

Choice of the Medium of Instruction in Kenyan Preschools: Averting Xenocentrism

Waithaka Esther N.

Abstract

This qualitative study sought to prompt a critical and reflective discourse on the dismal use of mother tongue in Kenyan early childhood education (ECE) institutions in an attempt to detect existence of xenocentrism. Although the Kenyan ECE policy framework sanctions use of the language of the catchment area when teaching and communicating with the young learners, many teachers continue to use English. Though studies have tried to identify factors that deter use of mother tongue, it is not clear whether the practice could be an indicator of xenocentrism. The objectives of the study were to assess parents' and teachers' competence in mother tongue, how they valued mother tongue and their willingness to have children learn their mother tongue. The study used descriptive research design. The population comprised preschool teachers and parents with children in preschools in a rural zone in Kiambu County. Data was collected through interviews. The results revealed that parents and teachers promoted use of English. Parents felt that the schools that used English were superior to those that used mother tongue. Some teachers argued that, since most of the reading materials were written in English it was necessary to introduce children to the reading language early in life. Many teachers and parents claimed that the world had turned into a global village and it was not necessary for them to be competent in mother tongue. It was evident that majority of the teachers and parents did not attach much value to mother tongue.

Key words: Mother tongue, indigenous language, English Language

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