

Barriers to L1 Proficiency in Multilingual Educational Settings: A Case of Lower Primary School Pupils in Meru Central District, Kenya

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Abstract

This article is based on findings from a larger study conducted to assess levels of Kimeru proficiency among primary school pupils in Meru Central District. The study was a descriptive survey conducted in five primary schools. The sample consisted of thirty class four pupils from public primary schools and twenty lower primary school teachers. The research instruments employed were Kimeru proficiency tests, focused group discussions and questionnaires. Data was analyzed using quantitative and qualitative methods. From the study it was found out that several barriers such as motivation to learn L1, education policy, exposure to written materials and community influence contribute to low levels of Kimeru proficiency among primary school pupils. Given the role of L1 in learning other languages, the pupils were likely to have difficulties learning English and accessing the curriculum.

Key words: Proficiency, Bilingualism, Barriers, Mother tongue.

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