

Indigenous Language Renaissance: The Use of Mother Tongue as Language of Instruction in Selected Gweru Schools, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Zimbabwean constitution has been amended in 2013 to suit the needs of the indigenous people as it had gone for twenty-three (23) years after independence without change. Of importance to note is the raising of sixteen (16) previously marginalised languages to the official status position, (Section 6(1)). In line with that, the 2006 education act dictates that Zimbabwe's primary schools, early learning must be done in mother tongue instruction. This means that the use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction to children during their first years of learning is proclaimed in the education policy and more so by the Constitution of Zimbabwe, in a bid to revitalise local languages. However, contrary to the law, the use of mother tongue as a child's first language is just but on paper as witnessed by some Pre-schools and Primary schools in Gweru. There has been a strong call by many African scholars to decolonise the mind of an African so that they accept their language as key to development. The chapter thus grapples with the practicality of implementing the constitutional mandate by schools in Zimbabwe in as far as the child's medium of instruction is concerned. Guided by decoloniality theory and the qualitative research methodology, the chapter argues that the use of English as the language of instruction at early childhood is tantamount to dehumanising and dismembering the indigenous folks of their culture. The study asserts that schools that are depriving the young ones of their mother tongue language at a tender age, are not doing any favour to the children but they are depriving them of their linguistic right in the name of class and money. The study further opines that the creative genius in children is redundant.