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The Role of Parents' and Carers' Attitudes in (Re)Formulating Language Policy(ies) on Bilingual Education

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Abstract: *This article reflects on the role of parents' and carers' attitudes in the (re)formulation of language policies on bilingual education in Maputo province in general and in Manhica district in particular. Its specific objectives are (i) to identify the role of attitudes in the development of language policies; (ii) to survey the attitudes of parents and guardians when their children are placed in bilingual education classes; (iii) to analyse the attitudes of parents and guardians towards bilingual education. The methodological approach we followed is qualitative-interpretive. In this approach, we focus on the complexity of parents' and carers' perceptions and attitudes as they emerge, without predefining variables to obtain qualitative data. We used interviews and observation of the attitudes shown by parents and carers when approached about integrating their children into bilingual education classes as data collection techniques. The data was analysed using the content analysis method, which is seen as an instrument of communication analysis techniques (Bardin 2011, 1995).*

Keywords: *Attitudes; language policies; bilingual education.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The notion of attitude is quite complex, as the term is associated with a set of meanings, namely behaviour, posture and procedure, which are often also related to beliefs, which can be defined in various ways. Attitudes are therefore of paramount importance in the (re)formulation of language policies. As Baker (1992) postulates, the concept of attitude is a hypothetical construct whose essence is to explain human behaviour from the point of view of its direction and meaning. In line with Baker's (1992) perspective, attitudes relate to dispositions that cannot be observed directly and with the necessary precision, because they manifest themselves in a way that is not visible or noticeable.

In general terms, an attitude is a disposition to react favourably or unfavourably towards a class of objects or situations, taking into account a holistic view of them (Sarnoff 1970). In terms of their nature, attitudes are latent, which means miniature. However, despite this latent nature, attitudes are generally convincing and effective in clarifying behaviour patterns. In this sense, the attitudes of parents and carers must be addressed through a clear language policy, accompanied by proper publicity, in order to eliminate individual and collective stereotypes about bilingual education. We therefore believe that a well-designed language policy can greatly influence the building of good attitudes and, consequently, enable greater adherence to bilingual education.

The concept of attitude is viewed differently by researchers (Agheyisi & Fishman 1970:2). However, for these authors, the two most common perspectives are: the behaviourist, which has to do with overt attitudes and observable responses to observable social situations (Fasold 1982), and the mentalist, which sees attitude as an internal state that can be aroused by some kind of stimulus and which can mediate the organism's subsequent response (Williams 1974).

Although the above authors have different positions on the concept of attitude, there is a common point between them, because both positions refer to the response to a certain aspect or phenomenon. In this case, it has to do with how parents and carers respond and react to education. In the progressive development of attitude, social psychology generally advocates that it deals with the experimental study of individuals, seeking to examine their social and cultural background. Research into attitudes has therefore become a major focus for social psychologists because it is a phenomenon with a social dimension and enormous significance.

A. According to Lambert & Lambert (1972)

Attitude is an organised and coherent way of thinking, feeling and reacting in relation to people, groups, social issues or, more generally, to any event recorded in our environment. Its essential components are thoughts and beliefs, feelings (or emotions) and tendencies to react (p.78).

Attitudes play an essential role in determining our behaviour, as they affect our judgements and perceptions of others, as well as helping to determine the groups we live with, the professions we ultimately choose and even our perceptions of what we experience (p.83).

In this sense, we consider attitude to be a lasting social construction of beliefs and cognitions endowed with an affective charge for or against a defined social phenomenon, which predisposes to an action consistent with the cognitions and affections relating to this object (Rodrigues et al 2009).

Garrett et al. (2003) point out that an attitude is potentially an evaluative position that is sufficiently stable to allow it to be identified and, in a sense, measured. These authors also argue that attitudes have a tripartite structural role, in that they bring together three components: cognitive, affective and behavioural. In the view of Garrett et al. (2003), the cognitive component comprises beliefs about the world view. The affective component involves feelings about an attitude object and the behavioural component has to do with a certain way a particular person acts. These three components are linked because, in this case, they condition the perception and attitude of parents and carers towards bilingual education in the Manhiça district.

Another generally accepted characteristic of attitudes is the way in which they function as a gateway into and out of social action (Garrett et al. 2003:6). This is particularly relevant in educational research and in areas such as language planning.

This analysis can be used to explain the attitude of parents and guardians, both in receiving information and in promoting and valuing policies that favour bilingual education for their children. In fact, what has been highlighted in studies on parents' and guardians' attitudes today is that researchers are looking for more than simply what their attitudes are, but rather what effects they are having on their behaviour, which can subsequently influence students' learning (Mwanza 2017).

Garrett et al. (2003) also state that studies on attitudes can help us understand variations in thinking within the same community. These authors concluded that different language attitudes are influenced by the social characteristics of the people who make these questions or judgements about a certain phenomenon.

II. IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE OF PARENTS' AND CARERS' ATTITUDES

The attitudes of parents and carers towards a language or language varieties are important for the restoration, preservation, deterioration or death of a language (Baker 1992).

In line with this thinking, if parents and guardians are not in favour of the language of education, the implementation of bilingual education can become difficult and may lead to school failure. Therefore, the attitudes of parents and carers can be indicative of their thoughts, beliefs, convictions and doubts about the value of using a Bantu language as a means of teaching and learning.

A study on attitudes carried out in the United States by Lewis (1981) concluded the following:

Any language policy, especially in the education system, must take into account the attitudes of those who are likely to be affected. In the long term, the policy may succeed; what it may not achieve is one of three things: conforming to the attitudes of those involved; persuading those who express negative attitudes; or seeking to remove the cause of disagreement. Any knowledge of attitudes is important for the formation of a policy, as well as for its successful implementation (p. 262).

The above quote emphasises the need to take into account the individual beneficiaries of any language policy change. The attitude of the beneficiaries should be taken into account when determining the status, value and importance of languages by language policy makers. Therefore, the issue of language in education should not be separated from society, especially parents and carers, as they directly or indirectly participate in and influence their children's learning.

As Armstrong (1968) observed, the general attitudes of people in West Africa are important because their languages are considered symbols and flags of cultural differences in their countries. In this sense, an attempt to increase the use of Bantu languages in education must be accompanied by good linguistic planning, including the allocation of teachers who master and value Bantu languages, as well as teaching materials. Otherwise, the initiative could result in school failure, particularly if the linguistic attitudes of teachers and parents and guardians are not favourable to this change.

Positive linguistic attitudes favour the implementation of bilingual education policies that advocate the development of lower-status languages. For this reason, knowledge about the attitudes of parents and carers towards bilingual education can be fundamental to the successful implementation of this type of education.

III. CHANGING ATTITUDES

Despite the apparent stability of attitudes, everyday practice shows that they can change. However, this process of change isn't as simple as you might think, because it's much harder to change attitudes than it is to cultivate them. After being cultivated and developed, attitudes become an integral part of an individual's personality.

So, since parents and guardians may have already cultivated a series of attitudes towards Portuguese-based education, it may not be easy to change this personality, because it may have gained a dynamic and systematic organisation.

According to Lambert & Lambert (1972), changing attitudes presupposes a change in the four principles of learning. Thus, an attitude can be changed if the individual: (i) perceives that it is favourable to change in order to achieve a certain specific goal; (ii) wants to be part of a group; (iii) wants to obtain a certain social prestige; and (iv) wants to obtain a certain advantage, i.e. the satisfaction of a certain objective need. Similarly, attitudes can change if there are certain conditions for acquiring new feelings and reactions through association. In some cases, an individual can derive success from a negative experience. In this way, attitudes that were previously rejected can become positive.

As we can see, negative attitudes can lead to more rapid deterioration or extinction of a language in a given linguistic community if the right precautionary measures are not taken. However, this does not mean that only positive attitudes are strong enough to save endangered languages (Ngunga & Bavo 2011:11).

In line with this thinking, it is important to emphasise in this study that although parents and guardians generally have positive attitudes towards the Portuguese language, to the detriment of the Bantu language(s), they must ensure that their children also learn in a Bantu language that they know well and probably master, thus avoiding feelings of inferiority by association with it.

However, this does not mean that the formation of a positive attitude in parents and carers towards Bantu languages in education should be done in a coercive or imposed way. In our opinion, a social, pedagogical and psychological pact should be created between parents and carers and the various players in the Mozambican education system.

In this context, educational managers at all levels should trigger or reinforce the community awareness movement, including through different media outlets, about the value of bilingual education and the use of Bantu languages in teaching. Through this information movement and by systematically hearing about the positive implications of bilingual education, parents and carers can take on new attitudes towards this model of education.

As you can see, the success of bilingual education in general requires the intervention of teachers, as direct implementers and agents of community and social transformation, in raising awareness and mobilising parents and guardians. These actions can help to deconstruct the negative attitudes that parents and carers may have formed over time towards Bantu languages, thus creating a new awareness.

This analysis presupposes that this new awareness on the part of parents regarding the use of Portuguese and Bantu languages in the teaching and learning process can contribute to the formation and development of positive perceptions and attitudes towards these languages and bilingual education. To this end, it is also necessary to ensure the expansion of the use of Bantu languages, which should contribute to the valorisation and increase of their prestige and the recovery of self-esteem on the part of their speakers (Ngunga & Bavo 2011:12; Chimbutane 2011).

In short, if parents and carers receive new information, transmitted in a clear and objective manner, on a subject that has to do with their children's learning, they can change their possible negative perceptions and attitudes towards Bantu languages and Bantu language education.

A. Influence of Parents and Society on Students' Attitudes

The family environment also influences students' attitudes and, consequently, their learning, and it is assumed that parents and carers spend the most time with them from the earliest years of life.

It is in this context that, when observing pupils' behaviour, we often see the influence of the family environment on them, embodied in the perceptions and attitudes of parents and guardians towards Bantu languages as a vehicle for education and social mobility.

Rocha & Fidalgo (1998:94) warn that, through careful observation, we can assess how students acquire the scale of values in their family, because, from a social point of view, the individual tends to imitate the attitudes and behaviours of models conceived in the social context in which they are inserted. Thus, there is an urgent need for a deeper understanding of the acquisition of knowledge, which is not only restricted to the student's family environment, but also to that triggered formally and informally in society and other learning environments (González et al. 2005).

In line with the above, classrooms made up of students from different families and cultures with peculiar characteristics should be treated as socio-cultural spaces for building diverse knowledge (González et al. 2005). It should therefore be remembered that perceptions and attitudes generally influence any individual's motivation to learn. This is why, albeit superficially, we consider sociocultural knowledge to be important for our study.

IV. METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURE

The methodological approach we followed is qualitative-interpretative. By adopting this perspective we aim to understand attitudes through the meanings attributed by the informants, as well as to understand the context and the process through which language policies influence and are influenced by the context.

In the context of the methodological approach to accessing a given content of information disseminated by a singular or collective entity, Bardin (1995:37) suggests the following categorical analysis: the delimitation of coding units, assumed by the analyst on the basis of an objective and rational text. Bardin goes on to say that this is a taxonomic method that aims to order certain criteria in apparent disorder. In this context, Bardin (2011) points out that in order to carry out a content analysis, we must follow three main stages: (i) pre-analysis, (ii) exploration of the material, (iii) treatment of the results - inference and interpretation Bardin (2011:125). We consider it pertinent to explain that pre-analysis is the stage of organising the data collected, in order to define with the necessary precision the procedures to be adopted in the analysis and treatment of the data; The stage of exploring the material presupposes coding, categorising and arranging the data collected; The treatment of the results - inference and interpretation is the stage where the analyst goes to great lengths to make the results of the research significant, scientifically acceptable and valid.

V. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA.

This study sought to ascertain the perceptions and attitudes of parents and carers towards bilingual education. In this section, we will present and discuss the answers to the questions given in the interviews and questionnaires aimed at capturing the attitudes of parents and carers towards bilingual education in the district of Manhiça on the basis that a linguistic attitude can act as a mechanism of social inclusion and exclusion. In other words, the attitudes of parents and carers can demarcate a specific space in relation to bilingual education, thus generating a certain linguistic and cultural identity within the community.

From the focus group interviews with parents and carers whose children are in bilingual education classes, we captured data which, once cross-referenced, can provide us with convergent and/or divergent elements. In this interview, it was necessary to use two languages, Portuguese and Changana, according to the preferences of the participants.

Excerpt #: Attitudes expressed by parents and guardians when students are integrated into bilingual classes, 30/03/2021

No	Speaker	Content	Translation
1	DC:	<i>Misvitiwise kuyini lesvaku vana va n'wina vatajondza hi Xichangana xikolweni?</i>	How did you find out that your children would be learning in Changana at school?
5	Guardian1:	<i>Leswaku vana va hina vatajondza hi Xichangana hisvitive hlengetanwini ya kupfula lembe la jondzo.</i>	I learnt that my son was going to study in Changana at the opening meeting of the school year.
	Guardian2:	<i>Mina nisvitive hi mujondzisi wa n'wana wa mina.</i>	I learnt about it from my son's teacher.
10	Guardian3:	<i>Mina nibzeliwe hi muyakelani wa mina angaya hlengelanini.</i>	I found out from my neighbour who went to the school at the meeting.
	Guardian4:	<i>Mina nibzeliwe hi n'wana wa mina. anganibzela nkama angavuya hi xikolweni.</i>	I learnt about it from my son. He told me when he came home from school.
	Guardian5:	<i>Mina anisvitivanga lesvo. Mugangeni wa mina avasevulavula hi svona lesvo ((in a scornful tone)).</i>	I didn't hear about it. They never mentioned it in my neighbourhood.
15	DC:	<i>mamana seno ke? Awuhlamuli nchumu?</i>	What about Mum? Don't you say anything?
	Guardian6:	<i>((scornful laughter)). Anina ritu.</i>	I have no opinion.
	DC:	<i>N'wina seno miyendlhe yini nkama mingativa lesvaku vana va n'wina vatajondza hi Xichangana?</i>	What was your attitude when you learnt that your children were going to study in Changana at school?
20	Guardian7:	<i>Ahiyendlhanda nchumu hikuva svihitsakisile.</i>	We didn't do anything because we liked it.
	DC:	<i>Hi mhaka muni?</i>	Why did we do that?
	Guardian7:	<i>Hikuva vahipfuna kulera svilo svinyingi.</i>	Because it helps us read a lot of things.
	DC:	<i>I mpsini?</i>	What things?
25	Guardian7:	<i>Svinyingi ((laughter)).</i>	Many things.
	DC:	<i>Hingahibzela svitsongo.</i>	Tell us a bit about that.
	Guardian 8 & 9:	<i>((laughter. Then he says the following.)) Akujondza bibebe nkerekene. Vathhela vahipfuna kuhlumuxela.</i>	Reading the Bible in church. And they also help you interpret what you've read.

- 30 DC: *Tsem? Niyini kambe?* That's all?
Guardian 9: *Nikutsala amensagem ka foni ka n'wana wa mina* Also writing messages on the phone to my son who's
anga doropeni, nikunijondzela. in town, as well as reading too.
- 35 DC: *Tsem? Niyini kambe?*
Guardian 10: *I svinyingi Formadori, ninge vulavuli hinkwasvo.*
((laughter)).
DC: And can you tell us anything back there, sir?
- 40 Guardian 11: I have nothing to say.
DC: Why is that? Say something, sir!
Guardian 11: Actually, I haven't had a good attitude.
DC: Why, sir?
Guardian 11: I don't understand why our children/students leave
45 home speaking Changana and go back to school in
Changana! What will Changana do for our children?
*((speaks with an attitude of revolt at the fact that his
son is in a bilingual education class)).*
- 50 DC: OK. As soon as you didn't like it, what did you think
of doing?
Guardian 11: I even went to the school to ask for a transfer so that
55 my son could go to another school, where they only
teach in Portuguese.
DC: Did you get the transfer?
Guardian 11: I couldn't because the headmistress wouldn't accept
it and since we can't do anything about it, they're
60 still studying there *((she finished showing signs of
discontent))*.
DC: Since he's studying in Changana, what's his
performance?
Guardian 11: It's good because he can read and write in
65 Changana, but I wish he could do as well in
Portuguese.
DC: Why is that?
Guardian 11: I've said everything Trainer.
DC: Thank you.

Of the 30 parents and guardians interviewed, most said that they had learnt that their children would be learning in Changana at school during the opening meeting of the school year (lines 4-6), which takes place at the beginning of each school year, and that the same information had been passed on by the respective head teachers, as Excerpt 1 also shows. These responses from parents and guardians clearly show the absence or poor mobilisation of the community for bilingual education, as most of them said that they only found out that their children would be in bilingual classes at the opening meeting of the school year. As a way of avoiding this lack of information, a language policy should be designed that favours a community mobilisation programme in order to achieve a successful expansion, given that it is a form of education that breaks with the tradition of monolingual education in Mozambique. The fact that some parents and guardians say that they only learnt that their children would be integrated into bilingual education classes on the opening day of the school year largely contradicts what is stated in the Strategy for the Expansion of Bilingual Education 2020-2029, which states in its strategic objectives, that (i) "Mozambican communities should be sensitised to greater adherence to the bilingual education modality as it facilitates the learning of children who do not speak Portuguese when they start their primary education, and (ii) improve the communities' understanding of bilingual education and satisfy their request for the introduction of this teaching modality" (MINEDH 2019: 28). Furthermore, from a communication point of view, there is an urgent need to draw up a communication strategy at Manhiça district level to inform the public about the philosophy, objectives, implementation process, advantages and results to be achieved in this teaching modality, as expressed in the Bilingual Education Expansion Strategy 2020-2029 (MINEDH 2019:30).

In this dissemination process, in line with Lopes (1997), a language awareness programme should be drawn up, carefully planned by the educational authorities, to explain to parents and guardians the implications of learning through a particular language and convince them of the pedagogical, cultural and socio-economic advantages associated with promoting mother tongue education in the district of Manhiça.

As expressed in the extract under analysis, some parents and guardians said that they had no prior knowledge of the integration of their children into bilingual classes (lines 6 and 7), as they had not attended the inaugural meeting of the school year. This also reveals the poor dissemination of this teaching model (lines 8 and 9), because even if they hadn't taken part in the opening meeting of the school year, they should have received this information in the community through awareness-raising sessions. Therefore, in the context of the communication strategy proposed above, the educational authorities should establish a close relationship with the school councils and establish partnerships with community radio stations and some training and research institutions operating at district level, with a view to collaborating with and supporting the education sector in publicising and spreading the word about this teaching model, so that, among other things, parents and guardians are aware of its pedagogical and socio-cultural advantages. In the context of strengthening dissemination strategies, there should be convergence in the strategies adopted by the various institutions, citing community radio, community mobilisation and grassroots meetings for the dissemination of bilingual education, because the level of interaction between the entities involved in a certain purpose is what often dictates the results, which is why it is recommended that there should be healthy and coordinated interaction between different institutions for the implementation of mobilisation plans and activities on bilingual education (Sadie 2020:57).

With regard to support and guidance, some parents and carers said that their children helped them a lot in church during liturgy time (lines 23 and 24), as they read Bible passages to them. In contrast, other parents and carers expressed negative attitudes towards bilingual education, as they questioned why a child who speaks Changana at home should have to learn it and this language at school. This questioning is based on the assumption that Changana does not guarantee good social and economic mobility (lines 35-38). As you can see, some parents and carers expressed a disgusted attitude towards the integration of their children into bilingual education classes. They also said that they had even asked for their children to be transferred to other monolingual schools in the neighbourhood because they didn't want to see their children in bilingual classes (lines 56-58). In our analysis, these negative attitudes lead us to realise that there are still some pockets of misunderstanding about the use of Changana as a teaching and learning medium. This type of attitude is the result of a process built on behaviours, value judgements and beliefs that parents and guardians in the Manhiça district have developed in relation to Bantu languages and bilingual education based on these languages. As Corbari argues: Attitude is not merely an outcome, but a process, involving a complex system of beliefs, value judgements, emotions and behaviours. The tendency towards a certain type of action becomes, from this perspective, the product, the end result of this confrontation: it is the moment when affective beliefs and values are transformed into behavioural intentions (Corbari 2013:238). In short, it can be said that the positive and/or negative attitudes that parents and guardians manifest are the result of a set of social representations that have been created over time about the (un)valorisation of the use of Bantu languages in formal contexts such as school. These representations could be modified through systematic processes of disseminating the advantages of bilingual education based on Bantu languages.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

This brief study aimed to reflect on the role of parents and carers in the (re)formulation of language policies on bilingual education in Maputo province. It was possible to conclude that the attitude of parents and carers plays a very important role in the (re)formulation of policies on bilingual education, as they are key players in the teaching and learning process. They must be mobilised in advance about the importance of learning in a Bantu language, as advocated by the Bilingual Education Expansion Strategy 2019-2029. This study also showed that parents and guardians position themselves in two different poles when it comes to using the language for their children's learning. Among the poles identified, there is a group of parents and carers who show a lack of knowledge of the policies and strategies that guide bilingual education. This lack of knowledge of policies means that some parents and carers have negative attitudes towards bilingual education, which is why educational authorities should formulate and publicise policies that enable positive attitudes to be formed.

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