

Education For All:

In Whose Language? Language of Instruction in Lesotho Schools



Stephen Backman

PhD candidate, teacher education, Michigan State University

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238 HRCB

Stephen Backman has conducted studies at primary schools in Lesotho to see how teaching through English is practiced in the classroom. Most African nations continue to use the language of their former colonizers (English, French, and Portuguese) as the official language of instruction at schools. A number of scholars claim this practice has shut out many African children from gaining a sufficient education that has practical application to their lives. This year Backman received a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad fellowship to conduct research with local stakeholders (teachers, students, and parents) in education in Lesotho to learn more about their attitudes toward the English medium policy and how it can be changed or implemented in a way that has greater application to the local stakeholders lives. His presentation will include video clips from a few Lesotho classrooms and discussion on how the current language of instruction policy affects instruction at these schools. After serving in the Johannesburg South Africa Mission (1995–97), Backman participated in a field study in Tanzania in 1998, returned as a facilitator for the program (1999–2001), and taught Swahili at BYU (2000–02). Following graduation, he left for Michigan State University (MSU), where he has been pursuing a master's degree in linguistics and a PhD in teacher education. While at MSU, Backman conducted educational research and studied the Sesotho language in Lesotho during two summers (2004, 2005) and led an MSU study abroad program for education and society in South Africa and Lesotho (summer 2006).

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