Appreciation is expressed to all participants for joining the final summary session. The following questions were submitted by the conference participants during the conference and drawn at random from the basket.

**What would you recommend can be done to engage with the MOE to own the MLE program, e.g. to take care of MT teachers’ salary?**

Prof Joseph Lo Bianco: This is a common problem. There has been lots of research on the general process of innovation in education which shows that ministries and public officials are reluctant to change, partly due to the disruption it causes to established systems. Therefore, the first thing to be done with innovation is to reassure the people who are running the education systems that this disruption is actually temporary and good.

There are two other kinds of opposition; technical (how) and ideological (why). Technical opposition is where people believe it is not possible to have MLE as mainstream provision. So what they usually do is create specialised experimental pilots, which allow people to see the demonstration of the new model and in this way it’s kept safe. It’s also a way of keeping things distant in case they don’t work. So the problem then becomes how to bridge from the pilot to mainstream. There are many ways to do this and the most important is to design pilots in such a way that it can be generalised. The most important way to do this is to have active involvement of the senior people in the ministry in the design of the pilot in the first place.

The other kind of opposition is ideological—where people fundamentally disagree with the idea of MLE because they think that it will break up the country or that children’s education will suffer. This is the hardest thing to combat as often people don’t actually say those things. Sometimes they use technical problems as reasons to disagree, but deep down in reality they actually don’t agree with what you are trying to put forward. This ‘why’ opposition is much harder and takes longer to overcome. In order to break it down we must understand the thinking of those oppose
to MLE. One of the main things we need to do is make improving children’s academic achievement the targets of mainstreaming MLE—that’s a really important way to break down the opposition. Another way is to change their perception of the teachers who are recruited from either minority communities or who know the local language as part of the mainstream teaching force. The more we mainstream the pilot as quickly as we can, the more we break down the opposition.

Of course there is the need for research, but policy makers don’t listen to research. We still need to produce it, but they will normally generate research that supports what they want. However, as we know this, we can break into their systems of thinking. One way is to look at the press releases they put out, speeches they make to look for what is driving them and then pitch our plan to what they are saying in order to be very relevant. The most successful way to change practice is through invited evaluations. A system is admitting it is vulnerable if they invite someone in, and therefore, if you are invited it is very important to discuss the terms of reference and to include the policy makers in the process of doing it, having regular conversations with those in power.

Building salaries of MT teachers into the system would be precisely mainstreaming. Here you have plan to increase the number of teachers from minority ethnic groups over 3 or 4 years. They will be trained pre- or in-service preparing for full mainstream jobs.

How can MTB-MLE achieve broader sustainable development like the other goals listed in the SDGs?

Dr. Susan Malone:

SDGs include good health, gender equality, decent work, clean energy, improved industry, action on the climate, protecting life in the water and land, peace, justice and strong institutions. Parents cannot provide for their family’s health if they lack information about healthy food, safe water, and—for some—good agricultural methods. Gender equality is not possible if girls are excluded from school because they do not understand their teacher’s language. People cannot earn an income from their land if they cannot read directions for using fertilizer correctly. Literacy and ongoing education in a language that learners understand are essential for achieving all the SDGs except SDG17.

Ms. Maki Hayashikawa: Goal 17 is a combination of what we are all doing.

How can we do MLE in big heterogeneous classrooms with students from multiple language communities?

Dr. Carol Benson: I don’t have the answer, but I am pretty sure that some of you do. A few years ago, we talked about organizing classes by language and not grade (and there is an article by Kimmo Kosonen about this)*. Getting out of our classic class organization might give us, especially the teachers, the flexibility to teach to students. It is a challenge, but it’s not impossible to address it.
Ms. Ched Arzadon: This question is for policy makers because as teachers we have been trained to create an inclusive learning environment that responds to a diversity of students in terms of learning style, ability/disability, languages etc. But policy makers need to allocate funds for material development and therefore decide what languages are to be used for materials.

In the Philippines, in places where many languages are spoken, the lingua franca (in that region) is used as the official language of instruction. It is also suggested that teaching assistants (who speak the various mother tongues represented in the classroom) are to be provided to help the teachers.

We must also remember that MLE is also about diversity and inclusion, not just the choice of language of instruction. The learning environment and children's motivation are two main elements of success at school. Although there might be an “official language” (chosen among the languages in the area) to be used for instruction or materials development, there should be planned times like free writing activities when children are given the liberty to choose their own language or any language for such activity. Children should be able to see and read the multiple languages spoken in the area thru multilingual signage, reminders, posters, TV shows. In other words, though there is one or two chosen languages for instruction and textbooks, the multilingual nature of the student population must not be hidden or ignored, but multilingualism must be felt and be made visible.

How would you persuade government officials to delay the introduction of English in this situation (where there is a parental demand resulting in an increase in children sent to schools where English is the language of instruction)?

Dr. Andy Kirkpatrick: It is primarily the parents that need to be persuaded. Research tells us that even with materials and teachers, students do not learn English. The best way to learn English is through mother tongue literacy at the beginning, then maybe in the national language, then move to English. If you try to become literate through a second language before the first, it is not going to work. Parents need to be persuaded that delaying English does not mean that their
children will not learn English, and instead it will actually help them have a better command of English.

**Dr. Carol Benson:** That reminds me of a story in Ethiopia. The head of the Regional Bureau of Education in Oromiya Region of Ethiopia and his colleagues, all speakers of Afaan Oromo, wanted to show that they could have high quality primary education in their own language, so they opened 10 private L1-medium schools. I heard they were going well but I haven’t gotten an update. At least they were addressing the myth that high-quality education is only available in a dominant language.

**What are the essential components that need to be part of MLE teacher training? Which governments are making good progress?**

**Ms. Ched Arzadon:** The important components are (i) knowing the whats and whys of MTB-MLE, philosophical and legal bases, some theories of learning and language acquisition. There should be (ii) workshops where teachers will actually create their own materials (usually big books in the mother tongue) and (iii) discussion of teaching strategies, especially ways to teach MT big books and other materials to students. (iv) teachers should also learn and understand the workings of languages (linguistics for teachers), and finally, (v) there should be an activity for simulated teaching demonstration. (iv) networking and advocacy building might also be included among the topics to be discussed. We usually to create online groups among trainees for continued sharing and learning and to announce and coordinate activities and projects.

For teachers who are applying for a teaching position in public schools, when they can demonstrate that they can teach in the MT, they are given additional points and will have a greater chance of getting a better position. It is a challenge to find teachers who know the language used by the students, especially those in indigenous communities.

**Dr. Carol Benson:** Just to note—there was a presentation today on teacher education by representatives of the Cambodian government and CARE. They shared information about the teacher training curriculum for multilingual teachers in Cambodia, which includes 5 elements*: i) teaching and learning in general ii) teaching and learning of language iii) teaching and learning of mathematics iv) school and community v) bilingual education.

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*The table above is extracted from presentation by H. E. Ton Sa Im, Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Cambodia and Jan Noorlander, CARE international in Cambodia in Plenary Session II.

There is a gap between policy and implementation of MTB-MLE in countries with policies in place. What do you think policy makers should do to close this gap?

**Prof. Joseph Lo Bianco:** There are always gaps. When the pressure comes from the outside, it is important to take an objective view. The results of research and evidence from MLE is so strong that there are few disputes on whether MLE is any good. Again, the design of a pilot is extremely important. It needs to be scalable. It has to be implementable and there needs to be a supply of teachers. The most important thing is projection research for the future expansion of the program. We have to go to ministries, officials etc. with a plan for steady growth and push them towards projection research, and thus a plan for mainstreaming.

**Dr. Andy Kirkpatrick:** The implementation of multilingual languages doesn’t mean that English is the principal/dominant language to be taught. English will be learned more successfully later on if it is delayed.

When parents have choice, but choose to educate their children in the national language or international language, what can be done to persuade them?

**Dr. Susan Malone:** Parents in minority language communities, like parents who speak dominant languages, want their children to get a good education so the children will be prepared to find employment and earn a good income. Parents may think that teaching the MT is a waste of time because their children already know that language and studying it in school takes time away from learning the language of employment. Awareness-raising activities that help parents and
community leaders understand the rationale for and benefits of using the mother tongue as the foundation for learning in school is an essential early and on-going feature of successful MTB MLE programs.

200 languages are used in MTB-MLE in the Philippines. Does it mean that all Filipinos are now learning in their mother tongue?

Ms. Ched Arzadon: The government mandated that all teachers use the mother tongue for literacy, and trained everybody from kindergarten to grade 3 and to implement the MTB-MLE curriculum. Teachers are provided with sample lesson plans, teachers’ guide, learning materials, big book stories in the MT for 19 languages, spoken by approximately 90% of the population. There are teachers who use their personal and local funds. I would say that approximately 95% of pupils in the Philippines are now learning to read in any of their mother tongues.

Indonesia has too many languages. All Indonesians already speak Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa unifies the nation. Using many languages in education would cause division. Are your experts still promoting MLE in Indonesia?

Dr. Carol Benson: There have been a lot of presentations during this conference about how countries are dealing with multiple languages, so it is important not to use diversity as an excuse for not doing anything. The Philippines has given us a great example: A central policy in favour of L1-based MLE with implementation decentralised to the provinces. In Ethiopia this has also been true: if education programs are decentralised to at least the regional/provincial levels, those education representatives can make better decisions about which languages can be brought into the schools. They usually know which languages are spoken where, but another strategy is to survey or map the languages. This is relatively easy for schools themselves to do when they enrol students —they can just ask the families.

The aim of multilingual education is to ensure people can communicate in the classroom and in the future at local, regional, national and international levels. This should not cause controversy, if everyone is included. It is important to be clear that MLE is always about using and developing one’s own language while learning additional ones, and while learning the rest of the curriculum. If learners gain two or more languages, while maintaining their own, they will benefit from being able to communicate with others. Multilingualism for all is a great goal.

Prof. Joseph Lo Bianco: Shared languages are important. It is going to be important to call multilingualism a 21st century literacy. MLE is not only mother tongue education, it means multilingual education.

What should we do for children with exposure to multiple languages before going to school?
Dr. Susan Malone: Parents in multilingual communities prepare their children for entering school when they focus on helping the children build fluency and confidence in using their home language (or several home languages) for everyday communication. With a good foundation in their home language(s) children will be prepared and equipped to learn the official language(s) when they enter the formal education system.

Ms. Ched Arzadon: Learning and knowing many languages is an advantage for young children. They have many languages that they can use to access knowledge and to represent their ideas. It is even possible to imagine now that they have many MTs.

Malaysian public schools are attended by children from multiple ethnic groups. How can MTB-MLE aid integration problems?

Prof. Joseph Lo Bianco: It is important to be clear that we are talking about a shared curriculum in any nation which is taught in multiple language. However a shared curriculum is also differentiated. It has aspects that are differentiated for communities but with lots of bits in common. The idea of the ‘national community’ is preserved in the curriculum. Many communities want this as they want to participate in the economy and want children to progress. If it’s designed as a shared curriculum that is taught multilingually with adaptations for local culture then you are building in integration, not segregation. Within each language component of a shared curriculum you talk about similar (with some differences) content. it is important that what has been offered multilingually is not completely different in every place.

Dr. Susan Malone: In multilingual countries, MTB MLE curriculum begins with the competencies or standards established by the government for mainstream schools. Learning outcomes for each subject are based on the government standards, but broadened to affirm and build on the knowledge and skills that students bring from their home and community. A well-planned MTB-MLE curriculum should serve multiple language communities. With the necessary materials and competent teachers, students who complete the MTB-MLE program will be prepared to move into and succeed in the mainstream education system while maintaining their love for their heritage language and culture.