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Stakeholders' Roles in Education Language Policy Research in West Africa: A Review of the Literature

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Abstract: This paper provides an overview of West Africa-based language policy and practice (LPP) research, examining ethnographic and participatory action research from the last 15 years. These methodologies are of particular importance given their social justice orientation and the manner in which they prioritize the research participants throughout the research process, an important consideration given the historical, sociocultural, sociopolitical and post-colonial context of this region. Examining the literature provides valuable lessons for development agency personnel and researchers alike. This paper calls readers to reconsider how we include stakeholders in our work and research endeavors, and to what extent these initiatives allow stakeholders to influence and advance their contexts. Readers are invited to reconsider to what degree research serves to capacitate or restrict the same stakeholders that development efforts intend to reach.

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Introduction

McCarty (2011) noted that the research examining language policy and practice (LPP) has grown significantly over the last few decades. The research spans the globe and applies various methodologies to explore how education language policy plays out in different contexts. Samoff and Carrol (2004) noted that research on education has become one of the major forms of influence on education in Africa. Also to be taken into consideration is Diallo's (2012) work in which he stressed the majority of education-related research conducted in West Africa is a result of funding from development agencies. As a result, the actual stakeholders- those who are most directly impacted by educational policies- are not typically included in the research design or execution. While the research may to some degree be participatory in that it might include nationals, the research questions and its design do not necessarily come from the people who are immersed in the system. Together, these scholars lead us to question how those most impacted by the language policies- the stakeholders- are involved in the research design, data collection and analysis processes, and the dissemination of the findings. It raises the question of who, in particular, is doing the *influencing* in development work related to LPP? To address this inquiry, this paper looks at how the research surrounding LPP in West Africa examines and assesses language policy implementation at various levels (e.g. government, community, classroom) and how stakeholders' perceptions of the language policies are considered.

West Africa is the particular region of focus of this article. Countries most frequently tied to this region include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. As Alidou (2003) explained, various nations in this region (Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger) have well-established bilingual education programs. Yet, as this literature review will reveal, LPP-related research specific to West Africa is limited, despite the contributions this region can offer the field. As such, this article occasionally highlights research that extends beyond West Africa's political and geographic boarders for purposes of the discussion.

The debate about *which* language(s) of instruction (LoI) should be used in classrooms is a common theme in LPP research. Many scholars (Trudell, 2012; Nikiéma and Ilboudo, 2012; Walter & Benson, 2011; Ruiz, 1984; Brock-Utne 2000, 2007a, 2007b, 2010, 2012; Brock-Utne and Hopson 2005; Brock-Utne and Skattum 2009; Prah and Brock-Utne 2009; Ouane and Glanz 2011) have shown the importance of learning in one's first language (L1) because of its relationship to one's learning process and literacy practices. An additional benefit to L1 instruction is the impact its use has on one's identity (Holmes, 2008; Lallou, 1998; Trudell, 2009). Use of the L1 in formal education sends students the message that their language and culture are highly valued (Cummins, 1999, 2001). Dembélé and Lefoka (2007) outlined other benefits of learning in one's first language. Their list included: secure a smoother home-school transition; assist in the development of early literacy; create the foundation for high performance in a second (or third) language by fourth or fifth grade, and in other subjects such as math and science; contribute to making education culturally relevant; establish a link between cultural relevance and parental involvement in and demand for schooling; contribute to the emergence of a new kind of African citizen who accepts and experiences bilingualism and biculturalism as assets; and encourage instructional practices that are child-centered, active and participatory (p. 543).

These reasons do more than explain why many scholars have advocated for African languages to be offered as the medium of instruction (MoI) in African schools (Fafunwa, Macauley & Funnso Sokoya, 1989; Alidou, 1997; Bamgbose, 1997; Moumouni, 1998; Mazrui, 2000; Benson, 2004, 2011, 2012). The use of African languages in African classrooms has been connected to the development of its nations (Brock-Utne, 2012; Igboanusi, 2014). Not only are students more apt to stay in school, but also to perform with greater success if they understand what they are learning. The result is a more educated, literate society, which in turn has economic, health, and political implications that impact a nation's development.

Despite the benefits of using the L1 as the language of instruction, the next section discusses the numerous challenges that prevent its implementation in West African classrooms. After providing this context, the article discusses the theoretical framework that informs the literature search parameters, and describes the particular research methodologies that are prioritized for purposes of this literature review. The bulk of this article presents the findings, which identify the trends in LPP research in West Africa. The paper concludes with a discussion about the necessity of including stakeholders in West African-based LPP research if there is to be power shift in how development occurs in this region. Stakeholders must be provided opportunities to influence by playing fundamental roles in research. The paper invites all readers, despite their specific geographic location or field, to consider how they interact and involve stakeholders in the work they do.

Language of instruction: an ongoing debate

Whether it is in Africa's "francophone", "lusophone" or "anglophone" countries' classrooms, the former colonizer's language is commonly used as the MoI. Despite African countries being "afrophone" (Brock-Utne, 2012, p. 774) the former colonizing countries have maintained political and economic ties, even though many of the continent's countries gained independence over 50 years ago. Such ties, as well as stakeholders' perceptions of the languages in question, result in the continued presence of French, Portuguese and English in Africa's education systems. These factors are described below in greater detail.

Brief Historical Overview of MoI

Just as was the trend in the majority of African nations, newly independent West African nations maintained the use of the colonizer's language (French) as the LoI in schools. French was seen as a "neutral", "modern", and "scientific" language, and it was viewed as a means to unify a country with significant linguistic diversity (Heugh, 2009; Kone, 2010; Lavoie, 2008; Lavoie & Benson, 2011). In 1953 UNESCO's report was one of the first published documents that addressed MoI. This monumental report opened the discussion and debates surrounding the language of instruction in schools. No longer would the "colonizer's language" be considered the best option. In the 1970s, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger established experimental bilingual schools. The goals of these programs included "the preservation and promotions of African languages and cultures through literacy", as well as the "acquisition of adequate literacy in both national languages and the dominant languages of instruction… depending upon a country's colonial history" (Alidou, 2003, p. 110). Alidou also noted that bilingual schools have played a role in the "nationalization and Africanization" of primary schools in the postcolonial era (p. 110).

In 1990, UNESCO, the World Bank, national ministries of education, and several international organizations met in Thailand to evaluate the state of education in the world. At the meeting, Africa was identified as a region "experiencing a serious educational crisis related to the relevance of the curriculum, the languages of instruction, and the centralized organizational structures of the educational systems" which resulted in "a call for investments and reforms that take into consideration African people's socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds" (Alidou, 2003, p. 105). Various meetings followed the 1990 gathering, during which representatives from African countries' Ministries of Education met with education specialists and linguists. They produced papers that echoed the findings of UNESCO's landmark 1953 publication, proclaiming that the use of African languages as the MoI in schools is preferable. Participants at the 1995 meeting in Accra, Ghana, declared the following: "We solemnly declare our deep conviction that the promotion and use of African national languages in formal and non-formal education will ensure a greater success in the training of human resources and consequently drawing fully on the potentials of African countries for endogenous economic, social and cultural development" (ADEA, 1996).

In 1999, Mali's government passed the *Law of Orientation of Education*. This law has required that a bilingual model of instruction be offered as an education option. As a result, the Ministry of Education established *Écoles de la Pédagogie Convergente*- schools which use national languages (generally the students' L1) and French as the media of instruction. As of 2003, only Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger had developed new, or reestablished their experimental bilingual schools, "owing to the reluctance of the World Bank and France to support the promotion of national languages in formal education" (Alidou, 2003, p. 106). The following section discusses some of the reasons why French remains prevalent in former French colonies, despite the fact that few citizens speak the language.

One influencing factor: Post-colonial ties. Prior to colonial independence, France crafted numerous policies that retained its interest and ties to these countries. "France had been working since 1945 on the possibility of granting independence to her African colonies in a way that would not damage her own interests" (Renou, 2002, p. 9). For example, from an economic standpoint, France developed economic policies that would necessitate her colonies would financially rely on France. In 1947 the *Franc Zone* was established. The zone served to tie the currency[2] of 13 colonies to the French franc. "The purpose of the zone was to preserve monetary stability in the region. But it also enables France to control Francophone African countries' money supply, their monetary and financial regulations, their banking activities, their credit allocation and ultimately, their budgetary and economic policies" (Renou, 2002, p. 11). Additionally, France continues its influence on the African continent through its aid relationship with various countries, thus maintaining these nations' dependence on their former colonizer (Alidou, 2003; Kone, 2010; Renou, 2002). Since the 1980s French aid to sub-Saharan Africa has entailed fewer grants and more loans. In addition, of the billions of dollars spent on public aid (40 billion in 1993, 36 billion in 1997), very little has been spent on development programs with only 4% of this aid going towards improving health care and education. (Renou, 2002, p.10). Politically, many post-colonial African countries rely on France for military assistance. After independence, France signed policies that would allow it continued access to oil, natural gas, and uranium in exchange for military assistance (Renou, 2002).

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[2] The Franc CFA (Communauté Financière Africaine) still serves as the currency in circulation.

The use of French as a language of instruction in West African schools is an evident example of France's continued presence. Trudell (2012) described the similar goals of Africa's colonial and post-independent education system- to strengthen the colonial language-speaking African elite. Trudell stressed its impracticality, noting that schools are often the only setting in a community where the former colonizer's language is spoken.

France has a strong influence on many former colonies' education budget. Maintaining this budgetary assistance requires maintaining French as the language of instruction in schools (Alidou, 2003; Alidou-Ngame, 2000). In Burkina Faso, for example, "the belief is widespread among educationists that, should the Burkinabè government replace the French-language écoles classiques with a local language-medium curriculum, significant loss of French budget support would swiftly follow" (Trudell, 2012, p. 374). Kone (2010) described how France has continued its stance as a colonizer of West Africa through the textbook market. West Africa has grown financially reliant on France's economic ability to provide textbooks in the French language. Who will support the use of the L1 in West Africa's classrooms by funding a textbook industry that publishes in the African languages?

Another influencing factor: Stakeholders' perceptions. It is additionally important to consider how stakeholders' serve to validate or oppose the presence of a particular language in education. As Carlson highlighted, many parents, particularly those of marginalized groups, equate colonial language knowledge as a path to political and economic opportunities (Luke, 2003; Trudell, 2007, 2012). Carlson stated:

> Parents of school-age children are frequently hesitant to see their children educated in any language but the one associated with success, prestige, and government or civil service employment. Thus, the use of French and other languages of wider communication rather than the use of the child's first language in schools perpetuates the elitist nature of education, and linking school to life becomes more difficult (Carlson, 2004, p.19).

Other than the students themselves, parents are the main stakeholders in their children's education. Thus, the parents' agendas, or desires for their children, impact the education system. As a result, French is placed on a pedestal as the language of instruction compared to the local languages that are not viewed as languages that provide access. The stakeholders' views, in this case, those of the parents, influence which models of education are available to students. This effect is what Bourdieu (1991) labeled the "linguistic market".

Canvin's (2003) findings from her dissertation research among the Bambanankan-speaking communities in Mali support the possibility that there is the potential to shift stakeholders' views. Her study showed that parents' negative views about the use of L1 as a MoI shifted as students in schools where the L1 was a language of instruction outperformed their peers in the schools where French was the sole LoI. Parents went as far as switching their students to the schools where the L1 is used as a MoI, which increased the enrollment at these schools.

The MoI debate is undoubtedly complicated, which further supports the need for ongoing LPP research. The assertion of Grainville, Janks, Joseph, Mphahlele, Ramani, Reed, & Watson (1998), as cited by Joseph & Ramani (2004) highlights its complexity:

…If you provide access to the dominant language [French], you entrench its dominance. If on the other hand, you deny students' access to the language of power, you entrench their marginalization in a society which continues to accord value and status to that language. Lodge (1997) refers to this as "the access paradox". To resolve this paradox, it is important that learners are offered excellent access to [French] while at the same time using their own language as a medium. So dual-medium education, ironically aimed at challenging the hegemony of [French], must also endorse [French] to open the door for African languages as media of instruction. (p. 239)

Theoretical framework

Drawing on critical theory, this section begins with an examination of Samoff & Caroll's (2004) ideas about research as a means to *influence*- a discussion which leads to an explanation of the focal research methodologies this literature review features.

One of the fundamental tenets of critical theory is the concept that power is socially constructed, and thus not static. The power affiliated with, assigned to, or held by a particular population is able to be altered. Unpacking Samoff & Caroll's (2004) ideas about research as a means to *influence* with this in mind, research serves as a medium to maintain and/or disrupt the status quo. Therefore, equally important as the research topic (in this case LPP in education) is *how* the research is conducted, and *who* is involved. These are important considerations given the potential research has to inform education policies- and thus impact the lives of the stakeholders most affected by these policies.

Ethnographic and participatory action research (PAR) exhibit a humanizing approach to research as described by Paris and Winn (2014)- one situated in social justice and decolonizing methodologies:

> Our work…joins what we view as a trajectory toward a stance and methodology of research that acts against the histories and continuing practices, ideologies and accompanying dehumanizing policies of discrimination…we conceptualize humanizing approaches as those that involve the building of relationships of care and dignity and dialogical consciousness raising for both researchers and participants. (p. xvi)

The next subsections describe in greater detail how ethnography and PAR position stakeholders as *influential* by prioritizing research participants throughout the research process.

Ethnography

Language policy and practice research reveals that ethnography is a common methodological approach in this field, and has numerous benefits for examining LPP. To begin, looking at LPP through an ethnographic lens positions language as context-specific. It highlights the importance of contextualizing "cultural phenomena socially, historically, and comparatively across time and space" (McCarty, 2011, p.10). Additionally, as many have stressed, ethnography prioritizes the insiders' position. E.J. Johnson (2010) noted, "examining language

policies ethnographically highlights the role of key individuals involved within and across multiple levels of policy creation, interpretation, appropriation and installation" (p. 59). Furthermore, ethnography expands the researcher's awareness to what *could be*. As Hornberger & Johnson (2007) described, it reveals where the ideological and implementational spaces are located- spaces in which we can promote multicultural, bilingual education. These spaces (or what many deem as the micro, meso and macro levels) may be at the classroom, community, and/or policy levels, or even in a single social interaction. "Negotiation at each institutional level creates the opportunity for reinterpretation and policy manipulation" (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007, p. 527). Because ethnography opens our eyes to these spaces, we can identify them and use them to implement change.

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Participatory action research "refers to an epistemology that engages research design, methods, analyses, and products through a lens of democratic participation and collective action" (Torre, 2014, p. X). PAR was born in Central and South America as a tool for action against social injustice. In present day research PAR is a methodological approach that serves to explore social injustice, and acts to address it. Researchers set out to uncover the reasons behind injustice, all the while maintaining change as a fundamental outcome of the research. PAR research spans the globe and looks at issues including (though certainly not an exhaustive list): labor and educational policies, incarceration, threats to youth human rights, immigration violations, inequality in education, police brutality and over-surveillance, and LGBTQ discrimination.

In PAR stakeholders are positioned as the experts, as it is they who have the most knowledge of the particular context. Because of this, PAR ensures inclusivity of participants in all stages of the research process- the design, data collection, data analysis processes, and the dissemination of the findings. This research does not stop at the findings, however, as Tuck (2009) well illustrated in sharing her discussion about action. Gubrium and Harper (2013) further specified participatory research as the "methodologies, approaches, or techniques that afford the "subject," "community member," and/or "field site" greater narrative latitude when it comes to ethnographic knowledge production and a larger role in determining why and how research outcomes are produced and received by lay and academic audiences alike" (p. 16). This methodology is grounded in its mission to address the social injustices it explores. As Michelle Fine said in drawing on Appadurai, "at its heart, PAR insists that those persons who have been both structurally disenfranchised have, what Arjun Appadurai (2006) calls "a right to research" the conditions of their oppression and their resistance" (p. 2).

An overarching theme in ethnography and PAR: "Influential" stakeholders

Ethnography and PAR overlap in a variety of fashions. Both are typically oriented in critical perspectives, and adopt an approach to research that is rooted in and promotes social justice. Both approaches situate individuals as active agents of their social world, experts of their own context, and therefore essential to the research process given this expertise. Both methodologies look to understand, push back, and rise up against the dominant paradigms, hegemonic ideologies and social inequality. Both ethnography and PAR create space in the research for positive ethical practice by valuing participant involvement, data triangulation and member checks, and disclosure of research positionality. Both approaches instill a sense of

responsibility on behalf of the researchers to improve the situations they uncover in their research process. To draw on Fishman's (1994) words, students, practitioners, researchers, etc. are "co-responsible and must pull their weight in creating a better sociocultural reality for those whose lives are touched by the efforts that language planning encompasses" (p. 98). In sum, both of these methodologies are not limited to critically exploring a particular phenomenon, but are charged with contributing to it in some fashion. For these reasons, I prioritize exploring how ethnography and participatory action research have been used to examine LPP issues in education.

Methods

This article is informed by both "gold" literature (peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters) as well as the "grey" literature (including unpublished dissertations, written reports from non-governmental organizations and government agencies) from the past 15 years (primarily 1999-2014). To locate scholarly work I utilized *ERIC, Education Research Complete, Web of Science, AnthroSource* and *Academic Search Premier* databases. I also searched methodological-specific journals; specifically, those that publish only ethnographic or action research studies (e.g. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* or *Action Research*).

I drew on a variety of search terms, given the influence a particular descriptor has on the generated results. Deciding descriptors goes beyond choosing particular words. For example, in looking for research specific to West Africa I debated using the search term "francophone". This area of Africa is commonly known as "francophone Africa," given its postcolonial ties to France and the fact that many of the countries in West Africa deem French as an official language. Using the term "francophone", however, maintains the inaccurate portrayal that the majority of citizens of these countries are French-speaking. As Makoni, Makoni, Abdelhay and Mashiri (2011) explained, the use of "francophone" "underscores the prevalence of former colonial languages at the expense of the complex multilingualism that exists in these regions" (p. 526). While I did decide to use this as a search term, I was cognizant of the fact that it may locate literature outside of my epistemological perspective.

For these reasons, I applied a variety of search terms, including, but not limited to any combination of the following[3]: bilingual education, education, biliteracy, multilingual education, global south, post-colonial countries, developing countries, develop* language policy, participat*, participatory action, action research, PAR, ethnograph*, Africa, West Africa, francophone Africa, mother tongue, language of instruction, as well as specific country names. To generate varied terms, and exhaust my search, I relied on the thesaurus within the search engines to provide additional search terms. In addition to these formal searches, I also used authors' citations to locate supplementary literature.

While my intention was to review empirical research that applies an ethnographic or PAR approach to examine education-related LPP, various searches yielded few, or even zero results proving that these specificities were too limiting. I opened my search to other continents and found that ethnography is a more frequently used methodology for examining LPP on some continents than on others, for example (South America and Australia, respectively).

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[3] Note that for many of the multiword search terms (e.g. "West Africa" or "participatory action") I used quotation marks, however I do not include this punctuation here.

Additionally, search results showed that very few LPP-focused studies utilized PAR as their methodological approach- despite it being an appropriate approach because it not only allows to examine the impact of L1 in education, but for participants to advocate for its use. Thus, for demonstration purposes, this article occasionally discusses PAR and/or ethnographic research that extends beyond the field of LPP (e.g. healthcare, education, tourism) and references research that looks at LPP in geographic locations that extend beyond West Africa.

The literature cited herein is a selection of over 100 articles resulting from the search. Each manuscript was coded according to its date of publication, its methodology, its theoretical framework and its findings. The following section reveals some of the major themes that resulted from a synthesis of the literature. While it features research predominantly based in West Africa, I do occasionally step beyond this border and deliberately include examples of LPP research for comparative purposes between different African countries or regions.

Findings: Themes in LPP research in West Africa

What do the stakeholders think?
One overarching trend in Africa-based LPP research is the presence of stakeholders' opinions about the use of the L1 as an MoI. For example, Diallo (2011) discussed the factors that position Senegal for a successful implementation of mother-tongue bilingual education- one being that many Senegalese positively support the implementation of L1-based instruction through bilingual education programs. Unlike many of its West African neighbors, Senegal has yet to implement bilingual education programs where students learn through their indigenous language and French. Instead, students are confined to French as the language of instruction.

Through a combination of survey and personal narrative, Diallo (2011) set out to examine 404 participants' views about the use of the L1 in Senegal's education system. Diallo's findings showed that 87% of participants support the implementation of national languages into the education system. Based on his survey he found that the top three reasons people support the use of national languages in the classroom are 1) the pedagogical implications (facilitates access to knowledge) (18%), 2) they allow people to communicate more effectively/be understood (16%) and 3) their role in cultural and linguistic maintenance (14%). Diallo complemented the survey results with the content analysis he performed using the participants' narratives. The participants' words are a rich addition to the summary of the quantitative data. Diallo's study also showed that while participants would like to see the use of L1 in the education system, they are highly in favor of maintaining the use of French given its international status.

Diallo posited that his findings should serve as incentive for Senegalese policy makers to introduce national languages in the education system. Public support, as evidenced by these results, combined with the successful models of bilingual programs in neighboring countries (Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger), pave the way for such a model in Senegal.

Chimbutane and Benson (2012) also discussed the positive attitudes various stakeholders maintain toward the use of multiple languages in Mozambican classrooms, based on school observations in two different schools and 96 interviews with an array of of participants (54 pupils, 10 teachers, 2 school managers, 2 representatives from NGOs, 4 education authorities, 19 parents and 5 community members). Likewise, the classroom discourse excerpts display how communication and participation improve in classrooms where the students' mother tongue is

used. The excerpts from classroom interactions also illustrate numerous challenges that teachers experience- the integration of bilingual teaching methodologies, interpreting the transitional bilingual model, and dealing with lack of resources. Such findings can assist in creating and improving bilingual teacher education programs- another consideration in the policy planning process.

Davis and Agbenyega (2012) found very different results in Ghana than Chimbutane and Benson (2012) did in Mozambique regarding stakeholders' positions on the use of the L1 in the classroom, versus the use of the ex-colonial language. The authors interviewed ten principals (known as headteachers in Ghana) from randomly selected below-, above- and average schools. The authors gathered information about participants' biographical data as well as the languages teachers use as the LoI in class, in effort to address the study's topic- an exploration of the gaps between what the language policy says, and teachers' actual practices. They applied grounded theory to analyze the interview data, categorizing and identifying issues related to the "policy-practice dichotomy" (p. 343).

In Ghana, language policy in education states that all instruction in grades 1-3 should be conducted in the L1, and then in English from grade 4 onward. Results show that 50% of the principals interviewed stated English is used as the sole LoI in the upper primary level, but 40% claimed that the use of the L1 is often used to clarify. One principal said a combination of English and the local language (Fante) is used. At the lower primary level all principals indicated use of both English and Fante, and two of them explicitly stated they emphasize the use of English over Fante. Davis and Agbenyega stated the actual practices in these schools, as described by the principals, do not accurately reflect the policies, and in doing so undermines the L1 and positions English as serving a greater importance. The authors advocate that in Ghana, and in other countries that have national language/ex-colonial language bilingual education models, it is important to explore how the policy actors (teachers and principals) position these languages. The findings in this particular study suggest that the policy actors, responsible for implementing the policy, might benefit from gaining a broader understanding of why the use of the L1 as a LoI is important, so that students are not denied the opportunity to learn through their L1. "Headteachers and teachers need to be exposed to research information concerning the value of using the mother tongue as the medium of instruction…these participants were not aware of the theoretical and educational benefits of using children's mother tongue during their initial years of schooling" (p. 346). We can conclude from Davis and Agbenyega's research that language policy planning might also consider the actors' role in the policy implementation, and thus reflect on the necessary training and education they will need to undergo in order to implement the policy- including the necessary education that will serve to shift their language ideology.

The use of interview to gather this data is an interesting choice on behalf of the authors, as the study is based on what principals say their teachers do, rather than based on interviews with the actual teachers. Likewise, the research may have more validity if the authors implemented additional methods- combining the interview data with teacher observations, for example, as Chimbutane and Benson (2012) did in their study.

These articles demonstrate the stakeholders' role in West Africa-based LPP research. Stakeholders are involved from the outskirts, sought after for their opinions that researchers gather primarily via surveys and interviews. While their voices are showcased in the articles,

stakeholders are limited to *influencing* via their thoughts, not their actions. They provide information, but they are not involved in the research process, or in the dissemination of the findings. Participants are too often deprived the chance to act as change agents through research, and thus denied the opportunity to take control of their own situations through this medium. They serve as spectators, rather than actors. Instead of the researchers engaging the stakeholders, they limit their potential to influence.

Language-development connection

A second theme surrounding LPP research focuses on the importance of "proper[4]" language planning, and its connection to development. The literature suggests that simply introducing the mother tongue to nations' education systems is not enough, but rather language policy planning must contemplate a variety of issues during program design. Brock-Utne (2012), for example, advocated for L1 instruction that goes beyond the primary level. "Without mother tongue education at all levels of education there is no future for African development" (p. 491). In her article she drew on her work in Malaysia, which, after a number of years using English as the MoI, changed its policy to ensure the use of Malay given evidence that using English negatively affected students' performance. Brock-Utne (2012) (see also Prah & Brock-Utne, 2009) posited "development cannot occur in the postcolonial circumstances… without the centralization of the languages of the masses as languages of educational instruction" (Brock-Utne, 2012, p. 492).

Igboanusi (2014) also connected L1 literacy with development. He underscored the importance of successful micro-level language policy planning and its relationship to macro-level development goals such as those outlined in the Millennium Development Goals. In particular, Igboanusi looked at the correlation between increased knowledge of indigenous languages and the reduction of illiteracy rates and disease, two factors that result in poverty alleviation. The use of ex-colonial languages, he argued, economically excludes the majority of people (up to 80% of the population who do not understand these languages). Indigenous language capital is an economic resource since it may result in employment opportunities for translators, teachers, and publishers.

Igboanusi explained the interconnection between language policy and poverty reduction, a relationship, he argued, which is often overlooked. Furthermore, development policies and the discussion surrounding them are typically conducted in the ex-colonial language. The majority of the population will not be able to play a role in policy formation about development projects, preventing mass mobilization. Proper language planning must address the "widening of educational and economic inequalities, thereby narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor" (p. 88).

Taken together, Brock-Utne and Igboanusi demonstrate a common theme in the literature pertaining to West African LPP in education. Their articles, like many (see also Alidou, 2003; Dei, 2008; Lavoie, 2008; Kone, 2010 for example) draw less on empirical research, and are more commentary in nature, based on author's experience and expertise of a given context. This of course does not discount the information presented in the article, but highlights the absence of the stakeholders who are subjected to the language policies the authors discuss.

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[4] Igboanusi's term (2014)

A lack of ethnographic/participatory LPP research in West Africa

This article sets out to find LPP-related, West Africa-based research that applies ethnographic or PAR methodologies. In highlighting the existing literature above, we discover a third theme: the lack of ethnographic and PAR approaches as a means to examine LPP in education in this region.

Ethnography. Despite the prominent use of ethnography in LPP research globally, as well as the prevalence of PAR in examining a plethora of social justice issues world-wide, this literature review reveals that neither of these methodologies is commonly applied in West Africa-based research. I turn now to examine the factors behind this trend.

Diallo (2012) discussed some of the challenges in conducting and disseminating ethnographic research in Sub-Saharan Africa. He pays particular attention to the political, infrastructural and linguistic tensions present in this region. For these reasons, ethnographic research is rarely used as a means to explore LPP (or other topics for that matter) in Sub-Saharan Africa.

From a political perspective there is often a lack of financing, and an environment that fails to facilitate training for research or promote collaboration. Often there is tension between political leaders and researchers, because the former is worrisome that the researcher will make negative discoveries.

Researchers face infrastructural limitations as well. Internet access is sparse with only 1 in 5,000 Africans having access, as opposed to the world average of 1 in 40. Lack of Internet restricts access to published research. Additionally, Sub-Saharan Africa has no large publishing houses, neither in European languages nor in widespread African languages. Thus, the so-called "gray literature" is overrepresented within indigenous scholarship, and only 8% of an approximate 1000 studies are published.

Finally, many researchers experience linguistic isolation. While English-speaking African authors have greater access to publications and to publishing, it is difficult to publish in a foreign language. French-speaking researchers have an additional challenge because they are limited to French publications if they are illiterate in English.

Participatory Action Research. I now turn to ponder why PAR is scarcely used to explore LPP in West Africa, if at all. There are numerous aspects to consider if one is to use this approach– how to build and negotiate collaborative relationships; the specificities of recruiting and funding participants; teaching data collection and analysis techniques to participants; collaborative study design; negotiating the time and budgetary limitations; how to disseminate research and take action in collaboration with participants. Is the use of PAR in development work contexts too complicated given all these considerations? If development workers/researchers in developing nations were better versed in the specific techniques, strategies, or logistical tidbits PAR requires in order to use this approach, would they consider using it? Participatory action research may well be an appropriate approach to LPP research in this context, especially if one of the goals in conducting the research is to raise parents' awareness of the impact of L1 in education, and advocate for its use as a MoI.

Unlike Diallo's (2012) chapter that examines the reasons behind the lack of ethnographic research in West Africa, no one has yet formally considered PAR's missing presence in this region. While I speculate above, I also refer here to Koster, Baccar, and Lemelin's (2012) article as a means to illustrate the powerful potential of PAR and thus the need to implement this approach in developing nations/contexts. In discussing the lessons they learned in the *process* of conducting PAR, Koster et al. demonstrated its capacity-building potential.

Koster et al. (2012) conducted a reflexive evaluation of their five-year research project. They highlighted the difference of doing research *on* the community, as opposed to working *with*, and *for* them. From their reflection they were able to more clearly differentiate how they come to know, and gain knowledge, and thus move away from the "western paradigm" in doing so. This paradigm has guided research within the western world, "researchers and their expertise traditionally have been portrayed as objective and disembodied and thus privileged over those they study" (Koster et al., 2012, p. 196).

The research project on which they reflected took place between 2005 and 2010. Its main objective was to examine how to develop rural tourism in northern Ontario, Canada, despite the absence of significant physical infrastructure. Based on two years of research, in 2007 the main researchers held a two-day workshop that was attended by 40 people from the various communities in this region. The workshop highlighted the various elements that might attract tourists--local foods, local art (porcupine quill crafting), and spirituality (medicine bags). It showed the participants that tourism could be developed in this region.

Two researchers established this original research with the main purpose of serving their research agendas, exemplifying research *on* participants. Once they saw the enthusiasm of the community at the workshops, they invited community members to become part of the research process and altered their original research agendas accordingly to meet the needs of the community. This caused a shift from research *on* participants, to research *with* participants. Even still, as the relationship carried on, the original researchers often times found themselves participating in research *for* the community- at which points they drew on their expertise to help the community in areas that did not overlap with their own research agendas (e.g. developing a cruise ship itinerary and a cultural program for a conference).

To actively reflect on this five year project, the authors drew on co-constructed narratives in autoethnography and examined three questions: what is partnership within a community-university research project, what is research, and how are the outcomes of research valued by each partner? During a two-week period the original researchers and the community-based participant-researchers individually reflected on each of the questions and provided a text to provide their answers.

From their reflexive analysis Koster et al. (2012) advocated that all research conducted within a community (be it Indigenous or not) should continue to adopt a research stance and move towards methods that are "based on an ethic that respects and values the community as a full partner in the co-creation of the research question and process, and shares in the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge" (p. 208).

Koster et al. (2012) show that PAR offers a paradigm to more inclusively incorporate stakeholders into the research process, thus allowing them opportunities to act as change

agents of their context. The authors also illustrate that reflection is a powerful means to examine one's practices, and the effects of such practices on others. In this spirit, I conclude with the discussion.

Discussion

This paper examines the literature about LPP research based in West Africa, examining, in particular, ethnographic and participatory action research. I focus on these specific methodologies given their social justice orientation, and their prioritization of research participants throughout the research process: two important considerations given the historical, sociocultural, sociopolitical and post-colonial context of this region. Examining the literature provides valuable lessons about how education researchers allow or deny stakeholders the opportunities to disrupt the inequalities that are reproduced in post-colonial classrooms, an environment where too often the former colonizer pervades the curriculum via the MoI.

Furthermore, examing LPP research in this region has identified significant gaps in ethnographic and participatory action research, and highlights stakeholders' absence in the work in this region. It serves as a reminder for all of, despite our sector or region of focus, that development agency personnel and researchers alike must consider our role in interrupting or perpetuating the reproduction of the status quo in development work. We must, as Koster et al. (2012) so powerfully demonstrated, learn by examining and reflecting on our own practices. How do we create opportunities for stakeholders to be part of the work? How do we grant them their "right to research" (Appadurai, 2006).

The findings from the literature review have shown that research is not simply a means to gather information, but rather a way for stakeholders to *influence* and thus develop their nation. Moving forward in our journey, we need to better incorporate stakeholders in our work. An essential first step to achieving this is to reconsider the role research plays in development and reimagine what research *could be* in our contexts. Perhaps an important first step would be to commit to more time in the field in order to conduct research that utilizes ethnographic and/or participatory approaches so that we serve as conduits for stakeholders to *influence*, rather than simply reporting out what they have to say.

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