

Parents' and Teachers' Perceptions on the Use of Language in Early Childhood Development in Norton District

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ABSTRACT The study sought to establish the views and preferences of parents and teachers regarding the language to be used as the medium of instruction in early childhood development in Zimbabwe. A mixed research approach using semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire as instruments was conducted among 80 respondents comprising of 30 early childhood development teachers and 50 parents whose children were enrolled in early childhood education learning centers in Norton urban district, Mashonaland West Province in Zimbabwe, and an expert from the national curriculum development unit. Shona is the mother tongue predominantly spoken in the study area. The Zimbabwe education language policy stipulates that the second language should be introduced only after Grade 3. The findings of this study revealed that eighty-six percent of parents preferred the use of English as medium of instruction in early childhood development, while 66.7 percent of teachers preferred both English and Shona together. To address the mismatch between ideological and policy ideals on one hand, and practical reality on the other, the study recommends an evidence based, participatory national language policy review and development that consults parents, teachers and children among other stakeholders.