



GLOBAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH
(Scholarly Peer Review Publishing System)

PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE USE OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES AS A LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION AT EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT LEVEL IN HARARE NORTHERN CENTRAL DISTRICT PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Virginia Hope Mawere

Senior Lecturer
Department of Teacher Development,
Zimbabwe Open University,
Zimbabwe

Dr Thembinkosi Tshabalala

Senior Lecturer,
Department of Educational Studies,
Zimbabwe Open University,
Zimbabwe

Prof. Tichaona Mapolisa

Senior Lecturer,
Department of Educational Studies,
Zimbabwe Open University,
Zimbabwe

ABSTRACT

The study justified the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at Early Childhood Development education level in purposefully sampled five primary schools in Harare Central Northern District in Zimbabwe. Ten participants were selected using opportunity sampling. It established that parents agree that while indigenous languages' use as a medium of instruction at ECD level has some, benefits, it is its weaknesses. It also found that the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level is associated with a negative impact on children's future education endeavours. The study concluded that while the weaknesses of the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level outweighed the benefits, the weaknesses provide policy makers with an opportunity to bring the language policy at ECD level to every door-step of parents with children of school-going age. Its other conclusion was that advocacy for the adoption of the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level is meaningless in the absence of robust research. It recommended that the government needs to provide adequate information about the language policy at ECD level in newspapers that reach wide readership. Countrywide research needs to be carried out to inform current trends and practices of using indigenous languages for the benefit of the ECD learner, parent and other stakeholders.

Key Words: Indigenous languages, Mother tongue, ECD, language of instruction, parents' perceptions.



1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Early Childhood Development is essential in a child's life; hence the recent focus on it across the globe (Gboyega and Idiat, 2013). The medium of instruction in ECD has been found to be a controversial issue in African countries like Uganda, Ghana, Malawi, Zambia and even Zimbabwe. Mutton, et.al. (2002) noted that, the use of the Mother Tongue (MT) as a medium of instruction was recommended by Psychologists who proved that, children understand concepts better if they are taught using the language they speak at home. In support of the psychologists' findings, Nakpodia (2001) believes that the use of English language to the neglected MT as a medium of instruction alienates the child from his culture which the policy is meant to protect. Evidence shows that children learn better and develop faster intellectually, psychologically and cognitively if they are taught with mother tongue continuously over a period of time.

However, this is not the case at present because parents/caregivers want their children to be taught in English language at this level and they even measure the standard of education in terms of their children's ability to speak English language. Allan (1994) found out that the policy on the use of MT in ECD has failed not just for the ECD education levels but also in primary and post primary and has brought about many levels of criticisms from many language experts. Some of the questions raised by stakeholders included:

- Do not the statements on language constitute just a statement of intent rather than serious programme implementation?
- If MT or LL is considered important at ECD level as an integral part of child's culture and link between home and school, why should it be principally and sorely used at this level?
- If MT is considered an important medium for achieving initial functional and permanent empowerment, literacy and numeracy, why should it be used only initially and not throughout the whole primary education? There are many questions and few answers.

A research finding by Dutcher (1982) in Guinea and Cape Verde on the effect of the language of instruction on cognitive development in ECD indicated that there was no inherent value to the language of instruction. Children taught solely in French or solely in a local language scored better. The reason being that families send their children to ECD centres which use language employed at home, thus ensuring compatibility between the child and language of instruction. A developmental explanation is that, the child's first language has to be developed to the level where he/she has the conceptual and linguistic prerequisites for the acquisition of literacy and pre-literacy skills.

Dutcher (1982) found out that children in a bilingual situation also perform just as well as those who are taught using the local language only. Dutcher (1982:14) noted that "the perception of the wide community of the status of both the local and national languages is key in understanding the learning process in bilingual environments. Bilingual programmes do not retard the development of children in their native language if either the school or the community provides support and stimulation for the continued development of the native language." Teachers need to bear in mind that, when children have to deal in a bilingual environment, their cognitive and linguistic proficiency in both languages are interdependent, and for these proficiencies to be developed in a second language, a certain level of cognitive and linguistic development in the first language has to be accomplished. Therefore, the issue of the language of instruction depends on the nature of the environment the child is exposed to. Literature has proved that children can acquire concepts in a learning environment which is bilingual or where the local language is used because the skills will be enforced at home.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The question whether or not to use indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at Early Development Childhood level sounds to be a bone contention among the socially and economically affluent communities in developing countries.



This development seems to go against not only culture of the Zimbabweans but the dictates of the Director's Circular 15 of 2005 as well as Zimbabwe EFA Assessment Country Report (2000) which concur that one of the EFA goals was to make the mother tongue the language of instruction at ECD level and in the first three years of formal education (Education Amendment Act 1991). On the basis of these observations, the study explores answers of the following question:

- How is the use indigenous language at ECD level perceived by parents in Harare Northern Central District Primary Schools?

3. OBJECTIVE(S) OF THE STUDY

The study is guided by ensuing objective. It intends to explore parents' perceptions on the use of indigenous languages at ECD level in Harare Northern Central District Primary Schools.

3.1 Research questions

On the basis of the aforementioned objective, the study provides answers to the following three sub-questions.

1. How do parents perceive the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level?
2. How does the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction benefit ECD learners?
3. What is the impact of parents' negative attitude towards the use of indigenous languages at ECD level?
4. How can parents be made to appreciate the use of indigenous languages the use of indigenous languages at ECD level?

3.2 Significance of the study

The study is valuable for three reasons. First, it chronicles some of the possible reasons why parents tend to disregard the use of indigenous languages at ECD level, thereby, informing policy makers in education. In that regard, policy decisions may be influenced. Second, it contributes to the existing body of knowledge regarding how the use of indigenous languages at ECD level is critical to the total development of the ECD learner. Third, findings of this study may assist parents and other stakeholders such as the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to appreciate the need to use indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level.

3.3 Delimitation of the study

The study was confined to the perceptions of Harare Northern District Primary Schools' parents regarding the use of indigenous languages at ECD level. The data generation was based on the open-ended interviews and observation. The data generation was conducted between August 2014 and December 2014. Volunteer sampling was used to select participants of the study while purposeful sampling was used to select the research sites.

3.4 Limitation of the study

The study had a limitation of accessing voluntary participants since most parents appeared to hide behind busy schedules once asked for their participation through responding to interview questions. To alleviate the negative impact of this limitation, the researchers visited the studied schools during School Development Association meetings and consultation days after making prior arrangements with the school heads. In that regard, they were able to observe the parents' perceptions on the use of indigenous languages at ECD level.



4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The terms ECD, Mother Tongue, Language of Instruction and Parent's perceptions will be defined before we discuss the conceptual framework relevant to the topic.

Definition of terms

4.1 Early Childhood Development (ECD)

Evans, et al (2000) maintains that the term ECD encompasses all the support necessary for a child's survival, protection and care to ensure optimal development from birth to age of eight years. It includes all arrangements providing care and education for children under the age of eight years regardless of setting, funding, opening hours or programme content.

4.2 Mother Tongue

The term mother tongue refers to several different situations. Definitions often include the following elements: the language(s) that one has learnt first, the language(s) one identifies with or is identified as a native speaker of by others, the language(s) one knows best and the language(s) one uses most. Mother tongue may also be referred to as primary or first language'. (UNESCO, 2008)

4.3 Mother tongue instruction

Mother tongue instruction generally refers to the use of the learners' mother tongue as the medium of instruction. Additionally, it can refer to L1 as a subject of instruction. It is considered to be an important component of quality education, particularly in the early years. The expert view is that mother tongue instruction should cover both the teaching of and the teaching through this language. (Ball and Pence, 2006)

4.4 Indigenous language

Ball and Pence, (2006) describe indigenous language as a language that originated in a specified place and was not brought to that place from elsewhere. It is a language that is native to a region and spoken by indigenous people but has been reduced to the status of a minority language. Synonyms are "small languages," "endangered languages" and "autochthonous languages."

4.5 International Framework

According to UNESCO (2001:6) "it is increasingly obvious that the language of instruction at the beginning of one's education at such a crucial moment for future learning should be the mother tongue." In this regard, UNESCO, (2003) points out that, this position is supported by international agencies concerned with early education, children's rights, and linguistic diversity who strongly argue for the educational importance of using a child's own language as the medium of instruction in the early years of formal schooling. The international declarations and conventions support the learning of two languages in education, that is, a mother tongue and a language of the larger community, and that the child should have access to international languages. UNESCO's (2003) position paper, Education in a Multilingual World, indicates:

- Mother tongue instruction as a means of improving educational quality by building on the knowledge and experience of the learners and teachers;
- Bilingual and/multilingual education at all levels of education as a means of promoting both social and gender equality and as a key element of linguistically diverse societies;
- Language as an essential component of inter-cultural education to encourage understanding between different population groups and ensure respect for fundamental rights.



The key standard frameworks include; The United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948) which affirms the right to education without discrimination. Article 2 of this fundamental document establishes the basic principle against discrimination on the grounds of language. Article 5 of the 1960 Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education specifically recognizes the right of the members of national minorities to carry on their own educational activities, including the use or the teaching of their own language. Recently, numerous other United Nations declarations and conventions affirm the rights of minorities, including Indigenous people, to learn and/or have instruction in L1 or their heritage language. Key documents include: the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992, Article 4), the ILO Convention 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (1989, Article 28), the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Article 45); and the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. (UNESCO, 2003)

4.6 Theoretical Framework

The phenomenon of the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level has been perceived with mixed feelings. First, mother tongue education is a sore point with South Africans, teachers and officials, with two main perspectives prevailing (<http://www.mediaclubsouthafrica.com/youth-and-education/43-culture/culturenews/3555-south-africa-s-mother-tongue-education-problem#ixzz3RbRBZP7u>). The same source argues that one camp believes that the key to resolving South Africa's education crisis is to radically improve education and training for teachers, specifically language teachers, whether they teach Afrikaans, an indigenous South African language or English. The second camp shares this view but also believes that African-language speaking children have to drop their mother tongue or home language too soon, and learn in a language they do not understand. They therefore struggle to learn concepts, how to read and write and to learn English.

Regarding the justification of the use of indigenous languages at an early level of education, the following findings suffice. The additive model of bilingualism allows society to attribute positive values to both the child's mother tongue and the second language. Thus children add a second language at no cost of their first language (Borich and Tombari, 1997). In this view, development of additive bilingualism does not negatively impact on children's academic, linguistic or intellectual development. Baker, (2006) advises that a more additive process of bilingualism allows the child's first language and related culture nurtured and supported and in turn introducing the second language later. Baker regards transitional bilingual programmes as those that use the learner's first language for the gains of rapid development of L2 to occur so that learners can quickly move on to an English only programme. The justification is to use learners' first language only to compensate for lack of proficiency in English, in order to prepare them for immersion in English as a second language.

With regards to bilingualism, as a conceptual framework with its models namely additive and subtractive together with related models of language teaching the transitional and immersion informed and directed this study. Literature shows that bilingual education assumes that children in ECD gain linguistically when the form of bilingualism is additive rather than subtractive as well as transitional and immersive in interaction during language teaching (Baker, 2006).

Mwamwenda, (1996) observes that subtractive bilingualism downplays and does not accommodate linguistic skills acquired by the child in the mother tongue. The situation was evident in pre-colonial Zimbabwe where English was viewed as an elite and more prestigious socio-economic and official language and also, a language of power which enjoyed higher status than the indigenous languages which were viewed as insignificant and inferior (Roy-Campbell, 1996, Jeffreys, 1996). In such a model Robinson views that the pupils' mother tongue skills are replaced by L2. This places linguistic and cultural systems in conflict instead of complementing each other. The subtractive model therefore puts bilingual children to a disadvantage. (Jeffreys, 1996). According to (Setati, 2005), literature reveals that children with a high degree of bilingualism have a high level of intellectual development. This situation of bilingualism is similar to what obtains in Nigerian schools in which young learners are exposed to multilingualism. The challenge is that English is



exclusively taught as a subject at all level while the indigenous languages suffer neglect and are mostly restricted to their domains or regions of use (Adegbija, 2004).

With regards to the successes and failures of mother tongue in other countries, in 2001, the Government in Demark amended the law on school instruction in the home language. The same scholars go on to point out that the amendment abolished government's subsidy for the instruction in the home language except for children of parents from European Union countries.

In view of the preceding observations which are mostly teacher-centred, the current study explores the degree of parents' perceptions on the use of indigenous languages at ECD level in Harare Northern Central District primary schools. The Zimbabwean language policy initiates bilingualism in the education system. The area of bilingualism in schools has interested many researchers (Miti, 1995; Nyawaranda, 2003; Setati, 2005; Ndamba; 2008). In Zimbabwe little research has been done on implementation of the indigenous languages as a medium of instruction in ECD.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research paradigm

The study has its roots in qualitative research. Qualitative research was useful in this study because it permitted the researchers to unravel the hidden perceptions regarding the perceptions held by parents on the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level. It allows researchers to use real world settings where the researcher does not to manipulate phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2001).

5.2 Research approach

The researchers used a multiple case study of five primary schools in Harare Northern Central District. The use of a multiple-case study was a welcome development as it enables the researchers to study the phenomenon in great depth (Silverman, 2014). Also, the use of case studies is useful in contemporary research where manipulation of behaviour is not possible and highly undesirable in order to get factual and progressive phenomenon (Yin, 2009).

5.3 Selecting the research sites and the participants

Purposeful sampling was employed to select the five research sites. It was chosen ahead of other sampling designs because it enabled the researchers to visit research sites with participants who held sought perceptions on the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level. As a result, three primary schools were selected from low density suburbs, while the other two were chosen from high density suburbs. This enabled the researchers to establish the degree to which perceptions from the two sets of suburbs were comparable.

Opportunity sampling was used to select ten parents from the five schools. Five parents were male, while the other five were female. Opportunity sampling enabled the researchers to interview parents from the target population who were willing to take part in this study. According to McLeod (2014), its use offers two strengths for the conduct of qualitative studies. First, it is based on convenience. In this study, participants were obtained by asking population of interest that is, parents who attended SDA meetings and school consultation days to voluntarily participate in the study. Second, opportunity sampling is a quick and easy way of choosing a sample. Thus, ten participants were chosen without compulsion. It is however criticised for not providing a representative sample and could be biased (McLeod, 2014). For the purposes of this study, issues of representativeness and elimination of biases were not of concern to this study since qualitative studies seek particularity rather than generalisability (Marshall and Rossman, 2011).



5.4 Methods of data generation

Two methods of data generation namely, in-depth interviews and observations were used to generate data. Interviews generated lots of information about parents on the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level. Denzin (2001) sees interviews as conversations. In qualitative research, interviews refer to attempts to understand the world from the subject's point of view, to unfold the meaning of people's experiences and to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanation (Denzin, 2001, p.96). Interviews review the respondents' level of emotion, the way in which they have organised the world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences and their basic perceptions (Hatch, 2002, p. 103).

Observation was used to complement interviews in data generation for this study. The researchers visited the schools during SDA meetings and consultation days to have a real feel of the parents' perceptions on the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level. Thus, Denzin (2001) argues that observations enable researchers to record verbal and non-verbal behaviours associated with the phenomena under study.

5.5 Data presentation

Research data were presented using selected narratives and quotes drawn from the participants. Direct quotes give the reader a feeling of being at the research site when the study was being carried out (Thomas and Nelson, 2001).

5.6 Data analysis

The research sites were coded using letters A to E. Thus, school A stands for first visited school, while school E represents the fifth visited school. The interview data were coded using participants numbers from 1 to 2 per each of the five schools. This type of coding enables researchers to identify individual participants together with their responses (Creswell, 2012).

6. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

The study provided answers to the following research questions.

1. How do parents perceive the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level?
2. How does the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction benefit ECD learners?
3. What is the impact of parents' negative attitude towards the use of indigenous languages at ECD level?
4. How can parents be made to appreciate the use of indigenous languages the use of indigenous languages at ECD level?

6.1 How parents perceive the use of indigenous languages as a language of instruction at ECD level

The study came up with a number of findings in connection with how the studied parents perceived the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level. First, the study revealed that there was a challenge on the issue of using the Mother Tongue (MT) or the Local Language (LL) in the teaching and learning process in ECD. Parental attitude and misconception that the local languages should not be used as the medium of instruction forced the teachers to use English as a medium of instruction. The preceding sentiment is well elucidated by the following participants' excerpts:



- *'I do not know why we have this change of policy overnight because English is an international language, if you go to any country you meet someone who can assist you if you are an English speaker. I expect my child to be taught in English throughout.'* (School A participant 1).
- *'The wider economy accepts school leavers who are proficient in the use of English language'* (School B participant 2).
- *'I do not want my child to be taught in Shona. When I went to school we were being taught in English'* (School C participant 1).
- *'I think we need an explanation why our children should use Mother Tongue when learning at school. I am happy with what is happening now. My child who is five years old now can speak fluent English and I am proud of it.'* (School D participant 1).

The Director's Circular 15 of 2005 as well as Zimbabwe EFA Assessment Country Report (2000) noted that one of the EFA goals was to make the mother tongue the language of instruction at ECD level and in the first three years of formal education (Education Amendment Act 1991). Ironically, in practice, in the primary school education (from grades 1-7) the medium of instruction is the English language. The centrality of language to the teaching and learning process is that the mother language in Zimbabwe is important to the protection, preservation and promotion of Zimbabwean culture and inter-ethnic cohesion, enhancement of human dignity and for the purposes of promoting national unity and integration, have constitutional backing on the constitution of Zimbabwe and the justification is national. (Nziramasa, 1999). Hence, the need to use it throughout the primary school level.

6.2 How does the use of indigenous languages as a language of instruction benefit ECD learners?

The study emerged with mild benefits associated with the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction. In explaining these benefits, three pertinent excerpts demonstrate that regard:

- *'Of course, indigenous languages will make my child bilingual, but will not make him compete with other pupils in further grade levels of education.'* (School B participant 1)
- *'While my child will become knowledgeable about her culture, she will be disadvantaged against her peers as from grade 3 and above because English language is the medium of instruction up to university level.'* (School E participant 1)
- *'I feel that my child stands to master concepts at an early age, but unfortunately, textbooks in schools are not written in native languages. All of them except those for Shona and Ndebele are written in English language.'* (School E participant 2).

These findings are buttressed by observations made by the researchers on consultation days at the research sites. Researcher 1 observed that while parents at Schools A,C and E acknowledged that indigenous languages benefitted learners in terms of mastery learning, they however felt that indigenous languages retarded academic excellence in further education. Researchers 2 and 3 echoed similar sentiments raised by parents at School B and D respectively. They found that parents were content with the fact that indigenous languages benefitted learners to a certain extent, but they produced learners that they do not feel proud of. Also, observations revealed that most parents do not use indigenous languages to communicate with their children at home. Therefore, exposing children to indigenous languages at school was likened to regression of the children academic excellent pursuits. The above participants' perceptions on the benefits of using indigenous languages as a medium of instruction for ECD learners are comparable to Abidogun and Adebule's (2013) observations which contend that recognising the significance of the mother tongue in helping the child to develop



the right attitude to language acquisition, literacy and cultural values by parents would reduce emphasis on speaking English language as a must for their young ones.

6.3 The impact of parents' negative attitude towards the use of indigenous languages at ECD level

The study revealed three interesting scenarios about the impact of parents' negative attitude towards the use of indigenous languages at ECD level.

- *'If this is going to happen I can see us having different types of ECD centres for the poor and the rich. The rich will enrol their children in private centres where they use English as a medium of instruction and the poor will remain in the government schools and rural schools where they will use mother tongue. The situation defeats the whole purpose of achieving quality, equity and access in our education system.'* (School E participant 1).
- *'If I learn that teachers happen to use Shona or Ndebele to teach my children, I do not hesitate to transfer my children from that school.'* (School E participant 2).
- *'I feel that schools and their authorities are on the verge of creating Bantustan states in which School A will teach what School Z cannot teach because of language differences. Examinations in Zimbabwe are reading in nature. It will mean that schools will set at least ten examination papers to cater for individual differences.'*

The above findings point to three significant implications for the impact of parents' negative attitude towards the use of indigenous languages at ECD level. First, the dislike of indigenous languages as medium of instruction at ECD level is likely to give rise to exclusivity in schools. This gives rise to elite ECD centres which are in contradiction with the democratisation of education that Zvobgo (1999) observes. Second, the second finding puts to the fore a sad story about the likely enrolments in schools. Schools that are disliked by parents are bound to have sharp drops in enrolments. Third, the final excerpt indicates that instead of schools acting as havens for social cohesion and harmony, they will end up fanning tribalism, disunity and disharmony, all because of localised mini education setups. These findings tend to contradict with literature which shows that bilingual education assumes that children in ECD gain linguistically when the form of bilingualism is additive rather than subtractive as well as transitional and immersive in interaction during language teaching (Baker, 2006). The same participants' perceptions are not also compatible with Abidogun and Adebule's (2013, p. 271) findings that note, "Thus, the beauty of mother tongue to early childhood education should be emphasised to every opportunity not only by those in the education enterprise but by all agencies of government concerned with Mass Mobilisation agency and all other advocate groups."

6.4 How parents can be made to appreciate the use of indigenous languages the use of indigenous languages at ECD level

In a bid to demonstrate how parents can be made to appreciate the use of indigenous languages the use of indigenous languages at ECD level, the study emerged with three findings which are illustrated by the following excerpts.

- *'I suggest we embark on through research and awareness campaigns on this issue. Some of us read the Lewis Taylor Commission and other commissions where the current policy on the use of mother tongue was recommended but we all know it was never implemented in English so why now? Do we have the resources and the capacity?'* (School B participant 1)

The revelations from the above excerpt are that informed decisions by research need to be employed in order to convince parents to appreciate the need for them to let their children be exposed to indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level. These findings are consistent with previous research observations by (<http://www.medioclubsouthafrica.com/youth-and-education/43-culture/culturenews/3555-south-africa-s-mother-tongue->



education-problem#ixzz3RbRBZP7u) who noted that the second camp shares this view but also believes that African-language speaking children have to drop their mother tongue or home language too soon, and learn in a language they do not understand. They therefore struggle to learn concepts, how to read and write and to learn English.

One other interesting finding of this study was that teachers really need to know the needs of ECD learners if ever they are to win the hearts of the parents of learners they teach, especially, on the teaching of ECD classes using indigenous languages as a medium of instruction. To underline this finding, one participant had this to say:

- *'I am a working parent. The teachers invite us during the week for consultations when I am busy at work. It is difficult and time consuming for me to move up and down. When I get there I am not told much about my child. Some teachers seem not to know the needs of the children they teach.'* (School C participant 2)

The implication of the above observations is that parents feel that if teachers fail to understand the needs of their learners in English, the situation is bound to worsen if indigenous languages are used as a medium of instruction. The challenge is that English is exclusively taught as a subject at all level while the indigenous languages suffer neglect and are mostly restricted to their domains or regions of use (Adegbija, 2004). The teachers need to give adequate time to interact and convince parents about the benefits of using indigenous languages are used as a medium of instruction at ECD level. This may help to confirm Nakpodia's (2001) belief that the use of English language to the neglected MT as a medium of instruction alienates the child from his culture which the policy is meant to protect.

7. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study came up with these precise four major findings. First, parents prefer the use of English language as medium of instruction to indigenous languages. Second, parents agree that while indigenous languages' use as a medium of instruction at ECD level has some, benefits, it is its weaknesses. Third, the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level is associated with a negative impact on children's future education endeavours. Fourth, parents feel that teachers are not fully aware of their children's learning needs at ECD level.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The study made four conclusions. First, parents had misconceptions about the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level. Second, the study concluded that while the weaknesses of the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level outweighed the benefits, the weaknesses provide policy makers with an opportunity to bring the language policy at ECD level to every door-step of parents with children of school-going age. Third, disregarding the place of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level is one of the surest ways of perpetuating mental colonisation, loss of cultural identity and dignity, imperialism and dependency syndrome. Fourth, advocacy for the adoption of the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level is meaningless in the absence of robust research.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the aforesaid findings and conclusions, the present study recommends the need for:

- The government to provide adequate information about the language policy at ECD level in newspapers that reach wide readership. Such a strategy would enable parents to do away with misconceptions they hold about the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level.
- ECD teachers to be thoroughly trained at teachers' colleges so that they will be able to convince parents and other stakeholders on the efficacy of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level.



- ECD teachers and their supervisors to capitalise on the consultation and prize giving days and SDC meetings to inform parents about the great benefits associated with the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level. This will ward off the negative impact associated with both the provision and non-provision of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level.
- Thorough research on the effectiveness of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level to be instituted countrywide using both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies to help the Zimbabwean citizens feel comfortable about the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level. It also informs trends and practices of using indigenous languages as a medium of instruction at ECD level for the benefit of the learner, parents and other stakeholders.

10. REFERENCES

- [1] Abidogun, B.G. and Adebule, O.I. (2013). Contributions of mother tongue education in Early Childhood Education. 1st Annual International Interdisciplinary Conference, AIIC 2013, 24-26, April, Azore, Portugal- Proceedings. 267-272.
- [2] Adegbija, E. (2004). *Multilingualism: A Nigerian case study*. Lawrenceville, NJ: Africa World/Red Sea.
- [3] Allan, G. (1994). *Community life: An introduction to local social relations*. London: Routledge.
- [4] Ball, J and Pence, A.P. (2006) *Supporting Indigenous children's development: Community-University partnership*. Vancouver. UBC Press.
- [5] Baker, C. (2006). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism*. London: Library of Congress.
- [6] Bangbose, A.(2000) *Language and Exclusion: The consequences of language policies in Africa*. London. Lit Verlag.
- [7] Benson, C. (2002) Real and potential benefits of bilingual programmes in developing countries. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 5 (6) 303-317
- [8] Bonset, H and Rijlaarsdam, G. (2004) Mother tongue education (L1) in learning-to-learn paradigm: creative redevelopment of learning materials. *Educational Studies in Language and literature*. 4 (1) 35
- [9] Borich, C. and Tombari, A. (1997). *Effective teaching strategies: Lessons from research in practice*. Cape Town: Sage.
- [10] Creswell, J.W. (2012). *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches*. Thousand Oaks.
- [11] Denzin, N. K. (2001). *Interpretive interactionism*. London: Sage.
- [12] Director's Circular 15 of 2005 . Harare: Government Printers.
- [13] Dutcher, (1982). Bilingual and multicultural education: Canadian perspectives. In Sharpson, S. and Oyley, V. (1982). *Bilingual and multicultural education*. New York:
- [14] Education Amendment Act 1991. Harare. Government Printers.
- [15] Evans, J.J, Myers, R.G and Ilfeld,E.M. (2000) *Early childhood counts: A programming guide on early childhood care for development*. Washington DC. World Bank.



GLOBAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH
(Scholarly Peer Review Publishing System)

- [16] Hatch, J.A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings*. New York: New York Press.
- [17] Jeffreys, S. (1996). *Queer theory and communication*. New York: Routledge.
- [18] Marshall and Rossman, (2011).
- [19] McLeod, S. (2014). *Sampling methods*. Documents/McLeod 2014-SAMPLING METHODS.html.
- [20] Miti, M. (1995). The Problem of Establishing initial literacy in L2: The Case of Zambia. *Education for Africa*. 1 (1) p3
- [21] Mutton, T., Mooney, A., Moss, P., Petrie, P., Clark, A. and Woolner, J. (2002). Review of international research on the relationships between ratios, staff qualifications and training, group size, and the quality of provision of early years and child care settings. London: Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education.
- [22] Mwamwenda, T.S. (1996). *Educational psychology: An African perspective*. London: Heinemann.
- [23] Nakpodia, E.D. (2001). *Early Childhood Education: Its policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria*. (Online Journal).
- [24] Ndamba, G.T. (2008) Mother Tongue Usage in Learning: An Examination of Language Preferences in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, Vol2. No.4. 171-188.
- [25] Nyawaranda, V (2003) Doing qualitative study. *The Zimbabwean Bulletin of Teacher Education*. Vol.12 Issue1 pp1-16
- [26] Nziramasanga, C. (1999). *The Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training*. Harare: Government Printers.
- [27] <http://www.medioclubsouthafrica.com/youth-and-education/43-culture/culturenews/3555-south-africa-s-mother-tongue-education-problem#ixzz3RbRBZP7u>
- [28] Patton, M.Q. (2001). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage .)
- [29] Roy-Campbell, Z.M. (1996) "A Neglected Pillar of African Education: The Language of Schooling." Paper presented at the First Annual Conference of the Zimbabwe Languages Association. Harare
- [30] Setati, M. (2005) "Access to Mathematics versus access to the language power. The struggle in multi-lingual Mathematics Classroom" Paper presented at the Fourth International Conference on Mathematics Education and Society. Australia
- [31] Silverman, D. (2014). *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*. London: Sage.
- [32] Thomas, J.R. and Nelson, J. K. (2001). *Research Methods in physical activity* (4th Edition).
- [33] Albany: Human Kinetics.
- [34] Yin, R. (2009). *Applications of a case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- [35] UNESCO (2001). *International Conference on Education 46th Session: Final Report*. Paris: UNESCO.



GLOBAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH
(Scholarly Peer Review Publishing System)

- [36] UNESCO (2003). *Education in a multilingual world*. UNESCO Education Position Paper. Paris: UNESCO. Retrieved January 15, 2009 from: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001297/129728e.pdf>
- [37] UNESCO Bangkok (2005). Advocacy brief on mother tongue-based teaching and education for girls. Bangkok: Author.
- [38] UNESCO, (2007). *Strong foundations: Early childhood care and education*. Paris: Author. Retrieved March 15, 2009 from: <http://www.unesco.org/en/education/efareport/reports/2007-early-childhood/>
- [39] UNESCO, (2008). *Mother Tongue Matters: Local Language as a Key to Effective Learning*. Paris: UNESCO.
- [40] Zimbabwe EFA Assessment Country Report (2000). Harare: Government Printers.
- [41] Zvobgo, R.J. (1999). *Transforming education: The Zimbabwean experience*. Gweru: College Press.