

Mother Tongue- Based Instruction: Policy to Practice

Tizza Marie M. Navarro

tizzanavarro@yahoo.com

Cebu Normal University
Osmeña Boulevard, Cebu City
Cebu, Philippines
6000

Ethel L. Abao

etheldabao@yahoo.com

Cebu Normal University
Osmeña Boulevard, Cebu City
Cebu, Philippines
6000

Remedios C. Bacus

mhedybacus@yahoo.com

Cebu Normal University
Osmeña Boulevard, Cebu City
Cebu, Philippines
6000

Rivika C. Alda

rivika_coronado@yahoo.com

Cebu Normal University
Osmeña Boulevard, Cebu City
Cebu, Philippines
6000

Christise C. Espera

chrycordova@gmail.com

Cebu Normal University
Osmeña Boulevard, Cebu City
Cebu, Philippines
6000

Abstract

The use of Mother Tongue both as a subject and as medium of instruction from Kinder to Grade 3 posed challenges and opportunities for teachers and curriculum planners/ policy makers. This paper looked into the level of awareness and extent of implementation of the Mother-Tongue Instruction. The study used the descriptive-normative method to take into account the 500 Grade 3 teachers' responses in the awareness and implementation questionnaires and in the FGDs. The cool analysis of the data revealed that the teachers' high level of awareness and high level of implementation have created certain benefits and opportunities which lead the students to learn and enjoy their varied learning activities. Through this, both the pupils and the teachers have become conscious on the significance of the program towards global understanding.

Key Words: *Mother Tongue Instruction, awareness, implementation, challenges, opportunities*

Introduction

Communication is a survival resource. The inception of the K to 12 gives credence to a valuable realization that a country progresses and can take its stand together with the other countries in the world if its citizenry is able to express their needs, motives and desires in a free-willing manner of communication and address them appropriately. The use of the mother which has been influenced by the economic, political and cultural dimensions engenders common understanding among its fellow countrymen.

As noted, countries in Asia like Vietnam, Thailand, Hong Kong and some others which religiously use their mother tongue in their academic undertaking as well as in their various encounters, have progressed dramatically their economy. According to some residents, they are not at all bothered even if many people from other countries don't understand them because they can live independently with their resources at hand.

In the Philippines however, students as early as Grade one are exposed and are encouraged to use English especially in their learning environment. This comes with the belief that these students succeed if they are able to communicate in English. Conscious of globalized education where English is considered the lingua franca of the world, this scenario has created affirmations among the academic stakeholders. Having adopted the language for many years, many Filipinos especially the younger ones have become at home with it, hence many consider it as their second language. Formal and official communications are done in English to the extent that it has become a status symbol. It's a sad note however that those who don't use it somehow become disadvantaged. This reality has cascaded in the educational system where English is used as a subject and as a medium of instruction. Some teachers give various sanctions to those students who use their mother tongue. In office transactions as well, clients are not entertained properly if they don't speak English.

This scenario has created a challenge in the realm of education. With the desire to become part of the global enterprise, studies have been conducted on the feasibility of adopting the K to 12 like what other countries in the world are doing. The primary reason of which is to make our graduates fully equipped with the needed concept and skills in order to become employable across borders. Research findings reveal that the use of the mother tongue help our students attain this goal

because they are not inhibited to express their ideas and opinion thus, flow of thought is encouraged. This is supported by Cummins 1996 when he said that the use of native tongue supports understanding and in the development of their critical thinking.

The K to12 program which was implemented in the Philippines in 2012, emphasized the use of the mother tongue both as subject and as a medium of instruction in Kindergarten, Grades one, two and three. Thereafter, English is used. This has engendered various reactions especially on the teachers handling the subject and using it as a medium. Having implemented it for three years, the researchers would like to find out its successes and challenges.

Objectives of the Study:

This study aimed at looking into the level of awareness and extent of implementation of the Mother-Tongue Based Instruction. It further explored the teachers' challenges and opportunities in the course of implementing the program.

Research Methodology

The descriptive-normative method was used intaking into account the teachers' responses as regards the implementation phase of the program likewise in obtaining the current status of the phenomena to describe "what exist" with respect to variables or conditions in a situation (Key, 1997). Furthermore this was used in the assessment of the teachers' answers during the focus- group discussion. Five hundred Grade three public school teachers in the Province of Cebu were randomly selected as respondents of this research.

This study utilized two researcher-made instruments, namely; questionnaires for the awareness and implementation and interview guide for the focused group. Each questionnaire had 20 items. Validity was established through consultation with experts in the field of linguistics and Mother-Tongue Based Instruction. Reliability was established by pilot-testing the questionnaires to the grade 3 teachers in City Central Elementary School.

As this a descriptive study, simple frequency counts and percentage distributions were used as statistical tools for the treatment of data. The weighted mean was used in determining the level of awareness and implementation of teachers.

Results and Discussion

For the past years, information dissemination through trainings and workshops was conducted to heighten the teachers' awareness of the policy. The short-exit model- the first three years of implementation, has afforded an indication of the teachers' awareness and understanding of the new policy, implementation guidelines and the monitoring scheme. Table 1 presents the level of teachers' awareness on what MTBMLE is as a policy. Table 1 presents the teachers' level of awareness on what MTBMLE is as a policy.

Table 1. Teachers' Level of Awareness(N=500)

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
MTB-MLE...			
• increases pupils' participation.	2.65	Highly Aware	1
• develops the pupil's awareness of their own culture.	2.60	Highly Aware	2
• uses two or more languages.	2.55	Highly Aware	3.5
• uses locally-appropriate materials.	2.55	Highly Aware	3.5
• facilitates the learning of the 2 nd and 3 rd languages.	2.50	Highly Aware	5
• denotes gradual integration of MLE in all subject areas.	2.48	Highly Aware	6
• necessitates active involvement of parents.	2.46	Highly Aware	7
• enhances reading and writing skills.	2.45	Highly Aware	8
• enjoins the teachers to implement the guidelines conscientiously.	2.43	Highly Aware	9
• is supported by empirical evidences/research findings.	2.42	Highly Aware	10.5
• produces better pupils than those taught in L2.	2.42	Highly Aware	10.5
• requires region-specific scheme to institutionalize it.	2.28	Aware	12
• produces top performers in standardized tests	2.25	Aware	13.5
• requires that adjustments are to be made based on evaluation results.	2.25	Aware	13.5
• conducts ongoing trainings that promote effective community teachers.	2.21	Aware	16
• supports the "MLE Bridging Plan" which influences teaching and curriculum development.	2.21	Aware	16
• encourages the use of current and relevant instructional methods	2.21	Aware	16
• allows the use of the school's MOOE for the planning and implementation of MLE programs.	2.18	Aware	18
• has periodic monitoring and evaluation of the MLE program.	2.19	Aware	19
• develops/supports an MLE TWG who facilitates the ongoing effort to develop capacity to design and implement MLE programs.	2.15	Aware	20

Legend: Not Aware= 1.00-1.66 Aware= 1.67-2.34 Highly Aware= 2.34-3.00

The weighted mean of 2.65 interpreted as Highly Aware indicates that the teachers are cognizant that the use of mother tongue in teaching increases pupils' participation. Many studies have already revealed that teaching using the mother tongue (MT) 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, 2003 in Lartec, 2014). Such awareness is in consonance with the findings of the Lubuagan experiment, (funded by SIL) which showed dramatic improvement in the pupil's scores in Mathematics, English Science and Social Studies (Mondez, 2014). In addition, the teachers understand that the use of MT can develop the pupils' awareness of their culture. There is a sense of pride when a child sees and hears his first language used in the official context of schooling both in oral and in print. This awareness necessitates that they have gained a full grasp on the importance of inexpensive, locally-produced materials. Designing locally-appropriate materials to foster learning had been successful in Papua New Guinea, Nigeria and China (UNESCO, 2005).

The use of such enables the teachers to bring cultural values into the classroom, thus elevating the status and usefulness of a child's home language.

It can be noted further that teachers are also highly aware that MTB-MLE facilitates the learning of the 2nd and 3rd languages and that MLE is gradually integrated in all subject areas. This gradual integration of MLE is a feature of the program after the pupils have gained firm grasp of their home language. This ensures that there is equitable opportunity for them to access learning. Malone (2011) cited that as the pupils build fluency in speaking, reading and writing the L1, teachers introduce them to oral L2 and help them gradually to build confidence in understanding and speaking that language, a key step toward the students' comprehension of official language texts. When the students have built a foundational vocabulary in Oral L2, teachers help the students transfer their knowledge and skill in L1 literacy to reading and writing the L2. As teachers and students use both languages for different learning tasks, the students have the added advantage of being able to compare and contrast the two languages in ways that develop and increase their verbal and cognitive abilities.

Teachers realized that parents, along with the other stakeholders, play significant role in the implementation of the program. Cummins (2000) and Dutcher (1995) in UNESCO (2005) purported that parent participation is a widely-cited factor in successful bilingual programs. This situation is likely to be related to the fact that parents will no longer have hesitations to speak to the teacher for they are allowed to use their first language. In Bolivia, d'Emilio (1995) in UNESCO (2005) found that given a "real opportunity to participate in decision-making about their children's schooling, parents no longer think speaking to teachers is a 'waste of time,' nor are they ashamed of using their native language in these meetings." The parents become an important part to the program since it is largely community-based. Home-school relationship is an important factor contributive to the immense success of the program.

Nolasco (2009) in Gallego and Zubiri (2013) accentuated that in MTB-MLE, a teacher should start from "where the learners are and what they already know. Building a strong L1 foundation, the student is then bridged to his/her second language/s (L2) by providing a strong training in his/her L2 listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Such claim is corroborated by Ganal (2014) citing that the level of development of children's mother tongue is a strong predictor of their second language development. He pointed out that children who come to school with a solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities in the school language.

Teachers are also aware that the implementation of MTB-MLE can improve pupils' performance in reading and writing with a mean of 2.45, interpreted as Highly Aware. Empirical evidences that support the program must have been clearly articulated to them through department memoranda and circulars. On the other hand, it can be noted that, a number of salient thrusts in the program's implementation is the teacher's knowledge on the sustainability, monitoring and evaluation scheme to assure that the program hits its goal of quality, equitable and culture-based basic education (DepEd Order No.36, s. 2013). With responses interpreted as Aware to items on the need of a technical working group, periodic monitoring and evaluation, the probable use of school's MOOE for the implementation, the ongoing teacher-trainings for redesigning classroom tasks and curricular modifications based on evaluation results, the teachers need to reawaken their sense of responsibility to keep them updated. In this manner, they can better facilitate learning and constantly nurture every learner.

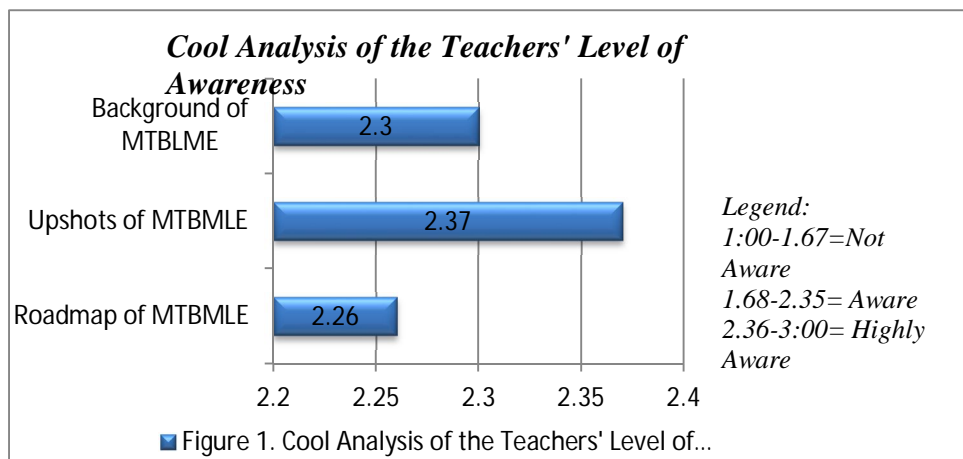
By and large, the teachers have acknowledged their key role in the implementation of MTBMLE. Their responses interpreted as Highly Aware, in eleven (11) statements and Aware in nine (9) proved that the three-year short exit program has afforded an indication of the significant leap in education despite the many observed weaknesses in the implementation. Notwithstanding

Gunigundo's (2011) claim in Martin (2012) on his strong opposition to the short exit implementation because international researches have shown that six years of teaching in mother tongue is an absolute minimum, the teachers believed that MTBMLE has started to effect change in the quality of teaching and learning.

The result on teachers' awareness provided the department of education with a clear snapshot of the outcome of the information drive to equip the teachers with the necessary foundation to build upon their teaching practices in the classroom.

Cool Analysis of Teachers' Level of Awareness

The three important aspects of MTBMLE that directly affect the teachers in the field are identified as follows: Background of MTBMLE, Upshots of MTBMLE and its Roadmap. Figure 1 below shows the cool analysis of the data on the level of teachers' awareness of MTBMLE.



Based on the result, the teachers are Aware, with the weighted mean of 2.3, of the Background of MTBMLE. This means that teachers are conscious that MTBMLE is supported by empirical evidences and research findings that it indeed produces better pupils than those taught in the second language (English) and that top performers in standardized tests were taught in their first language (mother tongue). They are also aware that MTBLME uses two or more languages. The results provided a landscape of how much the teachers know the program. Mendez (2013) stressed the importance of contextualization of an educational idea or principle before it is applied or implemented. Thus, the government, particularly DepEd should exhaust all means so that teachers will be highly aware of the program most specially that it is on its third year of implementation.

Moreover, the program of the three most important aspects, the teachers are highly aware on the upshots of the program, with a weighted mean of 2.37. The result implies that teachers are highly knowledgeable on the effects of the program to students' performance. Specifically, teachers are highly aware that MTBMLE increases pupils' participation, develops awareness of pupils' own

culture, enhances reading and writing skills and facilitates the learning of the 2nd and 3rd languages. In addition, the teachers also understand that the conventional instructional methods are not adequate for MLE programs and adjustments are to be made based on evaluation results. The result implies that these teachers who are pilot implementers of the program find it very useful. Since they are highly aware of what the program can do and have done to their pupils, they are able to appreciate its effects and thus feel rewarded by seeing the enjoyment among the pupils in their learning experiences. They have also understood that the “MLE Bridging Plan” influences teaching and curriculum development and innovations are made in order to achieve the purpose of helping students build a “bridge” between the two languages so they can become fluent readers and writers in both languages.

Furthermore, for the program to sustain and achieve its long-term educational goals, teachers and the community should take leadership in planning, implementing, and maintaining the program. The result above shows a mean score of 2.26 interpreted as Aware on the Roadmap of the program. This implies that teachers are just aware on where they are going and what they are supposed to do to sustain the program. They are only aware that it requires a region-specific scheme to institutionalize it; encourages the use of locally-appropriate materials; denotes gradual integration in all subject areas; and they are enjoined to implement the program conscientiously. On the other hand, Malone (2012) gave emphasis on the role of stakeholders in implementing the program. In a mother-tongue based education program, the stakeholders are the learners, their families, the community officials and other who are involved and are affected by the program. The result shows that the teachers are aware that the parents’ active involvement is necessary to make the program successful. Stakeholders need to work together as partners. Lastly, as prime implementers, the teachers should be made highly aware of the ongoing trainings conducted for them and the presence of MLE technical working group who facilitates the ongoing effort to develop capacity to design and implement the program.

There are many aspects of MTB education program. Within each are the most important elements-the teachers, writers, supervisors and others who will teach the classes, prepare the materials and oversee the program (Malone,2012). These people who hold the key to sustaining and achieving the long-term educational goals of MTBMLE should be well-acquainted of the nitty-gritty of the program.

Extent of Implementation

The support that both teachers and learners receive during the implementation of the mother tongue policy contribute largely on its success. Wright (1987) stated that teachers play an important role in the implementation of not only mother tongue instruction policy but also of other educational reforms in the classroom level. It is on this understanding that teachers need to embark on formidable challenges on improving the quality of their teaching while meeting the tremendous demand of change.

In order to review teachers’ practices which are significant to the success of the implementation of mother tongue, the teachers’ access, advocacy and collaboration, and its implementation in the classroom were taken into consideration. Table 2 presents the level of implementation in terms of access, advocacy and collaboration, and the implementation.

Table 2. Level of Implementation (N=500)

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Level of Implementation	Rank
As a teacher, I...			
allow pupils to speak using mother tongue.	2.71	Very high	1
encourage pupils to read in their first language.	2.68	Very high	2.5
present/explain ideas and concepts in clear and understandable manner using the first language.	2.68	Very high	2.5
encourage pupils to write in their first language.	2.67	Very high	4
integrate MLE in all subject areas.	2.65	Very high	5
use effective assessment tools in MLE.	2.61	Very high	6
attend on-going trainings relevant to MTB-MLE.	2.57	Very high	8
comply the requirements needed by the monitoring and evaluation committee of the MLE program.	2.57	Very high	8
use localized materials.	2.57	Very high	8
design activities that develop students' awareness of their own culture	2.56	Very high	10
read and update oneself with literature related to MTB-MLE.	2.54	Very high	11
give interesting, stimulating, and challenging tasks related to MTB-MLE.	2.49	Very high	12
develop and produce localized materials.	2.47	Very high	13
employ innovative methods for MLE programs	2.44	Very high	14
meet the parents and other stakeholders to help them fully understand MTB-MLE and its processes.	2.42	Very high	15
participate in developing and designing MLE programs.	2.41	Very high	16
use the pupils' first language exclusively for instruction.	2.40	Very high	17
design localized materials.	2.39	Very high	18
initiate school-wide activities related to MTB-MLE.	2.37	Very high	19
collaborate with the parents in designing relevant activities.	2.31	High	20
Total	2.53	Very high level	

Legend: Moderate =1.00-1.67

High level=1.68-2.35

Very high level=2.34-3.00

The result shows that teachers advocate and practice the use of mother tongue in the classroom and in school. It is understood that the Very High Level of implementation of the 19 indicators supported that teachers had applied changes in their practices in the classroom, since it was also evident in their claims. No education policy or intervention can succeed without teachers' 'buy in' (Nyarigoti, 2014). The teachers exhibit strong support and practice Very High Level of implementation in almost all aspects except for the collaboration with parents in designing relevant activities for students which has a weighted mean of 2.31 and was interpreted as High Level only. Their high level of awareness on the policy affected their attitude towards the implementation since they agreed that the use of mother tongue in teaching increases pupils' participation.

The weighted mean of 2.71 interpreted as Very High Level indicates that the teachers allowed pupils to speak using mother tongue. This is evident on how teachers embrace the policy implementation. They acknowledge the importance of providing opportunities to the pupils to

speak and use their mother tongue. As accentuated by Naom and Ambiyu, (2014), teachers need to be sensitized on the benefits the policy will leave on the learner. Education reforms are effective when teachers as implementers act as the primary agents of change. Their beliefs and attitudes about the innovation are also important to the implementation of the new program. Hunzicker (2004) states that changing a teacher's belief requires that new information be presented repeatedly over time, to the point that the person begins to feel disequilibrium between current beliefs and new information. A critical component of mother tongue implementation to succeed is the change of attitude (Naom and Ambiyu, 2014).

It is also evident that teachers are aware that the implementation of MTB-MLE can improve pupils' performance in reading and writing as mentioned in the previous results. One of the points that can be considered is the Very High Level of Implementation by the teachers in terms of encouraging the pupils to read in their first language, allowing them to present, explain ideas and concepts using the first language and encouraging pupils to write in the first language. This is in accordance to Heugh (2006) who states that learners' language skills and expertise in their home language can be further developed for use in formal academic contexts more especially in reading and writing for creative and cognitively challenging purposes. Teachers expressed strong support in the policy and confirmed that pupils learn better if they use a more familiar language because it is easier for pupils to learn a second language after gaining proficiency in their first language. Therefore, learning will be a more pleasant experience since pupils will not be struggling to understand, to express and to write new concepts in an equally new language.

This is supported by the findings of Naom and Ambiyu's study (2014), that teachers expressed that teaching in a familiar language has developed a favourable reputation which led to its adoption as an official language. It was reported that learners found it difficult to grasp concepts when instruction was in English; however, when teaching is done in a familiar language, learners make progress faster because they can read ahead and continue studying even out of class. This is in consonance with the claim of the teachers that resulted to Very High Level of implementation in integrating MTB-MLE in all subject areas. In a research conducted by Chilora (2001) Yao pupils whose teachers used mother tongue to help the pupils grasp a point performed better in English reading and comprehension, and in Mathematics than Yao pupils whose teachers were weak in using or never used mother tongue to help the learner grasp a point. This suggests that teachers should teach the lessons in their local language which is heightened by the teachers' responses having Very High Level of Implementation.

Another significant understanding shown is the Very High Level result of teachers' attendance on on-going trainings, compliance of the requirements needed by the monitoring and evaluation committee of the MLE program, and updating with literature related to MTB-MLE. A sufficient number of teachers were trained and were constantly monitored for the effectiveness of this program. The teachers attended a considerable number of trainings and professional development programs and had more opportunities on becoming better informed about the innovation, and they had more chances of modelling it in action and finally, practiced using it. Success of the implementation is also pegged on the intense compliance of the requirements needed by the monitoring and evaluation committee. They also recognized themselves as responsible agents with appropriate delivery practices. Whatever is recommended, approved, and prescribed by the committee, they were always reminded to strictly adhere and comply. To put the policy in action and to achieve its goal, constant updating with knowledge and pedagogy were also taken seriously by teachers as the prime implementers.

Another emerging view is that teachers have a Very High Level of Implementation in terms of developing, producing, and designing of localized materials. In the same context, there is also

Very High Level of Implementation in designing activities that develop students' awareness of their own culture, in giving interesting, stimulating, and challenging tasks related to MTB-MLE, employing innovative methods for MLE programs and in initiating school-wide activities related to MTB-MLE. McKay (2003) emphasizes the involvement of the learners' local culture in English as a foreign language classroom. He maintains that each country where English is taught as an international language should take the responsibility to select and develop language materials together with appropriate language teaching methods within the context of the learners' local culture. As reported in the study of Naom and Ambiyu (2014) the issue of learning materials in the local languages was pointed out as the limitation to effective implementation of the language policy. Further, they purported that mother-tongue is also good way of preserving culture. It is believed that when children learn in their language, they learn about their culture and use things in their own environment as opposed to learning using foreign examples, which they can only struggle to imagine. The use of mother-tongue promotes culture and identity of people. There is a need of consistency in the medium of instruction and the materials prepared by the teachers. For pupils to appreciate their language, they need to be totally immersed with the language. This could be made possible with instructional materials and activities prepared and designed by the teachers according to the learners' interests and needs. As stated by (Afolabi, Adeyanju, Adedapo and Falade, 2006 as cited by Sunday and Joshua, 2010) teaching can only be effective when adequate and relevant instructional materials are used.

The teachers however, need more opportunities to collaborate with parents in designing relevant activities. This indicator has a weighted mean of 2.31 which is interpreted as High Level. In the findings of the study of Naom and Ambiyu (2014), parents were more concerned with the end product, but not the process that leads to it. Although other parents appreciate the fact that the children would show greater interest in learning if lessons were conducted in mother-tongue, they observed that factors such as lack of opportunities related to mother-tongue use would stand on the way to effective implementation. It is worth noting that parents are considered partners in the success of the MTB-MLE implementation. Therefore, more favourable combination of circumstances with parents as valuable partners should be reckoned. For MTB-MLE to be successful there must be strong collaboration and support structures in place from key groups, the teachers and parents. According to the National Competency-Based Teacher Standards, the domain of Community Linkages focuses on the ideal that classroom activities are meaningfully linked to the experiences and aspirations of the students in their homes and communities. Thus, the domain focuses on teachers' efforts directed at strengthening the links between schools and communities, particularly as they link in the attainment of the curricular goals. It is therefore worth-noting that teachers should involve the parents and the community in sharing accountability for the learners' achievement and use resources and design activities that would support the implementation the use of MTB-MLE. Figure 2 shows the cool analysis of the data on the level of teachers' implementation of MTB-MLE –, its access, advocacy, and collaboration.

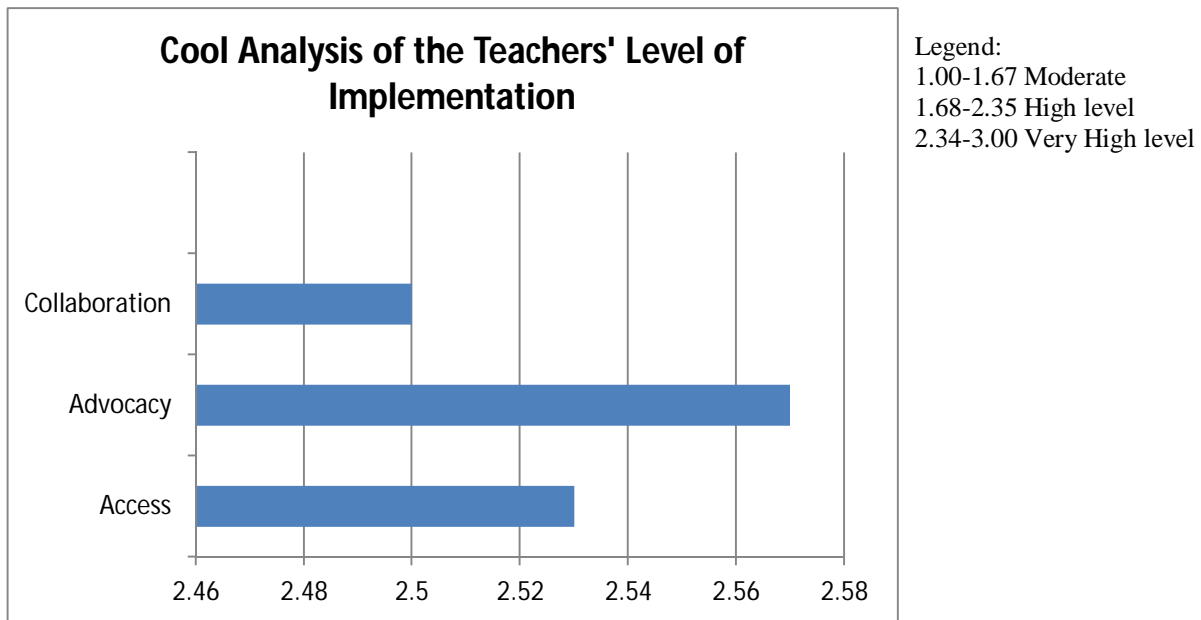


Figure 2. Cool Analysis of the Teachers' Level of Implementation

When mother tongue is implemented as the medium in primary instruction; learner end up being better thinker and better learner in both first and second language. Of the three features of MTBMLE level of teachers' implementation, advocacy with a weighted mean of 2.57 comes first in rank, followed by access to implementation with a weighted mean of 2.53 and third in rank is collaboration with the stakeholders with a weighted mean of 2.50, are interpreted as Very High Level of implementation.

The results show that in order to strengthen the early childhood education, teachers play an important role especially in the implementation of the policy in the classroom because of their immediate relationships with the children. Literature discusses the responsibility teachers hold for implementation at the classroom level (Mohanty, Panda, & Pal, 2010; Ricento & Hornberger, 2006; Shohamy, 2006), while a different set of literature on family language policy focuses on the function of parents in the home (Caldas, 2013; King, Fogle, & Logan-Terry, 2008). Despite the emphasis of holistic community involvement in MTB-MLE, very little scholarship addresses the cross-over of language policy practices between teachers and parents. In fact, most literature on language-in-education policy focuses on the role of teachers rather than that of parents. General literature on educational change points to teachers as the gatekeepers of reform because of their vital role in implementing policies (Fullan, 2003), while literature specific to language policy calls teachers the —central agents of implementation (Silver & Skuja-Steele, 2005). This is because teachers reside at the classroom level where implementation happens, and they have control over if and how well changes occur. While educational reform initiatives hold much potential for effecting positive change, they may fail if they do not gain the necessary commitment from those who directly interact with and influence children, or the —street level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1980). Several studies have suggested variables that can influence teachers' willingness to support a reform, such as changes in working conditions (Chapman, 2009), teaching workload (Mulkeen, Chapman, & DeJaeghere, 2005), and continued support and training (Fullan, 2003; Chapman

& Miric, 2005). These factors may become apparent amidst changes in language policy. Therefore, attention to the role of teachers is warranted in the midst of a large educational reform.

While teachers may appear to act as —_soldiers‘ of the system by implementing national policies without questioning their quality and relevance, studies have suggested that their actions in the classroom are contextualized and adapted according to their own language ideologies (Johnson & Freeman, 2010; Creese, 2010; Menken, 2008; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002). Drawing on her previous work (Leung & Creese, 2008), Creese (2010) wrote:

Individually and collectively teachers within their school communities will operate policy according to their local contexts, experiences and values, even where there is a strong element of statutory compliance. They will interact with policy not in a one-to-one reading of what is required, but in an interactive frame which involves their own interpretation within their own localized communities.

Challenges and Opportunities in the Implementation of MTBMLE

In the process of implementing the MTB instruction, challenges as well as opportunities were noted. The responses of the teachers were gathered through the structured and unstructured interview. For smooth facilitation, questions and responses were ranged by themes or dimensions: Personal Preparedness; Teaching-Learning Pedagogy; Learning Influences; and General Appraisal.

In the area of Personal Preparedness, the teachers expressed their strengths and weaknesses as well. Positively, most of them expressed that they are prepared in teaching the subject because primarily because the medium of instruction used is their own and students' mother tongue as well, therefore they found it easy to facilitate students' understanding. Sixty percent (60%) of them said, "My students are not shy and assertive in giving answers and expressing their opinions because they don't hesitate to use the language and oftentimes they can relate the lesson to their actual lives." In the same manner, the teachers are comfortable and can easily express their thoughts freely and communicate to them confidently. They too, have noted that teaching using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction based on experience has created a positive impact on the performance and attitude of the students towards learning. Fifty percent (50%) verbalized, "Although at first awkward because we were attuned to using English in the classroom, but we later realized how valuable it is to the students in the way they learn and communicate their thoughts". A 1999 UNICEF statement similarly acknowledged the value of mother tongue instruction where one research shows that students are quicker to learn to read and acquire other academic skills when first taught in their mother tongue. In addition Thomas and Collier's (1997) in their major longitudinal studies in the United States found that language minority children who were educated in their home language for the majority of their elementary school years demonstrated stronger gains in English proficiency than other language minority children who were educated only in English or for just a short time in their first language.

Since obviously the latter can readily understand, they likewise find the lessons meaningful and enjoyable. Studies have also indicated that English (or other second language) literacy skills develop more easily and efficiently when they are based in a child's understanding of their first language (Cummins, 2000).

This finding has furthermore made the teachers motivated and determined to continuously prepare and be equipped with relevant strategies and techniques in teaching. They have become conscious that meaningful learning happens when the student really understands and can connect and evaluate learning experiences.

On the other hand however, challenges were met like the insufficient materials for the MTB instruction and the lack of training relevant to the implementation of the MTB instruction. Around

thirty percent (30%) of them has noted that they have not been part in any of these trainings. Positively however they expressed, "Although we have not been part of any training, we tried our best to be equipped". They added, "We asked notes from our friends and colleagues who were able to attend, discussed with them and at times browsed the internet to such purpose". In addition, Abatchew (2010) even argued that unless a rich environment of books, posters, television and radio programs are created in the medium or media of instruction, the students are doomed to failure. This scenario is a manifestation that budget for training as well as instructional materials is not sufficient for all Grades one, two and three classes respectively.. Therefore teachers' initiative is called for and very gladly, have been done by these teachers.

In addition, the unfamiliar terms used in the different subject areas especially in Math which even the teachers themselves don't readily understand. Forty percent (40%) of them uttered, "We only have one material or two in a grade level. Dutcher (2003) admitted that it is ultimately ineffective when there is lack of materials, poor teacher training, unfit curriculum, and inadequate language development.

According to the teachers, "So what we do is really find time to translate the old materials in English to the students' mother tongue." Understandably, many teachers range from 25-35 years old, products of English, then the medium of instruction. Besides, although they speak the mother tongue at home but in the area of linguistics as found in certain instructional materials spoken by the native speakers, they really found it difficult to speak or understand. What they use in the classroom is the students' functional and conversational mother tongue. They uttered, "The language used in some instructional materials is the one spoken by the native speakers of Cebu province which we ourselves unless we translate, don't understand". Apart from this, the Sinugbuanong Binisaya language as used in these instructional materials is not used by the entire populace because certain areas far from Cebu City have their own dialects which the students really consider their mother tongue. The teachers in these areas articulated, "Indeed a challenge on our part because our students have their own dialect. Although generally they can understand the medium used in the text, but we still need to unlock certain terms for comprehensibility." .

In the area of Teaching-Learning Pedagogy, a question was raised as to how these teachers make themselves comprehensible to their students as they teach. If these students don't understand them what strategies they employed.

One important criterion of good teaching according to MacCarthy, Kellough and Kellough, is that the teacher should make use of varied strategies and techniques. Majority of the teacher-respondents noted that they made use of illustrations, realia as well as conducting group activities. They verbalized, "Students become animated as we present to them the realia and some illustrations. Although tiresome at times but we have become conscious of how much and how well they learn from us." Giving concrete examples was also practiced by the fifty percent (50%) of the respondents. They stated, "We give them real life examples in order for them to find meaning in what they learn." This was also followed by making their voice audible, teaching students from simple to complex and using other languages like English and Filipino to bridge understanding. As stated, "If the teachers' voice is audible and language is simple, we believe that students understand better." Aside from this, they expressed, "Using other languages can help bridge understanding."

In time however, when students cannot understand, majority of the teachers resort to re-teaching. They said, "If majority of the students don't comprehend, we teach again and make some remedies." In addition, thirty percent (30%) of them stated that, "We unlock unfamiliar words through pictures, context and action clues and sometimes games." Ten percent (10%) of them articulated, "We also consider the individual differences of these students and that we give more time to the others to learn at their own pace." This finding revealed that the teachers are

conscientious by really exhausting several means so that students would learn and enjoy. Being in the basic primary education is certainly not easy considering that many of them still are developing the basic skills to learning. Thus, spending extra time with the students who lag behind without any remuneration is a sign of dedication and passion for teaching and that they are highly appreciated.

In the area of Learning Influences, certain manifestations of the students' behavior as regards the use of the Mother Tongue were observed. Eighty percent (80%) of the teachers noted that that majority of the students are actively engaged. They said, "With the use of the Mother Tongue, the students become participative, and eager to answer and can readily use this in understanding other subject areas. Based on the 1999 UNICEF research findings noted certain benefits. One of which highlights stronger classroom participation. (Benson, 2000; Dutcher, 1995). It's because they use their own language." Another group of teachers expressed that, "Since the students can relate their lessons to their real life experiences, they enjoy learning other subjects like stories behind Social Studies, Science and others. It is in Mathematics though that they need to spend time to translate and comprehend because of certain terms which they used to understand it in English." It is observed that those who are shy are gradually showing up and start to express themselves in both oral and written activities." Stephen Krashen (1980) supports Cummins' Common Underlying Proficiency Theory which maintains that the most efficient and effective way to help children improve their learning and acquire literacy is to invest in developing L1 language and literacy. Academic arguments and educational noise are obviously noted. These observations are manifestations that students learn best using their first language because they can freely express their thoughts and feelings. In effect they feel happy and satisfied. Moreover the family members are very supportive in this regard. Seventy percent (70%) of the parents and guardians as shared by the teachers uttered, "Amo gyung suportan ang mga bata aning gitawag ug mother tongue kay mas madali silang makat-on sa lain laing subjects kay kahibaw man gyud sila sa pinulungan. (We really support our children in this Mother Tongue-Based Instruction because they can also learn faster in other subjects because the medium of instruction is their own native tongue.) These positive observations were noted because the MTB instruction used in school is likewise the students' first language at home. There has been an easy transition of practice from home to school. Kioko, Mutiga, Muthwii, Schroeder, Inyega and Trudell 2008 supported this notion by stating that the use of the learners' first language in school promotes a smooth transition between home and school fostering an emotional stability that translates to cognitive stability. Furthermore, UNESCO, 2007 noted that examples of good practices indicate that local community members can be excellent teachers if they participate in training before they teach, have regular in-service training and have access to instructional materials that easy to use and relevant to the learners they are teaching.

In the area of teachers' general appraisal to students' reaction to MTB instruction, it is commonly observed that students perform well in both oral and written communication and as seen in their behavior. Eighty percent of the teacher respondents said, "Students perform class activities with less fear of making mistakes because they can understand the instructions, thus they get higher marks." They added, "They are actively engaged because all of them have ideas and opinions to share. Eventually they have become confident." This is supported by Cummins (1994) on his additive bilingualism in which the first language is continually developed and the home culture valued while the second language is added. Baker (2000) further noted that additive bilingualism is linked to high self-esteem, increased cognitive flexibility, and higher levels of proficiency in the second language. In addition, Appel, 1998; Cummins 1989, 1990; Hernandez-Chavez 1984 noted that many studies show that mother tongue-based instruction can improve self esteem.

This positive remark implies that this practice has been made consistent by the different schools as enjoined by the Department of Education. It is further noted that resourcefulness and creativity matter a lot in order to effect the successful implementation of the MTB Instruction. This being a work in progress then teachers hold hands for their continuous dedication with the clear purpose of developing the students' lifelong learning and likewise leading them to be part of the global academic community.

Conclusion

The teachers' high level of awareness and high level of implementation has created certain benefits and opportunities which lead the students to learn and enjoy their varied learning activities. Through this, both the students and the teachers have become conscious on the significance of the program towards global understanding.

Recommendation

Based on the findings, the following are highly recommended:

1. Strengthen information dissemination on the Mother-Tongue Based Instruction for Grades one to three among the stakeholders and involve the same primarily in the planning phase.
2. Provide sufficient in-service trainings for all teachers employing the MTB.
3. Create/innovate instructional materials to facilitate lessons in MTB. Materials for both teachers and students must be available in their own specific language context. To materialize this, financial support from government and non-government organizations (NGOs) is needed.
4. Collaborate with parents and other stakeholders in designing relevant activities

References

- Burton, L. A. (2013). Mother tongue-based multilingual education in the philippines: Studying top-down policy implementation from the bottom up (Order No. 3567404). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1420349276). Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1420349276?accountid=141440>
- Dutcher, N. (2003). Promise and perils of mother tongue education. Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, DC. USA
- Espada, J. (2012). The native language in teaching kindergarten mathematics. Leyte Normal University
- Gacheche, K. (2010). Challenges in implementing a mother tongue-based language in- education policy: Policy and practice in Kenya. POLIS Journal Vol.4
- Gallego, M. and Zubiri, L. 2013. MTBMLE in the philippines: perceptions, attitudes, and outlook. Retrieved on July 14, 2015 from <https://mlephil.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/mtbmle-in-the-philippines-perceptions-attitudes-and-outlook.pdf>
- Ganal, N. N., Ed D. (2014). Demographic profile and perception of teachers and school head on mother tongue as language of instruction. Indian Journal of Management Science, 4(3), 44-55. Retrieved on July 17, 2015 from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1640732685?accountid=141440>
- Garbes, L. (2011). Mother tongue based education in the Philippines. Retrieved at <http://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/mother-tongue-based-education>
- Malone, D and Malone, S. (2011). Teacher education for mother tongue-based education programs. Retrieved on July 15, 2015 from

http://www.sil.org/sites/default/files/files/institutionalizing_teacher_training_for_mtbml_e_12-2011.pdf

- Martin, S. (2012). Filipino children fare badly in academic performance. *Tribune Business News* [Washington] Retrieved on July 15, 2015 from <http://search.proquest.com/>
- Martin, I. (2012). Diffusion and directions: English language policy in the Philippines. AteneodeManila, Philippines
- Meiers, M. (2013). Introduction to issues and Implications for children learning to read in multilingual settings. Education Resource Facility, AusAID
- Mondez, R. (2013). Appropriateness of mother tongue-based multi-lingual education (MTB-MLE) in urban areas: a synthesis study. *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)*. Retrieved on July 16, 2015 from <http://www.ijsr.net/archive/v2i1/IJSRON2013351.pdf>
- Paulson Stone, R. (2012). A professional development program for the mother tongue-based teacher: Addressing teacher knowledge and attitudes about MTBMLE (Order No. 3518270). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1033224534). Retrieved on July 17, 2015 from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1033224534?accountid=141440>
- Phyak, P. (2007). Mother tongue education: Practices and problems with reference with reference to limbu language. Social Inclusion Research Fund. SNV, Nepal
- Sanchez, A. S., Q. (2013). Literacy instruction in the mother tongue: The case of pupils using mixed vocabularies. *Journal of International Education Research*, 9(3), 235. Retrieved on July 18, 2015 from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1433389601?accountid=141440>
- Stone, R. (2012). A professional development program for the mother tongue-based teacher: Addressing teacher knowledge and attitudes about mtb-mle. University of Massachusetts Amherst
- Tupas, R. (2012). The new challenge of the mother tongues: the future of Philippine postcolonial language politics. National University of Singapore
- Walter, S. L., & Dekker, D. E. (2011). Mother tongue instruction in lubuagan: A case study from the philippines. *International Review of Education*, 57(5-6), 667-683. Retrieved on July 18, 2015 from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11159-011-9246-4>

Web Sources:

<http://www.deped.gov.ph/about/mandate>
<http://www.mlenetwork.org/evaluation>