

**Attitude of teachers towards use of mother tongue as medium of instruction in lower primary schools in Bungoma South Sub- County, Kenya.****Manyonyi, Joan<sup>1</sup>; Mbori, Bob<sup>1</sup> and Okwako, Erick<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Language and Literature Education, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, P.O Box, 190-50100, Kakamega, Kenya

**Corresponding Author:** Manyonyi Joan, Department of Language and Literature Education, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, P.O Box, 190-50100, Kakamega, Kenya.  
**E-mail:** [joanomuka@gmail.com](mailto:joanomuka@gmail.com); Cell phone: +254- (0) 722 582 826

This study set out to investigate the attitude of teachers towards use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in lower primary schools in Bungoma South, Kenya. Although the language policy in Kenya is that mother tongue should be the medium of instruction from primary 1- 3, the repeated directives by the government on the same indicate that there may be a mismatch between policy and implementation. This mismatch may be hinged on the attitude of critical implementers of this policy. The study was guided by the Theory of Planned Behaviour which predicts deliberate behaviour and proposes a model which can measure how human actions are guided. It predicts occurrence of a particular behaviour provided the behaviour is intentional. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The target was 119 public and private primary schools which were stratified into three categories namely: urban, peri- urban and rural. A total of 36 schools representing 30% were randomly selected. The study sample comprised 108 lower primary teachers out of which 96 responded to the questionnaire and 12 additional teachers were sampled for interview. Findings indicated that teachers did not favour a mother tongue medium of instruction at lower primary school level. Most teachers 70 (75.26%) indicated that they did not use mother tongue as a medium of instruction due to lack of instructional materials, differences between the teachers' L1 and learners' mother tongue and lack of specific training on how to teach in mother tongue at lower primary level. There was a strong feeling among the teachers that mother tongue did not add any value to the academic performance of the learners while some teachers indicated that teaching in English prepared the pupils better for excelling in examinations and consequently getting good jobs. It was recommended that the Kenyan government invests more in mother tongue medium instructional materials. To enhance the teaching in mother tongue at lower primary school, it is proposed that a deliberate effort be made to employ more teachers who speak the language of the catchment area.

**Key words:** Attitude, Mother tongue, medium of instruction and lower primary.

## **Introduction**

The present article discusses the use of mother tongue at lower level of the primary school in Kenya. Mother tongue medium of instruction is a policy where instruction is done through the (L1), (Ball, 2011). Ball (2011) gives a variety of definitions of mother tongue: the language(s) one has learnt first, the language(s) one identifies with as a native speaker 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, 2003). Mother tongue also refers to the first language that a child acquires and uses at home before attending school (Moyo, 2009). The mother tongue is the language that the language policy planners deem as most suited medium of instruction in the early learning in order to facilitate smooth transition from home life to school life.

## **Background on Mother Tongue Use**

Khosa (2012) in a study focusing on Mother Tongue Education found out that teachers' attitude towards mother tongue as a medium of instruction in lower primary schools would be categorized as either positive or negative. The attitude was positive in those teachers who were implementing it but negative in those teachers not implementing it. Khosa's (2012) study, an investigation of mother tongue education in the Limpopo Province of South Africa used two instruments to collect data; observation and semi-structured interviews. The study found out that mother tongue was predominantly used during class activities and that 6 teachers had a positive attitude towards use of mother tongue. The knowledge gap that the current study sought to fill was to get the teachers' attitude towards use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in the Kenyan situation focusing specifically at Bungoma County. This information was deemed very useful in the implementation of mother tongue language policy in Kenya by using Bungoma County as a case study.

The attitude of teachers and parents in Kenya may have an influence on the implementation of mother tongue as the medium of instruction in lower primary schools. If teachers feel that there are good outcomes when learners are instructed in mother tongue they are likely to support it. Along these lines of argument, Pickens (2005) states that although, the feeling and belief components of attitudes are internal to a person, we can view a person's attitude from his or her resulting behaviour. This would imply that if the teachers' feelings are positive to mother tongue as the medium of instruction they will instruct pupils in the mother tongue. However, if the teachers' feelings are negative, they are unlikely to use mother tongue as a medium of instruction. It would be

argued that the attitudes of teachers in Kenya may affect the implementation of mother tongue as a medium of instruction policy in the lower primary schools in Kenya in general and in particular in Bungoma County.

While it may be agreed that lower primary children may understand concepts better when taught in mother tongue, the negative attitudes of Kenyan adults have been witnessed as early as the language policy formulation period in Kenya. These attitudes, like in many other African countries, began during the colonial times (Nabea, 2009). At present, the situation of the language of instruction in independent Kenya is a reflection of the shifting stance in the colonized Kenya. Immediately after independence, the Ominde Commission (1964), made a number of recommendations that favoured English medium of instruction. This included English being adopted universally in the education system as the only viable medium of instruction. Secondly, it was proposed that Kiswahili becomes a compulsory subject from primary 1 wherever possible. Furthermore, there were a number of justifications for making English the universal medium of instruction while relegating Kiswahili and other indigenous languages. First, English provided a better medium for learning languages and literacy than vernaculars. Second, English provided a more systematic and quicker development in all other subjects of study.

Khejeri (2014) investigated teachers' attitudes towards the use of mother tongue as a language of instruction in lower primary schools in Hamisi, Vihiga County, Kenya. This study surveyed 12 schools coming out with findings which indicated that respondents saw more disadvantages than advantages in the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction. The assertion by the teachers in Khejeri's study may be supported by their attitudes.

Lewis (1981), in Baker (1992), observes that any language policy has to take account of the attitude of those likely to be affected by the implementation of the policy. In the present study, the affected are the lower level pupils and the teachers implementing the policy. In the long run, no language policy will succeed which does not conform to the expressed attitudes of those involved, persuade those who express negative attitudes about the rightness of the policy or seek to remove the causes of the disagreement (Lewis, 1981) in (Baker, 1992). The implication here is that for Bungoma County Kenya, the consideration of the attitudes of teachers is a very important ingredient in the implementation of the mother tongue medium of instruction in lower primary schools.

The Koech Commission, (2000), one of the major educational Commissions in Kenya recommended the need to stick to the language of the school's catchment area as the language of instruction for lower primary classes. The Commission observed that the use of English at the pre-school and lower primary levels reduced the children's mastery of their mother tongues. However, despite this policy recommendation, many years later there is an indication that, non - implementation may be the major challenge to the mother tongue language policy in lower primary classes in Kenya. Mbori, (2008), refers to this situation as a disconnect between policy and implementation. This means that policies are formulated but implementation does not take place. The implementation is more theoretical than practical. There is therefore, need to consider the attitudes of teachers and parents of lower primary classes towards the use of mother tongue medium of instruction in the lower primary classes in Bungoma South Sub County as a critical factor in the adoption of mother tongue as the language of instruction.

## **Method**

### ***Participants and Instruments***

The sample population comprised 132 respondents (108) lower primary teachers, in both private and public primary schools. The lower primary school teachers provided information on the medium of instruction used in the school. Stratified sampling was employed in order to have homogenous sub - groups in various strata (rural, peri- urban, and urban) in the study/ target population. The rural schools are those schools found outside town while the peri – urban primary schools are found on the periphery of the town. Urban schools are those schools found within the town.

After the stratification of schools the categories were stratified further into public primary schools and private primary schools. A total of 36 schools representing 30% of the target schools were used in the study. The schools were proportionately and randomly selected from each stratum. A sample of 30% was considered ideal (O'connor, 2011). Random sampling was again used to select four schools from each strata from which two were public schools and two were private schools in order to select the teachers to be interviewed. The teachers interviewed were therefore those who had taught lower primary school the longest in the current school and this sampling was done purposively. A total of 12 teachers were interviewed and the teachers formed part of the 108 teachers sampled for the study.

**Table 1: School Category and Sample Size**

School category	Type of school	No of schools	Sampled schools	Teachers of lower primary
Urban	Public	8	2	6
	Private	13	4	12
Peri - urban	Public	23	7	21
	Private	7	2	6
Rural	Public	56	17	51
	Private	12	4	12
Total		119	36	108

**Findings****Teachers Attitude towards Teaching in Mother Tongue at Lower Primary Level**

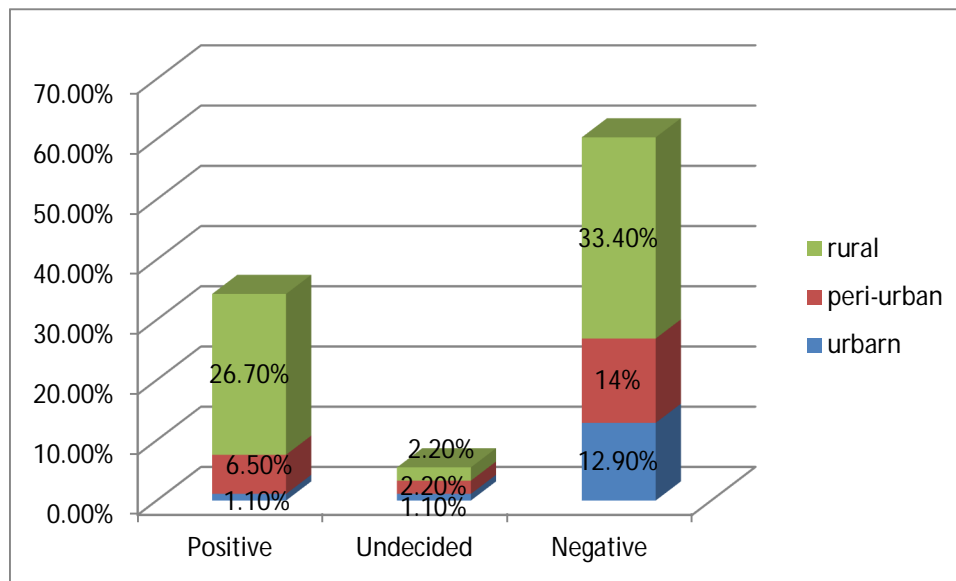
Both those teachers who used and those who did not use mother tongue as a medium of instruction in lower primary schools, were asked to respond to items on a five point Likert scale beginning with SA-Strongly Agree to SD-Strongly Disagree with regard to the teachers' attitude towards use of mother tongue medium of instruction in the lower primary school. The analysis was done at the level of the regions of the schools. The table below shows the data of the first item on the Likert scale.

**Table 2: Mother Tongue as the Medium of Instruction in Lower Primary School Level**

Mother tongue should be the medium of instruction in lower primary school						
Region	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Urban	5.4% (5)	7.5% (7)	1.1% (1)	0% (0)	1.1%(1)	15.05%(14)
Peri-urban	6.5% (6)	7.5% (7)	2.2% (2)	5.4% (5)	1.1% (1)	22.6%(21)
Rural	10.8%(10)	22.6%(21)	2.2% (2)	16.1%(15)	10.6%(10)	62.4%(58)
Total	22.6%(21)	37.6%(35)	5.4%(5)	21.5%(20)	12.9%(12)	100%(93)

Source: Field Data

Data on mother tongue being the medium of instruction in lower primary school level revealed that, many respondents across the regions did not agree that mother tongue should be the medium of instruction. This was shown by the 22.6% (21) who strongly disagreed and the 37.6% (35) who disagreed totaling to 60.2% (56) in comparison to the 21.5% (20) who agreed and 12.9% (12) who strongly agreed making a total of 34.4% (32).



**Figure1: Mother Tongue should be the Medium of Instruction in Lower Primary**

Figure 1 above shows that most of the teachers in the study had a negative attitude towards use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction. Cumulatively, 60.3% of the 93 teachers interviewed across the three regions had a negative attitude. 5.5% of the 93 teachers interviewed were undecided, while 34.3% had a positive attitude. 26.7% out of 34.3% who had a positive attitude were from the rural region and this partly explains why they had a positive attitude. In the rural region mother tongue is commonly used and it would be appropriate to teach lower primary learners in mother tongue as they would easily understand concepts.

### **Pleasure in Use of Mother Tongue Medium of Instruction**

The respondents were also required to indicate whether they enjoyed using mother tongue as a medium of instruction. They did this on a scale ranging from SA- Strongly agree to SD- Strongly disagree. The findings are shown in table 3.

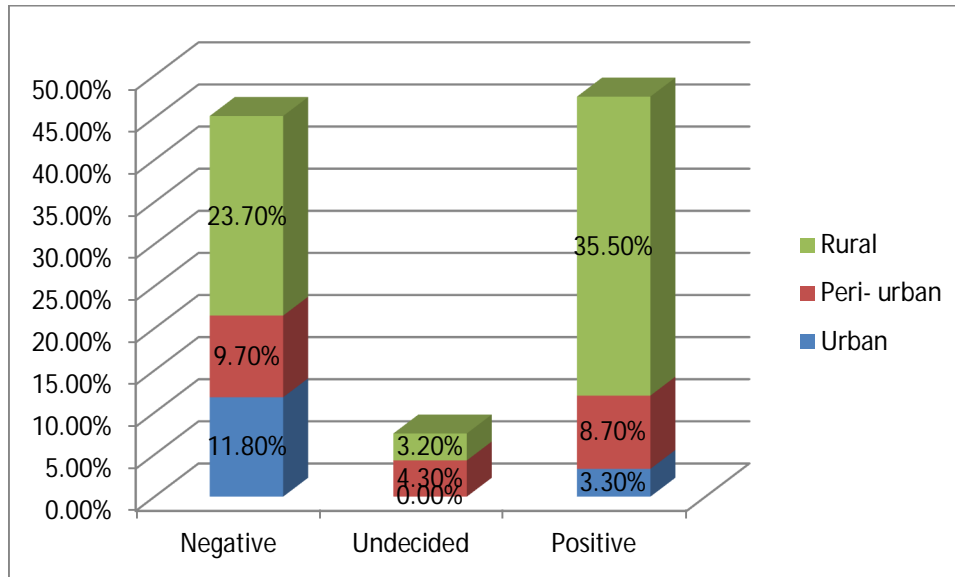
**Table 3: Pleasure in Use of Mother Tongue as Medium of Instruction at Lower Primary School Level**

It is enjoyable to use mother tongue as a medium of instruction while teaching in lower primary

Region	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Urban	21.4% (3)	57.1% (8)	0% (0)	7.1% (1)	14.3% (2)	15.05% (14)
Peri-urban	23.8% (5)	19.0% (4)	19.0% (4)	28.6% (6)	9.5% (2)	22.6% (21)
Rural	20.7% (12)	17.2% (10)	5.2% (3)	37.9% (22)	18.9% (11)	62.4% (58)
Total	21.5% (20)	23.7% (22)	7.5% (7)	31.2% (29)	16.1% (15)	100% (93)

Source: Field Data

Data on whether the teachers enjoyed using mother tongue as a medium of instruction indicated that cumulatively, 45.2% (42) never enjoyed while, 47.3% (44) enjoyed using mother tongue as a medium of instruction. 7.5% (7) were undecided. Worth noting is the fact that a large proportion of those who enjoyed using mother tongue came from the rural region. This group had 35.5% (33) of the total respondents. The high figure from the rural region of the teachers who seemed to enjoy could be attributed to the fact that most learners in particular schools shared a mother tongue with their teachers. The use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction would therefore be seen as would help learners have a smooth transition from home to school since they used a language that was familiar to them in both in the home and the school



**Figure 2: Pleasure in Use of Mother Tongue at Lower Primary School Level**

Figure 2 shows that the teachers who did not enjoy use of mother tongue in lower primary school were almost at par with those who enjoyed the use of mother tongue. This was shown by the fact that those whose attitude was negative were 42 teachers 45.2 % (42) out of 93 and those with positive attitude were 44 teachers 47.3% (44). Others, 7 teachers 7.5% (7) out of 93 were undecided.

**Use of Mother Tongue Makes Pupils Eager to Learn at Lower Primary School Level**

The respondents were further asked to indicate the degree to which use of mother tongue made the pupils eager to learn concepts in class. The responses of the teachers are captured in table 4 below.

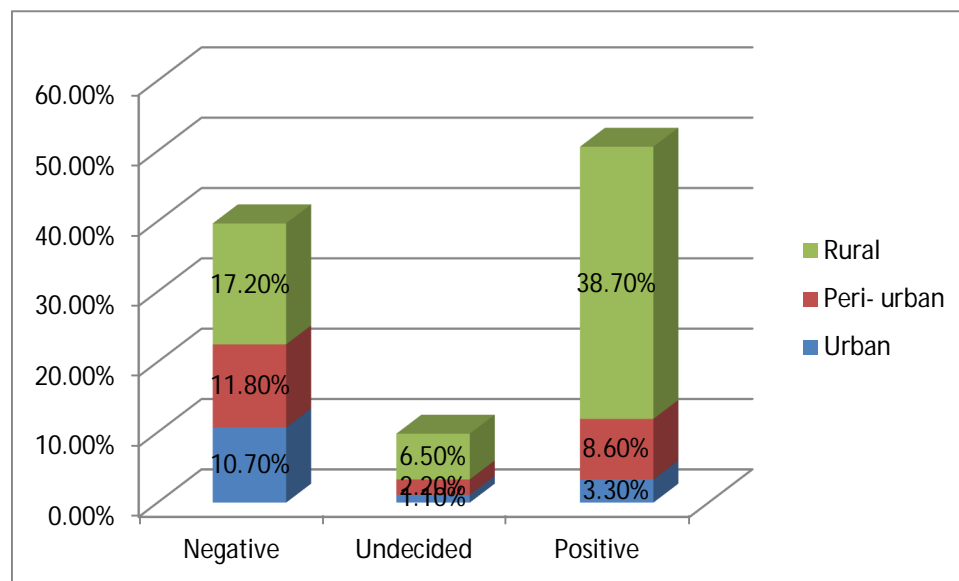
**Table 4: Use of Mother Tongue Makes Pupils Eager to Learn at Lower Primary School Level**

Use of mother tongue makes pupils eager to learn at lower primary school level						
Region	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Urban	3(3.2%)	7(7.5%)	1(1.1%)	1(1.1%)	2(2.2%)	14(15.05%)
Peri-urban	3(3.2%)	8(8.6%)	2(2.2%)	3(3.2%)	5(5.4%)	21(22.6%)
Rural	5(5.4%)	11(11.8%)	6(6.5%)	16(17.2%)	20(21.5%)	58(62.4%)
Total	11(11.8%)	26(27.9%)	9(9.7%)	20(21.5%)	27(29.0%)	93(100%)

Source: Field Data



Data indicated that many respondents from the rural region strongly agreed that use of mother tongue made pupils eager to learn at lower primary school level. The percentage of those who strongly agreed was 21.5% (20) and those who agreed were 17.2% (16). The percentage in rural areas was higher than in the other areas. For example, in the peri-urban 3.2% (3) agreed and 5.4% (5) strongly agreed. In the urban region 3.2% (3) strongly disagreed and 7.5% (7) disagreed.



**Figure 3: Use of Mother Tongue Makes Children Eager to Learn at Lower Primary Level**

Figure 3 gives a summary of the responses from the teachers on whether mother tongue made children eager to learn. It was revealed that most respondents 50.5% (47) out of the 93 interviewed had a positive attitude for they said that mother tongue usage made children eager to learn. A majority of these respondents 38.7% (36) were from the rural region. However, 39.7% (37) of the teachers were negative while 9.7% (9) were undecided.

### **Mother Tongue Enhances Learning in Lower Primary School Level**

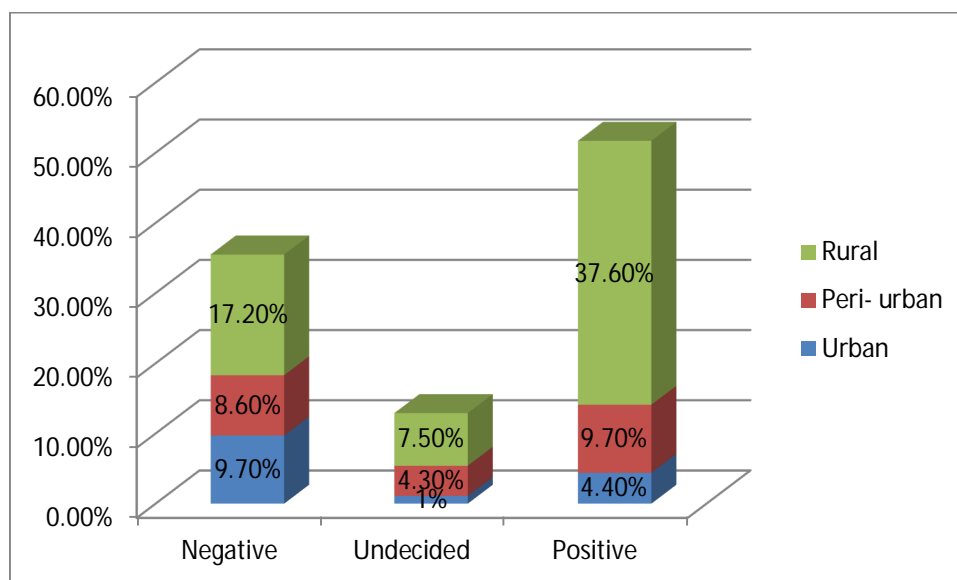
The teachers were also required to indicate the degree to which they agreed with the statement that use of mother tongue enhanced learning in lower primary school level. Their responses are as tabulated in table 5.

**Table 5: Mother Tongue Enhances Learning in Lower Primary School Level**

Use of mother tongue enhances learning among pupils in lower primary school						
Region	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Urban	2.2% (2)	7.5% (7)	1.1% (1)	2.2% (2)	2.2% (2)	15.05%(14)
Peri-urban	3.2% (3)	5.4% (5)	4.3% (4)	5.4% (5)	4.3% (4)	22.6%(21)
Rural	7.5%(7)	9.7%(9)	7.5%(7)	20.4%(19)	17.2%(16)	62.4%(58)
Total	12.9%(12)	22.6%(21)	12.9%(12)	27.9%(26)	23.7%(22)	100%(93)

Source: Field Data

Data indicated that 2.2% (2) respondents from the urban region strongly disagreed that use of mother tongue enhanced learning among pupils. 7.5% (7) disagreed, 1.1% (1) was undecided, 2.2% (2) agreed and 2.2% (2) strongly agreed that mother tongue use enhanced learning. Data from the peri-urban region indicated that 3.2% (3) strongly disagreed, 5.4% (5) disagreed, 4.3% (4) were undecided while, 5.4% (5) agreed and 4.3% (4) strongly agreed. The rural region data indicated that 7.5% (7) strongly disagreed, 9.7% (9) disagreed, 7.5% (7) were undecided, 20.4% (19) agreed and 17.2% (16) strongly agreed. The implication was that in the rural region and peri-urban region a majority of respondents were positive that use of mother tongue enhances learning in the lower primary.



**Figure 4: Use of Mother Tongue Enhances Learning in Lower primary school**

Data in Figure 4 shows that 33 respondents 35.5% (33) out of the 93 respondents did not support the view that use of mother tongue enhanced learning in lower primary school. On the other hand, 51.7% (48) supported the view that mother tongue usage in lower primary school enhanced learning. Many of these respondents were again from the rural region, thus, 37.6% (35). A total of 12.9% (12) of the respondents were undecided on this issue.

#### **Parents feel that teacher should Teach in Mother Tongue at Lower Primary School Level**

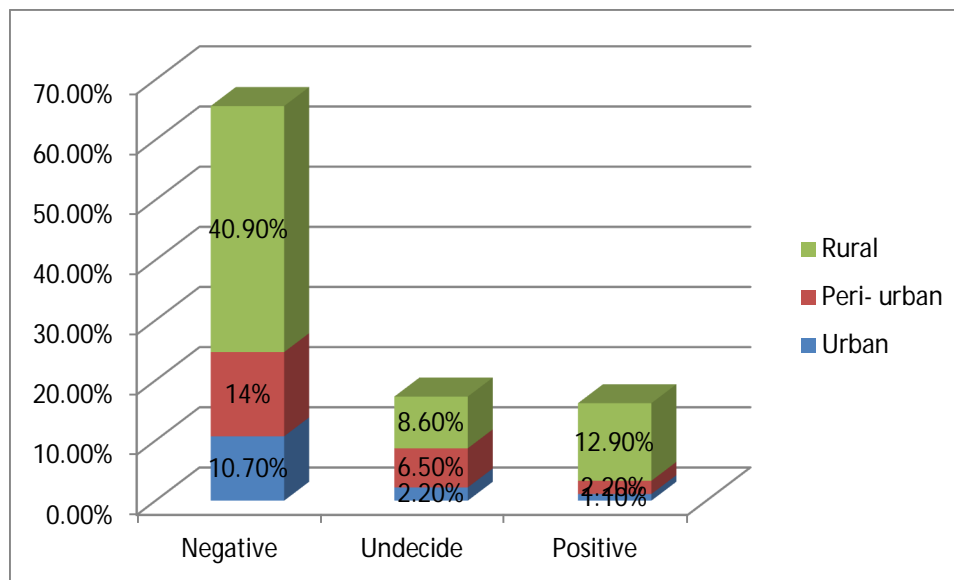
The teachers were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed that parents felt that they should teach in mother tongue. The responses are as given in table 6 below.

**Table 6: Parents feel that teachers should teach in mother tongue at Lower Primary School Level**

Parents feel that teachers should teach in mother tongue						
Region	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Urban	3.2%(3)	7.5%(7)	2.2%(2)	1.1%(1)	1.1%(1)	15.05%(14)
Peri-urban	8.6%(8)	5.4%(5)	6.5%(6)	1.1%(1)	1.1%(1)	22.6%(21)
Rural	17.2%(16)	23.7%(22)	8.6%(8)	9.7%(9)	3.2%(3)	62.4%(58)
Total	29.0%(27)	36.6%(34)	17.2%(16)	11.8%(11)	5.4%(5)	100%(93)

Source: Field Data

The data from the respondents indicated that parents' feelings had an influence on teachers' use of mother tongue medium of instruction. From the data, a total of 65.6 % ( 61) respondents from all regions failed to agree to the view that parents felt that they should teach in mother tongue. This was against 17.2 % ( 16) respondents who agreed to the view. This may influence the choice of the medium of instruction that teachers may use.



**Figure 5: Parents feel that teachers should Teach in Mother Tongue at Lower Primary School Level**

The data in figure 5, indicates that many respondents were negative on the issue that parents felt that teachers should teach the lower primary level in mother tongue. 65% (61) of the teachers out of the 93 who responded to the questionnaire did not agree with the item on whether parents felt that teachers should teach in mother tongue in lower primary school . Only 17.2% (16) teachers agreed with the item. The indication was that although mother tongue was supposed to be the medium of instruction in the rural regions, it lacked support of the parents. Parents are more interested in their children excelling in examinations which lead to good courses and good jobs in future, than they are interested in mastery of mother tongue. This in turn could influence the use of mother tongue by teachers in teaching the lower primary school in these rural regions.

### **I Prefer Teaching in Mother Tongue rather than Kiswahili or English**

The respondents were also required to respond to the view they preferred teaching in mother tongue rather than Kiswahili or English. Their responses were as shown in table 7 below.

**Table 7: I Prefer Teaching in Mother Tongue rather than Kiswahili or English**

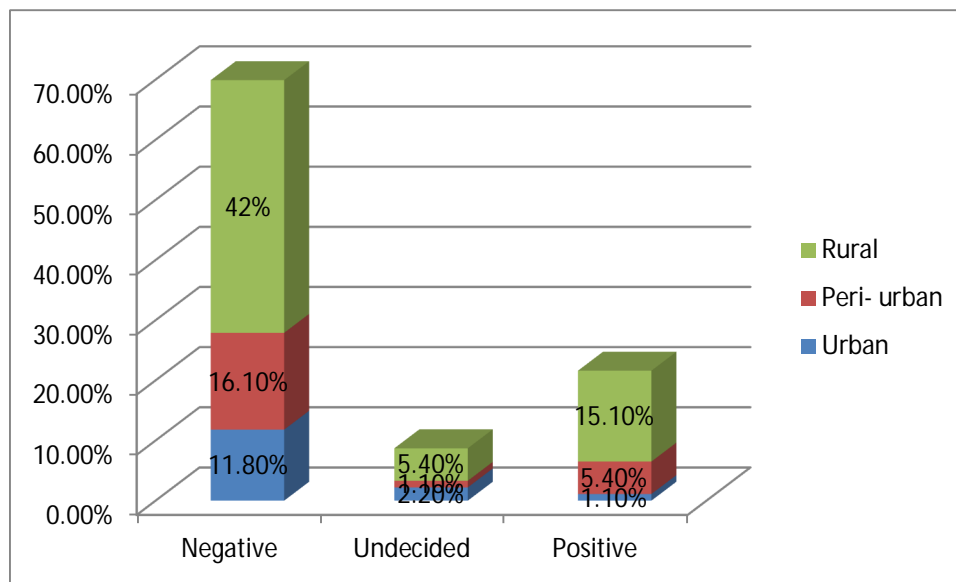
I prefer teaching in mother tongue rather than Kiswahili or English						
Region	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Urban	7.5%(7)	4.3%(4)	2.2%(2)	0%(0)	1.1%(1)	15.05%(14)
Peri-urban	7.5%(7)	8.6%(8)	1.1%(1)	4.3%(4)	1.1%(1)	22.6%(21)
Rural	23.7%(22)	18.3%(17)	5.4%(5)	10.8%(10)	4.3%(4)	62.4%(58)
Total	38.7%(36)	31.2%(29)	8.6%(8)	15.1%(14)	6.5%(6)	100%(93)

Source: Field Data

The responses on the item on preference to teaching in mother tongue indicated that out of the 14 teachers from the urban region, 7.5 % (7) strongly disagreed and 4.3 % (4) disagreed with the statement regarding preference of teaching in mother tongue. 2.2% (2) were undecided while only 1.1% (1) strongly agreed that they preferred teaching in mother tongue. From the peri-urban region, 7.5% (7) strongly disagreed and 8.6% (8) disagreed that they preferred teaching in mother tongue

rather than Kiswahili and English. 1.1% (1) was undecided while 4.3% (4) agreed and 1.1% (1) strongly agreed that they preferred teaching in mother tongue rather than Kiswahili and English.

Data from the rural region regarding preference of teachers to teaching in mother tongue showed that 22 23.7% (22) strongly disagreed on this item, while 18.3 % (17) disagreed. 5.4% (5) was undecided, while 10 (10.8%) agreed and 4 (4.3%) strongly agreed. Cumulatively, across the three regions 65 (69.9%) disagreed, while, only 20 (21.6%) agreed that they preferred teaching in mother tongue rather than Kiswahili or English. This partially explains the non effective implementation of the mother tongue language policy in the lower primary schools.



**Figure 6: Preference in Teaching in Mother Tongue rather than Kiswahili or English**

The data presented in the figure 6 shows that cumulatively, many respondents from the three regions, urban, peri-urban and rural were negative towards the idea of teaching in mother tongue. This was seen from the fact that, 65 teachers 69.9% (65) out of the 93 teachers who responded to the questionnaire were negative while 21.6% (20) were positive and only 8.6% (8) were undecided. The high number of teachers who preferred to teach in English and Kiswahili could be linked to the importance attached to the two languages, thus, a mastery of the languages leads to good grades in national examinations.

### One is considered a Less Competent Teacher if one Teaches in Mother Tongue

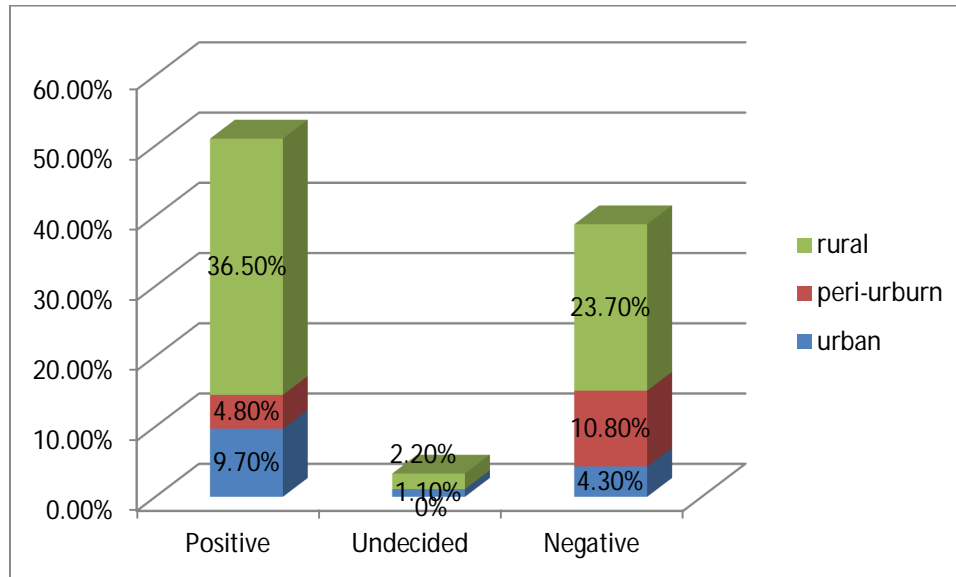
Teachers were also asked to indicate to what degree they felt that one is considered a less competent teacher if they taught in mother tongue. Table 8 below shows the responses of the teachers.

**Table 8: One is Considered a Less Competent Teacher if one Teaches in Mother Tongue**

One is considered a less competent teacher if one teaches in mother tongue						
Region	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Urban	7.5%(7)	2.2%(2)	1.1%(1)	3.2%(3)	1.1%(1)	15.05%(14)
Peri-urban	7.5%(7)	4.3%(4)	0%(0)	5.4%(5)	5.4%(5)	22.6%(21)
Rural	24.7%(23)	11.8%(11)	2.2%(2)	8.6%(8)	15.1%(14)	62.4%(58)
Total	39.8%(37)	18.3%(17)	3.2%(3)	17.2%(16)	21.5%(20)	100%(93)

Source: Field data

The data indicated that more than half of the respondents from across the three regions namely, urban, peri-urban and rural cumulatively disagreed that one was considered a less competent teacher if they taught in mother tongue. Those who strongly disagreed across all the three regions were; 39.8% (37), while 18.3% (17) disagreed in comparison to 17.2% (16) who agreed and 21.5% (20) who strongly agreed. This implied that this was not a valid reason to make teachers not teach in mother tongue in lower primary schools.



**Figure 7: You are considered a Less Competent Teacher if You Teach in Mother Tongue**

Many teachers 58.1% (54) who responded to the questionnaire did not agree to the fact that one was considered a less competent teacher if he/ she teaches in mother tongue. Only 38.8% (36) were in support of the item. It was therefore expected that such teachers could avoid to teach in mother tongue for fear of being despised and consequently, would fail to implement the language policy. Total 3.2% (3) teachers were undecided.

#### **Data from the Lower Primary School Teachers**

To corroborate the findings on teachers' attitude towards use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction, twelve teachers were interviewed. The teachers were asked to state the language they felt should be used as a medium of instruction in the lower primary school. Out of the 12 teachers interviewed, 1 (8.3%) recommended English, 8 (66.7%) recommended Kiswahili and 3 (25%) recommended mother tongue.

#### **Reasons Advanced by those not in Favour of Mother Tongue Medium of Instruction**

Some of the reasons given by those teachers that were not in favour of mother tongue medium were, first, most pupils understood Kiswahili better than their mother tongue. Secondly, teachers were of the view that when children were instructed in Kiswahili, they tend to understand the concepts better. One of the respondents, noted said that emphasis should be on English because the terminal examinations, that is, the Kenyan National Examinations were set in English. Further,



another view of the group of teachers who did not favour mother tongue medium of instruction was that most of the pupils spoke Kiswahili even back at home and so it was better to use the Kiswahili medium in the classroom.

Another reason advanced by those teachers who did not favour use of mother tongue medium of instruction was that the parents did not feel that the teachers should teach in mother tongue and so this caused a social pressure on teachers.

The data collected during the interviews also revealed that many teachers did not find it pleasurable to use mother tongue as a medium of instruction. Out of the 12 teachers, 75% (9) said they did not find it enjoyable. In addition 66.7% (8) out of the 12 teachers did not agree that use of mother tongue made children eager to learn. 25% (3) teachers said that a teacher was considered less competent if he/ she taught in mother tongue.

Although some of the teachers taught in the rural schools where the pupil's mother tongue was the main language of the catchment area, they said that they did not share a mother tongue with the learners and so they could not teach in mother tongue. This corroborated the findings of the teachers who responded to the questionnaires regarding the similarity in teacher's and learner's mother tongue.

### **Reasons Advanced by those in Favour of Mother Tongue Medium of Instruction**

The teachers in support of the use of mother tongue gave the following reasons to support their choice. One of the teachers said that pupils understood more when they were instructed in mother tongue. Another teacher who was from the rural region recommended the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction because she felt that pupils understood concepts fast when taught in mother tongue. 25% (3) of the 12 teachers interviewed, said that it was enjoyable to use mother tongue as a medium of instruction. In addition, 25% (3) of the teachers interviewed were of the view that children were eager to learn when taught in mother tongue.

Although many teachers did not favour mother tongue medium of instruction, 75% (9) out of the 12 interviewed did not feel that a teacher was considered less competent if he/ she taught in mother tongue. This corroborated the responses on the questionnaires about the same statement.

## Discussion

The study sought to find out the attitude of the lower primary school teachers towards use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in lower primary school level. Attitude is determined by the individual's beliefs about outcomes or attributes of performing the behaviour, weighted by evaluations of those outcomes. Ajzen, (1988), defines attitude towards behaviour as a person's overall evaluation of the behaviour. This refers to the degree to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation or appraisal of the behaviour in question.

The findings of the study indicated teachers were aware that use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in lower primary school enhanced learning at that level. Teachers were also of the view that teaching in mother tongue did not downgrade them. A big number of teachers especially, from the rural region felt that pupils were eager to learn when instructed in mother tongue.

However, a large proportion of teachers felt that mother tongue should not be the medium of instruction in lower primary school. This feeling could have arisen from the fact that according to these teachers mother tongue was not useful beyond the lower primary school. One recurrent reason they gave was that the terminal Kenya national examinations were not set in mother tongue and so there was need to train the lower pupils early in the language of the examination which was English and Kiswahili. The Kenya Education system is examination oriented and the success one gets in national examinations leads to a successful and progressive future. This leads to the favourable evaluation accorded to English and Kiswahili as media of instruction.

The findings also indicated that the number of teachers who enjoyed use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction was almost at par with that of those who did not enjoy use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction. The majority of those who enjoyed were from the rural region. This was due to the fact that the rural region was inhabited by many pupils who shared the language of the catchment area and many of those teachers could be speakers of the same language. Teachers therefore viewed the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction favourably

It was also revealed that parents, who are stake holders in the children's education viewed use of mother as a medium of instruction negatively. The teachers indicated that parents did not support use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in teaching their lower primary children. Parents' feelings would affect the behaviour of teachers. This is in line with Ajzen's theory of planned action

that informs this study which gives subjective norms as a variable. Subjective norms have two components which work in interaction: beliefs about how other people who may be in some way important to the person, would like them to behave (normative beliefs) and motivation to comply. In this respect, parents may influence teachers' behaviour.

Generally, the teachers largely favoured use of English and Kiswahili as media of instruction. A few teachers favoured use of mother tongue. The responses were in line with those of the teachers interviewed. English and Kiswahili were favoured because of their future benefits.

### **Conclusions**

Generally, the findings indicated that the teachers' attitude towards use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction was negative. This was shown by the fact that over half of the respondents did not favour use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction. Thus, out of the 93 teachers who responded to the questionnaire, 56(60.2%) were against the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in lower primary school. On the issue of whether it was enjoyable to use mother tongue as a medium of instruction, the rural region had the highest positive response. This was shown by the fact that 33 (35.5%) were from the rural region. However the number of the teachers who did not find it enjoyable was greater than that of those who enjoyed teaching in mother tongue. From the findings more teachers preferred to teach in English and Kiswahili than in mother tongue. This led to the conclusion that the teachers' attitude towards use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction was negative.

### **Recommendations**

Teachers need to be encouraged to teach lower primary schools in mother tongue. In urban regions, Kiswahili should be reinforced as a medium of instruction in lower primary schools Teachers need to be reminded of the importance of mother tongue medium of instruction since as Cummins, (2001) states, mother tongue provides the basis for the child's ability to learn another language. Indeed, reading and writing through the mother tongue is a predictor of the children's second language development.

Many times teachers have been posted to primary schools in areas where they do not share the mother tongue with the pupils. For example, in the case of the Luhyas, the dialects could be quite different and this hampers the use of mother tongue. So, the county governments would make a

deliberate effort to staff the rural regions with teachers who speak the language of the catchment area of the schools.

## References

- Baker, C. (1992). *Attitudes and Language*. Multilingual Matters. Brigend. WBC Print Ltd.
- Ball, J. (2011). Enhancing Learning of Children from Diverse Language Backgrounds: *Mother Tongue Based Bilingual or Multilingual Education in the Early Years*. Paper Commissioned for UNESCO.
- Cummins, J. (2000). *Language Power and Pedagogy*. Los Angeles: California Association for Bilingual Education
- Khejari, M. (2014). *Teachers' Attitudes towards the Use of Mother Tongue as a Language of Instruction in Lower Primary Schools in Hamisi District*. *Kakamega International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Vol. 4 NO 1; January 2014*.
- Khosa, M. (2012). *Mother Tongue Education: A Case Study of Grade Three Children*. Unpublished Master's Dissertation. University of Johannesburg.
- Koech, D. (2000). *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Education System of Kenya*. Nairobi: Government Press.
- Mbori, B. J. O. (2008). *The Interface between Language Attitudes and Language Use in a Post Conflict Context: The Case of Rwanda*. A PHD Thesis. The University of South Africa.
- Moyo, T. (2009). *Linguistic Diversity and Development: The Language Question and Social Justice in Southern Africa*. University of Zululand. Kwazulu- Nattal, South Africa.
- Nabea, W. (2009). *Language Policy in Kenya: Negotiating with Hegemony*. *The Journal of Pan African Studies, Vol. 3 no 1, Sept 2009 121-138*.
- O' Connor, T. (2011) " *Sampling*", *Megalinks in Criminal Justice*. Retrieved from [http://www.drtoconnor.com/3760/3760\\_lect03.htm](http://www.drtoconnor.com/3760/3760_lect03.htm) accessed on July17, 2011
- Pickens, J. (2005). *Perceptions and Attitudes of Individuals*. Organizational Behaviour in Health Care in Borkniski NY :) Jones and Barlet Publishing Book of the Year Awards: The Most Valuable Tests of 2005, chosen by AJNs' panel of judges. *AJN, American Journal of Nursing: Volume 106 (1) January 2006 pp51-57*.
- The Kenya National Education Committee. Ominde Commission (1964). [www.Scribd.com/doc/93462935/ Kenya Education Commission Report 1964](http://www.Scribd.com/doc/93462935/Kenya-Education-Commission-Report-1964).
- UNESCO. (2003). *Education in a Multilingual World. UNESCO Education Position Paper*. Paris:UNESCO.[http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/00129701298\\_e.pdf](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/00129701298_e.pdf) April.