

The Role of Kiswahili in enhancing the Potential of Science and Technology

by

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Abstract

The 21st Century is widely considered to be the epoch of science and technology. Many institutions of higher learning, including Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology in Kenya, are developing academic programmes in science and Technology in order to foster national development and ultimately improve the quality of life in society. For this reason, most institutions embrace a multidisciplinary approach where programmes in science, engineering, humanities and languages are integrated. The integrated approach in higher education has raised a number of pertinent questions: What is the role of higher institutions of science and technology? What is the place of language within the integrated approach? Can Kiswahili make any contribution in enhancing the potential of science and technology in development?

This paper seeks to provide answers to the foregoing questions by illustrating the centrality of language as a medium of creating, transmitting and disseminating knowledge in science and technology, with specific reference to English and Kiswahili in Kenya. It is observed that the current age of science and technology is characterized by knowledge and information explosion; whoever accesses and utilizes these two commodities speedily has advantage over others. Efficiency and effectiveness of the medium that the knowledge and information are transmitted in thus becomes a key factor. Thus, the paper suggests concrete steps that can be taken by institutions of higher learning, planners, policy makers and scholars to ensure that the two languages, Kiswahili and English, facilitate the contribution of science and technology to development.