

Language of Instruction in Urban Children's Homes: Status and Implications, 2014

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Abstract:

This study is a sociolinguistic survey of the status of Language of Instruction (LOI) in Children's Homes. It considers the fact that there is a variety of languages at the disposal of the children in CHs, who are a minority group in the society and so have no common language as the educational language policy requires during schooling. The study, therefore, sought to describe the status and implication of LOI in CHs in order to give empirical recommendation. The literature reviewed showed that while pupils from CHs do not have immediate families to nurture their first languages, their counterparts do, hence the gap this study fills. The Critical Language Planning and Policy approach that is meant to reduce various forms of inequalities was adopted to guide this study. The objectives of the study were to: identify the language(s) used during classroom instruction in Children's Homes; investigate the factors that influence or motivate the choice of the language(s) used in classroom contexts and to identify the difficulties faced in applying the national LOI policy in the lower primary school level in CHs in urban centres. The language policy identifies mother tongues or the language of the catchment area as the language of instruction. The survey data was collected from a sample of 76 respondents that comprised teachers, administrators and pupils from a sample of six Children's Homes in Nairobi City. All the respondents were subjected to an interview. Questionnaires and document analysis were also used. Data interpretation was both qualitative with Critical Content Analysis used in the interview and qualitative questionnaire responses and quantitative with SPSS used in the management of the quantitative data. The study revealed that there are many languages used in class by both the teachers and the pupils in an effort to communicate including verbal and nonverbal communication. A number of factors such as a common language, the language used in the Home and the linguistic background influence the choice of language to use in class. It is not likely to find Kiswahili or mother tongue a common language among the pupils of standard 1-3 from Children's Homes. Whenever teachers use language as per the educational language policy, they exclude some pupils especially those from Children's Home.