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Preparedness on Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) and Instructional Competence of Grade 1 and 2 Teachers in Libungan West District

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Abstract

This study investigated the level of preparedness and instructional competence of Grade 1 and 2 teachers in Libungan West District, Libungan, Cotabato, Philippines, in implementing Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE). The research explored the socio-demographic profile of the teachers, their level of preparedness for MTB-MLE, their instructional competence, and the challenges they encounter. Findings revealed a very extensive level of preparedness for MTB-MLE across all areas: pupils, teachers, instructional materials, and training. Teachers believed that pupils were well-prepared to engage in MTB-MLE, and they felt confident in their ability to teach in the mother tongue. The availability of culturally appropriate instructional materials further supported the program's implementation. However, significant challenges were identified, including varying levels of fluency in the mother tongue among pupils, insufficient teacher training in MTB-MLE, and limited access to culturally relevant instructional materials. A strong positive correlation was found between teacher preparedness and instructional competence, highlighting the importance of adequate training and resources. The study concludes that while Libungan West District is well-prepared for MTB-MLE, addressing the identified challenges is crucial for ensuring the program's effectiveness and sustainability. Recommendations include providing comprehensive teacher training, developing culturally appropriate materials, and fostering a supportive school environment. By addressing these issues, the district can create a more equitable and effective educational environment that supports the linguistic and academic growth of all students.

Keywords: Level of Preparedness; Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education; Instructional Competence; Teacher Preparedness

1. Introduction

Background of the Study

The Philippines, with its diverse languages, faces the ongoing challenge of providing high-quality education

for all students. While the national language is crucial, the use of mother tongues in the classroom has gained prominence as a potential strategy to enhance learning. This study investigates the instructional competency of Grade 1 and 2 teachers in Libungan West District concerning Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), focusing on their preparedness for this evolving educational landscape. Understanding teacher readiness is vital for successful MTB-MLE implementation and ensuring equitable, effective education for all students in the district.

The mother tongue is an essential educational component of the basic education curriculum. It incorporates a child's native language into the classroom and the school's curriculum. At home with their family, the youngster speaks their mother tongue. By the time they are old enough to attend school, some children have acquired two or more languages. Children learn more effectively when taught in their mother tongue, however this isn't always possible (Manabat, 2016). Children are more dynamic and involved in schools when taught in their native tongue. They are more at ease inquiring and responding questions, sharing their opinions, and undertaking tasks independently (Arzadon, Calinawagan & Mceachern, 2020).

International organizations like UNESCO and various academic conferences have lauded the Philippines' 2013 decision to integrate multiple native languages into its basic education system through MTB-MLE (Arzadon, Calinawagan & Mceachern, 2020). This initiative, praised for increasing educational access and respecting cultural and linguistic diversity, serves as a model for other nations. The "Multilingual Philippines," a network of academics, educators, and advocates, actively promotes inclusive language and education policies (Arzadon, Calinawagan & Mceachern, 2020). Research emphasizes the benefits of mother tongue instruction for cognitive development and language acquisition, supporting the "linguistic interdependence hypothesis" which suggests that strong mother tongue skills facilitate the learning of other languages (Cummins, 2000). Furthermore, a strong connection to one's mother tongue fosters cultural identity, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011; Malone, 2018).

The Department of Education's DepEd Order No. 16 s. 2012 mandated MTB-MLE implementation in all public schools starting in School Year (SY) 2012–2013 as part of the K–12 Basic Education Program, aiming for "Every Child a Reader and Writer by Grade One" (Enclosure to DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2012). Effective MTB-MLE implementation requires teachers proficient in Grade 1 and 2 instruction to address learning gaps and ensure students meet learning standards. Lucero's (2018) study in a separate location highlighted the importance of high teacher instructional competency as a foundation for successful educational outcomes.

Related to this issue, a study was conducted by Lucero (2018). It shows that the level of instructional ability of educators was determined as the foundation for educational action cell sessions in this study. The mean revealed the following results: the educator's overall instructional competency is very high; curriculum, planning, and assessment are very high; all students are taught at a very high level; family and community engagement is very high; and professional culture is very high.

Libungan West District in Cotabato Division has implemented MTB-MLE since SY 2012-2013. While students come from diverse backgrounds, the prevalent mother tongue is Cebuano. This study addresses the need for research on local MTB-MLE implementation, specifically examining the instructional competency of Grade 1 and 2 teachers in relation to their ability to meet the learning needs of students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The scarcity of local research on this topic motivated this investigation. Do not change the format. Use this format for writing the manuscript.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Noam Chomsky's Innateness Theory

This research is based on Noam Chomsky's innateness hypothesis, which holds that although people are born with the capacity to learn a language, this ability must be developed through social interactions with adults and cognitive growth (Clark, 2009). Noam Chomsky's Innateness thesis highlighted the innatist constraints of the behaviorist perspective of language acquisition tasks, where children are born with an intrinsic knowledge that helps them in the language acquisition task. It is stressed that children's abilities make learning a first language easier than otherwise.

Language is not a self-contained communication system. Gesture, gaze, stance, facial expression, and voice quality are all part of the whole range of communication possibilities available to people. "In learning language, youngsters may first rely on nonlinguistic possibilities, both in their initial understanding and in their early use," the study found. Learning is complicated, and our gaining experiences impact the context in which it takes place (Clark, 2009).

Despite the intricacy of the process, Chomsky says that this inborn knowledge supports children in acquiring their native language in an uncomplicated and orderly manner. Language acquisition is possibly the most challenging aspect of a child's development. On the other hand, children do not appear to be aware of how much information they are absorbing and digesting (Aljoundi, 2014).

This theory is connected with the research in the case of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE) and the instructional competence of Grade 1 and 2 teachers in Libungan West District. These factors empowered the teachers' ability to foster the natural ability of children from various ethnic groups to acquire language through social interaction with cognitive development environments. The instructional competence of teachers can develop the cognitive status of learners by enhancing their innate ability even if they came from different ethnic origin.

The Interdependence Theory

The interdependence theory developed by Cummins (1979) describes how to effectively transfer literacy abilities from L1 to L2. According to him, the degree of proficiency a kid possesses in L1 at the start of rigorous L2 instruction influences the level of reading proficiency they achieve in L2. This implies that, if an education system submerges learners in L2 without first trying to further develop the skill they already have in L1, the school risks impeding their competency in L2 for years to come, while also limiting continued, autonomous development of their L1 (Ricablanca, 2014). This is because the sustained use of a foreign language of instruction in schools negatively impacts the way children, learn to think, thus inferring with their cognitive development (Simpson & Wigglesworth, 2008). Therefore, when education system imposes a foreign language on children, disregarding their initial contact with a language and pattern of processing new information, inhibits their development of cognitive function (Ricablanca, 2014).

The learners can start reading and writing in the L2 after they have a foundational understanding of the L1 and a working knowledge of the L2, effectively transferring their literacy skills to the familiar language. Cummins' (1991, 1999) interdependence theory and the idea of common underlying proficiency serve as the educational foundation

for this beneficial skill transfer, according to which linguistic information does not need to be relearned once oral L2 skills are established.. At the beginning of education, mother tongue instruction is very important not only to develop a strong educational foundation, but also to strengthen the cognitive development of learners (Ricablanca, 2014).

The distance between a student's home and school is significant if the mother tongue is not utilized in the classroom. By developing literacy skills in the first language, mother tongue-based multilingual education helps strengthen the first language and provides a smooth transition from L1 (first language) to L2 (national language) or L3 (international language) to be used as a medium of instruction (Ricablanca, 2014).

Teacher Efficacy Theory

Teacher efficacy, a cornerstone of Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997), significantly influences a teacher's instructional practices and ultimately, student outcomes. Defined as a teacher's belief in their capacity to effectively manage a classroom and positively impact student learning (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998), it becomes particularly crucial in the context of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE). MTB-MLE, while offering substantial benefits for students' cognitive and linguistic development (Cummins, 2000), presents unique challenges for teachers.

In this context, a teacher's self-efficacy includes their confidence in their capacity to overcome these obstacles. This includes having faith in their ability to instruct students in their mother tongue, which calls for not only subject-matter expertise but also a solid command of the local tongue and the flexibility to modify lesson plans to meet the individual linguistic requirements of each student.

Furthermore, effective management of multilingual classrooms is necessary for the successful implementation of MTB-MLE. Teachers must design inclusive learning environments that accommodate the variety of linguistic origins and learning styles present. This necessitates confidence in employing strategies that promote equitable participation, bridge linguistic gaps, and address the diverse needs of students with varying levels of language proficiency. The ability to modify instructional strategies to meet the unique needs of multilingual students is another crucial component of MTB-MLE teacher effectiveness. The capacity to adapt current techniques, create fresh ideas, and successfully apply a variety of teaching methodologies catered to the linguistic and cognitive demands of their students must be a source of confidence for educators. This might involve incorporating diverse teaching methodologies, using visual aids, and collaborating with other teachers or specialists.

Finally, specific abilities and knowledge are needed to evaluate students' comprehension in a bilingual environment. A teacher's confidence in their capacity to create and administer tests that fairly represent students' learning while accounting for their linguistic and cultural backgrounds is shown in this area of teacher efficacy. This might involve using a variety of assessment methods, adapting assessment materials, and interpreting assessment results in a culturally sensitive manner.

In MTB-MLE, high teacher efficacy basically means that a teacher has a strong belief in their abilities to overcome the difficulties that come with this approach and establish a productive and positive learning environment for every student. To comprehend and enhance the use of this educational paradigm, research examining the connection between teacher effectiveness and student outcomes in MTB-MLE contexts is essential (Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

Statement of the Problem

This study sought to look into the Instructional Competence of Grades 1 and 2 Teachers in The Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Instruction in Libungan West District. Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the socio-demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1. age,
 - 1.2. gender,
 - 1.3. religion,
 - 1.4. highest educational attainment, and
 - 1.5. trainings attended?
2. What is the level of preparedness on the mother tongue-based multilingual education instruction in terms of:
 - 2.1. pupil's preparedness,
 - 2.2. teacher's preparedness,
 - 2.3. instructional materials, and
 - 2.4 teacher's training?
3. What is the level of instructional competence of Grades 1 and 2 teachers handling mother tongue-based multilingual instruction in relation to:
 - 3.1. quality of instruction,
 - 3.2. professional behavior,
 - 3.3. teacher's belief, and
 - 3.4. content knowledge?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the level of MTB-MLE instruction and teachers' level of instructional competence in handling mother-tongue based multilingual instruction:
 - 4.1. of Grade 1 teachers alone;
 - 4.2. of Grade 2 teachers alone; and
 - 4.3. Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers when combined?
5. What are the challenges encountered in implementing instructional competence of Grades 1 and 2 teachers handling Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual instruction in terms of?

Significance of the Study

The outcome of this study will be significant to the following stakeholders:

Administrators. The outcome of this study will be utilized for future curriculum plans and may serve as reference information for administrators to determine the instructional competency of teachers participating in Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education for high-quality academic instruction in Libungan West District.

Teachers. This study serve as a model for teachers in teaching the topics for quality instruction, this study may give instructors information about the instructional competency needed to design Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education for high-quality academic instruction in Libungan West District.

Parents. This study may provide data to the parents of pupils from the different ethnic groups regarding the instructional competence educators usage in instruction of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education for cognitive development of pupils in Libungan West District and provide their support to achieve the educational goals.

Pupils. The result could be used as information to help students learn more about mother tongue subjects by letting them know how well teachers in Libungan West District are teaching mother tongue-based multilingual education.

Future Researchers. The result of this study may provide data to serve as a reference for future related studies.

Scope and Delimitations

This research focused on the Instructional Competence of Grades 1 and 2 Teachers in The Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Instruction in Libungan West District. This was conducted to Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers at Libungan West District in SY 2021-2022.

Definition of Terms

The succeeding terms were operationally defined to provide the meaning of the concepts discussed in this study:

Content Knowledge. This refers to the stored knowledge on Mother Tongue exhibited by teachers required in teaching Grade 1 and 2 pupils at Libungan West District.

Ethnic Origin. This refers to the Grade 1 and Grade 2 pupils who belong to different groups with different dialects affected by the Mother Tongue academic instructions at Libungan West District.

Instructional competence. This refers to the knowledge, skills, and values acquired by teachers used in conducting instructional activities in using Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education to pupils in Libungan West District.

Level of Instructional Competence. This refers to the level of proficiency that instructors in Grades 1 and 2 demonstrate when instructing Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in the Libungan West District.

Level of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education. This refers to a guide to the use of mother tongue-based multilingual education with students in grades 1 and 2.

Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE). This refers to the subject included in the basic education curriculum implemented based on the standard dialects used in the community for Grade 1 and Grade 2 pupils in Libungan West District.

Professional behavior. This refers to the attitude of teachers instructing in Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in Grade 1 and II pupils despite the different ethnic origins belonging in Libungan West District.

Quality of instruction. This refers to teachers' effectiveness in teaching Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in Grade 1 and 2 learners who belong to different ethnic groups in Libungan West District.

Teacher's belief. This refers to the confidence exhibited by teachers to provide practical instructions to Grade 1 and II Grade 1 and II pupils on Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in Libungan West District

2. Review of Related Literature

Defining Mother Tongue in Education

The term "mother tongue" refers to the first language that a person learns, usually in early childhood from their parents or other primary caregivers. It is frequently seen as the language that is most engrained in an individual's identity and in which they feel most at ease and proficient. This concept is often referred to as a person's "native language" or "first language" (Crystal, 2003). In addition to being a tool for communication, a person's mother tongue can provide insight into their cultural background and foster a sense of community.

The importance of the mother tongue goes beyond personal identity and plays a crucial role in cognitive development. Research by Cummins (2000) highlights the "linguistic interdependence hypothesis," which suggests that knowledge acquired in one language can transfer to another. This means that a strong foundation in the mother tongue can significantly benefit students' ability to learn other languages (Cummins, 2000). Furthermore, studies have shown that children who maintain a strong connection to their native language often display a deeper understanding of themselves and their place within society, leading to increased self-esteem and confidence (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011).

While the concept of "mother tongue" may seem straightforward, it can be more complex in multilingual contexts. Individuals may have multiple languages they consider to be their "mother tongue," particularly in communities where bilingualism or multilingualism is prevalent. In these cases, the "mother tongue" may be the language most closely associated with a person's cultural identity or the language they feel most comfortable expressing themselves in (Fishman, 1991). Understanding the multifaceted nature of "mother tongue" is crucial for promoting linguistic diversity and creating inclusive learning environments that respect and value the unique linguistic backgrounds of all students.

The Advantage of Using Mother Tongue

According to Arzadon, Calinawagan, and Mceachern (2020), there are several benefits for a child learning in their mother tongue dialect in the teaching environment. a) children are more likely to take up and learn other languages if they speak their mother tongue. b) A child's cultural, social, and personal identities are shaped by their mother tongue. c) Using a child's original language aids analytical reasoning and literacy skills development. d) Studies show that students who learn in their mother tongue understand the material better. f) When kids switch to a second language, they do not need to be taught the same skills they learned in their mother tongue. f) Children who learn in their mother tongue like school more and pick things up faster because they feel more at ease in their environment. g) Children who are taught in their native language have higher self-esteem. h) As a result of the parent's ability to assist with schoolwork, the parent-child relationship improves. Children who benefit from multilingualism have an advanced socioeconomic status and make more currency, according to research.

The major benefits of utilizing the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, especially in early childhood education, are highlighted by a large body of research. Children who receive instruction in their native language show improved literacy skills, stronger academic performance across a range of subjects, and enhanced cognitive development, according to numerous studies on bilingualism and academic achievement, including those by Cummins (1984, 2000) (Thomas & Collier, 2002). This positive impact is attributed to the inherent familiarity and comfort students experience when learning in a language they understand deeply, fostering greater comprehension

and engagement with the learning material (Krashen, 1996).

Furthermore, utilizing the mother tongue promotes a stronger sense of cultural identity and self-esteem, as it validates students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds within the educational setting (UNESCO, 2003). While the benefits of multilingualism are widely acknowledged, research suggests that a strong foundation in the mother tongue serves as a crucial springboard for acquiring additional languages later on, rather than hindering the process (Baker, 2011).

Conversely, studies have shown that forcing children to learn in a language they do not fully grasp can lead to frustration, disengagement, and ultimately, lower academic achievement (Skutnabb-Kangas & Toukomaa, 1976). As a result, using the mother language in the classroom is essential to guaranteeing fair access to high-quality education and supporting the overall development of young students, not only a question of linguistic preference. According to Gay (2010), this method is in line with the more general ideas of culturally responsive teaching and learning, which emphasize the value of integrating students' varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds into the educational process.

Reasons of Offering Mother Tongue Program

The implementation of MTB-MLE programs in schools is increasingly recognized as a crucial strategy for improving educational outcomes and fostering inclusive learning environments. Numerous compelling reasons support the integration of students' native languages into the curriculum, drawing upon extensive research and diverse scholarly perspectives.

Enhanced Cognitive Development and Academic Achievement

Cognitive growth and academic achievement in a variety of topics are greatly improved by a solid mother language foundation (Cummins, 2000; Genesee, 1987; Saville-Troike, 2003; Thomas & Collier, 2002). Students who get instruction in their first language have improved understanding, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, according to numerous studies. Later on, learning additional languages and disciplines is made easier by this solid linguistic foundation.

Fostering Cultural Identity, Pride, and Self-Esteem

MTB-MLE programs play a vital role in preserving and celebrating students' cultural heritage and linguistic diversity (Malone, 2018; Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1994; UNESCO, 2003). Students' general well-being and motivation to learn are positively impacted when they learn in their mother tongue because it promotes a sense of pride, self-worth, and belonging. Respect for various cultural identities is encouraged and linguistic prejudice is opposed by this inclusive strategy.

Improved Literacy Development in All Languages

Research shows that the development of literacy in other languages is positively correlated with having high literacy skills in the mother tongue (Au, 1980; Krashen, 1996). A strong foundation in mother tongue reading and writing translates to other languages, speeding up the development of literacy skills and enhancing reading comprehension in general.

Facilitating Second Language Acquisition

Contrary to the misconception that mother tongue instruction hinders second language learning, research shows that a strong foundation in the mother tongue actually facilitates second language acquisition (Cummins, 2000;

Genesee, 1987; Lambert, 1974). This is because students develop strong cognitive and linguistic skills that transfer to other languages, leading to faster and more effective second language learning.

Increased Parental and Community Involvement

MTB-MLE programs promote greater parental and community involvement in education (Malone, 2018; Hornberger, 2006). When schools value and utilize the language spoken at home, parents feel more connected and empowered to participate in their children's education. This collaboration strengthens the educational process and enhances student outcomes.

Promoting Social Justice and Equity

MTB-MLE plays a crucial role in promoting social justice and equity in education (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1994; UNESCO, 2003). It addresses the historical marginalization of linguistic minority groups by providing equal access to quality education in their native language. This approach makes learning more egalitarian for all kids and helps to reduce the achievement gap.

The Implementation of DepEd on Mother Tongue-Based Learning

The Philippines, a nation teeming with linguistic diversity, has long grappled with the challenge of providing effective education to its multilingual population. The implementation of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) in 2013, as part of the Enhanced Basic Education Act (Republic Act 10533), marked a significant shift in the country's educational landscape. This approach sought to enhance learning results, protect cultural heritage, and promote national unity. It was based on the idea that children learn best in their mother tongue. But the process of putting MTB-MLE into practice has been intricate and multidimensional, with both advantages and disadvantages.

In the Philippines, early research on MTB-MLE showed promise for improving learning, especially in early childhood schooling. According to research, pupils who received instruction in their mother tongue had enhanced comprehension of academic topics, stronger cognitive development, and increased reading skills. According to Bialystok's (2001) research, pupils who received instruction in their first language during their primary school years showed stronger and earlier development of metalinguistic awareness and cognitive flexibility than students who only spoke one language. This approach aligned with global trends in multilingual education, where numerous studies have shown the positive impact of mother tongue instruction on cognitive development and academic achievement. Through several measures, such as resource allocation, teacher training, and material production, the Department of Education (DepEd) has aggressively pushed MTB-MLE. DepEd Order No. 74, s. formally established MTB-MLE as a national policy in 2009, requiring that all students in kindergarten through third grade receive instruction in their native or regional languages. Later guidelines and memoranda have further strengthened this policy.

Despite the strong policy framework and the theoretical benefits of MTB-MLE, its implementation has faced significant challenges. One major hurdle has been the lack of adequately trained teachers who are proficient in the diverse mother tongues spoken across the Philippines. The development of high-quality learning materials in various languages has also been a persistent challenge, leading to uneven implementation and varying levels of effectiveness. The studies of Eslit (2017), Gamutan (2019), and Po (2019) indicate that the transition phase from mother tongue to English-medium instruction is a critical area requiring further attention and research. In order to minimize learning gaps and maximize students' chances of academic achievement, effective techniques must be created to guarantee that students are well prepared for the transfer. Additionally, some children have faced challenges throughout the

shift from mother tongue instruction to English-medium education in higher grades, which could result in learning gaps and impede their academic advancement.

The implementation of MTB-MLE has also been influenced by sociolinguistic variables. With more than 175 different languages spoken in the Philippines, it has proven difficult to create and execute a standardized method of teaching mother tongues. Additionally, because English and Filipino have historically dominated education and culture, some people believe that knowing English is necessary for success, which makes them resistant to MTB-MLE. The study by Da Galea, Peralta, and Abocejo (2022) also showed that sociolinguistic factors, like the distribution of languages in various regions and the belief that English is the language of prestige, had an impact on the program's implementation. The study suggested language mapping to ascertain the distribution of languages in schools and to create evaluation instruments that are linguistically and culturally responsive.

Another significant challenge has been the assessment of learning outcomes in MTB-MLE. Hunahunan (2019) found that teachers faced challenges in assessing students' learning in their mother tongue due to the lack of appropriate assessment tools and materials. The study also emphasized the necessity of providing teachers with further training on MTB-MLE evaluation procedures. When taught in their native tongue, students' comprehension and abilities may not be sufficiently measured by traditional assessment techniques, which are frequently created for English-medium instruction. Accurately assessing MTB-MLE's efficacy has required the creation of linguistically and culturally suitable assessment instruments.

Despite the difficulties, there have been some encouraging outcomes from the use of MTB-MLE. According to Aguja, Aliña, and Prudente (2018), a greater level of student engagement, active participation, and freedom of expression resulted in increased communication and higher-order thinking abilities. Research has indicated that children who have been taught in their mother tongue from an early age have performed better academically, especially in language and literacy. Additionally, the curriculum has promoted inclusivity and national unity by cultivating a deeper understanding for linguistic and cultural variety.

The Philippines is still working on the MTB-MLE implementation, which needs constant review, modification, and improvement. This policy's effectiveness depends on resolving issues with evaluation, sociolinguistic variables, teacher preparation, and material development. For MTB-MLE to be implemented effectively and fairly, stakeholders must be dedicated, collaborate, and do ongoing research. This would ultimately help achieve the aim of giving all Filipino children access to high-quality education.

DepEd Order No. 16 s. 2012

Section 16 of DepEd Order No. "Guidelines on the Implementation of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE)," published in 2012, requires all public schools across the country to teach Kindergarten and Grades 1-3 in the mother tongue beginning in the 2012–2013 school year. By utilizing their native language capabilities, the organization seeks to improve pupils' linguistic, cognitive, intellectual, and sociocultural abilities. In regions where there are many mother tongues, it describes two implementation models: one that uses the pupils' mother tongue directly, and another that uses the local lingua franca. The use of twelve major languages is described, along with guidelines for adjusting to various linguistic circumstances.

This is a relevant policy document in the context of MTB-MLE implementation. It acknowledges the order's significance in shaping the program's execution and its impact on teacher training and curriculum development (Paz, 2018). The order also emphasizes the importance of teacher training, outlining the composition and roles of regional training teams. It highlights the necessity of a seamless and efficient bridging process by addressing the shift to

Filipino and English as the mediums of instruction in higher grades.

Section 16 of DepEd Order No. The year 2012 had a significant impact on how MTB-MLE was implemented in the Philippines. Numerous studies emphasize its main features, its influence on curriculum creation and teacher preparation, and the continuous attempts to resolve issues and improve the program's efficacy (Paz, 2018; Lan-Quintero, 2018). All things considered, the memo offers a thorough framework for putting MTB-MLE into practice, with the goal of enhancing learning outcomes and cultural preservation by carefully utilizing students' native tongues.

Language Barriers in Education: A Hindrance to the Learners

As indicated by McConville (2019), UNESCO predicts that 171 million individuals may get away from extreme neediness assuming all understudies procured Basic Literacy Skills. As a result of language obstacles, numerous understudies end up unskilled notwithstanding long periods of tutoring. Numerous semantic minority understudies end up ignorant regardless of long stretches of tutoring. As per Concern Kenya Country Director Wendy Erasmus, this uncovers that evaluations show that when understudies are in grades six, seven, and eight. Understudies can recount what is written in a book yet don't fathom it.

The condition depicted is not extraordinary to Kenya. Classes are given in French and Haitian Creole a great many kilometers across the Atlantic in Haiti. Numerous Haitian kids, notwithstanding, don't communicate in both of these dialects. According to a World Bank-sponsored test, 29% of third graders, 49% of second graders, and 76% of first graders were unable to read even one word of Haitian Creole. When equivalent understudies were attempted in French, the results were similar (McConville, 2019).

Furthermore, Mishra (2019) emphasizes the vicious cycle of language disadvantage that results from the absence of mother languages from education in her paper on tribal children in India. Mishra contends that disadvantaged communities experience poverty, capability deprivation, and educational failure as a result of this isolation. In order to overcome the language barrier and empower indigenous youth, he highlights the necessity of multilingual education initiatives.

Kim and Mattila (2011) provide insightful information about the difficulties faced by students who are not proficient in the language of instruction in their article on language obstacles for immigrants. The authors highlight the significance of language acquisition for effective integration and learning while discussing a variety of communication hurdles, such as variations in accent, idioms, and language structure.

Velasco (2023) provides a comprehensive analysis of Philippine language-in-education policies, tracing their historical evolution and the challenges of MTB-MLE implementation. He examines arguments for and against English dominance, referencing Bernardo (2009), and Nolasco (2008), ultimately advocating for a balanced approach that values both mother tongues and English.

Bernardo (2009) explores the significance of English in the Philippine education system, posing the question: "Is English really the solution or is it the problem?" He presents a balanced perspective, outlining arguments both for and against the intensified use of English. Supporters argue that English promotes social integration, is valuable in economic and intellectual domains, and presents pragmatic difficulties when shifting away from it. The colonial and oppressive history of English, as well as its possible negative impacts on Filipino students, are cited by its detractors. Nolasco (2008) focuses on the "basic weakness" of the Philippine education system: students' lack of comprehension of teachers' instructions. He argues that this issue stems from the use of English and Filipino as mediums of instruction, despite the fact that many students are not fluent in either language. Nolasco cites extensive research to

support the need for educational reforms that institutionalize the use of mother tongues as the medium of instruction, ultimately advocating for a complete shift away from the bilingual education policy.

These studies collectively demonstrate the significant impact of language barriers on learners, particularly in the context of MTB-MLE. They highlight the need for effective policies, resources, and strategies to address these barriers and ensure that all learners have equal opportunities to succeed.

Suggestions to Cope

McConville (2019) continued in *Rewriting the Rules*. The tests in Kenya, Haiti, Liberia, and Niger all yielded encouraging results. Wendy Erasmus in Kenya adds, "Children can get comfortable reading and writing in a language that they know." "Then kids transition to English and Swahili in years three and four." What had been observed was incredibly amazing... a significant improvement in these children's reading and writing abilities." This approach is anchored with UNESCO's suggestion for initial mother tongue instruction. The advantages of this early education will continue as students advance into national language-taught schools. Additionally, proficiency in both languages is necessary for teachers to succeed. Concern has been supporting these initiatives by providing learning resources, teacher training, and curriculum development.

Furthermore, MacConville (2019) claims that continuing what pupils have learnt at home has a significant impact on pupils' learning, which teachers should consider. Mr. Sode, a second-grade teacher at St. Peter's Primary School in Sagante, Kenya, poses a question in Borana. Daki Guyo, 6, eagerly springs to her feet in answer. It was clear that she is well-versed in the subject and eager to demonstrate her expertise. "This really assists children to learn in school more effectively, because it is a continuation of what they have learnt at home... and what they learn in school is also reinforced at home," Concern's Benson Thuku observes.

Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development: An International Journal

A new educational program was implemented by the Philippine government that from an early age, children are encouraged to learn in their mother tongues. Which presented difficulties for linguists and educators because of the diverse range of linguistic backgrounds present in every Philippine classroom. This suggested that the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education approach is challenging and affects both teachers and students. The results of this study showed that the current situation in the Philippines had explained two approaches that might have a positive consequence for adopting mother tongue-based education based on current research and a thorough assessment of the country's linguistic condition. Additionally, the author includes information from his earlier studies on the topic conducted in the Philippines (Wa-Mbaleka, 2014).

Description on Pupil's Preparedness

In their 2016 study, *Mother Tongue-Based Instruction: Policy to Practice*, Navarro, Abao, Bacus, Alda, and Espera examined how prepared students were to use their mother tongue with kindergarten through third-grade students. Teachers and curriculum planners/policymakers faced challenges and opportunities regarding topics related to mother tongue and the medium of instruction. From the information taken from the investigation it was found that the educators' significant degree of mindfulness and execution had explicit advantages and opportunities for the understudies which permitted the conduct of the study and partake in different learning exercises. This have developed more mindful of the program's significance in advancing worldwide mindfulness for both the understudies and the teachers (Navarro, Abao, Bacus, Alda, and Espera, 2016).

Children Learn Better in their Mother Tongue

According to Ball (2014) UNESCO has encouraged mother tongue instruction in primary education that highlights the advantages of mother tongue education right from the start because the findings indicate that globally, there are 50-75 million 'marginalized' children who are not enrolled in school whose primary language is not the language of instruction in school are more likely to drop out of school or fail in early grades.

Kosonen,(2005) said that children are more likely to enroll and succeed in school while Benson (2002) emphasized that parents are more likely to communicate with teachers and participate in their children's learning; further it was indicated that girls and rural children with less exposure to a dominant language stay in school longer and repeat grades less often (Hovens, 2002; UNESCO Bangkok, 2005); and children exposure to multilingual education tend to develop better thinking skills compared to the monolingual peers.

Further, Ball (2014) stated that, contrary to what some educators contend, the initial language lessons given to students are likely to accomplish the objectives of education for all. Additionally, research indicates that using mother-tongue-based, multilingual education (MTB-MLE) to engage marginalized children in school is an effective paradigm.

A review on academic Competencies for Mother-Tongue Teacher Education directed by Liliana Ma (2014) examined that Professional Standards for Teachers of Languages Professional principles are a bunch of assumptions and requests identifying with the information, capacities, and perspectives that educators are relied upon to show in their associations with pupils at a level that society acknowledges as good. This term relates to the observable and measurable aspects of a teaching profession. Logical information, educational capability, qualities, and mentalities were seen as the absolute minimum of abilities expected of language teachers. Kelly et al. (2002) determine that the skills portrayed ought to incorporate the character attributes regular of a decent language instructor, and what these mean for study hall learning; the qualities of a strong homeroom environment, and how this can be made and kept up with; and the manners by which an educator can make and support pupil inspiration, eagerness to talk, and gathering inspiration, while additionally considering individual pupil contrasts and individual union. According to the point of view of beginning preparing, proficient guidelines continuously coordinate the fundamental information and abilities that are needed by language instructing, for the effective joining in the pedantic profession.

A framework for creating and enforcing professional standards for mother-tongue teachers is another goal of the project. The key issue addressed in this assessment is the lack of a set of defined guidelines for the primary training of first language teachers. The flow study in this area is focused on the most significant methods and momentum research in the field of expert guidelines for language educators generally, as well as reference materials for first language instructor schooling especially, according to the hypothesis.

This review fostered an imaginative methodology for the preparation of pre-administration native language educators determined to characterize academic guidelines, which is in accordance with current strategies. The goal of the flow research tries to distinguish explicit instructive abilities at the degree of beginning projects for native language educator schooling. The current's review will probably recognize specific instructive skills at the essential degree of primary language educator training programs. An advisory group including 38 experts in the field of advanced education language instruction was asked to survey the academic capability-based functional classifications. The poll's findings indicate that participants will think of an alternative approach to developing effective pre-administration training guidelines for native language teachers.

Another investigation, titled Teacher Preparation in Mother Tongue Education, was conducted in 2010 by Hans

Hulshof and Mary Kooyon. A nation's mother tongue—for instance, Greek in Greece—reflects its culture and personality. It should come as no surprise that this influences and shapes native language education in college educator training programs. Social assortment all through the world, just as movements that outcome in multicultural countries, make characterizing a common perspective of the critical ideas and capacities fundamental in educator training and in schools progressively testing. This article centers around topic information, proficient and academic skill, and field-based encounters, which are terrifically significant pieces of primary language instructor schooling. It likewise recommends that overall discourse and study be sought after to more readily get ready instructors in manners that mirror the evolving nature, information, and practices of mother language training.

The Mother Tongue-Based Literacy and Education Teaching and Learning Materials

The primary premise that underpins all successful education, according to Literacy and Education (2021), is that individuals acquire finest when they "move from the known to the unknown." This implies that they may utilize what they currently distinguish as a basis for gaining something new education. This suggests that various pupils in mainstream education programs from non-dominant language groups have difficulties since neither the language nor the substance of teaching is familiar to them. They are denied a basic basis for learning since their own dialect and information are not allowed in the classroom.

Besides, in the authority instruction framework, primary language first training programs accentuate that the information and knowledge that children carry from their homes and networks are the finest assets for aiding them in becoming fruitful pupils in school. In the early grades, the understudies' local language is the main language utilized for instructing and learning, and it stays one of the homeroom dialects in later years. At the point when classes and perusing materials utilize recognizable substance (individuals, spots, and exercises) to clarify new ideas, little youngsters secure certainty as fruitful pupils. The goal is for understudies to achieve grade level skills and to be ready to keep contemplating in school and then some (Literacy & Education, 2021).

Teaching and Learning Materials for Mother Tongue-Based Literacy and Education

According to the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) (2002), a fundamental idea that guides all effective education is that learning occurs most effectively when a student builds on their prior knowledge. Many students struggle because they are unfamiliar with the language and the subject matter of the lessons" Due to the exclusion of their own language and knowledge from the classroom, students are deprived of the fundamentals of education. In mother tongue-based education, successful students contribute their home and community knowledge and experiences, which are the most effective in assisting them in becoming successful students. In the early grades, the students' native tongue is the only one utilized for instruction and learning; in later grades, it is also used in the classroom. By teaching in their native tongue, students are expected to meet grade-level competencies and be ready to continue their education both inside and outside of the classroom. In non-formal mother tongue-first education programs, learners and adults learn how to access and convey information and ideas both orally and in writing using the same abilities that were taught and utilized in the first language. This is to get the students ready to apply what they have learned for the long-term growth of their nation, community, and themselves.

The staff of the Summer Institute of Linguistic (SIL) collaborates with stakeholders and local communities to create a variety of resources in the local language. These include teaching and learning guidelines, curriculum and lesson plans, instructional resources for early primary school subjects, community new sheets, and primers for basic literacy education, which contain alphabet charts and instructional aids.

Another is health information, which includes local and cultural literature, dictionaries, pedagogical grammars,

numerous shell books, and information on community development, such as beekeeping, agriculture, leadership, income production, and repair guides. Transitional materials also help preserve culture and language by providing a bridge from the national language to the local language or from the local language to the national language, which gives access to knowledge found in the greater body of literature. Additional resources include helpful phrase booklets, lesson plans and curricula for language learning, transitional literacy resources, and dictionaries and textbooks for second language acquisition.

One study focused on the Philippines, the leading nation in Southeast Asia to implement a public policy mandating first language grounded multilingual education (MTB-MLE) throughout the elementary school years. Although research has long supported using one's native tongue as a teaching method, most of these studies have been implemented in private rather than public settings. This study examined how teachers and parents in a particular Philippine school district interpret and administer MTB-MLE questions. The facts, opinions, and behaviors of teachers and parents were investigated in order to determine the practical implementation of the public language plan. Additionally, study and analysis were done on the difficulties in implementing agreements.

This review used a contextual analysis process and focused on center gatherings, surveys, study hall perceptions, and individual meetings. One month after the start of MTB-MLE implementation in the schools, the data was collected over the course of three weeks in June and July 2012. The findings of this review revealed that the majority of educators' and guardians' perceptions of MTB-MLE focused on the arrangement's short-term benefits and long-term drawbacks. Although the two groups expressed satisfaction with the improvement in understudy comprehension, they expressed concern about the long-term effects of focusing on Bikol instead of English. Their actions and words revealed covert opposition, but they openly supported the plan insofar as following the rules. The management of language strategy is the focus of these findings' consequences. Language strategy should not be implemented in a hierarchical system that ignores the surrounding environment, but rather through associations between the top and the base (Burton, 2013).

In March 2012, Zubeida Khatoom Desai conducted a second study titled "A Case for Mother Tongue Education." This study attempted to address a problem that is commonly discussed in South Africa in terms of binary concepts. The question asks whether a language of greater communication, like English, or a well-known local language, like Xhosa, should be used as the medium of instruction. The study examined the writing skills of Grade 4 and 7 students at Themba Primary in Khayelitsha, Western Cape, in both English, which has been their official language of instruction since Grade 4, and their native Xhosa. The data seems to confirm the following theory: First, students at schools such as Themba Primary are not prepared to transition to English as a fourth language. Second, in order for students to learn in their mother tongue, they need to develop their Xhosa cognitive academic language proficiency.

This is made possible by the use of Xhosa academic literature by students. Finally, pupils must be exposed to regular contact with both Xhosa and English literature. Reading entails a lot more than just deciphering. Fourth, to enhance their productive abilities in both Xhosa and English, pupils require frequent and consistent chances to produce diverse types of texts. One ethical question raised by this research is whether schools should continue to use the current language in education policy, even if it disadvantaged pupils by failing to recognize their existing linguistic abilities (Desai, 2012).

Strategies and Challenges Teachers Face in Using Mother Tongue-Based Instruction in a Multilingual Classroom at Saint Louis University in Baguio City, Philippines, were published by Lartec et al. (2014). This study examines how understudies' learning is affected when a native language is used in the homeroom in a multilingual setting. As a blending and educational hub of the north, Baguio City, Philippines, needs educational practices that not only adapt to the interconnectedness of other societies and dialects, but also value them. This article analyzed educators'

strategies for taking on Mother Tongue - Based Instruction in a Multilingual Classroom and featured a portion of the challenges they face. The review depended vigorously on subjective investigation, with interviews filling in as the essential wellspring of data. The results showed that teachers employed strategies like translating from a target language to a primary language, teaching multiple languages, using the most common language, creating informational materials on the spot in a primary language, remediating guidance, and drawing inspiration from an artistic work written in a primary language. Teachers have struggled to embrace primary language-based education because of a lack of resources provided in the primary language, a lack of jargon, and a lack of educator preparation. In any case, the analysis showed that the method requires a lot of consideration and work.

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In the Philippines, two viewpoints regarding mother tongue-based education were put forth in 2014. Given the Philippines' wide linguistic diversity, teaching English there presents a number of difficulties for academics. Given that there are already over 180 languages spoken in the nation, linguistic power struggles are inevitable, even if they are quiet. The Philippine government just introduced a new educational policy that encourages learning in the child's mother tongue during their early years, which further complicates matters. Despite being supported by solid research, this rule presents a number of difficulties for linguists and educators because of the diverse linguistic backgrounds present in practically every classroom in the country. From a variety of angles, the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education strategy is intricate. Evidence from studies and the Philippines' current situation are presented in this paper. Following that, it presents two approaches that might be successful when mother tongue-based education is used. The preparation of both viewpoints is mostly based on the body of current literature as well as a thorough critical examination of the language context of the Philippines. The results of his earlier studies on the subject in the Philippines are also cited by the author (Two Proposed Perspectives on Mother Tongue-Based Education in the Philippines, 2014).

Quality Instruction as a Motivating Factor in Higher Education

A study on the value of high-quality instruction in inspiring students in higher education was carried out by Segundro (2017). Additional topics covered include the effects of high-quality education on practice (i.e., andragogical competency, sufficient planning and organization, knowledge content and currency, technical competency, resourcefulness, and dispositional traits), institutional policy, and future study. Building self-awareness is one of the main components that Washington State Human Resources officials have highlighted. retains or improves self-esteem, listens and reacts empathetically, and exercises self-control. solicits assistance and promotes participation. exchanges ideas, emotions, and justifications. offers assistance without abdicating accountability, and makes the most of the opportunity to obtain and consider performance criticism. takes action based on feedback to enhance behavior, knowledge, skills, and influence on others.

3. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed mixed methods research using the explanatory sequential approach in identifying Mother Tongue preparedness on the academic instructions encountered by teachers towards the pupils with multicultural origin. The explanatory sequential design emphasizes the quantitative phase, followed by the qualitative phase (Creswell, 2011). The purpose of the second qualitative phase is often to explain the results discovered in the first

quantitative phase, and sometimes to explain outliers that are not entirely consistent with the collected data. Since the analysis of qualitative data is used to explain the quantitative phase's results, thus the term 'explanatory'.

Respondents and Participants of the Study

The respondents of the study were the Grades 1 and Grade 2 teachers who handled Mother Tongue subjects in 14 schools of Libungan West District. Seven (7) teachers were chosen as participants of the study were interviewed.

Locale of the Study

This study was conducted at elementary schools in Libungan West District. There were 13 schools with teachers handling Grades 1 and Grade 2 levels in Libungan West Districts. This location of this study was chosen because the researcher is part of this district. Thus, data gathering and other procedures would be more accessible and convenient.

Sampling Techniques

In this study, a random sample using complete enumeration was the sampling method employed. Complete enumeration allows researchers to gather comprehensive data on each individual, providing a detailed understanding of the population's characteristics and relationships. This can be particularly valuable in exploratory studies or when investigating complex phenomena (Creswell, 2014). A total of forty-three (43) teachers took part in the survey.

For the focused group discussion (FGD) of the qualitative data, participants were chosen using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling, as defined by Creswell and Creswell (2018), is a non-random sampling method where researchers intentionally choose specific individuals or groups that possess certain characteristics or meet specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. This approach aligns with the study's goal of gathering in-depth and meaningful data from participants who can best inform the study's focus. In this study, six (6) participants were involved in the FGD.

Data Gathering Instrument

This study used a five-part questionnaire that was created by the researcher as the data collection technique. The sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents were determined in Part I, including their age, gender, religion, tribe, greatest level of education, and trainings attended. Part II, has identified the level of mother tongue-based multilingual education instruction in terms pupil's preparedness, teacher's preparedness and instructional materials. The scales used was 4 for very extensive, 3 for extensive, 2 for less extensive and 1 for least extensive. Part III, has determined the level of instructional competence of Grades 1 and 2 teachers handling mother tongue-based multilingual instruction in relation to quality of instruction, professional behavior, teacher's belief and content knowledge. The scale to used was 4 for very extensive, 3 for extensive, 2 for less extensive and 1 for least extensive. Part IV, has identified the challenges encountered in implementing instructional competence of Grades 1 and 2 teachers in handling Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual instruction. The scale used was be 4 for very much encountered, 3 for much encountered, 2 for less encountered and 1 for least encountered. The questionnaire was submitted to validation and reliability tests. Content validation criteria for questionnaire in this study were indicated in appendix E.

In the case of the qualitative method, the interview guide inquired about the instructional materials, instructor readiness, and student readiness. The final question focused on the difficulties teachers faced while putting MTB-

MLE into practice, which included student readiness, teacher readiness, and teaching materials. The information obtained from the interview was subjected to thematic analysis.

The problems in this study were applied with appropriate statistical tools. For problem number 1, identified the socio-demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, religion, tribe, highest educational attainment and training attended, frequency and percentage distribution will be applied. For number 2, was on the level of mother tongue-based multilingual education instruction in terms of pupil's preparedness, teacher's preparedness and instructional materials. The scale to be used was 4 for very extensive, 3 for extensive, 2 for less extensive and 1 for least extensive. The statistical treatment used was the weighted means with the range of 3.50 – 4.00 for very extensive, 2.50 – 3.49 for extensive, 1.50 – 2.49 for less extensive and 1.00 – 1.49 for least extensive.

For number 3 evaluated the degree of instructional competency of Grade 1 and 2 teachers managing mother tongue-based multilingual education in terms of topic understanding, professional conduct, teacher beliefs, and instruction quality. The scale used was 4 for very extensive, 3 for extensive, 2 for less extensive and 1 for least extensive. The statistical treatment used was the weighted means with the range of 3.50 – 4.00 for very extensive, 2.50 – 3.49 for extensive, 1.50 – 2.49 for less extensive and 1.00 – 1.49 for least extensive.

The test of the significant relationship between the level of MTBLE instructions and the level of instructional competence of teachers of Grades 1 and 2 was applied with correlation.

Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

The survey questionnaire was first presented to the research adviser for evaluation of its language clarity and completeness, content specificity, purposelessness, and lack of assumptions and suggestions. Later, its face validity was established. Three validators performed a face-and-content check on it to further improve its content validity (see APPENDIX E).

The instrument that was validated was administered to thirty grade 1 and grade 2 teachers of Libungan West District, but were non-respondents, to determine the degree of its construct validity and internal consistency, and eventually, to ascertain its reliability. Cronbach's Alpha was applied to determine such reliability. The table below displays the reliability test's outcome.

The study's research instrument's reliability test results, which used Cronbach's Alpha, revealed differing levels of internal consistency among the various constructs. The instrument's dependability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha values, where values above 0.90 were regarded as excellent, values between 0.80 and 0.90 as good, values between 0.70 and 0.80 as acceptable, and so on.

For the Level of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Instruction construct, the dimensions showed high reliability. The Pupil's Preparedness ($\alpha = 0.923$) and Teacher's Preparedness ($\alpha = 0.908$) both demonstrated excellent internal consistency, indicating that the items within these scales were highly consistent and reliable. However, the Instructional Materials dimension ($\alpha = 0.896$) was slightly lower but still rated as good, suggesting that the items measuring instructional materials were sufficiently reliable for measuring this construct.

In terms of the Level of Instructional Competence in handling mother tongue-based multilingual instruction, the scales for Professional Behavior ($\alpha = 0.915$), Teacher's Belief ($\alpha = 0.955$), and Quality Instruction ($\alpha = 0.873$) showed excellent and good internal consistency. The Content Knowledge dimension ($\alpha = 0.842$) was good as well, indicating that the items measuring content knowledge were reliable, although not as strongly as the other dimensions.

Finally, for the Challenges encountered in implementing instructional competence in handling MTB MLE construct, both Pupil's Preparedness ($\alpha = 0.957$) and Teacher's Preparedness ($\alpha = 0.938$) scored excellent, showing high

reliability in these areas. However, the Instructional Materials dimension ($\alpha = 0.843$) again fell into the good category, which suggests moderate reliability in the challenges related to instructional materials.

Overall, the reliability results indicated that the research instrument was highly reliable in measuring the constructs related to MTB MLE and instructional competence, with most of the scales scoring in the excellent to good range. This suggests that the instrument can be trusted to produce consistent and dependable results for the study.

Furthermore, the survey and in-depth interview have been conducted by researchers. The participants have been better informed about what they want to accomplish, what information they want to obtain and gather from them, and how the selected pupils were chosen to be one of the participants.

In addition, each participant received a duplicate of the results transcripts for comments to improve accuracy during data collection and the appropriateness of interpretations. Since the participant addressed aspects of the data analysis with which they disagreed before publishing, any deletions or adjustments to the transcript during the checking provided the study with more credibility. This method ensured that the research participants were properly represented in the study's narration.

Data Gathering Procedure

After the thesis proposal was accepted, a letter requesting authorization was sent to Sultan Kudarat State University's (SKSU) Graduate School Dean. After approval, the superintendent of the Schools Division received a letter requesting authorization to carry out the study. The authorized letter was included with the letter addressed to the Libungan West District District Supervisor. The principals of the Libungan West District's schools received letters. In order to conduct semi-structured interviews, the researcher used Google Docs and Google Meet to administer the survey form. In the assent letter, the responders signed it.

Statistical Analysis

This research aimed to assess the socio-demographic profile of teachers, their preparedness in MTB MLE, the level of their instructional competence, and the challenges they faced in delivering effective education through mother-tongue instruction. To answer the research questions, a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical analyses was employed.

Descriptive statistics were utilized to assess categorical variables, including age, gender, religion, highest educational attainment, and trainings attended, in order to investigate the sociodemographic profile of the respondents. These factors were subjected to frequency, percentage, and central tendency assessments (e.g., mean, median). Since teachers' sociodemographic characteristics may have an impact on their readiness and instructional competency in MTB MLE, this analysis was essential.

The second research question focused on understanding the level of preparedness in MTB MLE, considering the pupil's preparedness, teacher's preparedness, instructional materials, and teacher's training. For this, descriptive statistics was applied, particularly using Likert scale responses to measure teacher and pupil preparedness and the availability and quality of instructional materials. Frequencies, means, and standard deviations were calculated to assess the level of preparedness.

The level of instructional competence of teachers was assessed across four dimensions: quality of instruction, professional behavior, teacher's belief, and content knowledge. Descriptive analysis using Likert scale data was used

to assess each dimension's mean score, standard deviation, and frequency distribution.

To determine if there was a significant relationship between the level of MTB MLE preparedness and instructional competence, correlation analysis was conducted. Specifically, Pearson's correlation or Spearman's rank correlation (depending on the distribution of the data) was used to analyze the relationships for Grade 1 teachers, Grade 2 teachers, and both grades combined. The literature consistently pointed to a positive relationship between teacher preparedness and instructional competence.

The final research question explored the challenges faced by teachers in implementing instructional competence in MTB MLE. This included challenges related to instructional materials, teacher preparedness, pupil preparedness, and teacher training. Descriptive statistics summarized the responses, and thematic analysis was employed to analyze open-ended responses.

Specifically, the thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's 6-Step framework. This includes becoming familiar with the data through reading and re-reading them. The next steps were generating initial codes, searching for themes, and reviewing them. Once the themes were reviewed, this was followed by defining them, and finally, writing-up the analysis (Yardley, 2023).

Overall, this study used both descriptive and inferential statistical methods to examine the different factors that affect teachers' readiness and the quality of their instruction in MTB MLE. Through the use of t-tests, correlation analysis, and thematic analysis, the study offered a thorough grasp of the relationship between sociodemographic factors, readiness, and instructional competence and the successful implementation of MTB MLE in Libungan West District. This study added to the body of knowledge on multilingual education by shedding light on the difficulties teachers encountered and the tactics required to improve MTB MLE's efficacy.

4. Discussion of Findings

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents in terms of their Age

The age distribution of the teachers in the Libungan West District, as shown in Table 1a, reveals a distinct pattern of a predominantly experienced workforce. A significant proportion of the respondents (54%) are aged above 40 years, which highlights the seniority of the teaching staff in this district. This finding is consistent with trends observed in other educational settings, where older, more experienced teachers tend to dominate rural or less urbanized school districts (Bobbitt, 2021). The concentration of older teachers can reflect factors such as job stability, seniority, and accumulated years of experience, all of which can positively impact instructional competence. Experienced teachers are more likely to possess developed teaching strategies and a deeper understanding of classroom management, which are crucial for the implementation of effective Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE), as they can adapt and apply knowledge from years of teaching practice (Gonzalez, 2020).

On the other hand, a notable 28% of the respondents are within the 25 to 30-year age range, representing a group that is either in the early stages of their teaching careers or possibly still undergoing professional development. This younger cohort may bring fresh perspectives and energy into the classroom but may also face challenges in adapting to the complexities of MTB MLE, which requires a nuanced understanding of both language acquisition and educational theory (López & Lázaro, 2019). The presence of relatively fewer teachers in the 31-40 age range or 16%, further suggests that the district's workforce is either aging or there are fewer teachers moving through the career ladder at this stage. The limited number of teachers within this group could imply a potential gap in mid-career

professionals who might possess the balance of experience and contemporary training on pedagogical strategies, including the integration of multilingual education (Pacheco & Petty, 2018).

This distribution raises important questions about how the age of teachers may influence their preparedness for modern educational methodologies such as MTB MLE. As research has shown, older teachers tend to have more confidence in their teaching ability but may also be more resistant to adopting new methods or adapting to educational reforms (Tharp, 2021). Younger teachers, in contrast, might be more adaptable to innovative teaching strategies but may need more mentorship and professional development to master the complexities of bilingual or multilingual instruction (Baker, 2011). Given the older age profile in Libungan West District, it is essential to assess whether these teachers have received adequate training in MTB MLE to ensure that their instructional competence aligns with current educational demands.

In conclusion, the age profile of the respondents points to a mature and experienced teaching workforce in the Libungan West District. This demographic characteristic may offer strengths in terms of seasoned classroom management and teaching practices but may also present challenges related to the adoption of new educational methodologies. As the district continues to implement MTB MLE, it will be crucial to address these generational dynamics through targeted professional development programs that consider both the strengths and the needs of teachers across different age groups.

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents in terms of their Gender

The gender distribution of the respondents, as presented in Table 1b, highlights a striking imbalance, with 42 female teachers, or 98% and only 1 male teacher or 2% in the Libungan West District. This significant gender disparity reflects broader trends observed in many educational settings, particularly in primary education, where the profession tends to attract more women than men (Smith, 2021). The overwhelming majority of female teachers in this study suggests that the teaching profession, especially in early grades such as Grades 1 and 2, may be perceived as more aligned with gendered expectations of nurturing roles, which have traditionally been associated with women (Carrington & McPhee, 2019).

Only 2% of responses are male, which begs significant questions regarding the possible effects on teaching methods and student-teacher relationships. A diverse teaching team, including balanced gender representation, has been found to provide a range of viewpoints, which is crucial for creating a more inclusive and all-encompassing learning environment (Browne & O'Neill, 2020). In settings where male teachers are underrepresented, pupils may miss out on different teaching styles and role models. Furthermore, the lack of male teachers might influence the implementation of certain pedagogical strategies, such as those required for the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE) program, where cultural and gendered understandings of language and identity can play a significant role (Dixon, 2021). Male teachers, although few in number, might bring distinct insights or approaches to teaching multilingual classrooms, particularly in how they navigate the integration of native languages alongside Filipino and English in the educational framework.

The overwhelming presence of female teachers in this study also points to possible gender dynamics within the district, which could affect how teaching strategies, such as MTB MLE, are delivered. Female teachers, who constitute the vast majority of educators in the primary grades, might bring strong relational skills, empathy, and an intuitive understanding of child development, all of which are crucial for effective multilingual education (Cheng, 2020). However, the gender imbalance also raises the issue of potential gender bias or stereotypes that could limit the professional development of male teachers or dissuade men from entering the profession, further contributing to the unequal gender representation in education (Reay & Ball, 2019).

In conclusion, the gender distribution of the respondents in Libungan West District reveals a highly feminized teaching workforce, which may have implications for instructional strategies, teacher-pupil dynamics, and the implementation of MTB MLE. While female teachers bring critical strengths to early education, the severe underrepresentation of male teachers warrants further investigation into how gender dynamics may influence the teaching and learning process, particularly in a multilingual education context. Additionally, this imbalance highlights the need for initiatives that encourage male participation in the teaching profession to diversify the teaching experience and support a broader range of pupil needs and learning styles.

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents in terms of their Religion

The religious affiliation of the respondents, as shown in Table 1c, reveals that the majority of the teachers in Libungan West District identify as Roman Catholic, accounting for 35 respondents or 82% of the total sample. This religious affiliation is consistent with the predominant faith in the Philippines, where Catholicism has deep historical and cultural roots. The significant majority of Roman Catholic teachers may influence classroom practices, particularly in terms of moral education, values integration, and community building. As many Filipino teachers are guided by Catholic values, their approach to Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE) may also incorporate elements of these cultural and religious perspectives, which could shape the way they engage with pupils, particularly in the areas of language, identity, and community involvement (Bautista, 2019).

A small minority of respondents identifies with Iglesia Ni Cristo and Islam, with one teacher or 2% each belonging to these faiths. The presence of such small numbers suggests that there is minimal religious diversity among the teachers in this district, which is reflective of the overall religious landscape in many rural areas of the Philippines. However, this diversity, even if limited, could have implications for the school environment, particularly in terms of fostering respect for diverse belief systems and promoting an inclusive educational climate for all pupils, regardless of religious background (Diestro, 2020).

The "Others" category, accounting for 6 respondents or 14%, encompasses a broader spectrum of beliefs and practices that are not explicitly detailed in the table. This category may represent other Christian denominations, indigenous beliefs, or even non-religious affiliations. The diversity within this group, though relatively small, still points to the varied belief systems that may influence teaching practices and the way teachers approach pupil interactions, cultural understanding, and value integration.

The religious makeup of the teaching staff in this district underscores the importance of considering the impact of religion on both the pedagogical methods employed and the social dynamics within the classroom. For example, teachers who are Roman Catholic may incorporate specific moral teachings, Christian values, and traditions into their teaching methods, while those from other religious backgrounds might emphasize different cultural or ethical principles. This could have an impact on the inclusivity of the educational environment, especially when teaching subjects like MTB MLE, which emphasize language diversity and cultural respect (Hernandez, 2020).

In conclusion, the religious composition of the teachers in Libungan West District highlights a predominantly Catholic workforce, with a small but diverse presence of other religious affiliations. While the influence of religion on teaching and classroom dynamics is likely to be shaped by the predominance of Roman Catholicism, the diversity within the district, though limited, may require awareness and sensitivity to ensure that all pupils feel respected and represented, particularly in a multilingual education context. Teachers, regardless of their religious backgrounds, must be mindful of the diverse belief systems present in their classrooms to foster an inclusive environment conducive to learning and cultural exchange.

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents in terms of their Highest Educational Attainment

The educational attainment of the teachers in Libungan West District, as presented in Table 1d, reveals a diverse range of academic qualifications, which is critical in assessing their preparedness and competence for teaching, especially in the context of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE).

A significant proportion of the teachers, 17 respondents or 40%, hold a bachelor's degree, which is the minimum qualification for teaching in the Philippines. This group represents those who have completed their undergraduate studies and are likely to have foundational knowledge in educational theory and teaching methodologies, though may require further professional development in specific areas such as MTB MLE (Dizon, 2020). Having a bachelor's degree is a strong starting point for teachers, but the lack of further academic advancement in education could limit their exposure to advanced teaching strategies and research on multilingual instruction.

A close second, 15 respondents or 35%, are Master's Degree graduates. These teachers have pursued postgraduate education, which generally equips them with specialized knowledge in their field, deeper pedagogical skills, and an understanding of contemporary educational theories. The presence of a considerable proportion of Master's Degree holders suggests that many teachers in the district have invested in further education to enhance their competencies, which is crucial for effectively implementing specialized teaching methods such as MTB MLE. Graduate education tends to promote more critical thinking, advanced teaching strategies, and an understanding of the latest educational reforms (Sanchez, 2018).

Interestingly, 11 respondents or 26% have earned Master's Degree units but have not yet completed the degree. While they may have gained valuable expertise through these graduate-level courses, they may still lack the full academic and practical training that a completed Master's Degree would offer. This group could benefit from finishing their graduate studies to enhance their qualifications and be better equipped to implement complex programs like MTB MLE, which require a nuanced understanding of language, culture, and pedagogy (López, 2019). Notably, there are no respondents with a Doctoral Degree or earned doctoral degree units, which indicates a lack of teachers with the highest academic qualifications. This absence may limit the district's capacity for high-level research or the adoption of cutting-edge teaching practices that are typically associated with doctoral-level education. Doctoral-level expertise is often linked with advanced theoretical knowledge, research skills, and leadership abilities that could greatly contribute to the development of educational policies or innovation in teaching methods, including multilingual education (Nicolini & Wang, 2020).

In conclusion, the educational profile of the teachers in Libungan West District reflects a healthy mix of qualifications, with a substantial number holding Master's Degrees or earning Master's Degree units. This suggests that while most teachers have some degree of specialization in their fields, there remains room for further academic growth, especially in doctoral studies. These findings suggest that the district has a moderately well-educated workforce, but to better support the implementation of MTB MLE, further professional development, including advanced degrees and specialized training, may be necessary to ensure teachers are fully prepared to meet the challenges of multilingual instruction. Additionally, supporting teachers in completing their Master's Degrees and fostering opportunities for doctoral studies could strengthen the academic capacity of the district and enhance the quality of education provided to pupils.

The training and seminar participation of the teachers in Libungan West District, as outlined in Table 1e, reflects a mixed and varied engagement in professional development, which can influence their readiness and ability to implement programs like Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE).

Nine teachers, or 21% of the respondents, stated that they had not attended any seminars or professional training. This is a significant percentage that suggests these teachers are not receiving enough continuing professional

development. The inability to stay up to date with new teaching approaches, educational reforms, or subject-specific strategies—especially those pertaining to the intricate requirements of multilingual education—may result from these.

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents in terms of the Trainings they Attended

Teachers' lack of recent training. Teachers must pursue professional development and ongoing education, particularly in light of quickly changing teaching methods as MTB MLE, which call for knowledge of many languages, learning preferences, and cultural sensitivity (Gonzalez, 2021). Among those who have attended professional development programs, there is a wide range of specific trainings attended, each contributing to different aspects of teaching. For instance, SLAC (School Learning Action Cell) was attended by 4 respondents or 8%, indicating a notable engagement with collaborative learning communities that focus on improving teaching practices and pupil outcomes. SLACs are essential as they provide teachers with platforms to reflect on their teaching practices, share strategies, and learn from one another, all of which are important for fostering effective multilingual instruction (Sengupta, 2019).

Several teachers also participated in seminars on K to 12 or 5% and MATATAG Curriculum or 5%, which are directly related to national educational frameworks. These seminars likely provided teachers with crucial insights into curriculum implementation and the integration of new teaching practices that align with the government's education reforms, including MTB MLE. However, the relatively low participation in these key seminars might suggest that not all teachers are equally equipped with the latest knowledge on curricular changes, which could impact their competence in delivering the MTB MLE program effectively.

Some teachers attended in-service training (INSET) and virtual in-service training with 3 respondents, or 7%, which could be crucial for teachers in adapting to modern teaching tools, such as online resources and digital classrooms, especially relevant in today's education landscape, where technology is increasingly integrated into instruction. These virtual and in-person training sessions provide teachers with the skills needed to navigate digital platforms and tools that can support multilingual teaching, including resource sharing in multiple languages. Additionally, specific seminars related to literacy and mathematics or 2%, leadership training or 2%, and training on special education or 2% also reflect the broadening of teachers' expertise in areas beyond language instruction. These additional qualifications are essential for teachers who may encounter diverse classroom needs, such as supporting pupils with special educational needs or integrating literacy and numeracy with language acquisition strategies, as is often the case in MTB MLE classrooms.

One of the most relevant trainings for this study, the MTB/MLE workshop, was attended by only 1 teacher or 2%. This is a concerning figure, as participation in such workshops is essential for teachers involved in multilingual education. This lack of extensive training in MTB MLE suggests a gap in preparedness for the effective implementation of the program, which requires specialized knowledge in bilingual education, cultural sensitivity, and pedagogical strategies for teaching in multiple languages (Baker, 2011).

In conclusion, while there is a considerable amount of professional development engagement within the Libungan West District, a significant portion of teachers have not attended any training in recent times. The varied and somewhat limited participation in key trainings, especially in areas directly related to MTB MLE, points to potential weaknesses in the overall preparedness of teachers to implement the multilingual education program effectively. Access to focused professional development should be expanded to solve this, especially in the areas of MTB MLE and other crucial teaching techniques. The ability of teachers to deliver high-quality, inclusive education to a variety of student demographics will be improved by ensuring that they all take part in pertinent training.

The data presented in Table 2a highlights the pupils' level of preparedness for Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual

Education (MTB-MLE) in the Libungan West District, with results organized by descending mean scores. The highest mean score ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.495$) reflects that pupils show the greatest readiness when instructional and reading materials employ familiar content—such as known people, places, and activities—to introduce new concepts. This supports the findings of Ball (2018), who emphasized the significance of culturally relevant pedagogy in enhancing student comprehension in multilingual settings. Closely following is the statement that pupils' home and community-based knowledge and experiences serve as crucial assets in supporting their academic success through MTB-MLE ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.545$). This aligns with Malone's (2017) view that contextual learning rooted in students' lived realities is essential for effective language acquisition. Equally important is the foundation established using the learners' mother tongue as a starting point before learning additional languages ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 0.592$), in line with UNESCO's (2016) stance that early education in one's first language strengthens cognitive development and learning outcomes.

Level of Preparedness on Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education of the Teachers

Level of Preparedness on Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (Pupils' Preparedness)

Another item with an identical mean ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 0.550$) underscores the need to use pupils' familiar language for better grasp of basic concepts, echoing the position of the Department of Education (DepEd, 2017) in its MTB-MLE policy. Finally, the lowest mean ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.545$), though still classified as "Extensive," reveals that transitioning from the known mother tongue to an unfamiliar language is a key marker of readiness, suggesting a need for support in scaffolded learning strategies. Overall, the "Very Extensive" rating ($M = 3.53$) indicates a high level of preparedness among pupils, which is promising for the sustained implementation of MTB-MLE in the district.

Level of Preparedness on Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (Teacher's Preparedness)

The results of Table 2b illustrate the level of preparedness of Grade 1 and 2 teachers in the Libungan West District in implementing Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), with all indicators rated as "Very Extensive," indicating a highly favorable level of readiness. The highest mean scores ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.482$) are shared by two key competencies: teachers' preparedness to integrate specific knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values for native language acquisition, and their ability to apply diverse instructional strategies such as class teaching, pair work, and individual learning.

These findings echo the work of Kirkpatrick (2018), who emphasized the importance of teacher versatility and culturally responsive teaching methods in multilingual classrooms. Following closely are competencies related to the formulation of concrete objectives ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.502$) and the ability to design varied lesson types for first-language learning ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.548$), which align with the teacher competencies identified by Cummings (2017) as essential in language instruction: clarity of instructional goals and flexibility in lesson planning. Lastly, the preparedness reflected in acquiring competence to ensure the functionality of MTB-MLE processes ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.495$) supports findings from Tupas and Martin (2017), who advocate that sustained professional development enhances the implementation of localized language education. With an overall mean of 3.60, the data clearly indicate that teachers in the district are very well-prepared to implement MTB-MLE, a critical factor for student success in early-grade multilingual learning environments.

Level of Preparedness on Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (Instructional Materials)

Table 2c presents the level of preparedness regarding instructional materials for the implementation of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) in the Libungan West District, with all indicators reflecting a "Very Extensive" level of preparedness, except one rated as "Extensive." The highest mean score ($M = 3.70$, $SD =$

0.465) highlights that learners gain greater confidence when instructional materials for early primary education are aligned with their commonly used community language, reinforcing the findings of Ouane and Glanz (2015), who stress the importance of linguistic relevance in materials to enhance student engagement and comprehension.

Following this, the use of curriculum-based instructional resources that incorporate community language ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.502$), as well as materials familiar in both language and content ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.548$), support the idea that culturally contextualized teaching materials are key to effective multilingual instruction – a perspective supported by Malone (2017). Similarly, the availability of training guides and teaching materials tailored to learners' own languages ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.592$) indicates efforts to build a solid foundational literacy base, consistent with the goals outlined in DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2012. The lowest mean score ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 0.592$), though still marked as “Extensive,” reflects challenges in accessing instructional resources due to cultural and linguistic diversity.

This finding underscores a concern raised by Benson (2019), who pointed out the persistent inequities in material availability for non-dominant language communities. Overall, the mean rating of 3.56 suggests that instructional material preparedness is generally strong but may still benefit from enhanced resource distribution and contextual adaptability.

Summary of the Level of Preparedness on Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education of the Teachers

Table 2d summarizes the level of preparedness on Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) among Grade 1 and 2 teachers, reflecting a “Very Extensive” level across all three dimensions: pupils' preparedness ($M = 3.53$), teachers' preparedness ($M = 3.60$), and instructional materials ($M = 3.56$), with a general mean of 3.56. The highest preparedness is observed in teacher-related factors, emphasizing their strong commitment and capability to implement MTB-MLE effectively. This supports the findings of Reyes (2019), who emphasized that teacher competence and confidence are critical enablers for successful multilingual education. Instructional materials also received a high rating, indicating substantial availability and relevance of resources, in line with the recommendations of Malone (2018), who noted that culturally and linguistically appropriate teaching materials are essential for supporting learners from diverse backgrounds. Pupils' preparedness, while slightly lower, still indicates a very favorable level, affirming Cummins' (2017) principle that grounding early education in learners' mother tongue fosters better engagement and understanding. Overall, the consistently high scores across all categories suggest that MTB-MLE implementation in Libungan West District is built on a solid foundation of teacher competence, learner readiness, and adequate resources—key elements identified in the literature as crucial for equitable and effective multilingual education.

Level of Instructional Competence of Grade 1 and 2 Teachers Handling Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Instruction of the Teachers

Table 3a reveals the level of instructional competence of Grade 1 and 2 teachers in delivering quality Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) instruction, with all indicators rated as “Very Extensive.” The highest mean score ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.529$) underscores the role of technological competence in creating enjoyable and supportive classroom environments, aligning with the findings of Al-Marroof et al. (2020), who assert that integrating technology enhances student engagement and instructional quality in multilingual settings. Equally important are teacher preparedness and subject knowledge ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.499$), which highlight the importance of organized, well-prepared instruction for fostering learners' cognitive development. These findings support the position of Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who stress that high-quality teaching begins with strong content knowledge and pedagogical planning.

Level of Instructional Competence of Grade 1 and 2 Teachers Handling Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Instruction (Quality Instruction)

The slightly lower, but still high, mean scores ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.502$) for teachers' resourcefulness in creating familiar learning environments and possessing the necessary dispositional attributes (e.g., patience, empathy, cultural sensitivity) emphasize the importance of teacher attitudes and adaptability in delivering effective MTB-MLE instruction. This is consistent with Garcia and Wei's (2018) advocacy for teacher agency and responsiveness in multilingual classrooms. Overall, the average mean of 3.59 reflects a very high level of instructional competence, indicating that teachers are not only knowledgeable and well-prepared, but also flexible, tech-savvy, and empathetic—traits essential for delivering high-quality MTB-MLE instruction.

Table 3b presents the assessment of Grade 1 and 2 teachers' professional behavior in delivering Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), with all indicators rated as "Very Extensive," demonstrating a high level of instructional competence in this domain. The highest-rated behaviors, all with a mean of 3.60 ($SD = 0.541$), include teachers' self-awareness that motivates cognitive development, their empathetic listening and responsiveness to learners, and their proactive encouragement of inclusive participation across diverse cultural backgrounds

Level of Instructional Competence of Grade 1 and 2 Teachers Handling Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Instruction (Professional Behavior)

These findings align with the work of Jennings and Greenberg (2019), who emphasized that teacher emotional intelligence and culturally responsive behaviors significantly improve classroom dynamics and student outcomes. Slightly lower, but still notably high, are the competencies related to maintaining self-control ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 0.550$) and enhancing self-esteem to foster a professional culture ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 0.505$).

These dimensions of professional behavior support the principles of social-emotional learning (SEL), which according to Jones et al. (2017), are critical for teachers to build safe, respectful, and effective learning environments. The overall mean of 3.57 suggests that teachers in the Libungan West District not only possess strong pedagogical skills but also embody the professional disposition necessary for successful MTB-MLE implementation—marked by empathy, cultural sensitivity, and a commitment to learner development.

Level of Instructional Competence of Grade 1 and 2 Teachers Handling Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Instruction (Instructional Materials)

Table 3c assesses the instructional competence of Grade 1 and 2 teachers in using instructional materials for Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), with results indicating a "Very Extensive" level overall ($M = 3.58$). The highest-rated item ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.522$) highlights that learners gain confidence in acquiring the Mother Tongue through effective instructional support, reinforcing the findings of Cummins (2017), who argued that confidence-building through the first language enhances academic performance and literacy development. Closely following is the observation that learner participation increases, and illiteracy decreases ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.482$) when teachers exhibit strong instructional competence—an effect also supported by Malone (2018), who emphasized the vital role of competent teachers and culturally relevant materials in multilingual learning settings. Expressing ideas freely through motivational, culturally inclusive activities ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.548$) further underlines the significance of inclusive pedagogy, aligning with Banks (2019), who noted that such strategies improve classroom interaction and critical thinking among early-grade learners.

The item with the lowest mean ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 0.550$), though still marked as "Extensive," refers to learners' deeper understanding of lessons through basic language use, suggesting that while foundational literacy is addressed,

there may be room for enhanced material design or differentiated strategies for deeper conceptual engagement. Overall, the data underscores the effectiveness of instructional materials when used by competent teachers to promote learner participation, communication, confidence, and critical thinking—key pillars of MTB-MLE success.

Level of Instructional Competence of Grade 1 and 2 Teachers Handling Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Instruction (Content Knowledge)

Table 3d outlines the level of instructional competence of Grade 1 and 2 teachers in terms of content knowledge for implementing Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE). The overall mean score of 3.53 signifies a “Very Extensive” level, suggesting that teachers possess a strong foundational understanding of the subject matter they teach in the mother tongue. The highest-rated item ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.495$) emphasizes the belief that content knowledge is essential for teachers' continuous professional growth—a view supported by Shulman's (2015) theory of pedagogical content knowledge, which asserts that deep subject knowledge enhances instructional quality and learner outcomes. Close behind is the general understanding of what to teach in Mother Tongue ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.502$), reflecting teachers' clarity on curriculum content and its appropriate delivery, which is critical in multilingual classrooms as noted by Ball (2017). Slightly lower mean scores were observed in indicators related to community engagement and learner-driven cultural awareness (both $M = 3.49$), categorized as “Extensive.”

These suggest areas where teachers might benefit from further support or training to better integrate community-based knowledge and foster appreciation for linguistic diversity—practices advocated by UNESCO (2018) to make MTB-MLE more relevant and sustainable. Lastly, the acquisition of content knowledge specific to the Mother Tongue ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 0.550$) underscores the need for targeted teacher training and localized curriculum development to ensure relevance and accuracy. Overall, while content knowledge among teachers is strong, deeper community integration and enhanced sensitivity to cultural-linguistic diversity could further strengthen instructional competence.

Level of Instructional Competence of Grade 1 and 2 Teachers Handling Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Instruction of the Teachers

Summary of the Level of Instructional Competence of Grade 1 and 2 Teachers Handling Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Instruction of the Teachers

Table 3e presents the summary of instructional competence of Grade 1 and 2 teachers in delivering Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), with an overall general mean of 3.57, indicating a “Very Extensive” level across all four measured domains. The highest-rated domain is Quality Instruction ($M = 3.59$), highlighting teachers' ability to prepare, organize, and deliver effective lessons that foster learners' cognitive development—an observation supported by Shulman's (2015) framework on pedagogical content knowledge, which stresses the integration of subject matter expertise with effective instructional strategies. Closely following are Instructional Materials ($M = 3.58$) and Professional Behavior ($M = 3.57$), reflecting teachers' skillful use of appropriate teaching tools and their commitment to maintaining empathetic, inclusive, and culturally sensitive classroom practices. These findings are consistent with the conclusions of Banks (2019), who emphasized the role of teacher behavior and culturally responsive materials in supporting multilingual classrooms. The domain of Content Knowledge received the lowest, though still “Very Extensive,” rating ($M = 3.53$), suggesting room for enhanced training or engagement with community-based linguistic and cultural knowledge.

According to UNESCO (2018), integrating local knowledge into teacher training strengthens the effectiveness of multilingual education. Overall, the data suggest that Grade 1 and 2 teachers in the Libungan West District are highly competent in implementing MTB-MLE, particularly in instructional delivery, material use, and professional practice.

Correlation Analysis Between the Variables of the Study

Relationship between the Preparedness on the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education and Level of Instructional Competence of Grade 1 Teachers Handling Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Instruction

Table 4a presents the results of the correlation analysis examining the relationship between the level of preparedness on Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) and the level of instructional competence of Grade 1 teachers handling MTB-MLE instruction. The analysis was conducted using Pearson's correlation since the data was normally distributed for Grade 1 teachers, as indicated by the normality tests.

The results show a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.751$) between the two variables, with a p-value of 0.000, which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates a strong relationship between the teachers' preparedness in MTB-MLE and their instructional competence. In other words, as the preparedness of Grade 1 teachers in MTB-MLE increases, so does their instructional competence in teaching using the mother tongue.

The correlation's strength and significance suggest that teachers who are better prepared in MTB-MLE are more competent in their instructional practices when teaching in the mother tongue. This finding supports the notion that effective teacher preparedness in language-based education is closely tied to teacher performance and pupil outcomes, as well-established in educational literature (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Teacher preparedness not only includes knowledge of the content and the language but also involves skills in teaching methodologies, which significantly impact pupils' learning experiences and success (Guskey, 2000).

Moreover, this finding emphasizes the importance of providing teachers with adequate training and resources to enhance their instructional practices. Teachers' competencies, particularly in teaching with the mother tongue, play a vital role in language acquisition and the overall success of the MTB-MLE program, especially in early education settings (Baker, 2011).

The strong connection between preparedness and competence suggests that professional development and ongoing teacher training should remain a priority for educational institutions, particularly in multilingual contexts. Fostering teacher confidence and skills in their native languages could further enhance their teaching effectiveness, benefiting both educators and learners in multilingual educational settings.

Relationship between the Preparedness on the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education and Level of Instructional Competence of Grade 2 Teachers Handling Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Instruction

Table 4b shows the results of the correlation analysis between the level of preparedness on Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) and the level of instructional competence of Grade 2 teachers handling MTB-MLE instruction. The Pearson correlation coefficient reveals a very strong positive relationship ($r = 0.841$) between the two variables, with a p-value of 0.000, which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

This very strong correlation indicates that Grade 2 teachers who are better prepared in MTB-MLE tend to demonstrate significantly higher instructional competence in their teaching practices. Essentially, teachers with more extensive preparedness in MTB-MLE are more capable of effectively teaching in the mother tongue, which can lead to better learning outcomes for pupils. This result strongly suggests that teacher preparation in MTB-MLE directly influences their ability to deliver high-quality instruction in the mother tongue.

The implications of these findings align with the idea that teacher effectiveness is deeply rooted in their

preparedness, particularly in multilingual and multicultural settings like those in MTB-MLE programs. When teachers are properly trained in their local languages and in effective multilingual teaching strategies, they are more likely to employ teaching methods that are culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate, which enhances pupils' engagement and comprehension (Cummins, 2000). This is particularly crucial in the early grades, where pupils are learning foundational literacy and numeracy skills.

This finding also supports the literature on the importance of teacher training programs in ensuring that teachers are equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge, and strategies to implement language policies effectively in the classroom (Kuhlman, 2013). Moreover, when teachers have a strong command of the language of instruction and understand the cultural and contextual factors of their pupils, they can foster a more inclusive and effective learning environment (Baker, 2011). As a result, efforts to increase teacher preparedness in MTB-MLE programs should be viewed as an investment in improving both teaching quality and pupil achievement.

In sum, the very strong relationship between preparedness and instructional competence for Grade 2 teachers highlights the importance of ongoing professional development and targeted training programs for teachers, particularly in multilingual education contexts, where language and culture play a critical role in the learning process.

Relationship between the Preparedness on the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education and Level of Instructional Competence of Grade 1 & 2 Teachers Handling Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Instruction

Table 4c illustrates the correlation analysis between the level of preparedness on Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) and the level of instructional competence of combined Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers handling MTB-MLE instruction. The Pearson correlation coefficient shows a very strong positive relationship ($r = 0.814$), with a p-value of 0.000, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

The very strong relationship between preparedness and instructional competence in this combined group of Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers reveals that teachers who are better prepared in MTB-MLE also demonstrate higher levels of instructional competence. Specifically, teachers who have received adequate training and preparation in the MTB-MLE framework are more equipped to utilize effective teaching strategies in the classroom, leading to improved learning experiences and outcomes for their pupils. This implies that teacher preparedness in MTB-MLE is a critical factor influencing instructional competence, which is essential for ensuring effective language and literacy instruction in early education.

This result highlights the importance of well-structured and comprehensive teacher training programs in multilingual education settings. The findings are consistent with research emphasizing the importance of teacher preparedness in creating effective and equitable educational environments, especially in multilingual contexts where the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction has been shown to improve pupil learning outcomes (Cummins, 2000; Thomas & Collier, 2002). When teachers are properly prepared to teach in a mother tongue-based multilingual setting, they are more likely to be culturally responsive, linguistically competent, and pedagogically sound, which leads to enhanced classroom practices and pupil engagement (Baker, 2011).

Furthermore, these results emphasize the importance of ongoing professional development in the field of multilingual education, particularly in areas where language diversity is prevalent. Studies show that teachers' knowledge of pupils' languages and cultural backgrounds enables them to better support pupils' learning (García, 2009). The positive relationship found in this study suggests that investments in teacher training and preparation for MTB-MLE programs are crucial for improving instructional quality and pupil achievement, particularly in regions

with diverse linguistic populations.

In conclusion, the very strong correlation between preparedness and instructional competence for the combined group of Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers underscores the need for effective teacher preparation programs. These programs should aim to provide teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to teach in a multilingual, culturally responsive manner, which will ultimately enhance both their teaching quality and their pupils' educational outcomes.

Challenges Encountered by the Teachers

Table 6 shows the thematic analysis of teachers' responses on the challenges they encountered in implementing instructional competence in handling mother tongue-based multilingual instruction which were encompassed in the following themes: Pupil Preparedness, Teacher Preparedness, and Instructional Materials. Below are the detailed interpretations with specific statements from teachers who were coded as P1-P6 to retain confidentiality.

Pupil Preparedness

Pupils' varying levels of fluency in mother tongue and confusion over first language Fluency in the mother tongue and clarity about a pupil's true first language are essential for effective learning. However, teachers observed that pupils exhibit varying levels of fluency in their mother tongue. Some children spoke different dialects (e.g., Ilonggo, Bisaya, Cebuano), which can lead to communication barriers among pupils as presented by the following accounts.

Thematic Analysis of Challenges Encountered in Implementing Instructional Competence of Grades 1 and 2 Teachers Handling Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Instruction

MTB-MLE emphasized the importance of a strong foundation in the mother tongue. Research showed that children who learn in their native language develop stronger cognitive skills, making them better equipped to learn additional languages later on (Guro Tayo, 2020). The varying levels of fluency in the mother tongue among pupils, alongside confusion regarding their true first language, indicated a significant barrier to effective learning. Research supports that pupils learn best when instruction is aligned with their linguistic background (Cummins, 2000). This suggested that a mismatch between the language spoken at home and the language of instruction can hinder educational outcomes.

However, by addressing these issues through accurate assessment, differentiated instruction, and language support programs, teachers can create a learning environment that values linguistic diversity and supports all pupils' learning journeys. Also, by implementing culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate teaching practices, teachers can create a learning environment that supports all pupils and promotes academic success.

Teacher Preparedness

Lack of adequate training

Several teachers expressed that they have not received sufficient training or professional development opportunities related to MTB-MLE. This lack of training affected their ability to transition effectively to using the mother tongue in instruction as revealed on the statements below:

"Hindi kami nakasali sa mga seminars and trainings before about MTB, so yun, naga research na lang kami." We were not able to attend any seminars and trainings on MTB-MLE before, so we opted to do our own research. – P2

"Maraming terms sa libro ang hindi ko alam since hindi ako na-train para dito." There are terms from the book which I do not understand because I was not trained for this. – P3

"Since ako, bago pa lang po ako nakapasok, lack of specialized trainings po ako. Hindin po ako naka-attend ng

seminar, and not receive adequate training.” Since I am new, I lack specialized training. I did not attend any seminars and did not receive adequate training. – P5

“Hindi ako nakasali ng seminar, so, tinatanong ko na lang yung mga nakasali. Sa kanila din ako humihingi ng materials”. I was not able to attend any seminars, so I just asked those who were able to join. I also borrow materials from them. – P6

Teachers who did not undergo any trainings may not fully grasp the pedagogical principles underlying MTB-MLE, including the importance of language immersion, code-switching strategies, and the development of bilingual/multilingual competencies. Even if teachers were native speakers, they lacked the explicit linguistic knowledge necessary to teach the mother tongue effectively. They may not be able to analyze language structures, develop appropriate instructional materials, or address the specific linguistic needs of diverse learners (Baker, 2011). Studies have shown that teacher training significantly influenced pupil learning outcomes, particularly in bilingual education contexts (August & Shanahan, 2006). Without proper training, teachers may struggle to implement effective MTB-MLE strategies. This necessitates targeted professional development programs that address all aspects of implementing MTB-MLE effectively, including content knowledge, pedagogical approaches, assessment strategies, and resource development. Furthermore, supportive school environments and administrative backing are essential for successful implementation.

Difficulty adjusting to new methodologies

Teachers faced challenges in adapting to different methodologies and strategies required for effective MTB-MLE instruction, which impeded their instructional competence. They have expressed their struggles and discomforts as specified below:

“Yung transition ng mother tongue, nagkakaroon ng adjustment to the different methodologies and strategies na gagamitin nung teacher.” The transition to the mother tongue, there is an adjustment to the different methodologies and strategies that the teacher will use. – P1

“Iba talaga ang approach sa MTB-MLE, kaya kailangan mag-adjust ni teacher ng kanyang mga strategies.” MTB-MLE has an entirely different approach, therefore, the teacher really needs to adjust his/her teaching strategies. – P2

“Medyo nakakapanibago, yung mga nakasanayan mo na, hindi mo na maaring gawin, kay iba man pud ang MTB-MLE.” It is a bit disorienting and unusual; I may not be able to use my old practices because MTB-MLE is really different. – P4

“Usahay, makapuyan na ko mag-adjust, sa bag-o, pero kay teacher man ta, go lang.” Sometimes, it feels so tiring adjusting to new innovations, but since we are teachers, we should do it. – P6

“Jack of all trade jud baya ang teacher, so i-accept na nimo ug pangitaan jud na permi paraan.” Teachers are jack of all trades, so we need to accept everything and find ways to implement them. – P7

MTB-MLE relied on a deep understanding of language development and the unique characteristics of the mother tongue. Teachers who struggled to adapt to MTB-MLE methodologies may not be able to effectively utilize the mother tongue as a medium of instruction. This can lead to a disconnect between the language used at home and the language used in the classroom, potentially hindering pupil learning and comprehension.

Studies revealed that when teachers are hesitant on change, educational practices can become outdated and fail to keep pace with advancements in pedagogical research and pupil needs. This can lead to a less effective learning environment and hinder pupil achievement (Fullan, 2007). Moreover, trying to implement new methods while lacking adequate training or support can lead to increased stress and burnout among teachers. This can negatively affect their job satisfaction and overall well-being, potentially leading to higher turnover rates (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Thus, it should be emphasized that the success of MTB-MLE depended heavily on teachers' ability to adapt their teaching methodologies to align with the principles of this approach. Therefore, the successful implementation of MTB-MLE required a multifaceted approach that included teacher training, curriculum development, and ongoing support for educators.

Instructional Materials

Limited Access and Understanding

While some teachers reported that instructional materials (IMs) are available online, there are still challenges in understanding and utilizing these materials effectively in the classroom. Some materials may be too complex for both teachers and pupils as shown on the views below:

“Okay naman ang instructional materials, available online, kaya lang kailangan mo pang i-print para magamit ng mga bata. Minsan, sayang ang oras.” Instructional materials are available online, however, printing them to be used by pupils is time-consuming. – P1

“For me, so struggle talaga kasi hindi sila lahat... lalong-lalo na yung ginamit namin na book na “Cenebuanong Bisaya”, very ano yung mga terms doon hindi namin alam. So yung ginawa namin, nag research kasi malalim yung mga terms doon kaso from Cebu kasi yung mga terms compared sa mga terms na ginagamit natin dito. So, as teacher, nalilito ako.” For me, it’s really a struggle because not all of them... especially the book we used, “Cenebuanong Bisaya”, the terms there are very... we do not know them. So what we did, we researched because the terms there are deep, but they are from Cebu, compared to the terms we use here. So, as a teacher, I am confused. – P3

“Medyo naga-struggle ako kay hindi man ko Bisaya. Hindi Bisaya ang mother tongue ko, so nahihirapan ako minsan na maka-relate sa instructional materials. So, naga-research talaga ako at naga-ask ng help from my co-teachers.” I struggled sometimes because I am not Bisaya. Bisaya is not my mother tongue. So, I have difficulty relating to the instructional materials. So, I really do research and ask help from my co-teachers. – P4

“Accessible naman ang learning materials na pwedeng iprovide sa mga bata. Kaya lang may mga terms and concept doon na hindi ko masyadong maintindihan, kaya nagtatanong pa ako minsan sa mga kasama ko.” Learning materials are accessible and can be readily provided to the pupils, however, there are terms and concepts which I do not understand. So, I sometimes ask my colleagues for help. – P7

MTB-MLE relied on a curriculum that was specifically designed for instruction in the mother tongue. If teachers struggled to find or understand appropriate materials, the curriculum may become misaligned, potentially undermining the program's goals. Furthermore, teachers who struggled to understand and utilized complex IMs may not be able to effectively deliver instruction in the mother tongue. This can lead to a disconnect between the language used at home and the language used in the classroom, potentially hindering pupil learning and comprehension.

The availability and understanding of instructional materials are crucial for effective teaching. The complexity of some materials can lead to misinterpretation and ineffective instruction. Research indicates that culturally relevant instructional materials improve pupil engagement and understanding (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Therefore, ensuring that teachers have access and appropriate understanding of the materials are essential for successful implementation.

Teachers’ Strategies in Coping with Challenges in Handling MTB-MLE

Table 7 showed how teachers coped with challenges in handling Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education. Two (2) themes emerged from the responses of the participants. These are: continuous learning and teacher collaboration.

Continuous Learning

Teachers emphasized the importance of ongoing learning in improving their skills in handling MTB-MLE. They also highlighted notable self-directed learning strategies which helped them cope with the challenges of this new methodology as presented on their responses below:

I implemented differentiated instruction, to address the needs of my pupils and then I utilized online resources. – P1

“I plan ahead para ma-research mo pa.” I plan ahead so I can still research. – P3

“So na overcome ko yung challenges as a teacher, kailangan mo lang talagang maging committed sa continuous learning and teaching MTB-MLE.” So, I overcame the challenges as a teacher, you just really need to be committed to continuous learning and teaching MTB-MLE. – P5

“I look for any available resources na makatabang sa akola to overcome that challenge” I look for any available materials that could help me overcome challenges on MTB-MLE. – P6

Teachers' continuous learning and professional development in MTB-MLE instruction are crucial for effective implementation. It is clear from the statements above that teachers really did an extra mile to deliver quality instruction using MTB-MLE. Their drive to seek for additional resources despite their lack of training speaks volume about their commitment to teaching.

Continuous learning is essential for teachers implementing MTB-MLE. By embracing best practices, teachers can enhance their language proficiency, master translation skills, access relevant materials, develop effective multilingual teaching strategies, and stay informed about current research and best practices. This commitment to ongoing professional development will contribute to the success of MTB-MLE programs and empower pupils to thrive in a diverse and multilingual learning environment (Karlsson, Larsson, & Jakobsson, 2020).

Teacher Collaboration

Teachers emphasized the importance of collaboration with colleagues to improve their MTB-MLE skills. They actively sought guidance from experienced MTB-MLE teachers and involved parents in supporting their children's learning as revealed in the statements below:

“Kailangan ding mayroong collaboration and advocacy para ma ensure yung success in teaching MTB-MLE.” There also needs to be collaboration and advocacy to ensure success in teaching MTB-MLE. – P5

“I think mentorship helps, tapos, seek feedback and keep learning.” I think mentorship really helps then, seek feedback and keep learning. – P3

“I seek support from experienced MTB-MLE teachers. And then, I actively engage my parents in supporting their children's learning development po.” – P1

“I seek help with my co-teachers, magtanong sa mga mas nakakaalam in addressing the pupils' needs.” I seek help with my co-teachers, ask those who know more in addressing the pupils' needs. – P2

“I look for any available resources na makatabang sa akola to overcome that challenge, as well as seek help especially sa mga much more experienced compared sa akola, and also pwede pud ko makapangayog help pud sa mga parents sa mga bata.” I look for any available resources that can help me overcome that challenge, as well as seek help, especially from those who are more experienced than me, and I can also ask for help from the children's parents. –

P6

The responses above are clear manifestations on how teachers worked with colleagues on solving problems together and sharing best practices. The statements highlight how teachers work together to address challenges or issues related to teaching and learning and how they share successful teaching strategies, resources, or techniques with each other.

Teacher collaboration is a vital element in fostering a successful and enriching learning environment. It empowers educators to share knowledge, solve problems collectively, and create a unified approach to teaching, ultimately leading to improved pupil outcomes. Teacher collaboration is not just beneficial—it is essential for creating a dynamic and successful educational environment. When educators join forces, everyone wins: teachers grow, pupils thrive, and schools flourish (Teachers Connect, 2025).

Teachers' Impressions and Insights on the Implementation of MTB-MLE Instructions to School

Table 8 showed teachers' insights and impressions on the implementation Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education. Participants' responses revealed that they positively view MTB-MLE instruction as it increased pupil expression and improved leaning outcomes.

Increased Pupil Expression

Teachers consistently observed that MTB-MLE empowers pupils to express themselves more freely and confidently, as they are able to communicate in their native language.

"My insights for this implementation of MTB-MLE as medium of instruction, okay for me because ma express sa mga bata ang ilahang gusto nga isulti and then dili na sila hesitant nga mo-express sa ilang thought kay gamit nila ilahang first language." My insights for this implementation of MTB-MLE as a medium of instruction, it is okay for me because the children can express what they want to say, and they are no longer hesitant to express their thoughts because they use their first language. – P7

"The use of MTB-MLE promotes inclusivity so that the child is not hesitant or aloof, because if the child at least accepts their culture, their language, there is acceptance, and in that way, they can be molded and their confidence can be boosted." – P7

"Very helpful talaga sa mga bata kasi madali lang silang maka-express ng kanilang ideas because they used their first language." It is really very helpful for the children because they can easily express their ideas because they use their first language. - P3

"Support nako ang pag-implement sa MTB-MLE because maka-explain ang bata sa unsa jud iyang gusto iingon, ug mas masabtan pud sa bata since it is their own language." I support the implementation of MTB-MLE because the child can explain what they really want to say, and the child can understand better since it is their own language. – P6

Teachers observed that using the mother tongue in instruction fosters a sense of inclusivity and acceptance, boosting pupils' confidence and self-esteem. This is supportive with the idea of Malone (2018) that pupils taught in their mother tongue are more likely to participate actively in classroom discussions, ask questions, and express their ideas freely. This is because they feel more comfortable and confident in a language they understand deeply.

Furthermore, learning in their native language allows pupils to develop a strong foundation in their mother tongue, which in turn enhances their ability to express themselves clearly and effectively. This confidence translates to other subjects and languages as they progress through their education.

MTB-MLE is a powerful tool for promoting pupil expression, fostering cultural understanding, and enhancing academic performance. By valuing pupils' native languages and providing them with a supportive learning environment, MTB-MLE empowers them to express themselves confidently, think critically, and achieve their full potential.

Improved Learning Outcomes

Teachers noted that pupils' understanding of concepts and lessons improved when taught in their native language, leading to better comprehension and engagement as shown on the responses below:

“MTB-MLE nag o-offer po siya ng significant na potential para ma-improve yung educational outcome kasi yung mga bata nai-express nila yung kanilang answers in their own native language and then natuturo mo rin sa kanila, nakakaintindi sila kasi yung sinasabi yun yung first or native language na tinuturo mo sa kanila. So, naiintindihan nila yung mga tinuturo mo, mas nakakaintindi sila mas nakaka comprehend sila kasi madali lang sa kanila.” MTB-MLE offers significant potential to improve educational outcomes because the children can express their answers in their own native language, and then you also teach them, they understand because what you are saying is the first or native language that you are teaching them. So, they understand what you are teaching, they understand better, they comprehend better because it's easy for them. – P5

“MTB-MLE, it improves the communication and comprehension skills sa mga bata.” MTB-MLE improves the communication and comprehension skills of the children. – P1

“Through MTB-MLE madali silang maka intindi.” Through MTB-MLE they can easily understand. – P3

“Mas madali sa mga bata ang makaintindi sa lessons kay sa native language man nila. Dili na kailangan i-translate2.” Children find it easier to understand the lessons when they are taught in their native language. There's no need to translate. – P4

“Tungod sa MTB-MLE, taas na ang scores sa mga bata kay mas maintindihan man nila ang lessons kay sa ilahang dialect man ginatudlo.” Because of MTB-MLE, pupils' scores have increased because they understand the lessons better since they are taught in their own dialect. – P5

It is apparent from the above statements that teachers believe that MTB-MLE has the potential to significantly improve educational outcomes, as students are better able to grasp concepts and participate actively in the learning process.

In fact, research suggests that MTB-MLE leads to better literacy skills in both the mother tongue and other languages. Students develop a strong foundation in their native language, which facilitates the acquisition of other languages (Walter & Dekker, 2011; Ramirez, 1997). This is supported by the "linguistic interdependence hypothesis," which posits that skills learned in one language can transfer to another (Cummins, 1979).

Furthermore, research has shown that students who are taught in their mother tongue tend to perform better academically, especially in subjects like reading and mathematics. This is attributed to increased engagement, better understanding of concepts, and a more positive learning experience (Malone, 2018).

MTB-MLE promotes educational equity by providing all students, regardless of their linguistic background, with equal opportunities to access quality education. By creating a more inclusive and engaging learning environment, MTB-MLE can lead to increased school participation and reduced dropout rates, especially among students from linguistic minority groups (Ramirez, 1997). Thus, the successful implementation of MTB-MLE has the potential to

transform education systems, fostering equity, promoting cognitive development, preserving cultural heritage, and ultimately creating a more just and prosperous society.

5. Summary, Conclusion, And Recommendation

Summary

This research paper investigated the level of preparedness and instructional competence of Grades 1 and 2 teachers in Libungan West District, Libungan, Cotabato in relation to the implementation of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE). The study utilized quantitative and qualitative data to analyze the socio-demographic profile of the respondents, their level of preparedness for MTB-MLE, their instructional competence, and the challenges they encounter.

Specifically, this study aimed to determine the socio-demographic profile of the participants in terms of age, gender, religion, highest educational attainment, and trainings attended. It also sought to identify the level of preparedness, and instructional competence of Grades 1 and 2 MTB-MLE teachers in terms of pupil's preparedness, teacher's preparedness, instructional materials, and teacher's training. Furthermore, it investigated the significant relationship between the level of MTB-MLE instruction and teacher's level of instructional competence in handling MTB-MLE instruction. Lastly, it also explored the challenges encountered in handling MTB-MLE instruction.

Results revealed that the teaching workforce in Libungan West District was predominantly experienced, with a majority of teachers aged above 40. The gender distribution was significantly skewed towards females, with only 2.3% of teachers being male. The majority of teachers were identified as Roman Catholic, with a small but diverse presence of other religious affiliations. The educational attainment of the teachers was diverse, with a large proportion holding Master's Degrees or earning Master's Degree units. The participation in professional development programs was varied, with a significant portion of teachers lacking recent training, particularly in areas directly related to MTB-MLE.

This study also discovered a very extensive level of preparedness for MTB-MLE across all areas: pupils, teachers, instructional materials, and training, with means 3.53, 3.60, and 3.56, respectively. Teachers believed that pupils were well-prepared to engage in MTB-MLE, and they felt confident in their ability to teach in the mother tongue. The availability of culturally appropriate instructional materials further supported the program's implementation.

Furthermore, teachers demonstrated a very extensive level of instructional competence, with an over-all mean of 3.53, in delivering MTB-MLE, exhibiting high-quality instruction, professional behavior, effective use of instructional materials, and strong content knowledge. These implied that teachers were highly competent in delivering the MTB-MLE instruction.

Moreover, a strong positive correlation was found between the level of preparedness for MTB-MLE and the level of instructional competence for both Grades 1 and Grade 2 teachers, as well as, for the combined group. In other words, as the preparedness of Grade 1 teachers in MTB-MLE increases, so did their instructional competence in teaching using the mother tongue. The correlation's strength and significance suggested that teachers who were better prepared in MTB-MLE were more competent in their instructional practices when teaching in the mother tongue.

Teachers also faced significant challenges in implementing MTB-MLE, particularly related to pupils' preparedness (language barriers, cultural gaps, lack of mother tongue proficiency). This highlighted the need for strategies that bridge these gaps, such as culturally relevant materials and community-based learning approaches to support pupils in making meaningful connections between their home language and school language. With a mean value of 2.99, the challenges regarding teachers' preparedness in implementing MTB-MLE were also much encountered (lack of training, difficulty adjusting to new methodologies). This emphasized the importance of targeted professional development programs for teachers to enhance their competency and confidence in MTB-MLE instruction. Lastly, the mean score of 3.30 suggested that challenges related to instructional materials in MTB-MLE were also much

encountered. (limited access and understanding). Addressing these challenges required investment in developing locally relevant materials and increasing financial support for resource development.

Conclusion

The findings suggested that Libungan West District was well-prepared for the implementation of MTB-MLE, with a highly competent teaching workforce. However, the study also highlighted significant challenges that need to be addressed to ensure the program's effectiveness and sustainability.

For pupil preparedness, the varying levels of fluency in the mother tongue and confusion over the "true" first language among pupils posed a significant barrier to effective learning. In terms of teacher preparedness, insufficient training in MTB-MLE and difficulty adjusting to new methodologies hindered teachers' instructional competence.

Lastly, it was revealed that there was a limited access to culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate instructional materials. Challenges in understanding and utilizing these materials also posed a significant obstacle to effective teaching.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the challenges and enhance the success of MTB-MLE in Libungan West District, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. To enhance pupil preparedness on MTB-MLE instruction, it is crucial to Implement culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate teaching practices, provide language support programs to bridge the gap between home language and school language, and conduct thorough assessments to identify pupils' language needs and tailor instruction accordingly.
2. To ensure teacher preparedness on MTB-MLE instruction, it is vital to provide comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs specifically focused on MTB-MLE, to offer opportunities for teachers to share best practices and collaborate with peers, and to create a supportive school environment that encourages innovation and adaptation to new methodologies.
3. To enhance the delivery of instructional materials, it is important to invest in developing locally relevant and culturally appropriate instructional materials, to provide teachers with training on how to effectively utilize and adapt existing materials, and to collaborate with the community to ensure that materials are aligned with pupils' lived experiences.
4. In general, it is necessary to allocate sufficient funds for the development and implementation of MTB-MLE programs, encourage community participation in the curriculum development process, and conduct regular evaluations to monitor the effectiveness of MTB-MLE and identify areas for improvement.
5. Future researchers should investigate the correlation between teachers' MTB-MLE preparedness and student learning outcomes in Libungan West District. This would provide crucial evidence on the effectiveness of MTB-MLE initiatives and inform future policy decisions.

By addressing these challenges and implementing the recommended strategies, Libungan West District can create a more equitable and effective educational environment that supports the linguistic and academic growth of all pupils.

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