

## Enhancing Citizens Capability to Compete Globally: Rwanda's Formal Language and Education Policy and Its Implications for Development

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### Abstract

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The paper provides a reflective analysis of the move to establish English as the main medium of instruction in schools and addresses the role of language and education in the overall development processes in Rwanda. Primary data collection involved interviews with members of the society, education community (state department, staff of primary and secondary schools and universities) and civil society in Rwanda. We argue that the linguistic realities of globalisation represented through the spread of English and the growing wealth of knowledge and intellectual capital through formal education has far reaching consequences for Rwanda as she attempts to spread and sustain its economic and social development within and across her borders. The introduction of English as the formal national language is seen as a form of empowerment and a mechanism towards the enhancement of the global competitiveness of its populace. Also, the introduction of the new language policy has resulted in a new perception of the national educational system and an emergence of private-public partnership in primary education. The paper makes the case for the need to modify the language policy to encourage further public-private partnerships in primary education. Emphasis should be placed on the effective delivery of the formal curriculum in a way that will allow the use of English to add value to the quality of basic and tertiary education. It is important to educate the populace of the value of multilingualism so as to encourage parents and students to embrace the new policy.

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**Keywords:** Rwanda, capacity development, language, basic and tertiary education, capability enhancement.

### 1.0 Introduction

Linguistic diversity on the African continent has often been a contentious issue and a challenge for nation building and state unity. The decision to adopt English as principal medium of instruction and language of administration in Rwanda symbolises the new national development strategy within a forward-looking post-conflict society. The linguistic realities of development represented through the spread of English and the growing wealth of knowledge and intellectual capital through formal education has far reaching consequences for Rwanda as she attempts to become globally competitive. President Paul Kagame stated *'The kind of education we want for our children is that which is in line with the vision in place for the development of our country, we have to prioritise the language that will make them competent when they get on the labour market after completing school'* (Rwanda News Authority, 2010). President Kagame establishes a link between development, language and education - in order for development to be lasting, education needs to be effective and for education to be delivered successfully language policy must be clear. So it was in October 2008 the Rwandan government constitutionally established the English language as principal medium of communication in schools and public administration.

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The present study addresses the effect of linguistic transition on education in the overall developmental processes in Rwanda in her quest for economic and social property. This paper will examine how forms of capital are created and reproduced through language, and ascertain the role, effect and perception of English as the new medium of instruction and how this influences Rwanda's forward outlook and development. Chinua Achebe raises an associated question when he stated that "*is it right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else's? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling. But for me there is no other choice. I have been given the language and I intend to use it*" (Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*). This study intends to explore the extent to which language can amount to national empowerment and how this shapes the outlook of Rwandan people as well as a vehicle for development: (Corson, 2001:16).

The paper will first examines some theoretical discourses on language, national development and education in Rwanda. It will then discuss the methodological process employed by the study on which this paper is based. This will be followed by a discussion of relevant national census data and the empirical qualitative data generated during the fieldwork of the project. The paper will conclude with a discussion of policy strategies towards the enhancement of Rwanda's human development efforts through education and language.

## 2.0 Theoretical debates

Our stratified social world, composed by a complexity of distinctions, compels us to complicity in structures where language serves as the unifying interactive vehicle with which to move in and between. It was Bourdieu (1991: 1) who declared that language is central to social life since "a good part of our social life consists of the routine exchange of linguistic expressions in the day-to-day flow of social interaction." In this vein Crystal maintains, "it is quite possible for social groups to alter the course of language" (Crystal 1997: 227). As a medium for progressive development and empowerment, "language is built into the economic and social structure so deeply that its fundamental importance seems only natural" (Tollefson, 1991: 2). Not only does linguistic interaction define the social setting but it also helps to reproduce it (Bourdieu 1991).

Mesthrie et al. (2000) suggest that language ideology implies assumptions about what type of linguistic standard is advantageous for a nation, community or an individual. Schiffman (2000) views state language policy as the reflection of a government's ideological orientation, hence the eventual view of society since hegemony supersedes all. In short language ideology is the notion of people acting on the condition of certain worldviews formed through cognitive and subliminal thought processes. Language ideology in this sense is indeed bounded in necessity for development and meeting global demands for labour and socio-economic integration. Individuals may become implicit in such relations due to feelings of community cohesion and forms of solidarity but may become empowered if the change offers them wider opportunities beyond what is presently available to their advancement (Bourdieu, 1986). The notion of common sense is apt here as adherence to a particular linguistic ideology, say English, aligns with large global consensus systems, from which opposition to is imprudent; it is what everybody knows and cannot be easily disputed. For the outsiders who do not know, in our rural context, sparingly educated individuals emerge as a flawed collective lacking the right kind of 'know-how' (Ricento, 2006).

Nevertheless, the limitation of local indigenous languages has been identified as having marginalising effect on local knowledge systems and other forms of culture. These views often perceive foreign languages as catalysts for global economic security (Phillipson, 1992, Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). Amidst the chaos of globalisation, the power exerted by English language further boosts its status as a superior language in the midst of a linguistically crowded continent. For some it is logical to employ a language that unites and brings about solidity among the numerous ethnicities and identities (Fishman, 2006).

For some time now language has been on the margins of policy and academic debate, due to its imprecise nature and lack of theoretical body, though during the last century the study of language has at long last been granted the level of attention it rightly deserves as a discipline constituted by linguistics and its sub-disciplines, sociolinguistics and the sociology of language (Ricento, 2006; Spolsky, 2004; Wright 2007). We can say with confidence that language is much more than merely a medium of communication. The subtleties and subjectivities inherent in language practice embody explicit emblems of identity, modernity, emancipation and diversity, leading to the development of value systems that become central tenets in the accreditation and realisation of social systems and development (Blommaert, 1999).

Nevertheless, language possesses implications so extensive that it can be said that its enquiry is "both central and marginal" to understanding the nature of society (Pateman, 2006).

Central in the respect that language offers us leading ideas, or in any case abstractions of the world around us, and marginal in the sense that linguistics has been a subsidiary of the main pillars of social thought. In other words, the contours language policy are essential elements in revealing the make-up of society and not only a tool to communicate but more so as an emancipatory resource vital in development of people's lives and well-being. Language policy relates to decisions on language rights, access to languages and the roles languages are given in specific environments (Ricento, 2006). Crucially, policy can be overt or covert. Language planning conventionally consists of corpus, status, and acquisition planning (Spolsky, 2004). Well defined language policy is a necessary instrument in a state's agenda, and becomes increasingly important in the conflict between multilingualism and global lingua franca. Policy has rules for the choice and function of official languages, for national languages, for language requirements in employment and for language use in commercial transactions and the media. It is predominantly governments who elect a language as medium of instruction, as is the case in Rwanda. Many types of language policy issues present in Rwanda reflect the political and economic choices, the values and objectives of planners.

International foreign languages are often seen to be in the national interest, principally for economic reasons (Shohamny, 2006). Issues also arise in the assertion of indigenous cultures and the elevation of language rights (Fishman, 2006). Language policy is therefore an indicator of identities at local, national, and international levels and relays how society at large are galvanised or dissuaded to certain languages and ideologies.

### **3.0 Language, Education and Development in Rwanda**

The declaration assigning the English language as principal medium of instruction and mode of communication in government administration and schools was made on 18 October 2008. The decision brought about the end of French as primary medium of communication. Since Rwandan independence in 1962, French enjoyed a privileged position as the language of education and government, complementary to Kinyarwanda, the national language, known and spoken by 99.4% of the population (Rwanda, 2005). The most recent version of the Rwandan Constitution adopted on 26 May 2003 states that 'the national language is Kinyarwanda with the official languages being Kinyarwanda, French and English.' Apart from the Constitution establishing trilingualism and law governing education institutions, there was no definitive language policy. As Rwanda has opened her borders, the intake of global commodities, media and culture are elevated to an advanced form of symbolic capital. Ultimately it comes down to education and the type of education the government would want its populace to have in order to be globally competitive.

#### **3.1 Education**

Incorporated under the paternalism policy, the colonial regime in Rwanda systematically avoided offering adequate education, and notably curbed any form of post-secondary education. Top-down educational policy was persistently ideological; upholding stringent obedience to authority using a syllabus entrenched in socially constructed stereotypes inciting hatred and discrimination. Embedding these divisive relations and becoming "subjected to the dominant norms" is common place in negotiating education and society (Bourdieu, 1991: 83). Following the establishment of the National University of Rwanda at Butare in 1963, only 1000 students had graduated by 1994 (Tickly et al. 2003: 29). Regardless of this, pre-1994 Rwanda was dubiously acknowledged as a successful development model exemplary to the rest of Africa (Obura, 2003). Education was not a high regard for the colonial administration. As a consequence this maintained the intensity and application of Kinyarwanda within the country and at its borders for trading purposes but equally minimised any significant knowledge of French. For the modest education that did exist, French was the principal medium of instruction, although on the whole it remained superfluous and of little use. The challenge for the Rwandan government after the genocide was enormous. The most pressing issue was how to go about reconciling Rwandan perceptions and mind sets as well as harness its human resource potentials. One approach for resolving the deep-seated anxiety was to embark on a restructuring program of education in order to address the failings of previous national plans and forge national unity out of chaos. "Education was to provide human resources for economic and social development while promoting peace and tolerance" (Hayman, 2005: 11).

Notions of tolerance, acceptance and 'being Rwandan' were transferred into curriculums in order to demonstrate an inclusive agenda and provide for children from all backgrounds, whatever language they spoke. In 1994 the Ministry of Education intervened and added English to the curriculum allowing students to complete exams in English. The biggest challenge for the ministry concerned teachers and their lack of knowledge in English. Standards for secondary school and university graduates' were alarmingly low, and have remained so, due to poor teaching and serious deficiencies in materials leading to the de-motivation of teachers and students (World Bank,

2004). The ever increasing numbers of returning Rwandans from overseas made it progressively more difficult to harmonise a truly effective national education plan. A combination of the above issues, along with more political and global constraints pushed education to the top of the government's agenda. In late 2008 the government announced the adoption of English as the prime medium of instruction in the Rwandan education system.

### 3.2 Rwandan School System

Rwanda's education system comprises of four stages, pre-school and kindergarten, primary, secondary, and higher. The government have made substantial effort to improve uptake by introducing a '9 year education plan' which offers free education for the first 9 years schooling, exceeding Goal 2 of the Millennium Development Goals, achieve universal primary education. This has led to the consolidation of both primary and secondary education and to lower dropout and repetition rates. Apart from Kinyarwanda, French and English have been introduced in all schools as curriculum subjects from primary grade 1 and English will be used as the language of instruction from grade 4 so from here on throughout the remaining of schooling, students will be taught in English, assuming they attend state school. Throughout primary and secondary school French is not a compulsory subject but can be chosen as an elective. The national policy now makes it compulsory to teach in English in state schools while private schools may choose to teach in French. All three languages are found throughout the education system from primary to tertiary levels. The medium of instruction for each level of schooling is as follows:

**Table 1. Language Use and Education**

Level of Education	Medium of communication and instruction
Pre-School	Kinyarwanda
P1 - P3	Kinyarwanda (English and French are taught as individual subjects)
P4 - P6	English
S1 - S3	English
S4 - S6	English
University/tertiary	English

*Source: World Bank 2004*

The switch to English is a considerable undertaking in a country where 95% of schools teach in French to pupils from about the age of nine. Rwanda's formerly francophone schools will cease to use French for instruction and from 2010 all staff and school students are expected to communicate in English.

### 3.3 Methodology

The study employed a qualitative data collection methodology using individual interviews with a combination of random and purposive sampling techniques (Gray et al.,2007: 42). One of the benefits of the qualitative approach in studying social phenomena is their ability to allow the researcher to explore and deduct the subtleties of meaning. Crucially this not only includes verbal communication but also gestured signals through body language. It relied on a snowballing approach to identify the respondents of the study. In view of the outlined research objectives for the study, it was envisaged that a method involving members of the Rwandan civil service, development organisations and the education community would be a suitable study sample. Four categories of respondents were identified including staff of government ministries, staff of educational institutes, national civil society groups and international development organisations operating. The sample categories were purposively selected in view of the focus of the study related core issues. Individual members of sampled organisations were randomly selected and interviewed. Sampling from a cross-section of the society and Rwandan workforce allows us to examine the core objectives of the study. Table 2 below displays sampled respondents. A semi structured interview schedule was used elicit data. All interviews took place in the offices of the sample whereas interviews with civil society groups and members of the population mainly took place in their homes at the request of interviews.

To ensure compliance to ethical requirements for the study, we completed and submitted the project ethics form to different ethics committees in the UK and interested organisations in Rwanda. Also, each of the sampled respondents completed a consent form which also provided detailed background and objectives of the study.

	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Tag</i>
<i>Government based</i>	National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC)	Director of Languages and Humanities Unit	<b>G1</b>
	Rwanda National Examinations Council (RNEC)	Executive Secretary	<b>G2</b>
	National Inspectorate of Schools	Inspector General	<b>G3</b>
	Rwanda Higher Education Council	Executive Director	<b>G4</b>
<i>Educational Institute</i>	Kigali Institute of Education (KIE)	Vice Rector Academic	<b>E1</b>
	Kigali Institute of Education (KIE)	Head Lecturer of Languages	<b>E2</b>
	Kigali Institute of Science and Technology (KIST)	Director of Language Centre	<b>E3</b>
	Kigali Institute of Science and Technology (KIST)	Head of English	<b>E4</b>
	APAPEC-IREBERO	President of School Board	<b>E5</b>
<i>National Civil Society</i>	Rwanda Development Organisation (RDO)	Executive Secretary	<b>CS1</b>
	CLADHO	Advisor	<b>CS2</b>
	CCOAIB	President	<b>CS3</b>
	BENISHYAKA ASSOCIATION	Executive Secretary	<b>CS4</b>
<i>International Consultants &amp; Organisations</i>	DFID	Senior Human Development Advisor	<b>IN1</b>
	British Council	English in Action Programme Advisor	<b>IN2</b>
	National University of Rwanda (NUR)	Director of Academic Quality and Standards	<b>IN3</b>

Source: Authors (2017)

#### 4.0 Results and discussion

The section will first discuss some data from the recent Rwandan national census and follow this with primary qualitative data generated during the field interviews. 4.1 Languages, Education and the Third National Census of Rwanda The Third National census was completed on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2002. Published in 2005 the document synthesises an analysis of the census carried out by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. Below Table. 3 displays abstracted data of languages spoken against gender and location. We have to take into account the fact that the census was carried out nearly nine years ago. The rate with which Rwandan capacities have grown in all sectors of the economy has been exceptional so the statistics, especially those figures displaying European languages, are guaranteed to be higher. The statistics do however give us a clear picture of the rural/urban and gender divides.

	<i>Urban</i>			<i>Rural</i>			<i>Total</i>		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Kinyarwanda	98.2	98.6	98.4	99.5	99.6	99.6	99.3	99.4	99.4
French	13.6	10.9	12.2	2.8	1.9	2.3	4.6	3.2	3.9
English	7.2	4.8	6.0	1.4	0.9	1.1	2.4	1.5	1.9
Swahili	14.6	9.9	12.2	1.7	0.8	1.3	3.9	2.2	3.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>609975</b>	<b>639469</b>	<b>1249444</b>	<b>311405</b>	<b>3600314</b>	<b>6714364</b>	<b>3724025</b>	<b>4239783</b>	<b>7963809</b>

Source: Rwanda Ministry for Finance and Economic Planning (2005)

Table 3 shows that within Rwandan society 99.4% of Rwandans speak Kinyarwanda, 3.9% speak French, 1.9% speak English and 3% speak Kiswahili. Overall the graph tells us that the great majority of Rwandans speak Kinyarwanda. Rwanda's population at the last count stands at 10,473,282 (IMF, 2011). Rwanda has an urban population of 18% of the total population (ibid). It should be noted that the rate of urbanisation has more than tripled in Rwanda from 5.5% in 1991 to 18.7% in 2007 (ibid).

This increase can partly be explained by natural population growth, rural exodus, and return of refugees living in foreign countries after 1994. The rate of urbanisation in Rwanda is among the lowest in the world and in Africa in particular, the average being 35%. Mindful of this catalytic role of urbanization to Rwanda's economic growth, the aim is to quadruple this rate under 'Vision 2020'<sup>3</sup> to increase the urbanised population to 30%.

As expected there is a strong correlation between place of residence and foreign language spoken. 2.3% people living in the rural areas speak French with 1.1% people living in the rural areas speaking English. Putting these figures alongside figures for urban areas shows a clear disparity shows that 12.2% people living in urban areas speak French with 6% of people living in urban areas speaking English. Data gathered in the capital Kigali shows even more variation as 17.7% speak French and 9.2% speak English.

These figures imply that more people have proficiency in foreign languages in urban areas especially in the capital city, Kigali. Data also suggests that the type of employment tend to determine the degree of knowledge of foreign language usage. For example Kinyarwanda speakers are found in all branches of economic activity whereas English/French speakers are found in non-agricultural non-manual jobs such as finance, administration, production and distribution services, real estate and enterprise. This suggests that the type of employment and languages spoken correlates with the level of education gained. Literacy figures reveal that Kinyarwanda speakers are mostly illiterate with English/French speakers having 98% literacy with 88% Kiswahili speakers being literate.

It is evident that the level of literacy increases with level of education gained which then influences types of employment. Interestingly the census states that on average Kiswahili speakers are older than French/English speakers, and foreign languages are spoken more by men. The former statement demonstrates the increasing spread of European languages seen as more functional than the regions former lingua franca, Kiswahili. As is common across Africa, men are more familiar with foreign languages than women. This sentiment comes in response to Rwanda's development vision of spreading security and raising the capacity of its people in industries such as science and technology. The lack of proficiency across the whole population is a big concern of the current Rwandan administration as this has implication for its forward outlook and national development strategy.

#### 4.2 Education and Social Reproduction of Language

Education is a key ingredient in Rwanda's development vision. Put another way, as Rwanda is without any material resources of merit, her only tool for modernising and economic growth is found in its population. *"Kagame's vision, it is a very strong kind of visionary process...you know the education focus here is huge with a big focus on ICT... you know, goes along side the access to English, a feeling of access to greater knowledge in the world."*<sup>E1</sup>

Two dominant elements within the field of power shape struggles for power in modernised society, these are economic capital (wealth, income and assets) and cultural capital (language, knowledge and culture) respectively (Bourdieu, 1991). Due to the nature of the interviewee's work environments language proficiency is paramount. As a result of the high dependence on donors and the international community, government, education and development employees are required to have first-rate ability in speaking English and French. Certainly having this skill is primarily down to education, but it is not purely schooling and university that permits a person to have know-how in a number of languages. Every one of the interviewees was well versed in English and French though those within government and education employment had markedly better comprehension of English, with stylistic superiority and more complex vocabularies. Nevertheless all respondents mentioned the absolute necessity of being able to speak in English and passing on their knowledge to their children/offspring.

The head of languages at the Kigali Institute of Education stated that: *"We are called francophone but in reality many are not...I like to call them 'so-called Francophone' because they are not able to express themselves properly because they do not have the opportunity to practice. At work we mainly speak Kinyarwanda but of course we speak English and French sometimes..."*<sup>E2</sup>. Respondents from civil society groups argued that the value and symbolic systems tend to determine people's position in society and consequentially determine specific life prospects. A leader of a civil society organisation explained that language and education play an inherent role in this process because the subtleties that play out in linguistic and aesthetic interactions that become internalised in the consciousness of users from a young age, structure the behaviours and know-how that essentially enables access or not.

<sup>3</sup> Vision 2020 is the government's long term strategy for Rwanda's development. It endeavours to transform Rwanda into a middle income country through a concerted effort into developing the science and technology industry to become the technology hub of east and central Africa.

Assumptions about the world around us become fashioned not only through knowledge that is endowed upon us, but also the language through which it is communicated in and the way it is communicated as argued by Bourdieu (1991).

It was further revealed during the interviews with civil society groups that language is also an ‘instrument of power’ so different levels of cultural capital and language proficiency are key elements in an individual’s position in the Rwandan society. The desire for knowledge, skills and capabilities enables people to act in new ways and the English language is perceived as fundamental in this process for Rwanda. It was revealed that the use of foreign languages in Rwanda has hitherto contributed to national disunity, with rural students particularly, and especially rural girls being disadvantaged. The rural/urban divide is without doubt far more complex than pure linguistic inequality, but it certainly has a major strategic role in the continuation of the poor state of rural capacities. *“Certainly when you go out to the rural areas, try speaking French and the quality of French is very poor...even non-existent” E4.*

When asked about the state of the Rwanda rural urban divide the respondent answered: *“In the countryside what use is there for languages like English and French” E4.* Although the response continued with acknowledging the need to increase language proficiency in rural Rwanda, this sentiment sums up the crux of the issue. Not directly denigrating rural communities and their hardships, the attitude that foreign languages are not required in rural quarters suggests the engrained nature of language realities and their power in the active economically concentrated character of language landscapes.

### 4.3 Schooling and Celebrity of English

Historically speaking the span of English as the global lingua franca is largely down to colonial ambitions of the British government, the divide and rule policy that elevated English to a privileged and effective tool for growth in social capital and mobility (Sonntag, 2003). Phillipson (2007: 378) stressed that *“British and U.S. governments have been open about their aims for global English and have adopted policies to promote it”*. In Rwanda’s case, the decision to adopt English as first official language is arguably down a number of causal factors; socio-economic, given that it has joined the EAC; political given the growing influence of English as a world language and the fractious relationship with France; and pragmatic since science, technology and the internet are first and foremost governed by English. Below is a response from a member of the education community in Rwanda, it is included here for interest as it evokes current trends in thinking. *“Since the introduction of the new language policy, there have been complaints about the sudden change in the education system some claiming that students who before were instructed in French, would find it hard to adopt it... though they might have problems we understand the need for English...this is the reality...we need English to be competitive” E1.*

We can say that the celebrity status of English as the world language is as much due to socio-historic factors as much as it is with the present era of globalisation. As the excesses of wealth and knowledge continue to spread across the world, administrations feel that by not accommodating European linguistic practices they jeopardise ‘losing out’; for Rwanda this is simply not a risk worth taking. This sentiment recounts much of the present thinking in Rwanda and begins to present the differing layers of the language dilemma. Below is a selection of responses voiced to this concern:

*“English is spoken globally in development circles, ICT, trade, among others, and is also a tool of integration. We don’t want to be left behind” G4. “Which language is more instrumental to our development?...its English of course...when I go to China, Japan, India even and speak French, no one would understand me...with English immediately my problem is solved” G1*

Whilst some respondents were enthusiastic about the transition to English, others had concerns about the rapidity of the transition and how this could impact on the educational system and citizenry. It was argued that a gentle transition would have a better reception and impact as French is still part of the national fabric. A civil society representative said that *“for me I feel this is a bit like a violation of human rights, French is still a big part of our history and destroying it in schools and elsewhere is not good for our people we still need French...think about the children who are now at school they will struggle I think...so no I don’t agree with the change in policy” CS3*

*“Although I agree with the new language policy it does seem that French is being pushed to the side because of English... when you think of Rwanda you see that we are bordered by Congo and Burundi both speak French, also all the other African countries who speak French. We need to make sure we don’t lose French though I don’t think this will happen”. E3*

With respect to global competitiveness and forward outlook it is important that the government steps up the programme and associated activities to translate the vision into reality especially with an urgent improvement in public school education. Whilst such patterns and opinions are common with many public schools across Africa and echoes a global concern for public educational systems. It will be critical to review or revamp the public school system to improve its capability in the delivery of the new language policy. It was noted that most parents employ a combination of having their children in private school and actively engaged in home education. Another respondent from the educational institute explained that the challenge is not just with the public schools but also the mode and style of delivering the educational curriculum. He called for a revision of the mode of instruction, the style of teaching and curriculum delivery so as to produce graduates who are confident or able to perform to international standards. 4.4 Private-Public Partnership as a tool for education and linguistic advancement The interviews with members of the public and educationalists revealed that most Rwandans have taken up the language policy and facilitating its translation into practice by the establishment of a new wave of private schools with parents having a stake in how they are run. There are schools that have also been formed by parent's coalitions and professionals who want to ensure that their children get the best education with multilingual skills.

This was explained by the sample as a forward-looking strategy, which could lead to the formation of academy schools as it is being proposed in the UK. A respondent explained that limited national resources and dependence on donor funds means that primary education through the public schools is not sustainable in terms of expansion and attaining state of the art status. Several respondents therefore consider the introduction of public-private partnership schools a welcome addition to existing options, as the government alone cannot do everything. In an attempt to understand how this works, the study attempted to ascertain the types of schools that children of respondents attend and also to understand how the emerging public-private schools are constituted or formed. "Our children attend Greenhills Academy where they study the International Baccalaureate diploma programme" **G1**. Another respondent indicated, "My children attend Kagugu primary school...it is one of the best in the country" **E3**. Other responses were..."they go to a very good school in Kigali and sometimes after school they go to extra language classes" **E4** ... "we and some associates have started a new school called APAPEC- IREBERO this is where my children go" **E5** ... "my children went to school in Kigali...they are now in jobs in the city but my youngest son goes to KIE" **CS4**. During the research process contact was made with a recently established and newly constructed public-private school. It was not possible to arrange a meeting with the school board but it was possible to speak to the president of board of governors of the parent's coalition that founded the school. The president explained that the name of the school was selected to reflect conceptualisation of the school. APAPEC- IREBERO translates roughly to, Association of Parents for Education and Culture Model. The school was set up in 2001 in response to a lack of quality and coordination within the public and private school systems. It currently supports 750 primary school children and employs 45 teachers.

He explained that after a few years of debate, a small number of parents came together and formed a coalition with the aim of constructing a new school whose ethos translates to 'strives for excellence'. Once this small group was formed, the numbers grew substantially until the group consisted of a wide variety of parents with diverse professional and political backgrounds. The idea was that with a group of committed parents the project could be realised and become a successful and symbolic model for other such school projects in the country. So the school opened its doors to its first students in 2001 after two years of planning. The local authority provided the site for the school at the Gisozi district.

This district is one of up and coming localities that is currently going through a regeneration scheme to accommodate the ever-growing Rwandan young professionals and middle class. The site is significant given the fact that it is creating a micro-community with educated, aspiring and forward looking professional families. At present the site only consists of a primary school though there are considerable plans for expansion. It was possible to view the blueprints for the next planned phase, a phase that will involve the construction of a secondary school, many impressive sports facilities that (swimming pool, gymnasium), and most surprisingly a shopping mall with adjoining car park with space for hundreds of cars. One of the respondents argued that people now appreciate the value of education and strive high quality education is not only in the hands of the government anymore as it is the case in many European countries and some neighboring African countries.

The president indicated that: ...it's not for money, it's for education of our children and we are not benefitting in terms of money... we just want our children to have a good education that we can evaluate and improve" **E3**

Here we begin to see that in this setting money is not considered as the key motivator, perhaps it is the end goal since a good education eventually permits greater wages in employment. It is evident that education is perceived as foundational in the accumulation and transmission of capital within a forwarding looking Rwanda.

When asked what were some of the motivations for creating the school the president mentioned the size of classes and types of teachers. The president explained that *"You see the public school you have 40/50/60 per class...for us the maximum number of children in a class is 35 and we have between 25-35 in lessons around 30...which means a teacher can really follow them and teach them better"*. He explained that they employ subject teachers to cover the various subjects across the school and recruits English teachers from Uganda.

He also explained that: *"We asked some of the people from the National Curriculum Development Centre to assist us in planning. We hired two or three people for a week and they helped us to pass the interview so that we get the best of the best"*. For many parents involved in this study, the poor quality of education experienced during the French era should be a thing of the past and welcome progressive strategies that are backed by cost minimisation.

It was argued that the public schools could also learn from this style of management. Some parents explained the importance of having children who could not only write good quality essays, but are well-rounded individuals, who are aware of their surrounding environment and who can use their knowledge and enhanced understanding of learning and literacy.

On the importance of languages, the English language in particular staff revealed that: *"Now we teach all our lessons in English...of course we paid for that financially...we got those teachers from Uganda and paid them better than our Rwandan teachers so that they could teach them English...it worked and now our school is very successful...for a time some teachers were jealous but they soon saw the instant benefit."* When asked why APAPEC has chosen the route of instruction in English whilst making French obligatory **E5** responded: *"We took the decision to keep French as when kids are still very young they can learn very quickly and we think having completely bilingual children at the end of primary school would be a plus. You see in public schools they don't have to learn French...we decided to have French as compulsory subject...in public schools it is only an elective in our school we will have it even at the secondary level when it is built"*.

Maintaining linguistic links to the whole world rather than just Anglophone countries seems to be a plausible idea as it could obviously expand future prospects of bilingual pupils. Concerted effort from parents or perhaps passionate and motivated pupils would be a critical requirement for its sustainability.

## **5.0 Conclusion: Policy Strategies and recommendations for Practice**

Today English possesses for some the potential of true cosmopolitanism, eliminating linguistic obstacles, whilst for others, it is the indication of a world becoming linguistically and culturally bland. As Graddol (2006: 14) estimates, by 2015 two billion people, over 30% of the global population will be learning English, add this to the billion or so who already have some level of proficiency, then half of the global population will have knowledge of English. There is a clear capacity gap in Rwanda and need to develop human capacity as part of the implementation of the language policy. There is the urgent need to develop a new cohort of English teachers who can help accelerate the teaching of English in public schools and particularly in rural communities. Rwanda like many African countries has weak rural schools with a significant shortage of teachers in both primary and secondary schools. Whilst rural communities tend to have the largest population of school children, they also invariably have the least resources to train or attract staff. A national strategy that would ensure the provision of teaching materials and related resources such as suitable accommodation, electricity and water will certainly go a long way to improve the attractiveness of rural education.

Also, the use of university graduates on a national service scheme will help address two critical issues. The first is that it will serve to provide staff for the schools and reverse the current pattern of low staffing.

Second, such a strategy would address the rising unemployment and also allow graduates to practice their linguistic skills in English prior to the commencement of their professional careers if that is not in education. Such an approach can address concerns regarding rural urban linguistic divide. This is also an issue to be considered by the government and international institutions.

The expansion of public-private partnerships in the provision of education in rural towns and communities will also help in expanding quality of education beyond urban areas and offer a degree of choice for those who have the means to pay a little extra for better education for their children. Whilst this will not mean abandoning the public schools, it will rather help inject some momentum into the public schools an increase competition as far as output and performance of schools are concern. English in Rwanda is here to stay. For the present it will be essential to improve formal education and teachers' pedagogy so linguistic advancements in English and the proposed benefits can become reality in the forward outlook strategy of Rwanda. Whilst the use of English in contemporary Rwandan society presents a new dimension to the expansion of socio-economic capital, there is the need to ensure that those without command of the language do not automatically become isolated or feel disempowered.

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