

The Attitude of Parents and Teachers towards Multilingual Medium of Instruction in Lower Primary School Classrooms: The Case of Kapiri District Schools of Zambia

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Abstract : The main purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes of parents and teachers towards multilingual medium of instruction in lower primary schools of Zambia. In 2013, the Government of Zambia formulated a language policy which stipulates that regional familiar languages should be used as the medium of instruction (MOI) from grade one to four in all public primary schools, while English is introduced as a subject in the second grade. This study investigated the views of parents and teachers on the use of multilingual medium of instruction in lower primary schools in order to accommodate learners who are not native speakers of regional familiar languages as well as the second languages which are official languages used in class. The study revealed that most parents suggested that teachers who teach lower primary school classes should be conversant with at least the four major local languages of Zambia (Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga and Lozi). In the same vein other parents felt that teachers teaching lower grades should not only be familiar with the regional official language but should be able to speak other dialects found in the region. Teachers teaching in lower primary grade felt that although it is difficult to speak all languages of learners in class, it is important for a teacher of lower grade class to try to accommodate children who are not speakers of the familiar languages by addressing them in the language they understand. Both teachers and parents highlighted a number of advantages of teaching children in their mother tongues. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used for the collection of data for this study. 30 teachers from selected public primary schools and 20 parents of Kapiri district and five lecturers of teacher training colleges in Central province were selected for this study. The researcher also observed class lessons in lower primary schools of Kapiri district. This study revealed that both parents and teachers are of the views that teachers teaching lower primary classes should use multilingual medium of instruction in lower primary classes so as to accommodate children of different linguistic backgrounds.

Keywords : familiar languages, medium of instruction, multilingual medium of instruction, native speakers

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