

The intention of this study was to survey the perceptions and utilization of selected factors on mother tongue teaching in nursery schools in Githunguri Division in Kiambu District.

The specific objectives of the study were: (1) to find out the academic and professional qualifications of the nursery school teachers, (2) investigate the factors which the teachers consider as having some influence on mother tongue learning in the nursery school, (3) Establish teachers use of the following curriculum tools; instructional methods, instructional materials, schemes of work, lesson plans and evaluation, (4) identify the problems that the nursery school teachers encounter when teaching, (5) make recommendations, on the basis of the research on how to improve mother tongue learning in the nursery schools.

The following questions were considered in this study, (1) what are the nursery school teachers' academic and professional qualifications? (2) What factors do teachers perceive as influencing mother tongue learning in the nursery schools (3) to what extent do teachers make use of schemes of work and lesson plans? (4) What instructional materials do teachers use when teaching mother tongue? What instructional methods do teachers use when teaching mother tongue? (6) What techniques do nursery school teachers use to evaluate the learners? (7) What problems do teachers encounter when teaching in the nursery schools?

The sample of the study comprised of 32 nursery schools selected from a population of 67 nursery schools in the division. Data was collected through; (1) Interview schedules for the nursery school teachers, (2) observation schedules during actual teaching in the classroom. Data was then analyzed using descriptive statistics and then presented and discussed through the use of tables.

Results revealed that majority of the nursery school teachers have reached reasonable academic levels of either form two or form four. There was a high percentage of those teachers who have undertaken professional training and those who are undergoing the training.

It was also revealed that most nursery school teachers do not prepare schemes of work or lesson plans. The findings further revealed that the teachers perceived the following factors as having a positive influence on mother tongue learning: (1) Teacher's familiarity to the children's mother tongue, (2) availability and use of; teachers guide, wall charts, pupils exercise books and pencils, improvised cut outs, flash cards and professional training. Teachers as having a negative influence perceived the following factors: (1) lack of pupils' textbooks, (2) low motivation for teachers due to poor salary, (3) interference with English.

The most commonly available instructional materials as revealed by the study were; chalkboard, wall charts, exercise books, pencils and teachers guides. From the research findings, it was evident that majority of the nursery schools do not have mother tongue textbooks and many nursery schools did not have free choice activity corners.

Results indicated that, in terms of quality and variety, the teaching methods used in the majority of nursery schools were impressive. Good teacher-learner interaction was evident, and the choice of listening, speaking, writing and reading skills development activities was usually good. Teachers also made use of varied class activities and involved various pupils in these activities.

The techniques used in evaluating the learners included; observation, marking the exercise books and giving tests.

The problems encountered by the nursery school teachers were; absence of guidance and support from the Ministry of Education, lack of pupils' textbooks, crowded classes, poor salaries and absenteeism.

On the basis of the research findings the researcher recommended the following: (1) professional training for all teachers handling nursery school children, (2) assistance for the nursery school teachers from the nearest primary schools in preparation of schemes of work and lesson plans, (3) provision from the Ministry of Education, of a variety of mother tongue textbooks, (4) the method of interviewing children who are joining standard one in English, should be discouraged, (5) motivation of teachers and increasing their teaching morale by way of paying reasonably good salaries, (6) Ministry of Education should consider taking up the employment of nursery school teachers, (7) nursery school teachers should maximize improvisations in the absence of pupils' textbooks, (8) Ministry of Education should organise regular seminars and refresher courses for practicing teachers; and ensure that there is appropriate personnel for inspecting the nursery schools at the district and divisional levels.