MTB-MLE in Parallel Ethnic Education Systems
A Case Study of Indigenous Language Education Policy and Implementation within Mon National Schools in Southeastern Myanmar

W. Gray Rinehart
Objective:

Can the MNEC MTB-MLE framework be used as a model for greater MTB-MLE practices in education in ethnic areas?
Notes on Mon Language

▪ C. 2004, spoken by 743,000 people in Myanmar, and decreasing in use (Ethnologue.com)

▪ Spoken in SE Myanmar

▪ Early Literacy – Myanmar script based on Mon script (33 of 35 characters)

▪ 1954 – 1964: taught at University

▪ 1962 – 1988: taught as a subject in government (MOE) schools in Mon communities

▪ Since 2014: taught as a subject in MOE schools in Mon communities

▪ Since 1972: parallel MTB education system in SE Myanmar

(Map Source: Myanmar Information Management Unit, Main Spoken Languages of Myanmar)
Notes on Mon Language

- C. 2004, spoken by 743,000 people in Myanmar, and decreasing in use (*Ethnologue.com*)
- Spoken in SE Myanmar
- Early Literacy – Myanmar script based on Mon script (33 of 35 characters)
- 1954 – 1964: taught at University
- 1962 – 1988: taught as a subject in government (MOE) schools in Mon communities
- Since 2014: taught as a subject in MOE schools in Mon communities
- Since 1972: parallel MTB education system in SE Myanmar

(Map Source: Myanmar Information Management Unit, Main Spoken Languages of Myanmar)
Steps towards MTB-MLE in Myanmar MOE

- 2014 National Education Bill & 2015 Amendments
  - Chapter 7, Section 39:
    (g) There shall be *freedom to develop the curriculum in each region* based on [nation-wide curriculum framework and curriculum standards]
  - Chapter 7, Section 43:
    (b) If there is a need, *an ethnic language could be used* alongside Myanmar as a language of *instruction at the basic education level*
Steps towards MTB-MLE in Myanmar MOE

- 2016 Naypyidaw Principles for the Development of a Peacebuilding National Language Policy for Myanmar
  - **Unity**: by **supporting all to learn Myanmar language and literacy**, for common and equal citizenship
  - **Diversity**: by supporting ethnic and indigenous communities to **maintain, enjoy, and transmit their language to their children**
  - **Ethnic Rights**: by **recognizing the unique cultures and traditions** of Myanmar’s indigenous people
Why the Mon National Education Committee (MNEC)?

▪ Founded in 1992 “to provide high quality education to Mon youth in their mother tongue”

▪ 1995 Ceasefire between Ethnic Armed Group (New Mon State Party) & Myanmar Military

▪ Working closely with NNER for policy development and curricula framework

▪ Two systems: Mixed (“hybrid”) & Mon National Schools (“non-state”)

▪ Collaboration and Signs of Convergence with State MOE (quarterly meetings, MOE support, non-state → MOE transfer)
Two Systems (2015-16 Data):

1. “Mixed” Schools (with MOE)
   - Mon subject classes (language/literacy & history) from MNEC curricula
   - 95 Schools, 154 Teachers

2. Mon National Schools
   - MNEC & MOE curricula
   - 136 Schools, 752 Teachers, 11,781 Students
MNS Inputs: Students

- 20 resettlement area schools + 116 state area schools (2015-16)

- Reasons for choosing MNS:
  1. MTB-MLE
  2. School costs
  3. MNS predates MOE schools in community

- Transfer could begin in Middle School, Matriculation offered at end of High School
MNS Inputs: Students

- Approx. 73% student retention rate from grade-to-grade (Grades 1-11)

- 93 Primary Schools
- 16 Middle Schools
- 24 Post Primary Schools (which offer some Middle School grades)
- 3 High Schools

- Lowest retention from late Middle → High Schools
MNS Inputs: Teachers

- 2015-16 Teacher Cohort (752 Teachers)
  - 73% have received training (largely inservice)

- Highest level of education for 682 Teacher surveyed:
  - 13% University graduates
  - 10% currently enrolled in University
  - 59% High School graduates
  - 18% Middle School graduates

- SITE (UNICEF Sponsored) Training
  - 46% of Teachers participated, 25% of Headteachers

- 85% retention rate (2015-16)
“MTB-MLE system must be applied with mother tongue, Burmese and English”
MNS Inputs: Policy & Curricula

Early Education
100% MTB
Mostly MOE Curriculum

Primary School
80% → 60% MTB
Mostly MNEC Curricula

Middle School
30% MTB
Mostly MOE Curricula

High School
20% MTB
Only MOE Curricula

“MTB-MLE system must be applied with mother tongue, Burmese and English”
Mon National Schools: Outcomes

- MOE Matriculation
  - Middle School → High School (pending)
  - High School → University (low pass rate)

- Annual Education Learning Assessment (2015 & 2016)
  - Low learning outcomes in Functional Literacy and Numeracy
MTB-MLE: Outcomes

- **Mon Readers**
  - Developed by stakeholders & local / national experts
  - Used by State-level MOE in Mon Literacy classes

- **Community Awareness & Support**
  - Outreach Workshops
  - Funding Support (35% of school running costs)
Implications:

Can the MNEC MTB-MLE framework be used as a model for greater MTB-MLE practices for education in ethnic areas?

• MNEC exists in a unique position (no. of schools, single mother-tongue, long-standing ceasefire)
• MNEC has developed and drafted a gradual MTB-MLE policy to be used in non-state schools
• MNEC has systematically developed early-primary readers and continues to use MOE curricula
• Ongoing implementation requires careful and comprehensive monitoring of outcomes
Next Steps: From Policy → Sustainability

▪ Advocacy with Ministry of Education for:
  ▪ MNS → MOE transfer
  ▪ Legal status of schools
  ▪ Curricula accreditation (Mon Literacy, Mon History)
  ▪ Teacher accreditation
  ▪ Continued support for teaching/learning materials
Next Steps: From Policy → Implementation

- Development of Curricula Framework for Primary and Middle Schools
  - Align to learning standards (literacy and numeracy)
  - Further upgrading of MNEC curricula

- Continued measurement of learning outcomes and transfer rates
  - Literacy and numeracy rates in primary and middle school
  - Transfer rates for Middle Schools
Next Steps: From Policy → Implementation

- Monitoring of MTB-MLE policy in practice
  - Link MTB-MLE to teacher competencies
  - Is MTB-MLE followed in practice?

- Preservice and Inservice teacher training
  - Understanding MTB-MLE best practices and competencies
Questions:

1. At this critical period in Myanmar, what must be done to ensure the future of parallel Mon education? [given: KG+12, reduction of MNSs, teacher retention…]

Or

2. What is the future of parallel ethnic education systems in Myanmar? [given: community support (excluding stipends), pre-MOE presence, inclusive and culturally sensitive education providers…]
Questions:

Perhaps unrelated but nonetheless burning:

3. How to move from rote-memorization to active learning pedagogy to increase learning outcomes?

4. What preservice and inservice teacher training can best support MTB-MLE in practice?
THANK YOU!