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The Influence of Medium of Instruction on Academic Performance in Lower Primary Schools in Tororo County: A Case Study of Ateso

This study on the Influence of Medium of Instruction on the Academic Performance in the Lower Primary Schools in Tororo County had the following specific objectives: To find out the extent to which the use of Ateso as medium of instruction influences pupils' academic performance in lower classes of primary schools in Tororo County; to identify the challenges of using Ateso as a medium of instruction in lower primary classes in Tororo county; to generate solutions that overcome the challenges faced when Ateso is used as a medium of instruction in lower classes of primary schools in Tororo County. The research was a case study on Ateso and took a quantitative and qualitative design. It was carried out in the selected schools of Tororo County. A sample size of 312 was selected using stratified sampling techniques and included pupils of primary four, teachers of primary one to three and the Head teachers. The data were collected using achievement tests (in Ateso and English) and questionnaires presented to pupils and (Head) teachers respectively. The data from the achievement tests was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer programme while that from the questionnaires were analysed manually. The findings from this study indicated that pupils obtained low scores in the achievement tests of reading and numeracy, each written both in Ateso and English. The overall scores in all the achievement tests by pupils were lower in Ateso than in English. Some challenges faced during the use of Ateso as a medium of instruction included lack of understanding of pupils' mother tongue and lack of reference materials related to Ateso in schools. The solutions suggested to overcome some of the challenges above included the provision of reference materials, organising refresher courses for (Head) teachers. Last but not least, the (Head) teachers should be deployed according to the needs of the schools. In conclusion, Ateso did not lower or raise the academic performances of pupils of schools. Some factors are responsible for the nature of academic performance of pupils. The use of Ateso language faces challenges in schools as seen above. Those challenges must be addressed urgently using the suggested solutions above. Recommendations include: Another study of this kind should be carried out in the year 2012 using the same pupils, who will be in primary six so as to establish their academic performance and then, compare those results with the academic performance of their predecessors in that class who learned using English in the lower primary. Furthermore, the challenges experienced during the use of Ateso as a medium of instruction in the lower primary schools, for example, the lack of reference materials and others should be addressed by the stakeholders in education so as to help to improve on the academic performance of pupils in this area. The stakeholders include the parents, pupils, teachers, District Education Officers and others. The head teachers, deputy head teachers and teachers should be facilitated to have refresher courses related to Local Language use in schools that are organised by the Permanent Secretary in Ministry of Education and Sports and facilitated by PTC staff like CCTs.

Key words: Instruction, Medium, Academic, Primary, Performance