



Status of Mother Tongue–Based Multilingual Education (MTB – MLE)

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of MTB-MLE in the Philippines has been the focus of various scientific investigations since its commencement in 2013. However, only a handful of studies have been conducted in upland schools concerning its status in terms of learning resources and the preparedness of teachers and learners. This prompted an investigation in the Cervantes District, Cervantes, Ilocos Sur, covering the perceptions of 86 teachers and administrators. Findings revealed that the District has a diverse group of faculty members, predominantly female, who hold Bachelor's degrees and some master's units, with 1-4 training sessions attended, and 4-6 years of service. Generally, MTB-MLE is very highly implemented, with highly adequate instructional materials and very well-prepared teachers and learners. Perceptions of administrators and parents vary regarding instructional materials and teachers' preparedness. The highest educational attainment, number of relevant training sessions attended, and years of service significantly affect the perceptions of teachers and administrators towards MTB-MLE. This implies that successful MTB-MLE implementation relies on sufficient access to learning materials and the high readiness of teachers and learners. Perceptions of the program are positively influenced by continuing professional development, among other factors. The paper recommends continuous professional development for faculty members to effectively fulfill their roles as successful implementers of curricular reforms.

Keywords: Status of MTB-MLE, Cervantes District, Instructional Materials, Teachers' and Learners' Preparedness, Level of Implementation

INTRODUCTION

Equitable and accessible quality education has been the dreams of many because of its vital significant impact on one's life and in nation – building. These promising outcomes continually motivate the United Nations to navigate and implement ways through its practical initiatives like comprehensive curricular reforms to attain its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education). One significant curricular reforms is the conceptualization and implementation of the K to 12 Program with its core aim of elevating the educational system thereby leveraging the competence of Graduates, which was later adopted and implemented in the Philippines in 2013 by virtue of Republic Act 10533. One of the significant features of the Program that promises Filipinos with a more successful cognitive, academic, and second language development is the Mother Tongue – Based Multilingual Education (MTB – MLE) (Republic of the Philippines, 2013; Department of Education, 2012; Ruani, 2023). MTB – MLE is a major subject being taught from Kinder to Grade III in compliance to the provision of RA 10533, to wit: "The curriculum shall adhere to the principles and framework of MTB – MLE which starts from the learners are and from what they already know proceeding from the known to the unknown. Instructional Materials and capable teachers to implement the MTB-MLE curriculum shall be available" (Sanchez, et al., 2023). Because of such provision, the Philippine's educational landscape through the K to 12 Graduates of various levels is expected to be of high quality and are able to thrive competitively in the business worlds.

surrounding the implementation of MTB-MLE, the appeal of this subject to emerging scholars remains unwavering. These scholars aspire to contribute to the academic discourse, aiming to convey scientifically substantiated perspectives directly from the educational frontlines to the relevant authorities. The persistence of their interest in MTB-MLE suggests a shared hope that addressing these issues will lead to the fulfillment of the promises embedded within this educational approach.

In alignment with the insights proposed by Lopez et al. (2019), which highlight substantial disparities in the implementation of specific curricular programs between rural and urban education in the

Sanchez et al. (2022) provided a comprehensive overview of the MTB-MLE in the Cervantes District, effectively delineating its landscape. However, their work lacked a quantitative assessment of critical aspects, including instructional material adequacy, teachers' preparedness, and pupils' preparedness within the district in the lenses of MTB – MLE teachers and administrators. This gap, among other considerations, has spurred the initiation of the current scientific investigation. Alongside to completely illustrate the status of MTB – MLE, this study did not only address the identified gaps but also aimed to offer insights that can benefit curricular planners and implementers. Specifically, the findings of this research may serve as valuable information for those involved in the implementation of new curricular programs, such as the MATATAG Curriculum recently launched for the K to 12 Program in the Philippines (Estrelado, 2023). By shedding light on the status of MTB-MLE and its dimensions, the study seeks to contribute to informed decision-making and enhance the overall effectiveness of educational initiatives.

Statement of the Problem

The study aimed to explore the status of MTB – MLE in the Cervantes District. Specifically, this aimed to answer the following questions: What is the profile of MTB – MLE teachers and administrators in terms of gender; highest educational attainment; number of trainings attended related to MTB – MLE; and, years of experience in implementing MTB – MLE? What is the status of MTB–MLE as perceived by teachers and administrators in terms of: Instructional materials; Teachers' preparedness; and, Pupils' preparedness? Is there a significant difference between the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding the status of MTB–MLE? Is there a significant relationship in the level of perception of teachers and administrators regarding the status of MTB – MLE when they are grouped according to: Gender; Highest educational attainment; Number of training attended related to MTB – MLE; and, Years of experience in implementing MTB – MLE?

METHODOLOGY

The study employed the Descriptive Survey Design. Considering the primary objective of the study which is to describe the status of the MTB – MLE along with instructional materials, teachers' preparedness, and learners' preparedness, the chosen design was relevant. Specifically, the study considered the Descriptive Correlational Design to answer the study's objective which is to determine the relationship between teachers' and administrators' profiles and the status of the MTB–MLE implementation. In a Descriptive Correlational study, the research design focuses on describing the relationships between two or more variables without intervening in them (Creswell, 2012). Descriptive Comparative Design was likewise utilized. This design entails the comparison of two or more groups, conditions, or variables to discern similarities or differences. It is a research approach aimed at exploring relationships between variables and understanding the effects of distinct conditions. In the context of this study, the Descriptive Comparative Design is chosen to discern variations in the levels of MTB – MLE implementation along its dimensions, and the teachers' and administrators' profile.

The study was conducted in all schools of Cervantes District, Cervantes, Ilocos Sur, Philippines. In the determination of the study's respondents, total Enumeration was considered to bring-out the picture of the status of the MTB – MLE in the District. Hence, there were 72 MTB – MLE teachers and 24 School Heads.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In terms of gender, most of the teachers in the district, forming 86.05% of the total population, are female, with the rest being male. This shows that the district is dominated by female teachers. Given the study's conclusions and the assertions made in the cited research, the district's instructional resources might lean toward favoring women. In terms of educational attainment, 38% of them hold bachelor's degrees, 38% have master's units, and 10% have master's degrees. The findings may imply that teachers' capacity for innovation and leadership in certain areas is low. Furthermore, the findings imply that the educational attainment of teachers in the district indicates a wide room for improvement. To meet the trajectory, a faculty development plan may be developed by concerned authorities. As to the number of seminars and training about MTB-MLE, 77.91% have undergone 1-4 seminars and training sessions; 17% have undergone five or more; 4.65% have had no seminars or training at all. The findings suggest that most of the teachers are oriented and trained in MTB-MLE, indicating a readiness to implement this educational innovation. This can be attributed to the Department of Education's desire to upscale teachers on MTB-MLE. Studies claim that when teachers are well-trained in MTB-MLE, they are more likely to successfully help learners in their language acquisition and learning (e.g., Piasta et al., 2017). As to their years of teaching MTB-MLE, most of the teachers (48.84%) have 4-6 years of experience; 37.21% have 7-9 years of experience; 9.30% have 0-3 years of experience; and 4.65% have 10 or more years of experience. The instructional materials for MTB–MLE, as perceived by both teachers and administrators, are sufficient, as manifested by a sub-mean of 3.80, described as Highly Adequate. The data indicate that teachers have access to enough instructional materials such as modules, teaching aids, and devices, among others, that can help them effectively facilitate teaching and learning. Furthermore, this suggests that the DepEd has supported the implementation of the program in this area. This suggests that most of the available instructional materials support teachers. These materials help teach the MTB-MLE concepts effectively and efficiently. According to studies, such instructional materials can help establish effective and efficient communication between teachers and learners. Owing to these, it can be claimed that MTB-MLE teachers in the district may have been manifesting effective instructional teaching as they are provided with relevant instructional materials. This further suggests that teachers in the district are capable of contextualizing their learning materials. Various studies claim the significant effect of contextualized instruction in the fields of education, including a high level of intrinsic motivation to learn that usually leads to successful academic performance (e.g., Jimenez, 2020). Among the indicators, "Adequate evaluation forms are also available" and "There are adequate standard evaluation devices" are ranked at the bottom with means of 3.43 and 3.58, respectively. Although ranked relatively low, their means are still described as Highly Adequate. This means that teachers and administrators perceive the need for the acquisition of more evaluation forms and standard evaluation devices. The table shows that the MTB-MLE teachers' level of preparedness received a sub-mean of 4.0, described as Highly Prepared. This means that both administrators and teachers themselves perceive a high level of readiness for the MTB-MLE, which may be due to the sufficiency of training and seminars they received and the strong and relevant support of the administrators, among other factors. Despite being described as "Highly Prepared," the sub-mean of 4.0 indicates that there is still room for improvement in teacher preparedness. This recognition underscores a commitment to continuous quality enhancement and professional development within MTB-MLE programs. It acknowledges that while teachers may be well-prepared, there are opportunities for further growth and refinement in their practice. This suggests that teachers are actively engaged in sharing their knowledge and skills on MTB-MLE among their colleagues. This indicates that the Cervantes District possesses a positive culture of care and collaboration, especially in program implementation. Ranked second is "Teachers have a sense of belongingness in the language spoken at home and take responsibility for the preservation of the language," with a mean of 4.23, described as Highly Prepared. As perceived by both teachers and

administrators, pupils' level of preparedness is high, as justified by a sub-mean score of 4.82. This indicates the appreciation and positive reception of pupils towards the MTB-MLE. This may be due to their familiarity with the language, which helps them comprehend texts, express themselves in various forms, and follow instructions easily, among other benefits. The high preparedness of pupils may be attributed to the highly adequate teaching and learning materials available for MTB-MLE and the high level of preparedness of teachers, as found earlier. Looking closely at the table, the indicator "Pupils can use MTB-MLE for daily living" ranked first with a mean of 4.84, described as very highly prepared. This means that administrators and teachers perceive the relevance of MTB-MLE in the lives of pupils, as they can utilize it in their day-to-day life experiences. MTB-MLE may offer no obstacles to concept acquisition or understanding, in contrast to other teaching languages like English and Filipino. The concepts they learn are easily translated by learners into practice as they are used to understanding the language. With a similar mean of 4.84, the indicators "Pupils show constant progress based on standard evaluation devices on MTB-MLE," "Pupils can read Ilocano words correctly," "Pupils can recite poems and rhymes in Iloco properly," "Pupils can use Iloco in communication," and "Pupils can easily comprehend MTB-MLE instructions" ranked second, which is described as very highly prepared. This means that both administrators and teachers believe that pupils are competent in MTB-MLE as they can properly read texts, easily comprehend them, and use the medium of instruction with mastery. This suggests that the subject is beneficial for learners. While the findings are mere perceptions, more comprehensive studies may be conducted utilizing hybrid research approaches to determine the effect of MTB-MLE on learners.

The study validates the findings of Sanchez et al. (2023), claiming that most pupils are knowledgeable about the terminologies in the subject, although a few are not due to issues with MTB-MLE implementation in the District, such as a mismatch of teachers' and learners' dialects with the language of the book, mismatch of teachers' dialects with the dialect of the community, dearth of instructional materials, and irrelevance of available MTB-MLE books to the learners' dialect.

Generally, the MTB-MLE in the Cervantes District is perceived by both administrators and teachers as very highly implemented, as evidenced by the overall mean of 4.21. This is due to the highly adequate teaching and learning materials for MTB-MLE and the excellent level of preparedness of both teachers and pupils. Taking into account the elements, it can be argued that having sufficient teaching materials is essential to the execution of any educational program, such as the MTB-MLE. According to Sanchez et al. (2023), instructional materials play a crucial role in the teaching-learning process since they support teachers in their instruction and encourage self-directed learning. Although Sanchez (2022) stated in his study that teachers make the finest educational materials, teachers who successfully integrate relevant materials into their lessons are remembered for the rest of their lives. The study's conclusions and the assertions made by earlier research demonstrate the importance of instructional materials in the educational process. Because of these tenets, any future curricular changes, like the MATATAG Curriculum, should take teaching materials into account as a must. Furthermore, teachers' and learners' preparedness are likewise significant considerations in the successful implementation of academic endeavors. Teachers are the prime implementers of the program; hence, their preparedness is of great consideration to effectively implement it. Likewise, learners, being the beneficiaries of the curricular changes or enhancements, should also be prepared for the innovations to fully realize their promises. Relationship between the profile of the respondents and the status of the Mother Tongue Based-Multilingual Education Age. Since the p-value of 0.186 is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. This means that there is no significant relationship between age and the level of perceptions of teachers on the status of MTB-MLE in the Cervantes District. This means that all teachers and administrators, irrespective of their ages, perceive that MTB-MLE is very highly implemented, further claiming that instructional materials for the subject are highly adequate and that teachers' and learners' preparedness is high. Highest Educational Attainment. Since the computed p-value of 0.014 is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, hence a significant relationship exists between the educational attainment and status of MTB - MLE. This indicates that teachers' and administrators' levels of educational attainment impact how they implement the MTB-MLE program. Teachers with higher educational attainment may perceive the implementation of MTB-MLE more favorably due to their enhanced training and professional skills. Conversely, those with lower educational attainment might face challenges that affect their perception and execution of the program. The findings validate the findings of existing studies (e.g., Warner, 2017; Heaton et al., 2016; Lewis et al., 2018) which claim that advanced schooling exposes teachers to research-intensive endeavors that allow them to become more innovative and excellent leaders in carrying out curricular innovations (e.g., Warner, 2017; Heaton et al., 2016; Lewis et al., 2018). Owing to these, a faculty development plan may be developed by concerned authorities for teachers to further improve the profiles of teachers (Moralista & Oducado, 2020). Along this aspect, the p-value of 0.259 which is greater than 0.05 shows no significant relationship between the highest educational attainment of teachers and the pupils' level of preparedness for MTB-MLE. This means that the educational attainment of teachers do not affect their perception as to how beneficial the MTB-MLE is in the lives of the learners. Number of training. Since the computed p-value of 0.002 is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between the number of relevant training sessions attended by teachers and administrators and their perceived status of the program. In other words, the number of training sessions attended by teachers and administrators does affect their positive perceptions of the MTB-MLE program across its components. Whether they have training on MTB-MLE or not, they perceive the practicality of MTB-MLE differently based on their training. The findings acknowledge the importance of professional development such as relevant training to enhance teachers' and administrators' perception towards curricular enhancements and innovations like the MTB-MLE, as similarly claimed by McIntyre et al. (2019).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn: Cervantes District is an inclusive workplace with diverse teachers and administrators who share varied cultural perspectives. These differences can lead to professional development or may cause misunderstandings. Hence, effective and inclusive leadership is essential. MTB-MLE is well appreciated by teachers and administrators in the district due to sufficient access to instructional materials, the readiness of teachers, and its perceived impact on the everyday lives of learners. Administrators and teachers view MTB-MLE as properly implemented and effective, particularly in its effect on learning outcomes. However, a gap between administrators and teachers was observed in their perceptions, especially regarding the adequacy of learning and resources. Perceptions of administrators and parents are greatly affected by their

educational attainment, training, and years in the service. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are humbly forwarded: Administrators may embrace a culture of collaboration by including team-building activities in their annual action plans. By doing so, their diverse perspectives can be instrumental in promoting professional growth and fostering camaraderie. In consideration of the MATATAG Curriculum, MTB-MLE may still be regarded as a separate subject or a medium of instruction to facilitate the successful acquisition of concepts. Likewise, any curricular enhancements and innovations, such as the MATATAG Curriculum, should consider the adequacy of instructional materials and the preparedness of teachers and learners to ensure successful outcomes. Democratic leadership should be considered in any workplace decision-making, especially regarding the need for instructional materials and the introduction of curricular reforms. Administrators should consider implementing a comprehensive faculty development plan to ensure the continuing professional development of faculty members. This approach can help faculty members adopt a proactive stance toward any curricular reforms.

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