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English language policy and practice in diverse education contexts

Eric Enongene Ekembe, Lauren Harvey and Eric Dwyer (eds.), *Interface between English Language Education Policies and Practice: Examples from Various Contexts*

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Shifts in governmental authorities often trigger educational reform, including changes to English language policy. However, the implementation of the changes can be challenging for a number of reasons. This volume, *Interface between English Language Education Policies and Practice: Examples from Various Contexts,* raises key issues in English policy alteration and application in different areas, such as insufficient resources, unsupported professional development, and unaccommodated multicultural backgrounds. It advocates a novel approach to language policies in education. The authors believe that instead of focusing solely on the theories of researchers and policymakers, it is crucial to consider the perspectives of teachers located in diverse geographical locations and varying work environments. This approach could facilitate a more holistic understanding of the challenges faced by these teachers and help in devising effective solutions that are tailored to meet the unique requirements of each locale. It also helps to see how language policies are implemented in different regions and how they affect teachers and students. To that end, this volume examines English language teaching (ELT) policy, implementation, and its impact on different stakeholders in various regions across the world, including Japan, Turkey, Egypt, Ghana, South Sudan, Central Ohio, Colombia, Florida, Guinea Bissau, Senegal, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Montenegro and Cameroon. The book also provides insights into teachers' strategies in policy implementation and voices on the policy innovation process.

This volume encompasses 13 chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the book's aim and provides overviews of the following chapters, which investigate changing policy, regulation implementation, teacher perspective, and summary. Chapters 2 to 13 are divided into four thematic parts: teachers' reflection on the complexity of ELT policy alteration (Chapters 2–5); policy application (Chapters 6–9); teachers' positions and experiences in policy innovation (Chapters 10–12); and summary of key themes of previous chapters (Chapter 13).

Part One addresses the top-down policy shift from English as a foreign language (EFL) to English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in all subjects, even in early childhood and primary education. Chapter 2 focuses on the policy changes of the Japanese Ministry of Education from grammar to communication and from internationalization to a global focus. Surveying and interviewing 14 English teachers, the study explores the policy impacts on mid-tier universities and teachers' awareness of the policies. It reveals a gap between the policy intentions and practical implementation. The English language teachers were unfamiliar with and unsure about the policies and their implications. The student achievement also did not meet policy expectations. This might result from the neglect of ELT specialists in a content-based learning curriculum.

Chapter 3 digs into the impact of the 4+4+4 educational policy in Turkey on English language learning in primary schools. The policy shifts from an eight-year primary and four-year high school system to a structure with four years each of primary, middle, and secondary education. This change lowers the starting age for English

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instruction from ten (grade 4) to eight (grade 2). It probes challenges faced by teachers in grades 2, 3, and 4. The data from a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews engaging 45 teachers from 30 state primary schools show a critical gap between the policy expectations and its practice. Many teachers lack Teaching English for Young Learners (TEYL) experience and training. Indeed, the curriculum demands exceeding students' English proficiency levels bring up a significant obstacle to effective learning. The incongruence between the policy demand and implementation requires further evaluation and improvement.

Chapter 4 investigates the voices of English language teachers in Egypt regarding current ELT policies in nine public and private schools. The findings highlight several areas of concern raised by teachers, including a focus on tests over achieving curriculum goals, excessive workload, and unequal salary. These factors, along with media portrayals that blame teachers for education shortcomings, lead to feelings of underappreciation and external pressure. Notably, teachers expressed frustration with the government's emphasis on distributing tablets as the primary educational technology tool, arguing for a more humanized education.

Chapter 5 presents a comparative case study on the English-only policy in Ghana, comparing its impact on students and teachers in rural and urban schools. In rural schools, teaching involves code-switching and code-mixing to aid student understanding, but the English-only policy hinders their academic and linguistic achievements. In urban schools, English usage is enforced with punishment, increasing compliance but causing frustration among teachers and students. This suggests that improving education in Ghana requires recognizing the importance of local languages in learning.

Part Two discusses policy regulation and implementation, English language teaching strategies, challenges and opportunities in teaching English to students of other languages. Chapter 6 explores how EFL teachers in South Sudan Secondary School adapt communicative strategies to overcome the challenges of overcrowded classrooms. Through interviews with six teachers over two months, the study unveils tactics such as space and time management, fostering engagement and interaction, and encouraging problem-solving. Strategies include rearranging seating, outdoor learning, and employing techniques such as sampling and communicative jigsaw methods amid resource limitations such as text printing shortages.

Chapter 7 examines language policy and pedagogical practices in Central Ohio's adolescent newcomer program. Data collected through institutional ethnography and discourse analysis reveal a gap between policy goals and students' linguistic needs. While the educational policy aims to foster linguistic diversity among students, English dominance remains the norm in the classroom, with restrictions on the use of native languages, indicating a mismatch between policy and implementation.

Chapter 8 evaluates English language teaching policy effectiveness in Colombia, focusing on Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo (PNB) objectives and Escuela Nueva model impact. Interviews with 15 participants from Octavio Calderón (OC) school in Medellín uncover unmet PNB goals, policy misinterpretation, and unrealistic proficiency expectations. Top-down implementation leads to misunderstandings among English teachers. While Escuela Nueva benefits Octavio Calderón education, its impact on English language learning is limited.

Chapter 9 investigates the Florida Consent decree's implementation for equitable education access for multilingual students. Data collection across three phases reveals ongoing constraints in providing full access to learning materials for multilingual language learners (MLLs). Difficulties arise in conveying multicultural experiences to native English-speaking students (NESs). Despite efforts to support diverse language and cultural backgrounds, improvement is needed to ensure all students feel engaged and represented in the learning process.

Part Three examines teachers' perspectives and involvement in the policy reformation. Chapter 10 examines global issue integration in English classes in Sub-Saharan Africa, focusing on Guinea Bissau, Senegal, and the DRC. The findings reveal teachers' and students' various perspectives on the integration of global issues. Most teachers integrate social and global issues in class through discussions and student presentations, but some refrain due to time constraints. This research also highlights the importance of teacher agency in curriculum design and engaging students through relevant content.

Chapter 11 delves into the English language teaching policy at the University of Montenegro. The study employs semi-structured interviews and questionnaires with content teachers, EFL teachers, and students. Findings reveal discontent among content teachers due to reduced subject content caused by additional EFL courses. English teachers advocate for enhanced English proficiency but suggest additional EFL courses outside the regular curriculum. The research suggests involving English teachers in the decision-making process for formulating an English language teaching policy.

Chapter 12 probes teachers' perceptions of relevant ELT policy in Cameroon based on their work experience. Conducted qualitatively with 113 teachers of four secondary schools as participants, the study reveals a troubling disconnect between teachers and policymakers. Many teachers are unaware of local limitations, and policymakers misunderstand the impact of their policy on teachers' responsibilities. This study also highlights the criticism regarding policymakers' insensitivity to practical challenges faced by teachers and their misinterpretation of the connection between teacher duties and policy implementation.

Part Four, comprising only Chapter 13, sums up the critical connection between policy and practice in EMI. It explores the rationale for and methodology of selecting the specific areas for the study. It also synthesizes the previous three parts into two concepts: administrators' robust demand for achieving both content and English as a curricular outcome and the problematic implementation of EMI. It further discusses critiques of EMI and concludes by offering practical recommendations for successful EMI implementation aimed at stakeholders.

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This volume refreshes the discussion on the practical aspects of policy implementation and teacher involvement in English language education. First, it broadens the scope of research beyond commonly studied areas and acknowledges teacher voices, which are often neglected in the top-down policy-making process. This can empower educators by providing them with a broader understanding of policy implementation across diverse contexts and advocating for their role in shaping future policies. Second, Chapters 2 to 13 commence by providing explanations of a brief history or rationales of language policy implementation of discussed areas. This equips policymakers with a global perspective on successful and unsuccessful policy approaches, fostering the creation of more realistic and effective policies that consider the needs of educators and students. Third, regarding the book parts and content presentation, the first chapter offers overviews for initial understanding, while the last chapter synthesizes issues of language policy and practice in the areas studied, helping readers grasp the interface between policy and practice vividly.

Nevertheless, the book has its limitations. Although data of this volume are gathered through ethnographic research complemented by other quantitative or qualitative data (Chapter 13), they remain limited in scope and may not represent the broader reality of English language education policies and practices across different regions and contexts. Indeed, policy is a complex process that may involve different levels of authority and various realities such as history, politics, and economy. Even though this volume has highlighted relevant facts in almost all chapters, acknowledging the voices of authorities is crucial to reinforce the findings and critically see the connections between policy and practice from diverse perspectives.

In conclusion, this book reveals the complexities of English language policy reform and implementation in various areas. It emphasizes the need for better alignment between the policy goals and practical realities and the importance of teacher involvement and support in the process. Recommendations include improved teacher training (pp. 34, 51), stakeholder collaboration (pp. 14, 79, 206), and a more nuanced approach to policy implementation to ensure equitable and effective English language education (p. 144).

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