The impact of community involvement on the mother tongue-based education program: Lainong Naga, Myanmar

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Lainong Naga is one of the indigenous Naga tribes living in northwest Myanmar, with an estimated population of 15,000 people. Socioeconomic development in the highlands lags far behind the rest of the country. However, Lainong community members participating in mother tongue-based education find themselves better equipped to develop their children’s education, as well as to maintain their language and cultural values. The community members are also highly motivated to improve their children’s education and produce materials in their own language. The strong community support has a considerable impact on the mother tongue-based education program implementation.

Lainong Literature and Culture Committee organized different volunteers such as writers, artists, teachers, and other literacy workers to promote literature and instructional materials with guidance from a mother tongue-based education specialist from the Linguistic Society (Myanmar). Based on the practical experience of leading the committee, I discuss how community members participate in the process of developing Lainong literature and curriculum. This paper will present both the challenges of preparing resources for teaching and learning as well as the most effective strategies and solutions.

Based on the evaluation of the program activities, I am confident that the language community participation is essential for the mother tongue-based multilingual education program. Financial and technical support from government agencies and NGOs are important to keep the MTB-MLE program sustained, but without community participation, there can never be a relevant program which meets the needs of learners and achieves successful learning.