Towards Integrating Mother Tongue Based – Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) Subject in the Teacher Education Curriculum: Lessons from the Administrators and Teachers

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Abstract: **With the change in the Philippine Educational System implementing the MTB-MLE, Teacher Education Institutions are now called to revise their curriculum to accommodate such change and prepare pre-service teachers. Implementing the MTB-MLE in the Teacher Education Institutions can be a way of preparing the future teachers. A question can be raised from this situation, that is, what appropriate subject content is necessary for the integration of MTB-MLE in the Teacher Education Curriculum? This is the research question that this study aimed to answer. Using the qualitative approach employing the case study, the study made use oral and written interviews to gather data. The interview took place in five participating schools where the MTB MLE is being implemented for a total of 35 respondents. Among the 35 respondents 30 were in-service teachers and five were administrators. Gathered data were grouped and themed according the ideas each convey. From collated answers of teachers and administrators, this study was able to surface 6 major subject contents for the MTB-MLE. From these contents the study developed the E.M.B.L.E.M. Content Subject from the Administrators and Teachers; Enrichment of Vocabulary, Material Preparation, Books Needed, Learning and Teaching Strategies and Approaches, Empowerment of Teachers and Management. These subjects can helped pre-service teachers equip themselves before immersing into teaching.**

Keywords: **Mother Tongue Based – Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), Experiences, Subject Content, Teacher Education Curriculum, Teachers and Administrators.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Mother Tongue Based-Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) has been implemented and adapted as a response to the call of achieving the goals of the Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations (UNESCO, 2007). MTB-MLE is the use of a language that is familiar to the learners of simply using the learners' first language – their mother tongue—as the medium of instruction (MTB-MLE Network, 2011). It refers to the use of the students' mother tongue – the regional or national language—as a language of instruction in schools (Smith, Huisman, Kruijff, 2009).

MTB-MLE plays an important role in children's social, personal as well as their overall cognitive and language development and their academic achievement as well as economic success (UNESCO, 2007; Schluessel, 2009) since it provides an opportunity for students to learn in the language they understand (MTB-MLE Network, 2007) making it a strong educational foundation for the learners (Malone, 2007). Children who come to school with a solid foundation in

ISSN 2350-1049

International Journal of Recent Research in Interdisciplinary Sciences (IJRRIS)
Vol. 9, Issue 2, pp: (37-47), Month: April - June 2022, Available at: www.paperpublications.org

their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities (Noormohamadi, 2008). Having said that, MTB-MLE ensures that students can achieve educational competencies (Malone, 2007).

Countries that have adapted and were able to successfully implement MTB-MLE in their curriculum find MTB-MLE essential in their quest to eliminate illiteracy and facilitate better learning (Lee & Person, 2012). Research show that creativity of the learner's mind is enhanced if there was an unrestricted use of the mother tongue because it enables the learners to think and express their thoughts with precision and also giving them a broadened world outlook (Mushi, 2012). Walter and Dekker (2011) made mention that the use of mother tongue also has a great impact in learning the critical areas of Math and Sciences. A study conducted by Gorter & Cenoz (2011) in Basque and Friesland show that students who use their mother tongue as the medium of instruction attain good performance in school. Because students learn in the language they know best, MTB-MLE also helps in the enhancement of the learners' problem solving, and analytical skills (Aytemiz, 2000). Other benefits of MTB-MLE is that it facilitates second language (L2) acquisition for it promotes cognitive development needed to learn a second language faster since children has a good grasp of their mother tongue (Cummins, 2001). It was also proven that good skills in the mother tongue which developed the language and intellectual capacities of children were transferred to the second language (L2) (Torspten, 2012; Yazici et al., 2010) since the children's ability to learn a second language does not suffer when their mother tongue is used as a medium of instruction (Ball, 2010). Multilingualism is indeed the default state of language competence, which in turn has important consequences for the development of language acquisition and use (Hammarber, 2010). Aside from facilitating a second language, MTB-MLE is viewed as a solution to high dropout rates among schools. Since MTB-MLE is the use of language children know best, they do not feel that their knowledge is treated as a disadvantage making them more comfortable in the classroom and let them enter school on a regular basis (Malone & Malone, 2011; MTB-MLE Network, 2011).

Accompanying the success of the MTB-MLE are the problems faced in its implementation. Malone (2009) enumerated problems in the implementation of the program. Among the problems enumerated is the lack of qualified Mother Tongue teachers as a result current teachers of the old curriculum are the ones encountering problems. Because they do not fully understood the concepts they find difficulty teaching in the mother tongue. Malone also mentioned that teachers do not speak, read or write the official language of the school. As a result, teachers would still go to their old ways and code switch to the language they are used to (Eklund, 2012).

Proper implementation of MTB-MLE requires a great deal of consideration and is a challenging issue for current school contexts (Ziegler, 2011). Educators then need to address three main issues: learners' proficiency, teacher training and resources (Bahous, et al., 2011). As mentioned, one of the issues to be considered is the teacher training. Inadequate educational infrastructure such as lack of trained teachers and appropriate teaching and learning resources need to be taken into consideration (Rassool, et al., 2006). Teachers play an important role in the implementation of MTB-MLE (Chilora, 2001) since they are the ones who leave a great impact on knowledge acquisition among learners. According to Lim &Torr (2007), teachers' primary aim for literacy is for children to communicate and express themselves freely. Teachers have to be proficient in the mother tongue and the second language (MTB-MLE Network, 2011) because they are viewed as instruments in producing efficient and loyal citizens (Rassool, et al., 2006).

Teachers need to have proven both high levels of high language competencies to cope with the implementation of the MTB-MLE (Mata, 2012). When teachers have a basic vocabulary in the mother tongue, they will not find it difficult to teach in the language that their learners know best; they have to be fluent in using the oral and written forms of the mother tongue but a critical problem is that in most countries, there are too few certified teachers from local language communities who have the level of fluency needed to use the first and second languages in the classroom (Malone & Malone, 2011). Teachers then have to undergo wider and improved trainings that incorporate the best practices for both first and second language learning (Yazici et al; 2010). Teacher training in public schools is government-sponsored, however, many teachers are reluctant to let go of their old ways (Bahous, et al., 2011). MTB-MLE is to be integrated in the pre-service teachers' curriculum to be able to change the "old ways" and adapt to the modernized teaching strategies. Speakers of the local language can receive trainings to help teachers improve their language proficiency to cope up with the mother tongue curriculum (Gacheche, 2010).

Though many researches were already conducted on the training programs for pre-service teachers like that of Malone (2012) where she suggested on how to develop learning materials for MTB-MLE programs; the Malone and Malone

(2011) discussed the training content of pre- and in-service teachers; also, in the work of Lim &Torr (2007) workshops are given by school coordinators or at other schools and top universities in reading and writing strategies; the Ministry of Education- Singapore (2012) mentioned that teachers receive pre-service trainings and have many opportunities for continual development to build up their capabilities as teaching professionals. Teacher Education Institutions are yet to integrate MTB-MLE in the pre-service teachers' curriculum. Perhaps this is because changing the status quo is likely to require attention to more than faculty preparedness (Stockman, 2008). This means that even though the subject was made compulsory, proper implementation must take place too; developing specifications for mother tongue teachers may significantly contribute to quality assurance and the specification of professional or pedagogical standards for language teachers (Mata, 2012). Pre-service teachers themselves admit that they do not receive enough support by way of course integrating mother tongue as a subject making it a major problem in some Teacher Education Institutions (Essien, 2010).

Aside from the in-service teachers, pre-service teachers have to be given importance also. Their part in the implementation of the MTB-MLE is as important as the in-service teachers because they are the ones being thoroughly trained for the MTB-MLE. Pre-service teachers need to be trained as early as possible emphasizing the learning of grammatical rules (Rassool, et al., 2006). Pre- service teachers then have to be trained focusing on MTB MLE where they learn how to read and write the fluently and how to teach their students do the same (Malone & Malone, 2011) however, teacher training usually is only for short period of time (Nikiema, 2011) so for better results, MTB-MLE must be integrated in the pre-service teacher's curriculm. To accommodate such trainings, teacher education institutions have to revise their curriculum integrating MTB-MLE in the pre-service teachers' curriculum. Creating awareness of the multilingual context of teaching must be given emphasis on the pre-service teacher's curriculum.

In the Philippines, the MTB-MLE has been implemented through Republic Act 10533 otherwise known as the "Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013" which took effect last June 8, 2013. Major provisions of the act include the curriculum development where DepEd must adhere to the principles and framework of the MTB MLE in revising their curriculum. Also, Teacher Education and Training (Section 7) was taken into account. To cope with the new curriculum, in-service teachers will have to be retrained to meet the content and performance standards of the new curriculum. It was also specified that new graduates of the current teacher education curriculum shall undergo training as well to upgrade their skills to the content stands of the new curriculum.

Since the law was just recently implemented, Teacher Education Institutions are yet to come up with a curriculum adhering to the provisions of the law. Integrating MTB-MLE in the new curriculum will be indeed necessary to prepare these future teachers in the implementation and success of MTB-MLE in the country. Since Teacher Education Institutions in the country are yet to integrated Mother Tongue subjects in their Curriculum, this study attempts to find out what curriculum content is necessary in the integration of MTB-MLE in the Teacher Education Institution from the lived experiences of the administrators teachers in the public and private schools who are already implementing MTB-MLE. The success of the study will help curriculum developers in the tertiary level create the appropriate content of Mother Tongue subjects for pre-service teachers.

2.   RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study made use of qualitative approach employing the case study since it collected lessons learned from the teachers and administrators to gain insights from the teaching experiences of the administrators teachers and explored the depth and richness of the program of the teachers implementing it as well as the problems they encountered for them to tell the curriculum content necessary for the integration of mother tongue as a subject for pre-service teachers.

Participants and Setting

The study was conducted in 4 public schools namely: Buyagan Elementary School, Dona Nicasia Elementary School, Forst Del Pilar Elementary School, and Puguis Elementary School and 1 private school which is Little Flower Children's Foundation. The study selected the schools because of their willingness to participate in the study and that they are implementing MTB-MLE. All in all the participants of the study are 35. Among which are 30 in-service teachers who have 1st hand experiences as to how the MTB-MLE is implemented; and 5 administrators who are the ones overlooking

the implementation of MTB-MLE. These administrators are the ones making sure that the in-service teachers are properly implementing the MTB-MLE.

Data Gathering Tool

This study used written and oral interview as its main tools. The guide questions for the narrative essay consisted of items that lead to determining their experiences and lessons from implementing the MTB-MLE. The guide questions for the written interviews were: (a) What were your experiences in implementing the MTB-MLE? (b) What problems have you encountered in implementing the MTB-MLE? and (c) Is there a need to integrate MTB-MLE in the teacher education curriculum so that pre-service teachers will be fully equipped in implementing the MTB-MLE? The oral interview was used to clarify other issues in the narration to be able to know which content is to be taken into account if mother tongue is to be integrated in pre-service teacher's curriculum basing it from their own experiences since they already had a taste on the implementation and had observations of how to improve the teaching process in integrating mother tongue.

Data Gathering Procedure

Permission was asked from principals through communication letters for the administration of the written and oral interview to the teachers implementing mother tongue in the schools in Baguio and Benguet. Through the guide questions the respondents will shared their insights and lived experiences regarding the implementation of MTB-MLE in their respective schools and the oral interview questions were asked to clarify issues that are vague from the written interview. The answers from the narrative essays and the interview were grouped according to the ideas conveyed by the respondents and were analyzed by the researchers to come up with the appropriate curriculum content for MTB-MLE in the tertiary level for the preparation of pre-service teachers.

Data Analysis

Answers from the teachers and administrators were transcribed in a word document and afterwards, significant statements that lead to determining the appropriate subject content were highlighted. The highlighted significant statements were grouped according to the idea each message convey. After the statements were grouped, the researchers formulated a theme or category for each of the groupings. The correctness of the answers were ensured and validated through the teachers' and administrators' affirmation towards the interpreted data.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The implementation of MTB-MLE in the elementary schools call for the integration of MTB-MLE subject in the Teacher Education Institution's Curriculum. Since there is a new curriculum, future teachers need to be trained to be fully equipped. To do so, MTB-MLE needs to be integrated in their curriculum.

In integrating such subject, the course goals should be taken into account. The goal of the subject would be to help future teachers understand the MTB-MLE content and also to provide them strategies and approaches on how to teach the MT effectively.

Fig. 1: E.M.B.L.E.M. Content of MTB-MLE Subject from the Administrators and Teachers

Through the richness and in-depth narration of the participants, 6 interesting themes emerged relative to the subject content of MTB-MLE. Hence, we have developed the E.M.B.L.E.M. Lessons from the Administrators and Teachers for MTB-ME Subject. This includes: **E**nrichment of Vocabulary, **M**aterial Preparation and **B**ooks Needed, **L**earning/Teaching Strategies and Approaches, **E**mpowerment of Teachers and **M**anagement. As shown in Fig. 1. These compose the subject content for the MTB-MLE subject.

Enrichment of Vocabulary

Vocabulary development and instruction are areas universally important in all educational contexts (Boyd., et al., 2012). Having even a basic vocabulary in another language demonstrates good-will and facilitates understanding (Evans, 2011). Vocabulary enrichment is very important for teachers to be able to teach the subject and to communicate with their pupils properly. When they have good vocabulary of the language, it will be easier for them to introduce and explain the subject matter because they will not have hard time struggling to look for the proper terms and they will be able to choose the proper words to say to the class.

A teacher with good vocabulary will be able to attend to the needs of his or her pupils who can't understand some words or deep terms especially pupils who can't speak or understand the language (like Ilocano) used in the MTB-MLE. Especially when materials like dictionaries are not available for them to use. That is why it is very important for the pre-service teachers to have a subject about vocabulary enrichment of a language used in the MTB-MLE.

As experienced by the respondents when they mentioned:

"there are some Ilocano terms that I do not know"

"there are words that needed to consult the dictionary"

In addition, teachers themselves had to research on the terminologies that they can use. If such terminologies are to be presented to pre-service teachers, they would not spend much time in looking for appropriate terms in the mother tongue, thus enriching their vocabulary while they are still in the preparation stage would not make it hard.

This is in relation to what one of the teachers answers that:

"it also give us teachers work to research on terminologies that we would use"

In enriching pre-service teachers' vocabulary, focus must be given to the spelling, pronunciation and similarities of words in Ilocano and Filipino.

In connection to this, teachers mentioned that they experienced:

> *"lack of vocabulary"*

> *"confusing in spelling"*

> *"words are difficult to pronounce"*

Also, mathematical terms has to be given attention especially that teachers will teach math. Mathematic terminology differs from the language of other disciplines (Hedric, et al., 2008) thus, additional stress should be placed on teacher's ability to translate (Fennema-Bloom,) The teachers suggested:

"list of terminologies to be used as a guide"

"yes so you cannot identify the translation of the answer of subtraction. What is the Ilocano term of subtraction? you cannot translate it immediately."

The in-service teachers suggested that pre-service teachers must learn the Ilocano language to enrich their vocabulary and so that they won't find it hard to explain.

As one of the teachers stated:

"list of terminologies are the vocabulary words so that if we will explain, we know other Ilocano terms because we are not pure Ilocano"

Teachers to be should have a wide range of vocabulary especially those that are going to teach in the elementary where MTB-MLE is implemented since they will soon be deployed in linguistically diverse schools (Evans, 2011). Effective instruction of content area vocabulary moves beyond rote learning of word meanings to impacting passage comprehension of concepts (Hedric, et al.,2008), and to be equipped with more knowledge *of* and *about* words (Kelley, et al., 2010) in Ilocano. Wood., et al. (2009) mentioned that it is imperative to provide teachers with continuous and systematic development training on vocabulary since teachers' vocabulary practices contribute to disciplinary learning (Boyd, et al., 2012). Since, Word learning is a complicated process (Bromley, 2007) especially to those teachers who are not exposed to the medium of instruction which is Ilocano. Vocabulary instruction should be incorporated to into standard practice (Kelley, et al., 2010) to help pre-service teachers widen and enrich their vocabularies.

Material Preparation and Books Needed

In teaching MTB MLE, teachers must familiarize themselves with the curriculum (Malone, 2011) in order to make appropriate materials for their lessons. The use of materials is important in providing an organized and systematic presentation to achieve an objective. Material preparation is necessary to be able to accommodate the needs of learners providing them a better way of learning. It helps teachers to formulate appropriate and effective instructional materials in teaching. The materials and sources needed should be provided to have the students acquire more knowledge. From this, pre-service teachers must be equipped on how to create effective materials appropriate in their MT lessons.

From the data gathered, most of our respondents mentioned:

"*There is lack of Materials for reading exercises, evaluation forms/ workbook in the Mother tongue*"

"*lack of instructional materials and text books*"

"*hoping that there will be books that we can follow*"

"*it is hard if you have no basis*"

In addition, spoon feeding pre-service teachers with materials alone is not enough to equip the pre-service teachers, our respondents also mentioned that pre-service teachers should understand and learn how to make materials.

In connection to this, in-service teachers said:

"*understanding and preparing materials appropriate in the MTB MLE*"

"no teacher's guide and materials"

"*training on IM's*"

Aside from materials, books and references must be taken into account. Inadequacy and insufficiency of resources do not provide a room for interaction and communication activities (Bahous, 2011). In connection to this, references were also suggested like:

"*References should include- literature in the MT, to writ:*

a) nursery rhymes & songs

b) poems

c) short stories

d) simple essays/ compositions"

 "*there should be concrete modules or lessons*"

Based on the statements of our respondents materials needed should be provided for pre-service teachers to be able to come up with a quality performance. Curriculum materials are one key contributors to instructional quality (Charalambous & Hill, 2012). The idea that a greater number of materials available in schools imply, in and of themselves an improvement in the quality of teaching (Mesa & Rodriguez, 2012).Teachers were meant to have the support of intermediary materials elaborated to facilitate opening curriculum development (Mesa & Rodriguez, 2012). To improve the quality of instruction and consequently student learning (Charalambous & Hill, 2012)

Learning/ Teaching Strategies and Approaches

A teacher to be effective must be flexible to be able to employ a variety of strategies and approaches in teaching their lessons in order to attain their desired objectives. From this, pre-service teachers must learn different strategies and approaches on how to implement MTB-MLE effectively.

From the gathered data, respondents mentioned that strategies and approaches in the MTB-MLE must be learned by pre-service teachers for them to be equipped and address the problem. As mentioned and suggested by some teachers:

"strategies in teaching MTB-MLE"

"Approaches in teaching MTB-MLE"

"they should also learn different strategies or ways on how to practically implement MTB-MLE"

Different students, different instructional goals call for different strategies to be used (Flanigan, 2007). From these problems encountered by teachers, pre-service teachers should also learn different strategies in order to accommodate all kinds of learners or to accommodate the diversity of learners.

Moreover, pre-service teachers should learn how to elevate their strategies that support them (Bahous, 2011) to arouse the interest of their students' pupils and for teachers to use appropriate approaches to let pupils understand the lessons in the MT. In addition, they should learn strategies so that they will really implement the mother tongue and refrain from going back to other medium of instruction like Filipino or English.

This is in connection to the problem mentioned by the some teachers:

"One of the main problem I encountered in implementing the MTB-MLE is the approach on how will I teach the MTB"

"not all my pupils can understand Ilocano"

The teachers have difficulties on how to teach MTB because some students cannot understand the mother tongue which is being used. So in the MTB-MLE content, it would train pre-service teachers to provide an effective strategy to teach the subject well that all the students will understand.

In order to facilitate learning, teachers must be competent, possess self-esteem, hold authority within the classroom, show companion, respect for individuals and be flexible in the range and style of T. M. (Banning, 2005). Understanding different approaches can facilitate the development of teaching expertise (Moore, et al; 2002) because different strategies are suited to different types of lessons applying strategy without first aligning it to clear instructional outcomes can hinder student learning (Thoughtful Education Pres, 2011). Pre-service teachers must learn how to use appropriate strategies and approaches. This is because learning facilitation should be encouraged with effective preparation strategies (Banning, 2005).

Empowerment of Teacher Preparation

In implementing MTB-MLE, administrators should consider the effectiveness of teaching on the integration of the curriculum. Teacher preparation is very important since teachers are the ones who will build a strong foundation of student's success. Teacher preparation or knowledge of teaching and learning, subject matter, experience and the combined set of qualifications measured by teacher licensure are the leading factors in teacher effectiveness. Having that said, teacher education institutions should make sure on the preparedness of the future teachers by providing them sufficient inputs.

As experienced by the in-service teachers that they:

"lack teaching guides"

"the learning competencies is not arranged as compared to RBEC"

"we find it hard to explain in Ilocano and it is also the problem of others"

Teacher preparation in the MTB-MLE content would train pre-service teachers to understand the MTB-MLE as well as communicate through MTB-MLE. As the respondents suggested:

"MTB-MLE content"

"Communication through MTB-MLE"

"Understanding the MTB-MLE"

" proficiency in Ilocano"

Aside from the MTB-MLE content, respondents also mentioned as their suggestions:

"short reading lessons"

"Perhaps 2-3 semesters should have the MTB-MLE in preparation for their practicum and actual teaching in the elementary-primary level"

Teachers that are well-prepared are most likely to remain in teaching, they produce higher student achievement. High quality pre-service teacher preparation provides beginning teachers with the knowledge and skills needed for effective teaching (NCATE, 2014). The preparation for teachers is essential to the success of the implementation of MTB-MLE. This is because teacher education is the actual stage of instruction for pre-service teacher training (Ho, 2012). Because of the implementation of MTB-MLE, teacher education should assist novice teachers to deal with uncertainties in their practice (Gafoor, 2011).

Management

In preparing teachers, management should also be taken into consideration. Classroom management is the management of a classroom before the school year even begins. This is important so that teachers will be ready even before students enter the class. The difference that set the effective classroom managers apart from the less effective classroom managers was in the preventive, organizational strategies used by the effective teachers (Oliver et al, 2011). Students have different kinds of behaviors inside the classroom so teachers should be ready for this even before they start their class. A knowledgeable teacher may fail in teaching due to inability to work effectively with pupils. Thus, pupils maybe entertaining each other during class time, talking aloud incessantly ,walking around aimlessly in the classroom ,and bothering others, among other annoyances (Ediger, 2013).

As experienced by our respondents:

"it takes time to finish a lesson"

'shortage of time"

Teachers should learn how to maximize the period of time allotted for the lesson they are to teach. In short teachers should know how to budget their time properly for their lessons to be finished in the given time. So it is important for teachers to have "time management" as a subject.

The respondents also said:

"students are bored"

"students were not attentive"

Also teachers need to learn different kinds of techniques and strategies to make and keep their lessons more interesting so that students will not be bored and be more attentive in their lesson.

4. CONCLUSION

The study successfully brought out certain content for MTB-MLE from the experiences of in-service teachers and administrators which are: Enrichment of Vocabulary, Material Preparation and Books Needed, Learning /Teaching Strategies and Approaches, Empowerment of Teachers, and Management.

From the findings of this study, curriculum developers may be helped in formulating the appropriate subject content especially that the respondents of this research was directly derived from the lived experiences of the teachers implementing MTB-MLE.

This study clearly states that there is indeed a need for the integration of MTB-MLE in the pre-service teachers' curriculum. It is evident that future teachers have to be fully equipped and prepared before immersing themselves into teaching especially that there is already a new curriculum being implemented.

Since this study was conducted in a limited scale, the researchers suggest that further study be conducted on a larger scale to solidify the primary findings of the current research.

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