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## The Implementation of Shinashigna Language as Medium of Instruction in Some Selected Primary Schools of Metekel Zone: Challenges and Opportunities

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### Abstract:

*This study explored opportunities and challenges of implementing Shinashigna language as medium of instruction in some selected primary Schools of Metekel zone, Benishangul Gumuz National and Regional State, Ethiopia. To achieve the purpose; both qualitative and quantitative research methodology was employed. For this study, out of seven Metekel zone woredas; four woredas were selected by purposive sampling. For primary school centers; four centers were taken by availability sampling. In the study, a total of 255 research respondents were involved. To collect data from each respondent group's; interviews, FGD and class room observation was employed. In addition, to support the findings, documentary analysis was done. Hence, for this study purpose, both primary and secondary data were used. Analysis and interpretation of data was made by using qualitative and quantitative approach. Based on the analysis, the study confirmed that; low relevance and quality of educational materials in Shinashigna medium, poor organization of materials, lack of qualified teachers in medium of instruction, insufficient text book supply, poor capacity of implementers, lack of adequate training materials and lack of continues professional development effort for teachers were discovered as major challenges. Beside to the challenges, the study also identified existing opportunities for the implementation of Shinashigna as medium of instruction. These were conducive policy and constitutional environment of the government, improvement in the academic success of students, Shinashigna language was made to be a written language and the preservation of the Shinasha culture was made possible because of the program. Finally, the study recommended that, greater attention should be paid to the preparation of teacher guide, teaching materials, learning and reference materials, there is an urgent need on the development of literature in the language, there should be continuous training program to teachers, and there should be Shinashigna language development and enrichment institution to crate wide literature in the language. Finally, there should be a need to work with local, nation and international development agencies to develop the language and save the language of Boro Shinasha from danger of extinction.*

**Keywords:** Mother tongue, Shinashigna, Shinasha, Implementation, Opportunities and Challenges, Metekel

### 1. Background

Pupil's active learning, teaching process and appropriate educational system are closely related in nature in the process of actively developing the potential capacity of the students. This educational process is more active when done with the use of mother-tongue as medium of instruction. As scholar Copper (1997) believe that the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction is at the heart of education. As he stated its mission is to enable the learners to develop all their potentials to the full and to realize their creative capacities. The role of mother tongue in educational process is important. This observation is true because the effectiveness of the learning process is dependent on the existence of effective communication between teacher and learners. Emanon (1960) explains that effective communication between the teacher and learners take place when the appropriate language is used as medium of instruction. In Ethiopia the new education and training policy formulated in 1994 recognized that primary school curriculum programs must be related to the actual local condition and anticipate the needs of the learners. The vast changes in the schooling since then necessitated parallel changes in education both in terms of curriculum, medium of instruction and method of instruction.

These all changes have occurred because of the dissatisfaction with the previously existing educational system characterized by high students dropout rate, low enrollment, gender disparity and unequal distribution of schools between urban and rural (Teshome Nekanibeb, 2002). This has led to a shift in educational philosophy from teacher centered to student centered. Thus, among the key issues that need to be addressed to realize the achievement of national educational goals and targets with regard to primary education the draft program of operation (MOE, 2001) has given strategic priority to the introduction of local language as a medium of instruction to facilitate children's learning, curriculum development, to promote the development of foreign specific text books, teacher guide and instructional material using regional or local languages. The advantage of all this, for the child is an individual ease

speed of expression, greater self-esteem, greater independent of thought, greater creativity, firm grasp and longer retention of the subject matter (Robin and Junn cited in Mulluneh,2001). Based on these benefits, Benishangul Gumz Education Bureau has accepted all the attributes of the new educational and training policy and endorsed mother tongue education(*Shinashigna*) as medium of instruction in some selected primary schools of Metekel zone. Therefore, change in instructional medium from Amharic to *Shinashigna* is associated with specific changes and adoption of the curriculum materials, text book translation, and teacher training in mother tongue.

However, the pedagogy of *Shinashigna* as a subject was also provided from pedagogical and psychological point of view. Linking the issue of medium of instruction and curriculum resources with the mother tongue concerns is relevant in language policy because the problem of meeting the basic needs of the native learners revolves around the nature and the pattern of interaction between the child and his/her environment. Therefore, the medium of instruction for the pupils living in their language environment is preferable to be mother -tongue and the teacher who teach them should also be those who speak their native language or tongue. This is because students understand their own language best and to start their school life with it can narrow down the gap between home and the school. From this point of view, it seems that the new education and training policy of Ethiopia declared that the promotion of local language including *Shinashigna* for primary school education. The region has three zones and out of these Metekel zone was selected for its implementation of *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction. According to the Annual Education Abstract of Benishangul Gumz (2007/8) Metekel zone has 105 primary schools out of which five primary schools were selected for the implementation of *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction whereas the remaining schools use *Gumzigna* and *Amharic* as medium. The reason for this was that because of the dominate population of the *Shinasha*, easy and accessibility to supervision (Supervision Report 2001). With regard to teachers certainly, the promotion of the use of mother tongue calls for qualified teachers who are capable enough to teach through the language. To meet this requirement, training of teachers is pedagogically necessary. Because teaching through mother tongue is not simple task. Instead, it is an expression of active mind constantly. Thus, the changes made in the education policy on the language of instruction particularly to the use of local language or nationally languages as a language of instruction in primary schools is one of the fundamental changes or reform that is introduced as the result of the new education and training policy (MoE,1994). This is the central concerns of the study and researcher and how the use of good constitutional and education policy environment is practice in Benishangul Gumz in general and Metekel zone *Shinasha* people in using their mother tongue in particular.

## 2. Conceptualization of Mother-Tongue Education

Pupil's mother tongue is the language used by the community to which she or he belongs; provided that, he or she has already acquired that language. Since the mother -tongue is the language in which the pupil is most adapted, which can best express himself, and the one he or she can best understand; it follows that, it is the language in which learning can best take place. It is a universally acknowledged Pedagogical principle that instruction should preferably be provided in the pupil's mother tongue (Mitofanova and Desherieva cited in Mekonnen Fisseha, 1994).

As the authors explained that, the reasons behind using the mother tongue in instruction "*it is naturally quicker and easier to use the mother tongue to relate written symbols, to know sounds and concept's than to use those of unknown or foreign language.*" Other scholar (Hoben J. 1994) stressed that mother tongue education has been promoted for many reasons: Pedagogical, Psychological, and political as a means of empowering minority ethnic groups in many parts of the world.

There are four fundamental roots from which the quest for education through a mother-tongue (MT) is generated. The initial one is maintaining the sustainability of the linguistic ecology according to which a loss of any one of languages in the world is seen as minimizing the world's cultural and linguistic diversity. In this view of conception, since all languages are sources of one or knowledge they should be protected from the danger of extinction. Second, the issue of Human Rights system according to which linguistic rights are considered as major parts of human right has also a great value in this regard. In terms of this fact, all human beings seek or deserve their rights of using the language that they prefer for their day to day communications. The third one lies up in the relationship between language and identity. This refers to the function of language as a symbol of identity. As a whole the mother tongue (MT) is an ancestor for and a closely inter woven language with the language, culture and tradition of community that affirms the identity, self-image, self-confidence, and sense of independence of an individual. The best but the major source from which mother-tongue (MT) education derives is the pedagogical and psychological or psycholinguistic role by which the education and thought of a child is influenced or determined. In other worlds, since a mother tongue (MT) is the language that the child know best, empirical and research findings confirm that children (human beings in general) do best in their mother-tongue (MT) and consequently is a case in point to be the root for studying (MT) mother-tongue education (MOE 1994, and, Mazba and Nethepe, 1979).

Based on the aforementioned assertions for the quest of a mother tongue (MT),various researches have been carried out on its role on education. Such research findings have established that the use of a mother- tongue (MT) as a language of instruction (LOIs) during one's years of schooling results in not only an improved acquisition of knowledge by the pupils but also a profitable application of the knowledge acquired to the local science. Moreover, a mother-tongue (MT) as language of instruction (LOIs) has been found to be effective in helping the pupil with a better acquisition of a second language. That is why several attempts have been made to implement various language policies in multi-language nations elsewhere in the world since the profound 1953 UNESCO declaration that has endorsed the principle that the best language of instruction is the mother tongue (MT) of the learner in (Fafunwa, et. al. 1989 and Mbamba, 1982). Nevertheless, because of the fact that, there is nothing safe of critics in this world, the use of mother-tongue (MT) as a language of instruction (LOIs) has been debating issues since its inception. That is, even if most educators support and acknowledge the importance of educational instruction in a vernacular (at least in the early years of primary education) there are still many who oppose it. Since Ethiopia is a multicultural country by respect the international and national laws, the government of the

federal democratic republic of Ethiopia introduce and implemented the mother tongue education program for all mainstream and minority languages in the geographic vicinities. According to Education and Training Policy (MoE, 1994) cognizant of the pedagogical advantage of the child in learning in mother tongue and the rights of nationalities to promote the use of their languages, primary education will be given in nationality languages. Besides, the policy document states that by making the necessary preparation, nations and nationalities can either learn in their own language or can choose from among those selected on the basis of national and countrywide distribution. Furthermore, the education policy ensured that, the language of teacher training for kindergarten and primary education will be the nationality language used in the area and Amharic shall be taught as a language of countrywide communication. For encouraging international understanding, English will be the medium of instruction for secondary and higher education and Students can choose and learn at least one nationality language and one foreign language for cultural and international relations. Finally, the policy discussed clearly, English will be taught as a subject starting from grade one and necessary steps will be taken to strengthen language teaching.

### 3. Statement of the Problem

In the discussion of proceeding parts of this paper, the new education and Training policy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (1994) declares that the right of nations and nationalities to use their mother tongue or nationality language as language of instruction in primary schools. In connection with this, Elisabeth Gfeller (1999) argued that "Ethiopia has recognized the challenges of multi-cultural education policies in 1991. In exemplary way to other education policies; it has opened the way for all languages to be used in education." The constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) also provides the same reality in Article 5 and 39 as follows: "All Ethiopian Languages shall enjoy equal state recognition". Beyond this, "Every nations, nationalities and people in Ethiopia has the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language: to express, to develop, and promote its culture: and to preserve its history". Thus, Benishangul Gumz Education Bureau and *Shinasha* people being as the beneficiaries of such an opportunity is embarked on the use of mother tongue as medium of instruction in some selected primary schools of Metekele zone where the *Shinasha* people are dominate Ethnic group in the region. To realize the constitutional and policy right, the region give concentration to mother tongue education (*Shinashigna*) to be a medium of instruction in some selected primary school. Hence, according to Benishangul Gumz National and Regional Education Bureau Supervision Report (2001 E.C ) the researcher confirmed that the new medium of instruction often faced problem of resistance from the beneficiaries and community due to lack of awareness regarding the advantage of mother tongue education (*Shinashigna*), shortage of appropriately trained teachers in *Shinashigna*, lack of instructional materials in the language of instruction especially text books, lack of general and supplementary reading materials, absence of need assessment and research coordination, negative attitudes of some peoples towards their own language, lack and weak capacity of linguistic training and studying institutions in the region, centralization of resource management and control, lack of coordinated effort from bottom to top level and centralization of decision making were the most important problems. Therefore, it is researcher's belief to conduct a study on the topic Opportunities and Challenges of using *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction in some selected schools of Metekel zone. Here, the focus was on class room pedagogy to examine the strength and weak sides and to forward constructive recommendations.

Moreover, there were also complains from some people by saying that *Shinashigna* is not the need of the community of the *Shinasha* to be used for instructional purposes but it is imposed by the politicians of that region. Hence, the researcher is interested to investigate what was happened in reality. The other reason was that absence of prior research on issue was also the motives that interested the researcher. Besides, *Shinashigna* did not have as such developed literature and written grammar for longer periods regarding mother-tongue education. This was the issue that made the researcher to concentrate on this study. In general, the researcher is interested in investigating opportunities; which favored the program and the problems; which challenged the program in due courses of the implementation of instruction in mother tongue (*Shinashigna*).

#### 3.1. Objectives of the Study

Both the general and specific objectives of the study were formulated and basic research questions were prepared as follows:

#### 3.2. General Objectives of the Study

- To assess the opportunities and challenges of implementation of *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction in some selected primary schools of Metekel zone.

#### 3.3. Specific Objectives of the Study

- To identify the existing opportunities that encouraged the implementation of *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction in education.
- To list out the major challenges that affect the implementation of *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction in in education
- To forward possible recommendations in order to solve the challenges in the implementation of *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction in education.

#### 3.4. Basic Research Questions

To meet the above mentioned research objectives; the researcher formulated the following two basic research questions;

- 1) What were the opportunities which have promoted the use of *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction in some selected primary schools of Metekel zone?

- 2) What were the challenges faced in the implementation of *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction in some selected primary schools of Metekel zone?

#### 4. Research Methodology

The main purpose of this study was to examine the opportunities and challenges of using *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction in some selected primary schools of Metekel zone; Benishangul Gumz National and Regional state. To serve the purpose, a descriptive survey method of research was employed. Seyoum and Ayalew (1989) have noted the significance of this method for educational research. This is because the method enables the researcher to reflect on the condition of implementing educational program in particular country, region or school.

##### 4.1. Sources of Data

For the purpose and objectives of this research, both primary and secondary data was used. Thus, the primary sources of data were students, teachers, parents, education experts and administrators working in the Woredas and zone were the primary sources of data in this study. Secondary sources of data for this study were documents such as strategic plans, school reports, statistical figures, state council decisions on mother tongue education, minutes, letters and finally, related literature to consolidate the study.

##### 4.2. The Study Area

The study area includes three zones and out of these; one zone (Metekel) was selected for two reasons. The first reason was that, this was the only zone selected for the implementation of the program. The second one was the researcher had better knowledge about the issue of mother tongue education (*Shinashigna*) because he is the member of *Shinasha* community and practically observed the problems in the implementation of *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction. Metekel zone have seven (7) woredas. For this study, only four (4) woredas were selected purposively. In the zone, 105 primary schools are functional. The study covered only five (5) primary schools in the zone where *Shinashigna* has been used as a medium of instruction.

##### 4.3. Sampling Techniques and Size

The sample of the study included 4(57.14%) woredas out of the 7 (100%) woredas in the zone. The sample woredas were selected by using availability sampling technique because there was no other woreda that uses *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction in the zone. From each selected sample woredas the available primary schools were taken as sample primary schools where there were 5 primary schools influenced by the program in the four woredas. Regarding the respondents sampling all the available principals and vice principals in each selected sample schools were included in the study because they were expected to be key role players in the implementation innovation or the policy. *Shinashigna* teaching teachers were selected purposively because they were the teachers that were directly implementing the medium of instruction (*Shinashigna*) as implementer than other teachers who knows the detail opportunities and challenges of the program. Regarding respondents from experts and administrators, availability sampling employed. In sampling of students and parents random sampling was used. Thus, see the table below which shows the distribution of respondents by schools, woredas and zone. The table below shows the number of sampled woredas, schools and their corresponding number of research participants.

No	Name of Woreda (District)	No. of Schools Sampled	Sample of Respondents (N = 255)				
			Teachers	Students	Parents	Experts	Administrator
1	Bullen	2	10	20	12	10	3
2	Wombera	1	5	20	12	10	3
3	Debati	1	5	20	12	10	3
4	Dangur	1	5	20	12	10	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>15</b>

Table 1: The distribution of respondents by woreda and school

Source: Questionnaire

##### 4.4. Data Gathering Tools

To obtain and collect relevant and reliable data for the study both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered through questionnaire (open and closed ended). Therefore, questionnaire of similar items was prepared for both teachers, principals, vice principals and education office experts. The questionnaire was prepared in relation to the collected literature review. For the purpose of gathering relevant data, the initial draft of the questionnaires had to be pre-tested before actual distribution had been made for respondents. Hence, the questionnaire was pre-tested in Emangi primary school by taking 2 teachers who teach *Shinashigna* as subject, 1 principal, and 1 vice principal. Finally, the piloted respondents as well as schools were excluded from the main study. Hence, based on recommendation and suggestion of the respondents some items were omitted and some were restated in order to increase the soundness of the questionnaire. Qualitative data was also collected using interviews which were made for woreda and zonal administrators, education heads and parents including representative of PTA members. Thus, the interview guidelines were employed to get further information from the group mentioned above. In addition, actual class room observation was conducted by preparing observation checklist while class was on progress to examine about the implementation of *Shinashigna* as medium of

instruction. Finally, since grade 2 students were unable to fill the questionnaires hence the researcher employed structured interviews with students in each sampled schools. For the data collected in using interviews, classroom observation and group discussions; analysis was made together to support those data collected in quantitative method in form of questionnaires.

#### 4.5. Methods of Data Analysis

The information collected from documents, opinion gathered through interviews and the responses of the rating scales obtained in questionnaire were structured, organized and farmed to make the information conformable to analysis and inferences. To analysis the data collected, based on the nature of the data, percentage was used to elaborate the characteristics of the respondents and response of the different respondent categories towards *Shinashigna* medium of instruction. Moreover, tabulation, frequency and mean values were used for analyzing and interpretation data.

#### 4.6. Discussion and Result

In this part of the study the following were identified as the major opportunities and challenges of using *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction in some selected primary schools of Metekel zone, Benishanigul Gumuz National and Regional State, Ethiopia.

#### 4.7. Opportunities of Using *Shinashigna* as Medium of Instruction

The existing opportunities that encourage and promote the implementation of *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction are going to be discussed and presented under. Hence, the tabulation below display the issues raised to both teachers and experts of education in the research area as potential opportunities for the beginning and implementation of *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction in some primary schools of Metekel zone. Accordingly, the data collected is analyzed and presented as under.

Opportunities	Respondents categories											
	Teachers (N=25)						Experts (N=60)					
	Rating Scales						Rating Scales					
	1	2	3	4	5	X*	1	2	3	4	5	X*
Increased school enrollment rate	2	1	8	11	3	3.48	0	2	4	47	7	3.81
Improved academic success	0	1	12	6	6	3.68	0	0	5	36	19	4.23
Helped reservation of heritage	6	1	2	10	6	3.36	4	28	13	9	6	2.75
Our mother tongue skill improved	1	2	14	3	5	3.36	1	1	9	30	19	4.08
Drop out and repetition reduced	0	2	1	5	9	3.00	1	12	4	40	3	3.53
Solid constitutional right	0	0	2	16	7	4.20	0	0	4	46	10	4.10
Conducive education policy	3	1	10	7	4	3.32	1	1	10	37	11	3.93

Table 2: Frequency and mean value distribution of the respondents on opportunities of using *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction (N =85)

Note: 1.00-1.49=very low, 1.50-2.49=low, 2.50-3.49=Neutral, 3.50-4.49=high, 4.50-5.00= very high Agree, x\*= and mean values across each cell

Key: VH=Very High, H=High, M=Medium, L=Low, and VL=Very low

As it can be shown from the table 2 above, respondents were asked to rate the extent of students enrollment after using *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction in primary schools. Based on their response, both teachers and experts confirmed their agreement with mean scores of 3.48 and 3.81 respectively on the rating scale which indicate the presence of improved school enrollment after the implementation of *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction. From school annual statistical (2007/2008) collected from Ekonti and Eganemebo Primary School; students who were registered for mother tongue education or medium of instruction (*Shinashigna*) the report has shown change of students enrollment from 131 students in 2007 and 226 in 2008 for both sexes. Thus, this implies that student's enrollment is higher after the use of *Shinashigna* as medium since it shows an increment in trend from 2007 to 2008 academic year. This may be due to their interest in language of instruction or increase in school age population in the area. According to Mazamba and Nthep (1999) and Bamgbose in Heugh (1999) explains that the absence of the necessary attention for language case while designing an educational language policy will have its own economic implications in education system. For instance, one of the economic concepts is educational wastage that emanate from high dropout and repetition in primary schools are very likely a consequence of the problem connected with the language policy planning. Moreover, World Education Bureau research report of 1970 supports this fact by confirming that two of the fourteen factors for educational wastages are connected with language of instruction which is mother tongue instruction. Further, scholars like Mazamba and Nthep (1979), Hobben (1994) and Cummins (2000) argued that using mother tongue as a language of instruction enables to ease in expression and subject matter grasp as well as improvement in enrollment and speed or facilitate teaching process and reduces dropout rates. Therefore, the finding from this study has resulted in the same outcomes which enable as to say using *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction have increased the enrollment of students in the study area and concluded as good opportunity to encourage and further promote its use in primary education of the region where there is a *Shinasha* community (The word *Shinasha* represent ethnic name who speak the *Shinasha* language).

In the same table, at second place, respondents were also asked regarding how far the academic achievement of students is improved after the use of *Shinashigna* medium of instruction. The per the analysis of the data, the mean score value for sampled population has

shown 3.68 for teachers and 4.23 for experts respectively that implies both the respondent categories agreed on the issue that *Shinashigna* medium has improve the academic performance of students compared to the use of external language as medium of instruction. The mean values revealed that the implementation of *Shinashigna* (mother tongue) had increased the academic achievement of the students of their respective school since the values are greater than an average value on the rating scale which shows the agreement of both respondent groups. As to practical observation conducted while the class is on progress and interview held, the researcher confirmed that; there is better communication, understanding and expression of ideas in class of *Shinashigna* medium between the teacher and the students in school visited. By conclusion, where there is good communication, understanding and better expression of concepts; it is an expected fact that students can achieve better in their academic area. In support of this argument, Mitfanva and Desherieva cited in Meknnen Fisseha (1994) since the mother tongue is the language in which the pupil is most adopted which can best express himself and the one she/he can best understand it follows that it is the language in which learning can best take place.

In third place, respondents were also asked on the extent of the *Shinashigna* medium in line with promotion and development of the culture, language and heritage of its speaker. Here, the two group means 3.36 and 2.75 for teachers and experts respectively. Hence, these two means have statistical significant difference in the interpretation. That is, the contribution that the program gives to the preservation of *Shinasha* culture, language and heritage is great. This is because before the use of *Shinashigna* as medium. The *Shinasha* language was only an oral language before its use in school programs. There is no written script and document that can serve as means to pass it to the next generation. What the respondents confirmed to the researchers was that, since the language is a small area language, its use in school programs helps to promote develop and preserve it as world heritage. Interview made with an education expert who was much concerned Teye, (4:30:2008)shared his view in this way:

- The program introduced as medium of instruction in areas where *Shinasha* community is inhabitant and dominant may help the development and preservation of the culture of its speaker. It can also help to keep the oral language in the form of written to transmit the language to the new generation without extinction. By so doing, it will be much easier for the future generation to obtain the language, culture, tradition, spiritual and material life of the *Shinasha* in well-articulated manner if its use in school program is in place.

From the above views of the research respondent, it is possible to assure that the use of language in school programs is very important for the development and preservation of the culture of a particular nationality. It is the same to the *Shinasha* people that the use of their language *Shinashigna* in schools as medium of instruction was practically obvious to say that could help the enrichment of the language through training, teaching and research for better *Shinasha* language in their own vicinity. Hence, there should a proper attention and concern to develop the language and maintain it further from the danger of extinction as the young generation is as in adopting the outside culture because of rapid migration, movement and modernization process as the result of globalization internally and externally.

In the fourth place, the researcher tried to look in to the issue of whether the use of *Shinashigna* medium of instruction had improved the four language skill like writing, listening, reading and speaking in class room and outside class room in their mother tongue especially in assimilated *Shinasha* areas. In relation to this, the mean scores for both teachers and experts are 3.36 and 4.08 respectively. The mean values are greater than an average which confirmed that both categories of respondents had agreed and shown their consent that *Shinashigna* medium of instruction improved the student's language skills. That is students were not able to perform the four basic language skills in better manner before the use it in the schools. But after its use in the education system of schools students were doing it in good manner. In areas where the *Shinasha* community had been assimilated historically like in Wombera woreda; the *Shinashigna* pedagogy played great role in creating good opportunity for *Shinashigna* language skill development in schools and outside environment. As to the finding, the practice of *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction is taken by the community, schools and students as good opportunity especially for those students who lost their native language *Shinashigna* as their daily language at their home and beyond. Furthermore, teachers and experts were also requested to respond to the condition of students drop out in their respective school where the medium is *Shinashigna*. Thus, report of the two means scores values of the two sample groups indicted 3.00 and 3.53 for teachers and for expert's respectively. Thus, these figures were statistical significant. That is to say, the dropout rate reduced as the result of the implementation of *Shinashigna* as medium. As the finding indicated, since the medium is their own mother tongue, no language fear is available because language fear is very critical for student's school attendance. When students are taught in their own home language, they fell confident and self-esteem as it will help them to communicate with their teachers and peers in the school. Therefore, this is very interesting opportunity in order to retain more students in school system and to improve completion rate of learners at each level of schooling in the area. This can be also taken as their good support to their own mother tongue education. As Magnan explained that, the most essential factor that kept parents not to take the opportunities or educational facilities available is that, opposition to the language of instruction. For instance, as he put it, if it is the national language rather than the local language parents may not sent their children's to them. Thus, if the language of instruction is local, they prefer the school and the relationship between the school and the community would be high and the community send and keep a child's in school and on the way in reduces the dropout rate in schools. Finally, the respondents provided their feeling in relation to the constructional and education policy rights for the use of *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction in education. For these two questions, the two sample means were 4.20 and 4.10 about language and policy right for implementation of *Shinashigna* language for instructional purpose in the school. Moreover, the calculate t value for the two groups is 0.827 which is much less than the critical table value 1.664. The implication of the two means shows that the respondents were agreed as national constitution and education policy of the country in

most important opportunities that promotes the use of *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction. *The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia* (1995), article 39 sub article 2 *Every Nation ,Nationality, and Peoples in Ethiopia has the right to speak, to write, and to develop its own language; to express, to develop and to promote its culture; and to preserve its history.* Similar to the constitutional declaration of the government cited above; Hobben (1994) the introduction of mother tongue as medium of instruction in primary schools is the major steps in putting the basic constitutional and human rights in to practice.

Again respondents were also asked on their interest to mother tongue for policy education. The issues raised as the country education policy, the mean scores calculated are 3.32 and 3.93 for teachers and experts respectively. These values indicate that the country education policy is the other important opportunity for the use of *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction in at least at primary level. As stated in the new Education and Training Policy (MoE, 1994), cognizant of the pedagogical advantage; the child in learning in mother tongue and the rights of nationalities to promote the use of their languages, primary education will be given in nationality languages. Hence, as this finding discovered, the presence of conducive and democratic constitutional provision and educational policy are the two most important opportunities for the implementation and use of *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction in education not only for the *Shinasha* people but also for the rest of the peoples of Ethiopia.

#### 4.8. Challenges in the Implementation of *Shinashigna* as Medium of Instruction

This study tried to investigate the practical challenges that negatively impact the implementation of *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction in some selected primary schools of Metekele zone in Benishagul Gumz National and Regional State of Ethiopia. As to the findings of this study there were several problems that obstruct the use of *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction. In the following table below the presentation of the challenges and discussion of the challenges were made as follows under.

Challenges	Respondents											
	Teacher(N=25)						Teacher(N=60)					
	Rating Scales						Rating Scales					
	1	2	3	4	5	X*	1	2	3	4	5	X*
Lack of instructional materials	1	3	1	12	8	3.92	1	1	2	31	25	4.30
Poor standardization of the language	2	5	0	12	6	3.60	0	3	4	27	26	4.27
Lack of supplementary material	0	0	3	8	14	4.44	2	0	1	28	29	4.37
No <i>Shinashigna</i> language institution	2	1	2	4	16	4.24	3	1	1	26	29	4.28
Lack of teacher trained & qualified	2	8	0	12	3	3.24	1	3	3	27	26	4.24
No on-time provision of materials	2	2	3	13	5	3.68	1	2	2	25	30	4.35

Table 3: Frequency and mean value distribution of the responses of respondents on challenges of using *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction (N =85)

Note:1.00-1.49=Strongly Disagree, 1.50-2.49=Disagree,2.50-3.49=Neutral, 3.50-4.49=Agree, 4.50-5.00= strongly Agree, and x= mean values across each cell,

The presence of instructional materials in education is the most important input for teaching learning activities in any school. In table 3 above; respondents were asked to rate whether there exists lack of instructional materials in the language of instruction or not. On this issue both the experts and teachers expressed their agreement with the mean value or score 4.30 and 3.91 respectively as there is lack of teaching and learning materials in the medium of instruction of *Shinashigna*. The implication of this finding is that there is lack of instructional materials in medium of instruction. On the interview held with woreda education heads, zone and administrators similar idea was reported. All respondents agreed that there is complete lack of instructional materials in the newly introduced local language (*Shinashigna*) because even for grade one student of last year (2007) and even in this year (2008) books were not normally distributed at all. Therefore, the lack of instructional materials in instructional language of *Shinashigna* is in place. According to interview with a school principal and staffs on March 02/03/2010 expressed that text book- pupils ratio is 1:3 even for grade two students which is high that hinder teaching learning in our schools. For selected subjects, text books were not still prepared for distribution like Aesthetics by using the medium of instruction *Shinashigna*. This is the implication that the Benishangul Gumz Regional State education bureau launched the *Shinashigna* language of instruction with prior preparation in all subjects to the intended class level. According to the UNESCO's documents regarding the use of mother tongue in education,; lack of text books and educational materials, general reading materials, shortage of teachers trained and inadequacy of vocabulary, shortage or lack of instructional materials is one of the impeding factors for the use of mother tongue for the instructional purpose. As they concluded, it is fruitless to teach children to read and write in their mother tongue without adequate instructional and supplementary reading materials. In the sametable, responds were also requested to evaluate the quality and standard of the available instructional materials. Both the experts and teachers sampled shows with mean scores 4.27 and 3.6 respectively. They expressed their feeling by rating agree. The two mean values had indicated the poor standardization of instructional materials produced in the *Shinashigna* medium of instruction. To support this finding Fasold (1984) and Fishman (1968) in their discussion about the use of vernacular language in instruction in some languages; it may seem have no grammar or alphabet. This may create difficulty in standardizing the language of in vernacular languages''. This is what this study has discovered as the major challenges for the provision of education in *Shinashigna*. Though, the beginning of *Shinashigna* language as medium of instruction is encourage, about standardization of its words, grammars and phonology lags behind. Therefore, there is need to establish strong language development institution that is responsible for the

enrichment of the language research, training and teaching in the *Shinashigna* language. Respondents were again asked for looking condition of supplementary reading material in the instructional language. For this request, 4.44 and 4.37 mean values were obtained for teachers and experts respectively. The two groups sampled expressed their feeling by rating strongly agree for the question. Here, the finding is that there exists lack of supplementary reading materials (*Shinashigna*) to consolidate teaching and learning in *Shinashigna* medium. The problem may be resulted from lack of emphasis from the responsible organ, economic problem for affording cost of production activity, lack experience, weak promotion and motivation of teachers and experts at regional level to produce additional materials can be challenges of producing addition materials that can serve as references for teachers, researchers and students. The finding confirmed that the supply of teachers' guides, references, literature, audio and radio-broad casting in the language (*Shinashigna*) to strength the actual class room teaching in almost none and has to be improved to use *Shinashigna* as medium in sustainable manner. Finally the participants were asked about the on time provision of available instructional materials. Thus, 3.68 and 4.35 mean value was obtained. As to this figures there is lack of on time provision of instructional materials. The reason for this may probably lack of road communication in the countryside areas where some of the schools are found far away from the main road network of the region. In the interview with some school teachers on situation of text book provision, they stated the seriousness of the problem as such:

- In our school let alone complete text book provision for grade two students; still now even grade one students last year(2001) and in this year(2002) were not given text book totally. Those students who are in grade two in this year, last year; in grade one completed their education in their mother tongue without any text book". From these results there was no on time provision and distribution of text books for both teachers and students in the instructional medium (*Shinashigna*).

The table demonstrates that, the frequency and mean distribution of experts and teachers respondents towards the training and professional development conditions of teachers. For this issue, the researcher raised the question, "is teachers teaching in *Shinashigna* medium were adequately trained or not. For this item, the mean values calculated for teachers (3.24) and for experts (4.24) respectively obtained. This shows *Shinashigna* teaching teachers are not adequately trained for teaching in *Shinashigna* medium of instruction. The reason may be lack of appropriate training program that was arranged by the education bureau to make the teachers competent in their subject matter, skills, pedagogical skills, and linguistic skills. According to (UNESCO, 1984) training improvements and retraining of professors especially for mother-tongue-teachers in the form of short term course (5-10 days), medium term course (1-3 month) and long term courses (6 month- 1 year) would be necessary to envisage the creation of an adequate number of applied linguistic centers and institutions especially in training linguistically, methodological, and pedagogical simultaneously is necessary. Respondents were requested to judge whether teachers for *Shinashigna* medium trained in short or not. The finding indicated that teachers teaching in *Shinashigna* medium were trained in short term training programs (1-2 weeks only). Therefore, the result obtained shows that, teachers supplied for *Shinashigna* medium of instructions were completely trained through short-term courses. To support this, particularly, the interview with principal's, heads and teachers of sample schools feel that, the implementation of mother-tongue education at grass root level requires real commitment of teachers towards their profession, heavy investment on the skill training provision, and material supplies. Based on this the upcoming question to one of the vice principal of Bullen Millennium primary school forwarded his view in the following manner: How do you state the use of mother tongue (*Shinashigna*) as medium of instruction with regard to the skill training provision?" He responded to the question as;

- "It is a child right to learn through his/her own mother tongue (*Shinashigna*) because it gives great pleasure as it has pedagogically benefited. However, mother tongue education (*Shinashigna*) lacks well educated and trained teachers to implement it at grass root level. Mere experience and language fluency dominated mother-tongue instruction that affect its implementation very badly because all teachers were not qualified. They only received a week training in form of workshop and professionally incompetent. Teachers lack motivation in the mother tongue education due to insufficient time span given for the skill training. For effective implementation of the program, there must be continues professional skill development. It has to be acquired and given at college level to produce teachers who are professionally skilled as what Afaan Oromo, Amharic and Tigrigna speakers were doing and functioning in their region."

Respondents were asked to evaluate whether teachers for *Shinashigna* medium of instruction were trained in service program (summer program) or not. The finding implies that, teachers for *Shinashigna* medium were not trained in in-service program. This is because those teachers were trained in short-term training programs in the form of conference and forums informally. Teachers were not certified or diploma holders in the medium of instruction as per the education policy. Therefore, the result shows that, teachers for *Shinashigna* medium teaching were neither have a certificate nor diploma in the language what they are teaching. This may be due to lack of an appropriate commitment from the politicians, lack of applied linguistic centers, budgeting issues and lack of general interest to improve the language. In sum, the discussion above shows the major problems in relation to the training and professional development status of *Shinashigna* teachers. Thus, the program suffered from lack of appropriately trained teacher in the language, the existing teachers were trained in short term programs who were not competitive pedagogically and linguistically, lack of continues in in-service program, lack of competency in the language they teaching, and finally lack of acknowledged certificate or diploma in the language of instruction. To support the above findings, the existing research findings argue that teachers who are supposed to teach in the local language may lack appropriate training in the profession, in their teaching language, adequate quantities and qualities of text books that be severely limited in the use of local language for instructional purpose i.e. why the demand for local language is limited in education (Vawda, 1998).



## 5. Conclusion

The regional, zonal and woreda education office has directly implemented the new education and training policy with no sufficient preparation in instructional material, supplementary materials and training of teachers. Though there is development in the program, the output gained from teaching in *Shinashigna* medium was not up to expected because teachers, students and parents were discouraged due to several limitations in the quality of education delivered through the *Shinashigna* medium of instruction. The problem also has negative effects on the general quality of primary education in the region. There was no in-service and pre-service training program arranged for primary school teachers especially in *Shinashigna* to develop competence in the four skills. An effective in-service program that prepares teachers both in a language and subject matter content. Teachers were not continually programmed for in-service and pre-service programs. Hence, teachers who were responsible for children's language development might not be teachers in charge of their aspect of professional development. The finding proved that, there were no technical and professional development supports rendered to teachers. An integrated, cooperative and committed approach were not seen among the school organizational pattern, Woreda, zone and regional education bureaus to facilitate smooth and strong information flow on the implementation of *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction in the program. To facilitate the teaching - learning process high quality materials which are culturally thoughtful was not imported from other cultures. Good quality bilingual dictionaries are essential for children who have developed levels of literacy in their first and second language. In Metekele zone, such practices were not seen which shows the teaching-learning process was not supplemented by additional reference materials. *Shinashigna* is spoken in Metekele zone widely it was not possible for students to borrow or buy books from other region or zone in their medium of instruction. The only alternative is to wait for books until they were sent from the regional education bureau. The number of prints was not sufficient and the distribution also had problems. The shortage of the teaching materials created problem on children's learning that they were not able to work their exercises at home. It also hindered the children not to participate in group discussions in their class using their text books. The findings of the study provide that there were dialectal and word problems between woredas of the same zone. What students understand from the text books in Bullen and Debati Woredas was quite different from Dangur and Wombera Woredas. Thus, there should be need for standardization of the common dialectics for all groups. The need for supplementary education materials should be made to go hand in hand with the supply of text books that are sensitive to the socio-political and cultural atmosphere. The better and effective way of going about this is by cooperating with the local community development workers. A good example is the program of teaching in mother tongue (*Shinashigna*) to promote literacy in *Shinashigna* language in cooperation with the *Boro-Shinasha Development Association*. Other development agencies could also look in to ways of working with the local community partners. In this way, the gap between book supply and demand could be bridged. There is enormous need for provision of technical help in training sponsoring potential educationists, editors and publishers. Since the need is extensive, to solve the challenges, donor community should identify potentially resourceful areas, people and act accordingly. I believe that the support of such a kind would benefit the indigenous *Shinasha* community, the regional government and development agencies altogether.

## 6. Recommendations

In the above discussion, the finding indicated the challenges that were faced during the implementation process of *Shinashigna* as medium of instruction in some selected primary schools of Metekele zone. Therefore, the following recommendations were forwarded to solve the major challenges;

- In a research area, it is quite clear that teaching -learning process was backed by ruthless professional training, of teachers. The provision of continues in-service and pre-service training for professional development in instructional language (*Shinashigna*) to teachers was almost neglected. Therefore, in order to make teachers cope up with new dynamics need to get trained. Thus, concerned bodies such as Woreda, zonal and regional educational authorities need to take the initiatives to train teachers in order to develop their teaching skill and language competency to correct and reverse the existing situation which affects teachers' professional development in the vernaculars (*Shinashigna* medium).
- The research finding also shows that schools were running under the scarcity of educational or instructional material. Thus, disproportionably distribution of instructional materials among the schools and students were also found to be other bottleneck problems. It is clear that both teachers and students need adequate teaching and learning materials. Homework, class works and other activities are heavily reliant on text books, teacher guides ---- etc. Because, it is difficult to organize and assist students otherwise. Hence, educational officials should pay attention to print, publish and distributed books on time and adequately. Equity of resource distribution among the schools should be maintained on the basis of student- teacher number that each school would have.
- Moreover, *Shinashigna* is used for restricted aspects and areas. Language has its utility value in many aspects. Its degree of attraction would be enhanced with its scope. The use of language only for limited service might affect the interest of its users. However, *Shinashigna* was limited to some selected primary school levels. Woredas, zonal and kebele offices failed to use it for official purposes. Therefore, concern Woreda, zonal and kebele authorities should underline the use of *Shinashigna* for official purpose.
- Finally, producing quality and standardized teaching materials is very important in teaching - learning process. Teaching materials should be prepared and translated by taking in to account the local situations which is from where children were drawn should not be forgotten. Whatever idea retained in the book emphasis children capacity to catch up what they learn. Hence, books to be translated should be refined accordingly. Therefore, the research results shows that instructional materials were translated

and prepared in Shinashigna were difficult to understand in their edition, printing and publication. Therefore, careful attention should be taken during the preparation and translation of instructional materials in *Shinashigna*.

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