

MOTHER TONGUE-BASED MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION

Many Filipino learners face barriers in education. One of these barriers is that our learners often begin their education in a language they do not understand. Because they do not understand the language of education, many learners become discouraged and tend to drop-out from school. Content of material is often culturally distant or unfamiliar to the learners. The limited education that learners receive does not prepare them for lifelong learning.

Mother tongue-based multilingual education (MLE) is a formal or nonformal education, in which the children's mother tongue is used in the classroom as a bridge in learning Filipino and English. Children begin their education in a language they understand, their mother tongue, and develop a strong foundation in their mother language.

The purpose of a multilingual education program is to develop appropriate cognitive and reasoning skills enabling children to operate equally in different languages – starting in the mother tongue with transition to Filipino and then English. It is a structured program of language learning and cognitive development which provides learners with a strong educational foundation in the first language.

If the mother tongue is not used, we create people who are illiterate in two languages. Children do not become sufficiently fluent in their mother tongue (L1) in both oracy and literacy if their vocabulary in L1 is limited, thus restricting their ability to learn a second language (L2). A strong foundation in L1 is required for learning L2. Children's understanding of concepts is limited or confused if leaning is only L2.

The benefits of MLE include the following:

- Reduced drop-out
- Reduced repetition
- Children are attending school.
- Children are learning.
- Parents and community are involved.
- It is more cost - effective to implement mother tongue programs.

A region wide training was conducted last summer in preparation for this school year's pilot implementation. A Regional association of supervisors, school heads and teachers was organized during that training.

Feedback gathered from the pilot implementers revealed that teachers find the use of the MTB-MLE very useful. Pupils are very participative and most of them have learned to read by this time. Although some teachers find it tiresome, especially in the preparation of materials, but they feel rewarded by seeing the enjoyment among the pupils in their learning experiences. **CLMD**