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Teaching under-resourced languages: An evaluation of Great Zimbabwe University's initiatives in the teaching of Tshivenda and Xichangana

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Tshivenda and Xichangana, like other minority languages in Zimbabwe, are only taught up to Grade 3 of elementary education in areas where they are spoken. Chishona and isiNdebele are the only indigenous languages that are taught as subjects up to university level, either through the medium of English or through their own medium (as at Great Zimbabwe University). This paper seeks to evaluate the initiatives that have been set out to promote the teaching and use of Tshivenda and Xichangana by training teachers at university level to enable them to teach these languages beyond Grade 3, at secondary and university level. These teachers will then form the manpower base to teach at the grassroots. The initiatives include partnerships with language associations, universities that teach the languages in South Africa, affirmative action on recruiting students into the languages and lobbying for support from government and other stakeholders. The research describes the initiatives, evaluates them and recommends the best way to finalise the project and how to promote other minority languages to the level of Chishona and isiNdebele in the country.

Introduction

The position of the government of Zimbabwe on languages did not change much with the coming of political independence. English, the language of the colonial master, remains the official language according to the Education Act Chapter 55 of 1987 that operates as a quasi-language policy in the country. IsiNdebele and Chishona enjoy a status that is above other indigenous languages as these two are taught up to university level; there is nothing new in this as the two languages were taught to the above level even during colonial times. Apart from English, Chishona and isiNdebele, Zimbabwe has many indigenous languages spoken in different areas of the country such as Chitonga and Tjikalanga. These languages are classified as minority languages, and the criterion used to label them thus is neither clear nor justifiable.

In 2004 the new Great Zimbabwe University (GZU) decided to change the status and function of these so-called minority languages. The university started with the teaching of Tshivenda and Xichangana. It outlined strategies to accomplish this programme, starting from engaging with the communities and later, the actual teaching of the languages at university level (Workshop report, unpublished data). This research seeks to evaluate these initiatives within the conceptual framework discussed below.

Evaluating educational programmes: A conceptual framework

'Programme evaluation' is the process of judging the worth

or value of a programme (Boyle, 1981). Thus the purpose of evaluation is to determine what's working, what's not and why (Rossett & Sheldon, 2001). Rennie and Singh (1995) assert that evaluation is the systematic collection of information about a programme's activities, its characteristics, the personnel and outcomes for use by specific people to reduce uncertainties, improve effectiveness, and make decisions with regard to what the programme, personnel or products are doing and have done. Evident from the definitions is that evaluation places emphasis on the systematic collection of information on the integral components of the programme for purposes of accountability and decision making (Stufflebeam in Knowles, 1980). For this particular study, it was considered prudent to assess the effectiveness of the programme with regard to the current policy, recruitment systems, teaching staff from the University of Venda (UNIVEN), teaching materials and the pedagogies that were applied in the teaching of Tshivenda and Xichangana at GZU. More specifically, the group of stakeholders who provided valuable data for evaluative dimensions included: the community of students; the teaching staff both at GZU and UNIVEN; the administrators of the programme; and policy makers.

Evaluation dimensions

Muraskin (1998) provides three dimensions of evaluation, namely impact, outcomes and process.

Firstly, impact evaluation inquires about positive and negative effects of the programme. This evaluation study looked at the immediate results of the policies such as

affirmative action and the impact of the actual teaching of students by staff of GZU and UNIVEN. Impact evaluation looks beyond the horizon so as to identify longer-term programme effects and unintended effects. As such, impact evaluation addresses those issues that relate to sustainability of the existing programme in its current form. Stakeholders may ask whether or not there is a future for the teaching of minority languages at GZU.

Secondly, the outcomes dimension is about whether desired or unwanted outcomes were achieved in the short term. It questions what the immediate or direct effects were on the participants, such as the GZU students and other stakeholders.

Thirdly, formative evaluation which runs parallel with the programme sets out to measure the success or failure and continuous improvement of the process. Significant components to be assessed include the following: administration; needs; and potential. *Administration* involves monitoring the implementation of the programme, the programme activities and resources as an on-going concern. The *needs* aspect is about paying attention to the types of needs to be met. *Potential* is about analyzing the opportunity to use the information as it surfaces to improve the programme as it unfolds. In short, the researchers also subscribe to the notion contended by Drew *et al.* (2000) that evaluation is the only way to learn from the successes and failures of the past so as to improve policies and procedures for the future.

The language situation in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is a former British colony and, as in many other former colonies, the language of the colonial master dominates linguistic space in the country. English occupies a very important position over the indigenous languages in Zimbabwe as a result of almost one hundred years of colonial dominance and entrenchment of a foreign language in all official spheres of Zimbabwean life. Linehan (2005:2) expands on this:

The issue of language and education in Zambia was fairly straightforward throughout the colonial and much of the Federal period. From 1927, only three years after the Colonial Office took over the responsibility for what was then Northern Rhodesia up to 1963, just before the break-up of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, the policy was consistent:

mother tongue was used for the first two years of primary education, followed by a dominant vernacular up to Standard 5, and English thereafter.

At independence the language policy did not change much. English remained the official language with only isiNdebele and Chishona enjoying limited privileges such as being taught as subjects up to university level, as compared to other indigenous languages.

The linguistic make-up of Zimbabwe is a conglomerate of African languages, most of which are also cross-border languages due to migrations of the African people and the separation of people by colonial boundaries. Historical migrations created many languages in the country. Political boundaries that came with colonialism in most cases separated people of the same language, creating cross-border languages that had to develop differently in separate nation states. There are many languages in Zimbabwe that are separated by political boundaries and are treated as separate languages. Table 1 gives some of the languages spoken in Zimbabwe that are also spoken across political borders in other countries.

The languages listed in Table 1 have experienced different developments depending on national policies. This has afforded Tshivenda, for example, a higher function in South Africa than in Zimbabwe. English proficiency demarcates the elite from the non-elite as Adegbija (1994:18) explains:

As a consequence, an elite class, demarcated from the non-elite class principally on the basis of competence in the ex-colonial language, has emerged.

English in Zimbabwe has remained the language of education while isiNdebele and Chishona are used as national languages for purported purposes of national unity. Hadebe (1998:123) notes that the justification for the choice of English is twofold: firstly, for economic development to be achieved, a language that is developed enough to handle administration activities, technological training and general efficiency is needed for effective communication. Secondly, English was chosen because there was need for a neutral language to be used by all as a symbol of national unity, even though it is not understood by all. It was therefore chosen to protect the people from their own languages which are divisive. Mavesera (2011:79) says

Table 1: Cross-border languages in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwean language	Same language across borders	Country
Tshivenda	Tshivenda	South Africa
Xichangana	Xitsonga/Xironga	South Africa/Mozambique
isiNdebele	isiZulu	South Africa
Chishona	Chishona/Chinyai	Mozambique/Botswana
Chichewa	Chichewa	Malawi
Chitonga	Chitonga	Zambia
Tjikalanga	Ikalanga	Botswana
Sesotho	Sesotho	South Africa
isiXhosa	isiXhosa	South Africa

although a majority of Zimbabweans are changing attitudes in favour of the use of indigenous languages, many have inhibited feelings of fear of change. The status of different Zimbabwean languages is tabulated in Table 2.

Zimbabwe as a country does not have a properly constituted language policy. The policy on African languages is contained in the Zimbabwean Education Act (1987:19). It states that:

1. Subject to the provisions of this section, the three main languages of Zimbabwe, namely Shona, Ndebele and English, shall be taught in all primary schools from first grade as follows:
 - a) Shona and English in all areas where the mother tongue of the majority of the residents is Shona; or
 - b) Ndebele and English in all areas where the mother tongue of the majority of the residents is Ndebele.
2. Prior to the fourth grade, either of the languages referred to in paragraph (a) and (b) of subsection (1) may be used as the medium of instruction depending upon which language is more commonly spoken and better understood by the pupils.
3. From the fourth grade, English shall be the medium of instruction provided that Shona or Ndebele shall be taught as subjects on an equal time allocation basis as the English language.
4. In areas where minority languages exist, the minister may authorize the teaching of such languages in primary schools in addition to those specified in subsections (1), (2) and (3).

The above education policy on languages creates a dominance of all languages by English and a sub-dominance of the rest by either Chishona or isiNdebele. The Secretary Circular Number 1 of 2002 states that English is the only core language subject offered at Ordinary Level to the exclusion of even Chishona and isiNdebele let alone the so-called minority languages. The Education Act was amended as follows in 2006 (Zimbabwean Education Act, 2006:19):

New section substituted for section 62 of Chapter 25; Section 62 of the principal Act is repealed and the following is substituted – Languages to be taught in schools:

- (1) Subject to this section, all the three main languages of Zimbabwe, namely Shona, Ndebele and English, shall be taught on an equal-time basis in all schools up to form two level.

Table 2: Status of Zimbabwean languages

Status	Languages
Official language	English
National languages	isiNdebele, Chishona
Officially-recognised minority languages	Tjikalanga, Xichangana, Tshivenda, Chichewa, Chitonga, Chinambya
Other minority languages	Sesotho, Chisena, isiXhosa, Chikunda, Chibarwe, Chihwesa, Chitshawo

- (2) In areas where indigenous languages other than those mentioned in subsection (1) are spoken, the Minister may authorise the teaching of such languages in schools in addition to those specified in section (1).

This situation effectively excludes African languages from development beyond elementary education. Modernization is a key component in development and it involves the use of science to improve the condition of life for everyone, speakers of African languages included (Wiredu, 1980:43).

Tshivenda and Xichangana are part of the languages classified under recognized minority languages, and for that reason they can be used as mediums of instruction only as far as the fourth grade, if the minister agrees. The ideal situation is to raise the minority languages to the level of isiNdebele and Chishona, thereafter a united front of indigenous languages can seek to take over from the colonial language, English. Mavesera (2011:78) argues that:

The status of indigenous languages should be imbedded in the constitution. The use of indigenous languages in industry and commerce would give feedback into the education system and motivate students to learn and master these languages.

The education Act is not enough to guide the country's language policy. The inclusion of the status and functions of indigenous languages can be a step in the right direction for African languages in Zimbabwe.

Great Zimbabwe University initiatives

Given the language situation in Zimbabwe, it is very difficult to start a programme that would promote the teaching of minority languages at least to the level at which isiNdebele and Chishona are taught. The marginalized languages lack literature and in some cases they do not have an orthography, making it very difficult to start thinking of teaching them up to university level, let alone using them as mediums of instruction.

Great Zimbabwe University is a state institution founded in December 2002 and mandated to be a centre of excellence in creative arts, culture and technology, as enshrined in its vision statement (GZU Prospectus, 2011:3). The university started as Masvingo State University (MASU) and later changed to GZU. Prior to the establishment of GZU there were already two universities with departments of African languages, namely the University of Zimbabwe and Midlands State University. The older universities inherited the concept of a department of African languages from the colonial period, teaching only the national languages isiNdebele and Chishona, and still maintain the status quo. To the former colonial masters, African languages meant isiNdebele and Chishona, and the medium of instruction for teaching them was, and still is, English.

GZU sought to develop a wider department of African languages, not a department limited to Chishona and isiNdebele. The only way this could be done was to include minority languages in the department, even though the

languages were never taught at school, and if so, only with the permission of the minister and not beyond the fourth grade. The university identified Tshivenda and Xichangana and came up with a strategy of teaching them as subjects in the department of African languages. While people questioned GZU over the choice of Tshivenda and Xichangana, these languages were chosen because of strategic, cross-border, and community initiative reasons.

In 2003 GZU formed a committee on marginalized languages through its department of African languages and literature. This committee was to spearhead the initial research on the possibilities of teaching minority languages. The then chairperson of the Department of African Languages and Literature, with a team of language experts, undertook a needs analysis in Thivenda and Xichangana regions, including Beitbridge, Chiredzi, Mwenezi and Chikombedzi. The team met with language associations, chiefs, education officers, teachers, non-governmental organizations and the business community. The chairperson of the African Languages and Literature Department at GZU wrote in a needs analysis report (2005a:3):

A needs analysis was then carried out in both Venda and Shangani speaking areas in 2003 and 2004 respectively where the stakeholders also highlighted the benefits of having MASU (now GZU) teaching the languages. It was noted however that there were no material resources, trained person-power and standardised orthography to bring the noble vision to reality. (parenthesis added)

The needs analysis was a result of a request by Tshivenda and Xichangana¹ communities to have the university teach their languages as beginner courses. After the needs analysis GZU organized a workshop on the 2nd of September 2005 and invited Xitsonga language academics Professor Golele and Mr Mathonsi from South Africa. The workshop also invited community representatives for both languages in Zimbabwe and Silveira House, a publishing company advocating for marginalized languages in Zimbabwe. In the workshop report (2005b:1), the then Vice Chancellor of GZU Professor Maravanyika indicated that he supported the development of cross-border languages and hoped that the people attending the workshop were going to share ideas towards the introduction of Tshivenda and Xichangana as courses. He noted that the biggest challenge for the university was to marshal human and material resources for the good of the programme. He promised to arrange visits to universities in the region for purposes of seeking partnership in the project (Workshop Report, unpublished data).

Professor Golele and Mr Mathonsi presented papers on the possibilities of using South African orthographies for Zimbabwean Tshivenda and Xichangana, after which they donated literature to kick-start the programme. The partnership with South Africa had started. Mr Ndou and Mr Chauke represented the Tshivenda and Xichangana communities in Zimbabwe respectively. Mr Ndou indicated that the Tshivenda community, including chiefs, were happy about the GZU initiatives and he indicated that old literature was

available since Tshivenda was last examined in 1964 at primary school level. Ndou said the Tshivenda Language Association had translated the isiNdebele Grade 7 syllabus into Tshivenda as the government wanted Tshivenda to be examinable at Grade 7 (Zimbabwe Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, Secretary Circular, 2002). Mr Chauke echoed Mr Ndou's sentiments and pleaded with the university to work together with their chiefs if the project was to be a success.

The Tshivenda and Xichangana communities were not resting on their laurels all this time but instead were lobbying for government support, writing primary school texts and making sure that the languages were taught up to Grade 3. In the case of Tshivenda the community had gone a step further by lobbying for incorporation of Tshivenda at Joshua Mqabuko College which trains primary school teachers. The college offers Tshivenda to teachers who can speak the language to enable them to teach it up to Grade 3 primary level. GZU had to start off with Tshivenda and Xichangana because:

- The Tshivenda and Xichangana communities had approached the university on the possibilities of offering the languages.
- The Tshivenda and Xichangana communities had an organized committee on language and culture involved in lobbying, and they had started writing primary school books.
- The two language communities are geographically closer to GZU than any other university in the country.
- GZU is closer to the border with South Africa and Mozambique where the languages are being taught up to university level.
- The two are cross-border languages with trained personnel to teach them in universities found in neighbouring countries.
- The subjects were taught by teachers trained to teach isiNdebele or Chishona.

The ground was set for the introduction of Tshivenda and Xichangana at GZU but the problems of manpower, orthography, literature and the Zimbabwean language policy were some of the challenges to be tackled. In 2005 the then Vice Chancellor of GZU sent a team to UNIVEN on a mission to discuss the possibility of a partnership. The meeting at UNIVEN was chaired by Mr Hlungwani, then deputy director at MER Mathivha Centre for African languages and attended by the director Dr Makgopa.

The then chairperson of the department of African languages and literature Mr. Makaudze wrote in a report to the Faculty board on the proposed teaching of Tshivenda and Xichangana (2005c:02) that the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the University of Venda had several advantages:

1. UNIVEN is close to MASU hence making the programme cost effective in many respects.
2. UNIVEN is already offering programmes in the two languages up to postgraduate level and so it has appropriate learning materials.
3. UNIVEN boasts of the much needed expertise in the two languages; people who are handy in the designing of

course content, producing teaching material and coming up with a standard orthography.

4. If a MoU could be arrived at, student and staff exchange, together with collaborative research could help MASU.

On the 26th of September 2007 a MoU was signed between GZU and UNIVEN formalizing cooperation between the two universities, a partnership that included the teaching of the two marginalized languages at GZU. Article One of the GZU/UNIVEN MoU (2007:02) is on co-operation and under this the parties agreed to cooperate in the following:

1. Exchange of faculty members
2. Exchange of students
3. Joint research activities
4. Participation in seminars and academic conferences
5. Exchange of academic materials
6. Staff Development Fellowships

The document states under its implementation that the two parties are to appoint coordinators and in terms of the provision to appoint coordinators enshrined in the MoU (2007:02), Mr Hlungwani was appointed coordinator for the minority languages programme from UNIVEN, and Mr Makaudze, the then chairperson of the African Languages and Literature Department at GZU, was appointed to coordinate the programme at GZU. The development and teaching of Tshivenda and Xichangana were central to the cooperation between UNIVEN and GZU as the MoU (2007:01) states under its article on the scope of cooperation:

The assistance to be provided by each of the contracting parties will include but not be limited to teaching, research, exchange of students and staff development. The cooperation will focus on African languages with reference to Shangani/Xitsonga and Tshivenda.

The agreement with UNIVEN was secured. Xitsonga and Tshivenda lecturers at UNIVEN started designing courses for a general degree in the languages. The lecturers assessed orthographies in Zimbabwe and agreed that the South African orthographies were the best for the language teaching. The orthography efforts in Zimbabwe were pushing Chishona and isiNdebele inclined orthographies onto Xichangana and Tshivenda respectively, which was not desirable. The lecturers were ready to teach at GZU but there were no students.

The challenge was how to recruit students given that the students would need to do two other subjects as per the stipulations of a general degree in Zimbabwe. Students usually come straight from high school and use 'A' level points to secure places, but there was no 'A' level Xichangana or Tshivenda in Zimbabwe. GZU had to bank on the mature student entry point to attract students. Ideal candidates were those teaching at primary schools with the following characteristics:

1. Mature people over the age of 25 years
2. Holders of a diploma in education
3. Having five ordinary level subjects including English

- language and one national language
4. Teaching either Tshivenda or Xichangana up to Grade 3
5. Proficiency in either language

The University had to go to schools on an outreach campaign to recruit students to enter the programmes. GZU took forms for teachers and had them apply from their schools. For Tshivenda, Mr Mulaudzi in the education offices in Beitbridge, was appointed to coordinate recruitment. Mr Chauke in Chiredzi did the Xichangana recruitment. The university had an affirmative action policy on the languages that included the following:

- a) Helping prospective students secure study leave from the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture for a period of three years.
- b) Taking application forms to areas where speakers of the languages are found.
- c) Offering on-campus accommodation for all students enrolled for the two languages.
- d) Allowing them to continue learning during part of their vacations at the university's expense since the visiting lecturers did not have enough time with them during term time as they taught at UNIVEN as well.

With these initiatives in place, GZU set to enroll its first Tshivenda and Xichangana students at the beginning of 2008. Lecturers from UNIVEN were to come and teach using UNIVEN sourced literature. According to the university newsletter (The GZU on Monday, 2008:05):

The coming of the four lecturers marked a major step towards the accomplishment of the terms of a MoU signed between UNIVEN and GZU last year. Under the terms of the MoU UNIVEN agreed to assist GZU with Tshivenda and Shangani/Xitsonga lecturers.

In 2008 the university held four inaugural lectures for both Tshivenda and Xichangana, making history in Zimbabwe. The two Tshivenda lectures were given by Mr Tshithukhe and Mr Netshisaulu respectively, and the Xichangana lectures were given by Mr Hlungwani and Mr Babane respectively. The two universities had to make sacrifices to see the success of the programme. UNIVEN provided teaching personnel and materials including a car and other resources for the trips to Zimbabwe. GZU provided free accommodation for the lecturers. GZU engaged political leaders and government, so as to influence policy makers to review the Education Act further so that the students would be granted study leave and have an opportunity to teach the languages up to Advanced Level after graduation.

Evaluating the initiatives

The evaluation of the initiatives is based on the results of the programme. From 2008 to 2012 GZU has had the two languages taught and it has since had the first and second groups of graduates. The community, Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, students, former students, lecturers and GZU/UNIVEN administrators are very important in this evaluation. The first initiative was to identify which

languages were to be developed first, and looking at this initiative it was clear that logistical reasons had to prevail. Both languages are spoken in the vicinity of the university and they had some written literature based on orthographies developed in Zimbabwe and some from South Africa. The two are also cross-border languages with lecturers and material in South Africa. The university could have included other cross-border languages as shown in Table 1. However, for GZU to take on the two languages was a great risk. They could have failed in 2008 had it not been for the kind support from UNIVEN. The programme of raising the function of the marginalized languages in Zimbabwe is an expensive one, therefore GZU is justified in starting with the two as a way of showing other universities that it can be done.

The initiative to go out to the communities and market the programme together with the affirmative action on the languages attracted students to the programme. The challenge initially was that the targeted people were teachers who needed study leave to study the languages. The ministry of education in Zimbabwe does not grant study leave to people who are not on education programmes. Unfortunately the languages are offered in a Bachelor of Arts, and not a Bachelor of Education programme. The Vice Chancellor of GZU then sought a special waiver of policy to develop the languages by granting teachers manpower development leave to study the languages. The approval also meant that the graduates would teach these languages at higher levels. To date there are 29 Tshivenda and 69 Xichangana graduates in the country. The graduates and the community are happy with the development. In a letter to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Art, Sport and Culture (2010:01), the then Vice Chancellor appealed to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education:

We kindly appeal to your office to kindly follow up on their forms as this will help solve one of the problems in this international programme, and help Zimbabwe have its first graduates in Xichangana and Tshivenda by the end of the year. We realize that these students will continue to face challenges in this regard and your continued help will be appreciated.

Opportunity to get study leave resulted in improved enrolment as shown in Table 3 which is adapted from the report of the chairperson of African Languages and Literature on the programme (05 November 2012).

In 2009 GZU embarked on a massive recruitment drive in areas where the languages are spoken. This resulted in a leap of over 400% in enrolment for both languages in 2010. However no outreach programme aimed at recruiting

students for the programme has been done since 2009. This is the reason why the figures have been going down from the 2010 enrolment in both languages.

While most of the people recruited in 2008 were primary school teachers, the expectation in Zimbabwe is that people with degrees teach at secondary and high schools. When the first group graduated in 2010 there was no policy change in education allowing the teaching of these languages up to secondary level, so the graduates went back to teaching in primary schools. The return of the first set of graduates to their old positions disappointed prospective students and this partly explains the drop after the first graduates in 2010. The university was supposed to go out on a campaign to influence policy makers before the first graduates to allow the languages to be taught and examined up to high school.

The programme succeeded in having the first ever graduates in the two languages in Zimbabwe. In a bid to develop Zimbabweans to continue teaching after the expiry of the MoU with UNIVEN, GZU selected the best two students in each language from the first graduates in 2010 to help as teaching assistants (TAs). This arrangement created an environment whereby the TAs were mentored by the UNIVEN lecturers. Postgraduate progression from GZU initiatives is as follows:

Tshivenda graduates

2010 (7)

- five went on to do honours with UNIVEN
- two went back to teach at primary schools
- The five honours graduates enrolled for masters at UNIVEN
- one masters student was employed as a Tshivenda teacher in South Africa.

2011 (4)

- two went on to do honours at UNIVEN
- two went back to teach at primary schools.

Xichangana graduates

2010 (13)

- three went on to do honours at UNIVEN
- 10 went back to teach at primary schools
- After finishing honours two proceeded to do masters at UNIVEN.

2011 (10)

- one went on to do an honours degree at UNIVEN
- The majority went back to teach at primary schools.

The above figures indicate a lack of motivation especially in the Xichangana sector to further their studies. Yet one student teaching Tshivenda in South Africa has motivated others to do a honours degree as it opens career opportunities in South Africa.

The lecturers from UNIVEN thought of starting with the following courses in both languages:

Level one-

- Introduction to phonetics and phonology
- Introduction to Tshivenda/Xichangana orthography

Table 3: Enrolment trends

Year	Tshivenda enrolment	Xichangana enrolment
2008	7	13
2009	4	10
2010	18	46
2011	16	21
2012	11	27

- Introduction to Tshivenda/Xichangana poetry and drama
- Introduction to Tshivenda/Xichangana novel and short story

Level two-

- Tshivenda/Xichangana drama
- Tshivenda/Xichangana morphology and syntax
- Tshivenda/Xichangana oral literature
- Tshivenda/Xichangana poetry

Level three-

- The Tshivenda/Xichangana novel
- Tshivenda/Xichangana orthography
- The Tshivenda/Xichangana dialects
- Theories of literature and criticism
- Tshivenda/Xichangana culture
- Research project

The initiative to offer the above courses produces a balanced graduate in as far as the languages are concerned. These languages in Zimbabwe had their own orthographies that were flawed according to the lecturers who came from UNIVEN. The emphasis was on making the students perfect in the South African orthographies, hence the two orthography courses. Recruiting people who are proficient in other African languages is a challenge to the lecturers as they have to correct orthography in almost every level one course. As the students progress they adapt to the orthography but there are a few cases of students who have problems up to level three. The research project is a good initiative as it is written in the languages, thus providing literature which aids the current shortage of books problem in Zimbabwe.

The enrolment procedure focuses on numbers rather than quality. There are some people, especially non mother tongue speakers of the languages, who take chances and get into the programme because of the mature entry provision that is prevalent. The lecturers have had to teach some students who are not good speakers of the languages and as a result, these students fail. Non mother tongue speakers in the programme create political questions in the communities as they feel their children are left out even in their own languages and speakers from other ethnic groups are taken on board. However there is no deserving applicant that has been denied to study the languages.

The students that take the languages as subjects are not very different from their counterparts at UNIVEN. The lecturers from UNIVEN confirm that the performance is almost the same. However, most Zimbabwean students are more committed to schoolwork. This may be because the majority are mature people. The greatest challenge is helping the students do away with the flawed orthographies they were used to, and this is done by teaching them two orthography courses, one at first year and the other at third year. On finishing, most are good in both written and spoken versions of the languages. The fact that a Zimbabwean Tshivenda graduate can teach Tshivenda in a South African secondary school is a clear example that the initiatives have produced the intended goal as far as the product is concerned.

Recommendations

The initiatives are a pioneering effort in the development of minority African languages in Southern Africa. Africans should seize the opportunity to unite in cross-border languages rather than to endure the division of languages by nation state boundaries. The programme has been, and continues to be, a good example to other languages and countries on how to develop marginalized languages especially when they are cross-border languages. The initiatives at GZU and their evaluations enlightened the researchers and they made certain observations and recommendations for the improvement of the programme and for the good of other languages:

- UNIVEN lecturers should not end their contact with GZU students when the MoU expires, rather they should make sure that the languages are always unified and standards are the same. It would be better if the MoU is extended.
- GZU and UNIVEN should extend their partnership to the production of literature in these languages, especially novels from Zimbabwean experiences. The literature should include lexicographic projects.
- GZU should continue with aggressive outreach programmes in the languages so that many people are trained leaving the ministry with no excuse of not introducing the languages at higher levels.
- There should be student exchanges between the two universities to expose students from both countries to teaching of the languages in the two different institutions.
- GZU should buy more books in the languages.
- There is need for a serious proficiency test as part of entry requirements at GZU.
- There are some students who do not speak the languages at home. There is a need to make sure that these students are immersed in homes or communities where they will speak the languages as part of training.
- GZU should initiate and emphasize the cultural aspects of the languages as well, not only the language, as some students are not aware of what it means to be Venda or Changana besides speaking and writing the languages.
- The Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture in Zimbabwe should change its policy on the two languages. The languages can now be taught up to Advanced level as there are graduates to teach them. The ministry can start with a few high schools where the languages are spoken.
- GZU should move to influence the ministry to introduce the languages as this has a bearing on the life of the programme.
- The education departments in Zimbabwe and South Africa should evaluate the graduates and see if they can be employed in either country. There is a need to have South African trained teachers teaching in Zimbabwean schools and vice versa.
- There is a need for universities offering Sesotho, isiXhosa, and Tjikalanga in the region, to get into similar partnerships to develop these cross-border languages.
- There is a need to come up with a different formula to develop non cross-border languages in Zimbabwe such as Chinambya. Development of these will include starting from scratch, as people like Clement Doke did with other African languages.

- The University of Zambia (UNZA) can be of help in the formulation of a programme that can help raise the function of ChiTonga in both Zambia and Zimbabwe. The University of Botswana (UB) can partner with a Zimbabwean university to develop Ikalanga. The University of Kwazulu Natal (UKZN) can partner with the Zimbabwean university in developing and unifying isiZulu and isiNdebele. South African universities can be of help too, in the development of Sesotho and isiXhosa in Zimbabwe.

The languages of Africa, especially those of southern Africa, may benefit from the initiatives of GZU in creating a linguistic landscape that is fair to all languages.

Conclusion

The initiatives by GZU and UNIVEN are a rare case of theory put into practice in African language policies. The initiatives are ground breaking and challenge policy makers to act and save marginalised African languages. It was prudent of GZU to start with cross-border languages because it proved to be cheaper and faster than starting from scratch. The programme implemented in partnership with UNIVEN has had marked success stories as there are people doing degrees and even higher degrees in two marginalized languages in Zimbabwe. The initiatives are a lesson to African status and corpus planners. The programme had its own problems, especially in the implementation and funding part, but the intended first goal of training teachers has been accomplished and continues to be accomplished. While the initiatives serve to raise the function of the languages by training teachers, they go beyond. The initiatives put policy makers in a compromised position if they do not change policy and allow for the teaching of the languages in all levels of education in Zimbabwe. The project is a lesson to other institutions in the region to embark on similar projects and to make sure that cross-border languages are at the same levels on both sides of a given border.

Notes

1. People are used to the spelling "Shangani", which is not proper; the correct spelling is Changana, although in most cases people use Shangani out of ignorance.
2. Extracted from a letter written to the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Education, Art, Sport and Culture from the then Vice Chancellor of GZU dated, 25/06/2010.

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