



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Kathmandu Office



Multilingual Education in Nepal: Hearsay and Reality ?

A Report

This study was conducted by Vishnu S Rai (Lead Researcher), Maya Rai, Prem Phyak and Nabina Rai within the framework of UNESCO's extra budgetary fund on Promoting Multilingual Education in Nepal initiated by the UNESCO Office in Kathmandu in collaboration with the Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, UNESCO Bangkok.

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Published in 2011 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Office in Kathmandu.

ISBN: 978-9937-8446-1-1

Printed by:

Jagadamba Press

Lalitpur, Hattiban, Nepal

977-01-5250017-19, Fax: 5250027

Email: info@jagadambapr.com

For more information:

UNESCO Office in Kathmandu

Sanepa-2, Lalitpur, P.O.Box: 14391

Kathmandu, Nepal

E-mail: kathmandu@unesco.org

Tel : +977-1-5554396/769

Fax : +977-1-5554450

http : //www.unesco.org/kathmandu

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A REPORT

Submitted to
UNESCO, Nepal
Sanepa-2
Lalitpur

Submitted by
The Research Team
Department of English Education
Faculty of Education, TU

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Acronyms

BPEP	Basic and Primary Education Programme
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills
CALP	Cognitive-Academic Language Proficiency
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
CNAS	Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies
DOE	Department of Education
EFA	Education for All
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HEC	Higher Education Commission
ILO	International Labor Organization
ITM	Indigenous/Tribal Minority
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
LAHURNIP	Lawyers' Association for Human Rights of Nepalese Indigenous Peoples
MLE	Multi-Lingual Education
MOE	Ministry of Education
Mol	Medium of Instruction
MT	Mother Tongue
NCED	National Centre for Educational Development
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NEC	National Education Committee
NEPC	National Education Planning Commission
NESP	National Education System Plan
SMC	School Management Committee
SSRP	School Sector Reform Plan
TU	Tribhuvan University
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Executive Summary

The present study entitled “Multilingual Education in Nepal: Hearsay and Reality?” was started in April 2011 and completed on 25th May 2011. The main aim of the study was to explore and analyze the realities of the Multilingual Education (MLE) programme being practiced in seven schools from six different districts. The MLE programme was launched by the Department of Education (DOE) with the technical assistance of the Government of Finland in 2007. Nepal Government has planned to implement MLE in 300 schools in the coming years but there have been no comprehensive studies conducted to give an accurate picture of the MLE programme. In this context, the present study was carried out.

The research team formed an Advisory Committee consisting of individuals who were involved in the MLE programme from the beginning. The role of the Advisory Committee was to suggest the team the course it should take. A set of tools was prepared to gather information from different stakeholders of the MLE programme which was piloted in a Newari medium school in the Kathmandu Valley. The findings of the pilot were used to improve the tools. The informants included the MLE school family which consisted of teachers, the School Management Committee (SMC), parents and the children. In addition to policy makers, policy implementers and educationists were also contacted to gather information.

The research team members visited different schools to collect the data and where it was not possible due to time constraints, Resource Persons (RP) from relevant catchment areas were hired for data collection purposes. The findings of the study were found to be encouraging but there were also noted problems. The MLE practice was found to be different in different schools: instead of practicing real MLE, schools were found to be practicing bilingual classes, meaning the medium of instruction was both the mother tongue and Nepali. Mother tongue was found as the medium of instruction in some schools while both mother tongue and Nepali were used as the medium of instruction in other schools.

Policies regarding MLE were found to be good in principle but in practice the implementation was very weak. However, the MLE programme was found to be successful in creating a positive environment for learning, both at school and at home. The dropout rate has significantly decreased and children like to go to school. Teachers are enthusiastic about the programme and despite many problems, they are in favour of continuing it. Parents are happy with the programme, but they would like English to be taught from the beginning.

The findings of the study indicate that unless the implementation aspect of MLE is realistic, the MLE programme may not be sustainable. Parents' awareness raising programmes are required. Many parents do not realize the fact that education through mother tongue in the beginning of schooling, will actually enhance the capability of their children to learn a second or foreign language such as Nepali and English respectively. During the period of the Finnish Government's technical assistance, teachers were provided with training, support materials and exposure visits, but with its termination, the sources of support were significantly reduced. The teachers need support to run the programme effectively and they feel that the support provided by the State is not adequate. The State has made many commitments through policy development and now is the time to turn the policies into practice. Parents, children, teachers and other community members want to continue the programme which suggests that the MLE situation in all schools is not discouraging.

Acknowledgements

This research was possible because of the support and feedback from different people to whom we would like to express our heartfelt thanks.

First, we would like to express sincere gratitude to Axel Plathe, UNESCO Representative to Nepal, who trusted us to carry out the study and agreed to provide financial support.

We are indebted to all advisory board members whose constructive comments during the study were instrumental to accomplish this study. We are grateful to Lava Deo Awasthi (Director General, Department of Education), Tap Raj Pant, (National Programme Officer, UNESCO Kathmandu), Chandreshwar Mishra (Head, Department of English Education, TU), Arun Tiwari (Deputy Director, Department of Education), Diwakar Chapagain (representative, Curriculum Development Centre) and Pradeep Bajracharya, (representative, National Federation of Indigenous Nationalities).

Similarly, Professor Jai Raj Awasthi and Professor Novel Kishore Rai deserve our special thanks for their feedback and comments on this study.

We sincerely acknowledge the support of head teachers, teachers, members of school management committee, parents, and students from the study schools and all our friends who provided valuable information without which this study would not have appeared in this form.

Research Team

CHAPTER I

1. Introduction

Language is one of the most contested issues in education (Liddicoat, 2007) especially in a multilingual country like Nepal where children from different indigenous/tribal/minority (ITM) groups representing more than 92 languages (CBS, 2001) find it hard to understand the legitimized Mol, Nepali and English, in schools. Many studies have already revealed that teaching in mother tongue in the early grades enhances children's ability to learn better than in second or foreign languages (e.g. UNESCO, 2003; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2003). It has also been reported that if children are taught in languages which are different from their home language, they drop-out from school, have low achievement and repeat classes due to a high failure rate. This state of affairs is still persistent in Nepal (Yadava, 2007; Awasthi, 2004). To address this issue, Nepal has made some significant language policy efforts in terms of legal frameworks with the restoration of democracy in 1990. Grounded on the provision that "each community shall have the right to operate schools up to the primary level in its own mother tongues for imparting education to its children," as enshrined in the Constitution of Nepal-1990, the government has introduced a policy for teaching mother tongue as an 'optional' subject at the primary level.

Nepal has already embarked on Education for All (EFA, 2003) programme with the goals of bringing all children (especially indigenous tribal minorities) to schools and enhancing the quality of school education by 2015. Teaching in one's mother tongue at the primary level is one of the priorities

of the programme. The Interim Constitution -2007 also stated that "Each community shall have the right to get basic education in their mother tongue as provided for in the law" (Part 3, Article 17). In order to translate this legal provision into practice, the government has developed a national framework for introducing 'mother-tongue based multilingual education' (MT-MLE) for non-Nepali speaking children in which the first phase of basic education (Grades 1-3) will be conducted in one's mother tongue. The government has also piloted the programme in six different districts (discussed in the following section) with eight different languages, aiming at implementing it throughout the country.

1.1 Legal provisions for mother tongue education

Nepal is a multilingual and multicultural country. The number of languages spoken in Nepal may actually be more than what the national census-2001 has reported above. Lewis (2009) recorded that 126 languages are spoken in Nepal. Among them, the majority of languages which are from the Tibeto-Burman language family, are on the verge of extinction (S. Toba, I. Toba & Rai, 2005). Likewise, Yonjan-Tamang (2005) argues that 144 languages are spoken within the territory of Nepal. Whatever the exact number of languages spoken in Nepal may be, it is certain that the majority of indigenous languages are endangered due to various reasons. Likewise, the trend of not using mother tongue, not only in wider social contexts but also at home, is increasing among the young ITM people due to the dominant role of Nepali and English in mass

media and education (Sonntag, 1995; Eagle, 1999).

The exclusion of languages other than Nepali in education began with the opening of schools on a large scale for the first time after the downfall of the Rana oligarchy in 1950. The National Education Planning Commission (NEPC-1956), which was formed by the first democratic government, made various recommendations for the education system in Nepal. Regarding the Mol in schools, the commission made the following recommendations:

- ❑ The Mol should be the national language [Nepali] in primary, middle, and higher educational institutions, because any language which cannot be made lingua franca and which does not serve legal proceedings in court should not find a place ... The use of national language can bring about equality among all classes of people, can be an anchor-sheet for Nepalese nationality, and can be the main instrument for promoting literature.
- ❑ No other languages should be taught, even optionally in primary school, because [only] few children will need them and they would hinder the use of Nepali ... and those who wish and need additional languages can learn them in the sixth grade. (p. 95)

This practice was more intensified in education during the Panchayat System (1960-1990) – the darkest age in terms of language policy. The slogan ‘ek desh, ek bhasha, ek sanskriti/dharma

and ek bhes’ (one nation, one language, one culture/religion and one dress) was the doctrine adopted by the nation-state for 30 years. In compliance with this doctrine, the nation-state nationalised and standardised the education system through the National Education System Plan (NESP) in 1969. With this plan, the curricula for various levels of education were designed, and textbooks were prepared in the Nepali language which was the sole Mol. As a result, many ITM children were not motivated to go to school and even if they joined a school they could not perform as well as the children from the Nepali speaking community could, which consequently forced them to leave schools (Awasthi, 2004).

The Constitution of Nepal – 1990 enshrined a more inclusive language policy by making the following provisions in its Part 1:

- ❑ The Nepali language in the Devanagari script is the language of the nation of Nepal. The Nepali language shall be the official language. (Article 6.1)
- ❑ All the languages spoken as the ‘mother tongue’ [local languages] in the various parts of Nepal are the national languages of Nepal. (Article 6.2)

The constitution provided the legal bedrock for the promotion of local languages by making a provision for mother-tongue education at the primary level (Article 18.2) and by guaranteeing all communities the preservation of their culture, scripts and languages as a fundamental right (Article 26.2).

The Interim Constitution of Nepal (2007) is another important landmark for the language policy of Nepal. It has clearly stated that Nepal is a 'multiethnic, multilingual, multireligious, and multicultural nation' (Part I, Article 3) and enshrined the following provisions:

- ❑ All the languages spoken as the mother tongue [first language] in Nepal are the national languages of Nepal.
- ❑ The Nepali language in Devnagari script shall be the official language.
- ❑ Notwithstanding anything contained in clause (2), it shall not be deemed to have hindered to use the mother language in local bodies and offices. State shall translate the languages so used to an official working language and maintain record thereon. (Part I Article 5).

It is explicit that although the government has accepted the country's multilingual reality, there are remnants of the previous monolingual policy as only 'Nepali in Devnagari script' is considered as the official language. Although the provision of translation of local languages into Nepali has been mentioned in the constitution, the government does not provide any interpreter in government offices, compelling the ITM people to accept the domination of Nepali. The constitution has also preserved the following important provisions in Part 3, Article 17.

- ❑ Each community shall have the right to get basic education in their mother tongue as provided for in the law.

- ❑ Each community residing in Nepal shall have the right to preserve and promote its language, script, culture, cultural civility and heritage.

These provisions have provided a strong legal background for education in the mother tongue, which is stated as one's right, for the first time in the history of Nepal. Regarding the Mol, the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC, 2008) has mentioned that 'the Mol for school education shall be Nepali, English or both languages' (p.4). At the same time, it states that Mol shall be as follows;

- ❑ Primary education can be provided in the mother tongue [first language].
- ❑ Languages [as a subject] shall be taught in the same language.

The provision is contradictory in itself. On the one hand, it clearly ignores the use of mother tongues while giving a focus on Nepali and English but on the other hand, it loosely states the possibility of education in mother tongues.

1.2 Rationale of MT-MLE

In a news report published in The Kathmandu Post, a national daily newspaper, Subedi (2007) reports that 'Four-year-old Babin Rai doesn't speak Nepali. Neither is he quick to respond to someone who talks to him in Nepali. But let him communicate in his native [the] Rai language, and he transforms into an articulate child'. She further reveals that

Babin is just one among five students at the pre-primary level at Suryodaya Sai Secondary school of Imadol, who are comfortable only with their native Bantawa Rai language. Unfortunately, they are spoken to and taught in Nepali and English in the classroom. That is precisely what makes them look like dull and dumb children, at least during the school hours. While talking to the Post, seventh grader Suman Rai from Suryodaya Sai School and ninth grader Basanti Rai from Mahendra Adarsh School strongly advocate that children should be given education in their mother tongue at least till class two. "When we are allowed to speak in mother tongue we feel very comfortable," said Suman, adding, "I was a very weak student till I was in class three, and that was because I had a language problem."

Similarly, the Lawyers' Association for Human Rights of Nepalese Indigenous Peoples (LAHURNIP), an organization working to promote, protect and defend the human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people in Nepal, in its website reports

There are already schools across the country that have recognised the value of indigenous languages. In Dang, for instance, at a school with mostly Tharu students, teachers found that the students were finding it exceedingly difficult to learn and [were] dropping out at a very high rate. The teachers, of their own accord, developed a curriculum in the Tharu language; and since then, the students have demonstrated remarkable progress, and

attendance has shot up. This is a school run by the state, and the government should step in to help it and others like it across the country.

These two reports echo the importance of teaching children in their mother tongues in early grades. As children in the above news report have stated, due to a language problem, the ITM children become weak and dull in their study. Since they do not feel comfortable in using Nepali and English, they also leave school. They are pushed out from schools due to a difference between home and school languages (Yadava & Grove, 2008).

Justifying the rationale of MLE for the ITM children, Skutnabb-Kangas (op. cited.) argues that

They [Children] speak fluently, with a native accent, and they know the basic grammar and many concrete words. They can explain all the basic needs in the MT: they have basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS). This may be enough for the first grades in school where teachers are still talking about things that the child knows. But later in school children need abstract intellectually and linguistically much more demanding concepts; they need to be able to understand and talk about things far away (e.g. in geography, history) or things that cannot be seen (e.g. mathematical and scientific concepts, honesty, constitution, fairness, democracy).

She further claims that

They [children] need to be able to solve problems using just language and abstract reasoning, without being able to do concrete things ("if I first do A, then either D or E happens; if I then choose K, X may happen but Y may also happen; therefore it is best to do B or C first"). The cognitive-academic language proficiency (CALP) that is needed to manage from grade 3 on in school, in higher grades, upper secondary school and later in life, develops slowly. Children need to develop these abstract concepts on the basis of what they already know in their mother tongue. If the development of the mother tongue CALP (which mainly happens through formal education) is cut off when the child starts school, s/he may never have an opportunity to develop higher abstract thinking in any language.

1.3 Mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MT-MLE)

Showing its commitment towards various international conventions (e.g. Universal Declaration of Human Rights-1948; Jomtien World Conference on Education for All (EFA)-1990; Dakar Framework of Action-2000; Millennium Development Goals-2000 and UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples-2007) and national constitutional provision and policies (e.g. Interim Constitution of Nepal-2007; Three Year Interim Plan -2008; EFA Core Document-2004-2009; EFA National Plan of Action-2003; Tenth Plan-2002-2007 and National Curriculum Framework for School Education in Nepal (NCF) - 2007, the government has just finished piloting MT-MLE – a part of EFA programme – in financial collaboration with the Finish Government since January 2007 in eight languages and in seven schools of six different districts as mentioned in the following table.

Rationale for mother-tongue based MLE

If teaching is in a language that the Indigenous/Tribal/Minority (ITM) child does not know (e.g. Nepali), the child sits in the classroom the first 2-3 years without understanding much of the teaching. S/he may repeat mechanically what the teacher says, without understanding, without developing her capacity to think with the help of language, and without learning almost anything of the subjects that she is taught. This is why many ITM children leave school early, not having learned much Nepali, not having learned properly how to read and write, not having developed their mother tongue, and almost without any school knowledge. If the child has the MT as the teaching language, s/he understands the teaching, learns the subjects, develops the CALP in the MT, and has very good chances of becoming a thinking, knowledgeable person who can continue the education.

(Source: Tove Skutnabb-Kangas)

Table 1: MT-MLE pilot districts, languages and schools

District	Language (s)	Pilot schools
Rasuwa	Tamang	Saraswati Primary School, Thade Bhimsen Primary School, Thulobhaarkhu
Palpa	Magar	Nava Jagriti Primary School, Dhaireni
Dhankuta	Athpahariya Rai	Shree Deurali Lower Secondary School, Sangtang
Kanchanpur	Rana Tharu	Rastriya Primary School, Dekhtabhuli
Sunsari	Uraw, local Tharu	Sharada Primary School, Chahariya
Jhapa	Santhal, Rajbansi and Nepali	Rastriya Ekta Primary School, Kajali

(Source: Department of Education, 2009)

MT-MLE, which is different from the previous policy of mother tongue as the subject in primary schools, is not simply teaching through and about more than two languages. It is 'the use of L1 as the primary Mol for the whole of primary school while L2 is introduced as a subject of study in itself to prepare students for eventual transition to some academic subjects in L2' (Ball, 2010 p. 18). Likewise, Skutnabb-Kangas and Mohanty (2009) define that MT-MLE 'is the use of three or more [local] languages as languages of instruction, in subjects other than the languages themselves, at a single school in a multilingual community' (p. 49). It is not only concerned with the teaching of one local language but also with the use of two or more local languages as the Mol in primary schools. MT-MLE is also called developmental bilingual education (Genesee, Paradis & Crago, 2004) in which proficiency in L1 is considered a foundation for learning L2 and other international languages (Dutcher, 2003).

The aim of the programme in Nepal is to help non-Nepali speaking children learn through their L1 with a view that instruction in L1 in early ages does not only foster basic communication skills

but also helps develop children's self-esteem (Benson, 2002). The models of teaching and learning in the classroom vary from one MT-MLE piloted district to another. The following table shows classroom features and models of MT-MLE.

In terms of the number of languages, the monolingual (one local language) and multilingual (more than two local languages) models of teaching are in practice. In four districts – Dhankuta, Rasuwa, Kanchanpur and Palpa – local languages are used as Mol in grades 1, 2 & 3 separately (Mono Grade) because the majority of teachers in the school can speak the local languages and all students come from the same linguistic background. In one district (Dhankuta), one teacher teaches all subjects (except Nepali and English) for one grade (grade teaching) because some teachers in the school cannot speak the L1 of the children (DOE, 2009). In three other districts – Rasuwa, Kanchanpur and Palpa – different teachers teach different subjects (except Nepali and English) in children's L1 in one grade (subject teaching). Likewise, in Sunsari there are two models:

Table 2: Models and classroom features of MT-MLE

District	Classroom Feature	Models of MT-MLE
Dhankuta	Monolingual, Multi Grade, Subject Teaching	Athapaharia Rai both MoI and subject in Grades 1-3 Uraw and Tharu/Maithali both MoI and subject.
Sunsari	Monolingual, Multi Grade, Subject Teaching	Uraw in a combined class of Grades 2 &3 Tharu/Maithali and Nepali in a combined classes of Grades 2&3
Jhapa	Multilingual, Multi Grade, Grade Teaching Monolingual, Multi Grade, Grade Teaching	Santhal both MoI and subject and Rajbansi only MoI Santhal in a combined class of Grades 1 & 2 Rajbansi and Nepali in a combined class of Grades 1 &2 (half a day in Rajbansi and the second half in Nepali)
Palpa	Multilingual, Multi Grade, Grade Teaching	Magar both MoI and subject in Grades 1-3
Kanchanpur	Monolingual, Mono Grade, Subject Teaching	Rana Tharu both MoI and subject in Grades 1-3
Rasuwa	Monolingual, Mono Grade, Subject Teaching	Tamang both MoI and subject in Grades 1-3

(Source: Department of Education, 2009)

only Uraw is used as MoI (monolingual) for the combined classes of grades 2 and 3 (multi grade) where separate teachers teach different subjects (subject teaching) and Tharu/Maithali and Nepali (multilingual) are used for the combined classes of grades 2 and 3 (multi grade) where one teacher teaches all subjects (grade teaching). In the case of Jhapa, both monolingual (Santhal) and multilingual classes are conducted for the combined classes of grades 1 and 2 where one teacher teaches all subjects (grade teaching).

Assessing the effectiveness of the MLE programme in Palpa, a news report published in the Republica daily (2010, June 9), mentions;

Using mother tongue for education in a school in Chidipani-1, Dhairani, has inspired students, teachers and even parents. Nava Jagriti Primary School [an MT-MLE pilot school], located in a Magar village, has breathed a new lease of life ever since starting to use [the] Magar language in education. The Magar students, who speak their mother tongue [first language] at home, are finding it easier to understand the textbooks after use of the language in classes. [...] There were many absentees last year due to the students' inability to properly understand [the] Nepali language but attendance has improved significantly after the change of language this session. (as cited in Phyak, in press)

Gopi Krishna Acharya, the Head Teacher of Nava Jagriti Primary School, Chidipani, Palpa said, “The students have opened up after being allowed to ask about confusions in [the] Magar language and hence there are more interactions in the classes.” Meena Thapa, a teacher, added “The students have become smarter and the environment at the school has become friendlier due to the excitement of teachers and parents.” Likewise, Hom Nath Sharma, District Education Officer (DEO), said the classes in [the] Magar language have been already extended in Himalaya Primary School, Khanichhap, and Jaupokhara Primary School as well.”

This news report reveals the fact that MT-MLE policy has helped non-Nepali speaking children to learn through their L1 making the understanding of textbooks easier, and promoting classroom interaction. Similar kinds of results have been reported from Rasuwa (Skutnabb-Kangas & Mohanty, 2009), Kanchanpur and Dhankuta (DOE, 2009). It has been reported that interaction between teachers and students and teachers and parents has increased, non-Nepali speaking children have become more inquisitive, their performance has improved, and the classroom has become more joyful when MT-MLE was implemented in schools. However, there are some challenges which have to be discussed critically in order for MT-MLE to be meaningfully implemented in the future.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) has already prepared a framework to implement MT-MLE as an integral part of the education system of Nepal. The MoE in its MT-MLE framework (2010)

mentions that (a) the Mol for all subjects (except Nepali and English) shall be ‘local mother language’ up to grade 3, (b) Basic education in grades 4-5 shall be bilingual in which Mol for all subjects (except Nepali and English) shall be mother tongue [local language] and the second language specified as official use, and (c) In grades 6-8 of basic education, the Mol shall be the second language and mother tongue or other languages can be taught as subjects. Moreover, the framework states that schools desiring to continue providing education in mother tongues shall not be considered restricted by this guideline. The framework has further mentioned that (a) ‘mother tongue’ can be taught as a subject in MT-MLE, and Nepali or English medium schools, (b) Nepali shall be taught as a second language in schools where local languages are the Mol and (c) SMCs and language groups can manage to introduce more than one local language as Mol in the contexts where students come from different language communities.

CHAPTER II

2. The Present Study

The present study was conducted by a team of researchers from the Department of English Education, TU and funded by the UNESCO Office in Kathmandu, Nepal.

2.1 Rationale

Individuals who were involved in the MLE pilot project were very enthusiastic about MLE, while many others do not take MLE seriously. Recently, Ms. Miranda Weinberg a Fulbright scholar visited different schools where MLE is being practiced. Her talk on the subject at the Centre for Asian and Nepali Studies (CNAS), Tribhuvan University (TU) on 9th July, 2010 revealed a different story. She found that MLE is being practiced only in two schools. Other schools are struggling to continue it and in one school, mother tongue has been abandoned in favour of using English. She also found that although schools (particularly teachers) highly praise mother tongue instruction by citing the benefits including a reduction in dropout rates and better performance by children, parents are not very enthusiastic about mother tongue education. She also found other problems such as a lack of mother tongue teachers, inadequate numbers of textbooks and inappropriate textbooks.

Similarly, in his talk entitled "ILO 169 and Nepal" on 26th July 2010 at the National Centre for Educational Development (NCED), Amrit Yonjan Tamang said that in the course of his visit to some schools, when he talked with the District Education Officers (DEOs) and school management

committees, they showed their ignorance about the commitment of the Government of Nepal to MLE and education through mother tongue in basic education.

The MLE pilot project was started in 2004 and completed in 2007. Since then, no study has been conducted (except Ms Weinberg's small study) to see how the pilot schools are doing. What problems are they facing? Are the children really doing better in their learning? Is there any change in parents' and education authorities' attitudes regarding MLE? Do they really understand its importance and are they willing to continue it?

Government of Nepal has planned to implement MLE in 7500 schools in the coming year. But no study has been conducted so far to find out how feasible it is to implement MLE. There are so many myths about MLE in Nepal. This study is an attempt to find out the realities about MLE in Nepal and to try to answer these questions about MLE to help the government plan accordingly. Findings related to MLE problems in Nepal will be useful for the effective implementation of MLE in the future. Since this study is based on the information collected from field visits through face to face interaction with all stakeholders of MLE, we have tried to create a clear picture of MLE and to provide future directions for policy and practice.

2.2 Objectives

The main objective of the study is to determine the realities of MLE being practiced in Nepal. The specific objectives are to:

- a. critically review the commitments made by the government of Nepal towards MLE policies.
- b. determine how MLE is being practiced in different schools in the country.
- c. identify problems and suggest solutions for effective implementation of the MT-MLE programme.
- d. analyze the impact of MLE on children's learning.
- e. determine and analyze attitudes of policy makers, educationists, teachers and parents regarding MLE.

2.3 Method

In order to collect relevant information to meet the objective, different kinds of tools were used. (See appendices 4, 5, 6 and 7). The members of the Research Team visited three MLE piloted districts: Dhankuta, Jhapa and Sunsari. For other districts, local teachers and trainers were hired to collect the required information. Questionnaires and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with parents and education authorities were used for the purpose of collecting opinions of people on MLE. Interviews and informal talks were held with teachers and students for objectives 'b' and 'c'. Relevant documents including Nepal Constitution, Education regulations, SSRP and

other documents were reviewed for the study. The research team talked to parents, head teachers, teachers and students, and audio-recorded interviews. The opinions of policy makers and educationists were collected through a set of questionnaires.

Prior to the field visit and to the use of the tools for the purpose of the data collection, the tools were piloted in a Newari medium school (Jagat Sundar Bwonekuthi Secondary School) in the Kathmandu Valley. The data was analyzed and the tools were modified.

2.4 Delimitations

The study had the following limitations.

- ❑ The data was collected from the six (Jhapa, Sunsari, Dhankuta, Rasuwa, Palpa and Kanchanpur) districts and only from schools where the MLE programme was piloted by the MoE with the technical support from the Finnish Government.
- ❑ The study was limited to only Rajbansi, Santhal, Tharu, Uraw, Rana Tharu, Athpahariya, Tamang and Magar languages although there were other languages (Bantawa, Maithili, Limbu, etc.) also taught as subjects.

CHAPTER III

3. The realities of the MLE schools

The main purpose of the study was to determine the reality of the MLE programme in Nepal. To do this, the researchers visited the schools where MLE is being practiced, and hired Resource Persons (RC) for those schools which they could not visit because of time constraints. The schools visited by the researchers in person were Shree Deurali Lower Secondary School, Dhankuta, Shree Rastriya Ekata Primary School, Jhapa and Shree Sharada Primary School, Sunsari. Data was collected from the 6 practicing schools, among which the detailed descriptions of the schools from Dhankuta,

Sunsari and Jhapa (the research team visited these districts) have been presented as case studies in Appendix 1, 2 and 3 respectively. The findings from the additional schools are given individually, first followed by the common findings.

3.1 Nawa Jagrit Primary School, Dhaireni, Palpa

Nawa Jagrit Primary School, Dhaireni is one of the MLE piloted schools in Palpa district. There are five teachers of whom three are Magar speakers and two (including the Head Teacher) are Nepali speakers. All teachers can speak both

Nawa Jagrit Primary School, Dhaireni: MLE School Profile					
Name of school		Nawa Jagrit Primary School, Chidipani-1,			
District		Palpa			
Languages represented		Magar and Nepali			
MLE introduced Grades		Grade 1-3 (No textbooks in Magar for Grade 3)			
Number of students	Girls	13	10	10	
	Grades	1	2	3	
	Boys	18	10	10	
Number of teachers teaching mother tongue		All six teachers, including ECD, use Magar as medium of instruction			
Do students speak their mother tongues in the classroom (both inside and outside classroom)		Yes quite often			
Model of MLE		Mono grade, monolingual			

(Source: Department of Education, 2009)

Magar and Nepali. Subjects other than Nepali and English are taught in the Magar language, up to Grade 3. For Grades 4 & 5 Magar is an optional subject. Textbooks in Magar are available only for Grades 1 & 2. In Grade 3 all textbooks except Magar and English are in Nepali so teachers have to translate them into Magar for use in the classroom. In the examination for Grades 3, 4 & 5, only instructions are written in Magar and students can answer either in Magar or in Nepali.

All of the students who spoke during the discussion said that they speak only Magar in their community and family. They said that three languages, Nepali, English and Magar are used as the medium of instruction in the school. They also revealed that they like to be taught in the Magar language as it is easier for them to understand what teachers teach in the classroom. As teachers and friends often use the Magar language both inside and outside the classroom, it is easier for them to communicate in their own home language, Magar. The children also argued that Magar should be taught only up to Grade 4 because they also wanted to study Nepali and English.

The Head Teacher of the school, who belongs to the non-Magar speaking community, speaks both Magar and Nepali with the children in the school. He uses Magar while teaching other subjects as children do not understand Nepali very well in the early grades.

3.1.1 Relevance of the MLE programme

Teachers agreed that the MLE policy is appropriate for the beginners (Grade 1-3) but support should be provided continuously. If the government allows students to write the SLC in mother tongues, students will be motivated to learn in their mother tongue.

Commenting on the relevance of the present MT-MLE policy, the members of the School Management Committee (SMC) said that the policy is good theoretically but in practice it is quite difficult to implement. They said that preparation of the curriculum, textbooks and materials in the Magar language is challenging for the school. At the same time, they also suggested that there should be training on how to teach mother tongues on a regular basis. Moreover, they are suspicious regarding the commitment of the MOE for the sustainability of the programme. The teachers also agreed that the MLE programme is relevant to the context of Nepal as the programme has helped Magar children learn better. They also said that parents want their children to learn English. The Head Teacher said that the policy has also created confusion – in the beginning they thought that they had to teach Magar only as an optional subject but later they had to teach other subjects in Magar.

The parents also agreed that the MLE policy is good as it helps their children learn easier and faster. They also said that 'we need English. So we decided to start English for the ECD classes. We are worried about due to this policy whether our children become poor in English and Nepali at higher level'.

3.1.2 Changes brought by the implementation of MLE

Discussion with different stakeholders such as SMC members, teachers and parents revealed that the regularity of the students has increased and that their participation and interaction in classroom activities has also increased. Students have become more open to communicate with teachers: previously after the break, students used to run home but after the implementation of MLE, they have started returning to the school. The drop-out rate of the students has significantly reduced, and the parents said that their children love to go to school and feel relaxed to learn in Magar.

Teachers commented that 'students are more active to participate in classroom activities while teaching in Magar now than they used to be in the past while teaching them in Nepali.'

3.1.3 Challenges in MLE implementation

The study found that parents are not ready to accept teaching only in Magar, and that they also demand teaching of a few subjects in English. There are dialectical differences in the Magar language. Given the lack of its own script and

orthographic system, it is difficult to prepare teaching and learning materials. Teachers said that they do not have problems with classroom management, as all students are Magar. They also reported that it is very difficult for them to write in Magar because it does not have its own script. Teachers also pointed out that there is a lack of instructional materials to teach Magar and that in the beginning parents were interested in their children learning in Magar but now they want their children to learn English.

A lot of support was provided in the past but there is very nominal support now. During the project period there were workshops, training and seminars. But 'after the completion of the project, everything is finished', a teacher commented. He further added that 'nowadays, there is no support, no materials, no training, no school visits and no guidance'. Regarding the attitudes of parents and children, the SMC members during a group discussion agreed that 'students are shifting to private schools. So the parents' meeting decided to start English from Early Childhood Development (ECD) class although they are not opposed to the teaching of Magar'. Similar to SMC members, teachers also commented that there was lots of training in the beginning (during the Finland project), but after the project there is no support from the MOE. Even if the Department of Education mentions that subjects other than Nepali and English will be taught in Magar up to Grade 3, textbooks in Magar for Social Studies, Science, Mathematics and the Magar language (as a subject) are available only for Grades 1 & 2. Magar is taught as an optional subject in Grades 3 & 4. Teachers have to teach other subjects by translating them into Magar.

3.1.4 *Suggestions for effective implementation of MLE*

Teachers suggested that in order to effectively implement MLE, curriculum should be updated and textbooks and teaching materials should be made available in advance. They felt that training and seminars for teachers (teaching Magar) should be provided regularly and academic support from the specialist on various issues of mother tongue teaching is also required. After the Finnish Project was over, they felt neglected and suggested that regular support, visits and monitoring from the MOE is necessary.

3.2 Shree Rastriya Lower Secondary School, Kanchanpur

Shree Rastriya Lower Secondary School is one of the MLE implemented schools. In the school, Nepali, English and Rana Tharu are taught while Doteli is spoken but not taught. MLE has been introduced for Grades 1, 2 & 3. There are six teachers who teach in the Rana Tharu language. More than 92 per cent of the students speak Rana Tharu. Although the MLE model as mentioned in the DOE's strategy is monolingual and mono-grade, teachers have to translate Rana Tharu into Nepali.

There are Rana Tharu and Doteli speakers in the school. The Head Teacher is the Doteli language speaker, but he speaks Rana Tharu while teaching other subjects. Textbooks (except Nepali and English) in Rana Tharu are available for Grades 1 & 2 while textbooks for other grades are in Nepali.

The students said that they use Rana Tharu at home and Doteli with other students. Rana Tharu, Nepali and English are taught and used as the medium of instruction. Students further said that their teachers speak Rana Tharu in the classroom but they also speak Nepali and Doteli outside the classroom. Although there are Doteli speakers in the classroom, they are not taught separately. Sometimes teachers also use Doteli. They also focus on teaching Nepali and English.

3.2.1 *Relevance of the MLE programme*

The members of the School Management Committee, including the Head Teacher, agreed that the MLE programme is relevant in the context of Nepal. Rana Tharu children are learning better than they used to in the past. They said that the programme should be continued. Teaching through mother tongue up to Grade 3 is relevant in the multilingual context of Nepal. Teachers said that the MLE programme helps to preserve the Rana Tharu culture and language. They agreed that it is very difficult to manage funds to prepare textbooks in all languages. Although it is relevant to the context of Nepal, in the end it is important to teach English and Nepali as they are necessary for getting jobs. They felt it would be better if people could compete for jobs in their own mother tongue.

Parents said that teaching in mother tongues is MLE. They want their children to be taught in Rana Tharu as it has encouraged their children to study at home. They said that children are learning better and that they are motivated to

Issue

Parents think it would be much better if English is also used with MT as they fear that children's competence in English might lag behind

go to school. Students like to be taught in Rana Tharu as they understand it easily. One important thing they noted is that they can ask their teachers questions without any hesitation.

3.2.2 Changes brought by the implementation of MLE

The SMC members and teachers also commented that parents and children are excited with the implementation of MLE in the school. Children are open and they can interact with the teachers without any fear. As a result of the implementation of MLE, children have more regular attendance in the school and their dropout rate has also decreased, though it has not stopped. They are also curious to learn in their own language. Teachers said that the environment of the school has changed since the implementation of MLE in the school. The involvement of parents in school activities has also increased. There is active participation of children in classroom activities and they attend regularly.

3.2.3 Challenges in MLE implementation

SMC members said that at the beginning of the programme, teachers were given training and assistance for preparing textbooks for Grades 1 & 2. There is no textbook for Grade 3. Teachers have prepared their own manuscript to teach Rana Tharu. The support is not enough. During the pilot project phase, workshops and seminars on MLE were organized by inviting parents, teachers, linguists, Janajati leaders, social workers, and scholars. An exposure visit was also organized during that time but since the completion of the project, there has not been any support from the Ministry of Education.

Similarly, teachers said that they had received a seven day training and that they have been receiving Rs 10,000.00 since 2066/67 B.S. They also received a train the trainer training (ToT) in the initial stage of the project. They were also sent to seminars. They said that although most parents are happy with MLE in general, quite a large number of them do not understand the value of mother tongue. Writing in Rana Tharu is very difficult and only teachers can prepare textbooks.

The Head Teacher reported that it is a challenge to write and print textbooks in Rana Tharu. Physical facilities and the management of teachers are not satisfactory. Teachers also said that there is a lack of textbooks in Rana Tharu. One crucial issue they raised was time management as they have to teach non-Rana Tharu children by translating what they teach into Nepali.

3.2.4 Suggestions for effective implementation of MLE

They suggested that the MOE should print textbooks and train teachers to teach in Rana Tharu. They strongly believed that the policy does not have any meaning if the implementation of it is weak. They want the MOE to provide more financial assistance to MLE-implemented schools. Since MLE is implemented in a school where Janajatis are the majority, there is a need for interaction and for an awareness-raising programme on MLE. Parents suggested that there is also a need for infrastructure development in the school, training for teachers on mother tongues, availability of textbooks, and seminars. They also said that the implementation strategy of MLE is not strong.

3.3 Saraswati Lower Secondary Schools, Thade, Rasuwa

Saraswati Lower Secondary School of Rasuwa is one of the first schools chosen by the Department of Education (DoE) under the MLE Programme with the assistance from the Government of Finland in 2063 B.S. (2006). The school has introduced the Rasuwa Tamang language as the

medium of instruction from Grade 1-3. There are 5 teachers teaching the Tamang language. There are 12 girls and 8 boys studying in Grade 1, 5 girls and 8 boys studying in Grade 2, and 8 girls and 4 boys studying in Grade 3. These students speak their mother tongue at home, at school and in the community.

Mr. Lakpa Tamang, who is the Head Teacher, is also the writer of textbooks from Grade 1 to 3, in the Tamang language. He is trained by the National Centre of Educational Development to be a master trainer and has written a training manual for Tamang MLE teachers with his colleague Ms. Urmila Tamang who is also an MLE teacher. He has trained Tamang speaking teachers in Rasuwa and Nuwakot districts. Mr. Tamang speaks the Tamang language and also teaches in the same language. As the community is predominantly Tamang, MLE based on the Tamang language is appropriate in his school. Except for approximately 10 Dalit students, all students are Tamang speakers. The MLE programme has had a positive impact because the Head Teacher is a Tamang native speaker who has been involved from the initiation phase of MLE in Nepal.

3.3.1 Relevance of the MLE programme

Guardians/Parents of the students mentioned above were interviewed to obtain their opinions on MLE in general and to cross reference them to the opinions expressed by their children. Regarding their familiarity with MLE, two parents said that providing education through many

languages is multilingual education. Likewise, four parents said that providing education through mother tongue is MLE. All parents agreed that MLE is a good programme because it helps children share their ideas with teachers without any anxiety, it makes teaching-learning activities easier, and children become happier as their home language is used in the school. One parent in the focus group discussion also said that if written scriptures are taught, children become 'lama'.

Regarding the medium of instruction in the school, parents agreed that children are taught in Nepali and Tamang. Among them two were in favor of teaching their children in Tamang whereas two parents said that Tamang should be introduced at lower classes, and English and Nepali should be the medium of instruction in upper classes. Two parents said that they wanted their children to be taught in Tamang and English. Likewise, two other parents revealed that they wanted their children to be taught in Tamang, Nepali and English. Although all parents said that mother tongue medium of instruction is more effective for learning, they believed that English should also be emphasized.

3.3.2 *Changes brought by the MLE programme*

Parents agreed that MLE had a positive impact on their children who now find it easy to learn in MT, and that children show more enthusiasm to go to school. For example, one parent said that before implementing MLE his child never showed any enthusiasm to go to school but now he does.

Children go to the school early and stay there throughout the school time. One parent said that she had to scold her son to go to school or encourage him to go by giving him money before, but now he goes without her having to tell him.

Discussions with children also revealed that they liked to be taught through their mother tongue. Samjhana Tamang who is studying in Grade 1, speaks Tamang at her home and school. She is taught through Tamang. She likes to be taught in Tamang because it helps her to learn easily. Her teachers also use Tamang both inside and outside the classroom in school. She enjoys being taught in Tamang. She can easily interact with her friends in Tamang. She thinks that teaching in Tamang should be introduced for higher classes as well as it makes learning easy and joyful. Similarly, Karma Tshering Tamang says that he uses Tamang both at home and at school. He is taught through Tamang. He likes to be taught in Tamang as it is easy for him to understand and it makes the classroom environment more conducive to learning. Teachers also speak Tamang with him. All students are Tamang speakers in his class. He speaks Tamang with his friends most of the time. He also believes that the teaching of Tamang should be continued up to higher levels.

Teachers also showed positive attitudes and enthusiasm towards the MLE programme. Riki Lamo Tamang and Pratima Lama are primary teachers at the school. Both of them speak the Tamang language at home. They also speak Nepali and English; however, the medium of instruction they use is Tamang in the lower

grades and Nepali in the higher grades, i.e., from Grade 4 upwards. Both of them stated that students learn faster as Tamang is easier for them to understand.

Prativa Lama teaches Social Studies. In the beginning, developing curriculum and textbooks by herself left her with little time to teach. Later it became easier to teach and manage time. She also stated that the Ministry of Education provided facilities like training, textbooks, educational visits, interactions and others. She said that students and their guardians have a positive view towards MLE. Since the implementation of MLE, students are happier to come to school. Regarding the appropriateness of MLE and related programmes in Nepal, she believes that MLE attracts students and helps to create a friendly school atmosphere for children.

Riki Lamo teaches mathematics in Tamang as well as in Nepali as she teaches from Grade 1 to Grade 6. She stated that MLE is appropriate in her school as the students are very motivated to learn in their MT; however, it is not without challenges. She responded that there is a rise in students' participation after the implementation of MLE in the school. They now attend regularly

and the rate of dropouts is decreasing. There is a need for communities to develop community ownership of schools to bring as many students to school as possible.

There is an increase in students' regular school attendance. Because Nepal is a multilingual country, MLE is appropriate and necessary. The textbooks used in the school are written in Tamang, Nepali and English.

3.3.3 Suggestions for the effective implementation of MLE

To ensure effectiveness of MLE, provisions must be made for reading materials, supplementary materials and training for teachers. One teacher said that because there were no textbooks, she had to translate the CDC developed textbooks into the Tamang language. Parents also suggested that textbooks must be developed before implementing MLE. In the case of Tamang, language development of the written script is also important. Furthermore, they said that provisions must be made for textbook writing, effective teacher training, and for the allocation of extra teachers to teach in Tamang.

CHAPTER IV

4. The Findings

The study findings represent common features found in all of the MLE schools. In addition, the findings of the critical review of the MLE policies are also included. The findings are presented here under the following headings.

4.1 Critical review of the MLE policies

In order to meet the first objective of this study, Nepal Government policies on MLE were reviewed. Review of the policies is based on the study of all of the MLE policy documents to date, and the analysis of the questionnaire responses from the policy makers and educationists.

4.1.1 MLE at the policy level

The government of Nepal has already signed and ratified some significant international covenants in which the right to receive an education in one's first language has been preserved. Some major international policies along with national legal provisions regarding mother tongue education have been summarized in this section.

The Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1996). The Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights is another important international provision for mother tongue education in formal education in Nepal. The Article-23 of the declaration asserts that

- ❖ Education must help to foster the capacity for linguistic and cultural self-expression of the language community of the territory where it is provided.

- ❖ Education must help to maintain and develop the language spoken by the language community of the territory where it is provided.
- ❖ Education must always be at the service of linguistic and cultural diversity and of harmonious relations between different language communities throughout the world.
- ❖ Within the context of the foregoing principles, everyone has the right to learn any language.

Similarly, Article-24 of the Declaration asserts that:

All language communities have the right to decide to what extent their language is to be present, as a vehicular language and as an object of study, at all levels of education within their territory, preschool, primary, secondary, technical, and vocational, university, and adult education.

Other important international conventions and policies that support mother tongue education are as follows:

- ❖ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights-1948
- ❖ The UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education-1960
- ❖ The 1990 Jomtien World Conference on Education for All (EFA)
- ❖ The Dakar Framework of Action-2000
- ❖ The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights-1966 (Article 13 and 14)
- ❖ The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights-1966 (Article 18)
- ❖ The Millennium Development Goals -2000

- ❖ The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples-2007

In addition there are many national legal provisions and policies that have provided a strong foundation for the implementation of mother tongue education in schools.

4.1.2 Constitutional provisions

The 1990-Constitution of Nepal made a provision for mother-tongue education at the primary level (Article 18.2). It also guaranteed that all communities shall have the irrevocable right to preserve their cultures, scripts and languages (Article 26.2). Based on this legal provision, Curriculum Development Center (CDC) has produced textbooks in 18 different local languages and has planned to produce textbooks in other languages based on the demand from local communities. Following the provisions of the constitution, the National Education Committee (NEC, 1992) and High Education Commission (HEC, 2000) and Basic and Primary Education Programme (BPEP; phase I and II (1991-2004) also focused on mother tongue education.

The Interim Constitution-2007 mentions that the state “shall not discriminate among citizens on grounds of religion, race, caste, tribe, sex, origin, language or ideological conviction or any of these”. The most significant provision the constitution has made is that it enshrined receiving basic education in one’s mother tongue, and preserving and promoting one’s language, script, culture, cultural civility and heritage are fundamental rights (Part 3, Article, 17).

4.1.3 Education for All

Education for All (EFA) has been envisaged as a campaign by the World Education Forum first held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 and later in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000. The Dakar framework for action for EFA is committed to “Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.”

The Ministry of Education and Sports prepared the EFA National Plan of Action (2003) and EFA Core Document (2004-2009) to implement EFA programme in Nepal. Meeting the learning needs of all children including indigenous peoples and linguistic minorities is one of the major objectives of the document which envisions primary education and non-formal literacy programmes in one’s mother tongue. The EFA action plan provided direction and strategies for introducing mother tongue as a subject and medium of instruction at the primary education level in Nepal.

Regarding the implementation of mother tongue as a subject and medium of instruction in schools, the EFA Action Plan has specified five different phases.

- ❖ **Phase I (2003-2005):** To boost up the teaching of 11 minority languages which have literate traditions and textbooks (e.g. Limbu, Rai Bantawa, Newari, Maithili, Urdu, Bhojpuri, Magar, Sherpa and Tharu) as a subject and medium of instruction in a multi-lingual context at the primary level.

- ❖ **Phase II (2006-2008):** To design curricula and textbooks in minority languages which are inclined towards developing their written system and to introduce those languages and subjects and medium of instruction in the multi-lingual context at the primary level.
- ❖ **Phase III (2009-2011):** To develop a writing system of the minority languages and to introduce those languages and subjects and medium of instruction in the multi-lingual context at the primary level.
- ❖ **Phase IV (2012-2013):** To design curricula and prepare textbooks in order to introduce all the minority languages including the most endangered ones as the medium of instruction at the primary level of education.
- ❖ **Phase V (2014-2015):** To establish at least one mother tongue school in each election constituency.

Regarding the Medium of Education, the Education Act of Nepal (7th Amendment) states that (a) the medium of education at the School shall be the Nepali language provided that education up to primary level may be given in mother tongue; (b) Notwithstanding anything contained in Sub-section (a), while teaching the subject of language the medium of education may be in the same language.

The Three Year Interim Plan of the government of Nepal (2007-2010) also includes a trilingual policy: Nepali language as the official language, mother tongue, and English as an international language. It states that basic education can be provided in the mother tongue(s).

The School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP, 2009-2015) has also made a policy for receiving basic education in one's mother tongue.

The National Curriculum Framework for School Education in Nepal (2005): the Curriculum Development Center has prepared a national primary level curriculum in which Nepali, English and mother tongue are taught for eight periods a week (6 hours), for six periods a week (4½ hours) and for four periods a week (3 hours) respectively. Regarding the medium of instruction, CDC (2008, p.4) has stipulated that Nepali, English or both languages shall be the medium of instruction. It also states that;

- ❖ Primary education may be provided in the mother tongue [first language].
- ❖ Languages [as subjects] shall be taught in the language (i.e. English in English; Nepali in Nepali).

4.1.4 *What policy makers and educationists have to say*

This section contains the views of policy makers, implementers and educationists regarding MLE policies and the MLE programme.

Relevance of MLE

- ❖ The MLE programme is highly relevant to the context of Nepal as it helps students learn easily in their first language in early grades.
- ❖ Most of the parents have a desire for their children to be competent in English, in order to access wider opportunities. We should

not forget the fact that mother tongue as medium of instruction will be appropriate for early grades to help students understand all subjects.

- ❖ Research has shown that the learning outcomes of children who started learning in their first language are better than the learning outcomes of those who started learning in a second language. Thus the MLE programme is relevant to the context of Nepal.

Applicability of MLE in all linguistic contexts

- ❖ Parents and communities should not be compelled to introduce MLE. If they realize the importance of MLE, it will be easier to implement MLE. Implementation of MLE in all contexts is not possible. Parents need awareness education about MLE.
- ❖ It is very difficult to introduce MLE in contexts where many local languages are spoken in a community.
- ❖ Until and unless there is a clear MLE policy and the implementers are positive, MLE in its real sense cannot be applied.

Sustainability of MLE in Nepal

- ❖ If communities are aware and actively participate, the MLE programme will continue.
- ❖ The state must support MLE schools for the programme to be successful.

Challenges of implementing MLE

- ❖ Parents are not aware of the importance of MT-MLE.
- ❖ Teachers need regular support for teaching through different mother tongues.
- ❖ There is a noticeable gap between MLE policy and practice in schools.
- ❖ Communities and other local stakeholders are not able to have ownership of the MLE programme. They seem to be reliant on the government.
- ❖ The financial and technical support from the MOE is inadequate.
- ❖ The trend of parents sending their children to English medium schools rather than MLE schools is increasing.
- ❖ The use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction has not been introduced vertically (i.e. Grades 1+2+3) but it has been extended horizontally (i.e. it has been introduced in other schools in the same grades).

Suggestions for the effective implementation of MLE

- ❖ The MOE should work to bridge the gap between MLE policies and practices.
- ❖ Multilingualism should not be considered a problem but should be seen as an asset by the State.
- ❖ Awareness raising programmes on MLE should be conducted before MLE is implemented in schools.
- ❖ Support mechanisms for MLE should be developed with the active participation of local communities.

- ❖ The role of the District Curriculum Committee should be made clear.
- ❖ Because transitional MLE starts with mother tongues gradually followed by second and foreign languages, the involvement of educationists from universities and experts in the area of English and Nepali language teaching should also be included in the MLE implementation strategy.

4.1.5 Policies reviewed

There is no doubt that the state has shown its commitment towards MT-MLE implementation in Nepal; however, progress towards the implementation of MT-MLE objectives into practice is not satisfactory. The majority of minority languages still do not have their own script, and textbooks have been prepared in only 18 languages. In many cases, mother tongues which have already been introduced in schools, have been used as a subject but not as the medium of instruction. There are two major areas of confusion with the policy itself:

- ❖ It is unclear in which contexts primary education may be provided in mother tongue.
- ❖ According to the MLE principle, mother tongue should be the medium of instruction from the beginning to at least Grade 3. In practice, the use of mother tongue in most of the schools has been limited to the teaching of mother tongues.
- ❖ The policy states that “the mother tongue which is spoken by the majority of children in schools will be selected to be taught” (CDC, 2008, p.4). On the one hand, it is not clear what ‘majority’ means and on the other hand,

it is very difficult to build consensus to select one mother tongue among the parents who come from different linguistic backgrounds. While selecting one mother tongue, the speakers of other languages also demand education for their children in their own languages.

As mentioned in the previous section, the Ministry of Education has prepared a strategy to implement MLE by considering it an integral part of the Nepalese educational system. Regarding the medium of instruction, the MLE framework states that:

- ❖ Local mother tongues [first languages] will be the Mol for pre-primary education.
- ❖ The Mol for all subjects, except Nepali and English, shall be the local mother tongue up to Grade 3.
- ❖ Basic education in Grades 4 and 5 shall be bilingual in which the Mol for all subjects, except Nepali and English, shall be the mother tongue and a second language specified as official for use in a given community.
- ❖ In Grades 6 through 8 of basic education, the Mol shall be the chosen second language and the mother tongue but other languages may also be taught as subjects. (MOE, 2010, p. 3)

The MOE’s commitment to implement MLE for basic education is worthy of praise. However, there is some confusion at the policy level in various educational policies, which indicate that the MLE programme may be non-functional in the future even if it is desirable;

- ❖ First, there is no clear provision for the implementation of MLE in private schools which are virtually English-medium schools. It loosely states that MLE can also be implemented in private schools. Because of this, parents still consider that teaching and learning in mother tongue does not help enhance the quality of education. As a result, they send their children to private schools rather than to MLE implemented schools.
- ❖ Second, based on a provision stated in the Education Act of Nepal, 2001 (7th Amendment), the MOE has started handing over the management of public schools to local communities. Because School Management Committees are given the responsibility of selecting the medium of instruction in schools, there is an increasing trend to shift from mother tongue or Nepali to English medium of instruction. This is because parents seem to have aspirations to send their children to English medium schools.
- ❖ Third, public schools are opting for English medium of instruction largely due to the Per Child Funding policy of the MOE. According to the policy, the student-teacher ratio proposed is: 40:1 for Mountain districts; 45:1 for hill districts and 50:1 for Terai districts and the Kathmandu Valley. This implies that the funds for schools and teachers are allocated on the basis of the number of students. If there are very few students in schools, schools will get less funding from the District Education Office. Thus, in order to increase the number of students in schools, SMCs often decide to provide English medium of instruction.

4.2 Findings from the field

In order to meet the second, third and fourth objectives, the research team collected information from different stakeholders by visiting different schools and communities. The information collected from them is presented in the following headings.

4.2.1 How is MLE being practiced ?

In some schools (e.g. Dhankuta), the Mol is the mother tongue, while in others (e.g. Kanchanpur) both mother tongue and Nepali are the medium of instruction. The present MLE practice does not follow the transitional MLE programme in which primary education starts with the mother tongue as the Mol and later the second language and international language are gradually introduced. The so called MLE, therefore, is more of a multilingual class where more than two languages are the medium of instruction rather than the actual MLE programme.

4.2.2 Impact of MLE

Stakeholders agreed that MLE has a very positive impact on children: the dropout rate has considerably decreased, the children willingly attend school, the children understand what their teachers say, and they like participating in school activities. Teachers agree that despite many problems, MLE should be continued. Parents are also happy that they do not have to force or induce their children to go to school. These are visible positive impacts but there are many challenges. There is no considerable improvement in the

achievement of the learners probably because although they are taught through their mother tongue and sometimes through their mother tongue and Nepali, the examination papers are always in Nepali.

4.2.3 Challenges in MLE implementation

Although the parents, teachers and students feel positively about MLE, different stakeholders have reported various challenges with the MLE programme. Parents said that there is a lack of awareness among parents. There is a huge attraction towards learning English as private schools are being opened in communities. Parents also questioned whether mother-tongue education will be sustained or not. They were concerned about the future of their children as a result of being educated in their mother tongue.

Teachers said that training and textbooks were available only during the project. It is important to continue to provide these resources.

There was a common view among SMC members, Head Teachers and teachers that there is a lack of human resources to effectively teach in mother tongues. They also reported that parents are not convinced with the value of the MLE programme. Some other issues that emerged from the discussion with various stakeholders have been summarized as follows:

- ❖ The sustainability of the programme depends on the commitment from the MOE.

Issue

- ❑ Especially for parents, the MLE programme means using more than two languages (including Athpahariya) in the same classroom by the same teacher while teaching a subject.
- ❑ Children and parents expect that children should also be taught in English.

- ❖ In linguistically heterogeneous communities, MLE is very difficult to implement.
- ❖ The concern of the MOE regarding MLE since the completion of the Finnish funding has seemed to decrease.
- ❖ There is a lack of proper budgeting for the implementation of the programme.
- ❖ There is a lack of proper coordination among various stakeholders, especially with the Athpahariya's association and the SMC. There is an issue of who takes the lead for recruiting teachers, and producing materials for MLE.
- ❖ Government's policy towards the implementation of MLE is not consistent.
- ❖ The most crucial challenge is that parents, teachers, children and other stakeholders are still resistant and suspicious about the sustainability and effectiveness of the policy.
- ❖ Another practical challenge is related to classroom management in schools where more than two local languages are spoken. In such schools, children from one linguistic background (e.g. Santhal and Uraw in Jhapa and Sunsari respectively) are kept separate in a combined class of two grades and taught all subjects by one or more teachers.

SMC members revealed that during the pilot phase, the programme was running effectively but now it is not going as effectively as was expected. They also raised the question of whether the programme will sustain or not. They further said that there were many people visiting schools from the MOE during the pilot phase, and they also had the chance to attend seminars and training in five star hotels in Kathmandu but since the completion of the pilot phase, nothing significant has been done. They revealed that the textbook development and production process is not effective. They also focused on the need for parents' awareness raising programmes on MLE. However, they were determined to continue the programme even if the government is not going to provide support.

Further exploration is needed to assess what students from one grade do and how they feel while students from another grade are taught in the same classroom. What impact does such a 'linguistic segregation' have on students when they have to sit separately in the school although they come from the same community?

4.3 Future directions

On the basis of the findings, the following recommendations are provided:

- ❖ The State has created effective MLE policies but the implementation of the policies is still weak. It should pay attention to the implementation of the MLE policies declared at various times (as mentioned above).
- ❖ The MLE policy should be implemented in private schools.
- ❖ Mother tongue as the medium of instruction should be extended vertically (i.e. Grades 1+2+3).
- ❖ There is a need to recruit balanced multilingual teachers who are equally proficient in listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in all local languages, which has been ignored in the current implementation of MLE.
- ❖ Research and textbook development skills for the teachers have been ignored both in policy and practice. Although the policy mentions that schools develop their own textbooks by including folk stories, indigenous knowledge, local religions, cultures, songs and poems in local languages in collaboration with the local community, teachers are trained in how to explore various resources, take photographs, video record voices, compile them and develop textbooks for teaching local languages.
- ❖ The MLE framework has also stated that schools 'desiring to ensure access to quality education' can provide education in local languages. This clearly indicates that the Ministry of Education is still hesitant

to implement MLE as an integral part of Nepalese primary education.

- ❖ Since it is based on the early-exit transitional model (Skutnabb-Kangas & Mohanty, 2009) – children are taught in their L1 up to grade 3 with partial exposure up to grade 5 and they switch to second and foreign languages from grade four – parents face a dilemma regarding the relevance of mother tongues in early grades if they are no longer used in higher grades.
- ❖ There is a need to educate parents about the benefits of mother tongue education. Recent research shows that if someone has been taught through their mother tongue in

the beginning, they are better able to learn a foreign language (e.g. English). Therefore it is not necessary to start teaching English right from the beginning.

- ❖ There is a lack of coordination between MLE supporters, policy makers and policy implementers. Good policies are developed at higher levels, but at the implementation level, including at the district level, either the educational authorities do not know about the MLE programme or they simply ignore it. (See appendix for suggestions for the improvement of MLE in schools in the form of a tree diagram).

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Appendix 1

Case Study of Athpahariya-based MLE in Dhankuta

Shree Deurali Lower Secondary School is situated at Dhankuta Municipality - 8, Santang. The school is seven kilometers south of the main city. The community where the school is situated, is dominated by Athpahariya Rais. During informal discussions with community members, they revealed that although there are some Yakkhas, they are already immersed in the Athpahariya culture and language. Presently all Yakkhas speak Athpahariya and follow its culture rather than following their own culture.



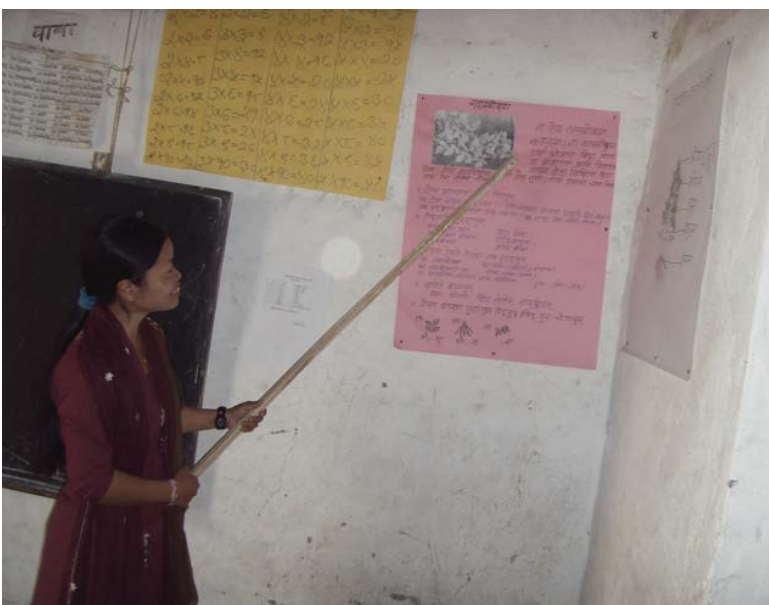
During the focus group discussion with the members of the School Management Committee, one parent said that most of the Athpahariyas in Santang are poor and do not have access to wider socio-political and educational opportunities. Due to their poverty, they can not send their children to school. The major source of income for them is agriculture.

Athpahariya in the community and school

The parents said that they speak Athpahariya with their children most of the time. They also agreed that they speak Nepali with their children as it is the dominant language in the wider social domain. In this regard, one parent revealed that children love to speak Nepali at home and he also speaks to them in Nepali because he thinks that this helps to improve their Nepali. The parents further agreed that the young generation of Athpahariyas speak more Nepali than Athpahariya at home.



The wall of the school has been painted in the Athpahariya language. The painting says, 'our school is mother tongue school'. It also says that we have to preserve the Athpahariya language, culture, and religion. The painting on the wall further says 'we learn our mother tongue'. The wall paintings indicate that there is a noticeable presence of Athpahariya in the school. The



Head Teacher commented that the walls were painted after the implementation of the MLE programme in the school. He further said that such paintings have encouraged parents and children to use Athpahariya in the school. Walls inside the classroom (Grade 1 & 2) are also painted in Athpahariya. The paintings include numbers, pictures, names of the months and days. The lessons prepared by teachers on Athpahariya have also been hung on the wall. The Head Teacher reported that there are no non-Athpahariya speakers in Grades 1 and 2. There are 13 teachers in the school including one lady teacher for early childhood education. Among them, 8 are Athpahariya speakers and five are Nepali speakers. The Head Teacher, who is non-Athpahariya, can also communicate in Athpahariya with children in the school.

In Grades 1 and 2, two lady teachers (one for teaching Athpahariya) have been assigned to teach all subjects. Both teachers can speak, read and write Athpahariya easily. They teach all subjects, except Nepali and English, in Athpahariya. However, they reported that in many cases they have to use Athpahariya while teaching Nepali and English as well.

In Grade 1, three subjects – Social Studies, Science and Athpahariya – are taught in Athpahariya medium of instruction. Social Studies and Science textbooks have also been prepared in Athpahariya. Questions for examinations are also prepared in Athpahariya for these subjects. However, for Grade 2, a textbook in Athpahariya is available only for the Athpahariya language but not for other subjects including Social Studies and Science. Questions for examinations are also written in Nepali, for the subjects other than Athpahariya. As reported



Anisha, who studies in Grade 1, does not speak even a single word with teachers if Athpahariya is not used in and outside of the classroom. She does not respond if she is asked questions in Nepali. She keeps quiet. First, I thought that she could not hear. But when I ask her to do activities in Athpahariya she becomes so active in doing the activities in the classroom. She does not understand Nepali. The MLE programme has helped such children to learn effectively.

by SMC members, there is no funding for the preparation, design and printing of textbooks in Athpahariya. Moreover, there is no textbook even for the Athpahariya language for Grade 3. The teacher who has been assigned to teach Athpahariya has prepared a manuscript for the textbook with his own effort to teach Athpahariya.

Since textbooks in Athpahariya are not available, the Head Teacher reported that it is very difficult to help students understand the Nepali words like 'khanyu' in Nepali. In such cases, teachers shared that they consulted with the Athpahariya language teachers and helped students understand the concepts by translating Nepali and English words into Athpahariya. The Head Teacher mentioned that if materials are available, school teachers can teach Athpahariya up to Grade 8. His view was similar to that of SMC members' which was that Athpahariya should be taught up to Grade 8.

Relevance of MLE programme

Focusing on the relevance of the MLE programme, one parent said that his children learned by force before the introduction of Athpahariya in the school. They could not understand what teachers asked them to do and they also used to cry because they could not express their views. He further reiterated that by introducing Athpahariya in the school, children have received a natural and homely environment to learn.

All SMC members agreed that the MLE programme has helped to attract Athpahariya children to the school. They also said that the relationship between the school and the community has been enhanced through the programme.



The Head Teacher reported that three other schools—Madhuganga Primary School, Bhirgaun; Rastriya Janata Primary School, Tekunala, Jimi Primary School, Yakte – have already introduced Athpahariya in their schools. He mentioned that these schools have been teaching Athpahariya only as a subject and not using it as the medium of instruction at the primary level.

Highlighting the relevance of the programme in the school, he revealed that the programme has created a child-friendly environment in the school and has bridged the gap between the school and the community.

Similarly, teachers said that the MLE programme has helped to preserve Athpahariya culture. One teacher, who is teaching Athpahariya in the school, said that if children are not familiar with their culture there will be no one to perform Athpahariya rituals in future. He gave an example of the neighboring Bantawa community: One day there was no one to perform rituals in the community. So one 10+2 graduate was asked to perform rituals. As a part of the rituals he had to pour water on the head of a cock. Before its sacrifice, the cock had to shake its head to throw the water off of it. When the cock shook its head, the performer thanked the cock in English 'Thank you, Thank you'.

Parents also agreed that the MLE programme is relevant to their community as it helps future generations learn their history, language, culture and identity. However, they also reported that all parents are not aware of the value of education in mother tongue.

Teachers further stated that since there are only Athpahariya children in the school there is no problem addressing linguistic diversity in the classroom. Children also agreed that it is easier for them to learn in Athpahariya.

Attitudes towards MLE

- ❑ The programme is highly relevant to our context because it has encouraged children to come to school regularly. (Teachers)
- ❑ The programme has helped to preserve Athpahariya culture and language. (Teachers)
- ❑ The programme is very good for the Athpahariya community. Children should also be made equally competent in Nepali and English. (Parents)
- ❑ Parents are not aware of the importance of MLE. (SMC member)
- ❑ Parents happily provide support (e.g. narrating stories) while exploring materials and they are really excited to see their

०	मेक	११	ठिठिक	२१	इप्पोठिक
१	ठिक	१२	ठिप्पोक	२२	इप्पोठिक
२	इप्पोक	१३	ठिगुम्बोक	२३	इप्पोठिक
३	सुम्बोक	१४	ठिटेम्बोक	२४	इप्पोठिक
४	टेम्बोक	१५	ठिलेम्बोक	२५	इप्पोठिक
५	लेम्बोक	१६	ठिकडा	२६	इप्पोठिक
६	डा	१७	ठिकसी	२७	इप्पोठिक
७	सी	१८	ठिकपाड	२८	इप्पोठिक
८	पाड	१९	ठिकयाड	२९	इप्पोठिक
९	याड	२०	इप्पोमेक	३०	सुम्बोकमेक
१०	ठिमेक				

children learning in Athpahariya. (Head Teacher)

- ❑ We enjoy learning in Athpahariya. (Students)
- ❑ The programme has addressed the linguistic rights of the Athpahariyas. (SMC members)

Challenges faced by teachers

- ❑ Lack of textbooks for Grades 2 and 3.
- ❑ Lack of appropriate teaching materials.
- ❑ Lack of expertise in developing teaching materials.

Facilities received from MOE

- ❑ Two training sessions.
- ❑ Seminars and orientation on MLE
- ❑ Financial support for textbook preparation
- ❑ Providing NRP 1000/ annually for producing pamphlets, leaflets and wall paintings.

Changes brought by MLE programme in children's behavior

- ❑ Friendly student teacher relationship has been created.
- ❑ Students have started feeling closer to teachers and more easily share their feelings.
- ❑ Students have started asking questions and they have become more enthusiastic to learn.
- ❑ They express their thoughts freely with teachers (A teacher teaching Grade 1 said in the past children did not know how to ask for permission if they wanted to go to the toilet. Now they can easily do so in Athpahariya).
- ❑ Children love to go to school regularly and

their performance has improved.

- ❑ The drop-out rate has decreased.
- ❑ Children feel it is easier to learn.
- ❑ Children interact more with their friends and teachers.
- ❑ The drop-out rate has decreased (for example, in Grade 2 there were 22 students admitted this year and all students appeared for the final examination).
- ❑ Students' achievement rate has increased after the implementation of MLE.
- ❑ The relationship between the school and the community/parents has become closer.

Preferred medium of instruction

In the focus group discussion, parents emphasized that their children should be taught in all three languages – Athpahariya, Nepali and English. On the one hand, they wanted to preserve their language and culture but on the other hand, they also wanted their children to become equally competent in Nepali and English. One parent strongly emphasized that 'our children should also be taught English like in private schools'.

They also revealed that about 50 children from their community go to private schools. They want their children to be taught in English. They said that English should also be equally emphasised in order to attract those students and increase the number of students in the school. Similarly, the Head Teacher and SMC members also reiterated the teaching of all three languages (Athpahariya, Nepali and English). The children who were studying in Grade 1 said that they learn easily. Parents said that their children are enjoying learning through Athpahariya.

Appendix 2

Shree Sharada Primary School, Sunsari

(Languages: Tharu and Uraw)

Shree Sharada Primary School is situated in Simariya-8, Sunsari district. The school is about eight kilometers from Duhabi town on the highway. The community is predominantly Tharu, Maithili and Uraw with a few people speaking Nepali. During discussions with Tharu teachers, they revealed that the language spoken by the Tharu and the Maithili people is almost similar and that is the reason why the language used in the school is called Maithili/Tharu. Both groups can understand each other

clearly; therefore, even though the medium of instruction is Tharu, it is also the language of the Maithili speaking students. The language is also different from the Tharu spoken in the other parts of Sunsari and Nepal. Living in close proximity within the community, both languages have been assimilated to create a unique blend of the languages. The three language groups, Tharu, Maithil and Uraw can understand each other's languages, which is another remarkable achievement that is reflected in the multilingual education programme implemented in the school. Teachers say that now most of the students, especially those who have studied under MLE, can understand each others language well, thereby allowing them to bond. This was not evident



previously as they were compelled to speak in Nepali, which inhibited their communication. The only problem is with the very young children who speak their own languages, as they have not been able to interact closely with the children of other communities.

During the interviews with the parents of the students of both the Tharu and Uraw communities, most of them mentioned that they do not interact with their children much regarding education because they are not educated enough to understand what their children say. However, they are happy that their children are willing to go to school on their own. Previously, they had to use stern measures or bribe them

to go to school. They also said that they cannot send their children to English medium/boarding schools due to their financial situation. They have small farms and depend heavily on subsistence farming and livestock. Their low income and lack of proper education are their major setbacks for access to wider socio-political and educational opportunities.

Tharus and Uraws in the community and school

The parents said that they speak their mother-tongues (MT) with their children most of the time. But they also speak the other languages



including, Tharu/Maithili, Uraw and Nepali. Even if the Maithili/Tharu and Uraw speakers cannot speak the others' languages fluently, they understand enough to communicate among each other comfortably. They speak in Nepali with their children, in the presence of other speakers who do not understand their language; however, they feel that knowing Nepali as well as English is crucial for their children to get good jobs and to improve their living standards. Therefore they want the school to give their children opportunities to learn these languages in higher grades.

The school has implemented MLE from nursery/ kindergarten (also called Early Childhood Development (ECD) or Early Childhood Education) level to Grade 3. The medium of instruction is Uraw and Tharu throughout kindergarten to Grades 1 and 2 except in subjects like Nepali and English. However, in Grade 3, there is a gradual transition from the mother-tongues (MT) to the Nepali language which is the medium of instruction in the higher grades. The MLE classrooms are different from the other classes. All around the walls, letters, words, names of months and days, numbers and pictures are in either Tharu or Uraw which creates a child friendly atmosphere. Teachers say that these wall paintings help reinforce learning and also encourage students of other languages to learn the language.

There are four teachers teaching the MLE classes. Two of them are Tharu speakers and two are Uraw speakers. Ms. Lalita Chaudhary, a Tharu speaker, teaches Tharu language, Science, and Social Studies as well as Uraw language. She uses both the Tharu and Uraw languages to teach, especially in the lower grades. Like Lalita,

Mr. Binod Chaudhary, a Tharu speaker, teaches Tharu language, Science, Social Studies and Mathematics using both languages as well as Nepali and Maithili, when need arises. They both speak Tharu, Uraw, Maithili, Nepali and some English. For both, Tharu is the medium of communication at home.

Mr. Kaliram Uraw speaks Uraw at home. However, he can speak Tharu, Maithili and Nepali as well. He teaches Uraw and Science. Whenever there is a need he uses all four languages to make sure students understand his subject in all of the grades he teaches.

As Devnagari is the writing system of the four languages, reading and writing pose no problem for the four MLE teachers. In Grade 1, both the Tharu and Uraw teachers have developed Social Studies and Science in their mother-tongues apart from Uraw and Tharu languages. Questions for examinations are also written in both the MT as well as in Nepali. The students are given the choice to answer in whichever language they feel comfortable. The MLE teachers have written Grade 2 textbooks in both languages but they have no money to print the textbooks. Irregardless, they use lessons from these books in class. They pointed out that the problem is not in teaching but rather that the students do not have texts to read by themselves at home. In such cases, learning may not be as effective as they want it to be. As reported by the SMC Chairperson as well, there is no money for the preparation, design and printing of textbooks in mother-tongues even though the teachers are capable.

Relevance of MLE programme

Focusing on the relevance of the MLE programme, parents agree that MLE classes are relevant in lower grades as children are more motivated to learn. Parents understand what their children are studying as they use their mother-tongues. The children do not feel inhibited. Before, parents had to use stern measures or bribe their children to go to school. Their children say that the teachers are also friendly.

The teachers say that MLE has helped the classes to be more child friendly and child centered. Students are eager to learn and even show off how much they know to their teachers, which is a sign that they treat their teachers like their parents and that they are bonded by mutual love and trust. The students also interact a lot with their peers, forming learning groups within their language group as well as with the other language groups. Teachers said that the breaking down of the language barrier has helped students to communicate and establish mutual respect and trust which is essential in MLE schools. This is a significant improvement from the time when the students could not

“In Grades 1 and 2 we (teachers) use the Tharu, Maithili and Uraw languages to teach so we found it difficult to finish our courses. As the students progressed to higher grades, they were able to understand the three languages plus Nepali. This benefits the students in two ways. It facilitates learning and it also bridges the language gap among students enabling higher interaction. This supports bonding for mutual respect and trust in a true MLE spirit.”

understand what their teachers were saying or did not know the language enough to ask to be excused to go to the toilet, to the present situation where they speak in their mother-tongues and can be understood by everyone. The retention of students is remarkable. So far only a few have left schools due to migration. They were Nepali and Maithili speaking students.

The SMC Chairman also agreed that the MLE programme has helped to attract more children to the school as well as to retain them. He also said that the relationship between the school and the communities has been enhanced through the programme. The Head Teacher who is also an MLE teacher of Uraw and who can speak Maithili, Uraw, Tharu and Nepali, feels that the programme has created a child-friendly environment in the school and has effectively bridged the previous gap between the school and the communities.



Parents also agreed that the MLE programme is relevant to their community as it helps future generations learn about their history, language, culture and identity. However, they also reported that all parents are not aware of the value of education in mother tongue.

Teachers agreed that the MLE programme is relevant for addressing linguistic diversity and for establishing mutual respect and trust in classrooms.

Children also agreed that it is easier for them to learn in their own languages and to learn other languages so that they can understand their friends better.

Attitudes towards MLE

- ☐ The programme is highly relevant to our context because it has encouraged children to come to school regularly, learn about each others' language and culture, and because it has helped establish mutual respect and trust among students and teachers. (Teachers)
- ☐ The programme has helped to preserve cultures and languages. (Teachers and parents)
- ☐ The programme is very good for the communities. Children should also be made equally competent in Nepali and English. (Parents)
- ☐ Not all parents are aware of the importance of MLE. (SMC member, teachers and parents)
- ☐ We enjoy learning in our languages and can also understand other languages. (Students)
- ☐ The programme has addressed the linguistic rights of the communities. (SMC member)

Challenges faced by teachers

- ☐ Lack of textbooks for Grades 2 and 3.
- ☐ Lack of appropriate teaching materials.
- ☐ Lack of funding for developing teaching materials.
- ☐ Lack of separate classrooms for MLE.
- ☐ Multigrade and multilingual classes create time insufficiency.

Facilities received from MOE

- ☐ Training on developing materials and teaching in MLE contexts.
- ☐ Seminars on and orientation to MLE.
- ☐ Financial support for textbook preparation.
- ☐ Providing NRP 1000/ annually for producing pamphlets, leaflets and wall paintings.

The Ministry of Education has yet to show a commitment for the implementation of MLE. Having extensive MLE policies on paper is not enough. Neglecting MLE schools like ours is like aborting the programme midway and declaring it a failure. During the pilot phase the programme was running effectively but now it is not going as effectively as was expected. There were many people visiting our school from the DoE during the pilot phase. We were invited to attend seminars and trainings in five star hotels in Kathmandu. Since the completion of the pilot phase nothing significant has happened. We have been forgotten.

Changes in children's behavior brought by the MLE programme

- ❑ Friendly student teacher relationship has been created.
- ❑ Students have started feeling closer to teachers and peers, and share their feelings more readily.
- ❑ Students have started asking questions and they have become more enthusiastic to learn.
- ❑ Students express their thoughts freely with teachers (A teacher teaching Grade 1 said in the past children did not know how to ask for permission if they wanted to go to the toilet, but now they do).
- ❑ Children love to go to school regularly and their performance has improved.
- ❑ The drop-out rate has decreased.
- ❑ Children feel it is easy to learn.
- ❑ Children interact more with their friends and teachers, creating mutual respect and trust.
- ❑ The student achievement rate has increased since the implementation of MLE.
- ❑ The relationship between the school and the community/parents has become closer.

Challenges for the Implementation of the MLE programme

Teachers said that there is a lack of awareness among parents about the importance of MLE. They feel that in the long run, the students of private schools who know English will have more opportunities than the Nepali or MT medium schools. They also feel that English should be learned from Grade 1.

The common view shared among the SMC Chairman, Head Teacher and teachers is the lack of human resources to teach mother tongues effectively. They also reported that parents are not convinced with the value of the MLE programme. Some other issues that emerged from the discussion with various stakeholders have been summarized as follows:

- ❑ The sustainability of the programme depends on the commitment from the MOE.
- ❑ In linguistically heterogeneous communities, MLE is very difficult to implement.
- ❑ The concern of the MOE towards MLE since the completion of the Finnish funding, seems to have decreased.
- ❑ There is a lack of proper budgeting for the implementation of the programme.
- ❑ Government's policy towards the implementation of MLE is inconsistent.

Appendix 3

Rajbansi and Santhal MLE in Jhapa

Shree Rastriya Ekata Primary School is situated at Haldibari 9 VDC in Jhapa District. The school is about 4 kilometers west from Chandragadi, the headquarters of Jhapa district. The community where the school is situated, is predominantly Santhal and Rajbansi. However, the population of Rajbansi is greater than that of Santhal, almost to the ratio of 1:4. The Rajbansis are also considered better off socio-economically than the Santhals. Most of the Santhals depend on

subsistence farming and livestock rearing while there are Rajbansis who have tea estates and larger tracts of farms. As a consequence, the Rajbansis are better educated. Rajbansis and Santhals have languages and cultures that are distinctly diverse from each other. Yet, students and teachers share an easy camaraderie and interact without any inhibitions, the staff, Mr. Dwarika Subedi (Head Teacher), Mr. Bishnu Rajbansi and Ms. Phul Kumari Hemram (MLE teachers), Mr. Lakhan Hemram, the Chairperson of the School Management Committee and Mr. Badaram Hemram, President of Nepal



They further elaborated that the students have benefited significantly from the MLE system. The students, especially the beginners are more confident in being seen and heard than they were before MLE was implemented. They believe that every child has the right to choose the medium of instruction they feel comfortable with.

Santhal Adibasi Utthan Sang pointed out. This bond among students can be attributed to their understanding of each other's languages, which also enhances communication, which results in mutual trust and respect. Teachers are role models as they can understand and speak the Rajbansi, Santhal and Nepali languages with equal ease.

The students are motivated to come to school and parents are satisfied that they do not have to force their children to attend school. The programme has also instilled the importance of MLE in parents and most of them are convinced that MLE helps students to learn effectively, preserves their languages and cultures, and creates harmony among the community through mutual respect.

The parents also said that they cannot send their children to English Medium/boarding schools due to their financial situation. They have small farms and depend heavily on subsistence farming and livestock. Their low income and lack of proper education are the major setbacks preventing access to wider socio-political and educational opportunities.

Rajbansi and Santhals in the community and school

The parents said that they speak their mother-tongues (MT) with their children almost all of the time. The occasions where they use Nepali or other languages are when they are among people who do not speak their languages. Most of the parents stated that they also speak and understand the other languages including, Rajbansi, Santhal and Nepali, enough to communicate among themselves. However, they feel that competence in Nepali as well as English is crucial for their children to have access to higher studies, to get good jobs and to improve their living standards. Their sentiments are echoed by the students who want the school to give them opportunities to learn these languages in higher grades.

The school has implemented MLE from Grades 1 to 3. The medium of instruction is Rajbansi, Santhal and Nepali. The two mother-tongues are used mostly in lower grades because the teachers have developed and printed textbooks for subjects like Social Studies, Science and Mathematics in their respective languages in Grades 1 and 2. They have also developed textbooks for Rajbansi and Santhal languages for Grades 1 and 2. There is a gradual transition from the mother-tongues (MT) to the Nepali language which is the medium of instruction in the higher grades from Grade 3 onwards.

The MLE classrooms are quite different from the other classes. The walls are decorated with letters, words, names of months and days,



numbers and pictures in either Rajbansi or Santhal. Some of the pictures are labeled in three languages simultaneously, creating a child friendly atmosphere. Teachers say that these wall paintings help reinforce learning and also encourage students of other languages to learn the language.

There are only two teachers teaching in the MLE classes. Ms. Phul Kumari Hemram is a Santhal teacher and teaches Social Studies,

Science, Mathematics and the Santhal language. Likewise, Mr. Bishnu Rajbansi teaches similar subjects in Rajbansi. Since the classes have mixed students, they use both languages as well as Nepali to ensure that students understand. Students are happy that not only the two MLE teachers but all of the teachers use the three languages to help students understand better. In examinations, the children are given the choice to write in their MTs or in Nepali.

The teachers have already developed textbooks for Grade 3 but they have no funding to print them. After the completion of the MLE Project, the Ministry of Education was unable to provide funding. However, the teachers used lessons from the books they developed in Grade 3. They pointed out that the lack of textbooks, supplementary materials and other teaching materials in mother-tongue which are essential for teaching, especially in the lower grades, has compromised their ability to teach effectively. It

has created problems for students as they do not have texts to read by themselves at home. As reported by the SMC Chairperson, there is no funding for the preparation, design and printing of textbooks in mother-tongues even though the teachers are capable.

Regarding MLE, parents have mixed feelings. Some of the parents would like to send their children to English medium schools. Discussions with teachers revealed that many students



migrated to other schools within the Haldibari Resource Centre, that were supposedly using English as the medium of instruction. However, some of the students returned when Shree Rastriya Ekata too, declared that it was going to use English as the medium of instruction. Despite the declaration, many schools did not use English as the medium of instruction and nor did Rastriya Ekta Primary School. In fact, the school is still implementing mother-tongues as the medium of instruction, especially in lower grades.

Relevance of MLE programme

Mr. Bishnu Rajbansi is proud that his is the first school to use the Rajbansi language as the medium of instruction. So is Ms. Phul Kumari Hemram who is a Santhal teacher of MLE. Both of them teach MLE classes from Grades 1 to 3. Both of them teach Social Studies, Science, and Mathematics in their respective mother-tongues apart from Rajbansi and Santhal language as one of the subjects. Although they do not have



monolingual classes, they are both fluent in the three languages, including Rajbansi, Santhal and Nepali, and they use them to teach MLE classes.

Mr. Bishnu Rajbansi and Ms. Phul Kumari Hemram believe that MLE is appropriate in their school and that it is a catalyst for effective teaching and learning, creating unity and harmony among people of the community through mutual respect and understanding of the wider multilingual society of Nepal.

Mr. Rajbansi and Ms. Hemram believe that since their community is predominantly Rajbansi and Santhal, it is only natural that children speak their mother-tongues at home and in their community. Teaching them in Nepali will take time and will not be as effective, as the academic sessions will end before they can master adequate Nepali. Therefore, teaching the concepts in their mother-tongues first and then improving their Nepali gradually makes more sense as well as serves both purposes rather than rote learning in a language they do not understand, like English.

Regarding the relevance of MLE, Mr. Rajbansi pointed out that if students of Grade 10 write down the meaning of difficult words or explanations in their mother-tongues, there is no doubt how essential MLE is for young children who do not have adequate exposure to languages other than their mother-tongues.

Being strong advocates of MLE, both Mr. Rajbansi and Ms. Hemram have helped to extend MLE to other schools. Each of them have chosen two other schools in Jhapa.

I. Santhal:

1. Janakalyan Primary School, Korobari
2. Laxmi Lower Secondary School, Jalthal 8

II. Rajbansi:

1. Shiva Lower Secondary School, Dalubari 8
2. Haldibari Higher Secondary School

These 4 schools teach Rajbansi and Santhal as one of the subjects at the primary level. They also use a bilingual medium to help students understand the lessons better. According to Mr. Rajbansi, there are about 20 schools that use Rajbansi as a bilingual medium. He is also a trainer of Rajbansi and MLE, and has trained about 25 Rajbansi teachers from primary schools.

Focusing on the relevance of the MLE programme, some parents agree that MLE classes are relevant in lower grades as more and more children attend school at younger ages than before, and therefore are less exposed to other languages. When children are not inhibited, they are more motivated to learn. Parents understand what their children are studying because they use their mother-tongues. Before the implementation of MLE, parents had a hard time persuading their children to go to school, but now children go on their own. Their children say that the teachers are also friendly.

The teachers say that MLE has helped the classes to be more child-friendly and child centred. Students are eager to learn and are not afraid to ask if they are confused or do not understand.

The power imbalance between the students and teachers is diminishing day by day which is a very healthy sign that classes are becoming child-centered and MLE classes. Mutual love and trust is developing among peers and teachers. The students interact with their peers and learn from each other. Teachers said that reducing the language barrier has helped students to communicate and establish mutual respect and trust, which is essential in MLE schools. It is indeed a far cry from the time when the students could not understand what their teachers were saying and did not know the language enough to ask to be excused to go to the toilet, to the present situation where they speak in their mother-tongues and can be understood by all. The retention of students is remarkable.

The SMC Chairman and the Head Teacher agreed that the MLE programme has helped to attract and retain more children. They feel that the programme has created a child-friendly environment in the school and has effectively bridged the gap between the school and the communities. Parents also agreed that the MLE programme is relevant to their community as it helps future generations learn their history, language, culture and identity. However, they also reported that all parents are not aware of the value of education in mother tongues.

Teachers agreed that the MLE programme is relevant for addressing linguistic diversity and for establishing mutual respect and trust in classrooms.

Children also agreed that it is easier for them to learn in their own languages. It also helps to know

other languages so that they can understand their friends better.

Attitudes towards MLE

- ❑ The programme is highly relevant to our context because it has encouraged children to come to school regularly, to learn about each others' language and culture, and has helped establish mutual respect and trust among students and teachers. (Teachers)
- ❑ The programme has helped to preserve the cultures and languages. (Teachers and parents)
- ❑ The programme is very good for communities. Children should also be equally competent in Nepali and English. (Parents)
- ❑ Not all parents are aware of the importance of MLE. (SMC member, teachers and parents)
- ❑ Children enjoy learning in their languages and can also understand other languages. (Students)
- ❑ The programme has addressed the linguistic rights of communities. (SMC Chairperson and Headmaster)

Challenges faced by teachers

- ❑ Lack of textbooks for Grades 2 and 3.
- ❑ Lack of appropriate teaching materials.
- ❑ Lack of funding for developing teaching materials.
- ❑ Lack of separate classrooms for MLE.
- ❑ Multigrade and multilingual classes create time insufficiency.
- ❑ Teachers need a high level of competence to teach MLE, especially in lower grades and multigrade settings.

Facilities received from MOE

- ❑ Training on developing materials and teaching in MLE situations.
- ❑ Seminars and orientations on MLE.
- ❑ Foreign exposure visits for empowerment.
- ❑ Financial support for textbook preparation.
- ❑ Providing NRP 1000/ annually for producing pamphlets, leaflets and wall paintings.

Changes brought by MLE programme in children's behavior

- ❑ A friendly student teacher relationship has developed.
- ❑ Students have started feeling closer to teachers and peers, and are sharing their feelings.

- ❑ Students have started asking questions and they have become more enthusiastic to learn.
- ❑ Students express their thoughts freely with teachers (A teacher teaching Grade 1 said in the past children did not know how to ask for permission if they wanted to go to the toilet, but now they do).
- ❑ Children love to go to school regularly and their performance has improved.
- ❑ The drop-out rate has decreased.
- ❑ Children feel it is easy to learn.
- ❑ Children interact more with their friends and teachers which creates mutual respect and trust.
- ❑ Students' achievement rate has increased after the implementation of MLE.
- ❑ The relationship between the school and the community/parents has become closer.

Teachers and Head Teachers are worried about the sustainability of the programme as the students lack textbooks written in their mother-tongues. Although the teachers, with the help of the community, are capable of writing textbooks, the lack of funding hampers them. Teachers have to spend extra time making lessons on their own in Rajbansi and Santhal languages especially in Grade 3, and it takes extra time to teach in two mother-tongues. The financial and moral support given during the MLE pilot phase has been drastically slashed. Neglected by the MoE, and with the parents' attraction for English medium education, the school is fighting a losing battle for the survival and sustainability of MLE. However, they are determined to continue the programme, even if the government is not going to provide support.

Challenges for the Implementation of the MLE programme

Teachers said that there is a lack of awareness among the parents about the importance of MLE. They feel that in the long run, the students of private schools with English will have more opportunities than students from Nepali or MT

medium schools. They also feel that English should be learned from Grade 1.

The common view shared by the SMC Chairman, Head Teacher and teachers is the lack of human resources to teach mother tongue effectively. They also reported that parents are not convinced with the value of the MLE programme.

Appendix 4

Interview Guidelines (Teachers)

District: School:

1. What languages do you speak?
2. Do you speak children's mother tongues?
3. What mother tongue do you teach?
4. Do you use MT while teaching MT itself and other subjects?
5. What is your perception towards MLE? Is this an appropriate programme in your school? Why or why not?
6. What challenges do you face while teaching in MLE? e.g. teaching different subjects, classroom management, time management, linguistically heterogenous class etc.
7. Has the MOE provided you with facilities, trainings and other required skills for MLE?
8. What is the perception of children, and parents towards MLE?
9. What differences have you noticed in children's performance after the implementation of MLE? e.g. interaction, drop-out, motivation, regularity
10. Do you think the MLE policy and programme is appropriate in Nepal? Why or why not?

Appendix 5

Interview Guidelines

(Head Teachers and SMC members)

District: School:

1. Do you speak children's mother tongues? (only for Head Teacher)
2. Do you use mother tongue while teaching other subjects? (only for Head Teacher)
3. What is your perception towards MLE? Is this an appropriate programme in your school? Why or why not?
4. What challenges do you face while implementing MLE? e.g. teaching different subjects, classroom management, time management, linguistically heterogonous class etc.
5. Has the MOE provided you or your teachers with facilities, trainings and other required skills for MLE? (for Head Teacher only)
6. What is the perception of children, and parents towards MLE?
7. What differences have you noticed in children's performance after the implementation of MLE? e.g. interaction, drop-out, motivation, regularity
8. Do you think the MLE policy and programme is appropriate in Nepal? Why or why not?
9. What suggestions do you provide to make MLE more effective?

Appendix 6

Focus Group Discussion Guidelines (Parents)

District: School:

Language and ethnic background:

1. Are you familiar with MLE?
2. What is your perception towards MLE? Do you like it? Why or why not?
3. What medium of instruction is being used in your child's school? (e.g. MT, Nepali or English or all)
4. What medium of instruction do you like your children to be taught? Why?
5. Do you think that MLE helps your children to learn effectively? Why or why not?
6. How often do you interact with your children in your MT in the family?
7. What is your child's perception towards MLE? Does he/she like being taught in MT? Why or why not?
8. Have you seen any difference in your child's study after the implementation of MLE in school?
9. What are the differences? For example, are they motivated to go to school?
10. What challenges do you see in the implementation of MLE?
11. Do you have any suggestions to improve it?

Appendix 7

Focus Group Discussion (Students)

District: School:

Language and ethnic background:

1. What grade do you study in?
2. What languages do you speak in your family and community? Mother tongue, Nepali etc.?
3. What medium of instruction is being used in your school? (e.g. MT, Nepali or English or all)
4. Which one do you like? Why?
5. Is it easy to learn through your mother tongue?
6. Is your mother tongue being taught to you? Do you like it? Why or why not?
7. How often do your teachers use your mother tongue in and outside classroom?
8. How do you feel when you are separated from other friends in terms of your mother tongue? Is it good?
9. How often do you interact with your friends in your MT in school?
10. Do you think that teaching in mother tongue should be continued up to higher level? Why or why not?

Appendix 8

Questionnaire

(Policy makers/educationists)

Name (Optional):

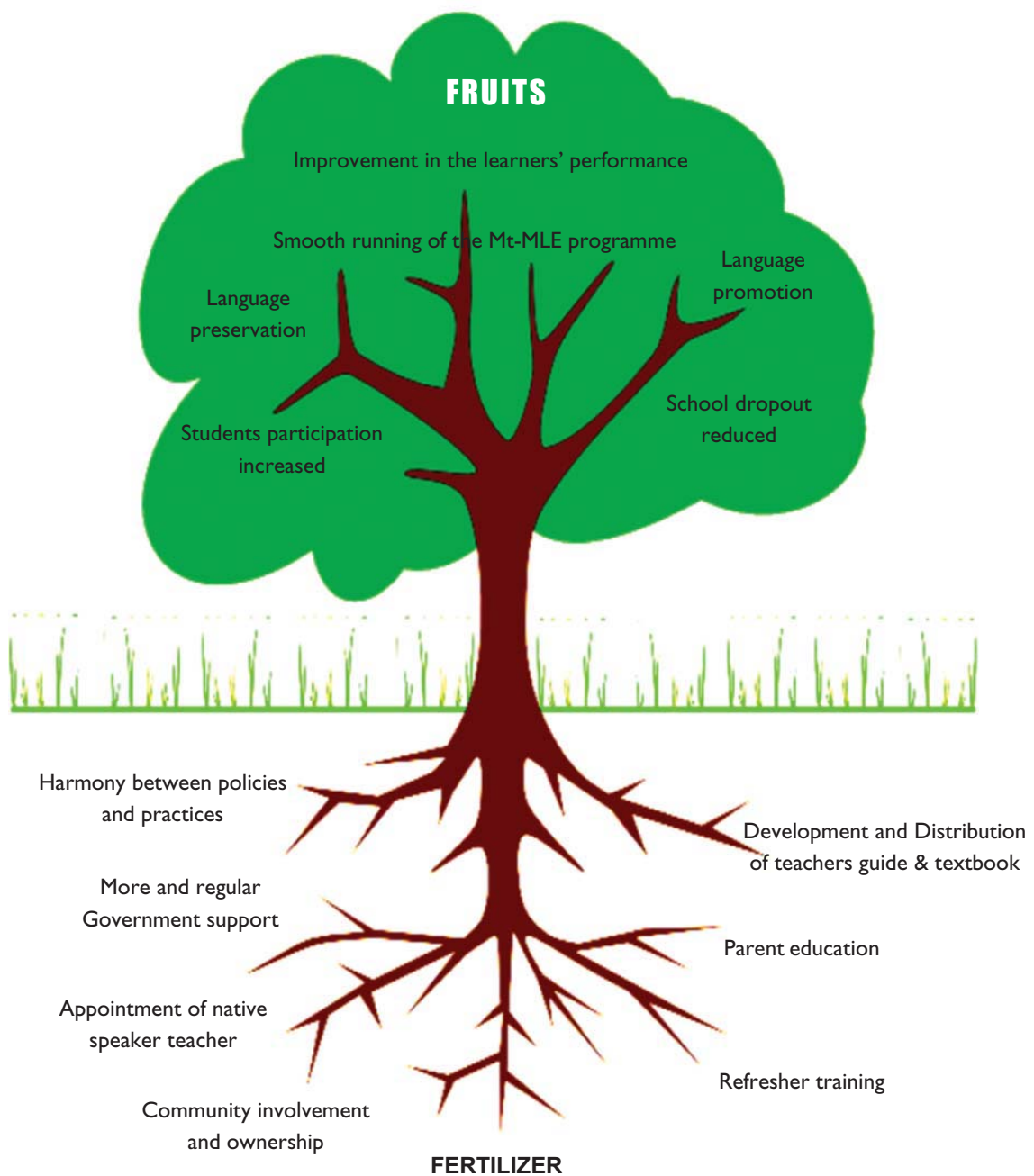
Institution:

Designation:

1. What do you know about multilingual education (MLE) policy in Nepal?
2. Do you think that MLE policy is appropriate in the context of Nepal? Why or why not?
3. Do you think that the role of government towards the implementation of MLE is satisfactory? Why or why not?
4. How do you assess the relevance of the MLE policy in the context that there is growing trend of shift from Nepali to English medium of instruction?
5. Do you think that MLE can be implemented in all contexts of Nepal? Why or why not?
6. Up to what grade children should be taught in their mother tongue? Why?
7. Do you think that the MLE policy should be implemented in private schools? Why or why not?
8. Do you think that the MLE programme sustains in Nepal? Why or why not?
9. What are the challenges of implementing MLE in schools?
10. Is there any policy which contradicts the MLE policy?
11. What do you suggest for effective implementation of MLE?

Appendix 9

Suggestions for the improvement of MLE implementation





Submitted to
 UNESCO Office in Kathmandu
 Sanepa -2, Lalitpur
 Nepal

Submitted by
 The Research Team
 Department of English Education
 Faculty of Education, TU
 May 2011