

Of Language Education Policy and Child Foreign Language Interest in Kenya.

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Abstract

Foreign language education, particularly in French, has taken root in Kenyan education institutions namely in secondary schools, universities, language schools and in other tertiary institutions. The subject has also, as it is, penetrated the learning system in primary schools in Kenya. However, learning of foreign languages and in particular learning of French at primary school level comes under sharp scrutiny. This is due to lack of sound (if any) education policies, lack of proper planning and (almost) no consideration by the education players. The overshadowing of education policies in foreign language education at primary school level seems not to be in the best interest of the child, who on the contrary harbors interest and potential in foreign language education at this young stage of life. Primary schools and in particular private ones have taken own initiative to teach French language to the children, albeit a myriad of challenges that they are facing ranging from lack of teachers, lack of resources, to lack of proper plan and policy. Since independence, the Kenyan government has set up several education commissions in order to review and fine-tune the education sector to the needs of post-colonial Kenya. Much transformation has consequentially taken place, some in the learning of languages (mostly Kiswahili and English) at primary school level, but with no mention of foreign language education at primary school level. Several researches have indicated potential in children to learn multiple languages at a tender age. This paper aims at sensitizing education players and partners towards the importance of prioritizing foreign language education to the child, and the need to establish clear guidelines, policies, plan and intervention at the primary school level.

Key words: Foreign language, French as foreign language, primary school, education policy, child interest, education commission

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