

English language in Kenya has been given a higher status as compared to other languages. Apart from being the official language, it is the language of instruction from primary four upwards. Stakeholders also regard it as the language of social and economic upward mobility. Recognition of English mastery notwithstanding, there is evidence that the reality in the school system is far below the ideal. Although the shortcomings in the mastery of literacy in English in Kenyan primary schools are associated with a number of factors, studies done in this area have not delved into detailed intervention approaches needed to improve English Literacy in primary schools. It was therefore, important to develop benchmarks as standards to inform policy makers, curriculum developers, teachers, teacher trainers and materials developers. This paper reports the results of a nationwide study aimed at reducing illiteracy in Kenya by developing interventions in form of English Literacy benchmarks for primary grades 3 and 6. This study was done by a team of Research and Development researchers, with the support of the Rockefeller Foundation. This is the first time attainment standards of any kind have been developed in Kenya.