Global perspectives on the intersectionality of gender:

L1-based MLE in pre-primary, primary and beyond

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✧ Why we are here
✧ Intersectionality of gender with non-dominant ethnicity/culture/language, low income, remote rural life, marginalization
✧ How MLE helps girls (and all children)
✧ Evidence from low-income contexts
✧ Lessons learned: L1 and gender
The bottom line: Educational goals for all

- Access
- Quality
- Equity
- Achievement
Intersection of non-dominant social status and gender: Getting to school

Non-dominant (ND) groups:

◆ ND groups are minorities or majorities that are unfairly marginalized
◆ Groups considered dominant in one context may be non-dominant in another (Kosonen & Benson 2013)
◆ Language, ethnicity and culture often overlap with poverty, rural/remote life, religion and gender
◆ Children from ND groups are 40-60% less likely than those from dominant groups to enroll in school in Bolivia, China, Ecuador, India and Laos (Lockheed & Lewis 2012)

Non-dominant (ND) girls:

◆ In the same contexts, ND girls are 30-50% less likely to enroll in school than ND boys
◆ Most out-of-school girls worldwide are from ND groups
◆ WHY?

Family “return on investment,” patriloclal culture, household and school division of labor, distance to school, risk of sexual assault, perceived usefulness of ed., lack of motivation, exhaustion... (UNESCO 2010; Lockheed & Lewis 2012; Benson 2014)

Gender is part of the experience of the child and the family ...
Female teacher, Gaza province, Mozambique:

“The boys are more active. The girls are more shy. One girl stayed at home for two months.”

Female teacher, Tete province, Mozambique:

“Most of the female students show a tendency to be dominated. This causes failure at school and gives support to the boys where they don’t earn that support.”

(Benson 1997)

School personnel are aware of gender differences...
An estimated 2.3 billion people (nearly 40% of the world’s population) lack access to education in their own languages.

We need “pull” factors:

- Education that meets learners’ language and learning needs
- Equitable access to national curriculum (including dominant language learning)
- Respect for cultural and religious traditions and local agricultural calendars

(Walter & Benson 2012; Benson 2014)
Basic understandings of MLE

**Early childhood:**

The child’s own language(s) (L1) is essential for:

- Developing pre-literacy skills
- Forming identity
- Linking to prior knowledge and experience

(Ball 2011)

**Primary level:**

The learner’s own language(s) (L1) is more efficient and effective for:

- Same skills as in ECE, plus...
- Learning to decode and encode language (reading and writing)
- Transfer of skills and knowledge to additional language(s) (Lx)
- Understanding non-linguistic content and reading to learn
- Developing questioning and reasoning skills

Gender is part of the experience of the child, the teacher, the family members...
How L1-based MLE addresses educational needs

▪ ACCESS: ND learners gain access to basic education (schools, teachers, national curricula)

▪ QUALITY: The education provided is understandable and useful

▪ EQUITY: ND learners get an education allowing them the same privileges as others

▪ ACHIEVEMENT: ND learners can succeed in school and move forward in education/work
What happens at school?

How might MLE facilitate the participation of girls?
Evidence of a positive effect of MLE on girls’ education

Evidence from Cambodia, consistent with Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique & Niger (Hovens 2002; Benson 2005)
How L1-based MLE may address girls’ participation

Hypothesis 1: More girls may come/be sent to school if they have MLE

– Eases the home-school transition
– Teachers come from same linguistic and cultural community
– Families can approach school staff
– Girls (and boys) are motivated when they can understand and participate

Condition: Authentic involvement of learners’ linguistic/cultural communities
Cambodia: School support committee at a Tampuen community MLE school in Ratanakiri province

South Africa: Tshivenda MLE school, performance for community
Hypothesis 2: More girls may stay in school if they have MLE

- Girls can demonstrate understanding in the L1 (teachers see)
- More self-confidence

Data from Tete province, Mozambique (Benson 1997)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MLE schools</th>
<th>N students</th>
<th>N girls</th>
<th>% girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MLE teachers in Cambodia (Bunong) and Mozambique (Xitswa)
How L1-based MLE may address girls’ participation

Hypothesis 3: Girls might be more academically successful in MLE

– Girls may not repeat as much
– Girls may learn better

Class 5 MLE over “control” student test scores in Tete, Mozambique

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Difference in percentage points on test averages:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average all tests</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese (L2)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Science</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>-3.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Darkened cells indicate where bilingual students had an average higher than “control” students; the darkest cells indicate where bilingual girls had the highest average. (Benson 1997)
Cambodia: Overall reading assessment results by program type and gender, over time
Math scores by program type and sub-group
Lessons learned

**To maximize MLE effects on girls:**

- MLE teachers need L1 development, MLE methodology and gender awareness
- Teachers and staff should equally represent women and men
- Include community women in school management decisions
- Communicate with family and community members in the L1

**Data collection implications:**

- Disaggregate all data by language and gender
- Collect longitudinal data on repetition, failure and dropout rates (quantitative)
- Follow up with dropouts if possible
- Elicit family and community perceptions (qualitative)
- Assess in L1 as well as Lx

**Authentic involvement of learners’ linguistic/cultural communities**
Cambodia: Tampuen MLE school in Ratanakiri province

Mozambique: Changana MLE school in Gaza province
References


Benson, Carol (1997) Relatório final sobre o ensino bilingue. Maputo: INDE.


