

INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS' ATTITUDE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION POLICY.

Martha Nyaboke Omweri

(Department of Early Childhood Studies, Kenyatta University)

Mobile: +254725 75 88 73

Email:marthanyaboke@gmail.com

Corresponding Author

Dr.Mugo,W.Juliet

Mobile: +25472283 90 01

Email:julietmugo2@gmail.com;mugo.juliet@ku.ac.ke

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to investigate on implementation of the language of instruction policy in pre-unit and lower primary classes in Kasarani, Nairobi County, Kenya. The need to carry out the study arose from the growing concern by various researchers that using the language of the catchment area (LOCA) or mother tongue (MT) as a medium of instruction in lower primary classes had been displaced by English. This is in spite of the research findings that language of the catchment area is crucial to the learning process. Specifically the purpose of the study was to determine the teachers' attitude on the implementation of language of instruction policy in pre-unit and lower classes and suggest interventions to enhance its implementation. The researcher adopted a descriptive research design, using the survey method. All the 150 lower primary schools within the division, their head teachers/directors, 600 class teachers and 900 parents formed the target population of the study. The research was carried out on a sample of 45 (30%) primary schools which were randomly selected according to strata, their head teachers, 90 teachers and a similar number of parents. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. Prior to the study, piloting was conducted in five schools (two public and three private). Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to analyze data. Specifically, quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive analysis and data exploration. Preliminary reports and conclusions were based on descriptive statistics mainly frequencies and percentages and presented using charts, figures and text. Qualitative data were organized in themes and reported according to the research questions. Language of instruction determines the quality of education and therefore should be a language which is understandable to both learners and teachers. The study revealed that although majority of teachers were aware of the language policy and supported the use of language of catchment area for instruction, they were not using it because they found it

challenging to use to teach all subjects. Some of the suggestions made for intervention included: stepping up awareness of this policy to parents and teachers, training of teachers and in-servicing those already trained on the use of language of the catchment area (Kiswahili) for instruction.

Introduction

Language of instruction is a vehicle through which education is delivered. Qorro, (2006), sees a close relationship between the role of language of instruction and water pipes in the manner in which both accomplish their mission. Just as a pipe acts as a medium of carrying water from one area to the other, the language of instruction is the medium which enables knowledge to flow from the source (teachers) to learners and amongst learners. It is important and paramount that the language of instruction be a language which is clear and understandable to both the learners and teachers. This will enable free debate and interactions as this is important to learning for it has a lot to tell on the quality of education. Cummins, (1979) and Krashon, (1985) suggests that the language of instruction is a vital tool/factor in defining the quality of education.

Early childhood curriculum internationally and in Kenya emphasizes the use of language of the catchment area/mother tongue for instruction at lower primary level. This is important as young children come to school when they are fluent in a language spoken in their home environment. Studies have shown that majority of lower primary teachers instruct young children in English yet it is not their first language. Though several studies have been done on the use of mother tongue in lower primary in Kenya, most of them have been focused on the rural areas. For example, Begi, (2014) focuses on the use of mother tongue in Kisii, Kericho and Bondo. Therefore there was need to focus on the implementation of the policy in urban areas where children in schools are from varied language backgrounds.

This study focused on the urban areas where Kiswahili which is the language of the catchment area is expected to be used for instruction.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to establish the influence of teachers' attitude on the implementation of language of instruction policy in pre-unit and lower primary classes.

Literature Review

According to Baker (1992, p.96) attitude to a language is partially important in the learning process because it affects the outcomes of education. Attitude was considered both as input and output. For example, a favourable attitude towards language learning is a vital input in language achievement. In this sense, attitude is a predisposing factor that affects the outcomes of education. Values and attitudes are some of the basic components of motivation in any given situation, language use included. The way teachers felt about the language they were exposed to within the school setting influenced how they used these languages during classroom instruction. How they used languages also influenced how their learners used the language. Basically, when an individual was confronted with more than one language, it led to a consideration of linguistic attitudes of the individual Omulando (2004, p.116)

Fullan (2001) states that for teachers to implement a new change in education like the language policy they should understand its objectives and importance and if they do not, they will resist the innovation. This means that a new change if introduced in a haphazard manner will not bring the desired changes.

According to Stern (1975, p.1) evidence indicated that teacher attitudes towards educational change were extremely influential in either facilitating or hindering the installation of a change relative to that issue while Karavas-Doukas (1991) postulates that introducing a new program like MTB-MLE created competition with well-established theories of language teaching and learning

which are the product of previous teaching and learning experiences, prejudice and beliefs. She went on to note that teacher attitudes were often unconsciously held and had a direct effect on what happened in the classroom, including teaching styles. Attitude change is thus a critical component of any pedagogical innovation

Failure to consider earlier experiences of teachers is a great obstacle to the assimilation of new ideas and practices that teachers are encouraged to adopt; moreover, encouraging teachers to reflect on their existing beliefs and behaviours could help them become more open-minded to alternative perspectives and be ready to modify their knowledge and work in ways that are consistent with their developing views and research based standards Kuzborska (2011, p.103).

In a study investigating on teachers Dingwal (1985) indicates that attitude can help identify the difficulties teachers face when implementing curricular innovations in the classroom and will go a long way to help in establishing the most appropriate kind of support that is needed in in-service teacher development. Breen (1991) also says that it is hard to change attitudes and beliefs if we do not know what they are in the first place.

This study was thus set to find out the attitude of lower primary teachers and whether it had any significant influence on the use of language of catchment area for instruction.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive design that used survey method to collect data. In the study the researcher carried out an in-depth investigation to establish the teachers' attitude towards using Kiswahili for instruction at pre-primary and lower primary classes and how this influenced the implementation of the language policy. As the method dictates, the researcher prepared questionnaires which were administered to the teachers as well as head teachers in the study.

The study was conducted in pre-unit and lower primary classrooms in Kasarani Sub-County, Nairobi, Kenya. The location was randomly selected as a representative of other sub-counties in Nairobi. This location was suitable because it helped to establish how teachers felt and their experience in the use of Kiswahili for instruction.

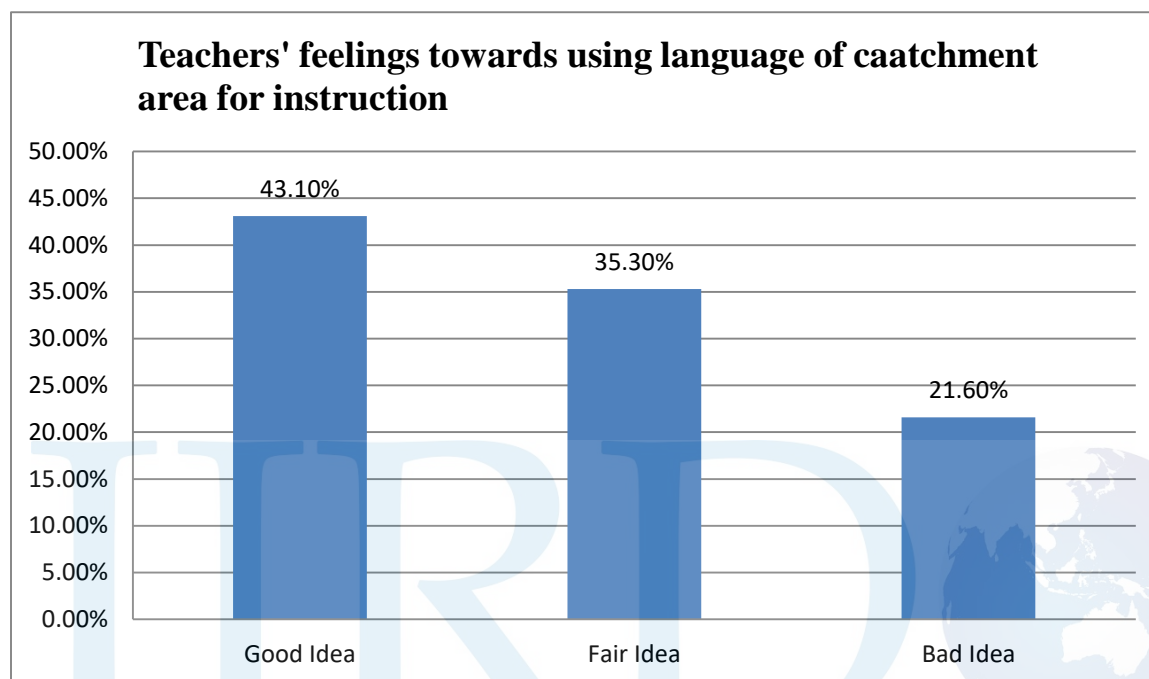
Out of the 150 primary schools in Kasarani Sub-County which was randomly selected; 45(30%) schools were sampled. The 27 public and 123 private schools were listed down according to their strata. Then, 8(30%) public schools and 37(30%) private were randomly selected by rotary from the 27 and 123 respectively. As for teachers, 90(30%) out of the total 600(two per each category of school) were selected.

Data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. The coded data was entered into SPSS spreadsheet after which formulae was applied to determine the percentages of the variables under study. The data was presented in descriptive statistics mainly frequency counts and percentages and presented using bar graphs, pie charts and frequency tables. Qualitative data were organized into themes and reported according to the research objectives.

Findings and Discussions

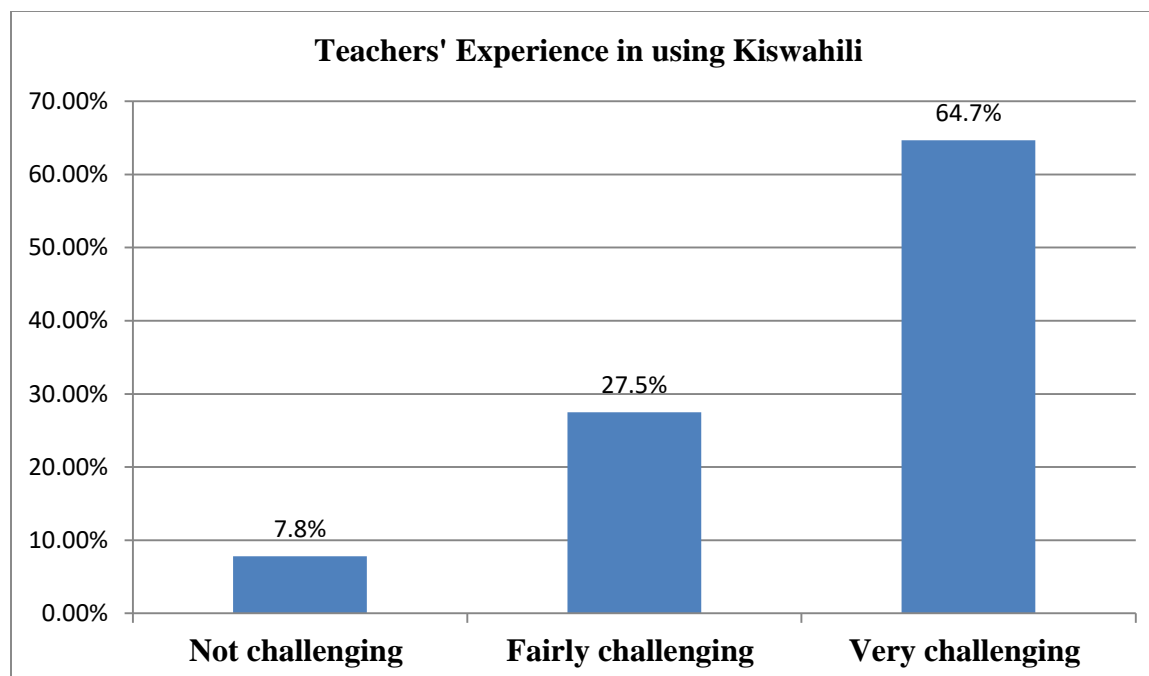
This section seeks to answer the objective that was to assess the influence of teachers' attitude on the implementation of the language of instruction policy in pre-unit and lower primary classes. In other words, the study partly sought to establish the ways in which the teachers perceived this policy since the language of instruction policy requires them to use language of the catchment area for instruction (Kiswahili in this case). This was premised on the idea that such a perception is partly an indication of the value placed on that language or lack of it. Accordingly, on a three-point

scale of Good idea, fair idea and bad idea, the teachers were asked to indicate their feelings towards using the language of the catchment area for instruction in lower classes. Their responses were as indicated below:



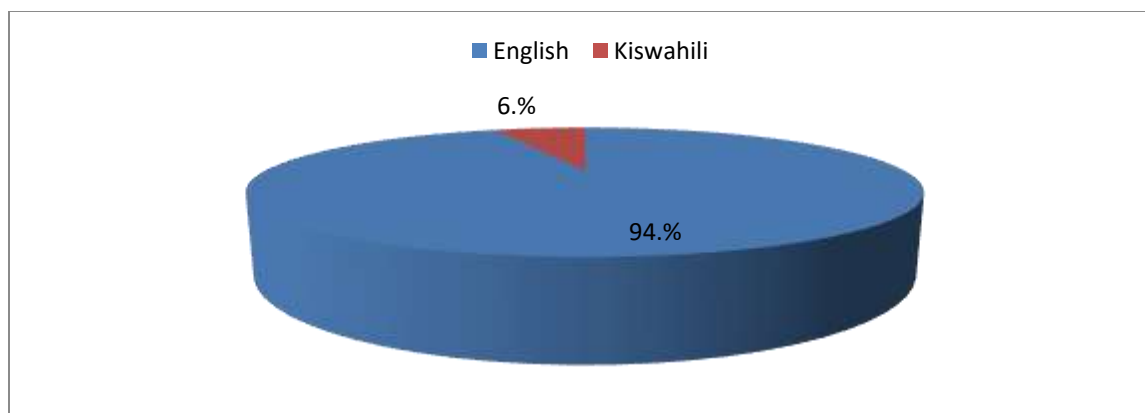
The findings for teachers' feelings towards using language of the catchment area for instruction indicated that a majority of 43.1% felt it was a good idea with 35.3% feeling that it was a fair idea. However, 21.6% of the sampled teachers who participated in this study felt that it was bad idea.

Secondly teachers' experience in using Kiswahili to teach all subjects was investigated. They were required to say whether they found teaching all subjects in Kiswahili language was very challenging, fairly challenging or not challenging. The results were presented in the figure below.



From the above figure, it was clear that majority of the sampled teachers (64.7%) found teaching all subjects in Kiswahili rather than English to be very challenging, while (27.5%) found it fairly challenging and only a few, (7.8%) said it was not challenging. Some of the reasons were that some concepts in maths and science subjects were hard to explain in Kiswahili. Furthermore, there were no reference materials written in Kiswahili for these subjects making it difficult to translate concepts from English to Kiswahili. Therefore, most teachers found teaching all subjects using Kiswahili difficult rather than English. Consequently, this indicated an attitudinal barrier in the implementation of the language of instruction policy that requires teachers to teach children in lower primary in the language of the catchment area, in this case, Kiswahili.

The researcher also sought to know the language of instruction preferred by teachers. 94% of the teachers indicated that they preferred using English and only 6% preferred using Kiswahili for instruction.



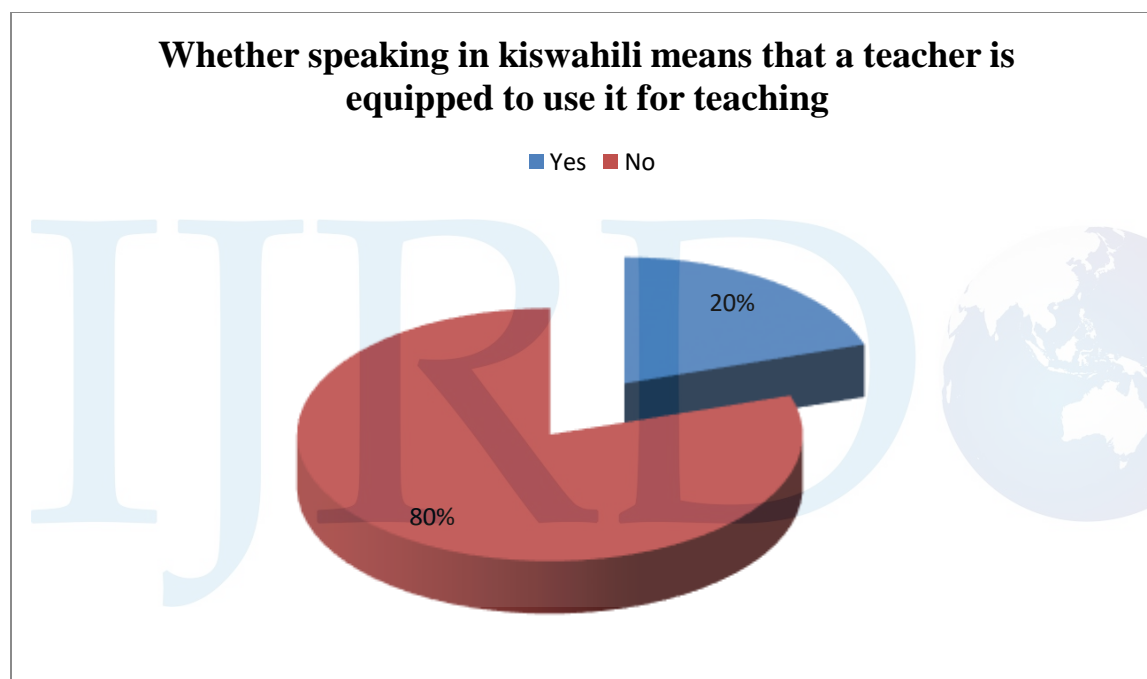
From figure , it was indeed, fascinating to observe that (94%) of the teachers who were expected to implement this policy in relation to using language of the catchment area that is Kiswahili preferred teaching in English. What this means is that the government has such an uphill task in securing the teachers' preparedness in using Kiswahili as a medium of instruction. It may also be interpreted to mean that there other factors, not only just outside the school but also inside the school that worked against the smooth implementation of this policy. For instance, lack of relevant materials in Kiswahili language for use by teachers and incompetence of teachers in using Kiswahili to explain concepts.

The Ministry of Education had intended that this policy to be implemented beginning from the time it was floated even though no prior preparation of teachers happened at any level or at any point in time. It must, therefore, have been thought that since teachers who teach in any given location are almost always capable of speaking the language of the catchment area, they would readily embrace this policy and go ahead to implement it.

However, from the foregoing findings of the attitudes and language preferences on the part of the teachers; it appeared that this does not always happen. It can therefore be generally said, that speaking in a particular language by a teacher does not always mean that he/she is well equipped

to use it for teaching in class as explained in their questionnaires, they felt incompetent because during their training, the use of Kiswahili/mother tongue for instruction was not emphasized.

The researcher therefore sought to confirm this position by asking teachers to indicate their opinion regarding whether they thought speaking Kiswahili language means that a teacher is equipped to use it for teaching in class. Their responses are as presented in the figure below:



From the figure above, it was clear that the majority of the teachers (80%) did not think that speaking Kiswahili meant that one was equipped to use it for teaching in class against a minority (20%) who thought otherwise. Given that these were the teachers speaking, there was a way in which these responses could be interpreted. The study having been carried out in Kasarani sub-county in Nairobi, where almost all the teachers spoke Kiswahili could be interpreted to mean that in spite of the fact that they spoke Kiswahili, it should not be assumed that they were well equipped to teach all subjects in Kiswahili.

Generally, teachers' attitude towards the use of the language of the catchment area for instruction was not very positive. This is because though they were aware of the policy, they were not implementing it from their responses in the questionnaires where only 40% felt it was good to use Kiswahili for instruction. About their experiences in using Kiswahili for instruction, majority (65%) found it very challenging. Some of the reasons were that it was difficult to explain some concepts in Maths and sciences using Kiswahili. In addition, there were no reference materials written in Kiswahili for these subjects making it hard to translate from English to Kiswahili. When asked their preferred language (94%) chose English over Kiswahili. It was also noted that (80%) of the teachers confirmed that speaking Kiswahili was not enough to make them competent in using it for instruction.

Studies done earlier on teachers showed that they play an important role in the education sector. Their attitude towards any educational policy and change matters a lot to realize positive results. This study sought to determine the influence of teachers' attitude on the implementation of the language of instruction policy in pre-unit and lower primary classes in Kasarani sub-county. The findings proved that the teachers' attitude towards using language of catchment for instruction were negative thus affecting the implementation.

The findings were in agreement with Stern (1975) who found that teacher attitudes towards educational change were extremely influential in either facilitating or hindering the installation of change relative to that issue. The findings also agree with Karavas-Doukas (1991) who established that introducing a new program like MTB-MLE created competition with well-established theories of language teaching and learning which are the product of previous teaching and learning experiences, prejudice and beliefs. She also noted that teacher attitudes were often unconsciously

held and had a direct effect on what happened in the classroom, including teaching styles. Attitude change is thus a critical component of any pedagogical innovation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The objective investigated was teachers' attitude on the implementation of the language of instruction policy in pre-unit and early childhood classes. The findings showed that majority of the teachers were aware of the policy and felt it was a good idea to use language of the catchment area (Kiswahili) for instruction. However, most of them through their responses claimed that it was very challenging to use Kiswahili to teach because explaining concepts in Kiswahili, was difficult. This was worsened by lack of reference materials to use in classrooms.

The results also indicated that teacher's attitude towards using Kiswahili was negative. Majority of them preferred English to Kiswahili which they found complex to use in class. It was also confirmed that though many of them spoke Kiswahili, it did not mean that they were well equipped to use it to teach.

A range of recommendations were drawn from the findings of the study for various stakeholders and for further research.

- The teachers should be positive in using the language of the catchment area for instruction and make an effort to learn it for the sake of the children's wellbeing.
- The Ministry of Education should step up on inspection of schools to ensure that teachers are using the language of the catchment area for instruction.
- The ministry of education through the agencies like KICD should sensitize teachers on the usefulness of using Kiswahili for instruction through workshops.

- Proper training of ECD and lower primary teachers and in-servicing those in the field to make them confident in using the language of catchment area for instruction.

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