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Language and Development – the Role of the Mother Tongue in Education

In their search for solutions to the development problems of Africa, students of African development have often ignored linguistic and other socio-cultural resources (Prah 1993). When linguistic issues are addressed at all, the fact that there is a multiplicity of languages in African countries is often seen as a hindrance to the development of the continent. This paper focuses on the relationship between language and development and offers a specific proposal for addressing issues of language policy and planning in Africa. Taking the language situation in Ghana as a case study, a model of development communication and education termed localized trilingualism is proposed; a model, it is believed, will enable Africa to harness its multilingual resources for accelerated and sustainable socio-cultural, economic and technological development in the 21st century.