

LANGUAGE POLICY IN AFRICA: AFRICAN CULTURAL VALUES AND LINGUISTIC HUMAN RIGHTS

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ABSTRACT

The paper discussed the importance of language in human existence. It asserted that the basic need of human interaction at both individual and collective levels was satisfied through language. Culture, although a familiar word, was often misunderstood and misused. The paper, consequently, delved into what culture was all about. The close relationship between language and culture was highlighted. The profusion of languages in the African continent was seen by the paper as problematic. African colonial experience and the current globalization process militated against evolving effective language policy and language planning in Africa. The paper contented that the militating factors notwithstanding, Africa was in dire need of a virile language policy. Languages being carriers of culture, the policy should appreciate the need for the protection and promotion of African cultural values through the indigenous languages. Linguistic human rights which included the practical ability of an individual to use his own language in all human interactions should be fully appreciated as a foundational element for democratization processes. In conclusion, the paper warned against the lopsided development in favour of science and technology in African countries. A commensurate attention should be given to the development of the language resources in the continent.

KEYWORDS: Language Policy, Indigenous African Languages, Cultural Values, Communication, Linguistic Human Rights, Globalization, Marginalization