

**MOTHER TONGUE-BASED MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION IMPLEMENTATION IN CEBU PHILIPPINES, IN THE EYES OF THE STAKEHOLDERS****Jennifer B. Gonzales\***, EdD

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**DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.1185615****Keywords:** MTBMLE, phenomenological qualitative research, basic education stakeholders, language ideology.**Abstract**

This study looked into the implementation of MTB-MLE in the DepEd Divisions of Cebu as how it is perceived, understood and experienced by the stakeholders. This phenomenological study is conducted in the school year 2016-2017. The data was collected through an interview of 14 stakeholders: School Heads in both private and public schools, teachers and parents. The results revealed that despite the mandated implementation of the MTB-MLE program, the stakeholders experienced and see flaws in the current MTB-MLE implementation, which made them kept their language ideologies making English as their preference to be taught since the first grade. It was recommended that proper training and selection of the teachers to handle the subject have to be done as well as the improvement of instructional materials to facilitate the class better. It was further recommended that College of Teacher Education in the Philippines will provide appropriate training to the pre-service teachers to be effective at teaching MTB-MLE.

**Introduction**

One of the determiners of educational success is verbal intelligence, that language learning is an imperative part, language has a weighty outcome to education (Hudson, 2010).

As a linguistic nation, Philippines is represented by regional dialects bound together two languages taught in school: Tagalog and English as a medium of instruction. In July 14, 2009, the Department of Education released DO 74, S2009, institutionalizing Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in the Philippines. This implementation is a result of the different researches which proved positive result towards implementing the program. Before the program was implemented, there was a debate that showed the resistance of the stakeholders because of the lack of information regarding the implementation of the program. Despite the divided opinion of the public and the stakeholders, the Department of Education in the Philippines pushed through the implementation of MTB-MLE in all basic education schools whether private or public from kindergarten to grade 3 level. Those who created the policy at the national level undertake that regardless of their opinion and whether they agree or not, the stakeholders of the community will implement the policy.

DepEd (2009) announces the relevance of multilingual education in the development of the cognitive and reasoning of the children to operate in different languages and successfully bridge in the global language, English. However, studies in language showed that language development of a child begins as early as six years old, that when a child start to learn foreign language, there is a higher tendency of language proficiency compared to those who are starting to learn at the age of 13 or 14 years old. Hawkins and Towell (2004) reported that "non-English speaking aged 3-7 arriving in the United States attained native speaker performance whereas new arrivals 7-39 did not". Baker (1993) posited that language immersion of the language is an effective method to learn foreign language at an early age. Research in neuropsychology showed that the younger brain is shaped by its own activity and is malleable. On the other hand, "The brain of an older student is stable and is not as armed to restructure itself" (Shrum & Glisan, 2000).



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Looking at the guidelines and policies for MTB-MLE implementation, it was made imperative to teach and use the mother tongue of the child from Kindergarten to grade 3 level. However, it was observed that the stakeholders may seem obedient to the national implementation but by heart continually resisted.

The goal of this study is to explore the experiences of the stakeholders and discover what they see in the implementation of the MTB-MLE program in order to help and provide the policy makers and implementers the idea on how to improve the implementation and ensure its success.

### Research Inquiry

This phenomenological inquiry is made to explore how MTB-MLE is practiced among selected stakeholders in Cebu. This seeks to develop a profound understanding of the perspective of the experiences of the informants, particularly the DepEd educators in order to understand the phenomenon and how it potentially affects the success or influence failure of MTB-MLE implementation. At the end of this study is a theory that would serve as a guide to the program implementers, which will give them a clearer view of the local perspective in order to arrive at a more effective implementation.

### Methodology

The design of this study was qualitative phenomenological. This was an appropriate design in order to explore and surface the emotions of the research participants who saw and experienced the phenomenon first hand (14). Using descriptive phenomenology by Edmund Husserl, the researcher was able to describe and expose the core experiences of the participants. Bracketing was used in order to record the phenomenon precisely. However, reflexive learning and reflective observation of the verbal and non-verbal cues that would potentially give meaning to the phenomenon was used as a strategy by the researcher, that by simply observing and decoding the experiences expressed in nuances of the research participants, reasons are understood. Knowblach (2005), who said that a qualitative investigation is dependent on the meaning, interpretation, understanding, context and reflection conceived.

This study was ontological in nature hence it adopted the concept that people see multiple realities, what they see and experienced is considered as real and authentic.

### Participants and Sampling

Purposive sampling was utilized in this study hence the statistical generalization was not part of the study's goal. A small sample of 14 was used which was composed of one administrator of the both private and public schools, who are also parents of a grade 1 student; two primary teachers in private schools who have grade one children enrolled in private schools; three primary teachers in the public schools who have grade one children enrolled in public schools in the Division of Cebu and one administrator of the private school who is a parent of a grade 2 student, one administrator of the public school who is handling kindergarten, two primary teachers in private schools who are parents of grade 1 and 2 students and three teachers of the public schools who are parents of grade 1 and 3 students in the Division of Cebu Province. This sampling was decided based on data saturation.

A semi-structured interview guide was used during the collection of data.

### Data Collection Procedures and Analysis

The data was collected through an interview of the research participants. The data was transcribed and thematized. The data was analysed using Colaizzi's method of data analysis. The first step was extraction of statements from the transcripts that are relevant. The statements were coded and analysed to construct meaning. These meanings were grouped and made into themes and sub-themes. The results were holistically combined in order to describe a rich emotions and experiences of the research participants. The participants were made to verify the data produced.



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### Ethical considerations

A consent to conduct interview and provide data was signed prior to the session. They were informed that they could withdraw from the research proceedings anytime and that any changes in the process and course of the research will be informed to them. The participants were given the assurance of destroying the audio recording after the transcriptions were made. The participants were coded to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

### Results and Discussion

Based from the responses explored, the following themes emerged.

#### Theme 1: Difference of the implementation from the stakeholders' expectations.

The stakeholders expressed their silent resistance of the implementation, that they will accept the implementation because it is mandated, not because they truly see its significance. Moreover, the stakeholders believed that the MTB-MLE was to be implemented as a language used for instruction of different subjects. Yet as they saw, there was a separate subject for MTB-MLE, which according to them were a bit confusing and difficult for the students. These are proclaimed in the following:

*MTB is already implemented, we have nothing to do. Whether we like it or not it is already there, it is a law or something. If that is what is necessary then all we could do is appeal to the teachers to not make it very difficult to understand. (TN2, L241-248,ING01)*

*Actually I read a lot about MTB, I have an idea about it, but I am not interested because it is not implemented in accordance to what is mandated. (TN3, LN21-24,ING03)*

*What they did, they looked for another vocabulary, which I believe common day to day words would do, which the community uses. Instead, they looked for something really difficult to understand and unfamiliar, something long forgotten, which are useless and impractical. So what is happening, it seems like a grade one student, six years old is learning a whole new language. MTB becomes an L2.*

*The implementation is useless, I understand why MTB needs to be implemented so the concepts are easily understood by the students, but how it is implemented makes the kids more confused. (TR3, LN41-46,ING03)*

Expectations are driving force of actions. It guides interests and priorities. It propels someone into deciding. It motivates. Because expectation is a double edge sword, failure of expectations could lead to disinterest. Disinterest of parents would lead to disinterest of the child as parents have a major influence on the child's beliefs and outlook. Parental help on child's education is very essential to the success or failure of the child. Kim (2008) noted that parental help begins at home. Parental involvement influences the educational outcomes of the child's education. When parents' expectations fail, they become less interested or worse not interested, which in return may affect the students' enthusiasm in general academic.

#### Theme 2: Difficulty of teaching and learning due to unfamiliarity of the vocabulary taught in class

It was the DepEd's goal to introduce MTB in the lower grades in order to bridge language difficulty. However, the stakeholders confirmed that the children, the parents and even the teachers have experienced difficulty in learning due to the unfamiliarity of vocabulary used in the MTB textbooks, that even the parents and the teachers could hardly comprehend.

*It's too unfamiliar, I have seen the books from the public schools. The terms are too difficult. (TR1, L17-19, IN:G01)*

*We, parents have not experienced the words that they use in MTB, I read it assignment notebook, the words are too unfamiliar, there are instances even that I texted my friends just to ask the meaning of the words. (TR2, L45-53, In:G02)*



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*There are really times that I am so confused on some instructions in MTB, but later I found out that the meaning is just so simple, even we adults don't understand. (TR2, LN58-64, IN:G02)*

One of the ideals of MTB implementation is that the Department of Education believed that education starts in the language that students understand best, ([www.depedregion6.ph](http://www.depedregion6.ph)). However, the stakeholders see that this ideals is contrary to the DepEd's mantra.

**Theme 3: Lack of communication between the school, the program implementers and the parents.**

The stakeholders confirmed their lack of knowledge and understanding of the totality of the MTB-MLE implementation. They said that it is purely to use the vernacular in teaching. They commented that there was no meeting for stakeholders' briefing on how to implement the program and how will the stakeholders contribute to its success.

*The teachers' style in teaching MTB and her discussion are different, mine is also different. Then there will be a conflict, because we are not trained, we are just informed to teach MTB, they assumed that we already know. How? (TR2, LN191-202, IN2)*

*Had I not read, I would have not known. But really there was no proper information from the Division on how to implement the program. The teachers were given the books. The teachers said some words are difficult. (TR2, LN33-35, IN2)*

*There could have been a meeting and orientation regarding the implementation of the MTB. We just knew from the news, how can we help our children if we also do not understand thoroughly of how it works. (TR8, LN415-416, IN3)*

*It has already implemented and it seems that our kids are the victims of a failed experiment. Until now we do not know why, we do not see its benefits. (TR12, L216-217, IN3)*

The stakeholders are expected to be the government's partners in the implementation of a certain program, however, with the responses above, it appears that the stakeholders have not completely supported the implementation.

**Theme 4: Lack of evidences of the program's success.**

The stakeholders could not confirm whether or not the program is successful, and whether or not it helped their children to understand better. Although the teachers believed that the students learn and understand better during the discussion, it was not an assurance of a better study habit of the students. Some stakeholders however are hopeful of the improvement of the program in the future if given attention by the policy implementers.

*I think we learn better before when we were students compared to the children now.*

*It is true that the students understand when we are using the vernacular, but this teaching style was no different than the teachers in the past. Our teachers also used Bisaya before maybe this is due to the change of the time. (TR13, L513-514, IN1)*

*If the students learn, this is not because of MTB but because of a hardworking teacher. MTB has not proven any positive effect yet. (TR8, L213-214, IN2)*

*I hope that there is an improvement in the implementation of MTB-MLE because if there is none, it would only delay our students the learning of English, which is supposed to be used in all subjects. (TN7, LN132-141, ING07)*

The program has already been running for three years, however, the stakeholders are still in doubt of its effectiveness and positive result towards children's education.



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When teachers find difficulty in elaborating, they tend to translate the concept from English to their native tongues, this could be of help in the Philippine setting however, “Translation process in foreign language or second language acquisition is not only the process of conveying meaning from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL)” (Aqel, 2013). The benefit of translation method can go further (Aqel, 2013) According to Krashen, “Acquisition is more related to the development of first language abilities while learning describes the development of second language abilities”.

### Theme 5: Difficulty in bridging from MTB to English

Successful bridging from L1 to L2 is one of the objectives of the Department of Education in implementing MTB-MLE, however, the stakeholders saw that this successful bridging has not occurred. Instead of successfully bridging L1 to L2, the children have experienced difficulty in spelling English vocabulary or verbally articulating the sounds of English words. The stakeholders expressed their concern of the situation and feared that their children need to cope-up with other children who could afford a tutorial service, which include children of other Asian countries.

*My child before schooling could already follow the English pronunciation of the characters in TV, before he could pronounce the /to/ as what Americans do, a little aspirated, but now he pronounces /to/ as his teacher does. How sad. (TR7, LN249-253, IN7)*

*Although I am a teacher, I feel that the children have difficulty in spelling English words because there was no English writing in the lower 2 levels. Now that the children are in grade three, spelling English words is a major dilemma of the teachers. TN1, L38-46, ING01)*

*I pity the children especially those that are in the minority group. It will give them less chance to be fluent at English, worse than before. We followed MTB implementation in the Philippines without considering the varied dialects that we have in the country and the implementation that they benchmarked were the rich Asian countries like Japan and Korea, which sent their children abroad to learn English. Could we compete that? The policy makers who implemented this program are the pretend educators in the national level, because their children are rich, and that they could afford tutors. (TR4, LN227-233, IN4)*

Isurin (2005) discussed that “similarities in linguistic structures in two languages will result to positive transfer, while differences will create an interference, which is known as a negative transfer”. If teaching MTB is stuck in another structure -knowledge-based template, it would results to linguistic power struggle.

Dewey (1938), quoted in Burton (2013), emphasizes that “sound educational experience involves both continuity and interaction between the learner and what is learned.” Expose the child in an L2 speaking environment and the child learns L2, neither transfer nor translation method necessary. Al-Sehayer (2010) emphasized that with the use of the native language as a language of instruction especially in a second language classroom, we are not helping the students in their way to learning the target language. The educators are not creating opportunities for them to learn. Furthermore, students who experience such instruction are not trained to thinking in the learned language.

### Theme 6: Language Ideologies

Language ideologies in the Philippines is still present. The use of English in the classroom is still preferred by the stakeholders, hence they believed that English is the language of opportunities. These are evident in the following lines:

*I preferred and strongly suggest that MTB would just be taught side by side with English even in lower grades. Like it or not our children have brighter future when they are able to communicate fluently in English. If they want to go abroad, it is better to use English so they will not be enslaved. During the interview for local or international job opportunities they will answer in English. If they are very intelligent in using Cebuano but cannot translate their ideas in English then they will be tongue-tied in front of the employers. I don't want that*





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*to happen to my child. They change the way they accept and promote employees and we change our beliefs, that is our deal. (TN1, LN62-68,ING01)*

*I am sorry but I feel that MTB implementation is just the excuse of the teachers who cannot communicate to the students in English fluently. They made an excuse and underestimated the capabilities of children to understand English, why do they understand TV shows in English easily? Only if given a chance to communicate in English at school, the children would have been better at language and expressing their ideas in the target language. But not, why? Maybe because their teachers can't tell the when the students made mistakes especially in pronunciation. (TN5, LN289-295, ING05)*

*Because the child could have learned a lot at this span of time, she could have learned a lot and could have competed against others schools, but not. It is just a waste. She already has started but with this, she would go back again. When she will be in grade three, it would be the time for her to start, how useless. It should been when she started grade one, because she went through preschool using English. And now, MTB. She already lost everything that she learned. Look at now, she doesn't know anymore. Such a waste, waste of effort, waste of preschool years, the time spent for MTB, such a waste. (TN4, LN90-100,ING04)*

The stakeholders made clear that using English as a medium of instruction is still their preference. They are not convinced that MTB will help their children in becoming effective English communicators. In the Philippines, English is considered as a privilege. The Filipinos' comprehension ability in the language is incontestable. English is a language of the learned, this has become the national ideology of the country. Tollefson and Tupas (2004) noted that in the Philippines "English is the marker of and the gatekeeper to a privileged socioeconomic class". The grip of English in the Philippines is anchored in the widespread belief that it is neutral and beneficial. It permeates economic, social and political provisions and processes that distribute and regulate access to valuable resources and that have an impact in the everyday lives of the Filipinos.

### Summary

Overall, the stakeholders experienced and saw: difficulty in the implementation of MTB-MLE; their expectations of the program implementation was different to how it was implemented; the lack of communication from the policy makers to the policy implementers, which are the parents; there was no remarkable evidence of success of the program; the lack of bridging from language 1 which is MTB to language 2 which is English; the importance of English in the future of the children.

### Conclusion

The stakeholders experienced and see flaws in the current MTB-MLE implementation, which made them kept their language ideologies making English as their preference to be taught since the first grade.

### Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government has to disseminate information of the implementation of MTB-MLE to the stakeholders through media or formal meeting in order to address the gaps of expectations and practices.
2. The policy makers needs to ensure that the goals of MTB-MLE will be addressed by proper implementation through an improved instructional materials and classroom practices.
3. The teachers need to be trained as to how to deliver MTB-MLE instruction which is easier for the students.
4. Grade 4 teachers need to be painstakingly selected, only those who are good enough to bridge MTB to English to ensure that bridging from L1 to L2 is met.
5. The use of English at school will be strengthened, that teachers from grade 4 will be using English in subjects that used English as a medium of instruction, and will avoid code switching.
6. Teacher Education Colleges and Universities offering Bachelor of Elementary Education need to emphasize the training of MTB-MLE and the proper bridging from L1 to L2.
7. Monitoring of the MTB-MLE program is done quarterly by the each DepEd Divisions.



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### Theory Generated

Based on the result of the study, the conclusion and recommendations, the following theory is generated.

***Proper Implementation and Monitoring Espoused with Stakeholders' Acceptance and Leadership (PRIME SEAL) ensure the success of MTB-MLE Implementation.***

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