Planning for sustainable inclusion and resilient systems: multilingual education in an era of displacement, mobility and turbulence
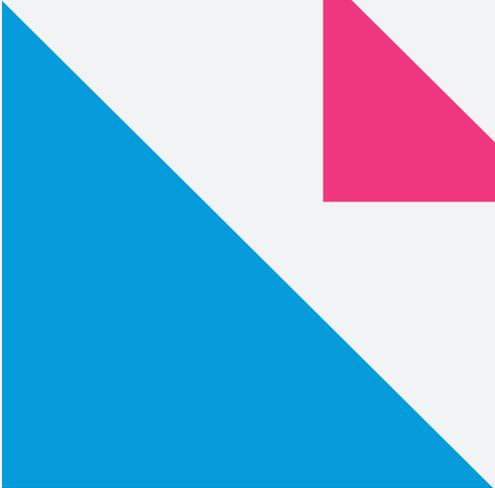
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Introduction

Along with voluntary and involuntary mobility of people, 21st century global shifts in economic, military and political power are unsettling national and regional systems of governance. This includes education systems and those responsible for education policy and its implementation. The starting point for this paper is to argue that 2020 has become a watershed moment for state-provided education systems everywhere. It is the point from which policymakers can no longer ignore the multiple ways that with increasing diversity provision of education becomes less equitable. If strong, resilient and sustainable socio-economic systems are dependent on schooling that is equitable, inclusive and safe, then a major reorientation of systems cannot be postponed. UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030, particularly inclusion and quality education (SDG 4), will not be met unless education systems are firmly anchored in principles aligned with the pluriversal nature of the world, its citizens and the people who live in each country. This means a shift from education systems based on one language, one knowledge system, and a belief that a universal curriculum is either possible or equitable. Although once intended for equitable provision of mass education, these systems are no longer fit for purpose, serving instead to widen disparity and inequity.

There are at least five key principles that underpin a shift from a monolingual and universal view of education to one with a pluriversal and multilingual orientation. These principles require careful consideration and adjustment at country, regional and global levels of governance. First, this means that there needs to be a rebalancing of the needs of minority and majority citizens to achieve equity at the country level. Second, the needs for equity and inclusion of incoming migrant communities, especially from situations of conflict and displacement, must be met. The consequences of the first and second principles bring about a third, a need to balance the needs of domestic minority and majority students with the needs of migrant and refugee students in order to ensure equity and inclusion; to prevent conflict and to promote social cohesion (Stoianova and Angermann, 2018). Fourth, together these require a shift in provision of education from a monolingual and singular view of culture and knowledge to a multilingual and plural view of culture, faith and knowledge diversities of each country's citizens and migrant populations (for example, Heugh and Mohamed, 2020).

It is easier for some countries to meet the challenges of the first four implications listed above. Significant disparities between countries, however, and the expectations to meet these requirements are too onerous for many without transnational collaboration and distribution or sharing of resources. The fifth principle, therefore, is the need for coordinated and partnered cooperation among neighbouring countries and regions and at a global level. The purpose of this paper is to identify a) steps for planning a shift in orientation; b) necessary instruments for joint responsibility and collaboration; c) research-evidenced mechanisms for effective and sustainable planning and implementation of educational change; and d) pedagogies appropriate for multilingual and inclusive education.

Planning for shift towards pluriversal and multilingual systems

Planning for sustainable inclusion and resilient education systems for displaced, marginalised and mobile communities during a period of global stability would be difficult but not impossible. At a time of global turbulence and unpredictability, the need to succeed in this venture intensifies as does the risk of failure with intergenerational consequences. On the one hand, there are opportunities for coherent global principles that guide the ethics, empathy and logic of policymakers. On the other hand, each context has its own unique demographic, economic, historic and socio-political dynamics. Policymakers and stakeholders responsible for the provision of education find apparent contradictions between global principles that appear to emphasise 'one-size fits all' responses and local realities that are too complex for these. The tension between what seem to be binary and opposing options often leave stakeholders confused or unable to move forward. It is important therefore to address this tension and to offer a clear set of steps towards solutions.

Reasons why policymakers find themselves caught in a dilemma between apparently contradictory pressure to adhere to universalist global obligations and their country-level diversities has to do with considerable disparities between countries. The disparities relate to differences in educational opportunity, life expectancy, poverty and wealth among countries in different parts of the world. The differences between countries are often measured in terms of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) annual Human Development Index (HDI) rankings and the concentrations of human diversities, including linguistic diversity, and proportions of

displaced and/or refugee communities. The Asia-Pacific, for example, is home to more than 50 per cent of the world's linguistic communities and also more than 50 per cent of the world's displaced or refugee communities, while Africa is home to more than 30 per cent of the world's languages and a significant proportion of the world's displaced and refugee communities. These differences become accentuated when, by virtue of the greater internal diversity of low-income countries, it seems that a larger share of the burden of responsibility to meet transnational agreements on equity and inclusion falls upon them. Governments with greater numbers of minority and displaced or refugee communities are unlikely to be able to attend to transnational frameworks without well-planned and coordinated collaboration and shared responsibility with countries that have relatively less human diversity and relatively more resources at their disposal.

To address inequity and disparity on a global level, transnational agencies, particularly the UN, have developed and continue to develop a series of instruments designed to increase co-responsibility and collaborative sharing of expertise and resources (UNGA, 2018a, b).

The intention here is to demonstrate that there are solutions and that solving problems in education is never a matter of a simple either-or alternative. Considering increasingly diverse populations that include both majority and minority communities in most parts of the world, and in-migration of displaced and refugee communities, the complexity for policymakers and the responsibilities for educational officials has reached a point not previously experienced.

It is now essential that key stakeholders are guided towards carefully taken decisions that will provide ethical and inclusive opportunities to minimise inequalities for marginalised communities. It is equally important that they pre-empt and minimise potential conflict that may arise as a result of unpredictable and precarious circumstances for both domestic and migrant communities (Stoianova and Angermann, 2018). Decisions therefore need to be made through careful balancing of the available common global principles and collaborative transnational instruments together with the changing nature and complexity of divergent or heterogeneous populations in each region or country.

An additional layer of complexity emerged during 2020 in the form of a global pandemic. Although countries with low HDIs are somewhat accustomed to widespread epidemics, including HIV-Aids, Cholera, and Ebola, it has been nearly a century since the last widespread global pandemic. Ironically, some of the worst-hit countries have been those ranked with highest HDIs. Among the many implications of the pandemic is that the attention of high-income and well-resourced countries has been diverted from the major task of overhauling and reorienting their own education systems for greater inclusivity and from attending to their responsibilities for collaborative exchanges. Together, increasing disparities, diversities and vulnerabilities caused by unexpected catastrophes mean that it has become even more urgent that every effort should be made to future-proof education systems to withstand unpredictability and frequent occurrences of change, including shifting balances of global power and diversity. While the transnational and global framework instruments exist, it is increasingly important that sustainable capacity development to support systemic change is strengthened at local, country and regional levels.

There is no longer a need to revisit at length the large body of research that demonstrates conclusively that students in all circumstances learn best through a language that they know and when the knowledge that they and their communities have is incorporated into the schooling system. It is also not necessary to revisit the reasons why students also need to learn to use and learn through the main language of the schooling system of the country or region in which they live. Instead, it is important to refocus the discussion towards how, by utilising the available instruments, resources and responsibilities for cross-border co-operation included in transnational agreements, systems can ensure that students are taught to read, write and learn both in their own home or community language and in the main language of the country or state in which they reside. In many cases, because of the degree of local and regional multilingualism, this means that education systems may need to provide opportunities for children to learn to read, write and learn in three or even four languages (Alidou, et al., 2006; Ouane and Glanz, 2010; Skutnabb-Kangas and Heugh, 2012; Mohanty, 2019; Heugh and Mohamed, 2020). This means a global shift towards provision of bilingual and or multilingual opportunities for teaching and learning. Whether education systems are in post-colonial countries of the 'South', or countries of the 'North' associated with considerable international power and or wealth, the shift is necessary. Immediate concerns that alarm educational officials, of course, include the implications for curriculum, assessment, professional learning of teachers, teaching and learning materials, quality assurance frameworks, monitoring and evaluation. These concerns can be minimised through careful planning and taking up of the global commitments, frameworks and research evidence together with transnational and localised expertise and collaboration.

Transnational research and frameworks to support diversity, plurality within coherent guidelines

There is already a growing set of transnational frameworks and agreements that can be used as policy tools for the development of a *coherent* approach a) to the opportunities and challenges of students from diverse cultural, faith and linguistic backgrounds, and b) to the needs of students from marginalised, migrant, minority and mainstream populations. Below is a list of documents have been developed as a result of considerable research that can be used to guide decision-makers and those tasked with implementing policies and plans in education:

In chronological sequence, some online documents that are based on reliable research and that may be useful include:

- *Optimising Learning and Education in Africa – the Language Factor, A Stock-taking Research on Mother Tongue and Bilingual Education in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Alidou, et al., 2006, for UNESCO and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa)

- *Why and how Africa should invest in African languages and multilingual education: an evidence- and practice-based policy advocacy brief* (Ouane and Glanz, 2010, for UNESCO and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa)

- *If you don't understand, how can you learn? Policy Brief 24* (UNESCO, 2016)

- *Language, Education and Migration in the Context of Forced Displacement. Policy Brief 1* (Menashy and Zhakaria, 2018, for UNESCO)

- *Approaches to Language in Education for Migrants and Refugees in the Asia-Pacific Region* (Heugh and Mohamed, 2020, for UNESCO)

The list of references attached to each of these documents leads decision-makers to original research and advice on why, how and when to implement policy change following careful and deliberative incremental steps. There is also a growing list of legal documents that bind United Nations (UN) signatory countries to adhere to principles discussed at length, agreed to and signed in meetings of the UN General Assembly. Recent agreements include specific framework guidelines relating to displaced and refugee communities. These include:

- *Global Compact for Refugees* (UNGA, 2018a)

- *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* (UNGA, 2018b)

- *Enforcing the Right to Education of Refugees* (UNESCO, 2019)

- *Refugee Education 2030. A Strategy for Refugee Inclusion* (UNHCR, 2019)

The United Nations and its various organs, including UNESCO, UNGA and UNICEF, draw attention to how transnational agreements and frameworks make provision for multiple stakeholder collaboration and joint responsibilities. Specifically, UNGA (2018a, b) and UNHCR (2019) have secured agreement that global resources and responsibilities need to be shared in order to address the needs of refugees

and to meet UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030, particularly for inclusion and quality education (SDG 4). As mentioned above, and because this requires a 180-degree shift in focus for education systems, it needs to be emphasised that these commitments and provisions can only be met if the foundations of education systems in each country and region of the world are firmly anchored in principles of heterogeneity, and this means a shift from one main language in education; minimally to multilingual approaches that maintain and support community languages alongside the main language of the state; and maximally to bilingual and multilingual models of education wherever possible.

Mechanisms for research-evidenced policy change to meet 2030 SDGs and global responsibilities

As we enter deeper into 2021, we need to plan both forwards to and backwards from 2030. This requires a framework for core policy and planning that takes local, national and transnational concerns into account, and joint collaboration and responsibility for meeting both the transnational Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 4 and the Global Compact for Refugees, as sketched out for example in Figure 1 below.
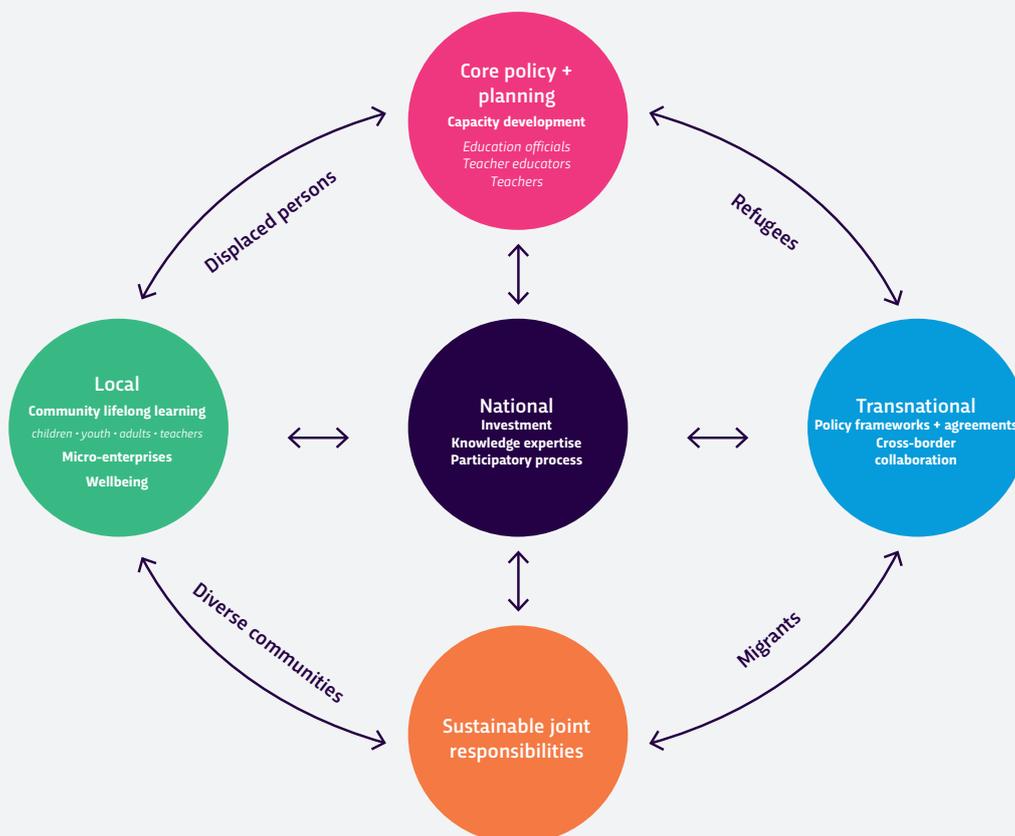

Figure 1: Planning framework to align with SDG 4 and the Global Compact for Refugees (Heugh, 2019. Slide from IMMLE conference presentation 26 September)

Planning in multiple directions

Each country has the sovereign right and responsibility to articulate its own polces, including for education. Government agencies tend to assume that policy begins at the national level with investment in both human and material capital in the interests of collective socio-economic advancement, safety, security and stability. Investment in human knowledge expertise is at the heart of educational enterprises, and this means investment in education systems from the early years through primary, secondary, further and higher education, and the institutions that support this. A significant portion of this investment is understood in relation to teacher education. Less attention has been paid to capacity development of education officials for continuity and sustainability of medium- to long-term plans for education.

We know from reliable evidence of language education policies, plans and implementation practices across post-colonial and global south countries that top-down policy articulation on its own is unlikely to be sustainable. Carefully established multi-stakeholder participation that involves local constituencies, including artists, performers and writers, language, cultural and faith-based interest groups, and community leaders, provides the foundations for durable and stable education (Bamgbose, 2000; Ouane and Glanz, 2011; McIlwraith, 2014; Lo Bianco, 2016; Coleman, 2017; Person, 2018, for UNICEF). Local stakeholders' commitment is best secured when their participation is recognised as essential by all parties and their voices and agency received with respect. It is often NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) that can forge and navigate strong relationships between government agents in the metropoles and local stakeholders in distant and remote locales

(Heugh and Mulumba, 2014). Developing trust takes time and cannot be left to the last minute or achieved in haste, especially with communities that have experienced conflict, displacement and/or marginalisation.

Transnational agencies have been responsible for setting global agendas for education, and these will continue to play a significant role in fostering collaboration between national and local agents and in facilitating supportive contexts for interventions to meet framework targets. Financial transactions between transnational agents and national governments, and also local agents, are often mixed blessings in that they can be accompanied by unwelcome pressure to give way to external agendas and priorities, although potential financial or in-kind support provided by various development agencies is sorely needed. Transnational agencies, such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)[1], are often able to negotiate through competing agendas and disagreements among local, national and regional stakeholders, to circumvent the onset of conflict and support local stability through literacy and minority language maintenance.

Interested parties at different levels of responsibility – local, national and transnational – have different sets of priorities. At the community level, these often relate to opportunities for lifelong learning for community teachers, adults, youth and children. The educational concerns include formal schooling, and non-formal education where literacy and numeracy lead to micro-enterprises and wellbeing, especially for those previously excluded from formal education through conflict, disaster and poverty. At the national level, priorities frequently relate to national

[1] The work of the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia has supported education in national minority languages as a way to pre-empt and prevent inter-ethnic rivalries and social division, especially in former Soviet states, now countries in Central Asia.

cohesion interpreted as one-size-fits-all monolingual and monocultural frames or views of the world. Even when a pluralist perspective is recognised, there is often a default to policies and plans based on the universalist frame because this seems easier to manage when the officials who are responsible for implementing change do not have the expertise to do so. This frailty is often exacerbated by lack of continuity from one government election to another, resulting in revolving door changes of senior education officials expected to carry out policy implementation. Lack of continuity leads to inconsistences, lack of institutional memory of the rationale for policy change, and lack of commitment to carry forward the policy and plans associated with a previous political party or government; in addition to lack of expertise (Heugh and Mohamed, 2020). These risks can be managed through collaborative joint responsibility for capacity development of senior education officials and teacher educators at both local and regional levels. An example of this was the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC)-supported Training of Trainers in Multilingual Education developed and run between 2001 and 2005 by a quango, the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA), at the University of Cape Town. This programme provided intensive face-to-face and distance postgraduate education for senior officials and teacher educators from 15 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Benson and Plüddemann, 2010).

An advantage of multi-country and regional participation in such programmes is the potential for strengthening regional levels of cooperation and leadership. Another is strengthening opportunities for cross-border collaboration and sharing of literacy and language teaching resources for closely related linguistic communities living on either side of geopolitical boundaries among several countries. For instance, successive waves of conflict in East Africa has resulted in considerable movement across borders of South Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and Eritrea, and across borders of South Sudan, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Collaborative development of teacher education and literacy and learning materials developed, for example, in Nuer and Anuak in Ethiopia could be shared with South Sudan, literacy materials developed in Ma'di in the North-West Nile region of Uganda could be shared with South Sudan, while resources in Dinka in South Sudan could be shared with communities displaced to refugee camps in northern Uganda.

Where the capacity of national governments to support local government is limited or fragile, as is often the case in situations of precarity, NGOs, like Literacy and Adult Basic Education (LABE) in Uganda, have shown how they can work at speed to address issues relating to minority education and emergencies that include human displacement and ill-health in remote parts of a country. LABE has demonstrated how it has been able to support newly established and resource-poor local government agencies in the post-conflict northern border districts of the country to return displaced children and adults to schools and non-formal education, build trusting rapport and joint responsibilities between village communities, schools, local government and national government (Sentumbwe and Heugh, 2014). Village-initiated non-formal early chidcare and education centres supported by LABE in districts that border the DRC and South Sudan have assisted national government to begin the process of developing provision of a national pre-school year (Heugh and Namyalo, 2017). LABE's swift response to COVID-19 by May 2020[2] with health education provided in local languages in 2020 has been facilitated through its trusted and well-established collaborative networks in the far-reaches of the country. Lessons from experiences such as these are easily shared across countries and regions of the world through mechanisms facilitated in the transnational instruments (UNGA, 2018a, b), and through regional capacity development of education officials such as that of SADC mentioned above.

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[2] See: https://labeuganda.org/web/gallery/labe-response-to-covid/ [Accessed 20 February 2021]

Teacher education and pedagogies for biliteracy, bilingualism and multilingualism

Significant progress has been made regarding understanding the practices in bilingual and multilingual education that are likely to be most and least helpful and useful for teachers and students over the last four decades. Research in post-colonial countries of Africa, South America and Asia, particularly those with greater linguistic, cultural and faith-based diversities, are those that offer portable small, medium and large-scale examples accompanied by longitudinal tracer-studies that can be relied upon. Policymakers need to be aware that short-term interventions with positive evaluations are often dangerous and unreliable unless their sustainability and long-term impact on student achievement can be shown over a minimum of six years (Heugh, 2011; Ouane and Glanz, 2011).

Biliteracy, which is the development of literacy in the home or local language plus in the main language of the school, is a crucial foundation for the success of minority students from low-income communities. Bilingual numeracy in the home or local language plus in the main language of the school is the second crucial foundation for these students. Biliteracy means more than learning to read and write narrative stories. It means learning to read, write and think in two or more languages across the primary school curriculum. This is not possible unless the cultural, faith and knowledge systems of students' communities are included in the curriculum alongside those of the national system. It has been established through system-wide and longitudinal studies traced across

the 20th century and first decade of the 21st century in Africa that this takes a minimum of the first six years, more likely eight years, of schooling (Heugh, 2011). Provision needs to be carefully managed and planned to deliver and sustain strong biliteracy and bilingual numeracy programmes, such as bilingual education, in systems that cater for multiple pairings of languages.

Multilingual education systems include provision for multiple pairings described above, and those where students require expertise in the local language as well as one or more of a regional, national or international language. Following developments in post-apartheid language education policy in South Africa, the term 'mother tongue-based multilingual education' or MTB-MLE has been popularised through Africa (Ouane and Glanz, 2010, for UNESCO) and then to South and South-East Asia through the work of the UNESCO Bangkok office. [3]

The use of code-switching and code-mixing between all languages in post-colonial countries has been common practice, even in schools, but relegated to spoken rather than written discourse, and frequently stigmatised as 'illicit' practice likely to result in conceptual confusion. We now know that this is an unfounded misconception of how people learn languages. Mixing languages is normal practice for all bilingual and multilingual people, often for deliberative purposes and as part of the language learning process. Deliberate, purposeful and systematic use of code-switching has long

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[3] The original rationale for the use of the term MTB-MLE in South Africa has changed in each context in which it has been adopted. So too has the interpretation of how best it might be implemented.

been part of elite bilingual education systems in the form of pedagogies of written translation (from Greek to Latin, Latin to English, English to French, and so on). For this reason, it has always been a key pedagogy used to develop high levels of bilingual Afrikaans-English proficiency in South African education, and it is also now being promoted as integral to successful bilingual education elsewhere (Cook, 2010). It is key to a kind of Welsh-English bilingual programme identified as 'translanguaging' by Cen Williams (1996) and subsequently discussed in Lewis, Baker and Jones (2012). This use of the term translanguaging should not be confused with the way the term has been adapted for use and popularised in the USA and the UK where the differences between languages is de-emphasised. For students in low-income post-colonial countries who come from marginalised and vulnerable communities, access to and inclusion in further and higher education depends on how well they can recognise how to separate languages and how well they can use the standard form of languages of power (see also Heugh, ftc).

As implied in the discussion above, multilingual education is not simply about developing proficiency in two or more languages, it is about ensuring access to and exchange of knowledges present in different communities, countries and regions. It is also about 'culturally responsive pedagogies' (Osborne, et al., 2019, 2020). For this reason, multilingual education requires culturally responsive pedagogies that support purposeful use of translanguaging and knowledge exchange (transknowledging). A visual connection among these pedagogies and how they map into the policy recommendations being made in this paper are illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Multilingualism, Translanguaging & Transknowledging

L1/linguistic repertoire
+
L2/Language of the school (translanguaging) to increase metacognitive language learning between L1 & L2

Evidence-based principles

Indigenous and international knowledge & expertise

Access through students' language & knowledge repertoires

Bi-/ multilingual translanguaging principles

+

Culturally sustaining & responsive CSP-CRP principles

+

Knowledges (epistemologies) exchange principles

Pedagogies

Multilingualism
Translanguaging
↓
Translation
Interpreting
Code-mixing
Code-switching
↑
CSP-CRP
↓
Two-way exchange of knowledge systems
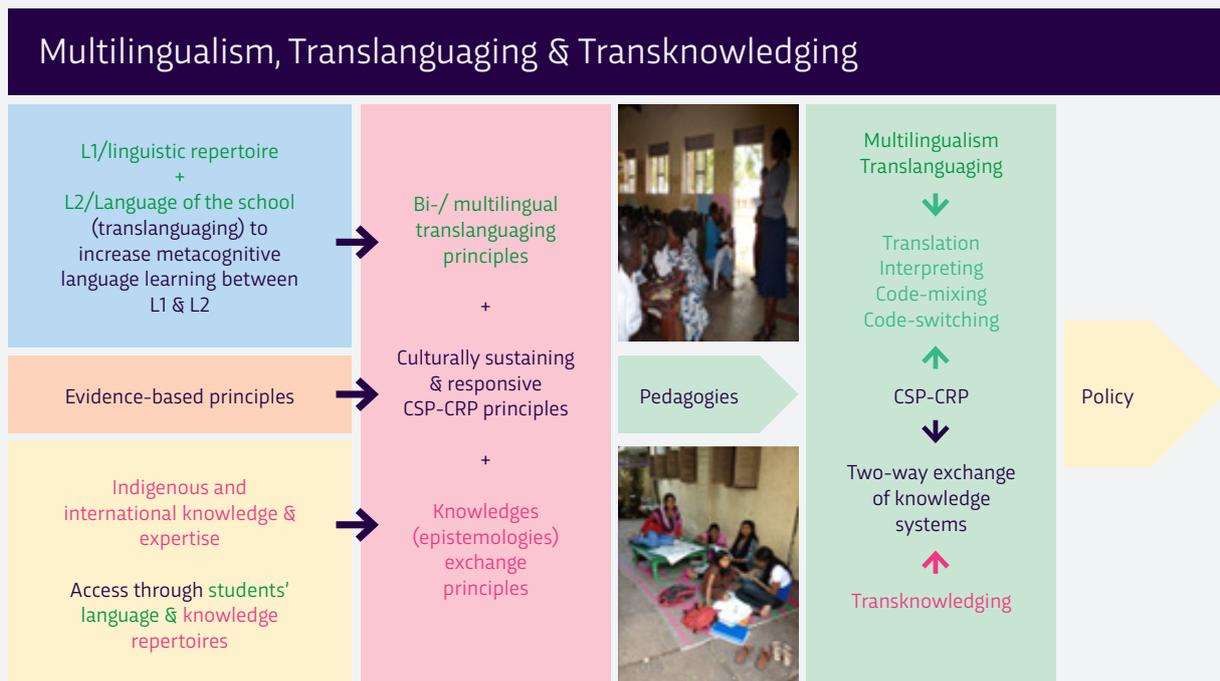↑
Transknowledging

Policy

Figure 2: Multilingualism, translanguaging and transknowledging with culturally responsive pedagogies (Heugh, 2019. Slide presented at the IMMLE Conference in Bangkok, 2019)

Conclusion

This paper sets out an argument for a sequence of key principles for shifting from monolingual and monocultural education systems to ones that meet the complexities of current diversities, instabilities and precarities in order to achieve inclusion and sustainability. The shift is towards multilingual education based on culturally responsive pedagogies that support biliteracy and bilingualism through deliberative, systematic and purposeful use of translanguaging and two-way exchanges of knowledge (transknowledging). The shift can be facilitated by building on substantive longitudinal evidence of multi-stakeholder collaboration and research on language education policy, planning and implementation, particularly in Africa. This includes a focus on capacity development of senior teacher educators and education officials to ensure continuity and institutional memory of expertise and the rationale for policy decisions. This can be facilitated through the sharing of expertise and co-provision of capacity development programmes at regional and transnational levels.

Finally, sustainability rests on the efficiencies and opportunities of well-oiled co-responsibilities of local, national and transnational stakeholders to ensure that national minority communities and displaced and refugee communities are provided with education designed for equity, inclusion and social cohesion. The timeframe is urgent and requires both backwards and forwards planning as 2030 approaches along with uncertain futures for everyone.

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