

## Using Indigenous Knowledge to Develop Rwanda's Language Curriculum

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### **Abstract**

*The major point propped by this article is that in most African countries the type of literacy given in schools (schooled literacy) is not always relevant to national development needs and aspirations. 'Schooled literacy' produces university graduates who join the job market with several deficiencies. They are not adequately empowered by the training they receive to become creative, self-reliant and assertive when they join the labour market. This article argues that by providing linkages between "traditional" and "dynamic" models of literacy, namely integrating indigenous knowledge (IK) systems within the school curriculum, Rwanda can successfully achieve both her short-term and long-term development goals. Thus, the country can produce a knowledgeable and skilled manpower that can use innovation and creativity to develop the country. The article draws on Taylor's family literacy theory and the concept of 'creative literacy' embedded in the IK model to make some recommendations to address Rwandan's language curriculum problems.*

**Keywords:** *literacy theories, curriculum, indigenous education, oral tradition, language education, critical thinking*

### **Introduction**

For a long time, the oral tradition was regarded as Africa's unique asset. It was seen as the major channel of disseminating 'literacy' among the masses. Before the coming of the Europeans, for example, wisdom, knowledge and skills were passed on from one generation to another through the word of mouth. In this respect, Africa's oral tradition was the continent's initial form of literacy. Many key values and good moral behaviour were informally transmitted by elders to the young generation through traditional practices such as marriage ceremonies, funeral rites, worshipping of ancestral spirits, hunting expeditions, etc. The African oral tradition took several forms — emphasis on practical work (apprenticeships of the youth to acquire technological skills, story-telling lessons mainly done in the evening around the fire place, the use and application of proverbs or sayings of

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the wise that characterised the oral discourses of elders and the use of riddles, tongue twisters, metaphors, similes as well as idiomatic expressions. All these forms of literacy carried along with them wisdom that was intended to transform the youth into useful citizens. In addition, songs and dances were used to convey specific, important messages such as instilling good behaviour in the young generation, enabling them to grow up as wise and useful members of society. This is what, in relative terms, used to help ancient African societies to survive the test of time by preserving and transmitting knowledge as well as developing socially, economically, politically and technologically.

The major argument in this paper is that the above techniques of knowledge transfer have continued to be despised or even abandoned in favour of imported knowledge embedded in Rwanda's current language curriculum, in terms of form, content and methodology, from the nursery level to the university level. This paper argues that as long as Rwanda's indigenous forms of knowledge (IK) are poorly linked to the current content in the school curriculum the products of the current system of education will continue to be irrelevant to the needs of the country, leave alone manifest mediocre performance.

This article handles the relationship between the themes of indigenous knowledge and literacy in their diverse forms and shows how the current language curriculum can exploit Rwanda's indigenous knowledge to enrich the language curriculum in schools. It seeks, broadly, to define the most relevant type of language curriculum for Rwanda's educational institutions and focuses on assessing the applicability of indigenous education or knowledge (IK) to language education and Rwanda's development. It also aims at mapping the scope, form and content of IK in Rwanda's language education.

The paper starts by outlining the importance and rationale of the topic under study. This is followed by tracing the historical perspectives of indigenous knowledge in Rwanda's strategy for national development enshrined in two major documents — VISION 2020 and the Economic Development Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS). The goals and objectives of these documents are then linked to the aims of this paper, namely to establish the relevance and applicability of Rwanda's indigenous knowledge to the country's development. In addition, the paper gives a theoretical grounding of the major thematic areas associated with Africa's indigenous knowledge systems, showing how

the latter feature in the current narrative on the concept of literacy by UNESCO. Before presenting the findings of the study conducted in Rwanda's institutions of learning and Vocational Technical Centres (VTCs), this paper shows the methodology that was used to collect data from a cross-section of respondents who participated in the study. Later, the paper proposes some solutions by giving examples of how IK can be used to enhance the teaching/learning of languages in Rwanda. Finally, a conclusion and some practical recommendations are made.

### **Rationale and Importance of the Study**

As a result of Western education in Africa, the importance given to Africa's forms of indigenous knowledge (IK) has gradually faded out (Flavia et al., 1995). There is a lot of knowledge on African technology (Nok pottery in Northern Nigeria) and African traditional medicine, for example, which have been lost simply because this information was not preserved in written form for posterity (Onukaogu, 2005). Many African countries have embraced Western education wholesale in their quest for change. However, western education continues to be regarded by some scholars as irrelevant because it does not draw from African indigenous sources (Kateregga, 2012). The switchover to new forms of imported 'knowledge' has brought little change to African countries in terms of development. Complaints continue to be voiced regarding university graduates who lack self-confidence and self-esteem while expressing themselves both orally and in written forms or even during job interviews (Kateregga, 2012). Some cannot write good application letters for jobs while others cannot persuade or convince their interlocutors in diverse forms of discourses. Many such problems associated with the current education system make people accuse the system of failing to establish forward and backward linkages between 'schooled literacy' and 'creative literacy' (Hanon, 2000).

### **Historical Background**

Rwanda's commitment to development as spelt out in two blueprints — VISION 2020 and EDPRS 2 — aims to promote human resource development and a knowledge-based economy as two major pillars for the country's development (EDPRS 2, VISION 2020). While VISION 2020 provides the country's long-term development goals, EDPRS 1/2 spell out the short-term national objectives. The latter, for instance, identifies 'critical thinking' and 'change of mindset' as key qualities to enhance service delivery at the workplace and value addition in the production process, especially in the industrial sector (EDPRS 2).

Rwanda's emphasis on the prioritisation of the human resource as a driver for development is based on the fact that the country is landlocked and that its soils are not agriculturally very productive; the country is also deficient in mineral resources (VISION 2020, EDPRS). Besides, Rwanda's development strategy is strongly influenced by Amartya Sen's development model (Sen, 1999) that argues in favour of promoting the human resource in development through expanding human freedoms enjoyed by all the people in the country. Sen argues that this can be achieved through the removal of any obstacles that surround human freedoms. Sen thus elaborates the 'capability approach' that aims at expanding the human capabilities and potentialities, namely empowering people with knowledge and skills such as communication and critical thinking. He stresses the need for countries to act and bring about the desired change in people's own life by empowering them to identify and respond to their local needs. Similar initiatives of embracing indigenous knowledge systems are stressed in Rwanda's blueprints.

Nevertheless, mere reference by VISION 2020 or EDPRS's to empowering the human resource with knowledge and skills may not bring about the desired change as long as the country's school curriculum continues to have poor linkages between 'schooled literacy' and 'creative' literacies (Hanon, 2000).

### **Theoretical Perspectives**

#### **Definition of Indigenous Knowledge**

Indigenous education, also known as traditional/indigenous knowledge (IK), refers to a set of knowledge that is specific to a given culture or society (Warren, 1991). It is a form of knowledge that is transcultural and interdisciplinary, embracing heterogeneous contexts of about 20% of the world's population (Flavier et al., 1995). Indigenous knowledge differs from the international knowledge systems transmitted by universities, research institutions and private firms (Warren, 1991). It is considered as the basis for local level decision-making in diverse domains such as agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, natural resource management and many other activities in rural communities (Warren, 1991). In most African societies, IK information systems are dynamic and are continually influenced by internal creativity and experimentation as well as by contact with external systems (Flavier et al., 1995). Traditional knowledge also refers to accumulated knowledge and understanding of how people live and how they manage their environment. This knowledge encompasses

spiritual and psychological relationships with their natural environment, how they use their natural resources, the relationships between people; IK is also reflected in language, social organisational values, institutions and laws (Legat, 1991).

It should be argued that the current theories and strategies of development espoused in African countries have not lived to the expectations of many Africans (Kateregga, 2011) not least because their implementation is based on imported models of development which are irrelevant to their needs and aspirations.

### **Literacy Theories**

This study draws on Taylor's 'family literacy theory' which stresses family and/or community involvement as key variables in enhancing academic achievement among learners (Taylor, 1983). Prior to this theory, development psychologists like Piaget and Thondike had advanced behavioural theories to explain how literacy was acquired. They argued that children need to be ready and mature in terms of their mental development (six and a half years old) before being introduced to successful literacy (reading and writing). Such theoretical underpinnings led to the view that instruction in schools was the only way to impart literacy skills. In other words, families and communities where children lived were considered to play a minor role in the acquisition of literacy. However, new constructivist and sociolinguistic theories (Bahktin, 1935, 1981; Gumperz, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978) started to emerge stressing the importance of social dimensions, especially the involvement of the family as a foundation of literacy acquisition. As a result of these theories, the role played by family adults as well as caregivers and extended family members in literacy development were introduced as key factors in literacy acquisition and in the construction of meaning by children during the processes of reading and writing (Halliday, 1975; Hymes, 1974). In view of the above opposed theories (behavioural theories versus social constructivist theories), two models of literacy have emerged as explained below.

### **Two Opposed Models of Literacy**

In conceptualising the term 'literacy', there are basically two opposed models that should be considered: the traditional and dynamic models. The traditional model of literacy is associated with learning three basic skills at school (the 3 Rs) – reading, writing and arithmetic (Okech & Mayanja, 2007). In the strict sense of the term, literacy is

derived from a Latin word (*literare*) which means to 'read'. This conception of the term is associated with 'schooled literacy'. However, from the 1990s, anthropologists, sociolinguists, social psychologists, anthropologists, cultural theorists and researchers on literacy started questioning the above definition of literacy because it did not recognise other institutional settings apart from the school where literacy could be acquired, hence a new "dynamic model" of redefining the concept. In the 'New Literacy Studies' by Street (1995), the concept of literacy is defined in a pluralistic sense, i.e. 'pluralities of literacies' (UNESCO, 2006). It is defined as a set of useful 'social practices' that respond to a diversity of problems, needs and aspirations of the people (Street, 1995). The traditional model defines literacy in a narrow perspective — literacy is an institutional affair formally given in schools and approved by the state. In other words, all other informal forms of literacy, especially those given in adult literacy classes and other informal situations, are considered to be inferior and sub-standard (UNESCO, 2006). However, many forms of 'despised' literacies in the 'traditional model' are "hidden literacies" that contribute to people's social welfare in their daily occupations (Okech & Mayanja, 2007). These include community routine activities such as fishing, tailoring, brick-laying, carpentry work, mechanics, shop keeping, etc.

Under the framework of classifying literacy practices, several studies have suggested heterogeneous literacy types (Hanon, 2000; Hill, 2000; Parry, 2005). These studies argue that heterogeneous literacies can lead to development in various ways, especially if they are embraced in a holistic manner; they include schooled, bureaucratic, commercial/technical, religious and creative literacies. The hypothesis suggested is that many African countries continue to lag behind both socially and economically because they concentrate on schooled literacy alone and ignore considering the implementation of a holistic approach embedded in creative literacy (Hanon, 2000).

'Schooled literacy' is associated with a narrow objective of reading for exams and obtaining a school certificate (Hanon, 2000), with the result that graduates with mere paper qualifications end up being 'job seekers' and not 'job creators'. Although this type of literacy may have a social function — it elevates the social status of someone who has acquired it — its major setback is that the examination-oriented system in many African countries encourages a limited kind of exposure to real life/practical experience and creates people who are specialised in one area with limited interest in reading beyond their

own specialisations, however useful these may be (Bakka, 2000). In this way, ‘schooled literacy’ limits people’s capabilities and impacts negatively on national development. Secondly, schooled literacy is acquired by using foreign languages at the expense of indigenous languages which are mastered by the masses (Kateregga, 2010). ‘Schooled literacy’ thus tends to lead to inadequacies in terms of critical thinking, interpersonal skills and knowledge transfer at primary level, secondary level and even at university level to the extent that some university graduates fail to confidently convince job-interview panels, where they are accused of not being able to write adequate job applications or CVs (Kateregga, 2010). A number of studies show that this is caused by learning conducted in foreign languages and that it is easier to master reading and writing skills in the mother tongue (Keshubi, 2000; UNESCO, 2006). Hence, Rwanda recommends that functional literacy programmes for both youth and adults should include the country’s “*traditional oral culture [...] reading aloud and story-telling are essential for literacy acquisition for both children, youth and adults, at home, in school, at community meetings, etc*” (MINEDUC, 2005:17).

Parry (2000) shows that in many African countries another form of literacy – bureaucratic literacy – has not adequately offered a useful link between local governments and central administration. Bureaucratic literacy is expressed in the acquisition and application of skills involved in running government business – writing reports, filling in official forms, interpreting receipts, land titles, understanding building plans/administrative communication, etc. Given that this type of literacy is associated with the use of elitist languages like English or French, its spread among the country’s masses is limited. The other type of literacy that enjoys a practical function in the promotion of economic development is ‘commercial/technical literacy’ (Parry, 2000). Despite its usefulness, it is put to use by the minority. It mostly entails the acquisition of advanced skills of document production and interpretation.

Parry (2000) also makes another classification – religious literacy – that empowers church leaders and believers in various ways: it gives them various interpersonal life skills to communicate and share ideas, interpret the Bible and to lead a harmonious life in the community. Pointing out that in Uganda different religious denominations use religious literacy skills to transpose various skills differently, Parry

(2000) shows that Muslims use the sacred text for memorisation and recitation; Catholics concentrate on leadership skills while Protestants encourage individual access to the text and emphasize communication skills of knowledge sharing.

According to Parry (2000), Izizinga (2000), Hill (2000) and Hanon (2000), Africa still lacks what they call “creative literacy”. This involves the use of language education to read/write materials in order to promote critical thinking. In order to illustrate the importance of creative literacy, Bakka(2000) proposes a compound term of “functional literacy”, according to which *functionally literate* people should be capable of effectively taking advantage of existing information channels such as ICT, newspapers, radio and television, etc. to solve their daily problems. On the other hand, he suggests another term, *functional illiteracy*, to refer to people who have gone to school or those who have attended literacy programmes outside school but fail to adequately use such skills acquired to their benefit.

### **Methodology**

A desk review of Rwanda’s two major policy documents on Rwanda’s strategy for development was made. This was done to find out the government’s views on education and how the latter could be used to develop the country and particularly, to find out if Rwanda’s national strategies for development give credence to indigenous knowledge. Interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) as well as questionnaires were administered to 50 respondents composed of university lecturers, students and parents. They were purposively selected from a population drawn from four institutions of higher learning in Rwanda: The University of Rwanda’s College of Arts and Social Sciences (CASS), Don Bosco Vocational Training Centre (VTC) Rango, Huye Polytechnic (IPRS) and Catholic University of Rwanda (CUR). The respondents from the above institutions included parents, students and teachers. Women were also included for each of the above categories for purposes of gender inclusion in the study findings. Respondents from the polytechnics and VTCs were included because vocational institutions are seen by Rwanda government as providers of education for self-reliance (carpentry, mechanics, brick-laying, tailoring, etc.). They were also chosen because of the prevailing allegations among many Rwandan parents and students that vocational education is despised as compared to academic education. In conformity with the objectives of the study, the researcher designed instruments aimed at fetching data on the current forms of knowledge



(literacies) transmitted in Rwanda's institutions of learning, their importance and their relevance in solving the current problems on the job market. Data was analysed qualitatively using a deductive/inductive approach. Conclusions and recommendations to address the stated problem were made.

## Findings

### Comparing “Schooled Literacy” with “Creative Literacy”

This study found that despite its shortcomings in the country's development, “schooled literacy” still occupied a highly privileged position among many Rwandans as compared to other forms of literacy available outside the classroom. It also confirmed that the latter continue to be despised and regarded as peripheral. The respondents (abbreviated as R1, R2, R3...) gave a number of views on the nature, form and content of education (literacies) they would wish their children to have.

They defined “schooled literacy” in terms of where it is given. R1: *“a type of literacy which is given in schools.”* Another respondent (R2) specified its content and subject matter: *“one that teaches reading, writing, maths and other subjects”*. As far as its importance in society is concerned, R3 said that: *“School education is very important for the community and individual graduates because it gives the graduate a good status in the community” [...] It leads to obtaining an international certificate which can help you to get a job anywhere in the world.”* He stressed its medium of instruction: *“it helps you to learn English very well because it is given in Rwanda's new language policy which the government wants to promote, a language that can take you outside the country and live comfortably there.”* R4 insisted on its international character: *“a language that can enable your child to go and study abroad to get a better job and integrate in the East African Community.”* Another respondent (R5) underscored the status-awarding nature of schooled literacy: *“a language that can help you to avoid being despised by society.”*

In defining other literacies, the respondents demonstrated a lot of doubt and uncertainty on their importance and usefulness to society. They categorically declined to consider them as ‘*real literacies*’, branding them ‘*substandard*’ in nature: (R6) *“this is the first time I have heard of bureaucratic literacy. I don't think it is a real literacy because it is not taught anywhere in this country at all, may be in*

*Europe.*” As for commercial literacy, R7 said: “*I think all knowledge that deals with running a business involves some arithmetic or maths which is taught in schools and therefore the importance of schooled literacy overrides any other literacy*”. Another respondent stated that although technical literacy exists in Rwanda it is inferior to schooled literacy: R8: “*Maybe technical literacy deals with technical skills taught and learnt in vocational institutions but which parent wants to send his children for manual jobs?*” I personally think that I cannot send my son or daughter to a technical institution if they have not **performed poorly** in class. A more probing question by the researcher was: “What do you mean by poor performance?” R9 revealed that: “*I mean when they fail. It is also possible to find religious literacy in Rwanda because people learn many things in their churches.* R10’s stand on creative literacy was: *I also think this is a new term. I don’t know how to define it and I don’t even know its importance.*”

When asked to compare ‘schooled literacy’ with the literacy given in technical/vocational institutions, almost all the respondents agreed that schooled literacy was better than any literacy taught in vocational institutions. R11 felt that vocational education is for academic failures: “*I cannot send my daughter or son to school to become a builder or carpenter. I prefer to send them to academic institutions like university because they will be respected by society and they will get good jobs if they finish their studies. Anybody can do a carpentry or tailoring course even if they never went to school. Even many carpentry workshops are owned by people who never attended school at all. Vocational education is good enough and useful but it is for children who have failed academic training.*”

Various conflicting views were given regarding the language they wished to have/or not to have in schooled literacy. R12 favoured English: “I propose that teaching should be conducted in English right from nursery.” R13 was for a mixture of English and Kinyarwanda in equal proportions. R14 did not support at all any education to children in Kinyarwanda whether in primary, secondary or university! Another said that: “*at the lower primary level, the mother tongue should be used while at later stages English can be used as it is in other EAC countries. Why should Rwanda be different from Ugandans or Kenyans or Tanzanians if we are the ones who applied to join them?*”

Asked if they considered professions like tailoring, fishing, carpentry and building to be useful forms of literacy, they gave a diversity of

responses. R15: *“Yes these skills are important but not for a student who has done university’.* R16: *“Even a student who has done mechanical engineering at university is not supposed to repair an engine.” He is supposed to be the overall supervisor with an office.”* Other respondents were probed on their future careers after university education. R17/18 said: *“They should look for an office job until they get it. They should go to other countries; they are too young and inexperienced to start any job.”*

Overall, the above findings show that the type of education supported by government in VISION 2020 and EDPRS (knowledge for self-reliance, self-confidence and development) is different from the education wished for by many stakeholders interviewed (parents, students and teachers). The above stakeholders wished to have an education that gives children a high status in society, one that leads students to master English very well, one that leads graduates to get white-collar jobs. In short, they want an education that is **not** vocational-oriented. These findings therefore show that the type of education coveted by many Rwandans is different from the one stated in VISION 2020 and EDPRS.

### **Causes of Poor Achievement in Rwanda’s Schools**

Here, the researcher asked a series of questions intended to establish the reasons behind: (1) poor performance in class and (2) low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence among students. The first cause identified was ‘language barrier.’ This was expressed by R20 as follows: *“First of all, students start to learn in languages that they have not mastered very well. For example, here in Rwanda some students are taught in English or French at nursery level but you find that even university students still have problems of understanding many things in English. How then do you expect primary or secondary students to cope?”* R21 related the problem to an irrelevant curriculum which does not give attention to African values. She asserted: *“Our curriculum aims at producing academicians but not job creators. Many syllabuses in universities and institutions do not teach how to be self-confident or how to answer interview questions. Many institutions don’t encourage practical subjects, instead they teach theoretical aspects which are memorised by students.”* R22 associated the problem with the age of students: *“Some students join university at 20 and they start studying very complex concepts at an early age which they never understand because they lack experience and exposure in*

*life. The students are too young to engage in constructive dialogue. In the past, some African cultures never allowed a boy to marry before he was independent and mature; he had to possess a garden and house.” R23 raised the problem of unequal power relations at lower levels of schooling and at home, all of which kill self-confidence among the students/children: “The classroom teacher is too powerful in class. He is a disciplinarian but not a teacher. He beats and intimidates the child frequently and this kills morale and motivation and creativity of the student. The student always learns in a state of fear. It is rare to find teachers, students and parents who interact as equal partners. Instead the students are there to receive orders from them.”*

### **Problems Associated with Rwanda’s Current Curriculum**

The study established that the current curriculum in Rwanda is examination-oriented as opposed to being practice-based. The respondents were asked to point out some problems associated with Rwanda’s curriculum which should be reformed with strong reasons. These were their responses: *I think that the language policy in schools should be researched on first and then changed. The government makes policies on the language curriculum for example without making thorough research and this frustrates students and teachers.* Another respondent added: *“We originally knew that Rwanda was a bilingual country, then it became Anglophone and then, when it was realised that Kinyarwanda was not given its importance, the latter was brought back. There is need for research to inform these changes. African governments don’t value research findings like they do in UK, USA.”* Another problem advanced was that: *“Everybody in the country puts too much importance on exams right from primary school to university. There is a feeling that when you fail exams you are very stupid and this is not true. However, only a small fraction of things are examined during national exams and students can fail even when they are intelligent.”* Another respondent said: *“They should change the way they set national exams and the way how foreign languages are taught. Students should be examined in many aspects. For example in English, there is no oral or listening exam. All subjects should be examined both practically and theoretically but they are generally examined theoretically, even in science subjects. Also at primary school, teachers should strengthen their methodology by making their lessons interesting by using storytelling and Rwandan folk-stories.”* Finally, another respondent concluded: *“There are too many reforms in Rwanda’s system of education and they are done*

*hastily with little to see whether the proposed changes have had an impact.”*

### **Discussion of Findings and Proposed Solutions**

The above findings show that the current curriculum in Rwanda's institutions of higher learning, like anywhere else in Africa, suffers from several setbacks. It is examination-oriented as opposed to being skills-based. It is based on inappropriate methodologies that do not adequately motivate students in language learning and teaching. It ignores oral skills which are part and parcel of Africa's oral tradition and heritage. In addition, the curriculum at lower levels of learning does not give the mother tongue (Rwanda's IK) the place that it deserves. Another key finding was that the curriculum does not adequately impart practical and useful skills to transform students into self-reliant, creative, self-confident and innovative citizens capable of participating in the country's development. Finally, the current system of education is supported by parents and the community that despise vocational studies in preference for academic education.

This study echoes the findings made by Parry (2005) in her research conducted on the causes of failures in the English 'O' Level Certificate exams in Nigeria, namely that many Nigerian students failed the exams in question not because they were intellectually incompetent but because the Nigeria Examination Council did not examine Spoken English at all at 'O' level.

In this connection, this paper proposes that oral exams should be included in the national examination syllabus at 'O' level. This should apply to all languages taught in the country. In addition, oral literature should be introduced right from early childhood education. The oral skills in languages should be examined at all levels because they have been identified in this study as components of Africa's oral tradition which should be exploited by all means in order to reinforce public speaking, communication skills and self-confidence which are still lacking among the current graduates.

Additionally, one of the factors responsible for students' failure in reading, understanding and writing during exams was the inadequate mastery of the language of instruction (Parry, 2005). This paper has identified the mother tongue as a basic form of IK that should be

promoted to facilitate knowledge transfer. The teaching in and of the mother tongue (Kinyarwanda) should be promoted especially at lower levels of primary school and secondary as a tool for enhancing study skills among students at all levels. This finding is similar to what was found by Kagwesage's (2013) in the National University of Rwanda where, despite the efforts deployed by the government to promote the use of English in that country, many students continued to find problems in understanding several concepts via the medium of a foreign language. Kagwesage's (2013) research found that the mother tongue (Kinyarwanda) is a cross-cutting facility in Rwanda's educational system because even university students resorted to it while conducting their class discussions or doing their group assignments outside class, arguing that the mother tongue helps them to enhance their study skills and to understand many concepts better when they use a familiar language. In Rwanda, therefore, many students may give "wrong" answers to questions during exams not because they are intellectually poor but because of language inadequacies caused by learning in foreign languages.

As far as inappropriate methodologies are concerned, it is proposed that more friendly methodologies entrenched in the indigenous knowledge systems should be used to motivate students in language teaching. These include using folktales and proverbs, songs, proverbs and riddles, especially at lower levels of learning.

On the point of a negative attitude of parents and students towards the value given to practical subjects, there is an urgent need for the government to launch a series of sensitisation campaigns using the press and mass media (radios and television) as well as using local administration structures to educate communities on the importance and strengths and limitations of schooled literacy. Similarly, the government should launch strong campaigns in favour of promoting the culture of reading at the local administration level and in schools. This would entail stocking existing school and public libraries in the country with books that are culturally relevant to the students. Besides, reading as a specific discipline should be introduced as a compulsory unit in primary and secondary schools for all language classes. And above all, language teachers should be encouraged to write and publish short story books and folk literature.

On the issue of poor linkage between schooled literacy and other literacies available outside school, the language curriculum should

review all teaching manuals to ensure that they empower learners with knowledge and skills that helps them to solve routine problems like reading operation manuals, attending job interviews, reading and understanding specialised documents like maps, newspaper articles, advertisements, agreements, and so on.

The findings of this study are supported by Bakka (2000) who found that in Uganda, there was no linkage between the literacy given in schools and the literacy found in many workplaces. For example, many graduates from Uganda's institutions ended up becoming *functionally illiterate* because they did not apply the knowledge they got from school to solve their routine practical problems: they were not smart enough at answering interview questions for employment, they lacked self-confidence, they did not master the art of public speaking, etc.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The objective of this paper was to identify the relevant curriculum for Rwanda's educational institutions and to show how the existing local and indigenous literacy practices in Rwanda could be used for curriculum enhancement and development. In an attempt to achieve these objectives, the paper has shown that a relevant curriculum for Rwanda is one that enables university graduates to apply the knowledge acquired at school to solve their daily problems. The paper has also argued that curriculum designers in Rwanda are likely to continue producing irrelevant students as long as they do not borrow a leaf from Rwanda's indigenous knowledge (IK). The study identifies several sources of Rwanda's IK that can solve several problems in the area of language teaching such as, among others, the promotion of teaching in and of the mother tongue (Kinyarwanda) as a tool for enhancing study skills among students, the teaching and use of folktales and proverbs as a friendly methodology to motivate students in language teaching, examining oral skills in languages as well as promoting programmes aimed at changing both students' and parents' attitude towards valorising practical subjects. However, the paper had shown that, despite its potential in enriching both the form and content of the 'knowledge narrative' identified in VISION 2020 and EDPRS, IK in the field of language teaching is still virgin and untapped in Rwanda. There is still need to conduct more studies on IK and use their findings to inform the teaching and learning of languages. By linking 'schooled literacy' with other literacies outside

school (rich in Rwanda's IK), Rwanda's graduates are poised to become job creators, as well as more self-reliant and self-confident citizens.

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