, mathematics and science;
- design, develop and produce textbooks and corresponding teacher's guides for five main Ghanaian languages (Twi, Ga, Ewe, Gonja and Dagbani) for primary 1−3 and each of the core subjects;
- run trainer of trainers workshop for tutors of teacher training colleges;
- finance the publication of textbooks and teachers' guides, distributing them to all students and teachers in the concerned language areas; and
- develop and distribute children's literature in five main Ghanaian languages.

By 2003, ASTEP had produced a textbook in each of the three core subjects − reading/writing, mathematics and science − for use in lower primary schools in the five language areas. The distribution and use of the TLMs was, however, stalled with the introduction of the English-only language-in-education policy in 2002. As Chatry-Komarek (2008, 138) points out:

> The tragedy of this decision was not so much the loss of six years of common effort and about six million Euros; the real tragedy was the reintroduction of schooling in a language that excludes the vast majority of children, especially girls, living in rural areas or in vast underprivileged urban areas. This decision was made by a country that only had about 50% primary school enrolment to begin with.

Though ASTEP was not able to realise its main objectives, other programmes were later introduced to promote mother tongue bilingual education in Ghana. One of such projects is NALAP.

National Literacy Acceleration Programme

The NALAP, launched in 2009 and currently in operation in schools, is one of the numerous attempts by the government of Ghana to resolve the country's literacy and numeracy crisis highlighted in a number of studies (Hartwell 2010; Leherr 2009).

NALAP is a bilingual transitional literacy programme which aims to ensure that all children in kindergarten to lower primary grade 3 have quality literacy materials, effective instruction and public support to learn to read and write in their mother tongue and English.

Preparatory work for the introduction of NALAP started in June 2006, when a National Literacy Task Force was formed by Ghana's Ministry of Education to develop and implement NALAP with support from USAID (Hartwell 2010). The instructional approach is supported by a comprehensive and high-quality set of instructional materials, including both teacher and learner materials, developed in the 11 government-sponsored languages − Akan in its three varieties (Asanti Twi, Akuapem Twi and Fanti), Dagaare-Wali, Dagbani, Dangme, Ewe, Ga, Gonja, Kasem and Nzema. The TLMs for five grades: Kindergarten grades 1 and 2, and primary grades 1−3 in the 11 Ghanaian languages include 30 conversational posters and 30 big books for the kindergarten grades and the first primary grade; pupils textbooks for primary grades 1−3; supplementary readers for primary grades 2 and 5. Teacher Guides area available for all grades in English with translations into 11 languages (Hartwell 2010).

NALAP also offered in-service and pre-service training on the new approach and use of the materials to about 70,000 head teachers and teachers, tutors and teacher trainees at colleges of education (Hartwell 2010). The project equally provided orientation to education service officials nationwide. To garner public support, NALAP embarked on a series of advocacy programmes which involved the wide use of the mass media (both print and electronic) for public awareness and education on bilingual approach to literacy.

A recent implementation study (Hartwell 2010, 5) investigated:

> the effectiveness of NALAP's introduction strategies in order to understand what is working, what gaps exist, and what strategies might be best employed to address the gaps, both in the short and long term; assess the distribution, utilization, level of difficulty, and relevance of the materials; the timing, thoroughness, applicability, and coverage of the training for both education managers and teachers; the degree of implementation observed within the schools and classrooms.

It is noted that implementation faced various challenges including delay in the distribution of the TLMs and the presence of a large number of untrained (pupil) teachers in rural and economically disadvantaged schools, who experienced difficulty in understanding and working with the new education principles.

The study also noted that teachers who were posted to rural schools on the National Youth Employment Programme and were trained specifically for NALAP had to leave in the course of the school year when their temporary appointment contract elapsed. About 20% of the schools surveyed (Hartwell 2010) had issues with the choice of Ghanaian language for the NALAP materials; in many schools, particularly in northern Ghana, neither teachers nor pupils know or understand any of the 11 Ghanaian languages, and in some situations, teachers are not fluent in the local language proposed as the medium of instruction.

Discussion

From the pre-colonial era to our contemporary context, there have been various attempts to support MTBE in Ghana. One factor that mitigates against effective implementation has been the inconsistency in the language-in-education policy of the country. The

various attempts discussed earlier in this paper which point to a failure to seriously assess the strengths and weaknesses of the various initiatives not only show a lack of resolve to enforce a policy, but also make it difficult for teachers to keep track of the changes. This fluctuation has inevitable consequences for the development and provision of school-books for MTBE.

In particular, any policy that places strong emphasis on English is likely to have the effect of eroding the status of indigenous languages. The focus of the policy impacts greatly on textbooks and learning materials that are published for schools. It stands to reason that if the policy favours English, there is a greater incentive for publishers to publish English textbooks and readers and other learning materials in English.

The issue of materials development cannot be decoupled from language policy and education. Though the achievements of initiatives such as ASTEP and NALAP in this area are noteworthy, the programmes were still not as successful as first anticipated for various reasons including the shortage of trained teachers and the need to expand provision beyond the 11 government-sponsored languages. Teachers are indeed core to the success of any educational endeavour. However, in Ghana, teaching generally tends to be the last option for most senior high school students who are unable to enter university and other tertiary institutions such as the polytechnics (Akyeampong and Furlong 2000). The situation is even worse for teacher trainees who opt to specialise in the teaching of Ghanaian languages as such students are perceived as unintelligent (Andoh-Kumi 1997, 1999). On the other hand, the Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) of the Ghana Education Service and the Bureau of Ghana Languages, originally mandated to develop the orthographies, which maintain and ensure the effective use of the local languages in schools have over the years been under resourced. Given the growing interest and activity across the continent in harnessing developments in information technology and social media to develop and translate stories for children, there is an obvious case for interested organisations to join forces. There is no shortage of expertise. The Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT), for instance, has translated the New Testament into 28 Ghanaian languages (www.gillbt.org). Equally, Faculty of Languages Education, in the University of Education, Winneba; the Language Centre and the Department of Linguistics in the University of Ghana; the Department of Modern Languages in the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology as well as University of Cape Coast offer undergraduate and graduate degree programmes in Ghanaian languages. Other MTBE materials development projects, such as the African storybooks project, and many others tend to defeat the argument that there is a shortage of expertise.

Another reason cited as a barrier to MTBE in Ghana and many other countries are widespread negative attitudes (Andoh-Kumi 1999; Opoku-Amankwa 2009, Bunyi 2005; Bloch 2007). Such attitudes are often associated with elite members of society. As Apple (1990, 378) points out:

> The culturally and economically dominant groups capitalise on the panic over falling standards and illiteracy... and the concern with the destruction of family values and religiosity to move the arguments about education into their own arena ... and since so many parents are justifiably concerned about the economic and social future of their children − in an economy that is increasingly conditioned by lower wages, the threat of unemployment, and cultural and economic insecurity − the position of the dominant group connects well with the fears of many people.

Apple's (1990) argument is this that the economic gains that come with education and related success in accessing social goods are not lost on parents and other stakeholders. There is, then, an urgent need for advocacy or social marketing to challenge widespread misconceptions around MTBE as argued, for instance, by Edwards (2006) in relation to bilingual education in Wales and by Leherr (2009) in relation to the implementation of NALAP.

Concluding comments

In this paper, an attempt has been made to provide historical insight into development in education in Ghana. We note that, while most educational policies and reforms in pre- and post-independent Ghana have emphasised the importance of mother tongue education, there has been no concerted attempt to design and implement a language-in-education policy incorporating this dimension. Rather, we note the inconsistencies and the frequent changes in the language-in-education policies as well as the sheer lack of political will exhibited in the limited support in terms of resources offered to the development of the Ghana's languages by successive governments. Such changes have directly or indirectly been fuelled by myths about African languages which do not stand up to close scrutiny and the unwillingness of governments to invest in mother tongue-based programmes (Brock-Utne 2001, 2005; Alidou and Brock-Utne 2005). The fact remains, however, that the use of an unfamiliar language as a medium of instruction denies full access to education for the majority of children from socioeconomically disadvantaged families. As noted by Apple (1990) and Toh (1984, 260), the formal education system is seen as a 'mechanism for intergenerational transmission of economic status by high-status families rather than as a vehicle for the social advancement of the poor'. The high-status families according to Martin (2005) tend, incidentally, to be urban based and belong to the political elite. This situation perpetuates inequalities.

Moving forward, we suggest that the teacher training curricula focus on preparing teachers to understand the multilingual language, literacy and learning context in which they operate. The study of Ghanaian languages should be made compulsory and examinable for primary school teacher trainees. If primary schools teacher trainees are made to study their mother tongue and one other Ghanaian language, then they could be posted to areas other than where their mother tongue is spoken. Efforts should also be made to develop orthographies for other widely spoken Ghanaian languages. In this regard, the CRDD of the Ghana Education Service and the Bureau of Ghana Languages as well as the various institutes, centres and departments of linguistics and languages in the tertiary institutions would have to be well resourced to develop and maintain the local languages. Continuous professional development programmes for primary school teachers in MTBE materials development would be highly beneficial to language teaching and learning.

Beyond these formal approaches, we believe a bottom-up approach as proposed by writers such as Malone (2003) and Tin (2006), whereby the main stakeholders – teachers, parents and pupils whose voices are seldom included in education decision-making (Ngwaru and Opoku-Amankwa 2010) – who collaborate with language experts in the planning, development and production of MTBE materials would be highly beneficial in acknowledging the legitimate place of local, cultural funds of knowledge in formal education (Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez 2005). The approach would also get parents, pupils and teachers to believe in themselves and their ability to produce their own TLMs. It would highlight and reinforce the belief in the value of collaboration and collective decision-making in resolving challenges to improve the quality of human actions.

Finally, for those who question whether African Governments should expend their energies and limited resources for education development on MTBE, Brock-Utne (2005, 179) provides appropriate response:

> When economists try to figure out how much it will cost to publish books in African languages, they also have to figure out how much it costs to have African children sit year after year in school, often repeating a class, without learning anything.

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