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Teachers' Interpretation and Application of Language Policy Guidelines in Kenya

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Abstract

The absence of a clearly defined language policy in education within the government of Kenya has led to a lack of structured and rational discussion on language policy matters. This gap is evident in the competence-based curriculum debate, particularly concerning the teaching of Indigenous languages. Controversies and diverse perspectives surrounding Indigenous language education in schools have hindered effective implementation of language policies in the education system. This study delves into the interpretation and application of language policy guidelines by teachers in Kenya, exploring their roles as policy actors and the challenges they face as subjects in these policies. Focusing on 40 teachers, this study investigated how they comprehend and enact recent language education policies and reform measures, specifically within the context of a competence-based curriculum (CBC). With a global emphasis on teacher quality and classroom preparedness, this study examines the nuanced ways in which teachers navigate and interpret language education policies designed to address quality issues within Kenya's education system. This study employs Fairclough's (1992) Critical Discourse Analysis framework, which provides a robust theoretical foundation to address tensions within Language Policy and Planning. Adopting a qualitative research design, specifically ethnography, this study utilised interviews and focus group discussions as data collection methods. The findings underscore the varied interpretations of core language policy concepts among teachers and reveal a significant gap between policymakers and implementers. In light of these findings, this study recommends a more inclusive approach, suggesting that the government should actively involve teachers in language policy development and implementation. By fostering collaboration

and understanding between policy makers and educators, there is potential for more effective and sustainable language policy outcomes in the education sector

Keywords: Agency, CBC, Critical Discourse Analysis, Indigenous Languages, Language Policy, Social Actors

Introduction
In language policy and planning policies are interpreted and translated by diverse actors in the policy environment, rather than simply and uncritically implemented (Liddicoat and Taylor-Leech, 2021). Spolsky (2009) states that Language policy is about choices. Decision-making is a fundamental aspect of Language Policy and Planning, and accordingly, the examination of who makes decisions, how they are made, and the nature of the decision-making process are crucial for understanding Language Policy and Planning. The emphasis on teachers underscores the individual, not institutional, nature of agency in these contexts: actors are not only institutions but also individuals who, through their actions, contribute to and shape decisions about language use in the environments in which they operate. Thus, Language Policy and Planning agency can be exercised communally or individually Johnson (2013) observed that a focus on Language Policy and Planning as a choice means that agency, or the capacity and power of individuals to act independently and to make their own choices of action is important for both theory and research. This study aimed to demonstrate how teachers in Kenya exert their agency to influence the ultimate formulation of language policies.

Shouhui & Baldauf (2012) presents a number of different possible actors in Language Policy and Planning decision-making, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Possible actors in LPP decision-making.

S/N	Policy actors	Description
1	People with power	Those who hold public office or judicial positions and have the power to shape LPP decisions.
2	People with expertise	Those who can influence LPP decision-making by deploying expert knowledge
3	People with influence	Those who are influential in society because of standing or esteem;
4	People with interest	Those who get involved in LPP decision-making at the grassroots level because of their interest in language issues.

The aforementioned roles in Table 1 have broader relevance to Language Policy and Planning, and the implementation of policies in school contexts. This study underscores the pivotal and proactive role of classroom teachers in implementing policies in practice. It is imperative to note that these "actors" or positions are not necessarily specific individuals, nor are they fixed, unified,

and mutually exclusive "types" of teachers in every situation. Rather, individuals may move between these roles, with a teacher sometimes acting as a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), transactor and entrepreneur, and narrator. Although some people may specialise in one type of policy work in specific schools, this is only a small part of all that they do at school. Furthermore, some roles may be more significant or prominent in certain schools depending on the context and circumstances.

Language policies in Kenya provide linguistic standards to be employed at various educational levels, specifying the use of English, Kiswahili, and regional dialects. These policies are meaningful and have far-reaching impacts on classroom practice (Bunyi, 2005). The current language policy guidelines in Kenya strive to encourage the use of Indigenous languages within schools by introducing the teaching of these languages in grades four, five, and six. It is important to recognise the vital role of teachers in the success of language revitalisation efforts and implementation of language policies. As such, this study aims to examine teachers' interpretations of recent language use in education policy, with a particular focus on their understanding of the power and freedom they have to inform their choices, as outlined in language policy guidelines.

Therefore, this study responds to one main question: How do teachers interpret the recent language policy guidelines in Kenya?

This study is founded on the premise that Language Policy and Planning spans multiple societies. The analysis thus follows Graham (2005) argument that power is not simply a top-down exercise of control, but is also dispersed and horizontal. It is imperative that this study enhances our understanding of the intricate and multifaceted roles teachers play in Language Planning and Policy (LPP). Moreover, it is vital to contemplate the ways in which social actors are likely to exhibit agency in language policy and planning settings, and to analyse the identities and motivations of those actors. In actuality, individuals from diverse backgrounds can be agents in decisions concerning language, especially at the micro level. However, it is imperative to determine who is likely to assume an agentic role in such contexts.

Literature Review
In a formal tone, teachers face numerous unresolvable dilemmas in their daily practices, as noted by (Lampert, 1985). Teachers must, therefore, develop tolerance for ambiguity. The practice of language planning provides a platform for teachers to explore the conflicts in their practice and find ways to manage competing obligations. One of the responsibilities commonly overlooked by teachers is their role as classroom language planners. Therefore, teachers are inevitably engaged in language planning when they engage in teaching.

Freeman (2004) emphasised that educators play a critical role in constructing school language policies based on the local context, rather than seeking a universal solution. This requires teachers to go beyond developing dual or world language programs and to understand the sociolinguistic context in which the school is situated. Teachers must consider the long- and short-term language needs of students as well as the perspectives of parents, community members, and students themselves. Freeman highlighted the importance of how educators

structure classroom language use and the connection between equity and classroom language policy.

Observing the sociocultural context of teacher learning communities, McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) note that three concepts frame the teacher's role in education: appropriation, discourse, and cultural models. Sutton and Levinson (2001) define appropriation as the teacher's role in macro-level institutional policies, Gee (2005) recognises the mediating role of language in teachers' micro-level interactions, and Holland and Quinn (1987) describe cultural models as the taken-for-granted assumptions that teachers use to simplify a complex world. Scholars suggest that teachers are central actors in language policy processes (Ricento and Hornberger, 1996), and construct their own appropriation, which infers that teachers play active and agentive roles in the language policy process (Menken & García, 2010a; Sutton & Levinson, 2001) by shaping mandates to align with their language ideologies, personal histories, and professional backgrounds. As a result, teachers can implement educational policies and reinforce institutional structures (Hopkins, 2012).

Critical Discourse Analysis

This study uses the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework posited by Fairclough (1992)to explore tensions within the field of Language Policy and Planning (LPP). The CDA is particularly well suited for examining the relationship between language policy and power, as well as the role of ideology in macro politics. Through the application of CDA, language policy can be seen as a socially constructed phenomenon shaped by national and regional contexts.. Johnson (2013) work, which views language policies as social constructs, supports this perspective. The use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) serves as the theoretical underpinning for this research with regard to the examination of other aspects of tension, specifically the macro-level structures and ideological perspectives that are the focus of critical theoretical analysis. This study explores the correlation between language policies and teachers, the effects of the policies on them, the challenges teachers face in adapting the policy to their local context, and their perception of the central policy.

Research Methodology

The study employed a qualitative research design, with an ethnographic approach being adopted in particular. The researcher conducted a six-month ethnographic study to examine the causal and ideological effects of the policy and to link microanalysis of texts to macroanalysis of power relations across networks of practices and structures. Creswell and Poth (2016) define ethnography as a method of research that involves the systematic description and interpretation of cultural or social groups and systems. The researcher focused on observing and analysing the learned and observable patterns of behaviour, customs, and lifestyles of the group in question.

In summary, ethnography involves an understanding and description of how participants understand certain aspects of their lives in a particular context, such as interaction, policy, rituals, behaviours, events, and customs. This understanding is achieved through immersion with research participants. Ethnography thus provides the opportunity to analyse agency or the roles that teachers and parents play in the language policy process.

The study was conducted in ten primary schools in Kiambu County chosen by the Ministry of Education for the piloting of the teaching of indigenous languages within the CBC framework. These schools were located in rural, urban, and peri-urban areas, thereby differing in terms of their catchment areas.

Accordingly, the study population comprised all teachers in ten public primary schools in Kiambu County, as well as language policy documents and curricula. Purposive sampling was employed to select four teachers from each school, resulting in 40 participants. The demographic information of the teachers, including gender, highest academic qualification, and years of work experience, was obtained to better understand the characteristics of the study population and determine whether the samples were representative of the target population.

Of the 40 teachers who participated in the study, 18 (45%) were male and 22 (55%) were female. This indicates that there was fair gender representation among the teachers who participated in this study. The researcher conducted the study within the broader context of schooling and the local community, exploring the lives, practices, and experiences of the teachers in Kiambu County.

The data in this study were obtained from in-depth interviews, document reviews of language policies, and focus group discussions (FGDs). FGDs and in-depth interviews provide room for in-depth responses and insight into respondents' feelings, hidden motives, interests, and decisions, thus creating space for qualitative analysis (Escalada & Heong, 2014; Showkat & Parveen, 2017). The objective was to investigate "what is happening" using guided questions to probe for deep information and knowledge. The interviews lasted from to 30-45 minutes. Some of these were recorded as MP3 files. All interviews and FGDs were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed. Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis has several benefits for qualitative researchers, including being capable of summarising key characteristics of a large dataset and/or providing a "thick description" of the dataset, generating unexpected insights. It also permits social interpretation of the data and is capable of generating qualitative analyses suitable for informing policy formulations.

Data analysis and Discussion
The analysis in this section concentrates on teachers' interpretation of the fundamental principles of language policy guidelines, their role as actors in the formulation of language policy, and policy appropriation. Language policy is a social construct that is dependent on other conceptual elements, such as belief systems, attitudes, values, prejudices, and religious strictures (Schiffman & Ricento, 2006; Spolsky, 2004). Ball et al (2011) suggest that policies are not simply implemented by diverse actors in the policy environment but are instead interpreted and translated by them. This study is grounded in the premise that language policy and planning are not only the domains of governments and institutional actors, but also a domain that is dispersed across society. The focus on teachers highlights the individual nature of the exercise of agency in these contexts: actors are not only institutions but also individuals within institutions whose actions shape decisions about language use in the contexts in which they operate. Thus, LPP agency can be exercised both communally and individually. Bouchard and Glasgow (2018) argue that a focus on LPP as a choice means that agency, or the capacity and power of individuals to

act independently and make their own choices of action, is important for both theory and research. This study demonstrates how teachers in Kenya exercise agency to shape the final form of language policies. The analysis is centred on the interpretation of core concepts of language policy guidelines, teachers as actors in language policy development, and policy appropriation.

Interpretation of core concepts of language policy guidelines
This study aimed to investigate whether teachers, as agents of policy implementation, comprehend the fundamental principles of language-in-education policies in basic education settings.. Mbaabu (1996) argues that for the policy to be fully implemented, understanding the meaning and implications of the following key concepts is important: (a) peri-urban/urban/metropolitan areas, (b) the place of mother tongues in learning and concept formation, (c) language predominance, (d) language of the catchment, and (e) the overall principle underlying the language-in-education policy requirement.

The concept of the peri-urban/urban/metropolitan areas
An examination of post-colonial language in educational policy papers reveals that stipulations regarding language in education are as follows:

Extract 1
> For linguistically heterogeneous areas, referred to in the policy as **peri-urban/urban or metropolitan areas**, the policy states that Kiswahili should be used for instruction.

To comprehend the catchment area outlined in extract 1.1, respondents were requested to provide their perspectives on the terms rural, urban, peri-urban, and metropolitan. The results of the study indicate that teachers have diverse understandings of these terms. The following key phrases were used to delineate the rural terms:

Table 2
Meaning of Rural Areas in language in education policy documents

Texts	
Text 1	Country areas
Text 2	Areas away from the city
Text 3	Areas where mother tongue is spoken
Text 4	Areas occupied by a given ethnic group
Text 5	Areas where people speak a given language
Text 6	Areas with a given home language

The data above indicate that teachers interpret the term "rural areas" differently. The research findings suggest that in rural areas, learners tend to be linguistically homogeneous, which

suggests that policies concerning Indigenous languages can be effectively implemented in this context. The interpretation of the term 'urban areas' in the LPP domain is as follows:

Table 3
Meaning of Urban Areas

Texts	
Text 7	Schools in town places
Text 8	Areas where children speak different mother tongues
Text 9	Areas with mixed is settlements
Text 10	Areas occupied by people who speak different languages
Text 11	Town areas
Text 12	This is like a metropolitan place

Table 3 presents a summary of the lexical items used to interpret the concept of Urban Areas within the Language Policy and Planning (LPP) domain. The analysis revealed that the recontextualization of the term is influenced by idiosyncratic beliefs, ideologies, and discourses that prevail in a particular setting, and that these factors determine the localised significance of language policy.

Mother Tongue Provision
The study conducted thorough interviews to understand teachers' comprehension of the policy's intention regarding the utilisation of mother tongues up to Grade 3, as demonstrated in Extract 2

Extract .2
*"The language of the catchment area (**Mother Tongue**) shall be used for child-care, pre-primary education and in the education of Lower Primary children (0-8 years).*

The word *Mother Tongue in* Extract 2 has different meanings. The findings of the study reveal that teachers have different meanings regarding what the policy means by using mother tongues up to grade 3. The data below provide different meanings for the policy above.

Table 4
Meaning of Mother Tongue Provision

Text	
Text 13	Learners should be taught in the vernacular languages
Text 14	Mother tongues to be used as languages of instruction only
Text 15	Mother tongues should be taught as subjects only
Text 16	The use of vernaculars in education
Text 17	Mother tongues should be used as both subjects and language of instruction.
Text 18	Using mother tongues as media of instruction in the lower levels only
Text 19	Mother tongues should be taught as subjects and used to teach content knowledge, including subjects in mathematics and science.

A close analysis of the above data reveals the possibility that Kenyan teachers are not active agents in the policymaking process. This is contrary to Ricento and Hornberger (1996) who position the classroom practitioner "at the heart of language policy." This research uncovered discrepancies in the implementation of language policies in education. For example, in Kiambu County, some schools in the region offer Gikuyu as a standalone subject, while others utilise it as a medium of instruction at lower primary levels. The study also found that the absence of an appropriate policy for mother tongues in Kenya led to inconsistent practices in the use of Indigenous languages. Additionally, the analysis revealed that teachers have a significant degree of autonomy in executing education policies, which can result in diverse classroom implementation. The classroom setting itself is also highlighted as a semi-autonomous space that contributes to the use of local languages. The various interpretations of native language provision

demonstrate that teachers simultaneously replicate and challenge existing language ideologies within the school environment as policy actors.

Predominant Language
This study aimed to investigate teachers' linguistic knowledge regarding the predominant language used in the educational system. Furthermore, language policy in education suggests that

Extract 3
> To be used as a language of instruction, the **predominant language** spoken in the schools' catchment area for the first three years of primary education.

Extract 3 suggests that certain regions within Kenya may possess limited linguistic diversity, wherein a single language is prominent. In such locations, the policy advocates the use of the dominant language. This provision is based on a second language learning principle: children can easily learn a predominant language (VanPatten et al., 2020). The data below show that teachers have different meanings regarding the predominant language in the policy:

Table 5
Meaning of Predominant Language

Text	
Text 25	Language that dominates a given area.
Text 26	The predominant language in Kiambu is Gikuyu hence it should be used in Grade 1 to 3
Text 27	Common language of the rural and urban areas
Text 28	The predominant language in rural is Mother tongues and in towns is Kiswahili
Text 29	Language of the majority of learners
Text 30	The ethnic language of a given area
Text 31	Child's first language.

The above data demonstrate that teachers do not concur with the interpretation of the predominant language. The investigation also revealed a lack of comprehension among teachers of the fundamental principle of language acquisition and learning, which is based on exposure to abundant input in the target language. To further explore this phenomenon, the researcher presented a hypothetical class of forty (40) Gikuyu-speaking pupils and five (5) non-Gikuyu speaking pupils and enquired about the language that should be used in accordance with the policy. The respondents' answers diverged, as follows

Table 6
Determination of a predominant language

Respondent	Response
Text 33	I would use Gikuyu since the majority of learners can speak it.
Text 34	To cater for the five pupils, I would use Kiswahili
Text 35	I would use both Gikuyu and Kiswahili to accommodate both pupils
Text 36	Personally, I would use Kiswahili since I can express myself well in it

The findings suggest that if given the opportunity to choose, respondents would prescribe the use of two or more languages, such as Gikuyu and Kiswahili, or a combination of Gikuyu and Kiswahili. Additionally, the results indicate that the location of the school does not necessarily determine which language should be used, but rather determines the scale of linguistic heterogeneity. Schools in towns may use a local native language, whereas others may use Kiswahili based on the level of linguistic diversity.

The data also show that some teachers interpret policies loosely, based on their personal opinions and beliefs about how they will impact their ability to teach. This is reflected in Texts 35 and 36. The application of policies in the classroom can create difficulties in collaboration between teachers and lead to discrepancies in pupil learning and development. However, the findings suggest that teachers play a crucial role in navigating policies to meet the needs of diverse learners, including those who speak different languages.

Languages of the Catchment area
This study aimed to examine teachers' understanding of indigenous languages in the catchment area. This is a critical aspect of the government's policy, as reiterated in MoE's Sessional Paper No. 14 of 2012, which highlights the importance of using native languages for instruction in early grades. The Kenyan government and the MoE have continuously emphasised their commitment to this approach.

Extract 4

*Learners are expected to begin at the pre-primary level and are instructed in **"the language of the catchment area."***

The responses below show teachers' understanding of the term languages in the catchment, as indicated in Table 7

Table 7
Interpretation of Language of the Catchment

Texts	
Text 37	Dominant language of a given area
Text 38	Language that is common in classroom and not an area
Text 39	Language commonly spoken in the school's catchment area it can be Kiswahili, Gikuyu or English
Text 40	language spoken in the local community around the school
Text 41	predominant language spoken around the school, not in school

The aforementioned data indicate that teachers have varying interpretations of the concept of catchment. The data suggest that the use of the Gikuyu language in instruction is not necessarily limited to the learners' language. Teachers in urban schools reported that although Gikuyu is the language of the catchment area, learners come from different communities; therefore, the policy mandates the use of Kiswahili as the medium of instruction. However, those teaching in urban schools noted that not all of them use Kiswahili for content delivery because some are not proficient in the language. According to Teachers 7 and 8, pupils may be instructed in English, Kiswahili, or any vernacular language. The data reveal that, in actuality, many Kenyan schools do not employ the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in early grades.

The research findings suggest that teachers in basic education institutions in Kenya have varying understandings of the various provisions of language-in-education policy. The respondents interpreted the provision of mother tongues as either a subject or the language of instruction. This diverse interpretation has resulted in criticism and defiance from implementers, particularly because of the government's ambiguous stance on native language education. The study also revealed that the respondents hold diverse views on native language education. According to Spolsky (2009), diverse understanding of policy among educators can lead to diverse implementation, non-implementation, and alternative policy implementation based on language

education/learning beliefs. These variations in the interpretation of the policy highlight the importance of recognising that teachers are not only curriculum implementers but also curriculum makers. The teacher is, therefore, an integral part of the curriculum, since it is constructed and enacted in the classroom, where there is interaction between the teacher, learners, subject matter, and the milieu.

This study revealed discrepancies in policy implementation across educational settings. These diverse interpretations demonstrated that teachers, in their efforts to comprehend policy matters in schools, acknowledged that similar policies may be executed differently across schools. The results indicate that these differences in implementation can be attributed to disparities in school contexts, which may encompass institutional history, the surrounding community, and student demographics.

The study therefore observes that there is a lack of proper implementation of the LOI policy in the lower primary school, which may lead to increased exposure to the English language, especially from the upper primary school. This may lead to English playing a dominant role in education and erasing the unique linguistic and cultural identities of the Indigenous languages. The findings are in line with Kamwendo (2016) who observe that: although the language of instruction policy appears to be clear, practical implementation is less straightforward due to a lack of instructional materials in the mother tongue, and a concern that students who do not begin instruction in English upon school entry will be disadvantaged when they take exit exams, combine to increase the use of English in the early primary grades." Moreover, teachers' understanding, and application of language policy guidelines are influenced by the support of educational authorities such as administrators and policymakers. Teachers are more likely to understand and appreciate the importance of the policies and feel inspired to apply them in their teaching practices when authorities actively promote and reinforce the policy objectives, provide clear guidelines and expectations, and allocate the required resources and support.

Teachers as actors in language policy development

This study seeks to examine the interpretation of teachers' functions in the formulation of educational policies. In light of the enquiry as to whether they had ever taken part in the language policy-making process, the teachers provided varying responses, as demonstrated in texts 42 and 43 below

Text 42
> *The teachers are passive in educational reforms they are only brought policies by MoE*

Text 43
> *We do what MoE and KICD dictates us through their circulars*

Text 44
> *The MoE never engages us in such debate*

With regard to the participation of teachers in policymaking related to Indigenous language education, all the teachers interviewed reported that there were no opportunities for them to participate in such activities. Some participants even mentioned that they had never been

involved in the Language Policy Planning (LPP) process. The study's findings, therefore, suggest that teachers in Kenya are passive policy targets, despite being expected to play an active role as policy agents in implementing policies in primary and secondary schools.

The management of the Kenyan education system is hierarchical, with the state, task forces, leaders, Ministry of Education (MoE), and Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) considered policymakers. On the other hand, teachers are mainly viewed as implementers of language policy, as reflected in the MoE's Sessional Paper No. 14.

The study's findings also indicate that teachers can influence policy implementation at the macro level and affect their perceptions and decision making. This is in line with Comb's et al. (2005) study on dual-language programs, which highlights the ways in which teachers can act as agents in (re)constructing language policy. This study underscores the importance of teacher education in equipping teachers to engage in policy construction and highlights the possibilities that exist for teachers to play a more active role in policymaking.

This research reveals that the policy regarding language in Kenya is formulated in a corporate setting, and the interests of the stakeholders it affects are not fully considered, as demonstrated in the following text.

Text 45

> *Decisions on language policy are made by the government and the elite. The task forces on education reforms hardly have teachers*

Text 46

> *Policies are made by leaders. Teachers are never involved in the policy making process, we are not supposed to be involved in it*

Texts 45 and 46 suggest that the perspectives and requirements of teachers as active agents in policy formulation are often disregarded during the initiation and implementation of such policies. This can result in adverse attitudes among teachers responsible for implementing language policies. To address this issue, it is crucial to involve teachers in the policymaking process, particularly in the planning and development of curriculum policies, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8
Areas where teachers may be involved in policy making in practice

Text 47	Curriculum design
Text 48	Constructing and selecting teaching materials,
Text 50	Methodology
Text 51	Identifying literacy areas
Text 52	Selection of the teaching materials
Text 53	I can participate in testing and
Text 54	in policy design Textbook Compiling

The data revealed that teachers are cognizant of the impact of policies on daily classroom practice and desire to be involved in policymaking processes, particularly in areas such as curriculum design, material selection, and methodology. The respondents expressed a desire to not only implement policy but also contribute to its formulation. These policy issues are significantly relevant to teachers' classroom practices. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers be given the opportunity to contribute their authentic classroom experiences as inputs to policymaking, data that experts need to inform their policy decisions, and ultimately benefit the majority of students in Kenya. However, none of the teachers interviewed participated in the curriculum policymaking process, and they were not consulted in the selection of teaching materials on Indigenous languages for schools in their regions.

Further, the results indicated that the teachers held the following sentiments regarding policymaking

Text 5.55

I have many ideas on the teaching of the Gikuyu language, but I do not know who to approach. It's hard to find a suitable person to talk to about these things

Text 5.56

I had never thought about participating in policymaking activities.

Text 5.57

When we find that the new curriculum is not practical in classroom teaching, but there is no way to let policymakers know about our opinion, we simply ignore the instructions in it.

Text 5.58

When teaching I use my own ways according to the pupils' needs and their individual differences"

Text 5.59

I would like to be involved in textbook compilation because I understand the learning situation.

Texts 55 to 59 indicate that educators are implementing language policies dissimilarly, which raises queries regarding those responsible for ensuring their implementation (for example, Quality Assurance Officers). It is apparent that Quality Assurance officers have yet to identify the shortcomings of such policies so that improvements can be made to ensure that students benefit from these interventions. Consequently, this study maintains that teachers serve as central policy actors in both the broad context of the school and its immediate classrooms. The findings demonstrate that, as policy actors, they simultaneously reproduce and challenge existing language ideologies in the school environment to cater to the diverse needs of learners.

This study indicates that the approach to Language Policy Planning (LPP) in Kenya is centralised, with teachers functioning as mere implementers. This is despite the significant conceptual implications of teachers' roles in policy and practice. The teachers reported that the policies were theoretical and that the objectives and requirements for teachers in the curriculum were set too high by experts who lacked knowledge of the actual classroom setting. This study observed that teachers should be involved in the creation, distribution, and implementation of the curriculum.

The findings suggest that the discrepancy between theory/policy and practice in language policy for Indigenous languages stems from the exclusion of teachers from curriculum development. The study shows that teachers have diverse roles in the development of language education and curriculum policy; however, in the present study, they were limited to being mere implementers of language policy. This is despite the fact that their practical experience and knowledge can provide valuable contextual evidence for policymakers to consider when reforming curricula and policies to ensure their suitability for implementation.

The findings also revealed that teachers were not involved in the selection of teaching materials or curriculum design for Indigenous languages, despite being responsible for their implementation.

Policy Appropriation
The analysis in sections 5.1.1 to 5.1.3 suggests teachers' appropriate policies to support pupils' learning. Levinson et al (2009) defines appropriation as the ways that creative agents interpret and take in elements of policy, thereby incorporating these discursive resources into their own schemes of interest, motivation, and action. The data below shows the importance of incorporating teachers into policy processes.

Text 60

Teacher's impact and advocate for pupils learning.

Text 61

Teachers play a huge role with regards to balancing the requirements of educational policies and the diverse needs of learners, and they must also be an advocate for any changes in quality education.

Text 60 and 61 demonstrate the recognition of teachers as "active agents" in the process of language policy appropriation. The data reveal that in contexts such as Kenya, teachers often assume a complex role as language policy actors, serving as narrators who interpret policy and make decisions regarding its implementation by selectively emphasising certain aspects and enforcing meanings in their local educational contexts. The findings are in line with Carlsson (2000) study which found that actors are not simply institutions, but also individuals within institutions whose actions create and construct decisions about language use in the contexts in which they act.

Further analysis of the data indicates that teachers engage in policy negotiation, as evidenced by the following excerpts from the text

Text 62

The teacher can determine the best practice for all the pupils

Text 63

Teachers are the experts in policy making since they are involved in teaching the learners

Text 64

Teachers engage with policy related issues in class

Texts 62 to 64 highlight the importance of teachers' comprehension of the various ranks of policies, as well as their significance to learners and teachers. For example, all respondents agreed that the policy requiring children to be taught in their mother tongue was crucial, as it facilitated a smooth transition from home to school. Teachers observed that, through the mother tongue, pupils learned about their community's customs, beliefs, and traditions, as well as their history. Text 62 also indicates that teachers determine the methods for teaching based on their understanding of the policy as well as the specific needs of the learners and the situations in which they find themselves.

The analysis reveals that teachers actively negotiate a place and space for language instruction within a sociocultural context that is often ideologically charged. Therefore, the findings of this study suggest that teachers should not be viewed as passive targets for reform efforts but rather as active and constructive participants in educational policy. As language policy is typically viewed as a national-level decision, teachers play a critical role in shaping local language behaviours within institutions, such as schools.

The study's findings demonstrate the paramount importance of teachers in the implementation of language policies, as their actions and methodologies have a profound impact on the practical application of such policies in the classroom setting. Interpreting and applying language policy

guidelines is one of their key responsibilities, which entails comprehending the goals, principles, and requirements outlined in the policy and ensuring that instructional practices align with the stated objectives (Cummins, 2017; Menken & García, 2010b). It is imperative that educators have access to suitable resources to effectively implement language policy directives. The availability and clarity of language policy guidelines significantly influence teachers' understanding and application. Therefore, educators should be motivated to align their teaching methods with established objectives when language-policy guidelines are readily available and understandable.

Conclusions

The results of this investigation demonstrate that teachers interpret fundamental concepts governing language policies in a distinct manner. This study revealed a disparity between policy formulators and implementers. As such, the study affirms that tensions exist between policy and practice due to the inadequate involvement of multiple stakeholders in the formulation of language policies. Teachers either discreetly or overtly disregard or desert government regulations. This study indicates that teachers play a pivotal role as policymakers in both the broader context of the school and their immediate classrooms. Consequently, it is imperative that the Ministry of Education (MoE) engage both teachers and parents in the language policy participation process. This can be achieved by organising meetings and training for teachers. Understanding linguistic diversity in Kenya and its impact on Language Policy and Planning (LPP) is beneficial for teachers, pupils, policymakers, and others who wish to understand the dynamics of Indigenous languages in Kenya in terms of teaching and maintenance. The results of this empirical study provide information that can be applied to developing language programs in the early years of language acquisition.

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