

**EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTS OF MOTHER TONGUE ON ACQUISITION
OF SCIENCE SKILLS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNERS
AGED 3-6 YEARS IN KIKUYU SUB-COUNTY,
KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Mother tongue, as the term suggests, is closest to a person's heart. To this end, modern psychology also lays tremendous stress on a child's connection with the mother tongue. Having realized the significance of the mother tongue advantage, parents have started initiating their children in their native and natural language. The main objective of the study was to examine the effectiveness of use of mother tongue on acquisition of classification, observation/recording and interpretation skills of ECDE children aged 3-6 years. The study was guided by specific objectives that includes, to identify science skills taught in mother tongue in Kikuyu Sub County, Kiambu County, to establish how mother tongue is used in teaching scientific concepts and skills in Kikuyu Sub County, Kiambu County, to assess the effectiveness of using Kikuyu in teaching science skills in Kikuyu Sub County, Kiambu County and to identify availability of necessary prerequisites in using mother tongue in teaching science in Kikuyu Sub County, Kiambu County. The researcher used descriptive survey research design to evaluating mother tongue and its effects on acquisition of science skills of ECDE children aged 3-6 years, Kikuyu Sub County. Purposive sampling method was used for this study where the researcher only identified the respondents that can be interviewed based on their accessibility and availability for the interview. The target population of the study included teachers, parents, children and ECDE officers both totaling to 1165. A sample population of 384 was adopted to represent the entire population. The study used questionnaire as the main data collection instruments. Pilot study was undertaken before the main study on participants who did not take part in the main study. The questionnaire and semi-structured checklist was piloted to ensure that the questions are unambiguous and answerable. The quantitative data were coded, tabulated analyzed using descriptive, frequencies and percentages. Correlation and regression analysis were used. The qualitative data on the other hand were organized into major themes and were used to draw conclusions on effectiveness of mother tongue as a language of instruction in acquisition of science skills. The study established that use of mother tongue enhances early childhood learners' acquisition of science skills such as classification, observation/recording and interpretation skills. The study thus recommends that schools lay emphasis on the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in science amongst early childhood and that learners be encouraged to classify plants and animals in their own language to enhance confidence and participatory learning of science concepts. Teachers be trained on the essence of using mother tongue as a medium of instruction in early childhood settings. The government formulates a policy to ensure adherence to the Language Policy which addresses use of mother tongue in early childhood education settings and enhance quality basic education.