

STRATEGIES AND PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY TEACHERS IN IMPLEMENTING MOTHER TONGUE - BASED INSTRUCTION IN A MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

With the prevalent sentiments on the effects of Mother Tongue Based – Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), this study investigated the lived experiences of teachers in an elementary school setting which focused on outcomes and challenges to capture the invariant structure of lived experiences common to all study participants of Catalunan Grande Elementary School located in Sitio Escuela Catalunan Grande, Davao City and A. Mabini Elementary School in Bangkal, Davao City. The study participants were only fourteen (14) teachers who had at least five years of experience in teaching about Mother Tongue – Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) under the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum. This research endeavor employed qualitative designs. It is qualitative in the sense that it utilized Colaizzi's phenomenological research design. Results revealed that after merging all reflected themes the whole structure of the phenomenon "MTB-MLE Impacts, Challenges and teachers' Coping Mechanism towards Implementation." This concluded that despite the MTB-MLE impressive outcomes, teachers experienced challenges in implementation.

Keywords: Mother Tongue Based – Multilingual Education, Key Stage 1 Teachers' Live Experiences, Pupils' Academic Performance,

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of language as a medium of instruction in promoting an effective teaching and learning is an issue that has occupied many scholars all over the world for many years. One of the latest developments in the Philippine educational system is the Mother Tongue – Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE). MTB-MLE refers to the use of students' mother tongue and two or more additional languages as Languages of Instruction (LoI) in school. In other contexts, the term is used to describe bilingual education across multiple language communities—each community using its own mother tongue aside from the official school language of instruction.

In South Asia, multilingual education usually follows the first definition, learning and using multiple languages in school. In some countries, MTB-MLE includes four languages—the students' mother tongue or first language, a regional language, the national language and an international language (Malone, 2007). According to the official language policy of the 1987 Educational Act (revised in 2004), children in Grades 1 – 3 were to be instructed in their first language, while those in Grade 4 onwards are set to be instructed using a second language (L2), which is English. This language policy can be identified as a possible model for bilingual education (Ndamba, 2019).

Many studies have already revealed that teaching using the mother tongue in the early grades enhances children's ability to learn better compared to the use of a second or foreign language (UNESCO, 2003; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2019, Rai, et al., 2019). It has also been reported that if children are taught in languages which are different from their home language or mother tongue, they drop out from school, have low academic performance, and repeat classes due to a high failure rate. This state of affairs is still persistent in Nepal (Yadava, 2007; Awasthi, 2004, Rai, et al., 2018). Research on L2 acquisition shows that when a child masters the first language then learning another language becomes less problematic in the habits of speech, listening, reading, and writing (Maclaughlin, 2017; Krashen, 2013; Ndamba 2019, Cummins, 2019).

Research that has been conducted on language education has also shown that children are quicker to learn, to read, and to acquire other academic skills when instructed in the language that they speak at home rather than taught in an unfamiliar language (Langer, et al., 2020). Recently, in the educational reforms in the country, the mother tongue in the regions plays an important role especially in the educational system. To strengthen this, the Department of Education (DepEd) has implemented the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction (DepEd order No. 74, series of 2009).

No research has been conducted on the effective strategies of teachers in implementing the MTB-MLE in a multilingual education. The city of Davao (Philippines) is considered to be a home to many immigrants from other parts of the country and other countries. A significant population of foreigners and local people contributed to the diversity of the city's culture. The languages that are commonly spoken are Cebuano, Bisaya, Ilocano, Hiligaynon, Kapampangan, Pangasinense, Tagalog, English, Chinese, and recently Korean. Having different languages in the city

has been a concern. The problems include what strategies can be employed by the teachers in successfully implementing MTB-MLE. This study explored the strategies employed by the teachers in implementing MTB – MLE and the problems that they have encountered. It specifically dwelt on answering the following research questions: What are the strategies employed by the teachers in using MTB-MLE in the multilingual classrooms? And, what the problems encountered by the teachers in employing the MTB-MLE?

These questions prodded the researcher to conduct the study at Catalunan Grande Elementary School and A.Mabini Elementary School in Davao City.

For this qualitative study, the explicit grand tour question (Agoncillo, 2019) that guided this research to generate the required data about the outcomes and challenges of the participants on Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) implementation was: How did you implement the mother tongue in your teaching?

Since this study employed the qualitative design where the researcher would like to know the lived experiences of the implementers of the MTB-MLE program as well the academic performance of the pupils. This study involved the elementary teachers of Catalunan Grande Elementary School and A.Mabini Elementary School.

The study is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of participants when they implemented the Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education?
2. What are the difficulties experienced by the participants when they implemented the Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education?
3. What are the factors that made the participants overcome the problems?

The greater part of the 7000 world dialects is in peril of getting to be wiped out. The factors causing this are invasions, colonization, and globalization (UNESCO, 2003). In the Philippines, there are 187 dialects recorded, 183 are living and four are extinct. In those living languages, 175 are indigenous and eight are non-indigenous. From these living dialects, 41 are institutional, 72 are developing, 45 are vigorous, 14 are in trouble and 11 are dying (Simons & Fennig, 2019).

There is surely a reason why languages live or die. As Mufwene (2019) explains, languages change further like species than like organisms, particularly in the manner that they are “born” and in the manner, they “die”. Accordingly, when the speaker always does a permanent shift of the language instead of his first language (L1), there is atrophy. This means that a speaker who does not use his first language frequently – the language proficiency goes astray. Therefore, “languages do not destroy languages”, but only the language utterers destroy them.

Since several languages continue to shatter, the birth of the use of vernacular languages (known as mother tongue) in education has started to emerge. In 1953, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) published a report on the utilization of native tongues in the educational arena.

According to UNESCO, mother-tongue instruction is now given more importance in Multilingual Education and this is supported by several countries. It emphasized that teaching using the native tongue (mother tongue) should be made at the start of formal education for social, cultural, and pedagogical regard (UNESCO, 2019).

UNESCO promotes and supports the mother tongue because of the three basic principles. The first principle states that the native or mother tongue is a way to improve the quality of education by creating and developing upon the knowledge and experience of the learners and teachers. The second principle stresses that the mother tongue is a way to push and support both gender and social fairness and as a solution of linguistically diverse societies. Lastly, the third principle asserts that the mother tongue as a language is a fundamental element of “intercultural education” that gives confidence of perceptivity among diverse groups of people and assures reverence for basic rights (UNESCO, 2018).

The MTB-MLE continues to gain worldwide interest due to several studies on academic achievement (Barron, 2019; Ocampo, 2019). It has been found that the use of mother tongue developed students’ self-esteem and cultural identity (Barron, 2019; Ocampo, 2019), and made learning more fun (Ocampo, 2019). Also, Kosonen (2019) reported that when the mother tongue was employed, children valued learning and succeeded in school.

Moreover, Ball (2020) stresses that once their mother tongue is the main language of instruction in schooling in the early years the learning ability of children to second language (L2) will not be affected. Otherwise, if children used the second language (L2) instead of their first language (L1), the first language acquisition is weakened. Moreover, their confidence and attention as participants in learning will decrease, resulting in a decrease of interest, academic disappointment, and untimely school parting.

Finally, research has revealed that mother tongue-based schooling significantly develops learning (Trudell, 2019; Young 2019) because the usage of a known dialect (language) to educate a child is effectual than a “submersion system” in which a child employs psycholinguistic guessing strategies to learn how to read and write (Benson, 2019). This implies that children can utter and scribble the words and can connect sounds with the symbols because of

facilitating understanding. Baldauf and Kaplan (2020) stressed that to keep the learners' understanding there should be more time spent in educating the child through wider communication of the language.

Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) is one of the trends in the Basic Education Curriculum under the K-12 program. The introduction of MTB-MLE starts as early as Kindergarten. In Grades 1, 2, and 3, the mother tongue is an additional subject area and a medium of instruction across the different subjects except for Filipino and English. MTB-MLE provides help to the aim of Every Child-A-Reader and A-Writer as early as Grade 1 (UNESCO, 2018). Thus, MTB-MLE is an avenue to sustain the Filipinos' literacy wherein language is an important factor in an integrated course of academic studies which is the curriculum. The child can express confidently his/her feelings and ideas using the first language. Moreover, the child as a learner can raise clarifications about what they misunderstood. Wigglesworth and Simpson (2018) stress that the child's language is essential in learning how to think and ask questions. The fear of expressing one's ideas and misunderstanding of concepts can be eliminated. Gacheche (2019) also stresses that through MTB-MLE, there is a decrease in the rates of dropouts, failures, and repetitions.

The researcher as part of the K stage 1 (Kindergarten, Grades 1,2 and 3) implementers of MTB-MLE had observed that at end of every school year, few pupils were retained in a grade level while few were forced to be promoted even if mastery of competencies was not attained. This only showed that there were early graders who had difficulty in their academic subjects even if they were taught in the mother tongue. This contradicted the findings of the studies conducted in Rizal, Iloilo, and Lubuagan that claimed that MTB-MLE had resounding academic benefits. Due to this inconsistency, the researcher had embarked in this study to find out the extent of MTB-MLE implementation, ideas, descriptions, thoughts, feelings, images, difficulties, and challenges of the Key Stage 1 MTB-MLE implementers in some schools in the Division of Davao City. Moreover, the researcher would also like to discover the enabling factors that made the study participants overcome their problems and their motivations to support the MTB-MLE. Finally, the researcher would also like to look into the academic performance results of central schools and non-central schools to find out if MTB-MLE has consistent results in different school settings.

In 2006, the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports (DECS) initiated the Lingua Franca Education Pilot Study. There were 32 schools (16 experimental and 16 control) chosen from the 15 regions that participated. The experimental group utilized one of three lingos (Tagalog, Ilokano, or Cebuano) as the language for teaching Grades 1 and 2. The control group employed Tagalog-based (Filipino) and English as languages for teaching. The outcome of the pilot study was encouraging because the result in all subjects was better in contrast to the control group (Gonzalez, 2019). Moreover, Young (2018) stresses that it is better to develop the basic concepts through first language (L1) instead of using both Filipino and English.

Meanwhile, the Lubuagan program involved several schools in Kalinga Province aimed to address educational impediments through sequential steps of creating the native language (Lilubuagen) and the culture of the learners (Walter & Dekker, 2019). Filipino and English were taught through the mother tongue, rather than through immersion. When oral proficiency in Filipino and English was achieved, literacy in these languages was established. The content subjects were taught in the first language integrating culturally-appropriate concepts. The result showed that the Grade 1 pupils in the experimental group who were taught using Lilubuagen performed better than the Grade 1 pupil in the control group in their reading comprehension tests in all three languages — Lilubuagen, Filipino, and English (Dumatog & Dekker, 2019). It was also reported that utilization of mother tongue enhanced involvement among parents, showed greater pupil engagement in class, and increase attendance. In 2008, tests were administered in Reading, Mathematics, English, Social Studies, and Filipino for the experimental and control groups of Grades 1, 2, and 3. The experimental group scored 21 to 22 percentage points higher than the control group. Among all the pupils, 80 percent of the top 40 pupils were in the experimental classrooms, while 90 percent of the lowest-performing pupils came from the traditional English-Filipino classrooms (Walter & Dekker, 2019).

Those experimental studies were done during the administration of DECS Secretary Br. Andrew Gonzalez. Two of the studies caught his attention: these were successful experimental studies in Lubuagan and Iloilo. Since then, these studies received considerable support from non-government organizations (NGO). In 2009, MTB-MLE was formally institutionalized by the Department of Education (DepEd) along with its DepEd Order No. 74 series of 2009 during the time of Department of Education Secretary Jesli A. Lapus. In this order piloting of MTB-MLE policy was continued in the school year 2010-2011 in selected pilot schools (DepEd Develops Learning Supplements Using Mother Tongue, 2011; Martin, 2019) and school year 2011-2012 in 921 pioneer schools all over the country. Ocampo (2019) stated that the new policy of learning the language helped establish a strong foundation for education and literacy development.

In 2012, DepEd Secretary, Brother Armin A. Luistro FSC released DepEd Order No. 16, s., 2012 for the pioneer schools involved in the initial years of implementation. It ordered that the MTB-MLE was to be fully implemented in all school systems. DepEd believed that MTB-MLE can develop the following areas: language improvement and

lifelong learning; cognitive improvement centered on Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS); academic improvement which trained and prepared the children to obtain mastery of learning competencies in every subject area; and socio-cultural understanding which increased the tradition, custom, language and way of life of every learner (DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2012). Inclusion to that order was the mandate to use the 12 mother tongue languages. The other seven mother tongue languages were added in 2013 (DO No. 28, s. 2013).

In 2013, the K to 12 Program became a law through Republic Act No. 10533 known as “The Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013”. The K to 12 basic education program has salient features. The first is to strengthen early childhood education. The second is to build proficiency through language. Lastly, to provide specialized upper secondary education (Lim, 2019). This lifts the condition of MTB-MLE and also connects it with other significant reforms. Since then, the mother tongue as part of the curriculum was widely implemented across the nation.

Okal (2019) found that knowing two or more languages helps a person to interact in different contexts and enhances intellectual perceptivity and creativeness. It is also found that it bridges the understanding of diverse customs. Moreover, it offers a viable advantage in the work industry and builds state harmony.

Moreover, Baker (2020), Cummins (2019), and Skutnabb-Kangas (2019) revealed that even if you learned two languages, it had already an advantage outcome on language and academic development. They also revealed that if a child’s first language (L1) was proficient there is also a possibility that the second language (L2) will do the same. Also, it was emphasized that by the use of the mother tongue, it helped to develop a child’s potential in the majority school language. Finally, utilization of the mother tongue will not affect the child’s academic performance instead it will be a bridge to perform better.

According to Dalvit, Murray, and Terzoli (2019), the easiest means to learn a foreign language is to have it as a language of instruction. Given that, Brock-Utne (2020) asserted that it is a mistake to believe that learning in English first helps learn to speak, read, and write English better. The same observation by Benson (2019) who also confirmed that there is no evidence that the second language must be used as the medium of instruction to be learned well. However, it is through first language learning one can learn the second language.

Education Sector Analytical and Capacity Development Partnership (2019) revealed that children who have access to mother tongue-based - multilingual education (MTB-MLE) develop better language skills in their mother tongues as well as national languages. When knowledge of a second language (L2) is added to a rich knowledge of a first language (L1), a child forms complex knowledge networks. They also revealed that the benefits of using the mother tongue are improved academic achievement, increased pupil’s attendance, and social-cultural benefit.

Butzkamm (2019) revealed that when the mother tongue was used by the children, they learn to think, speak, and gain grammar understanding. Furthermore, learning the mother tongue was peoples’ assets that bridged to foreign language learning. This showed that the mother tongue is the “master key” to foreign language learning. Careful use of the mother tongue in particular tasks will provide effectiveness in both the first language (L1) and second language (L2) (Hammerly, 2021).

Deller and Rinvolucris (2022) emphasized that the idea to use the mother tongue will help increase grammar development. Also, if the mother tongue is permitted in the classroom setting, the early graders will progress at a faster pace.

Bialystok (2020), Cummins (2019), King and Mackey (2018) also reported that those pupils in multiple languages education developed and improved in their thinking skills in contrast to mono language education. Lastly, Kosonen (2019) found that if the mother tongue is the language of instruction, children love to enroll and most likely to achieve in school.

According to the Education Sector Analytical and Capacity Development Partnership (2014), implementing MTB-MLE will encounter the following challenges:

Limited Resources. Creating materials in the language of instruction for teachers and pupils includes design, piloting, and evaluation which requires the commitment of important resources. It is also costly to prepare when the languages lack a writing system.

Parental Resistance. Parents may question why their children are being given mother-tongue instruction instead of the national or international language that would improve their learning opportunities and enhance their socioeconomic status.

Political Ambivalence. Governments will find it difficult to prioritize learning outcomes and sensitive issues concerning language use in education.

Human Resources. Teachers proficient in mother tongue languages must be “identified and trained”. To train teachers will require support, supervision, and monitoring which added costs for the government. There will be a need for massive training for human resources for them to be proficient in the language they speak, write, and communicate.

Human resources should be equipped and capable of teaching the mother tongue. Otherwise, the mother tongue will be ineffective if human resources are not trained.

Lastly, Bialystok (2020), Cummins (2019), King and Mackey (2019) revealed that despite the resonant effects of MTB-MLE, there were challenges found in the implementation of Mother Tongue Based-Multilingual Education. The following were the challenges:

Absence of books and dictionaries written in Mother Tongue. This challenge can impede the success of the implementation of Mother Tongue - Based instruction because the teachers were not proficient in several mother tongues of their learners. So, the production of mother-tongue textbooks and dictionaries is a must.

Lack of vocabulary. The teachers' and pupils' vocabulary was insufficient because they were not familiar with those other words in the mother tongue. Though some could understand, few had a limited understanding of the language. More than that, there are words of Filipino and English that have no equal words in the mother tongue. This challenge hindered teachers' capability of teaching the mother tongue.

Lack of teachers' training. Teachers were not prepared to teach their learners using the mother tongue as their medium of instruction taking into account that their pupils did not speak only one mother tongue since one class was composed of different mother tongues. Minority and majority languages existed. Teachers can only speak their mother tongue and have limited capability of speaking other mother tongues. This challenge requires teachers' training to address this limitation.

The theory of the curriculum is the most relevant framework for this study and its connection. In general terms, the curriculum reflected the discussions about what knowledge is most relevant to learn and it depends on the history of the society that individuals have inherited and the society they dream of creating for the future. In this way of reasoning, the theoretical approaches in this research are inspired mainly in the analytical model. According to Goran Linde, the relation between the curriculum and the teacher can be studied from three interesting areas: formulation, interpretation, and application or realization.

a) the formulation area means the content of curricula and policies b) the interpretation area means how the individual actors interpret and transform the curriculum c) the realization area means the application of the curriculum in the classroom. These three areas are seen as "dynamic processes" used to highlight how the visions formulated in the curriculum are interpreted and applied in practice. However, these areas are linked to each other and are reiterated in the questions, interviews, analysis and conclusions in this study.

In the international area, another theoretical guide in this study comes from the author Ofelia García (2019) who discusses bilingualism, multilingualism, mother tongue, etc. and their applicability in policies and in the practicalities of the school environment. In *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century- A Global Perspective*, she explores language and bilingualism as individual and social phenomena but also its circumstances in the educational field from a global and local perspective. She means that besides to political and moral interests, there exists linguistic ideologies or beliefs about languages and language use: the relationships between social aspects and linguistic (García, et al. 2019).

According to García (2019) one of the most popular ideologies is the one that argues for the link between "language and identity", but it is important to recognize that this is a result of the homogenizing work of school in imposing a national standard (García, et al. 2019). In this way, mother tongue policies would be the antithesis that will reinforce the existence of a dominant language.

Ofelia Garcia defined language as a place of resistance, of power and of solidarity (García, et al. 2019). She argues that the knowledge of more than one language (bilingualism, multilingualism) is good for all children worldwide, not only because of "utilitarian benefits" but also as a force for the "others" to break the walls of isolation and dominance. This study follows Ofelia García's convictions about the link between language and political power in which the term "mother tongue" has not only been a symbol of "separation" of minority and majority groups but also because she gives examples of how difficult it is to identify mother tongue. It may be the language one learned first (origin); the language one knows best (competence), the language one uses most (function), the language one identifies with (internal identification), or the language others identify one with (external identification). In addition, there are many variations, every member of a family, father, mother, relatives, can have different mother tongues and speak different languages at home (García, et al. 2019).

2. METHODOLOGY

The researcher employed the qualitative method research design grounded on the phenomenological tradition (Creswell, 2019) in revealing the lived experiences of the study participants. The phenomenological qualitative design focuses on probing the depths of human experiences through the verbal descriptions and explanations of a particular phenomenon in the life experiences of the participants (Garcia et al., 2019). It is descriptive because fact-finding inquiries are involved (Kothari, 2019). Moreover, qualitative phenomenological research attempts to expose how

people construct meaning or understanding about their real experiences (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2020; Neuman, 2019; Oakley, 2019; Polit & Beck, 2019; Bayod, 2019). Thus, this study revealed the experiences which include the ideas, descriptions, feelings, images, thoughts, difficulties and challenges, and the coping mechanisms and motivations of the Key Stage 1 implementers of MTB-MLE.

Eventually, phenomenological research exposes the in-depth meaning of certain experiences through dialogue and reflection of the ideal meaning of the experiences. Holstein and Gubrium (2019) stressed that words and language are viewed as the primary symbol system through which meaning is both constructed and conveyed.

Moreover, phenomenological type of qualitative research, the method banks on two supreme principles: “back to the things themselves” and the absolute elimination of all presuppositions that are unproven and unjustified (Quito, 2021). This study employed the qualitative first and quantitative gathering was done after it to support the findings of the qualitative study. The researcher gathered the necessary information through interview of the study participants to get the “what” and the “how” teacher teaches mother tongue as a subject and use it as a language of instruction. It also gathered the difficulties and struggles that they had faced as well as the enabling factors that made them surmounted the challenges. After this, tests were conducted in those schools involved and only samples of pupils were included. Nevertheless, this study would not forbid any data that can be exposed in this study. Hence, any probable positive and negative data that will be extracted are considered in the analysis (Husserl, 2018).

The research design was purely qualitative and the quantitative design was employed as supplemental to verify if the challenges affected the outcomes. Since it was observed that in some schools in the Division of Davao City there were pupils who struggled academically and did not master the learning competencies.

The key participants in this study were the elementary teachers where Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education has been implemented. There were fourteen (14) participants involved after they qualified on the inclusion criteria set for this study. Since the participants of the study were selected based on certain criteria, purposive sampling was employed.

The inclusion criteria are as follows: officially teaching in the identified school, of either sex, three years and above of teaching experience, and implementing the MTB. Purposive sampling is extensively utilized in qualitative research to identify and select participants who are linked to the phenomenon of interest. Even though there are more than a few different purposive sampling strategies, criterion sampling (Palinkas et al., 2019) was employed in this research journey.

Data collecting cannot be realized if there was no permission from the authorities. The researcher complied with the legal process in asking permission to ensure the smooth conduct of the study. A letter requesting for permission was sent to the RMC Dean of Graduate School, the Schools Division Superintendent of Davao City, and the principal of Catalunan Grande Elementary School and Mabini Elementary School. After being approved, letters to the school principals or school heads and participants were prepared. The chosen participants were asked if they could be part of the study. For this reason, consents were required from the participants before the interview commenced.

The collecting of data from the participants of this study was done through a semi-structured interview. Their responses were recorded with their consent. The responses of the study participants underwent analysis. During the analysis phase, the real meaning of what the members utter can be lost in the translation due to the academic terms that the researcher used in the study (Stake, 2019). To avoid this to happen, participants’ narratives were included to clarify the explanation. The recorded interviews were transcribed by the researcher to analyze information. Transcription was done to guarantee that the transcript was precise and inclusive as possible. Additionally, to complete the transcribing of the interviews the participants’ body language including gestures in a particular question was also observed and took into consideration. Lastly, interviews cannot be separated from looking and attending to emotions underneath the actual interview words or answers (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & McCormack-Steinmetz, 2019).

The most usual data source, therefore, is verbatim transcripts of audio-taped interviews, but other sources are sometimes used, such as group discussions, written accounts or diaries. While it is true that phenomenologists are sometimes reluctant to focus on specific steps in the data generation and analysis process because of the risk that they will become reified as in the natural sciences, in practice, many have devised methods that may be followed in a systematic fashion.

3. RESULT

Experiences of participants when they implemented the Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education

Based on the answers given by the participants in the implementation of mother tongue - based instruction in a multilingual setting, several themes emerged. These themes are (a) translation from target language to mother tongue, (b) utilization of multilingual teaching, (c) utilization of lingua-franca, (d) improvisation of instructional materials written in mother tongue, (e) remediation of instruction, and (f) utilization of literary piece written in mother tongue as motivation.

Difficulties experienced by the participants when they implemented the Mother Tongue Based-Multilingual Education

Aside from the best strategies mentioned by the respondents, there are also themes that were developed regarding the difficulties they encountered in the implementation of mother tongue - based instruction in a multilingual setting. These are (a) absence of books written in mother tongue, (b) lack of vocabulary, and (c) lack of teacher training.

Factors that made the participants overcome the problems

From the given statements shared by study participants, two theme clusters were found. These were Strategic Intervention Initiatives and Work Commitment; and Interpersonal Attachment. These theme clusters served as their enabling factors to face the difficulties as referred to as challenges in MTB-MLE implementation. This proved that teachers looked to alternatives to respond to the challenges encountered in their school setting. As I listened to their sentiments, I even felt that they even sacrifice their own time and financial resource just to address the identified difficulties in teaching and to ensure that pupils were learning from them. They also shared that it was being more than a public servant teacher that you laid your greatest effort and initiatives to the best interest of the pupils under their care in their statements.

Analysis

The reactions of teachers towards difficulties in teaching using MT place teaching and learning at stake since not all teachers were trained from MTB-MLE which they diverted their attention in looking alternative solutions just provide better learning.

This confirms the study of Rubagumya (2019) that there is a limited number of teachers who are trained in the first language (L1) based teaching. From the statements of study participants exposed that it seemed that only a few were selected and trained per district since teachers basically asked the help of people around them and always see remediation as a sort of their solutions. This urged teachers to look always remedies to address their predicaments.

The study participants expressed that they support MTB-MLE because of Academic Benefits and School Readiness. It is added that school readiness is a requisite, essential to the implementation.

The study participants emphasized that they supported MTB-MLE because of academic benefits and suggested that schools should be ready in terms of implementation. They claimed that using MTB-MLE did not only develop the cognitive aspect of the pupils but also the social aspect.

These statements affirmed the reason why study participants supported MTB-MLE. This confirms the study of Pflapsen (2020) that MTB-MLE has significant outcomes for the education system, teachers, and pupils. These outcomes are improved learning outcomes and improved children's self-concept. Nevertheless, the same finding found also by Education Sector Analytical and Capacity Development Partnership (2018) that utilization of Mother Tongue increased pupils' attendance.

4. DISCUSSION

This study provides relevant data needed for future research reference for the curriculum leaders of the Department of Education. The findings of the lived experiences of the teacher implementers served as bases for policymakers and policy implementers to revisit and assess the implementation of MTB-MLE at the school level.

It is crucial in the educational system that we have to heed different feedbacks/sentiments across different schools because this is the only way that we can validate and address the challenges they are facing. It is not only essential but it is indeed produced dominoes effect on the teaching and learning process if the Department of Education is open for sentiments described by MTB-MLE implementers.

Given its contemporary implementation, however, the linguistic and cultural diversity of Mindanao particularly in Davao City brings complexity in terms of its implementation if challenges continue and are not seriously taken. The researcher hopes that the Department of Education will not only focus on the benefits of MTB-MLE but also in the presence of challenges face by implementers. The researcher urges the DepEd to take necessary steps to address the sentiments at the school level for the success of the implementation. To this, the researcher is so grateful to discover and hear the lived experiences of study participants who were shared with consent.

For future research, a study must also be done to the different provinces of the Philippines to determine their feelings, struggles, dreams, and aspirations. This study can also be a reference in other studies relevant to MTB-MLE implementation.

For future directions it would be necessary to investigate the different aspects of the current curriculum of mother tongue education, as well as education and training in mother tongue. Apparently the laws, policies, and curricula with well-meaning texts about the benefits of mother tongue education are not sufficient. The current policies, curriculum prescriptions, and knowledge requirements need to be more adapted to the specific characteristics of MTE and every language. More quantitative and qualitative research needs also to look at the inconsistencies between the ideologies and visions of mother tongue and its realization. Another aspect to investigate is, "democracy and the right of influence in the workplace" from the mother tongue teacher's perspectives. It is of crucial importance to give a voice to the mother tongue teachers and let them have bigger influence on education reforms in the field of MTE. Through multicultural studies it would be interesting to investigate whether the situation of being domestic immigrants is correlated with the low status of the profession.

Some of the interviewed teachers show a preoccupation with the future of MTE, they perceive a tension caused for the emergence of xenophobic groups and their propaganda that awakens old nationalistic or regionalistic values. Further international and comparative studies could be made regarding the situation of MTE in countries or regions where extremist political parties have emerged that doubt the benefits of MTE.

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