

Factors influencing Parents' language Choice of Private Pre-Primary Schools in Tanzania: A Case Study of Urban private pre-primary schools in Njombe Region

Leopard Jacob Mwalongo

Open University of Tanzania

P.O. BOX 23409

DAR ES SALAAM –TANZANIA

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7085839>

Published Date: 16-September-2022

Abstract: Currently in Tanzania many parent's choice private English medium schools to send their children for education. Again, there is rapidly increasing of private English medium schools in the country. There for this study aims at examining the reasons of the parents to send their children in private English medium schools for the education. This study used. Qualitative research design, the study used purposive sampling to select ten parents for interview. The study selects ten parents those who have children in private English medium in Njombe region. The result showed that most parents made a choice of private English medium schools for a number of reasons such as Foundation of English language, Connection with the world, Language of Instruction, International Language and Competition for Employment. The study recommends that Government may think on introducing English language as a medium of instruction to all schools and Kiswahili remain as a compulsory subject from pre-primary schools to University level.

Keywords: Language choice, private pre-primary school, Language of instruction Parental choice.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language choice has gained popularity throughout the world since it is perceived as a personal freedom and provides opportunities for parents to make real choices for their children's Language education. It gives parents greater power over their children's education (Fung & Lam 2011). In Tanzania education system operates under private and public schools. Public schools in Tanzania are owned by the Government and are free. Private schools on the other hand are owned and operated by individuals, parents' unions or religious groups such as Christian and Muslim institutions. They could be differentiated based on medium of instruction, curriculum approaches, religious orientation, origin (Local or International) or political affiliation and branded or non-branded schools (Bin Dahari & Sabri Bin Ya, 2011). Parents in Tanzania are free to exercise the freedom of choosing pre-primary schools for their children out of the mentioned above school categories. From 2000s, private pre-primary schools are mushrooming in Tanzania education and most of the parents do opt to send their children in those schools (Mwalongo, 2016).

Accordingly, the Tanzania basic and compulsory education includes pre-primary education, primary education and secondary education (ordinary level) (MoEVT, 2014). This study dealt with the formal foundational level of education system in Tanzania i.e. pre-primary school education which is the base for all other formal education school levels and also as a preparatory level for primary school education level. Both private and public schools have choice of instruction language between English, Kiswahili, French and Arabic although most of the public pre-primary schools use Kiswahili language as a instructional language (MoEVT, 2014). This study investigated the factors that influencing Parents' language Choice of Private Pre-Primary Schools in Tanzania.

Background

In Tanzania, the emphasis on early childhood education came after the 1990s as a result of the World conference on Educational For All (EFA) (Mutahabwa, 2010). The 1995 education and training policy in Tanzania formalized pre-primary education for children from 5 to 6 years old (Mutahabwa, 2007). However, Tanzania like most African countries the provision of pre-primary schools' education is very poor as some children learn under trees while sitting on stones (Abagi, 2008). UNESCO (2012) reported that the demand for pre-primary school education continues to grow in the world; around 163 million children are accessing pre-education services globally (an increase of 46% since 1999). In sub Saharan regions where Tanzania belongs, the report commented that over 11 million children were enrolled in pre-primary education (119% increment since 1999). This expansion of demand and importance of pre-primary education make parents' language choice and decision for pre-primary school education for their children to become a critical issue globally and in Tanzania particularly. Since 1990s after the Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All most of the parents send their children in various pre-primary schools of their choices. With the choice of school Katz (1994) argued that parents make choices about the type and language of instruction of school to enroll their children by paying for the services provided in their schools of choice. In Tanzania parents makes different choices of pre-primary schools and pay for the services provided in their schools of choices based on the various factors for their school choices. This study investigated the language of instruction in pre-primary school as a factor for parents' school choice.

Also, Mutahabwa (2010) argues that most of pre-primary schools in Tanzania do not pay attention to the consideration of their children's voices, interest, needs, based on their age of development. From this reason the parents make a choice of language in most of pre-primary schools in Tanzania for their children development in children.

Basic concepts

In Tanzania basic education includes pre-primary education, primary education and secondary education (ordinary level) (MoEC, 1995). The concept pre-primary school education in Tanzania is used interchangeably with early childhood education. The provisional of pre-primary school education can be explained into different terms based on the services provided such as early childhood care and education (ECCE), early childhood development (ECD), early childhood education and care (ECEC), early childhood care and development (ECCD) and early childhood care for survival growth and development (EC-SGD) (Mutahabwa & Rao, 2009). Pre-primary school education typically aims at preparing children for formal primary school education in cognitive and non-cognitive development skills in Tanzania.

Statement of the problem

Language is a tool for human communication in all aspects of life. The use of language

in any society is unavoidable thing in all levels starting from home to working place. In this case learning a language to society is unavoidable thing. In Tanzania, most of parent's choice a pre-primary school based on the language of instruction of the school. The studies show that most of the parents in Tanzania do choose English language schools to send their children in education purposes. The current study investigated the language as a factor for parents' school choice in Tanzania.

Objective of the study

The study aimed at investigating the parents' language choice of private pre-primary school in Tanzania. Specifically, the study aimed at investigating language factors that influencing parents to make choice in private pre-primary school in Tanzania.

Research Question

The main objective of this study was realized with the guide of a set of research questions based on the "How the Language factors influencing parents to the choice and decision on private pre-primary school education in Tanzania?" particularly the study answered the following set of research questions.

- i. What are the parents' perceptions on Language of instruction in private pre-primary school?
- ii. What are the factors influencing parents' choice and decision of private pre-primary schools?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The fundamental rationale for the choice of schools and decision ultimately traces its origin to the classical liberal conceptions of the rational autonomous individual who is presumed to be a person capable of deliberating upon alternatives and of deciding between different educational programmes according to individual needs, interest and desires. Choice is a conception of autonomy of the individual which presupposes that the choices made are the individual's own; that they are independent results of a freely made decision and that outcomes have not been influenced, manipulated or imposed by external institutions or by the logic of situation

The educational policy of New Zealand of 1987 presumed that people are free to choose the schools of their children due to their ability to make rational decision based on an evaluation of their preferences and interest in relation to variables of general quality of education (Mark & Anne, 2010). In this case it has been said that choice will involve a wide range of options for both consumer (parents and students) and learning institutions. Consumers need to be able to directly influence their learning institutions by having a say in the running of it or by being able to turn to acceptable alternative. This will be possible only if the people are free to choose and will allow having true cooperative partnership between the community and learning institutions (New Zealand Department of Education, 1988). These studies are related with this study in sense that parents in Tanzania are free to make choice from public and private and also among the private schools to send their children for education purposes.

The concept of Language of instruction

The language of instruction may be the mother tongue of students (a language they speak at home and in their community), the official or national language of the country, an international language such as English, or a combination of these. The question of language of instruction is the major agenda of education in various countries all over the world. The discussion and decision about the instruction language includes what mother language to teach at which grade, when to transition to national and International language also which international language has to be taught however the effort to develop materials and instructional material support. In Tanzania the instructional language from pre- primary school to standard seven is Kiswahili and from ordinary secondary education to tertiary education is English. In Tanzania also, there is choice for private and few public schools some schools the instructional language is English from pre- primary school to tertiary education where the parents have a choice where they send their children for education purposes.

The methods of the study.

The research was done in Njombe region Tanzania. It used qualitative research design.

The study further used purposive sampling to select a sample of ten parents for the interview. The sample included 5 males and 5 females. The parents involved were those with children or child in private pre-primary schools in Njombe region Tanzania. The data collected were analyzed by using qualitative data analysis techniques. The recorded interviews were later transliterated into word format and translated into English language in order to prepare them for smooth analysis. 10 Interviewees were interviewed. The collected data were analyzed by content and themes. Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) argue that, content analysis requires the process of assigning and defining the meaning and arrangements of collected qualitative data. The analysis involved the open coding process followed by intensive coding and finally developing themes based on the objectives of the study. Finally, the findings were summarized depending on the content and themes. In order to support the findings quotations from the respondents were used based on each objective of the study.

3. FINDINGS ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This part presents the findings, and discussion of qualitative findings of the main objective of the study which is to investigate the language factors that influencing parents' choice and decision of private pre-primary school in Tanzania. The following are factors that have been discovered from this study.

1. Foundation of English Language

Under the interview of parents on private pre-primary school choice most of the parents revealed that these schools will prepare their children on English language as instructional language for future education from pre-school that will make them ready for other education levels. Since the Tanzanian educational language policy allows to use both Swahili and

English in pre-primary and primary school while in secondary level only English is used as instructional language and almost all public pre-primary and primary school use Kiswahili as a medium of instruction, however most of the private school do use English as a medium of instruction as explained by parents 6:

"I learned in this normal school and I have difficult in English language till now I will not let my child experience the same I sent my child in private pre-primary with perception that he will have a good foundation of English language for his future education. I am a teacher many students sometimes dropped from secondary school education especially Form Two because of language problem as the student cannot manage to learn academic and language of instruction at the same time". (PARENT 6)

These findings coincided with the six suggested areas by CDC (2006) as important learning areas for pre-primary school of physical fitness health, language, early mathematics, science and technology self and society and arts as the core learning elements. By taking attention to language the CDC said that language is important element because all knowledge areas originated from language. Children use language in everyday life during play activities. Also, language plays an important role in creative work and social interaction and enables them to participate fully in the whole process of knowledge acquisition. Referring to the findings of this study parents do make a choice to schools where there is a use of English in teaching and teachers use English in designing and effective language teaching environment according to the children's ability interest and needs. In this case most of the parents in Tanzania choose private pre-primary schools for their children because they need their children to learn English language.

2. Connection with the World

Yet the use of English language expanded in the world as the result of globalization. About all 10 parents responded that English language is a factor for them to send their children in private pre-primary schools. Since all public pre-primary schools their instructional language is Kiswahili (national language) and most of the private schools use English language as a medium of instruction. As a result, most of the parents wanted to prepare their children for further studies by learning English language at the initial early stage because the Tanzanian education system used English language from ordinary secondary education as a medium of instruction. Hence the parent number 8 said:

"I schooled in this normal school system when I join secondary education I had a difficult in English language and yet I am teaching in secondary school. In course of teaching I see how my students suffer with English language. I decided to choose this school so that my child learns English language at the very beginning of schooling so that he can manage the future studies". (PARENT 8).

The parents believed that by learning English language their children will be able to be connected worldwide. Since also the language is regarded as the international language one of the parents responded that with learning English language the child will build confidence, socialize with different people of the world and also the child will be able to express herself in front of people by using English language in future. In this case therefore, English language becomes very important factor to prepare the child for the future education investment. These findings corresponded with the Hawkins, et al (2007) who says that, parents consider children as their most valuable assets, therefore, they invest in education particularly pre-school education for children's future and theirs too. Beside the study by Mwalongo (2016) concurred with these findings that parents do choose English medium schools because they want their children to be connected with the world. Also, findings on language of instruction are in line with the study by Bin Dahari and Sabri Bin Ya, (2011) who reported that, parents when asked to select their choice of medium of pre-schools 71.6% out of 100% of participant choose English language as a medium of instruction. The study recommended further that, most of the parents in Malaysia prefer to introduce English language to their children in an early age life because they consider it as a global language.

3. English Language is for Instruction

The aspect of language of instruction has discussed a lot with the parents. Most of the respondents said that language of instruction is very important factor for school choice of their children. The respondents revealed that they choose the private pre-primary school for the sake of English language skills. This finding implies that, most of the parents in Tanzania do like their children to learn English language at early stage. The current findings seem to concur with a number of studies and literatures which also revealed that most of the parents around the world do send their children to learn English language for various purposes at early years (Bin Dahari & Sabri Bin Ya, 2011; Wong & Rao, 2015; Mwalongo, 2016).

International Journal of Novel Research in Humanity and Social Sciences

Vol. 9, Issue 5, pp: (1-6), Month: September - October 2022, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

The current findings on language of instruction as a factor for school choice concurs with the study by Bin Dahari and Sabri Bin Ya (2011) who reported that parents when asked to select their choice of medium of pre-schools 71.6% of participants chose English language as a medium of instruction. The study recommended further that, most of the parents in Malaysia prefer to introduce English language to their children in an early age life because they consider it as a global language.

The findings of the preceding study directly reflected the vision of most Tanzanian parents that English language is a crucial language for child's future settings which is also in agreement with the proposal by Wong and Rao (2015) who confirmed that preponderance of Hong Kong population about 90.8% speaks Cantonese as a first language yet parents want their children to start learning English language as a language for their future success in life.

4. International Language

English language is regarded as the international language and second official language in Tanzania. Most of the parents recognized that, they do expect much on a private pre-primary school choice because they believe that in these schools their children will learn English language. The finding of the study by Mwalongo (2016) tells that, most of the parents in Tanzania do prefer to send their children to learn English language at the very early stage. Findings of this study revealed that parents do expect good English language skills from their choice of private pre-primary school. The parents also expected that their children will be connected with the rest of the world through English language. Together with that, parents also prefer English language because the other levels of education use it as a medium of instruction. In this case therefore parents do want to prepare their children for future education. Parent 4, said;

"I expect my son to know English language since this language is very important for his future life to be connected with various people in the world also English language will be used for other levels of his education if I prepare him with this language skills, I am sure it will be easy for him in future study". (PARENT 4).

The findings of this study on the language choice for the children Education, most of the parents expect from private pre-primary school that their children will learn English language as the study by Wong and Rao (2015) which confirmed that, preponderance of Hong Kong population about 90.8% speaks Cantonese as a first language yet parents want their children to start learning English language as a language for their future success in life.

Also, findings are in line with the study by Bin Dahari and Sabri Bin Ya, (2011) who reported that, parents when asked to select their choice of medium of pre-schools 71.6% of participants chose English language as a medium of instruction. The study recommended further that, most of parents in Malaysia prefer to introduce English language to their children's in a early age life because they consider it as a global language.

5. Competition for Employment

About 5 respondents have the opinion that they expect their children to become a good competitor on an employment market since they want them to study good school so as to have a good foundation of their English language and became good scholars who can compete in employment market. These findings corresponded with Hawkins, Mothersbaugh and Best (2007) who say that, parents consider children as their most valuable assets therefore; they invest in education particularly pre-school education for children's future and theirs too. More over according to McDaniel et al (2006) children's early life has a profound impact on the children's later achievement in life hence parents tend to choose a best pre-primary education for their children future life. Heckman, (2008) suggest that investing in early childhood education is a cost-effective strategy for promoting economic growth, since our economic future depends on providing the tools for increasing mobility and building a high educated and skilled workforce. In this case therefore the parents in Tanzania showed to have high expectation on their English language educational investment of private pre-primary school (early childhood) education is the most effective way to accomplish these goals.

4. CONCLUSION

English language is an International language. Most of parents in Tanzania wants their children to learn English in their schooling systems. It is high time now for Government to think on introducing English language learning from pre-primary schools to University level.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abagi, O. (2008). *Final Situational Analysis Report on the Technical Support for the Development of an Implementation Strategy for ECD Element of the Kenya National ECD Policy Framework and ECD Service Standard Guideline* Nairobi:Associate, Centre for Research and Development.
- [2] Bin Dahari, Z. & Sabri Bin Ya, M. (2011). Factors that influence Parent's choice of pre- schools education in Malaysia : An exploratory study . *In International Journal of Business and Social Science*. Kuala lumpa , Malyasia VOL.2, No. 15
- [3] Curriculum Development Council (CDC). (2006). *Guide to the pre-primary curriculum*; Hong Kong. The Education Bureau HKSAR.
- [4] Fung, K. & Lam, C. (2011). Empowering Parents' Choice of Schools: The Rhetoric and Reality of How Hong Kong Kindergarten Parents Choose Schools Under the Voucher Scheme.
- [5] *Current Issues in Education*. Arizona State University. USA.
- [6] Hawkins, D.I. Mothersbaugh, D.L. & Best, R.J. (2007). *Consumer Behavior: Building Marketing Strategy*. New York: McGraw Hill
- [7] Heckman, J.J. (2008). Invest in early childhood education development reduce deficits strengthen the economy? *Chicago University, economic Inquiry* 46(3) 289-324
- [8] Katz, G. (1994). Perspective on the Quality of Early Childhood Programs. *Phi, Delta Kappan*, 76(3), 200-205. Retrieved September 2016 from ERIC/EECE BOOK Achieve.
- [9] Mark, O. J. C. & Anne, M.O. (2010). *Educational Policy Globalization, Citizenship and Democracy*. London Sage publications Ltd.
- [10] McDaniel, C., Lamb, C.W. Jr., & Hair, J.F. Jr. (2006). *Introduction to Marketing* (8th Ed.). Ohio: Thomson South-Western
- [11] Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. (2014). *Educational and Training Policy*, Dar es salaam: The United Republic of Tanzania
- [12] Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. (1995). *Educational and Training Policy*, Dar es salaam: The United Republic of Tanzania
- [13] Mutahabwa, L. (2010), Provision of pre-primary education as a basic right in Tanzania: Reflections from Policy documents. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 11(4)
- [14] Mutahabwa, L. & Rao, N (2009) pre- primary school education in Tanzania: observations from urban and rural classroom, *International journal of education development*
- [15] Mutahabwa, L. (2007). *Pre-primary educational Policy and Practice in Tanzania: Observations from Rural and Urban Pre- Primary Schools*. (Thesis) University of Hong Kong. Pokfulam Hong Kong SAR from http://dx.doi.org/105353/th_b3887702
- [16] Mwalongo, L. J. (2016). The Parent's Choice of Learning through English Language in Early Childhood Education - A Case Study of English Medium Schools in Tanzania, *European Journal of Foreign Language Teaching* Vol.1, issue, 1, ISSN, 2537-1754
- [17] New Zealand Department of Education (1988). (Taskforce to Review Educational Administration) *Administering for excellence: Effective Administration in Education* (Pilot Report). Wellington: Government Printer
- [18] Wilkinson, David & Birmingham, Peter. (2003). *using research instruments: A guide for researchers*. N.Y: Routledge Falmer.
- [19] Wong, J.M.S., Rao, N. ICEP (2015). The evaluation of early childhood education policy in Hong Kong: *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*. Springer Singapore.