Flexible language strategies in early years education in Tanzania

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There is an urgent need to heighten learning outcomes throughout the Tanzanian educational system. In this regard, language competences present a key challenge. While it is a matter of heated debate whether and when Kiswahili or English should be the language of instruction, it seems uncontested that strong language skills in both Kiswahili and English are vital for future generations of Tanzanians – for education and for life. The question is how to best lay the foundations for the development of the high-level language competences essential to learning across the curriculum?

In this workshop, we present flexible language strategies in early years education as a powerful and promising answer to this question. Early years education provide the basis for all further education, and it is therefore vital to build a solid linguistic foundation in early years which students can capitalize on as they progress through primary, secondary and tertiary education. Flexible language strategies are teaching strategies which invite students to draw on their entire linguistic repertoire in the learning process – Kiswahili and English as well as local languages.

In the workshop, we present a research project under development in cooperation between Tanzanian and Danish researchers. We introduce the project and its theoretical and methodological basis, and we invite participants in the workshop to try out flexible language strategies such as language portraits (Busch 2010, Prasad 2014) and dual language books (Nagvi et al 2012, Sneddon 2009) and to engage critically and constructively in the further development of the project.

(248 words)

References