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Language, education and identity in Africa

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STELLINGEN – PROPOSITIONS behorende bij het proefschrift van Bert van Pinxteren, 'Language, Education and Identity in Africa'.

1. The combination of my definition of culture (a value system that serves as common point of reference to a people) with the approach of cross-cultural psychology offers a promising way of researching and discussing existing and emerging cultural similarities and differences in Africa. (This thesis.)

2. African languages are currently not being used in higher education. The need for it is not there, because the higher education sector in Africa is too small. As the sector expands, pressure to use African languages in higher education is bound to increase. (This thesis.)

3. Developing all languages currently discerned in Africa for use in (higher) education is both unnecessary and counterproductive. (This thesis.)

4. Without a gradual transition to using designed African languages as medium of instruction in education, Africa will not be able to reap the full benefits of the 'demographic dividend' that has been predicted for it.

5. In order to make a shift to African language use in education possible, it will be important to use five guiding principles:

- i. Develop a **limited number** of designed languages for education.
- ii. Choose these languages so that they are **easy to learn** for as many speakers of discerned languages as possible.
- iii. Strive for **inclusivity**: choose designed languages so that all have to exert a relatively low but relatively equal effort to learn them.
- iv. Make use of **existing bilingualism** as a resource.
- v. Build incentives for **linguistic collaboration** for related linguistic communities.

(This thesis.)

6. In order to decolonize education and move towards 'education for all' decolonizing the curriculum is not enough. It will also be necessary to question the top-down model of education that was inherited from colonial times.

7. Linguistic and educational rights that are claimed for indigenous minoritized communities outside of Africa are usually not available to majority communities in Africa.

8. Language vitality and diversity involves more than diversity in speech forms and spoken language registers. It also requires language use in formalized (designed) ways in domains such as law, governance and higher education.

9. The need to avert climate change will lead to a regionalisation of trade patterns, away from the current global trade patterns. The Covid-19 crisis is likely to speed up this development. For Africa, this should be seen as a positive development, especially if coupled with a move towards greater cultural autonomy.

10. Hairstyles are gendered cultural markers of social and political positions. The novel 'Americanah' by Adichie shows how such markers for women with Afro-textured hair are different in Nigeria and the USA. This presents both possibilities and difficulties for women who try to navigate between these different cultures.