

The Ssentenza Kajubi Legacy: The Promotion of Teaching Kiswahili in Uganda

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Abstract

This paper contends that the Ssentenza Kajubi commission report of 1987 attempted to evenly consider the position of Kiswahili and its subsequent realization and promotion in schools amidst social, economic and political tensions of various dimensions in Uganda. Thus, it attempts to contextualize and present analytic perspectives on the outcomes of several reports to highlight insights on Kiswahili developments envisioned via the continuity of the legacy of the Ugandan university administrator, academic and community leader Ssentenza Kajubi (1926-2012) in the promotion of Kiswahili in Uganda.

Keywords: Education commission report, Education system, Ssentenza Kajubi, Swahili, Uganda.

Introduction

This review article is motivated by the annual memorial lectures for Professor William Ssentenza Kajubi (hereafter, Kajubi). Kajubi is so central to debates of education systems in Uganda that since 2015 there have been annual lectures, organized by the College of Education and External Studies, Makerere University - the oldest and leading public university in East and Central Africa, in memory of his work. In 2015, for instance, the lecture was entitled “Rethinking Uganda's education system” and it explored among other things, curriculum reforms in the country. The lecture for 2016 was entitled “Fostering the Quality of Education in Uganda” and among other issues, it was expected to discuss a way forward to adjust the current education structures with an aim of developing the quality and value of education that Uganda experienced prior to the 1970s (Evans and Kajubi, 1994: 144). These lectures are evidence that the educational-related contributions of the late Professor are still significant in the education system of Uganda given that the views advanced by various scholars and academicians in such debates contribute to influence the education-related decisions, policies, and practices in Uganda.

In brief, Kajubi, a Ugandan, was remarkably an accomplished academician, educationalist, administrator, consultant as well as a community leader. Upon completing his Bachelor of Arts with Diploma in Education, at Makerere University, in 1950, Kajubi enrolled for a post-graduate course, Master of Science in Geography, at the University of Chicago, and graduated in 1955. Kajubi is said to be the first African to be awarded a Fulbright scholarship to study in the United States of America in 1952. In 2010, Mbarara University of Science and Technology awarded Kajubi an Honorary Doctoral degree of Science. From the 1950s, Kajubi worked for different institutions in various capacities, including, as a secondary teacher; University lecturer; Principal of Kyambogo Institute of Higher Education; Director of National Institute of Education at Makerere University; twice, as Makerere University Vice Chancellor; and Vice Chancellor of Nkumba, a private University in Uganda. In other responsibilities, Kajubi was the first chairman of the Association for Teacher Education in Africa. In addition, he served as the Vice-President of the International Council of Education for Teachers. Lastly, he is also remembered for being a consultant for the Namibian National Education System upon Namibia's independence in 1990.

Since the introduction of Western Education around the last quarter of the 19th century, in the Uganda's education system (cf. Ssekamwa, 2000: 40-42; Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 2-3; Tiberondwa, 2001: 34-35; 81-82), there has been several education commissions established to reform the education systems in both pre-and-post independent Uganda. Some prominent commissions include; the Phelps-Stokes commission (1925), the de La Warr commission (1938), the Castle commission (1963) and the 1977 and 1987 Kajubi commissions (Evans and Kajubi, 1994; Ssekamwa, 2000; Tiberondwa, 2001). While the terms of reference for the commissions have been different from one commission to another based on, mainly, the educational needs in each era, the implementation of their recommendations have been, to a certain extent, unattainable for different reasons.

The recommendations, for example, from the report of Kajubi's (1977) commission were submitted to the Ministry of Education in February 1978. However, soon after, Uganda was plunged into war as Ugandan exiles based in Tanzania sought to liberate their country from the dictatorship of Idi Amin. Subsequently, the 279 recommendations in the report were never implemented as the commissioners felt it was not desirable to share the report with the cabinet or the public immediately. They assumed the report could be used in the future after the war. Thus, the report was shelved by commissioners and few other members of the commission's subcommittees.

While the final report of the Kajubi (1977) commission was neither edited nor printed for circulation, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (as cited in Evans and Kajubi, 1994: 138), notes that from that report, the then government, led by President Apollo Milton Obote, drafted a shortened summary statement as a basis for the Government's White Paper (GWP). According to Evans and Kajubi (1994: 138), this statement has never been used or implemented. Nevertheless, all the commissions note that one of the common dilemmas that the commissioners have been preoccupied with is, for instance, the question of the language of instruction, especially in primary schools of Uganda. See, for example, Mbaabu (1991: 84), Evans and Kajubi (1994: 147), Ssekamwa (2000: 133), Ssekamwa and Lugumba (2001: 8-9) and Ssebbunga-Masembe (2003: 145-146).

Kiswahili (language) Issues

Different reports of the education commissions have often been received with mixed reactions from different stakeholders in and outside the education sector particularly regarding the language-related recommendations (Ssekamwa, 2000: 134; Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 27; Ssebbunga-Masembe, 2003: 146). Subsequently, many of those recommendations have, often, never been fully implemented. For instance, in relation to Kiswahili in the Phelps-Stokes (1925) report, Tiberondwa (2001: 76-77) argues that the commission recommended the language of instruction in middle grades be Kiswahili (cf. Msanjila et al., 2011: 108-110). In view of the above recommendation, two years later, according to Ssebbunga-Masembe (2003: 146) and Ssekamwa (2000: 133), the then Governor of Uganda, Sir W. F. Gowers, issued a policy statement on language and declared Kiswahili as a language of instruction in schools within regions that previously used Luganda as a language of instruction.

Ssekamwa and Lugumba (2001: 8) contend that the other advocates for the use of Kiswahili as a language of instruction in Ugandan schools, including Hussey, the Director of Education, viewed Kiswahili as a common communication tool that could ease communication gaps across ethnic groups, and different societies within the East African region (cf. Kaplan and Baldauf Jr., 1997: 4; Msanjila et al., 2011: 69). Similarly, such proponents advanced the view that books written in Kiswahili could also be read by those who had not learned English or not attended school (cf. Mukama, 2009: 100).

Nevertheless, the recommendations on Kiswahili from the Phelps-Stokes (1925) commission report were opposed, for example, by some prominent British administrators, the missionaries, Ugandan cultural leaders/rulers and some elites (on the various opposing views, see for example, Pawliková-Vilhanová, 1996: 167; Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 9; Ssekamwa, 2000: 134-137; Mulokozi, 2009: 74). Whiteley (1969: 69-70) and Ssekamwa (2000: 134) stress that the two major reasons for opposing Kiswahili include: (i) associating the Kiswahili language with Islamic religion whose followers, mainly the Arabs, promoted slavery activities which were regarded as unreligious and inhuman by, mainly, the Christian missionaries; and (ii) that unlike Luganda language, Kiswahili was unattached to any ethnic group in Uganda (Whiteley, 1969: 70; Massamba, 2007: 98, 2015: 264; Msanjila, 2011: 4).

Subsequently, Kiswahili remained a school subject in only a few schools (Ssekamwa, 2000: 141), especially in areas with learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds and without a common indigenous language. This situation was further characterized by a lack of teachers who could teach Kiswahili. Ssekamwa (2000: 140) stresses that it was expensive to produce teachers with good fluency in Kiswahili because, in addition to their regular training, trainee teachers were expected to stay in Mombasa for three months (Ssekamwa, 2000: 139). The other issue regarding Kiswahili as either the language of instruction or as a subject was experienced when there were changes in the positions of Directors of Education as well as in the transfers of the Governors who were key proponents in support of Kiswahili. Thus, the replacement of Sir. W. F. Gowers with the new Governor, Phillip Mitchell, and the replacement of Hussey and Morris as Directors of Education between 1925 and 1934, by H. Jowitt, suggest that the decline in the Kiswahili language issues in Ugandan schools was inevitable. Ssekamwa (2001: 140-141) suggests that unlike their predecessors, the new Governor and the Director of Education had a negative attitude towards Kiswahili.

While Kiswahili issues re-emerged in the joint Parliamentary Committee on Closer Union of Uganda and Kenya of the 1930s (Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 9), it is on record that the witnesses from Uganda, including, Kulubya, Zirabamuzaale and Rwaboni (Ssekamwa, 2000: 140), preferred English over Kiswahili as not only a unifying language in Uganda but also as a future *lingua franca* of the region (cf. Whiteley, 1969: 71). Thus, the Joint Select Committee on the Closer Union of East African countries recommended the gradual change from Kiswahili to English. Relatedly, the Director of Education indirectly scrapped Kiswahili off from the primary curriculum where it was the language of instruction in a few areas. This led to the closure of the Kampala Teacher Training school at Nyanjeeradde, whose mission was to train Kiswahili teachers for the entire country (cf. Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 27).

The recommendation by the above committee was further strengthened by the advent of the de La Warr (1938) Commission. The report of this Commission stressed that instead of Kiswahili, English should be taught from primary school level (see also the recommendations from the Binns Study [1951] Group on Kiswahili).

Considering the above views, Mbaabu (2007: 101) and Mukama (2009: 85) argue that the last blow that the Kiswahili language received was in 1952 after the declaration of the language policy that ejected Kiswahili from the education system of Uganda. From then on, the linguistic spectrum in schools ceased to recognize Kiswahili as one of the educational languages (cf. Pawliková-Vilhanová, 1996: 168). This was further noted in the East African Royal (1953) commission. According to Ssekamwa (2000: 142), this commission advised the British administrators in Uganda to eliminate the use of Kiswahili as a language of instruction in mainstream schools and let it remain as a language of instruction in police and army schools (cf. Mbaabu, 1991: 89; Ministry of Education and Sports, 2010: 55; Chebet-Choge, 2012: 175).

Consequently, while Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB) annually examined Kiswahili learners, it is argued that, for around five decades the formal teaching of Kiswahili as a second language (L2) in mainstream (normal) schools indirectly existed in Uganda, a fact which Mukama (2009: 85) maintains is the primary justification for the present absence of pedagogically competent Kiswahili teachers in Uganda. Relatedly, Kawoya and Makokha (2009), as well as Mtesigwa (2009: 53) argue that the above situation accounts for the introduction of outdated scholastic and instructional materials for teaching and learning Kiswahili as an L2. While the above situation suggests devastating circumstances for Kiswahili in Uganda, Mukama (2009: 73) emphasizes that the informal progression in Kiswahili pedagogies was realized indirectly by what she refers to as “linguistically and pedagogically” incompetent teachers. In light of the above, Mukama (1989: 2) points out that amidst the above odds, the British colonial government of Uganda from 1930s-1964 continuously paid its financial contributions (600-800 British Pounds) to the East African Kiswahili committee (cf. Mbaabu, 1991: 97, 2007: 102). This committee was mandated to, mainly, standardize and develop Kiswahili in Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda, Zaire (The Democratic Republic of Congo) and Zanzibar (cf. Republic of Uganda, 1992: 18). Instead, Kiswahili flourished more in other countries than it did in Uganda (see, for example, Mbaabu, 1991, 2007 on the developments of Kiswahili in the East African region).

It is argued that even when the headquarters of the East African Kiswahili committee were, from 1950 to 1960, located at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, the Kiswahili language situation in Uganda was irreversible. The status quo of Kiswahili in Uganda was maintained even after the report of the Castle (1963) commission. Among other reforms, the Castle report is commended for its support for technical and agricultural subjects; the accessibility of girl child education and the control of education activities by the newly independent Republic of Uganda (Evans and Kajubi, 1994: 131-132). This control was based on national unity regardless of, for example, the denomination backgrounds, which missionary education was organized according to denominations, with each Christian group taking care of the education of its believers (Ssebbunga-Masembe, 2003: 145). In this regard, the report by the Castle (1963) commission also ignored Kiswahili. Subsequently, Kiswahili issues were more complex until the turn of the third millennium during the deliberations on the implementation of the report of the Kajubi (1987) commission (cf. Kwesiga, 1994: 59-60), as discussed below.

The Kajubi (1987) Commission

The previous section noted that the report of the Kajubi (1977) commission was not implemented because the government that should have implemented the report was fighting a war (Tanzania-Uganda war) for its own survival (Evans and Kajubi, 1994: 138). It should be recalled that four years prior to the establishment of the Kajubi (1977) commission, the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) was formed. The primary aim of NCDC was to systematically develop and implement the curriculums for primary and secondary schools nationwide. Decisions regarding the content of the curriculum, methodology, instructional and other learning materials such as textbooks and reference books were considered at the NCDC. Among the initial accomplishments of the NCDC was, for example, the restructuring of the curriculum for secondary schools. The implementation of the new curriculum started in the mid-1970s, where practical and science-based subjects were emphasized. This was envisioned to develop learners' interests in industrial and commercial-related endeavors (Evans and Kajubi, 1994: 134-135).

A decade after the establishment of the Kajubi (1977) commission, another commission, the Kajubi (1987) commission, also known as the Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC), was appointed by the then Minister of Education in July 1987 (Evans and Kajubi, 1994: 142). Unlike other previous commissions, the 1977 and 1987 commissions were the only commissions chaired by a Ugandan, Kajubi (Evans and Kajubi, 1994: 136). The Kajubi (1987) commission was constituted by Ugandan educationists who were deeply knowledgeable about the social, political and economic dynamics of Uganda. In this regard, it was hoped that the commissioners could translate the societal interests into the proposed education system so that they could be addressed, making the education system relevant to Ugandans. The main goal of Kajubi's (1987) commission was, generally, to review the entire education policy and its structures, including the objectives and the aims of education in Uganda. This is because the entire education system had been destroyed by war and that the nationals (mainly parents) had developed negative attitudes towards post-1960s educational values of Uganda.

As Evans and Kajubi (1994: 142) point out, while the commission had many tasks to accomplish, it operated under limited resources in terms of, for example, insufficient documentations with statistical information since most of the documents had been destroyed by the liberation war that ended in 1986. Nevertheless, after a year and a half and amidst the above challenges, the commission's report was released but it was not officially publicized immediately (Evans and Kajubi, 1994: 145). Unlike the 1977 commission's report, the rationale for failure to immediately publicize the 1987 report is grounded on reasons such as lack of consensus on the implementation of national ideology within the education system, for instance, the question of national language (Evans and Kajubi, 1994: 145-147). Relatedly, unlike the reports of most of the previous commissions, the Kajubi (1987) report was not debated immediately by the Cabinet.

This is because of, for example, the estimated costs to implement the recommendations on social services were unaffordable thus, the government thought that there was a need to calculate the estimated costs and formulate new estimates. Nevertheless, the report was adopted by the government as the basis of future policies and practices on education, as exemplified in Table 1. In order to readjust the above-stated estimates, Evans and Kajubi (1994: 147) stress the view that the government appointed a committee that “altered” some sections of the original report (cf. Ssentanda, 2014: 19) and produced the 1990 and 1991 versions of the 1992 GWP.

The Government White Paper (GWP)

Evans and Kajubi (1994: 147) stress that the commissioners feared that the issue relating to national language was a volatile one that needed political discussion (The Republic of Uganda, 1992: 17), see, for example, Msanjila (2009) on similar views from a Tanzanian perspective; thus, the commissioners focused on language issues that could have been feasibly addressed, for example, the teaching of Kiswahili in the education system as was later established in the GWP. The famous 1992 GWP is considered by several scholars as the framework for operationalizing several recommendations of the Kajubi (1989) commission’s report. The GWP has provided a basis for several developments in relation to the Ugandan education system. For example, among other issues, the 1992 GWP reiterates the issue of Kiswahili and recommends it as a compulsory subject in primary and secondary schools (The Republic of Uganda, 1992: 17-20). In addition, the GWP also stipulates that among GWP’s implementation strategies, is to initiate the teaching of Kiswahili in adult education programs and in the community polytechnic centers (The Republic of Uganda, 1992: 21). This was to ensure that the promotion and development of Kiswahili were adopted in almost the entire education system with an aim of eliminating, mainly, linguistic differences across learners and the society at large. This aim has to a certain extent been realized in form of some developments (see Table 1) as will be discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

As a matter of fact, the Republic of Uganda (1992: 21) projected the preparation of the curriculum to accommodate Kiswahili-related issues (cf. Mukama, 2009: 87; Ministry of Education and Sports, 2011: 13), with subsequent instructional materials being expected to be ready by 1992/1993. However, this article contends that the NCDC began to seriously consider the preparation of the Kiswahili curriculums after a series of major developments in matters related to Kiswahili, mainly, outside the education circles. For example, after the re-birth of the East African Community (EAC) in 1999, for instance, in Uganda, the EAC provided the space to promote Kiswahili (Chebet-Choge, 2012: 196) without attracting hatred from those quarters traditionally opposed to Kiswahili. Thus, what guided the framing of policies relating to the promotion of Kiswahili in the education system were the recommendations of the Kajubi report. Subsequently, in 2005, the Republic of Uganda amended its 1995 constitution. This was followed by the launching of the Uganda National Cultural Policy (UNCP) in 2006. These two documents reveal the elevation of the status of Kiswahili in Uganda.

Unlike in the previous regimes, mainly, in the post-independent Uganda, where the status of Kiswahili was determined by decrees (Kwesiga, 1994: 58; Mulokozi, 2009: 74) or political sentiments without subsequent amendments to the constitution or national language policy, the 2005 and 2006 Kiswahili recognitions were formally acknowledged in the Constitutional Amendment Act (2005) and in the UNCP (2006: 4), respectively. This acknowledgment was additional evidence to the NCDC that issues associated with Kiswahili had taken a positive direction. As a result, in the history of Kiswahili in the Ugandan educational system, in 2008, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) produced the first ever formal syllabus for the teaching of Kiswahili in Ugandan lower secondary schools (Ordinary level) (MoES, 2008: vi). Similarly, the MoES (2014a) published another Kiswahili syllabus for the teaching of Kiswahili in upper secondary schools (Advanced level).

The two authorized syllabuses are significant tools that teachers use to facilitate Kiswahili pedagogical practices in the classrooms. The presence of the two syllabuses can provide presumptions of the possible challenges that teachers faced in teaching Kiswahili without a common teaching tool (a national syllabus). At the same time, Kiswahili learners have continuously been subjected to writing uniform Kiswahili national examinations as set by UNEB for years. Some learners have performed below average, for instance, as a result of failure to understand the examination procedures, modes of assessments and question formats, such as specific topics to be expected in examination booklets as questions (MoES, 2008: x). Thus, the presence of authorized syllabuses has reduced some of the above challenges, for instance, by teaching the topics that are established in the syllabuses. Relatedly, UNEB bases its examination questioning techniques on the learning content as provided in the Kiswahili national syllabuses of 2008 and 2014a, respectively.

Table 1: Major postulations on Kiswahili statuses in the post-Kajubi's (1989) report

<i>Documents</i>	Government White Paper (1992)	Teachers' Guide to Primary School Curriculum (2001)	Constitutional Amendment Act (2005)	National Cultural Policy (2006)	Kiswahili Teaching Syllabus (O Level) (2008)	Kiswahili Teaching Syllabus (A Level) (2014)
<i>Statements on Kiswahili as established in the documents</i>	recommends for compulsory teaching of Kiswahili subject in primary schools.	recommends the promotion of Kiswahili as a national language and its teaching from primary schools.	accords Kiswahili official status and authorises Parliament to control the use of Kiswahili by statute.	states Kiswahili as a second official language, as a basis of consistency behind the intentions of the amended constitutional article	supports enhancing and harmonising the teaching of standard Kiswahili in schools.	provides for communication in standard Kiswahili in various disciplines.

It is desirable to note that the above-authorized syllabuses are in use in both private and government-owned learning institutions (schools). The language learning centers across the country that teach Kiswahili (Chebet-Choge, 2012: 185; Dzahene-Quarshie, 2013: 71) in, mainly, government institutions, such as the parliament and ministries; non-governmental organisations; including, media houses, financial institutions, telecommunication companies and several international agencies, are increasingly facilitating their practices by using, mainly, the 2008 syllabus. Similarly, at many higher institutions of learning, there has been expansion of teaching programs/courses that include Kiswahili programs and/or course units. In fact, currently, many higher learning institutions have established and joined students' as well as lecturers' organizations that bring together Kiswahili students and lecturers, respectively, from higher learning institutions across the East African Region. The students' organization is famously abbreviated as CHAWAKAMA and that of lecturers' as CHAKAMA (cf. Mulokozi, 2009: 77).

On one hand, while most of the Kiswahili textbooks and reference books used in the above learning institutions are imported from Kenya and Tanzania (cf. Mbaabu, 2007:93; Mulokozi, 2009: 79), on the other hand, there are few Ugandans on individual basis who have, informally, attempted to write and publish English-Kiswahili materials such as thesaurus, pamphlets, and charts that can visibly be seen in major towns being sold (cf. Kaplan and Baldauf Jr., 1997: 63; Mulokozi, 2009: 79). Such materials are suitably designed to assist Ugandans who can learn/teach Kiswahili on their own. There are also few Kiswahili reference books written by Ugandans for Ugandans who have mastered Kiswahili language. This assists Ugandans to expand and further develop their competence in, for instance, Kiswahili vocabularies, stylistics, and pragmatics.

Furthermore, there has been an increase in the procurement and production of Kiswahili books. In the 2013/2014 financial year, the education sector distributed 247,138 copies of Kiswahili dictionaries to all government primary schools. In the same period, copies of Kiswahili textbooks for primary five, six and seven were distributed to the above schools (MoES, 2014b: vi). Similarly, MoES (2014b: 63), reports that there were other procurements of 150 Kiswahili Teachers' Guides as well as 1,500 copies of Pupils' Books. MoES (2014b: vi) reveals that under NCDC, a total of 127 teachers received training on Kiswahili content for term one of primary seven. This training took place at Nakaseke Core Primary Teachers' College (CPTC), in Nakaseke district, Central-Uganda. Additionally, MoES (2014b: 63) reports that other than Nakaseke CPTC, other schools that were set to pilot Kiswahili teaching in the country were fully monitored. Subsequently, there were printing of 10,000 copies of primary syllabuses and Teachers' Guides and more Kiswahili teachers for primary six and seven were oriented to the use of Kiswahili curriculums (MoES, 2014b: vi).

Lastly, in relation to the Kiswahili curriculum, there is the proposed new curriculum for Ugandan lower secondary schools. This curriculum is undergoing a reform process before it is launched in schools. The curriculum is expected to be operational from 2017. In the proposed curriculum, according to the NCDC (n.da: 9; n.db: 11), Kiswahili shall be a compulsory subject for all learners. This move will provide opportunities to Ugandan learners to learn the language with the aim of using it within and outside Uganda.

As Msanjila et al. (2011: 67-71), state that the use of Kiswahili is mainly to foster its use in social-economic, political, scientific and technological advancements within and beyond the East African borders (see also, Mulokozi, 2004, 2009; Chebet-Choge, 2012; Dzahene-Quarshie, 2013).

Conclusion

This review article has argued that the different educational commissions in pre-and-post independent Uganda had different tasks to accomplish. Some of the reports of the commissions were fully implemented while others were not. The possible reasons for the above have been outlined such as mixed reactions from various groups to the reports. In this way, Kiswahili-related matters could be neglected and undermined. It was until the report of Kajubi's (1987) commission that the Kiswahili issues were to a certain extent evenly considered for implementation. This can be observed from the major Kiswahili developments that have taken place since the submission of the Kajubi report. For example, the production of the Kiswahili teaching syllabuses for both ordinary and advanced levels and the compulsory requirement for all learners to study Kiswahili as established in the proposed reformed curriculum for Ugandan lower secondary schools.

In general, the current status of teaching Kiswahili in Uganda's schools has drastically changed compared to what it was prior to the establishment of the Kajubi (1987) commission. The teaching of Kiswahili as a subject started in some primary schools, secondary schools and in tertiary institutions. In addition, those secondary schools that, informally, taught Kiswahili have enhanced their pedagogical practices by using the above-mentioned authorized syllabuses. Furthermore, the UNEB has continuously maintained its position in the preparations of Kiswahili examinations for secondary school learners annually. In brief, drawing from the above developments, it is evident that the significance of Kajubi's (1987) commission regarding the promotion of teaching Kiswahili in Uganda continues to be realized as an innovation in the education system of Uganda.

Notes

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