*ABSTRACT*

*The main purpose of the study was to identify the practices, benefits and challenges of mother tongue instruction in preschools of Woldia town. In doing so, concurrent mixed-approach design was employed. 3 government and 4 private preschools were selected by using available and random sampling technique respectively. The researcher employed questionnaire, interview and classroom observation to collect data. Frequency, percentage and average mean were employed to analyze quantitative data where as thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative records. The findings revealed that preschool teachers were motivated to practice mother tongue based ECCE program in preschools. That is, teachers usually use mother tongue for preparing instructional materials and for outdoor activity. What’s more children’s were taught all subjects except English in their mother tongue. Furthermore, the study revealed that most respondents concur mother tongue instruction enhances young children’s speaking, reading, writing and lessoning skills. However; some private preschools gave high privilege for English medium of instruction in the influence of the owners to attract and to gain high profit. Moreover; preschools face challenges to practice mother tongue as a medium of instruction effectively including absence of in-service training and lack of trained teachers in mother tongue based ECCE program. The study recommend that preschool principals and teachers should gain continuous in-service training in mother tongue based ECCE instruction, make available teaching and learning inputs for kindergartens and aware parents about the importance of mother tongue instruction for early child’s through different workshops and the regional government and concerned bodies should fulfill the necessary material and awareness change should be made on this issue.*

***Key words:*** *mother tongue, practice of mother tongue, preschool.*