MTB MLE for sustainable development for all: What have we learned?

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Review: The situation for many children from non-dominant language communities when they enter the formal education system:
Their teachers speak a language they don’t understand;

Their own language and culture, knowledge, and experience are excluded from the curriculum;

They are expected to learn to read and write in a language they don’t know or are just learning; and

They are expected to use the new language to learn other subjects but do not understand the teacher’s language well enough to understand the concepts.
UN Sustainable Development Goal #4: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”

MTB MLE is the only way to ensure that SDG4 will be achieved in non-dominant language communities.

The good news: Growing recognition in Asia, Africa and the Pacific of the benefits of MTB MLE...

1980s: MT-first education movement begins in Asia / Pacific

2000s: Growing awareness that MTB MLE provides educational benefits; more international agencies / organizations offer support

2010s: More government and INGO sponsored MTB MLE programs; increasing recognition that policy support is essential

October 2016: We’re getting there! Increasing recognition that MTB MLE is worth doing and why it’s worth doing.
Still needed: Clear and accessible information—for people / organizations who realize that MTBMLE is a good thing to do—that explains how to develop strong and sustainable programs:

**Who** should be involved?

**What** activities should be included?

**When** should they take place?

**Where** should they take place?
Quick review of some of the lessons we (collectively) have learned about planning, implementing and sustaining strong MTB MLE programs
Essential components of successful MTB MLE programs

- Supportive MTB MLE policy
- Realistic implementation plan
- Preliminary research
- Awareness raising & mobilization
- Acceptable alphabets
- Supportive partnerships
- Monitoring & evaluation
- Teacher recruitment & training
- Reading & learning materials
- Curriculum & instructional materials
What do we need?

Understand the context(s) in which MTB MLE will be implemented so plans and activities are appropriate to each situation.
What have we learned?

The kinds of information that we need to plan for each level of implementation

The importance of identifying people at each level that know when / where / how to ask questions that will elicit that information.
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Implementation plans that are realistic and clear and are in a language and format that people can understand and use.
What have we learned?

Planning for each level of implementation requires insights from insiders—the people who understand the situation best.

Implementation is a cyclical process with regular evaluations and adaptation.
We have also learned that we must plan specifically for three types of MTB MLE program expansion...

1. Expand to higher grades in pilot schools
2. Expand to new schools, same languages
3. Expand to new languages

...and that early preparation for each type of expansion includes evaluations so that necessary changes can be made and materials prepared before expansion takes place.
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What do we need?

Awareness-raising / mobilization activities that provide accurate information for stakeholders at each level of implementation...

about the purposes and benefits of MTB MLE,
what in general, a strong program will look like and
the people that will be needed to make it successful.
What have we learned?

Parents and community members need to know why / how MTB MLE will help their children learn the official school language(s) and do well in the formal education system.
Local and district education officials need to know why MTB MLE is effective and what a strong MTB MLE program looks like (and assurance from their supervisor that it is allowed.)

Sharing information about MTB MLE with regional leaders (Bench Maji, Ethiopia)
Government officials, universities, businesses, and NGOs need evidence as above plus examples of strong programs.

SEAMEO hosts an MTB MLE advocacy meeting for education officials and others (Indonesia)
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What do we need?

Writing systems for unwritten languages that...

accurately represent the sounds and structure of each language,
are “reader and writer friendly”,
acceptable to MT speakers and to relevant government agencies and
are easily reproduced using technology that is available to MT speakers.
What have we learned?

Political / cultural / religious / historical factors influence choice of script

MT speakers are an essential part of the decision-making process

Negotiation is essential and...

So is testing and revision.

Dr. Suwilai works with Chong leaders as they plan their new alphabet (Thailand)
We have also learned that...

Writers’ Workshops in which MT speakers create the stories that students will need as they learn to read are also a good way to test a new writing system.

Government officials may need to give final approval for the writing system so we don’t print expensive materials until it has that approval.

And yes, we have learned that it can be done!
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What do we need?

Curriculum and instructional materials that...

provide MTB MLE teachers with the information and resources they need to help their students succeed in each grade of primary school,

are easy for the teachers to understand and use, and

are acceptable to relevant authorities.
What have we learned about developing MTB MLE curriculum?

We’ve learned a lot, often/usually by trying out ideas / finding problems / trying again...

Following are some of the things we’ve learned that seem especially important for developing curriculum that helps teachers build successful learners.
Base MTB MLE curriculum for each year on MOE competencies, then adapt for MTB MLE students

Mainstream students who know the school language

MTB MLE students who must learn the school language

MOE competencies established for mainstream education

$L1$ (school language)

$L1$ (home language) + $L2$ (school language)
Introduce math, science and other concepts by encouraging students to use what they know to help them understand what is new.
Emphasize higher level thinking, starting on Day 1.

Follow a step-by-step approach (using small steps) when teaching language as a subject.

Keep language learning and concept learning separate in early grades and bring them together in later grades.

Follow a specific plan to introduce L2 academic terms.

Start L1 literacy in KG (5 year old students) and continue building fluency in oral / written L1 to the end of primary.
What have we learned about developing instructional / teaching materials?

We’ve learned that MTB MLE teachers *do* need Teachers Guides.

TGs for all grades should include...

- learning objectives
- step-by-step directions for each learning activity
- materials to collect and / or prepare
- new academic terms (L1 and/or L2)
- directions for assessing students’ understanding
Re the process for developing teacher’s guides and learning materials:

- Ministry of Education competencies for each subject

  Learning outcomes and indicators for each competency

  +

  Students’ knowledge and experience from home / community and school

  Learning materials that help MTB MLE students understand new concepts

  Teachers Guides that provide information needed for each lesson
Also, since MTB MLE teachers are bilingual, Teachers Guides are in the official school language but written specifically for L2 speakers (think feasibility, cost, and the need for the same content to be taught in multiple language communities so all students achieve MOE competencies).

Liberia—Teachers Guides in English (official language) for MTB MLE teachers from 15 language communities
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What do we need?

Graded reading materials in the students’ MT/L1 and other school languages

Learning materials / activity books / textbooks for language education and other subjects in each grade
Reading skills transfer across languages

Students require “graded” materials to help them gain fluency in all their languages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Starting to read (L1)</th>
<th>Beginning to gain reading fluency (L1)</th>
<th>Adding a new language (L1+ L2) (or L2)</th>
<th>Gaining fluency in both languages (L1 &amp; L2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
And...MT speakers can develop many of the reading materials their children will need.

At Writers’ Workshops, they write, illustrate and edit stories about people, places and activities that are interesting to the students and appropriate to their stage of literacy development.
Local artists draw pictures for each page (early materials) that help students understand the text. (Stories for higher grades have more text and fewer pictures.)

Patani Malay MTB MLE (Thailand)

Artists do the illustrations while others put the stories onto computer. (EMBLI, Timor Leste)
An official language translation is placed at the end of each story.

New MT materials are printed cheaply and tested / revised before re-printing in larger quantities.

Test versions of local stories with local pictures printed in the community.

After testing and revision—96 stories in 4 levels of graded readers. (Kaugel, PNG)
What have we learned about developing learning materials for language education using the Two-Track approach?
We know that students need materials that help them learn to understand, speak, read and write correctly…

Primers that teach students to identify letters/symbols and put them together to read words

Exercise books that students use to practice forming letters/symbols correctly and writing neatly.
...and materials that help them gain fluency in listening, speaking, reading and writing to learn and to communicate

Big Pictures to build children’s oral L1 and later, oral L2

Lahu children building oral Lahu (Thailand)  Hmong children learning Thai (Thailand)
Listening Stories for teachers to model fluent reading

Kam teacher (China)

Patani Malay teacher (Thailand)
Big Books that teachers read to and then with their students.

Patani Malay (Thailand)

Rajbanshi (Nepal)
Chalkboard and poster paper for Experience Stories that students create. Teachers write the story on the board and then on posters for students to read.

Rajbanshi students find words in their Experience Story posters (Nepal)

Kom girl reads the Experience Story she and her classmates created. (Cameroon)
Picture sets that students put into sequence and then use to tell the story.

Patani Malay (Thailand)

Seereer (Senegal)

Mon (Thailand)
Paper or individual writing slates for creative writing time. Young students create their own stories and “read” them to their classmates...

Saafi Saafii (Senegal)

Pakrari (Pakistan)

Kam (China)
...and before long, they are writing longer stories and essays, first in their MT and later in L2.

Grade 2 child writing in MT

Foundation of Applied Linguistics  Mon-Thai MTB MLE program, Thailand

Grade 3 child writing in L2
Also, plenty of things to read during Library Time. Students read stories of their choice, alone or together in their L1 and in the school language(s).
What have we learned about the learning materials needed for other subjects?
Use hands-on activities in early grades to introduce / review concepts (no textbooks)

Tharadri science lesson (Pakistan)

Students sort objects by type, size, length, color, use (Papua New Guinea)
Later, introduce “activity books” with familiar illustrations to teach content. If L2 is needed, keep it basic.
From middle grades to the end of primary, use L2 textbooks but explain new vocabulary and unfamiliar illustrations first.

Parkari girls use L2 textbooks (Pakistan)
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What do we need?

Bilingual / multilingual MT speakers as MTB MLE teachers

Quality pre-service training, supportive supervision and regular in-service training
What have we learned re teacher recruitment? Regarding qualifications...

Understand, speak, read & write the students’ L1 and the official school language(s)
Share their students’ heritage culture
Accepted by parents and others in the community
Accepted by relevant government agencies

NOTE: In early MTB MLE programs, MT teachers may not yet be certified. But with good training and support they become excellent teachers.
What have we learned about the components of pre-service teacher training?

- L1 and L2 reading and writing practice
- Foundational theories of learning and of language acquisition
- Child-centered teaching approaches for higher level thinking
- Use of teaching and learning materials
- Informal assessment methods
- Classroom management

Pre-service training in Timor Leste and Ethiopia
What about supervision and in-service training?

Regular and supportive supervisory visits

Regular in-service training
   Based on supervisor reports
   Share experiences & good practices; discuss ways to solve problems
   Learn new developments, discuss and practice new approaches

Dai In-service teacher training (China)
And what about institutionalizing teacher training as the program expands?

Establish a high quality MTB MLE component within regular teacher training in universities and other teacher training institutions.

Provide practice teaching opportunities in MTB MLE schools that are officially supported and of high quality.

Student teachers, Yala Rajabhat University (Thailand)
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What do we need?

Formal and informal student assessments at regular intervals

Context, process and impact program evaluations
What have we learned re student assessments?

Pre-tests in Year 1 to establish baseline
Informal assessments included in lesson plans
Periodic written assessments based on competencies for language education (proficiency in L1 and L2) and for other subjects (ability to apply concepts)

Written tests (math, science, etc.) in the same language that teachers used for instruction.

Test questions for all subjects that use vocabulary and grammar that students heard and used for learning
What have we learned re program evaluations?

Context evaluations / preliminary research to assess the situation before the program begins.

Process evaluations to identify strengths and weaknesses and revise the program as needed.

Impact evaluations to provide information...

for program expansion

to report to donors and other stakeholders

for others to use in planning their own programs.
Supportive MTB MLE policy

Realistic implementation plan

Awareness raising & mobilization

Acceptable alphabets

Monitoring & evaluation

Teacher recruitment & training

Reading & learning materials

Curriculum & instructional materials

Preliminary research

Essential components of successful MTB MLE programs

Supportive partnerships
What do we need?

Supportive partnerships that include each group of stakeholders and encourage each group to contribute from their areas of strength.
What have we learned re consequences when stakeholders do not work together?

Time, effort and money are wasted because knowledge and resources are duplicated

Curriculum, teaching methods, lesson content and outcomes are different across programs so “MTB MLE” is not clearly understood and loses credibility
What have we learned re benefits when stakeholders work together in partnership?

Each partner contributes from their areas of strength

Programs are more efficient (lower cost)

School staff are encouraged and students are more likely to achieve their educational goals.
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Language and education policies that provide the political and other support required at all levels for MTB MLE to be accepted and sustained throughout the pilot period and as it is incorporated and sustained within the formal education system.
What have we learned about the policy support needed for pilot projects?

Official mandate may be necessary to protect the pilot

Establish criteria for selecting the languages and schools and specify the grades to be included (KG to G6)

Identify the agencies/organizations responsible for planning and implementation

Specify source and amount of funding to ensure that the pilot is carried through to completion and evaluated before expansion begins.
What have we learned about the policy support needed to expand and maintain MTB MLE in the formal education system?

Establish an official mandate to incorporate MTB MLE into ECCE and all primary grades

Identify agencies / institutions—national, sub-national, local—responsible for implementation and support as MTB MLE expands to new schools and new languages

Identify funding source and amount for each year, amount increasing as the program expands.