

Language Policy in Kenya and the New Constitution for Vision 2030

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Abstract

This article discusses the language situation in Kenya, beginning with an insightful history on language policies from the period when the country was still under British colonial rule. In post colonial Kenya, the newly formed KANU regime, through the Ministry of Education, occasionally changed the country's language policy over the years in line with recommendations made by several commissions tailored towards education and this has had great influence on the current language situation. The current socio-linguistic in the country situation shows that English has a hegemonic edge over Kiswahili which, even though it enjoys widespread popularity, is not widely spoken, especially in the rural areas where mother tongue thrives. Mother tongue holds a strong footing in the Kenyan society since it is used for informal communication and neighborhood conversations. Sheng, a code that developed among the urban youth, has also spread across the country like wildfire. The lingo continues to thrive in the country due to factors such as political campaigning and commercial advertising that embrace it. There are various language provisions in the new Kenyan constitution; mainly, the recognition of Kiswahili as the national language as well as the official language of the country alongside with English. Other provisions recognize language as a human right, hence quelling any form of discrimination while enhancing equality and impartiality on language matters. These include the recognition of Sign Language, Braille, and other indigenous languages of Kenyan heritage.

Keywords: Language Policy, Constitution, Vision 2030, Kenya

Full text:

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