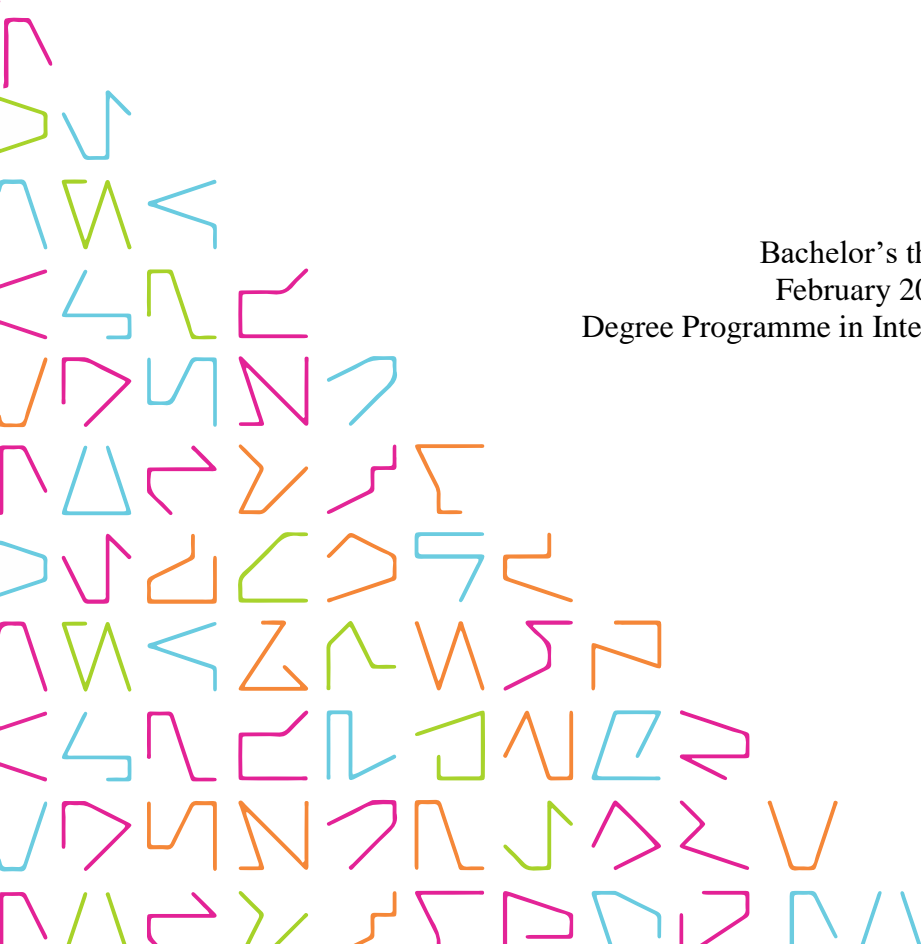


EFFECTS OF THE SWAHILI LANGUAGE ON THE EAST AFRICAN ECONOMY

Peris Linet Otieno

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ABSTRACT

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Swahili is one of the most popular and widely spoken languages in East Africa with at least 100 million speakers. The objective of this thesis was to point out how East African countries can use the language to improve their economies. The focus was on Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda because they use Swahili and have been doing so for a long time. In Kenya and Tanzania Swahili is a national language. The main aim of this thesis was to highlight the benefits of using a language in contributing to a country's economy.

This study was made on a personal interest because the writer of the thesis is a Swahili speaker and wanted to explore the benefits of this language for East Africa. The global market is becoming more competitive, and East Africa has been trying to be more competitive, too.

The number of Swahili speakers is higher than it has ever been, and being that the language is now recognized by the African Union, and it makes sense to use it for political and economic purposes. Education, employment and even the East African Community (EAC) have all benefited from this language but very little has been done to ensure maximum growth in the smaller communities. With millions of youths struggling to make a living, it would help the local communities greatly if they used ready-made resources to solve some of their problems, the main resource being the Swahili language that is so popular, with at least 100 million speakers all over Africa.

The East African Community (EAC) was created solely for the purpose of strengthening the member countries' economies. But this is going to take a very long period of time if the governments do not try to merge the local communities where real talent lies. Language is the most important tool when it comes to survival, and encouraging the use of one's language is not just great for identity purposes but also economic prosperity. Swahili has proven to be the most resilient language in the East African region. Even with the colonialists attempting to abolish it and the hundreds of tribes trying to fight its existence, it has still managed to spread and not just in Kenya but in Tanzania, Uganda and other countries. If governments consider the issues they face daily that have all been brought about by the division and tension amongst tribes, they will realize that a common language is one of the biggest steps towards achieving unity and a competitive economy.

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Key words: Swahili language, economy, East Africa

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1 INTRODUCTION

Africa is famously known as the most diverse continent in the world. This diversity has always been defined and understood differently based on where the narrator is from. For most native Africans, the continent is diverse not necessarily because of people's appearance but mostly because of the tribes and cultures that arise from them. It is estimated that there are at least 3,000 tribes in Africa but this is not an exact figure because there are some tribes that have not been documented for a few reasons.

From a foreigners perspective Africa's diversity comes from the different lifestyles and beliefs but that is not how an African sees it. Africans have always had a few things that they used to define themselves and fortunately or unfortunately, this was passed from one generation to another. Some of these things have had a great contribution to the political and economic environment of some countries. Outsiders or foreigners often find it odd or difficult to understand how people in one country could decide to divide themselves based solely on the language or tribe. But this is not so hard for Africans to understand because children often imitate what their parents and grandparents do.

For many countries suffering from tribalism, the problem is that it is taught and passed down from one generation to the other. Historians date tribalism back to hundreds of years ago when communities were even smaller and only interacted when it came to trade, worship and other necessary events. Tribalism arises from the existence of different tribes living in the same area or country. The best example comes from deciding who is going to represent the people because in such a case, all tribes want that chance. Failure to be heard or seen makes members of that tribe bitter and unwilling to cooperate in anything. African politicians are known for using tribalism to attract voters, especially in rural areas where many are still illiterate and depend on the government's help.

In every country where there are many different tribes, there are always those that feel superior to the rest. This is seen in the countries that this thesis is focused on, those countries are Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda and their East African neighbours. In Kenya for example, politicians chose allies and running mates based on the tribal following. Since numbers mean so much, politicians in Kenya and Uganda write their manifests and

campaigns on tribal grounds. Their speeches and choice of merchandise or colours is enough evidence to the citizens of these countries.

For most African states, the politicians decide and the citizens follow. This type of leadership only works if there is diversity when it comes to decision makers, which is something that most countries have not come to terms with. Great leaders are those who have always lead by example and not influenced by personal greed, nepotism, tribalism or personal needs. One of the most famous leaders in East African politics who embodied all these good qualities was Tanzania's founding father Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere. He believed that Tanzanians needed to go forward identifying themselves based on their nation and not language or tribe. To this day, Tanzania is one of the only East African countries where tribalism is almost non-existent. Nyerere's way of unifying his people was simple, using language. Of course there are other factors that contributed to this success but eliminating tribalism was the best of them. He believed in the Swahili language and made sure that it was fully implemented to benefit all Tanzanians regardless of their dialect, class, literacy or political influence.

In Kenya the founding father Kenyatta also tried the same idea, but this worked only for a short period of time, changing governments did not see it as a priority. Swahili is still the most used language in Kenya but there is more room for improvement, especially with the rise in tensions between some tribes. Unifying and convincing these people that they are one and do have the same interest would not only help them but the rest of the country.

The author of the thesis took a personal interest in this topic because she lived in a part of Kenya where Swahili is the first language and has benefited many. Having lived to experience the 2007-2008 post election violence in Kenya, she understood the importance of language and the identity it carries. Throughout this study, there was more focus on Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda. Other East African countries were briefly mentioned, too to show the relationship amongst them. The goal was to highlight the importance of language to these countries and other parts of Africa and how a language can be used to make everyone's life better. This is because there is greatness in people of different diverse backgrounds but the positives will only be noticed and achieved if the people are united. And so far, language seems to be the one of the only chances East Africa has and can agree on.

There are hundreds of languages in East Africa but Swahili is the only one that has managed to break barriers and amass millions of speakers. It has been recognised by the African Union and has crossed borders to other places all over the world. That is why it was chosen by the author as the language to focus on.

Objectives and purpose

The objective of this thesis was to explain the ways in which the East African community is strengthening itself using the Swahili language. It focused on the journey and path that the Swahili language has taken to become the lingua franca that it is today. The history includes a summary of the period before, during and after the colonialists' invasion of Africa. There is an explanation on how the Arabs and Portuguese contributed into shaping the language or how much Swahili has borrowed from other nationalities and cultures. The most important factor has been the economy and whether or not it has benefited from the growth of this language. Other topics such as religion, role of women and even slavery have been discussed to show the growth pattern and its challenges.

The purpose was mostly to show how the modern East Africans are using the language to further trade amongst themselves and how the rest of Africa and the world is responding to this. The millennials are taking over from their parents, being the first generation to experience a global market and open up trade routes that were considered impossible before. Introducing the East African passport was one of the major inspirations for this thesis, although to some locals it is just another passport. There are so many small and medium sized businesses that stand to benefit greatly from this move.

The passport might face some political differences because the East African market is huge and the bigger countries could easily depress the chances of a smaller country gaining as much. But all this remains to be seen because the passport has only been there for less than two years.

Moreover, other areas such as music, film industry and undocumented small businesses have been mentioned because these are day-to-day experiences that every East African experiences. There are at least ten countries recognised as East African member states. This of course is debatable based on colonial and border issues. This thesis mainly focuses

on Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Rwanda also briefly discussing parts of Congo too. This is because Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda have Swahili as one of their national languages. In Kenya and Tanzania Swahili is a mandatory subject in schools and people use it on the streets, news channels, churches, schools and many other daily situations. In Uganda however, traders who come from other parts of East Africa use the language in the local markets where the majority of the families shop for food and clothes. This means that most Ugandans understand some Swahili but they have not put great emphasis on it for historical and political reasons. There are parts of Uganda that are close to Kenyan and Tanzanian borders, these people speak and even perform all their daily trading in Swahili, the reason being that they encounter and interact with Kenyans and Tanzanians every day.

The challenges facing the language and its growth has also been discussed to show a balance. How come some countries have managed to benefit and grow by using this language? The political tensions and their influence to Swahili's growth or demise have been discussed too.

The research questions were:

- How has the Swahili language contributed to shaping the East African market?
- How much has political influence helped with the growth or failure of Swahili?
- What role is the East African Community (EAC) playing in strengthening this language?

2 EMERGENCE AND HISTORY OF THE SWAHILI LANGUAGE

2.1 Religion and tribes

In the early twentieth century, Swahili was largely described as an Islamic language, one of the reasons for this being that some of the old records had Swahili literature recorded in Arabic script. The most common reason known even today is the influence that the Arabs had on the language while they were visiting and co-existing amongst the people on the East African coast. Ali Al'amin Mazrui describes Swahili as a language “full of didactic religious poetry rendered in an indigenized version of the Arabic script, that called upon members of the Swahili society to live within the framework of Islam.”

This only slowly changed with the colonialists forcing the locals to change and only record it in Latin script. Their reason for this was to try and get rid of the link that Islam had to the language. But this did not go as per their expectations because for most Swahili speakers, this was a language deeply ingrained in their lives and passed from one generation to another.

2.1.1 Mijikenda in Kenya

The word ‘mijikenda’ means nine tribes that have been natives to the Kenyan coast. These are;

- Kauma
- Ribe
- Rabai
- Chonyi
- Digo
- Giriama
- Jibana
- Kambe
- Duruma

Over the years they interacted and traded with missionaries and people from other parts of the world such as Persia, Portugal and even Oman. These interactions contributed to the birth of the Swahili language. The mijikenda were organized around clans and lived in fortified villages known in Swahili as ‘Kayas.’

As of 2017, most members of these tribes have intermarried with other Kenyan and East African tribes. Majority of them still live along the Kenyan coast and are of Muslim faith. The reason was that when Islam was introduced in East Africa, these tribes were some of the first to be in contact with the religion, this was because the religious leaders and foreigners came by boats using the Indian Ocean.

The Swahili language is very similar to the mijikenda languages because they have borrowed so much from each other. If these tribes had not existed there would be no telling whether Swahili would be what it is. These tribes played a huge role in shaping and introducing the Swahili language to Kenya. And because of this, Kenya was able to trade and work well with its neighbours such as Tanzania, Uganda and other East African states.

2.1.2 Similarities between Swahili and other Bantu languages

There are many similarities between Bantu languages all over Africa and the most common are the ones within East Africa. Some words that can be heard in everyday language include; “baba” meaning father. This is common in Nigeria, South Africa and all over East Africa. Even those who do not speak Swahili do use the word and it has the same meaning all over. Other examples are; “shisa nyama” a term used in many South African townships describing a barbecue where people gather to grill meat. In Kenya and Tanzania, the term is “nyama choma” where people at homes or restaurants gather to grill meat and enjoy with friends. The Swahili word for meat is “nyama”. Moreover, there are many similarities even in smaller tribes in Rwanda, Burundi, Mozambique, Mayotte and even Zulu, Tswana and Xhosa in South Africa. These tribes are all part of the evidence that shows where Swahili drew its inspiration. Of course over time with the arrival of the Arabs, so many words were borrowed while trading and even learning the new religion.

2.2 Arabic Influence

Swahili	Arabic	Meaning
Hatari	خطر	Danger. Also the title of a 1962 movie starring John Wayne, set in Africa.
Safari	سفر	Travel. Also: trip
Mahali	محل	Place
Vitabu	كتاب	Book
Msumari	مسمار	Nail
Kata	قطع	Cut, chop
Habari	خبر	news
Huru	حر	free
Dhamiri	ضمير	conscience
Kamusi	قاموس	dictionary
Baridi	بارد	cold
Sama-hani	سامحني	forgive me, excuse me
Rafiki	رفيق	companion, friend
Ta-fadhali	تفضل	please
Furahi	فرح	happy

FIGURE 1. Some Swahili words borrowed from Arabic

The table in figure one shows some Swahili words that were borrowed from Arabic or Persian, most of which began during the trade between the coastal settlers and the Arab traders. It is also very common to hear people in the streets of Mombasa, Malindi, or Dar es Salaam use words such as “mash Allah, wallahi or alhamdulillah”.

2.3 Uniting the people

Kenya is a country with so many tribes that all believe in different things or lifestyles. With a new tribe comes new ideas, and the introduction of a language that would bring

all Kenyans together has always been debated on. This is because every tribe has someone who feels strongly about his/her place in the Kenyan history and therefore feels superior to others. The only language that has been able to unite Kenyans and Tanzanians without the occurrence of war is Swahili.

There are different theories as to why Swahili is found to be more neutral or acceptable to other tribes, regardless of the fact that it originated from the Kenyan coast. One of the most common theories that most people have been told was that “Swahili does not belong to anyone or any tribe.” This means that Kenyans or even Tanzanians, some Ugandans, Rwandans, Somalis and the rest of East Africa embrace this language because they believe it is not biased against their own languages. Of course history would show that Swahili’s neutrality is debatable depending on who you ask because if it was to be claimed then those from the East African coast could claim its ownership.

However, this has not been an issue because the sharing and distribution of political power brought about all problems. If we take a look at all the presidents in Kenya and Uganda for example, it is evident that they have been from the same tribes, leading the locals of these countries to feel left out and cheated. This is why they would not let another language, especially the one with a leader they dislike, to be introduced to their homes.

It is a fact that Swahili has helped with cohesion when it comes to peace and stability in the East African region. Without Swahili, Kenya and Tanzania would be in chaos, which would heavily affect the rest of East Africa because these two countries are depended on when it comes to trade and connection with the outside world, especially Kenya.

Tanzania is a great example of how a country with more than 100 tribes has been able to maintain peace and stability. The country enjoys peace and stability because of using Swahili and not focusing as much on other languages or tribes, especially the ones with a majority of political leaders.



FIGURE 2. Protesters during the 2007 post election violence in Kenya

Uganda and Kenya still have heavy traces of tribal problems but in Kenya the situation has been improving everyday. In fact, Kenya has come a long way because of the Swahili language. The 2007-2008 post election violence was an indicator of that. That period obviously showed the tension still hidden amongst Kenyans but it also proved that there has been progress in the communities.

Kwanzaa in the United States of America

Kwanzaa is a seven-day festival that takes place in the United States of America. Kwanzaa' is a Swahili word meaning first. It was chosen to symbolise the first fruits that people in the community harvest and share. It is celebrated from December 26th to January 1st within the African American community, to honour their African culture and history. During this period family and friends exchange gifts and have a feast. It has seven core principles and was created by a political activist known as Ron Karenga in the year 1966.



FIGURE 3. The seven principles of Kwanzaa

The seven principles derived from the Swahili language are; umoja meaning unity, kujichagulia meaning choice, ujima meaning collective work and responsibility, nia meaning purpose, kuumba meaning to create and Imani meaning faith.

According to a research done in the year 2015 by the National Retail Federation, at least 6 million people celebrated the holiday. The number has only risen ever since because its popularity has increased. It is now celebrated by people of African origin in Canada, Great Britain, Jamaica, Brazil and other parts of the world. This could be a chance for East Africans who speak and have Swahili as their language to capitalise of this celebration. Companies could push for merchandise and other services that could be used in a celebration such as this, by organizing big festivals similar to the Oktoberfest in Germany where tourists would visit countries such as Tanzania and Kenya to learn more about the festival and also celebrate.

This would be beneficial not just for the tourists but also for the tourism industries in Kenya and Tanzania, which are responsible for at least 25% of the countries' employment. The industries in East Africa are still at their early stages but tourism has always been a source of income for many. Cases of terrorist attacks in the past have contributed to the rise of unemployment especially in Kenya but this can be reversed. The huge wave of millennials who have proven to be more adventurous and interested in exploring different cultures could be the new market.

3 CHALLENGES FACED BY THE LANGUAGE

Africa is a home to hundreds of languages which are somehow related but migration and other practices have led to new dialects that might even sound foreign to other Africans. Before colonialism and the industrial period when all tribes secluded themselves from others, language was not considered to be the biggest problem.

However, the modern era sees African leaders using languages and tribes to fight, divide and even hold onto power in ways that are not fair or democratic. For most Kenyans or East Africans, Swahili was and is still a way to stop leaders and people from sticking to their own groups, even though there is a group of people referred to as the “Waswahili” meaning of Swahili origin. They are such a minority that other tribes do not see them as a threat. But since tribal divisions are such a huge part of Africans and in this case Kenyans, a new debate on what language to publish books or use in schools comes up.

3.1 Leadership

In an interview between professors and writers Ali Al'amin Mazrui and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, we see one issue being faced, what language to use on one of the subscription magazines that will be distributed in one of the American university libraries. Both of these men are well respected and looked up to in East Africa and the world for shaping the literary world with their amazing works and knowledge. Still, they could not come together and decide on how two African languages can be published together.

Professor Mazrui is a well-known author known for advocating for Swahili to be used more, partly because he identifies himself as a Swahili native and has been able to trace his ancestry, which according to records went back to the 1800's. As for Professor Thiong'o, he is of the Agikuyu tribe and some of this is reflected in his books. The idea was that a subscription magazine will be published in the Kikuyu language and since Mazrui was teaching in another university, professor Thiong'o asked if Mazrui would help him spread and assist in distributing. Professor Mazrui was for the idea, but since he does not

speak or understand Kikuyu, he suggested having the magazine in both Swahili and Kikuyu and this Mr Thiong'o disagreed, with the reason being that Swahili will easily overpower Kikuyu, since there are more Swahili speakers in East Africa and the world.

Mr Thiong'o also suggested that in the future, there should be a way to make sure that Swahili would be able to help and strengthen other African languages. From the conversation of the two professors and writers, we encounter another myth amongst some Africans. There are still people who believe that Swahili as a language has had its time and it is now time for other languages to be focused upon. It is not yet known how this can be implemented but with more people speaking it, there might be a new approach that has not been discovered yet.

This is a very good and clear example as to why having too many languages might be a problem. There will always be one tribe or language speaker who thinks he/she is superior to others. This is because some people are capable and interested in learning as many languages as possible, while others are stubborn and only wish to support their own language.

It is also true to say that this problem is not easily experienced in local Kenyan or Tanzanian markets because almost every citizen of these countries speaks Swahili either as a first or second language. But the higher one goes in different institutions and government offices, the more pronounced this challenge is. For this reason, English is still being recognised and used because there is already enough material available.

So, teachers and professors need not argue about the language of instruction at schools. A while back when Mwalimu Julius Nyerere was president, he strongly advocated for the Swahili language. One of the reasons why his strategy worked was because he showed it all by example. He even translated some famous books from English into Swahili, so Tanzanians would be able to enjoy the same books read all over the world.

3.1.1 Sheng in Nairobi

The arrival of 'Sheng,' which is a language invented by street children in Nairobi in the year 1980 after the great migration of people from rural to urban Kenya, is becoming a

bigger issue every day. The reason is that the poor and middle class in Nairobi have embraced and started using Sheng as their daily language of interaction.

According to linguists, Sheng is not a normal language but it is developing itself to be one. Popular artists in Kenya use it in their songs; advertisements by big companies and even politicians use Sheng to attract the youth and millennials. The biggest problem with this language is that it changes everyday and has no specific plan; everything is acceptable, making it volatile and not dependable.



FIGURE 4. Sheng lyrics from a Christmas song

In the year 2011, the Kenyan minister for education noticed a decline in performance when it comes to Swahili and English. However, this decline was not nationwide but only in Nairobi and other bigger cities where Sheng is largely practiced. English and Swahili are mandatory languages in the Kenyan school system. The education minister at the time, Mr Sam Ogeri said, “our suspicion is that adulteration of Swahili and English, where even senior members of the society, including top politicians, have turned to talk Sheng to endear themselves to the youth has affected performance in the two subjects.” He went ahead and cautioned the Kenyan public to acknowledge this problem and solve it because it was damaging the two most important languages in the education system. Even though

this happened exactly six years ago, no one has been able to come up with a solution yet. In fact, as of the year 2017, Sheng is more popular than ever.

Also, it is important to note that one of the most important parts of a language is gaining the knowledge on how to write it and understand all its rules. Sheng allows its users to freestyle and speak a mixture of English, Swahili and other local Kenyan languages without following any rules. And, it is considered ‘cool’ and trendy if someone can speak and understand Sheng, and for some youth, it is a way of fitting in.

However, this is a big risk to take because if the young students do not learn proper Swahili and English, which are the national Kenyan languages and also international ones, they risk being left behind. This is because their skills in the formal languages will be weaker making it impossible for them to speak eloquently. If this happens, their chances of competing in the global market will be in jeopardy and make them less competitive.

Nairobi is considered to be East Africa’s business hub, most important meetings that have anything to do with African businesses or politics are held there. This makes Nairobi a popular area when it comes to businesses, political projects and even East African market. With all this, there is always going to be a huge demand for educated international employees who can participate and represent their African nations or the continent. And language barrier could end up being a stumbling block for most youth, leaving room for foreign workers to infiltrate the job market.

3.1.2 The past

Some East African states such as Uganda still have problems with accepting Swahili because it reminds them of the painful past. According to most Ugandans, Idi Amin was not just a dictator but he used Swahili to bully and demean his people. The other reason why Swahili was not fully embraced by Ugandans is because its previous leaders and ‘Kabakas’ especially Daudi Chwa did not want to advocate for it. Historians claim that his reasoning was power related. He felt that by letting his people use this foreign language, he might lose his power or influence over them. To date very few Ugandans speak Swahili proudly and the rest only remember a few words or phrases that Idi Amin’s soldiers used

on them when they broke into their homes. Some of them are; “Toa viatu,” which translates to remove your shoes or “fungua mlango” meaning the door.

3.2 Tribalism and identity

Some historians argue that there are a few local Tanzanian languages that have suffered because of tribalism. Meaning in order for Swahili to be popular and strong, some languages might be forgotten or even die since the next generations grow up speaking Swahili and not their native indigenous languages. Whether or not this risk is worth taking, it is debatable because although a few languages may have suffered, Tanzania has benefited politically from this transition. Of all the East African states, Tanzania is probable the only one that has trained or convinced its people to identify themselves as Tanzanians first and their tribes second.

If one compares this to how Kenyans or Ugandans identify themselves and each other, there is a strong difference; despite being very close neighbours with so many similarities. For example, if you meet Kenyans and ask them about their native language, they easily describe their parent’s native languages. But Tanzanians just proudly explain that they speak Swahili at their home and if you question them further they might explain what languages their parents speak. Tanzania is also one of the countries that used Swahili as a language of instruction at schools. So, tribalism plays a huge role in the way Kenyans or Ugandans identify themselves, which is not the case in Tanzania. This is largely because Tanzania has tried different ways in the past and those effects are still felt in the present.

Julius Nyerere and Jomo Kenyatta

Julius Nyerere strongly emphasized on the unity of Tanzanian people and he chose the Swahili language as a tool. In Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta had a similar idea but the effort he put forward was not enough. He did not show the importance of the language by example; this means that some parts of Kenya were left to decide for themselves whether to use English, Swahili or their native language. Of course this did not kill or weaken Swahili but it did not have the same results that Tanzania has benefited from.

While addressing Tanganyika's parliament in the year 1962, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere put more emphasis on the importance of letting and encouraging Tanzanians to value and indulge in their native culture. He used music to give the example, in his speech he said; "When we were at school we were taught to sing the songs of Europeans. How many of us were taught the songs of the Wanyamwezi or the Wahehe? Many of us have learnt to dance the rumba or cha cha cha. But how many of us have even heard of the gombe sugu, the mangala, nyang, Umumi, kiduo or lele mama"? This statement shows how important it was for Nyerere to see Tanzania recognise itself as a great nation. It is often said that when people embrace another language, they embrace parts of its culture and lifestyle as well.

That is why for Nyerere to be able to show his people how to nurture themselves he used an example of foreign versus native or local practises.

4 ROLE OF WOMEN IN SPREADING THE LANGUAGE

It is common that the majority of children spend more time with their mothers before they gain independence in their day-to-day lives. This means that a huge part of their growth when it comes to habits and growth are greatly influenced by the mother or women whom they spend most of their time with.

Dictionaries define the phrase “Mother tongue” as a language that one grows up speaking as a child, one’s first language. Historically, mothers spent majority of their time nurturing and caring for the entire family but mostly the vulnerable young children. This meant that the mother’s first language or the language she chose to use with the child was what eventually ended up as being their first language. The first language that the children learn whilst growing up helps them shape their character, identity and how they view the world. Of course there are many different cases where children embrace a second or even third language once they start attending school or visiting other areas. But one cannot ignore the huge role that a mother plays in shaping the child and therefore the community, too.

Swahili as a language is evidence to how women have not only shaped the East African community but also preserved the language by passing it on to their younger ones, who then go ahead to make up the next generation that faces different challenges but has ingrained experience and identity borrowed from their mothers. In “The Story of Swahili,” John M Mugane explains how women not only multitasked to ensure every need was catered to but also carefully passed the languages to their children. He explains how their “writings, adaptations and even performance of Swahili have impacted and shaped Swahili to what it is today.” There are more than ninety million Swahili speakers in the world today.

4.1 Kanga/Leso and its relevance

Kanga is a medium sized rectangle piece of cloth that communicates in Swahili and is sold to women who use it for different purposes or occasions. The most common ones are tying it around their waists while running errands, decorating houses, and at wedding or funeral ceremonies. The ‘kanga’ has a sentence or famous saying written in Swahili, these

phrases or sentences are mostly to congratulate, console, appreciate or reprimand someone for his or her behaviour, or a phase in life. Some examples include; “Mwanamke mazingira, tunataka usawa amani na maendeleo”, this translates to “A woman is her surroundings, we want equality, peace and progress”. “Mtumaini cha nduguye hufa masikini” meaning “The ones who depend on their brother’s wealth die poor”, another common one is “Ulimi ni panga” which translates to “The tongue is a sword”. It is common for women to collectively show their appreciation or support to public figures by dedicating a piece of kanga to them. For example, when Barack Obama became the first African-American president, one was made in his honour.



FIGURE 5. Kanga dedicated to President Barack Obama

Political influence on women

Some political parties have also embraced the use of kanga to reach out to women, the most historical one being when the Tanzanian government used kanga to advocate and encourage adult education. Their motto was “education has no end.” This was published on kanga in English, Swahili and French.

Mothers use this piece of cloth to carry their babies on their backs. So, it is true to say that most East African babies are born and nurtured under the Swahili culture.

Traditionally and even in the modern times, 'kangas' are given as gifts from husbands to their wives, from children to their mothers and even from women to other women. Some historians have observed that these pieces of precious cloth helped the women share their sentiments in a society that would otherwise try to shut them up.

There are still very few reports on the small businesses that women started or have been doing for the past years. This is an issue of how the global market characterises what they consider to be formal businesses. And in most cases, these are done using foreign business models, which do not recognise the local woman or man selling fruit and kangas along the street, even though research has shown that this "informal sector is growing jobs at more than four times the rate of the traditional formal economy."

Kanga and female entrepreneurs

Selling or trading in 'kanga' is known to be the easiest way for a woman to venture into entrepreneurship. Most women would start by buying and reselling them to their friends, family members, wedding or funeral organizers and hawking them door-to-door. This was because the product is light to carry around and cheap too for someone with limited capital. The level of education needed to start and maintain this type of business was quite low, something most women had to live with.



FIGURE 6. Women in a rural area wearing Kangas

Also, because majority of the women were housewives, their husbands did not feel threatened by this move and the women could do it part time while being full time wives and mothers. Kanga gave the coastal and eventually the East African women a voice and introduced them to a place where they were able to contribute to their livelihoods and pass a tradition and culture too.

It did help them develop themselves as entrepreneurs and contribute not only to strengthening a language but the economy and positions in the society. This has been the norm for a long time and even though there are some men who are in this line of business, it is considered to be a woman's specialty. The East African textile industry has grown immensely because of the use and trading of 'kangas'.

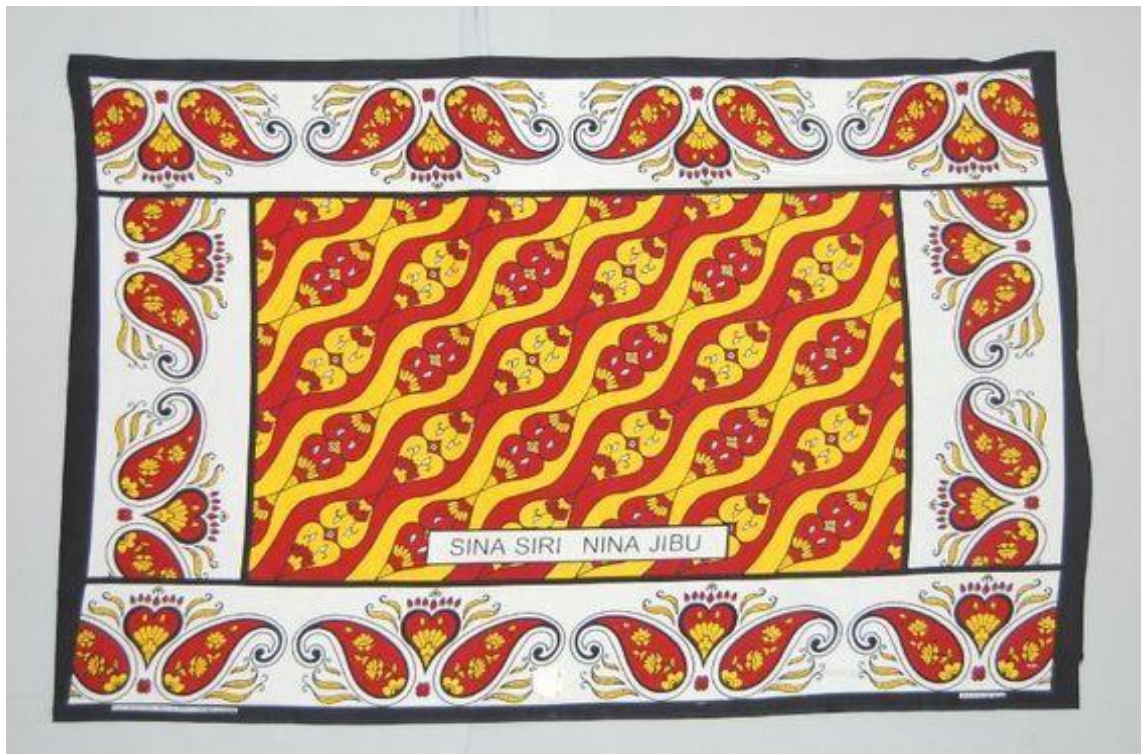


FIGURE 7. Kanga

Today this cloth is seen all over the world, embraced by women and fashion designers who use it to make different types of clothes. To most of the



FIGURE 8. International models wearing clothes made from Kanga

Modern wearers of this cloth, it may be just a fabric embracing the African spirit. However, the story goes centuries back when trading and entrepreneurship was only exclusive to men.

Millennials and the global market

The economic situation in Africa is still one that needs a lot of construction and development in order for it to efficiently compete better in the global market. If it is compared to other continents that might have had the same problems at least fifty years ago, it is true to say that Africa has experienced a shift but only a chosen few have felt the effects. This means that even though some might argue that the last twenty years have brought some growth, this is not the same for those living in the continent. Very few have really experienced the positive effects that have been introduced by the globalization of the world market and the open border policies between countries and even continents.

Much of these problems can be blamed on the governments that have faced major changes and issues ever since power was transferred from the colonial masters to the African leaders and freedom fighters. Historians have argued that the sudden transfer of power did not prepare the new leaders on how to govern in a way that will include and satisfy their nations. Some of these leaders were competent in the leading of their tribes and had not thought of a plan, which will help in the transition from small communities to a level where millions depend on them.

Some of the most common issues that almost all African states can relate to include:

- Tribalism and a huge division between minority and majority tribes
- Language barriers, where some languages are given more attention than others
- Corruption and embezzlement of public funds
- Dependency on foreign aid
- Politics and corruption
- Illiteracy and an outdated curriculum
- Poor and neglected infrastructure
- Lack of good and accountable leadership
- Abrupt changes brought about by change in governments from colonial powers to the democratic ones
- Class system
- Irresponsible governance
- Constitutions that were copied from other developed nations
- Gender inequality
- Religious tensions
- Brain drain
- Rural to urban migration

4.2 Unemployment in Kenya

More than fifty years have gone by and some African states are still struggling to figure out on a way to further strengthen their economies while empowering their locals at the same time. With a great number of youths aged between 18 and 35 years, it is astonishing to see the slow rate by which the governments are performing in order to utilize this portion of the population.

Kenya is arguably one of the strongest economies in East Africa but the rates of unemployment are higher every year. For some reason, the situation has not been improving. The Kenyan youth unemployment problem has been consistently high for more than twenty years. In the year 2017, 1 in every 6 Kenyans is unemployed and in Tanzania, the number is 1 in every 20 (Standard Media Kenya). Reports have suggested that this not only threatens Kenya's position as an economic power but also the country's position in the global market.

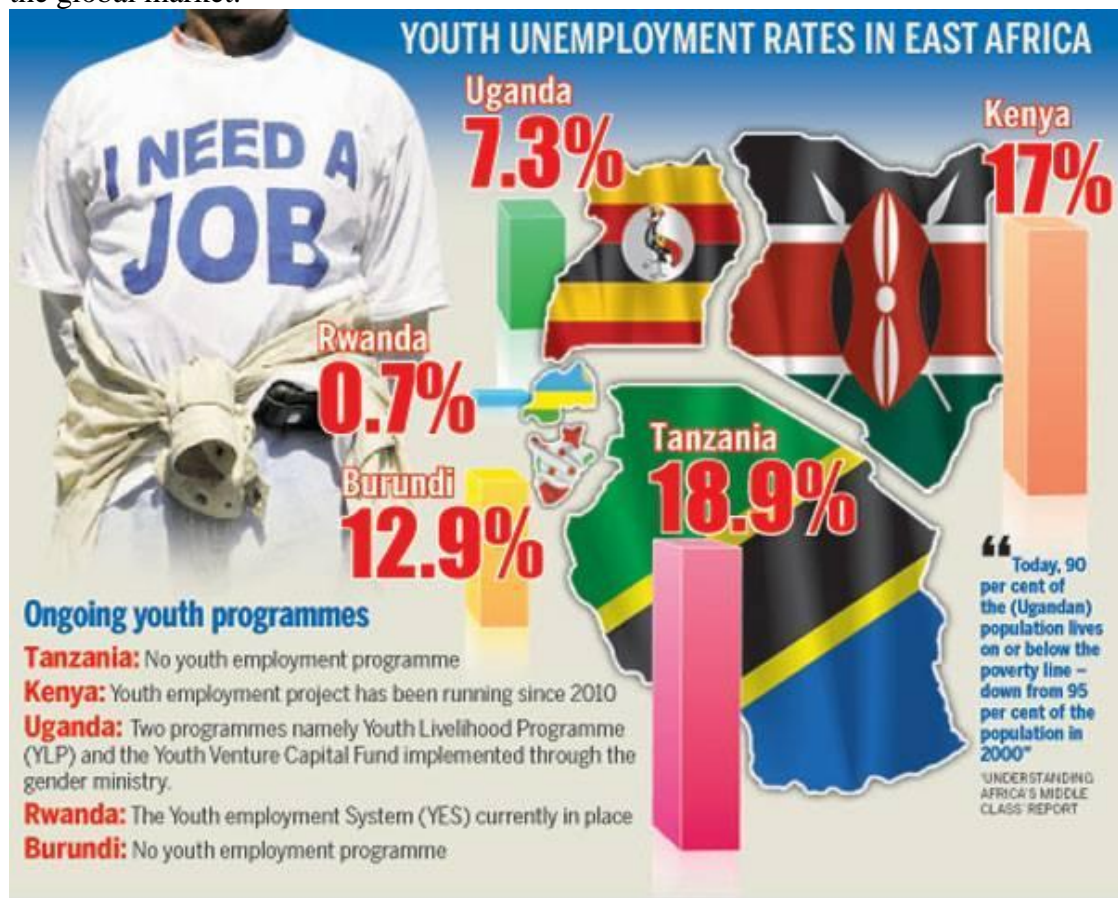


FIGURE 9. Yout unemployment rates in East Africa

Figure nine is an illustration of the unemployment problem in the year 2014, much of that has changed of course, with Kenya's situation worsening while other East African economies flourish.

Studies have shown that Kenya is lagging behind the Sub-Saharan mean in several key areas such as technical skills, development of talent, opportunities of growth, and retention of skilled talent (Standard Media Kenya).

President's Uhuru Kenyatta's government

The currently re-elected Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta's promise was to create more jobs for the youth who have always been left behind. This promise has somehow been achieved but with little success because most of the jobs created are low paying, informal and coming at a rate that economists say is too low to absorb the rapidly growing population (Reuters.com). According to Uhuru's party manifesto, he promised to create at least 1 million jobs per year, but this did not happen. Statistics show that in his first term he only managed to create 2.5 million jobs in the last 5 years. Although it is an improvement, it is less than enough. By September 2017, records showed that the unemployment rate was at 39.1%. This is too high if you consider the fact that the country has at least 24 million youth between the ages 18 to 25 years of age.

Statistics show that Kenya has the highest unemployment rate if you compare it to other East African countries such as Tanzania with 24%, Rwanda 17.1%, Ethiopia with 21.6% and Uganda 18.1%. The records show that at least 80% of unemployed Kenyans are below the age of 35 years. Another contributing factor is said to be the downsizing done by companies due to the harsh economic environment.



FIGURE 10. Unemployment rate in Kenya

The fact that Kenya is still the strongest economy in East Africa shows that the decline in growth is not only affecting its citizens but also its neighbors. The United Nations report showed that as of 2017, Kenya has been experiencing its worst level of unemployment in the region. The side effects of this issue is a suffering economy something that the country has not been able to curb yet. Of course the political division which has been at its highest in the year 2017 does not help the situation.

History suggests that this division could take years before it gets better and this only cripples Kenya because other economies are growing and fast. This could mean that Kenya will be replaced as the strong East African economy by any of its neighbors, such as Rwanda. Of course there have been some positive sides to the small growth

rates experienced in Kenya. The positives according to the Human development report are;

- Improving access to education
- Health and sanitation
- Promotion of human development
- A steady amount of people rising out of poverty

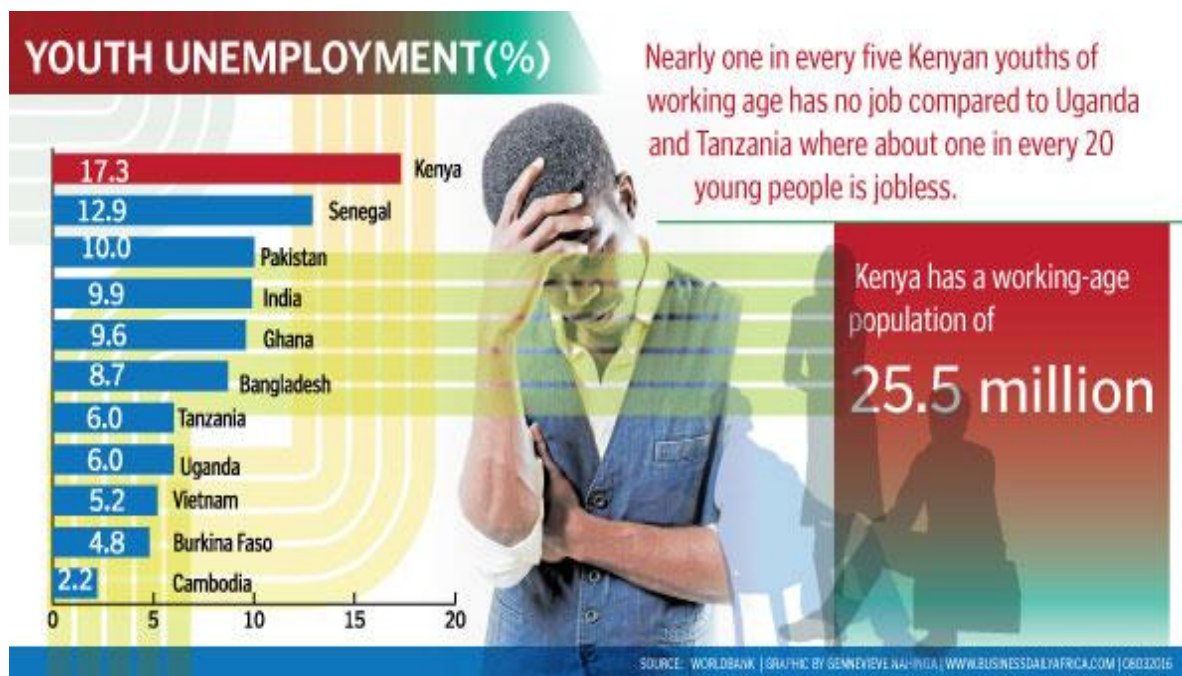


FIGURE 11. Youth unemployment

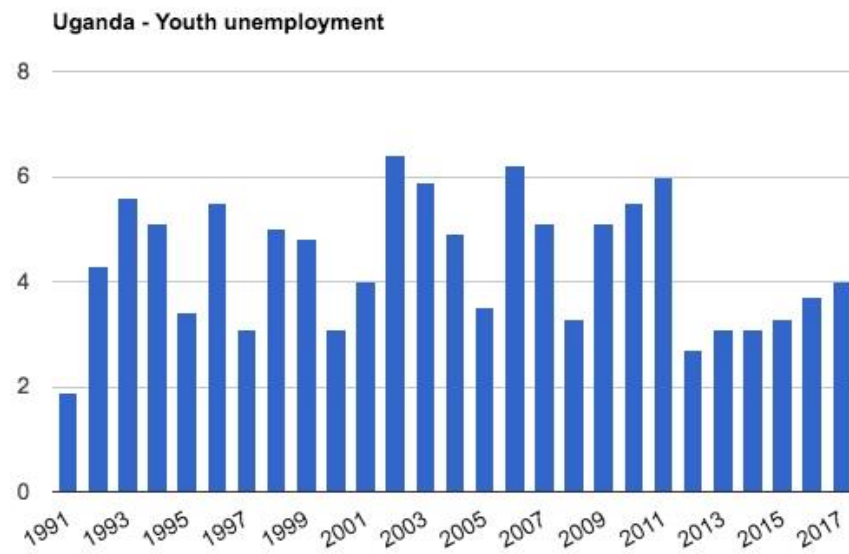
However, only a small portion of the population has experienced these improvements. Women, minority tribes and youths from low-income families have not yet tasted this small victory.

The effects of all these economic problems also mean that there is going to be a decline in internal growth of its people. One of these is language, this is because everyone uses a language to communicate but when there is a shift in terms of economy, education and peace, the people change, too. They start favoring one side to the other for personal, political or tribal reasons. In Kenya, the Kikuyu and Luo have been at loggerheads for more than 40 years because of the political leaders' habit of leaning on their tribal side. This is a problem that can be easily solved by encouraging people to use a more neutral language, such as Swahili. The best thing about this is that Swahili is already spoken by more than 80 million but if the leaders emphasized more on its benefits, the country would see a shift.

4.3 Unemployment in Uganda

Uganda has had the same president for more than 30 years, which means the policies and ideas have been recycled because there has been no change in matters of governance. It also means the youth have not been allowed a chance to participate in building their country and future. Poverty and illiteracy are to blame for most of these political

problems but tribal divisions play a bigger role, more than anything. Statistics suggest that 77% of Uganda's population is made up of youth who are under 30 years of age.



Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com, The World Bank

FIGURE 12. Youth unemployment in Uganda

5 SCHOOLS AND CURRICULUM

A famous historian once said that, in order for a language to flourish and strengthen itself, the environment and economy should be balanced or growing. With the East African current problems, Swahili has been affected positively and negatively, depending on how one looks at it. The positive being that there are more and more people in East Africa embracing the language, especially the youth, even with the old governments showing very little support. This is because most of them are educated and want to explore, mingle and travel within the region not as a tourist but as an East African citizen who can use the language to explore and enjoy the surroundings.

Studies have shown that children in Tanzania for example were able to do way better in their studies when they were taught in Swahili rather than English. This is because this is a language they use daily and are very familiar with. The decline in performance of most Kenyan schools could be because most children speak their mother tongue and Swahili at home but are forced to study in English only at school. Add this to the fact that the harsh and unstable economy keeps parents busy and away from home; meaning the children cannot use their parents' help.

Some of their parents were also not taught in English or Swahili but their mother tongue widening the division even more. With such a trend, it is no wonder that East Africa has been able to retain very few strong professionals or even benefit greatly from its education systems. In the last year and a half, Kenya has constructed one of its most expensive roads and railway lines in the East African region. But all the top constructors and architects were imported from Asia and Europe. The only jobs the Kenyans received were the minor ones such as cleaning, driving and so on. What this means is that most of the money spent on these projects was an investment to the Asian and European economies, even though the work was done and paid for by the Kenyan taxpayers.

This point does not mean that Swahili is the only solution but it is part of it, because every country needs its youth to be professional and competitive and this is only achieved when they are educated accordingly. In order to increase productivity, Kenya and other East African countries need to address the issue starting from the root, so they can prepare this young generation to not only compete for their place in the Kenyan market but the global one too. Using Swahili could help greatly because the young people are using this language while playing, partying, at home and everywhere, even at schools, when the teachers are not around.

5.1 Literacy levels

The literacy levels could be improved greatly if the young children could be nurtured through a curriculum they are more comfortable with. In the rural areas in Kenya, teachers teach all subjects in the area's local language. Keeping in mind that Kenya is home to at least 48 languages, this means millions of children in rural areas taught the same syllabus using all these languages; even though the law states that only English and Swahili should be used. The big problem is seen when they have to do the national exams known as KCPE (Kenya Certificate of Primary Education) and KCSE (Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education).

These exams are set in Nairobi, and every student in Kenya with an exception of those in the GCSE program, take this exam. So, those rural students who have learnt majority of their courses in their mother tongue are in deep trouble. Some of them do pass but most fail because they cannot understand the questions, which are in English except for the Swahili test. This is where the discrimination begins, these pupils are not only left behind but doomed, some forever. At least 60% of those students who have failed, end up doing odd jobs and cannot get out of poverty. The rest might enroll into some cheap courses in cheap private schools with questionable qualifications. This is where some graduates come from, with diplomas and degrees that have not prepared them to be competitive or ready for the real world.

If the government, had a strict system that ensured all teachers are competent and capable of teaching in one language that all know, this problem would be eradicated. In this case, teaching in Swahili should have been the law, because the language comes naturally to all Kenyans.

Now, while this is a good thing for the local tribes and pan-Africanism, it is a disaster for the youth's future. This practice leaves the students confused and misplaced, because once they join the university or the big cities where most of the jobs are located, they cannot find anything familiar. Add this to the fact that they have to compete with students who have had the privilege of enjoying the city experience where English and Swahili are used side by side.

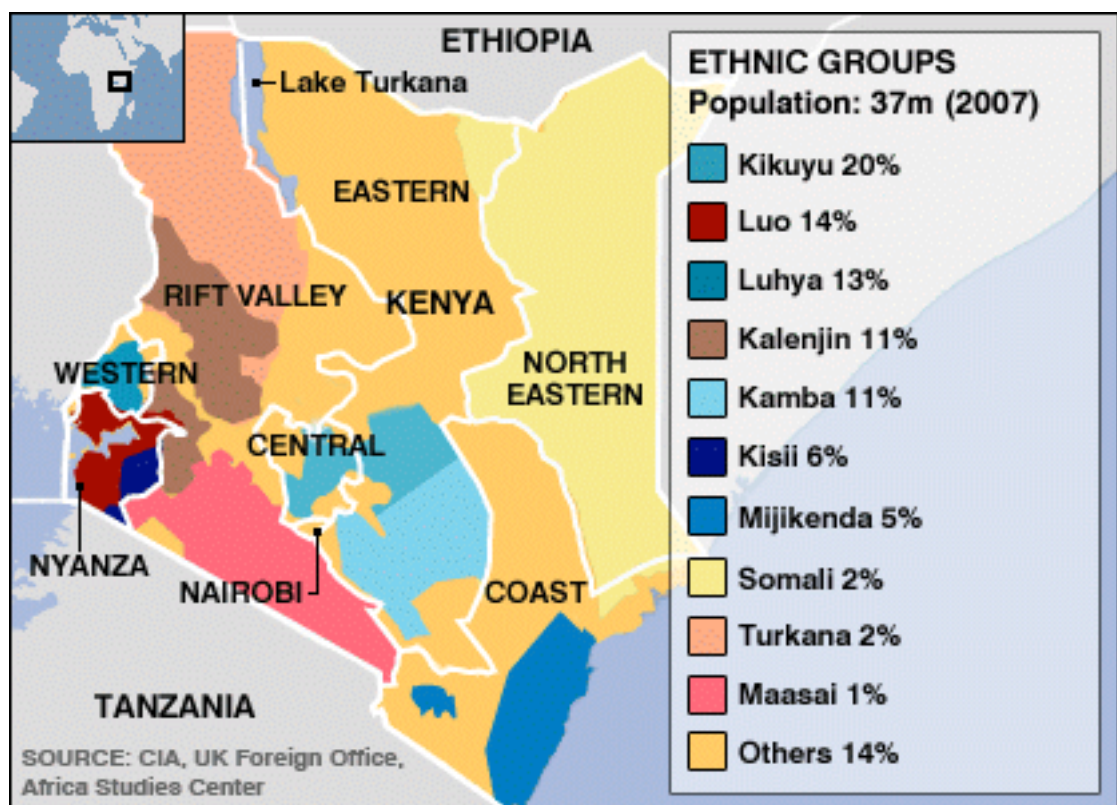


FIGURE 13. Map showing Kenyan tribes

According to The Guardian,² in every 3 pupils in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda fail to pass basic tests in numeracy, English and Swahili. This is a big failure for these countries because the same underperforming students are expected to one day get in the job market and contribute to their economy. Of the 350,000 students who were tested, less than 1 in 3 children were able to pass the Swahili test, only 1 in 6 passed the English test

and less than 1 in 6 passed the numeracy and literacy tests. English and Swahili are used as languages of instruction in Kenya and Tanzania, although Tanzania focuses on Swahili in the early stages and then introduces English later on in high school and university.

To explain the problem from one country to another, starting with Kenya. Kenya uses both languages but there is very little focus put on the language development. The little money directed to these subjects gets lost in corruption and embezzlement of public funds. In Tanzania, there is more confusion because at primary and secondary school level, Swahili is the language of instruction and then once one enters university, English is the only language used for majority of the lectures. What this move has done has confused the student even more because now they have to do transitioning to another language in a matter of months. The effects of these methods that have obviously been poorly planned have been a disadvantage to the young man or woman on the street who can barely communicate. Or the wrong use of both languages where the student is bilingual but not strong in either of the languages. No companies hire these kinds of graduates, leaving them with degrees in hand that will never help them further in their careers.

In Uganda, Swahili is hated by some and loved by others but all in all recognized even by those who do not understand it. This should be obvious because in all national celebrations, the Ugandan army addresses and performs in Swahili. Swahili is mandatory for every Ugandan who wishes to enroll in the army. How this is supposed to help the army bond and communicate with the locals remains to be seen.

However, the most important part about this move by the Ugandan government is that it makes it easy for the Ugandan army to work and collaborate with the rest of East Africa. This is because majority of the meetings pertaining to East African issues are organized in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya and sometimes in Tanzania or even Rwanda. Presidents Yoweri Museveni from Uganda and Paul Kagame from Rwanda have always used Swahili when attending National holidays inaugurations in Kenya and Uganda.

Companies and hiring process

There is no way any company is going to hire an individual who can barely write a basic sentence in the two languages they have been taught in schools. Now, just because these poor students fail in their tests does not mean that they are useless to the economy. This is because when you walk around the streets of Kawangware or Kibera in Kenya or Morogoro in Tanzania, you meet plenty of youths who have dreams, hopes, plans and even creative ideas. When you ask them how come no one has hired them, it all comes down to one factor, education level. Some people have only received the basic education and because higher education is expensive in Africa, they had to stop. Some East African universities have even been accused of churning out underdeveloped professionals, who cannot perform as per the company's expectations.

It has been reported that all East African countries have millions of students who have qualified and passed their tests, but cannot compete in the global market. Most of these problems arise because the students could not ask questions in class or express themselves confidently. For some of them the main reason has been language or ability to express himself or herself. For example, some of the writer's friends and cousins were educated in local schools in different parts of Kenya and East Africa and it has always

been a challenge bonding with most of them because they can only express themselves in one local language.

Some experts have blamed the government's poor investment in education and others talk about brain drain. Both of these factors have contributed to the multitude of problems. But the country's politics are to blame for everything, this is because politicians are professionals at taking sides to their benefit. This competition leaves Kenya to be in small sections instead of one big country, something Tanzania has partially successfully done.

5.2 Costs of higher education

The Kenyan government introduced in the year 2000 a law that made education 'free' for every Kenyan. This was part of the Millennium Development goals supported by the Kibaki government and everyone rejoiced over it. The goal was to eradicate poverty and raise literacy in numbers.

However, this plan slowly became more expensive for parents and the government because it was not well planned or executed. It introduced not just low standards but also produced students who have very little knowledge and can barely read and write.

The government has been slow to react for political reasons but there are a few options that could have helped balance this issue. For example, using temporary language tutors who could ensure that every child is comfortable in their use of at least one more language other than their mother tongue. This would mean hiring and investing heavily on Swahili and English teachers. It would of course be fast and cheaper to hire Swahili teachers because it is Kenya's own language. Plus, more help could be borrowed or loaned from Tanzania, which has amazing Swahili programs.

Also, most East African governments try to make all universities equal and the same, which has had little success, this is because all students are different and sometimes need their focus to be in different areas. For example, there are very few institutions of higher education that offer linguistic degree or bachelor programs. Yet these countries have more than 300 languages all together.

Lowering the cost of higher education is key in achieving economic growth, this is because if every capable student can receive the necessary education then the companies and startups would benefit as well. Kenya's former Prime minister was quoted saying, higher education in Kenya is "turning millions of parents into paupers and killing the dreams of millions of students".

Challenges in education: High costs of professional education

- Covering cost of professional education in East Africa is a challenge
- Median costs are unaffordable for most due to liquidity constraints/absence of loans even if internal rates of return and skill premia are high

	Profession	Years	Total Costs (USD)
Uganda	Lawyer (low/high avg.)	5	16,505
	Accountant (low/high avg.)	6	20,506
	Engineer (low/high avg.)	4	14,705
Tanzania	Lawyer	6	13,438
	Accountant (low/high avg.)	6	24,161
	Engineer	10	10,779
Rwanda	Lawyer	10	27,992
	Accountant	8	12,786
	Engineer (low/high avg.)	6	17,514
Kenya	Lawyer (low/high avg.)	6	14,096
	Accountant (low/high avg.)	5	11,918
	Engineer (low/high avg.)	4	11,793



FIGURE 14. Education costs in Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda

More than 100 universities in the eastern African region are members of the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA). This program is supposed to make it easier and less expensive for students in the EA region to fully benefit from the area's educational programs. But this has not made it possible for students from poor families to access higher education, mostly because the institutions require a student to pay the money up front and a full amount, making it difficult for most to complete the four-year course. For example, to study law would cost "US\$7,700 in Kenya, compared with US\$2,670 at Dar es Salaam and US\$2,850 at Makerere respectively, where the degree takes a minimum of three years."

6 BONGO FLAVOR

The East African music scene is unfairly dominated by Tanzanian music also known as “Bongo Flavor.” This is a genre that was introduced around the early 1990’s in Tanzania. It appropriated American R&B and Hip Hop and made it available for the Tanzanian and Kenyan markets. As of 2017, every East African youth probably knows more Tanzanian artists than they do their own local artists. This is mostly because the Bongo Flavor scene has grown rapidly in the last ten years, marking its place not only in the East African but the African market. Some Nigerians, Moroccans and even South Africans may not know much about Swahili or even Tanzania, but they have heard some Bongo flavor before.

The music is simple and easily understood by the locals of these countries and sometimes there are one or two lines in English, this is done to attract the international fanatics. Some of the most famous Bongo artists are; Diamond Platnumz, Aslay, Juma Nature, Ray C, Vanessa Mdee, Matonya, Alikiba and many others. Some of these have been nominated for international awards such as BET and European Music Awards which happen annually in Europe and the United States of America.

Bongo Flavor strictly uses Swahili, parts of it are urban or street and the other is standard. It is also one of the only well defined genres in the East African music industry. Some people previously called this the ‘swahilization’ of Hip Hop, but this is not the full story because this type of art borrows heavily from all genres and even Taarab, which is a type of Swahili music, sung mostly by women. Taarab is sung only in Swahili with maybe one or two English or tribal words but this is rare. This is because Taarab borrows heavily from the Arabic music scene, the Muslim community and even Swahili history. It was a channel for women on the east African coastal areas to express themselves.



FIGURE 15. Bongo song lyrics in English and Swahili

Slums and stardom

For the past seven years or so, Kenyan and Ugandan artists have been complaining that their music is ignored and instead, the clubs and radios have given Bongo music more airplay. For most Kenyans, this has been a slight shock because for a certain period of time, Tanzanian artists were ignored because they could only sing in Swahili.

However, this has changed and now the youth are mostly listening to Bongo Flavor. This can be seen by the amount of views a Bongo video gets compared to a song from Kenya, Uganda or even Rwanda. For example, Diamond Platnumz who is the most popular as of December 2017 has more than 100 million videos counted from his top five hits. He is well known all over Africa and partially in the United States of America because he has collaborated with some of the biggest names in the United States of America.

He is also always ridiculed for his little knowledge when it comes to English because he did not continue his studies past high school. But even with no English skills to support him, he has still managed to expose Tanzanian music not only to other African countries but the United States of America as well. This is to show that there are huge benefits in using Swahili as a language, even in music. He is one of the many examples of artists who have excelled using Swahili alone, no degrees or fancy English diplomas. Bongo artists are always trending in East, West and South African music scenes and social platforms such as YouTube.

It is hard to say how much money any of these artists make because there is no way to acquire the exact numbers. But they are successful enough to buy better houses, live in estates meant for the elite and rich and drive fancy cars. All these are different and more improved versions if they are compared to how these artists grew up or the conditions that they lived under.

Some of them are from slums and come from extreme poverty. For example, Diamond Platnumz used to sell clothes along the streets as a hawker and now he is a rich artist who lives comfortably and can provide for his family just like any other higher middle class. He has even confessed to “selling my mom’s” rings in order to book studio time. This is an artist that in Nairobi might not have received much attention because of the emphasis on English and Sheng. But he still proved that a local language such as Swahili was just as powerful as English. He has had contracts and endorsement deals with companies as big as Vodacom among others.

Reaching the youth

His success story has not only reminded East Africans that Swahili is just as relevant as any other language but that it has the reach and power to attract masses. It has shown companies that they no longer have to endorse international big names to sell products because people want to see a familiar face and the person can be a local Swahili singer. The best part about the success of Bongo music is that it has encouraged the youth to speak, sing, party and converse more using Swahili and explore the language in a way they were not doing before using music. There are so many artists in Kenya and Uganda who have ventured into writing their lyrics in Swahili in order to compete for the local customer who is one of their main consumers.

One thing that every person can notice when they go to a Diamond Platnumz concert is how all people come together despite their tribal or political differences. The masses of people buy tickets to come together and enjoy good music that they can relate to. Music sung in a language they are very comfortable in. Although this might not have a lasting impact that goes beyond the concert night, it still shows the power of Swahili.

East Africa’s biggest failure is the lack of promotion when it comes to art. There are still so many parents and leaders who think that the only career one should have is in the office as a banker, lawyer or doctor. The same applies with leaders, most of whom are older and very traditional; they only value white-collar jobs compared to being a professional athlete or a recording artist. The governments do not even include this in their yearly budgets even though studies have shown that the youth are more liberal in their career choices. Art is still largely considered to be a hobby and not a career option, not just in East Africa but also on the rest of the African continent.

7 EAST AFRICAN ECONOMY

The East African Community is made of 5 countries, namely Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi. This is an intergovernmental organization that has merged countries with the aim of uniting and strengthening them when it comes to trade and other political issues such as solving conflicts and helping each other grow. This organization was created with a vision to create a more “prosperous, competitive, secure, stable and politically united East Africa.”

In the year 2005 the countries pledged to maintain a common customs and excise tariffs. The EAC has its headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania and holds yearly summits. The presidency rotates from one member president to another.

Issues handled by the EAC offices include:

- Promotion of Swahili as a common language
- Coordination of public health policy
- Funding sustainable development initiatives
- Promoting and funding research organizations
- Unifying the East African market to increase productivity

The year 2017 showed so much hope when it comes to economic growth in the East African region. It is reported that much of Africa’s growth in the year 2016 “was driven by East Africa.” (AfDB African development bank). The East African country showing the highest growth rate was Ethiopia at 5.3%. This has been good news for the region because the last few years had been slow and growth was lacking. It however has not been the best news for Kenya, which was leading as the region’s strongest economy and now has been overtaken by smaller economies such as Rwanda and Ethiopia.

There are several reasons why some parts of Africa flourished while others suffered. A good example of this is the West African region, which despite its richness in minerals still experienced a slow almost non-existent growth because of the political and economic problems in Nigeria.

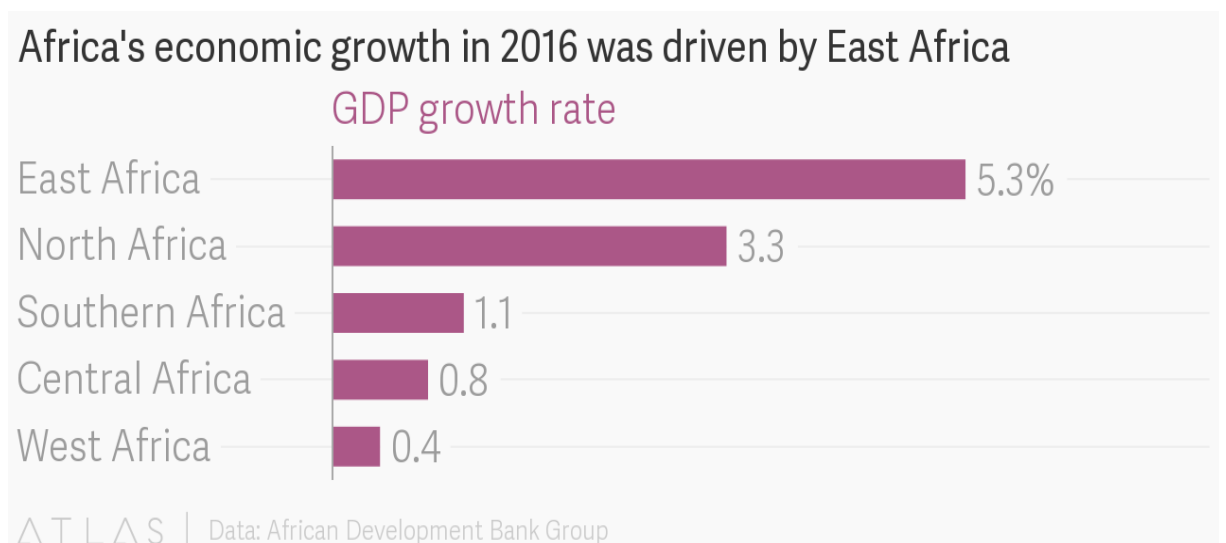


FIGURE 16. Africa’s economic growth in 2016

7.1 EAC passport

The EAC passport is to take effect from January 2018, replacing analogue forms of identification. This document will allow every citizen of an East African country to travel with the region freely.

7.2 Comparing Ethiopia and other East African economies

According to the International Monetary Fund report, the reasons why the Ethiopian economy has gone through this immense change is because of;

- It managed to attract more Chinese investors
- High population of at least 102 million people
- Government's decision to invest heavily on infrastructure
- Modern railway, roads and power plants
- Strong demand by the locals
- Power supply to neighbors such as Djibouti and Sudan

Although comparing Ethiopia and other East African states side-by-side would be assumed to be unfair, there are so many reasons why Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and even Tanzania could borrow or even copy ideas from Ethiopia. These four countries could use their similarities to increase their economic growth, these are; language and a similarity in traditions, education system, laws and even tribes. Most tribes or groups of people found in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda are so similar because they were once living together before colonialism and introduction of formal borders. Of course this would depend heavily on how much cohesiveness is possible amongst the leaders. This is because the East African Community has just finalised its plan on the EAC passport, and it is considered to be an economic suicide to give other EAC members any ideas of segregation.

Before EAC, there was a partnership or trade agreement between Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, which was abolished to include South Sudan, Rwanda and Burundi. So, the way forward from here is to invite and cooperate with the other neighbors and not separate but collaborate. This is not just for politics but learning from each other, especially because some of them have very progressive economies already, which all neighbors can benefit from. But this is still doable because there would be more that KETAU can accomplish together than apart. It can be done on basis of language where the three countries participate in projects where Swahili is used to empower the less educated adults. This will not only nurture and preserve the language but also bring people together and help the smaller communities make a decent living. Once the smaller communities are stable, it is obvious that the economies will notice a positive change.

The benefits of Swahili in this case are that it will speed up the process of cohesion when it comes to rounding up the youth and even local investors. It also distributes the risk so no country has to bear all the risk or have the profit once the process begins. For example, KETAU could reinvent them by starting programs where the youth are involved, in being innovative and suggesting ways in which the government can grow its economy, while using every skill within its borders. This would go from the local taxi driver, the priest, Imam, doughnut hawker or even jobless graduate. These are all part of the future generation, so they would be the best tool in deciding and coming up with a plan that will not only help KETAU, East Africa but Africa and the global market, too.

7.3 Entrepreneurship and SMEs

Local businesses still fail to get the recognition that they need, even though they account for almost half of Kenya's growth. However, there are so many factors that do hinder the growth of this industry, some of them being:

- Lack of sufficient help and recognition from the government
- Poor and disorganized infrastructure
- Inadequate capital
- Corruption
- Slow and ambiguous city council laws
- Inadequate knowledge and skills
- Rapid changes in technology

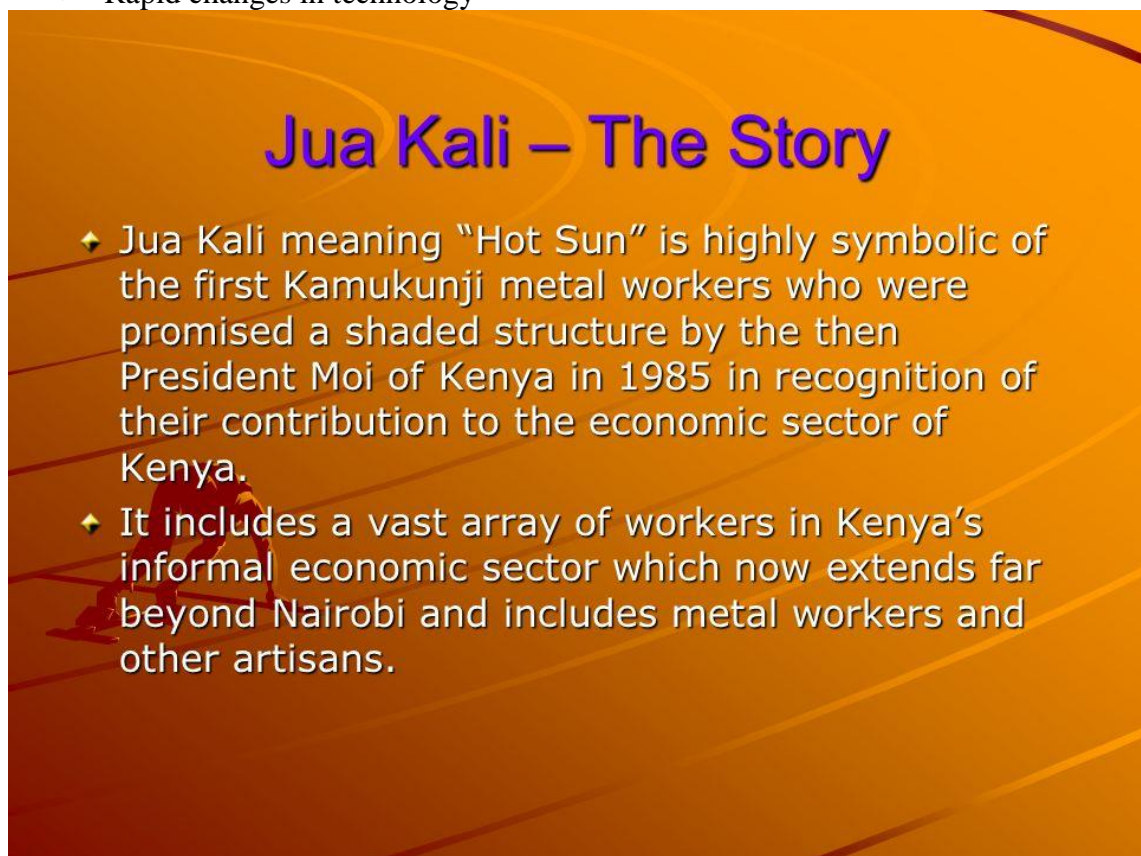


FIGURE 17. Jua Kali





In Kenya the ‘jua kali’ sector is the informal sector, which includes all informal businesses that the government does not acknowledge. These range from selling tomatoes on the street, matatu driver, boda boda workers, and hairdressers to part time tutoring. This section is made of those who have not been successful in finding jobs so they created their own ones. It constitutes of at least 98% of the country's businesses, contributes 30% of jobs and 3% of the country's GDP. Kenya's vision 2030 aims at finding ways to integrate and fully recognize these small-scale businesses. As of 2017, the government does not recognize or even tax them despite the fact that most families survive on these businesses in one way or another. This has made it even harder for banks to offer them loans but this is slowly changing.

The reasons why the Kenyan government cannot consider them include:

- They do not have any permanent addresses and move often
- Some are undereducated

- Lack of bank accounts
- Traditional laws have not caught up to this wave
- City council laws are vague and too formal for these traders to understand
- Poor connection between these traders and the corporate world
- Language issues because some might only be conversant in their own mother tongue and Swahili. Kenya's business languages are mainly English and Swahili, although Swahili is rarely used.
- Lack of a formal definition of this sector leading struggles in gaining capital or even loans from banks
- They are not considered as 'real' businesses
- Resentment towards the government because of its reluctance to help them. Making the traders not want to pay anything to the city councils

Exhibit 5: Highlighted country strengths and challenges

	Strengths	Areas for improvement
Kenya 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong physical space and network capability • Government involvement through ICT Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few trusted networks and mentorship • Finance for seed stage entrepreneurs • Onerous regulatory regime
Rwanda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best-in-Africa business set-up process • Highly engaged government support for ICT • Educational anchor through KIST 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on BPO and contract services • Access to markets for local SMEs • Limited trusted networks and mentorship
Tanzania 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upcoming infoDev supported incubator • Emerging grassroots entrepreneur network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community for entrepreneurs • Technical skills and practical experience gap • Limited market and investment funding
Uganda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide set of active business networks and associations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of incubation facilities for early stage companies • Limited "hands on" government involvement




FIGURE 18. Country strengths and challenges

7.4 Foreign investment

There are different reasons why some countries receive more foreign investments than others, the most common ones being;

- Political environment
- Skills available in the young graduates
- Growth rate
- Security and promotion of one's country
- Country's future plan for the global market
- Friendliness between countries
- Level of corruption

It is reported that complicated procedures have led to a low interest rates when it comes to investing in the East African region. These include, registering businesses, procuring business permits, tax implementation and transparency in how issues are handled.

Countries such as Rwanda for example have decided on special economic zones while Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda only use export-processing zones. This is a sign of difference in decision-making, when it comes to how one country's contribution could impact it and hence increases its benefits. What this means is that every country is looking after its own interests, which seems fine but if the region has to speed its progress then a common goal should be set. In addition, this would need all the contribution that the youth can give. Also, with the majority of the youths living or having grown up in areas where Swahili is the most common language, investing in the language and recognizing its importance is the key.

Mobilizing of the youth is easy as long as they feel valued and not sectioned into elite and others, which is what happens when governments only put more emphasis on English, French and Arabic. Not only do these languages confuse a big percentage of these young leaders but also lower their chances of getting jobs. Creating an environment where East Africans can finally feel accepted, and that everyone's contribution matters is the way forward; especially because only the lucky few manage to enroll at universities because of the high cost.

8 DISCUSSION

Languages and beliefs change over time, the same can be said about the attitude of East Africans towards the Swahili language. 50 years ago very many were against the idea of embracing or even passing another language to their children but it happened anyway. With the new generation being more open to new ideas and practises, there is so much hope for the language and East Africa in general.

There are so many lessons derived from this research, some of them have been known for a while and others were new to the writer. The ones that stand out the most are for example; the EAC passport and the new law that requires each member state to have their people to learn Swahili. What this means is that the future generations are not only going to be multilingual but also Swahili speakers who will be able to travel and interact using Swahili within the EAC. Of course it is to be expected that some communities might resist the idea of something new but with over 100 million speakers, hopefully they will change their minds. From this study it is seen that the Swahili language is responsible for the unity that the young governments are able to use to unite their people.

National unity and politics benefit the most when there is peace and stability in a country but since most governments are old fashioned this might take more time. With historical atrocities such as the Rwandan genocide and the recent post election violence in Kenya, most have learnt and realized the presence of underlying tribal tensions. This has encouraged governments to work together and strive to maintain peace and stability because global competition increases daily; and countries lacking stability cannot compete at the same level as peaceful ones.

In the future, other countries will hopefully see a good example from East Africa and try to find ways to cooperate when it comes to growing and strengthening economies. If leaders have learnt anything from the past, it is that regardless of political opinions, everyone wants peace and a good quality of life. All of these can only be achieved when there is unity and a strong economy where all contribute their skills into building a strong competitive nation. A common language is a good starting point, and Swahili has already proven how effective it is.

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