Filipino teachers: key to nurturing learning through MTB-MLE

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The Philippines Department of Education’s 2010 bold change of the language-in-education policy from double submersion Bilingual Education to Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) impacts learning and identity formation of Filipino learners. Teachers are key to educational reform as they enact their own beliefs whether enthusiastically embracing the policy and implementing a strong version of MTB-MLE, or resisting the policy altogether, or (the more common compliant) implementing with minimal changes to their practice. This study explores Filipino teachers’ beliefs about the mother tongue and how they use the mother tongue in the classroom. Norton and Darvin’s (2015) intersection of identity, capital, and ideology contributes to understanding teacher investment in the policy.

This multiple-site case study explores Filipino teacher identities related to the language policy change to MTB-MLE. Teachers, principals, parents, and teacher educators in six different schools across the Philippines participated in multiple interviews and focus group discussions. Classroom observations and analysis of L1 materials revealed policy implementation or resistance among Filipino teachers. Community support of or resistance to the policy were explored through parent focal-group discussions.

Findings reveal the perceived value of the mother tongue in various communities and how teachers’ identities impact the child’s learning. Findings further reveal that societal discourses, teacher’s own educational experiences, and prior teaching experiences deeply impact personal ideologies and teacher identities related to their own mother tongue. Ongoing reflective dialogue was found to contribute to reframing social discourses from mother tongue as bridge language to a more comprehensive decolonizing education framework by strengthening capital in the mother tongue.