

Original Research Article

Teachers' Experiences in the Implementation of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in Indigenous People Learner Dominated School in Southern Palawan, Philippines

Abstract

This study sought to examine the implementation of MTB-MLE in schools where the majority of the students are indigenous learners. It specifically aimed to describe the (1) teachers' experiences with MTB-MLE implementation and the (2) the teachers' concerns in implementation. Purposive sampling was used; 6 Primary Teachers were interviewed using a semi-structured interview technique. Results show that the teachers believe in the program's purpose of the program, but in practice, it has some issues that call for reflection among policymakers and program implementers. The teachers see MTB-MLE as something irrelevant because it is a duplication of the Filipino subject which is not the Mother Tongue of the learners in the first place. Another issue that was revealed is the implication of having a multilingual classroom. The diversity of the linguistic backgrounds of the learners poses a problem. Teacher says that they receive training on MTB-MLE, but such training has no practical relevance to their day-to-day instruction. The teachers also mention the dearth of teaching and learning materials. It could be safely said that the implementation of MTB-MLE failed to achieve its purpose, and it needs more re-thinking. The researchers believe in the goal of Deped in implementing the program but that more research is needed. Collaborating with teachers, anthropologists, linguists, and artists is necessary.

Keywords: Mother Tongue-Based Multi-Lingual Education (MTB-MLE), Indigenous People Education (IPED), MTB-MLE Program Implementation, Issues in MTB-MLE.

Introduction

The Department of Education released DepEd Order No. 16 series of 2012. This document mandates the implementation of Mother Tongue-Based-Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) as a subject from Kindergarten to Grade 3 (K-3) as part of the Philippine K to 12 basic Education. This move is seen as a support to the "Every Child-a-Reader and a-writer by Grade 1" goal of the education department. This document has cited that the conceptualization of MTB-MLE is a product of the 1999-2001 Lingua Franca Project and the Lubuagan Project. In the same document, the 8 major languages plus the of the Philippines are mandated to be taught as subjects namely: (1) Tagalog, (2) Kapampangan, (3) Pangasinense, (4) Iloko, (5) Bikol, (6) Cebuano, (7) Hiligaynon, (8) Waray, (9) Tausug, (10) Maguindanaoan, (11) Maranao, (12) Chabacano.

At this stage, we can see that although the Philippine Basic Education system has expressed its intent to recognize the role of the Mother Tongue in the Educational success of learners, a gap still exists in its inclusivity. Kaplan and Baldauf (1998) described the linguistic situation in the Philippines as characterized by being heterogeneous and having no absolute majority of speakers. Cunanan (2013) has also mentioned the multilingual nature of the Philippines, which is described as an archipelago of 7,017 islands and islets and 172 coexisting languages.

It is not an outrageous claim that implementing MTB-MLE based on the policy set by Deped, although it is a good start, is not enough because if we will look at the total number of languages in the Philippines and the mandated languages to be taught in the DO 16, s. of 2012, it accounts for only 0.07% of the total languages in the Philippines. This has serious implications for the learners who belong to minority ethnolinguistic groups, particularly the Indigenous People Population. This was also argued by Andaya (2019). For her, the teaching of the dominant language in multicultural communities is doing "*dire and irreversible consequences in our nation*" and defeats the purpose of MTB-MLE, which aims to help minority students acquire literacy skills. It could be said that the implementation of MTB-MLE is not faithful to its ideals, such as valuing cultural diversity and preserving the learners' cultural traditions and identities.

This is connected to another emerging issue at hand. The Indigenous People Education. The 1989 ILO convention and the 2007 declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. These two internationally accepted documents highlight the rights of the indigenous people. Among these rights is the recognition of the Rights of the IP communities to quality, culturally relevant, and responsive education. In the Philippines, Indigenous communities' rights have been established legally. The most relevant is the establishment of the National Commission of Indigenous People (NCIP) through the Republic Act 8173, commonly known as the IPRA law. This legislation also calls for a culturally responsive education.

The Department Order 62, s. 2011 of the Department of Education is another landmark policy to ensure the move to promote the right of the People learners to quality basic education. One of the policy statements stipulated in the National Indigenous Peoples Education Policy Framework is the provision stating the responsibility of the Department of Education to *"Provide adequate and culturally-appropriate learning resources and environment to IP learners."* Thus, teaching the Mother Tongue of the Indigenous People as part of the MTB-MLE could have worked consistently with the said IPED policy statement contrary to the current provisions stipulated on the DO 16, s. 2012. Dekker and Young (2007) argued for it before the MTB-MLE was implemented. In their paper, they reviewed the language policy of the Philippines. They presented a case study of implementing an innovative community-based approach to multilingual education in Northern Luzon (Lubuagan Project).

The project demonstrated that effective Mother Tongue instruction could serve as a strong sequential bridge to the prescribed languages in the then Bilingual Education Policy of the Philippine education system. This result was confirmed by other research conducted where it was demonstrated that said bridging effect of Mother Tongue to second language acquisition (Kadtong, 2018; Oda & Vizconde, 2021; Yadav, 2014).

MTB-MLE in Basic Education

The MTB-MLE implementation in the Philippines has been explored in the academic literature. Here, we will discuss the relevant research published on the topic. In studies examining the attitudes of teachers with regard to MTB-MLE implementation, various attitudes were revealed. For example, Anudin (2018) found out that teachers generally hold negative attitudes towards using Chavacano as a language of instruction. The inadequacy of books and learning materials, vocabulary deficiency of teachers, and insufficient teaching materials and teacher training is cited as issues. This problem was manifested in the early years of the program's implementation and is said to be persisting, such as the availability of instructional materials and facilities.

The study by Cabansag (2016), on the other hand, examined the problem from the perspectives of the school's stakeholders; aside from the teachers, other internal and external stakeholders were included, such as the pupils, parents, local school board, parent-teachers, and community association, including the non-government organizations and local government units. Results indicate that the MTB-MLE program provides a learning environment that promotes expressing ideas better on the part of the learners and that Mother Tongue instruction is said to contribute to building the learners' self-confidence along with better retention and the promotion of a learner-friendly environment. The study, however, confirms the findings of other studies regarding the difficulties in implementing the program, the linguistic diversity of school settings, the inadequate instructional resources, and the rigidity of the top-down program implementation of the Department of Education. Cruz (2015) also observed the same themes where the dearth of teacher training was mentioned. One unique issue that this study has pointed out is the provision of evaluation instruments for MTB-MLE teachers. Additionally, the curriculum appeared to fall short of its objectives because the pupils demonstrated grammar awareness, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension issues.

The comment presented by Cabansag (2016) with regard to the top-down planning and implementation of the MTB-MLE program was already explored by Burton (2013) in her dissertation. Her exploration of the understanding of the teachers and parents about the implementation of MTB-MLE. Concerns were raised about the top-down approach adopted by the policy's planners and implementers. The rigid Bureaucracy of the Department of Education could be a liability in the planning and designing of the Indigenous People's Education Curriculum, which needs a localized community-based approach.

The study by Dimaculangan and Gonzales (2020) revealed conflicting perspectives among stakeholders about the MTB-MLE program in relation to English Language Teaching (ELT). The perspectives range from being (1) undecided about their attitude towards MTB-MLE to having no full understanding of the program. From the perspectives, the participants expressed their uncertainty on whether the MTB-MLE could positively impact English language teaching.

It is important to mention that in the context of Southern Palawan, a study on the implementation of MTB-MLE was already published by Villarus and Perez (2020). Their paper examines the implementation of MTB-MLE by conducting a survey among students and teachers of remote areas of Brooke's Point, Palawan. Like Cruz (2015), it was found that the students scored low on the instrument that was used, which leads to the conclusion that the program has not met the expected outcome. Results also show that due to the fact that the teachers are unfamiliar with the communities' beliefs, cultures, and languages, the majority of teachers found it challenging to cope with the individual differences, interests, and needs of their students as well as to integrate MTB-MLE into other topics. This could be attributed to the context that they are not members of the local community where they were sent to teach and are of different ethnicity.

The implementation of MTB-MLE in the Philippines, as seen in the literature, has its nuances. There are different opinions between the teachers and between stakeholders regarding its implementation. While such implementation was perceived to be beneficial, it could be argued that the issues and challenges have persisted and remained unsolved.

The issues surrounding the implementation could be summarized as the following:

1. of lack localized training for teachers
2. lack of localized teaching/learning materials
3. Knowledge of teachers in the mother tongue of the community
4. Challenges related to having multilingual classrooms

MTB-MLE and Indigenous People's Education

It is critical to put into account that these issues have been experienced even by non-minority language groups. Eduardo and Gabriel (2021) have described that the IPRA law appears to be more of a tokenism. In this study among the Dumagat in Nueva Ecija, English has remained to be the most widely used medium in the IP schools' curricula. This was also observed by Tolentino (2017) after examining the perspectives of IP elders in an Aeta community in Pampanga in the implementation of the Indigenous People Education program (IPED) of the Department of Education. The elders express their concern over the use of language in school. According to them, the indigenous language is fleeting among the indigenous students, leading to conflicts between the IP elders and non-IP collaborators. It was mentioned that traditional was mentioned that although the students could still speak their indigenous language, the written form is slowly dying. The paper has also mentioned that the Aeta students felt awkward while using their indigenous language, resulting in using the language only when they are talking among themselves. This could be associated with the discrimination and bullying experienced by the IP learners.

These results are consistent with the findings of the study conducted by Suazo and Montenegro (2018) among the Manobo IP group in Mindanao. It was said that the majority of teachers do not speak the language as expected of being not part of the ethnolinguistic group. This has resulted in challenges in communication between the teachers and the students. The scarcity of learning materials is also observed. Villaplaza (2016) assessed the implementation of IP Education in Agusan Del Sur in Southern Philippines by conducting a survey among the school stakeholders such as teachers, school administrators, school heads, IP Learners, and IP elders; it was revealed that while pedagogy and methodology and indigenous knowledge systems and practices got a "satisfactory" rating curriculum content and planning, the language of instruction, teacher training, materials, and assessment and evaluation got a "poor rating."

From this point, it is safe to say that the members see the use of Mother Tongue of the community and learners as a critical component of indigenous people's education. This has two implications. In this context, we believe that the full implementation of MTB-MLE in schools with indigenous learners should not only be seen as a strategy to achieve learning goals, as proved by the report of Walter and Dekker (2011) but should be seen by education and research institutions as part of the commitment to the full realization of the right of the indigenous people

to education. This is in context to the fact that the language used for teaching is alienating for the learners.

Even in a time when the Indigenous People have the right to accessible and quality education, as well as the implementation of the MTB-MLE program as part of the formal curriculum of the Department of Education, there are still "*rough edges*" in this program. Here we could all agree with the statement of Eduardo and Gabriel (2021) when they said that with the IPRA law and we add all the other policies and programs for the Indigenous People, learners are still could be described as tokens "*tokens*." Advocating the use of Mother Tongue in education in general and in the Indigenous People learners is still an unrealized concept that needs to be accomplished.

The Episcopal Commission on Indigenous Peoples Education commented in 2008 that even though the graduates of learners from the Indigenous Communities are seen as success stories, the other side, which is often overlooked, is the grim reality that the number of dropouts exceeds the number of successful students. Comprehension difficulties are among the reasons cited, along with the adjustment to difficulties and discrimination. It is interesting because the use of indigenous language is also a source of discrimination and bullying, as implied by the results of Tolentino (2017).

From the things we have discussed in the previous sections, we can see how the issue of MTB-MLE and Indigenous People's Education are intertwined. For the indigenous people, the use of their language is part of their rights and a means of empowering them and providing opportunities for the communities to celebrate their culture and take pride in their identities. These things that were mentioned in the previous sections served as the conceptual basis of this research.

Research Objectives

This study aims to examine the experiences of primary school teachers in southern Palawan teaching MTB-MLE in schools dominated by Indigenous People learners. The following are the specific research objectives of the study:

1. Describe the teachers' experiences in the MTB-MLE implementation

2. Determine the teachers' concerns in implementing MTB-MLE

Methods

This research used a qualitative approach. The researchers used a semi-structured interview technique among the teacher participants. Purposive non-random sampling was used to determine participants. The criteria are the following:

1. a teacher of kinder to grade three pupils,
2. must be designated to teach in schools where the majority of the learners are members of the IP community,

Six teachers have agreed to participate in the study. They represent two schools that are located in remote locations. The respective school heads granted the researchers permission. Two cycles of interviews were done from April 26 to May 16, 2022. The interviews are audio-recorded and transcribed. The interviews are done using the Filipino language and translated by the researchers into English. The analysis of the data was done using coding and thematic analysis. Traditional techniques were used in the analysis by means of colored highlighter pens and pencils for coding and analyzing themes. The identity of the respondents is hidden in the presentation of data. Code names were used to represent them. We have also decided not to mention the names of the schools represented by the participants.

Results

The thematic analysis revealed ten (10) themes. The themes are connected based on the research objectives of the study. The following themes can best explain the teachers' experiences: (1) Disconnect in the capabilities of the teachers and the Mother Tongue of Students, (2) Tagalog was used because it is not necessarily the mother tongue but a common tongue. (3) MTB-MLE is redundant with the Filipino subject, and it would be better if the language used is the indigenous language.

Disconnect in the capabilities of the teachers and the Mother Tongue of Students.

The participants recognized that there is a disconnect between the teachers' capability and the learners' mother tongue.

If you are a teacher here, you need to speak the Pala'wan language and the language of the Muslims. This, for us, is a disadvantage because we can't speak any of those. We can comprehend but only a small fraction of the language. For us, it is difficult; we believe it's better if the teachers are from the community. (Teacher Sherlyn, Translated translated from Filipino)

Teacher Sherly shares her reflection based on her two years of teaching in the school. She mentioned that she could not speak the language of the pupils and believes that, for her part, it is a disadvantage because they are having difficulty communicating the lessons to their learners. All of the participants have the same opinion. This is not a novel finding because this is a recurring theme not only in the context of this study but also in the previously mentioned studies in the context of Indigenous Learners (Aguasito et al., 2019; Bonifacio et al., 2021; Cornelio & Castro, 2016; The Episcopal Commission on Indigenous Peoples Education, 200; Suazo & Montenegro, 2018; Villaplaza, 2016).

In relation to this, Teacher Sherlyn shared her thoughts that it would be better if the teacher was from the community. On the other hand, Teacher Cristy also shared her thoughts in the same light in the statement below:

"The linguistic difference between us, the teachers and the pupils, poses a problem. Pupils say something, but we do not understand them. For example, when they are crying, we cannot comprehend what they are saying. These things made our job difficult. Sometimes we don't know if something is hurting them, but they are having difficulty communicating it, and we teachers can't comprehend enough what they are saying. So that is the problem."
(Teacher Cristy, translated from Filipino)

We could see from the statement above that she expressed her belief that the language gap between the learners and her is a problem. It affects not only her ability to communicate the

lesson, but she also expressed concern about her (in)ability to check the welfare of her students. The gap between her and her learners limits her ability to function as a communicator of knowledge and as a second parent. Interestingly, one participant said she knows Jamma Mapun because she is part of the Jamma Mapun Cultural community. The rest of the participants are not members of the cultural community and have difficulty communicating with the learners.

The two statements presented are just a sample of all the participants' responses. They do recognize the problem that they are not capable of teaching MTB-MLE subjects should they offer to teach the real Mother Tongue of their learners. However, in the next section, we will see that teachers see MTB-MLE as irrelevance because it is a mere redundancy of the Filipino subject.

Tagalog was used because it is not necessarily the mother tongue but a common tongue.

While it was mentioned earlier that, theoretically, the implementation of the MTB-MLE is a move to promote multilingualism and a recognition of the rights of the marginalized. The statement of teacher Christy below shows the disconnect between the rationale of the MTB-MLE. The statement below says that there are two Mother Tongues in the communities where the schools are located, namely Pala'wan (*an indigenous People group in Southern Palawan*) and Mapun (*the language of Jamma Mapun, another minority group who migrated from the island of Tawi-Tawi, the southern Philippines, to Palawan*).

"Here in (sitio) Tagmaya, there are two dialects, Palaw'an and Mapun. So since we don't know how to speak that dialect, we are using Tagalog as a medium of instruction since they at least speak Tagalog." (Teacher Cristy, Translated from Filipino).

These two are minority languages in the Philippines, but these languages are not taught in the MTB-MLE classes. Teacher Juvelyn also mentioned that "*Mapun*" and Pala'wan are the learners' mother tongues. However, it is interesting to note that her statement contradicted the statement of Teacher Christy when she said that the language gap between the teachers and the student poses a problem. The statement below said that the learners are fluent in Filipino (*Tagalog*) and that it was used as the medium of instruction.

Here in Sumbiling, most of the students speak Mapun and Palaw'an as their Mother Tongue, but the learners today are not using their language even in their homes except those in more remote areas. All my students, especially Palaw'an, are fluent in Tagalog. They can speak and understand it because even in their homes, they are using it." (Teacher Juvelyn, Translated from Filipino)

The important context that could shed light on this contradicting statement could be explained by the fact that these two teachers are assigned to different schools. Teacher Juvelyn represents only her observations and has no attempt at generalization since she mentioned that she recognized that the more remote areas have a different reality. Another important context is that teacher Cristy is assigned to teach Kindergarten pupils. This explains her concern about the language gap. The age of the learners is a big factor because this will be the first year of formal education for indigenous learners. The adjustment from the Mother Tongue to the dominant language used in schools is a big factor. This is why we believe that Mother Tongue instruction at the Kindergarten level should be among the areas of higher priority as well as the schools located in remote areas.

While the usage of the Filipino language as a medium of instruction and the usage of MTB-MLE is justified for the reason that it is the common language, it is still an issue. It still reflects the concern of the Indigenous elders connected to the reality of the possible "death" of the use of their indigenous language and their cultural identity, as reported by Tolentino (2017).

MTB-MLE is Redundant with the Filipino subject, and it would be better if the language used is the indigenous languages

The interview data have revealed glimpses of the gaps between the theory and the implementation of the MTB-MLE subject and the attitude of the teachers towards the subject. The statements of teacher Juvelyn and teacher Lalaine best describe it.

Teaching MTB was the same as the topics being presented in the Filipino subject. Sometimes we skip redundant topics; sometimes,

there's no particular topic. (Teacher Juvelyn, Translated from Filipino)

Teacher Lalaine also says the same things in the following statement as she explains the implementation of MTB-MLE. She explained that Tagalog is being taught because it is the language that everyone can understand.

Teaching MTB (subject) is similar to Filipino; the only difference is that the mother tongue we recognize here in Palawan is Tagalog, which is why it is similar to Filipino.) (Teacher Lalaine, Translated from Filipino)

First, there is a need to clarify this statement by the participant. The original translation from Filipino is "*ginagamit na pinaka-mother tongue*" it could be translated roughly as "*most used*" used language. The use of mother tongue in this statement is meant only as a comparison to the mother tongue, and the teacher only equates the mother tongue to the common tongue. The statements above reduce the MTB-MLE subject as redundant to the Filipino subject. Teacher Alyusree in the following statement, commented that the implementation of the program (*the teaching of MTB-MLE subject*) could have been a good program.

"MTB-MLE could have been a good program if it was based on the true Mother Tongue of the Locality. For example, in the context of this community, like the Muslims (Jamma Mapun), the "Muslim" language should be taught----the problem is that not everyone in the class is Muslim... there is a mix of different tribes (minority ethnolinguistic groups)". -Teacher Alyusree (Translated from Filipino)

Just a context, the participants used the term "*Muslim*" interchangeably to the language of the community dominant in the locality, which is Jamma Mapun. The teacher participant used the term "*tribe*" to describe the other minority groups like the Pala'wan group (*We decided to put a context on the use of this term because it could lead to inaccuracies because Muslims are a group of people that practices Islam and the term "tribe" is an outdated term that is used to describe the Indigenous People*). The statement of teacher Sherlyn is consistent with that of

teacher Alyusree. She also agrees that MTB-MLE implementation could have been better if the local language had been used.

The teaching of Mother Tongue has advantages. Just like here in the context of this community, our students are members of the Pala'wan and Muslim (Jamma Mapun) community. If you teach here, you should know the Pala'wan and Muslim (Jamma Mapun). But for us, it is a disadvantage because we do not know these languages. We know little about those languages and cannot speak using those languages. It would not be easy on our part, but it would be a better setup for the students. If the teachers know their learners' language, the lesson will be delivered more efficiently. So we hope that teachers who are knowledgeable about the Mother Tongue of the learners will be assigned here (Teacher Sherlyn, translated from Filipino)

These statements show the recognition of teachers that more things are needed to be done and that the MTB-MLE still recognizes the problem. The teachers also believe that teachers should come from the local community. The statement of the respondents that Mother Tongue and Filipino a duplication was also observed by Monje et al. (2021); however, optimist teachers see this as an opportunity for mastery. One good takeaway from this is that the teachers who participated in the study have not expressed statements of bias against the MTB-MLE implementation. Although the teachers are not happy with the redundancy of MTB-MLE, they express support for the use of the actual mother tongue of the community. In the next section, the teacher participants expressed willingness to be trained in the local Indigenous Language.

Training activities are available but not enough.

The teachers were asked about the training they received from the Department of Education. The responses reveal that they are provided training, but they believe those training activities are not relevant to the needs of the teachers. For example, in the statement below by teacher Cristy, she said that she wishes to receive training programs that they can use in their teaching in their locality. For example, the learners' language and comprehensive training could lead them to understand the MTB-MLE program better.

"Let's take my example for this; I am teaching in Tagmaya; I wish that the training that we receive is the ones that we could use in our actual teaching. That's just my opinion. I believe it would be better if we were taught the local language. The seminars we receive are about enhancing the subject when the real need is actually we learn the local language and a better understanding of the MTB-MLE curriculum." (Teacher Cristy, Translated from Filipino)

Same thoughts were also expressed by teacher Juvelyn. She wishes to receive training activities that are practical and useful in their day-to-day classroom teaching. Although she named a few training programs that are useful, such as instructional materials making and classroom strategies,

"Attending training activities is important but depends on the training being implemented. Sometimes, there are training activities that are not really useful for our tasks here as teachers in our day-to-day classroom teachings. The training activities that we receive are about instructional materials making and classroom strategies. It is because, for grade 1, reading is the important thing. (Teacher Juvelyn, Translated from Filipino)

Two themes emerge if we look at the responses given by the participants. First, the participants mention that training activities are available and are provided by the Department of Education. However, the participants have also commented that they feel they are not receiving the training they need and the training relevant to their day-to-day classroom teaching. Training in the Mother Tongue of the learners is necessary as also training on the understanding of the MTB-MLE program. Cruz. This result is very relevant to the practice of MTB-MLE. Education program specialists, Human Resources Development officers, and researchers from local universities should work to contribute to giving a solution to this issue. Dimaculangan and Gonzales (2020) have also yielded similar results as their study participants mentioned that they need a better understanding of the MTB-MLE program implementation.

There are available Materials but insufficient

Like the results presented in the results of Anudin (2018) and Cabansag (2016), the participants of the study also mentioned the dearth of teaching and learning materials in the implementation of MTB-MLE in their experience. In the statement of teacher Juvelyn below, she mentioned that she used visual aids and printed pictures of objects, and she also uses multimedia materials, particularly television. She mentioned that only the Kindergarten level was provided MTB-MLE materials; from her experience, she has not received materials from the Department of Education.

In my experience of teaching MTB, I use visual aids, printing more on objects; I also use Multimedia (Television), which the Department of Education does not provide us. The Kindergarten level are the ones who are able to receive materials that they are provided (Teacher Juvelyn, Translated from Filipino)

Teacher Cristy also has the same experience. In her case, she mentioned that there is a dearth in teaching and learning materials. For her, they need real objects that are localized or things that are already available in the community. She also mentioned that they were not able to do those things.

There is a dearth of materials. We need real objects that are localized in the community, like the things that are already available in the community. Unfortunately, we were not able to do them (Teacher Cristy)

Teacher Lalaine said that although there are available materials, such as teacher's guides, and learners manuals, they tend to make (as they are expected to) instructional materials. She also mentioned that downloading materials available from the internet are also a strategy they utilize. In context, the LRMDs website of the Department of Education and Facebook groups are platforms for the exchange of materials.

There are teachers' guides as well as learners' manuals then. All we do is we make instructional materials; we download lessons if downloadable (Teacher Lalaine, Translated from Filipino)

While the responses of the participants indicate that there are available materials, teacher Cristy in the statement indicates that the instructional materials are not enough. She followed by the statement that suggests that there are no localized materials. She said it by mentioning there is a need for it.

"The instructional materials are not enough. There is a need for real objects, especially the localized materials" (Teacher Cristy, Translated from Filipino)

The statement of teacher Cristy corroborates with teacher Lalaine. She also mentioned that the materials are not enough. She mentioned a dearth of references for the activities suggested in the textbooks.

At present, the materials are not enough. There is not enough supply. There is also not enough supply of references for the activities mentioned in books (textbook). (Teacher Lalaine, Translated)

The statement of teacher Juvelyn also corroborates the previous statements. She mentioned that the Department of Education was only able to provide materials for Kindergarten classes.

DepEd has still not provided materials to us. They were only able to provide materials for the kindergarten classes. (Teacher Juvelyn, Translated from Filipino)

The statements presented here embody the experiences of the teachers relating to the availability of materials while implementing the MTB-MLE programs. As for their experience, it is at least safe to say that MTB-MLE materials are available. However, this statement would require reflection because the teachers have also mentioned that localized materials are not enough. The availability of materials for download must also be taken into context because this will also not mean that the downloadable material is already locally relevant.

Discussions

The literature and the results of the interview conducted by the researchers have common themes. The disconnect between the learners' mother tongue and the teachers' mother tongue is reflected in both the literature and the research data. The teachers who participated in this research, except teacher Dela Cruz admitted that they do not have the skill to use any of the Mother Tongues of the Community. If we look at the rationale of the implementation of MTB-MLE, we can see that the goal is to use the Mother Tongue of the learners. But in the DepEd Order No. 16 series of 2012, because of the limitations of the resources of the Department of Education and the limitations in the skills of the manpower, the initial implementation of MTB-MLE only included the eight major language languages plus four languages in Mindanao namely Tausug, Maguindanao, Maranao, Chabacano. In the following year, the MTB-MLE implementation was expanded to 18 languages. This reflects the gap between the theory and practice in the implementation of MTB-MLE.

It could be argued that while the rationale for implementing the program is theoretically well-founded, the Department of Education's capability has defeated the original purpose, as already expressed by Cucio and Roldan (2020), where it was argued that the implementation of MTB-MLE is a move towards the realization of the rights of the indigenous people learners towards quality education that suits their needs.

It could be argued that the MTB-MLE has not achieved its goal of creating a bridge between the local language and second languages such as Filipino and English. So far, it has also come short of fulfilling its goal of preserving the linguistic and cultural properties of minority groups. This research does not intend to nullify the efforts and the intentions of the Department of Education; however, the body of research that expresses the concerns with regard to implementing the MTB-MLE program is growing. It must be highlighted that while we celebrate the intention of educational planners in conceptualizing the program, we should realize that there is more to be done.

Another this worth noting is although the instructional materials and training of teachers are available, they are not enough. The context of the dearth of training and materials is essentially on (1) quantity of training and materials and the, (2) availability of localized materials, and (3) the availability of training activities that are practically relevant to the needs perceived by the teachers which are also evident in the study by Suazo and Montenegro (2018)

among the Monovu in Mindanao and the IP learners in Agusan Del Sur in the study by Villaplaza, (2016). The findings of the study appear to be consistent in the literature as there have been shortcomings in the implementation of MTB-MLE.

This research has implications for the Human Resources development and management practices, policies, and strategies of the Department of Education. The work of strengthening the MTB-MLE program also requires multi-agency and multi-sectoral collaboration. The academe needs to be involved in producing linguistics specialists, artists, and writers that would help develop teaching and learning materials. The latter would require research funding from different government agencies. The program is an ideal platform for the inclusion of the indigenous elders in the planning, designing, and assessing of the curriculum. This should be seen as a collaborative effort between researchers, teachers, and the indigenous communities, as already expressed by Cucio and Roldan (2020). These things could only be made possible by providing funds for such undertaking.

The suggestion of Arzadon (2020) could give important insight. She argues that IPED teachers should not only be specialized technicians but rather be transformative intellectuals. What she meant by this is that the scholars on IP education must understand the dynamic and processual view of identity and culture; they must understand the nuances of unequal power relations and how these things are experienced by the indigenous community and how they reflect on the learners.

Conclusions

This study has two objectives (1) to describe the teachers' experiences in the MTB-MLE implementation and (2) to determine the teachers' concerns in implementing MTB-MLE. The interview data have revealed the nuances of the experiences of the teachers and found out that the MTB-MLE implementation is consistent with the implementation of teachers in IP schools. The teachers experience difficulty because most of them are not knowledgeable of the language of the learners. They acknowledge that the program is good, but it will be better if the local languages are used. The teachers root for training programs that are relevant to their needs, like learning the local language and a deeper understanding of the program. The teachers mentioned that teaching and learning materials are available; however, those are not localized and usually are teacher-made. For the latter, Facebook was used to share teacher-made materials.

The implementation of MTB-MLE among the Indigenous Schools could be consistent with the DepEd Order No. 16 series of 2012. However, the issue, however, is the MTB-MLE program implementation among the IP schools where the mother tongue of the learners is the minority language that is not included in the department order; it becomes problematic as it failed to achieve the rationale of the program is an offshoot of the Lubuagan project which pushed for the recognition and promotion of regional languages to be in basic education as a medium of instruction and as a subject offered in Kinder to Grade 3 learners. The problems that were experienced by the teachers are deeply rooted in the scarcity of our knowledge of the minority languages and the lack of available materials on them.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations of the study:

Recommended Short-term solutions

- Establishing partnerships between the indigenous cultural communities and schools by means of bottom-up curriculum planning.
- Conducting research write-shop for teachers in collaboration with linguists, anthropologists, curriculum specialists, and artists.
- Conducting learning material write-shops for teachers in collaboration with the academe, local government, and non-government organizations.

Recommended long-term programs that could be considered

- Developing a Bachelor of Elementary Education Program specializing in Indigenous People Education.
- The academe should strengthen linguistics programs hoping to produce more linguists working on the different minority languages of the Philippines. There is a need for more research that is aimed toward the development of minority languages and the development of instructional materials that can be used in K-3 levels.
- One interesting suggestion said by the respondents is strengthening the indigenous people's education to produce teachers that are members of the indigenous communities. Scholarship grants should be extended to indigenous communities.

- There is a need for documenting indigenous oral literature that could be utilized for crafting instructional materials for IP learners. It was argued by Suazo and Montenegro (2018) and demonstrated by Cansino et al. (2022).

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