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Exploring Barriers that Affect Students' Achievement in Grade Ten Mother Tongue (Wolaytato) National Exam

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Abstract

The main objective of the study was to explore the barriers that affect students' achievement in grade 10 mother tongue national exam. The participants of the study were purposively selected 8 teachers, 4 school principals, 4 weredas education experts and 8 parents. Three tools were used to collect the data: interview, open ended questions and focus group discussion. Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods were employed to obtain the results. The study clearly indicated that preparing grade-10 mother tongue (Wolaitato) national exam which was not related to the textbook, syllabus and curriculum, shortage of sufficient time for the exam, teachers and students irrelevant attitude were some of the barriers that hinder student's score in grade 10 mother tongue national exam. It also disclosed that lack of reference materials, shortage of qualified BA teachers in Wolaita language, not coming of Wolaita language in grade 12 entrance exam, and teacher's weak time management were some of the impediments that hinder grade 10 students' results in mother tongue national exam. Hence, it was recommended that the concerned Zone and Wereda education leaders should work collaboratively with the school directors to provide sufficient textbooks to the schools. The stake holders like Zone education department, Wereda education office and the school principals should work hand to hand and manage and follow and be sure that Wolaytato national exam is prepared based on textbook, curriculum and syllabus.

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Introduction

Language is a tool of communication and knowledge as well as an indicator of cultural identity of an individual or a group. It is now become a common place of contemporary thinking that language is a highly emotionally charged issue, an aid and a barrier to national development, an advantage and disadvantage to an individual, a centripetal force that may unite a nation, and also a centrifugal force that may drive a society apart and ultimately divide a nation. Thus, in order to deliver

quality basic education, language is clearly the key to communication and understanding in the classroom. Thus, in order to deliver quality basic education, language is clearly the key to communication and understanding in the classroom.

UNESCO (2003a) espouses mother tongue instruction as a means of improving educational quality by building on the knowledge and experience of the learners and teachers. UNESCO has also encouraged mother tongue instruction in early childhood and primary education

since 1953 (UNESCO, 1953). Only through the mother tongue a student is able to acquire properly the learning skills like listening, understanding, absorbing, and communicating. Now days the importance of MT instruction has been understood, even though some confusions are there among the people in deciding the MOI(Medium of Instruction) at school level. The emphasis on mother tongue education is not merely for educational growth and achievements, but also for national reconstruction and development.

Students' academic achievement tends to have a direct relationship with the degree of available input of the school. In support of this idea, (Philip, 1969) indicates that factors such as qualified teachers, facilities like adequate and conducive classrooms, textbooks, furniture, curriculum relevance, infrastructure, learning process (monitoring and evaluation), and adequate funding have great influence on the successful achievement of the educational objectives and enhancing students' academic performance level

In many parts of Ethiopia, mother tongue language is given in regional and national exam in grades 8 and 10 respectively. Similarly, as other areas of Ethiopia, Wolaita language has been given in regional and national exam in grades 8 and 10 respectively. The result of the students in Wolaita language is still not satisfactory particularly in regional and national examinations. Basically, it is expected that students will score better result in their mother tongue language/Wolaita language/ than any other subjects as they are indigenous speakers. However, the score was/is inverse to the expectation, particularly in grade 10 national exam results.

The students' achievement in grade 10 national examination is very serious because students result is diminishing from year to year. The students are scoring in Wolaita language less than or equally with that of English language and other subjects in English media. Thus, this is a controversial issue that the society is still raising in different zonal and regional education forums and so that it needs deep investigation to dig out the problems. Thus, this study gave due emphasize to the factors that affect students' result or achievement in grade 10 national examination so as to find out the problems and come up with the possible solutions. The researcher are initiated to conduct this study because of his many year teaching experiences and his participation in some educational forums and as part of the community, he is able to observe the existence of the problem.

Objectives

The objective of this study was to search impediment that affect students' score in grade 10 mother tongue national exam.

Materials and Methods

The research design

The research basically explores exploring barriers that affect students' achievement in grade ten mother tongue (Wolaytato) national exam thus, in order to get relevant information, the researcher used descriptive research design. Because it was quite convenient to explore various factors affecting students' result in grade 10 mother tongue national examinations and the nature of the research by itself also allowed using this approach.

Research setting

The research was conducted in Wolaita Zone which is one of thirteen zones found in SNNPR, Ethiopia. It has thirteen woredas and three administrative towns. Among these, four Woredas (Damot Gale, Humbo, Kindo Didaye, and Duguna Fango) were purposively selected The reason for selecting these Woredas was the researchers' belief to obtain ample information from the areas as he has a good past experience in those woredas.

Research population

The estimated sample population for this study were four Woredas i.e. Humbo, Damot Gale, Kindo Didaye and Duguna Fango. From all these Woredas totally 104 students were selected using purposive sampling technique. This was mainly because the researchers wanted to participate those individuals who could offer rich information. From all weredas totally 8 teachers ,4 school principals, 4 weredas education experts and 8 parents were selected by using purposive sampling technique for study as sample size and this was the research population. Thus, the total population of the study was 128.

Sample size and sampling technique

The sample of the study was decided based on the objective of study. The total population size of the study was 128. In order to get this sample, the researcher used purposive sampling techniques for all population. The reason for using purposive sampling is to participate the

research subjects who can provide rich information to the study. Among selected four Woredas, one secondary schools from each Woredas were selected purposively by taking in to account its accessibility for the researcher to reach the area. From one selected schools in each Woredas, only grades 10 students were selected using purposive sampling so as to get those students who could offer ample data in the research project. From each school in selected Woredas, two sections were selected by using purposive sampling technique. This was based on information about the students that were given by the school principals so as to get adequate information from the students. From each section, 13 students were selected using purposive sampling techniques to involve both genders. Hence, 26 students were selected from each wereda and so that totally 104 (26 x4) students were participated in the study. Two Wolayta Language teachers were selected purposely from each school in each Woredas. This was to get rich data from the subject teachers. Thus, totally 8 teachers were selected. In addition, 1 school director from each school was selected purposely and so that totally 4 school principals were involved in the study. In each wereda 1 wereda education experts were involved and so that totally 4 wereda education experts were engaged in study. 8 educated parents were also involved in the study. Hence the total sample was 128 and this was to have ample data from the population. In addition to this, document analysis was made on relevance of mother tongue national examination to grade 9 and 10 text books, syllabus and curriculum.

Tools for data collection

Three instruments were used to collect data for this study. These were interview, focus group discussion and questionnaire.

Data analysis

In this study both qualitative and quantitative data analysis method were employed. This was because the data was gathered qualitatively and quantitatively by using interview, focus group discussion and questionnaire. The data gathered by using these three tools were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. During analysis priority was given to questionnaire then interview data to focus group discussion. The data gathered using three tools were analyzed in the form of text and in number in table. After that the result of data gathered by using three tools were triangulated.

Results and Discussions

Barriers that affect students' achievement in grade ten mother tongue(Wolaytato) national exam

Under this objective open ended questions were raised to the research participants. For the questions which says what do you think are the major problems of the Wolaytato national examination, many of the students provided various answers as follows:

Many questions almost fifty percent appear in exam from out of text book, syllabus and the curriculum. For example, the proverbs, figurative speech, poems, fables and some of other questions which need general knowledge and which we do not know and which are not in textbook and syllabus and thus extremely cheat students and so that it affects our result in national exam. The national exam should come from the text book. Another major problem is the time given for the national exam is too short and it is very difficult to finish the questions, particularly for reading one. The Wolayttatto questions will not come in grade-12 entrance exam and this totally desperate us or makes us hopeless. In addition, both teachers and students have less interest towards Wolaita language and they do not give relevant focus to the Wolaytato national exam and so that teachers are not teaching students effectively and students are also not learning and reading effectively, both of them have attitudinal problem and they do not give equal value for Wolaita language as that of other subjects like English. Some teachers do not attend the class on time and some miss the class at all and so that we are not learning effectively and even some chapters are not covered on time and some are totally not covered. Teachers also sometimes talk in Amharic and English in Wolaita language classroom and this by itself affects students score in national exam. The way of giving grades for the students by the national examination agency is not fair. If we miss 6-10 mark they give us C OR D. Shortage of reference materials which is written in Wolaita language and text books are also barriers that impede students score in national exam.

The interview data found from teachers, school directors and education experts also indicated that the problem for students' scoring low result in grade 10 national exam is bad perception towards mother tongue instruction, shortage of instructional materials and qualified man power in Wolaytato subject.

Let us see some of the responses: *Students do not give due attention to mother tongue instruction as much as they do for other subjects like Maths and Geography. They assume that Mother tongue is a local and easy to understand and so that they are not happy to learn it and this in turn affect their score in national exam(P2,13, 13,14,15 and 16). Many students do not want to learn Wolaita language except few students who want to read only for passing national exam. Many Students are not interested to learn for general knowledge. Even they do not understand that Wolaita language is a science. In addition to this, there is shortage of reference materials like different guide books that help students prepare for national exam and this affect students' score in national exam (P 9,10,12,&13).*

The book's publication do not take into account four language skills. Previously, un qualified teachers were teaching Wolaytato subject and similarly there was shortage of textbooks, but currently the lesson is being given by the qualified BA holders in Wolaita language even if there is still shortage of Wolaytato BA teachers and there were almost sufficient textbook. There were problem of book's preparation at the very beginning as it did not properly incorporate all language skills and grammatical structures. There were no teacher guide and this affects teachers' preparation and impedes students result. Both teachers and students have also attitudinal problem regarding Wolata language.(P12,13,14,15&16).

The data found from focus group discussion participants of four schools also shows that many factors that affect students' achievement in grade 10 mother tongue national exam. Let us see some of the responses: Students' negligent to giving due attention to Wolaita language education. Students consider as they naturally know Wolaita language do not want to attend the lesson properly as they do on other subjects. They lack knowledge to consider Wolaita language as a science of language. The national exam is also out of what we learnt in classroom. Some examinations are not accordingly the classroom lesson and textbook. Another factor is that lack of sufficient qualified teachers and because of shortage of skilled Wolaytato teachers the lesson is not started on time. There is also lack of adequate textbooks and reference materials. Teachers are also not punctual to enter the class and because of this the course is not covered effectively and this affects students' result in national examination.

Thus, based on the data found from in three tools, one can assume that preparing grade 10 national exam which were not related to the textbook, syllabus and curriculum, shortage of sufficient time for the exam, teachers and students irrelevant attitude, lack of reference materials, shortage of qualified BA teachers in Wolaita language, not coming of Wolaita language in entrance exam, and teacher's weak time management were some of the barriers that hinder student's score in grade 10 mother tongue national exam.

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were made.

The study disclosed that preparing grade-10 mother tongue (Wolaitato) national which was not related to the textbook, syllabus and curriculum, shortage of sufficient time for the exam, teachers and students irrelevant attitude were some of the barriers that hinder student's score in grade 10 mother tongue national exam.

The research findings also proved that lack of reference materials, shortage of qualified BA teachers in Wolaita language, not coming of Wolaita language in grade 12 entrance exam, and teacher's weak time management were some of the impediments that hinder grade 10 students' results in mother tongue national exam.

Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions, the following recommendations were made.

In order to reduce the barriers that affect students' achievement in grade 10 mother tongue(Wolaytato) national exam, the stake holders like Zone education department, wereda education office and the school principals should work hand to hand and manage and follow and be sure that the Wolaytato national exam is prepared based on textbook, curriculum and syllabus.

Most of the time there is a serious shortage of Wolayttato reference materials for the students. Thus, the concerned zone and wereda education leaders should work on it to ensure the availability of adequate reference materials

The stake holders should work ruthlessly to guarantee the coming of the mother tongue (Wolaytato) in grade 12 entrance exam and so that students will improve their attitude towards Wolayato in general. Teachers should enter the class on time to manage the students.

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