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ELEMENTARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS TEACHERS AND MTB MLE IMPLEMENTATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Abstract

According to the new The K to 12 Basic Education Program implemented in the Philippines in 2013, modifications in pre-service education for aspiring teachers shall be applied to conform to the requirements of both K to 12 and its auxiliary program for the first three levels called Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) that mandates the utility of students' mother tongue(s) as medium of instruction. The agencies in charge for these modifications are the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education. Their task involves ensuring that the Teacher Education curriculum offered in different higher education institutions in the Philippines will meet the necessary quality standards for new teachers. However, since the implementation of MTB-MLE as a national policy in the School Year 2012-2013, no national guideline has been issued to higher education institutions regarding the said modifications.

This paper locates voices of tertiary instructors employed in elementary education programs in four selected universities across the Philippines during the implementation of the MTB-MLE policy. This study specifically sought to determine the interventions applied by university administrations to their elementary education programs to ensure that their adult learners' knowledge and skills are aligned with the national policies even without direct guidelines from

any macro agents. Central to this paper are the perceptions of the informants regarding the interventions applied by their university administrations to their elementary education programs.

Keywords

Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE); Teacher Education Curriculum; Elementary Education Programs; Language Policy Planning (LPP); Language-in-Education Policy (LEP)

1. Introduction

In fictional literature, one of the earliest manifestations that humankind is naturally multilingual (and multicultural) is the Bible story of the Tower of Babel (see Taylor-Batty, 2013; Dascal, “The Tower of Babel”). Linguistic diversity is the punishment of the Christian god over the arrogant attempt of building a tower that reaches the heavens: the Tower of Bab-el (Babylonian, “The gates of heaven”) (Dascal, “The Tower of Babel”). It is said that the heavenly divinity created confusion among the builders by giving them different, unintelligible languages. Benjamin (1997: 72) writes,

After the Fall, which, in making language mediate, laid the foundation for its multiplicity, linguistic confusion could be only a step away. Once men had injured the purity of name, the turning away from that contemplation of things in which their language passes into man needed only to be completed in order to deprive men of the common foundation of an already shaken spirit of language.

Soon, humanity spreads across the planet that begins the many great civilizations with diverse cultures and multiple languages.

In 2003, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) estimated the multitude of languages in the world to be between 6000 and 7000 (Education in a Multilingual World, 2003: 12). Today, Ethnologue provides a more recent count of 7,097 living languages in five geographical divisions: Africa, Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Pacific. It is estimated that 50% of these are spoken in eight countries: India, Brazil, Mexico, Australia, Indonesia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, and Cameroon (Graddol, 1997), while the other 50% are composed of about only twenty languages¹ (Lewis, Simons and Fennig, 2015). Austin and Sallabank (2011) estimated that among the languages listed by UNESCO, 50-90% may become endangered or extinct by 2100.

In its effort to empower the large number of languages and cultures and identities in the world, UNESCO has claimed a firm stand in its statements regarding the use of the mother tongue (and linguistic diversity) in education. One of its core principles states:

It is through his (or her) mother tongue that every human being first learns to formulate and express his (or her) ideas about himself and the world in which he (or she) lives ... For these reasons it is important that every effort should be made to provide education in the mother tongue (The Use of Vernacular Languages, 1953: 47).

The organization has likewise sustained that “safeguarding this [linguistic] diversity” is one of the world’s most pressing challenges (Education in a Multilingual World, 1993: 30).

Tupas (2014) writes that multilingual education is a practicable educational policy for the following reasons: (a) it empowers minority groups through the acknowledgment and “recognition” of their rights to speak, preserve and invest on their languages (or their “linguistic human rights”); (b) it helps in the preservation of languages that are on the brink of danger or extinction (“language maintenance”) through the encouragement of their use in the community, public, and academic spaces; (c) it is an “anti-colonial” mechanism (against “the hegemony of the national language”) that embraces the multilingual and multicultural contexts of societies; and (d) it is supported by numerous literature and researches around the world that affirm UNESCO’s firm advocacy for Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) implementation.

In the Philippines, endeavors for multilingual education (MLE, hereafter) started as early as the 1950s with Jose D. Aguilar’s First Iloilo Experiment (Nolasco, 2008). In this project, Aguilar pioneered the use of Hiligaynon as medium of instruction for Grades 1 and 2 students. Findings revealed that learners outperform their English-taught counterparts in reading, mathematics, and social studies, and even caught up with other students in their knowledge of English six months after initial instruction in Hiligaynon (Nolasco, 2008: 7).

Effort for MLE is necessary in the Philippines to maintain its rich linguistic diversity. Though quantitative data differ from one research to another, scholars such as McFarland (1993 in Gonzalez 2008; Gonzalez, 1999), Nolasco (2008), and Lewis, Simon and Fennig (2015) report many diverse languages in the country. What is alarming among these data is Summer Institute of Linguistics’ (SIL) (through Lewis, Simon and Fennig, 2015; updated by Simons and Fennig, 2018) report that among the 187 individual Philippine languages identified in 2015, only 183 are living and four has gone extinct. Furthermore, among the 183 living languages in the country, 14 are in trouble and 11 are dying.

Addressing these dilemmas, Gonzalez (in Nolasco, 2008) started the Regional Lingua Franca (RLF) Pilot Project in 1999 in 16 regions using the Philippines’ three largest lingua

francae: Tagalog, Cebuano and Ilocano. The research yielded that using learners' mother tongue as medium of instruction helped them (1) effectively adjust to the school environment (students can easily express themselves freely) and (2) successfully regulate learning tasks such as reading and writing, solving problems in math, and understanding concepts in science (in Nolasco, 2008).

One of the most "compelling" (Nolasco, 2008: 8) experimental projects was the joint SIL, the Department of Education (DepEd), and the local community of Lubuagan, Kalinga province's MLE Program. In this project, three experimental and three controlled classes were used to determine if mother tongue-based instruction benefits the learners of Lubuagan. The students' mother tongue was used in the experimental cluster, while traditional method (Filipino and English) of instruction was used in the controlled group. Findings from the experiment reveal better performance from the experimental group compared with the controlled group.

Results of these experiments (among many others done in many parts of the country — see Nolasco, 2008 and Canilao, 2015) encouraged scholars and academicians to rally behind MTB-MLE in the country's basic education program. Finally, on March 6, 2008, Representative Magtanggol Gunigundo filed House Bill 3719 "The Multilingual Education and Literacy Act of 2008," and subsequently, on May 19 of the same year, then Senator Manuel Roxas filed Senate Bill 2294 "The Omnibus Education Reform Act of 2008" that launched MTB-MLE as a national policy in the Philippines (see Canilao, 2015).

The year that followed witnessed the institutionalization of MTB-MLE in the Philippine basic education program through DepEd Order 74 series of 2009. MTB-MLE is described by the Department of Education as "the effective use of more than two languages for literacy instruction."

Though these projects show how much the country supports UNESCO in its aim of empowering learners' diverse mother tongues, it is quite peculiar that the Philippines is the only Southeast Asian country that institutionalized MTB-MLE as a national policy in the primary level (Burton, 2013). While many other countries in and out of Southeast Asia have adopted the use of mother-tongue as medium of instruction, these setups are more often contextualized/community-based rather than national in scope.

Challenges in national policies arise when macro language policies drafted by politicians and other participants who are detached from the everyday classroom situations are handed over to the meso and micro agents (see 4.2 below) for implementation. This creates a big divide

between what the policy stipulates and what truly happens inside language classrooms; in Gonzalez' words, "Policy and reality do not match ... there has been language planning but not implementation or realization" (3; see also Shohamy, 2009: 52). Gonzalez explains that no matter what the policy is (or has been), teachers will always resort to using young learners' mother tongue(s) to explain concepts and deliver instructions for purposes of intelligibility (or strategic code-switching in Canagarajah, 1999).

On the other hand, in Burton's (2013) study among first grade teachers and parents in one school district in the Bikol Region, she found the great divide between what policy statements say, what teachers know about the policies, and the belief systems that parents inculcate among their children at home. In particular, participants in Burton's study feel that the policy may have short-term outcomes in contrast with policy statements speculating its long-term effects.

These two examples (as well as others that may be found in Metila, Pradilla, and Williams' investigations of the best practices of MTB-MLE implementation in the Philippines in 2017) provide details on how macro language policies fail especially when the community, including target implementers, feel distance from these national policies in education.

An often-neglected dimension in the implementation of MTB-MLE is the historic, economic, and functional position of English in the context. Mahboob and Cruz (2013) trace the historic and economic entrenchment of English in the Philippines that started with the United States colonization. The Americans ensured that their language seethed through all dimensions of their subjects' consciousness through education – a practice that was neglected by the earlier Spanish colonial masters. Thus, education, and the language through which it was delivered, was appreciated as an "incentive" by Filipinos, and traces of these can still be felt in the attitudes of Filipinos across generation towards English and other Philippine languages.

Still, today, it is undeniable that English remains to be the dominant language of education, politics, and all other socioeconomic domains in the Philippines. Kachru (1998) writes that in the recent decades, English has gained "presence in the most vital aspects of our Asian lives – our cultures, our languages, our interactional patterns, our discourse, our economies ... our politics ... our identities" (91). Kachru invokes the right of languages to "naturalization," claiming that English is an Asian language (and thus, a Philippine language as well, *I claim*) by its "functional nativeness." (see more in Kachru, 1998: 103). Given these, English may be a crucial addition to the list of languages that are mandated for MTB-MLE implementation. But this is not the only vital factor in its implementation. Nolasco (2008) writes

that in order for a true MLE program to succeed in the country, there are at least four conditions that must be met:

One, there has to be good curriculum, one that is cognitively demanding. Two, we will need good teachers who are competent in the required language, content and methods. Three, there must be good teaching materials (i.e. error free). Four, community support and empowerment must be present (2008: 12).

Ricento and Hornberger (1996) likewise writes that the layers that compose the Language Policy Planning (LPP) whole - the “onion” — that includes what other scholars call language planning agents, levels, and processes — the national (the language policy), institutional (parents, textbook writers, etc.), and interpersonal (teachers, ELT professionals) (Burton, 2013) - must work together for language policies to succeed.

This study aimed to trace the voices of tertiary instructors who are teaching in elementary education programs in four selected universities across the country in the middle of the implementation of the MTB-MLE policy. The paper draws from, and appropriates Nolasco’s (2008) fourth condition: community support and empowerment, by identifying teachers of elementary education programs in the tertiary level as one crucial part of the “community” that composes the stakeholders in this relatively new policy in the Philippine basic education program.

2. The Missing Macro Agents in National LEP Implementation

According to The K to 12 Basic Education Program (2013) prepared by the Presidential Communications Development and Strategic Planning Office (PCDSO), modifications in pre-service education for aspiring teachers “shall be applied” to conform to the requirements of the program (K-to-12 basic education program and the MTB-MLE policy implemented in the first three years levels of K to 12). The Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) shall ensure that the teacher education curriculum offered in higher education institutions (HEI) will meet the necessary quality standards for new teachers.

However, it must be noted that with four years in practice, no one between CHED or DepEd has released any national document mandating or directing (or guiding) HEIs to revise curricula offerings for elementary education programs to adapt to the changes in the medium of instruction for the first three grades of the country’s basic education program. Therefore, HEIs are left to decide and design their own interventions to make sure that adult learners

(“andragogy” in Celli and Young, 2017, versus pedagogy) understand and realize the importance of MTB-MLE implementation and instruction.

Without any clearly-defined guidelines from institutional education agencies, this paper aimed to determine selected tertiary teachers of elementary education programs’ perceptions regarding the interventions that their HEIs have taken to prepare their elementary education graduates for MTB-MLE instruction.

In the process, I answered to the following specific questions:

1. How are elementary education curricula and syllabi designed and implemented in the informants’ HEIs?
2. As far as the informants are aware, what interventions to prepare their elementary education majors for MTB-MLE instruction have been implemented by their HEIs?
3. What amendment/s in the design and implementation of elementary education curricula and syllabi can the informants suggest for their HEIs?

The results of this study are directed toward macro agents that are primarily concerned and responsible for language policy planning that eventually turnout as national language policies (or language-in-education policies [LEP]). This includes the national government, its subordinating agencies CHED and DepEd, politicians, and a number of meso agents like university officials, local government units, and other LEP implementers.

3. Tracing the Voices of Policy Implementers

This study aimed to trace the voices of tertiary instructors who are teaching in elementary education programs in four selected universities across the country in the middle of the implementation of MTB-MLE. The research used convenience sampling in identifying the informants² (teachers) for the study. These four informants are from four different regions in the country that represent the major divisions of the archipelago: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The study attempted to provide a view representative of the larger population though it must be acknowledged that an expanded version of the study must be conducted to provide more comprehensive and conclusive statements regarding the issue at hand.

The study is limited to the informants’ perceptions regarding curriculum and syllabi design and implementation in their HEIs’ elementary education programs. The study does not involve other degree programs offered by the HEIs involved in this study. Likewise, the effectiveness of either the curricula or syllabi is not included in this study.

This study is also limited to the HEIs of the four informants. The informants' responses are only limited to the best of their knowledge and experiences regarding the practices of their HEI and may not be true in the case of other HEIs.

4. The Formation of a Dialogic Approach to LPP

This paper imports Shohamy's (2009; 2006) argument that teachers in universities and colleges, as much as teachers in the primary level, play a vital role in the implementation of new education policies and procedures such as the K to 12 basic education program and its auxiliary program for the first three year levels called MTB-MLE. Teacher-trainers must (1) not only know about the new policies, but must likewise (2) learn the intricacies of teaching new skills integrated in, for example, primary education instruction because this is what their syllabi and curricula must contain. Therefore, (3) this paper argues that the voices of teacher-trainers must have a substantial place in the implementation of national policies and procedures in education.

This paper is guided by Shohamy's argument that "any policy needs to be viewed as a communicative, negotiable, and democratic act of expanding the participation of multiple stakeholders" (2009: 49-50). It likewise utilized Canagarajah's (1999) Critical Pedagogy to critique the top-down implementation of MTB-MLE: from the macro agents down to teachers and students across levels.

4.1 Teacher Empowerment and Linguistic Activism in LPP

Shohamy (2009) believes that teachers must be active partners in language education planning (LEP) bringing in their "educational knowledge, experiences[,] and praxis into the process" (46). Teachers' outputs, Shohamy claims, are "grounded and embedded in actual practice and knowledge about language learning" (46) as they are implemented inside classrooms with students and other "mechanisms"³ (53) and agents of language policy. These inputs are crucial "in addressing the realities of schools, students, and 'the nation' at large" (62). Likewise, she upholds that language policies must be "related and connected to the agents that implement them, as well as to research on language learning in educational context."

The gap between policy and practice made Shohamy (2009) call for "linguistic activism"⁴ (see Tollefson, 2007) among language professionals. She believes that language teachers are not (and must not remain as) mere instruments and implementers of top-down policies. Teachers are burdened with the responsibility to question government policies since they are assumed to be

more aware of the “loaded agendas” of language policies, and thus, have the capacity to resist them.

4.2 Canagarajah’s Critical Pedagogy

Canagarajah (1999) views learning using the following concepts of critical pedagogy:

- a. Learning is a process. Learners’ unique backgrounds (consciousness, identity, and relationships) shape the process of learning;
- b. Learning is situated. Complex social realities make each specific context where learners are located distinct from one to the other;
- c. Learning is cultural. Culture, social realities, and value foreground the reasons (why), processes (how), and items (what) that learners get from education;
- d. Learning is political. Exercise of power and dominance in the society is never detached from the processes of learning and schooling; and
- e. Learning is ideological. Negotiation of values, beliefs, and prior learning (learners’ schema) between and among communities result to the expansion and proliferation of knowledge.

These items contribute to how Canagarajah (1999 in Paez, 2012) expands ‘context’ from the lenses of pedagogy, thus contributing to his ‘critical pedagogy.’

Applying Canagarajah’s (1999) critical pedagogy to this research, I tried to point out what makes MTB-MLE as a national policy frail, while on the side applying Shohamy’s (2009) arguments to forward recommendations.

When learners attend school, they bring their diverse backgrounds and identities with them. These social and cultural milieus that come from different home environments, different relationships with family members and friends, as far as different interpretations of various texts across social and printed media, all contribute to the processes of learning that teachers must consider in addressing the various and diverse needs of students. When national policies are handed down by macro agents (who are often detached from these realities) to teachers in classrooms for implementation, teachers encounter difficulty in balancing what is expected of them to fulfill via the written policies versus addressing the needs of learners. Macro agents must consider that teachers are not mechanical instruments of national policies that are oftentimes loaded with political tensions (what must be retained on policies versus what must be substituted by practice-based approaches, for example). Teachers, on the other hand, must not be wary of these loaded policies that macro agents supply. Teachers must take the active role of a negotiator

among the macro (politician/the government), meso (parents, textbook writers, government and non-governments organizations, among other stakeholders) and micro (students) agents, thus yielding to a more dialogic approach to LPP that represents and empowers the community.

5. Towards the Analysis of Policy Implementers' Perceptions and Experiences

This qualitative research uses case study as an approach. Yin (1984 in Nunan, 1992: 76) defines case study as an “empirical inquiry that investigates contemporary phenomenon within real-life context; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” thus, inviting multiplicity of viewpoints (Adelman, et al., 1976 in Nunan, 1992). Yin (2003 in McKay, 2006) also explains that case studies serve the following purposes: (1) explanation of causal links, (2) description of an intervention, or (3) evaluation of a particular case. This research is able to fulfil all these purposes listed by Yin: (1) the study tried to identify the causal link between the MTB-MLE policy-in-practice in the country's basic education program and the teacher-trainers (informants/teachers) in tertiary education that practically supply the implementers of this policy; (2) the study sought to describe the intervention applied by HEIs in training adult learners of elementary education programs for the implementation of MTB-MLE; and (3) the study is an evaluation of the location and voice of tertiary teachers of education programs in training their elementary education adult learners to understand and implement MTB-MLE once these adult learners graduate and practice their professions.

The data-gathering procedure includes the following: first, I distributed self-made questionnaires to four informants who are teaching in elementary education programs in four HEIs across the country. The informants' answers were then collated, analyzed, and summarized to yield to four situational/contextual understandings of how HEIs prepare their elementary education majors for MTB-MLE instruction. Central to this paper are the informants' perceptions towards their HEIs' interventions to prepare their elementary education majors for MTB-MLE instruction.

Convenience sampling was used in selecting the informants for this study. Convenience sampling is used to select individuals who happen to be available for the study (Mackey and Gass, 2005) which is a representative of the larger population (McKay, 2006).

6. Teachers of Elementary Education Programs' Perceptions and Experiences on Cascading MTB MLE in the Tertiary Level

6.1 The Informants' Profile

Table 1 shows the profile of the informants' HEIs.

Table 1: *Profile of the Informants' HEIs*

	HEI Region	HEI Category	HEI Status
<i>Informant 1</i>	Region VIII (Eastern Visayas)	Public HEI: State University or College (SUC)	No answer
<i>Informant 2</i>	Region XI (Davao Region)	Private HEI	Deregulated
<i>Informant 3</i>	Region II (Cagayan Valley)	Public HEI: SUC	Deregulated
<i>Informant 4</i>	National Capital Region	Public HEI: SUC	Deregulated (Chartered)

The table shows that the convenience sampling technique applied to this research yielded to the widest possible representation of the three major divisions of the archipelago: Region VIII (Eastern Visayas) found in the Visayas Region, Region XI (Davao Region) is in Mindanao, while both Region II (Cagayan Valley) and the National Capital Region (NCR) are in Luzon.

Among the four informants, three are from SUCs while one is from a private HEI. Three of the HEIs (the private HEI and two SUCs: Region II and NCR) are deregulated while the informant from Region VIII preferred not to provide information.

CHED grants among HEIs privileges of autonomy and deregulation. Autonomy allows universities to design their own curricula, offer new programs, and carry out operations, among other privileges with minimal supervision from CHED. Deregulated HEIs practically enjoy the same benefit but must secure approvals from CHED for new programs and for the creation of satellite campuses.

It is important to identify the category (public or private) and status (autonomous and deregulated) of the informants' HEIs to determine the degree to which CHED must provide support and maintenance for elementary education programs of the schools involved in this study.

6.2 Design and Implementation of HEIs' Curricula and Syllabi for Elementary Education

Different schools follow different approaches in designing and implementing curricula and syllabi for degree courses. The informants were asked to identify the type of design and implementation that their HEIs follow.

Table 3: HEIs' Approaches in Curriculum and Syllabi Design and Implementation

	HEI Approach
<i>Informant 1</i>	Top-down with minimal teacher involvement
<i>Informant 2</i>	Top-down with minimal teacher involvement
<i>Informant 3</i>	Top-down with minimal teacher involvement
<i>Informant 4</i>	Top-down with no teacher involvement

Table 3 shows the general approach of the four HEIs in curriculum design and implementation in relation to teacher involvement. Informants 1, 2, and 3 selected the same answer, "Top-down approach with minimal teacher involvement." Informant 4, on the other hand answered, "Top-down with no teacher involvement."

Informants 1, 2, and 3 provided descriptions of how their HEIs (minimally) involve them in elementary education program curriculum and syllabi design and implementation. Informant 1 from Region VIII (Eastern Visayas) narrated that curriculum planning starts from their Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) who convenes the deans and unit heads to plan [for the curriculum drafting or revision]. The unit heads in turn meet the teachers to discuss the curriculum plan. Feedbacks from these small meetings are sent back to the VPAA. When it comes to syllabi design and implementation, the unit heads assign teachers to revise their syllabi based on their specialization. Results from these individual/small group tasks are sent to the unit head for comments and suggestions, and then submitted to the dean of the college afterwards.

Informant 2 from Region IX (Davao Region) explains that the administrators of his HEI commissions a special committee composed of researchers (who are not necessarily teachers), program heads or coordinators, and deans for curriculum design. Teacher involvement is limited to designing the syllabi or course outline based on the guidelines provided by the administration.

Informant 3 from Region II (Cagayan Valley) shares that teachers in his HEI involve themselves [only] when invited for curriculum planning workshops and syllabus designing mandated by CHED.

Informants 1, 2, and 3 enjoy varying levels of involvement in their HEIs' curriculum and syllabi design and implementation. Informant 1's HEI, based on the narrative provided seems to

follow a dialogic approach between the administration and teachers in both curriculum planning and syllabi design. Among the three, Informant 1 also has the greatest teacher involvement in the said activities. Informants 2 and 3’s HEIs, on the other hand, only involve teachers in syllabi design, with informant 3 highlighting that teachers only “involve themselves when invited.” Informant 2, on the other hand, must follow the guidelines set by the administration for syllabi writing.

These results show that curriculum design and revision of elementary education programs remain to be supplied by the administration with very little support from various stakeholders, including teachers.

6.3 Interventions Implemented by HEIs to Address the Education Shift to MTB-MLE in Grades 1 to 3

The following table provides a general picture of the interventions applied by HEIs (limited to those involved in this study) to ensure that their elementary education adult learners are updated with the reforms in the medium of instruction for MTB-MLE.

Table 4: *General HEI Interventions in the Elementary Education Programs*

	HEI General Interventions				
	Revision of elementary education curriculum	Revision of elementary education syllabi	Revision of both elementary education curriculum and syllabi	Verbal address to apply MTB-MLE in teaching	Others
<i>Informant 1</i>			/	/	
<i>Informant 2</i>				/	
<i>Informant 3</i>				/	
<i>Informant 4</i>					/*

/* “The University did not initiate, in any way, to address the need of revising the curriculum incorporating the MTB-MLE to equip its BED students.” - Informant 4

The table shows the interventions that the informants’ HEIs have implemented into their elementary education programs in connection to MTB-MLE.

Among the four informants, only the HEI where informant 1 belongs have revised both the elementary education curriculum and syllabi integrating the principles of MTB-MLE. Informants 2 and 3 report that their HEIs have instructed its faculty members to address the implementation of MTB-MLE in grades 1 to 3 via their instruction/teaching methods but have not yet revised their elementary education curricula and syllabi. Informant 2 further explains that

his HEI has provided instructions to take “small steps” to align their syllabi to K-to-12 implementation.

Only informant 4 reported that the university where he teaches has not initiated any form of revision on its elementary education curriculum and syllabi for MTB-MLE instruction. However, teachers have taken the initiative to provide this instruction to adult learners even without instructions from any HEI official.

Table 5 shows a more specific and functional list of interventions that HEIs implement or encourage to address the shift to MTB-MLE instruction.

Table 5. *Specific HEI Interventions in the Elementary Education Programs for MTB-MLE Instruction*

	HEI Interventions						
	Public fora	Public consultations	Consultations among faculty members	Seminars (conducted by the HEI)	Attendance in seminars conducted by other HEIs/ organizations	Distribution of leaflets/ handouts	Others
<i>Informant 1</i>			/	/	/		
<i>Informant 2</i>			/		/		
<i>Informant 3</i>			/	/	/		
<i>Informant 4</i>							/ (None)

The table reveals that HEIs (in the case of informants 1, 2, 3) (1) conduct consultations among its faculty members regarding the implementation of MTB-MLE policy in the first three grades of basic education, (2) conduct seminars for MTB-MLE instruction (except for informant 2), and (3) encourage its faculty members to attend seminars on MTB-MLE instruction conducted by other HEIs or organizations. Informant 4 answered that there has been no specific intervention that his HEI has conducted or has endorsed for their faculty members. However, faculty members take the initiative to attend seminars and study about the alignment of MTB-MLE in tertiary instruction, especially for elementary education adult learners.

6.4. Teachers’ Perception Towards HEIs’ Elementary Education Program

Shohamy (2009) advocates for teachers’ active participation in LEP. Nolasco, in the same degree, promotes the empowerment and support of the community for MLE in the country to succeed. This study appropriates the term ‘community’ to include teachers in the tertiary level who are teaching elementary education adult learners who, in turn, will implement the MTB-

MLE policy. But how do these teachers in the tertiary level perceive their own HEIs' elementary education program?

For informant 1, she reported that her HEI has "tried" to address the macro agents' implementation of both the K-to-12 basic education program and MTB-MLE by (1) including these new concepts to their curricula and syllabi across courses (informant 1's HEI is a teacher training institution holding a Center for Excellence recognition from CHED), (2) holding seminars and conferences for faculty members and adult learners, (3) development of the Waray orthography for MLE instruction, and (4) creation, development and expansion (CHED-funded project that will include other vernaculars) of a Waray dictionary that is used in the region.

For informant 2, he reported that there is a need to change the system of his HEI. He believes that faculty members in his HEI may be ready for the K to 12 basic education program in principle, but still lacks in terms of attitude, and curricula, and syllabi alignment.

For the third informant, his HEI must revise its curriculum [for elementary education] in order to meet the demand for MTB-MLE instruction. He highlights the need for competent teachers "in the future." He claims that reforms and interventions have been started in the beginning of School Year 2016-2017.

Lastly, for the fourth informant, he claims that his HEI's elementary education program does not address the needs of the K to 12 basic education program.

Except for informant 1 who belongs to a teacher education institution, all the other informants believe that their HEIs need to revise their elementary education program's curricula, syllabi, and instruction (and even attitude for informant 2). Informants 1 and 3 view the effort of their HEIs positively. This is seen on their description of the tangible reforms and interventions that their HEIs have started implementing. On the other hand, informant 2 seemed neutral, while informant 4 reveals a negative perception towards his HEI's lack of support for MTB-MLE instruction.

It is quite noticeable how informants 2 and 3 seemed to refer to the K-to-12 BEP and MTB-MLE as future programs (informant 3 mentions about competent teachers "in the future"). This shows a gap between Spolsky's (2004 in Shohamy, 2009) practice and belief. Both the K to 12 basic education program and MTB-MLE have been in practice for several years, but most HEIs have fallen behind their belief systems. This may be attributed to a crisis in management of macro and selected meso agents who fail to ensure the smooth implementation of policies across levels.

6.5 Teachers' Suggestions for the Expansion and Enhancement of HEIs' Elementary Education Programs

Following Shohamy's (2009) proposal that teachers must be active partners in LEP, the informants were asked to suggest possible interventions and/or amendments for their HEIs' elementary education program.

For informant 1, she forwards that there "may be" a need to revisit her HEI's elementary education curriculum and syllabi to find out if there is a "true" implementation of reforms [in MTB-MLE instruction].

Informant 2 suggests two things, (1) first is to improve teachers' involvement in the design of curricula for elementary education. Teachers must be given the liberty to apply modifications in classroom instruction and must be allowed to present their observations to the curriculum planning committee; (2) curriculum must involve a professional education course that train "future" basic education teachers the requisites of MTB-MLE instruction.

Informant 3 suggests that his HEI must (1) benchmark on the practices of specialized centers/institutions of education, (2) conduct research on the "contextual practices" to address the needs of an area, and (3) train teachers on "innovative interventions."

Informant 4 proposes that his HEI must now start revising its curriculum and syllabi for elementary education to meet the standards of the K to 12 basic education program.

Among the four informants, only informant 2 explicitly suggested a bottom-up approach to LPP. Informant 1 showed hesitation in her stand to "revisit" her HEI's curriculum. The informants aired diverse amendments and suggestions that supports Canagarajah's claim that learning is situational and cultural. For example, informant 3 was less direct in his suggestion for a revamp in his HEI's elementary education program (suggesting that his HEI must conduct researches, trainings, and benchmarking) compared to informant 4 who directly stated that his HEI must seriously and immediately consider curriculum revision to fulfill the standards of the K to 12 basic education program. This shows a big difference between the school culture of the HEIs of informant 3 and that of informant 4.

It is curious that among the four informants, no one invoked the power of macro agents like CHED and the national government in any of their answers. There may be two reasons for this: (1) could it be that the Filipino teacher and HEIs have gone used to the 'cold' and 'distant' treatment of the macro agents? Eventually, this has transformed HEIs into self-sustaining agencies (except for informant 2 who works in a private institution) that do not wait for specific

mandates or guidelines from the CHED or the national government; or (2) could it be that the Filipino teacher is marginalized/”silent” and HEIs find it difficult to resist and/or negotiate with the power and influence of macro agents?

It is with these observations and analyses that this paper forwards Shohamy’s (2009) position that teachers of elementary education programs (and practically, all teachers in all levels across the nation) must rally behind “collective actions,” or linguistic activism (Tollefson, 2007) to empower teachers across levels — to empower themselves — to resist and invoke the power and influence of macro agents embedded in loaded national policies on language and education.

7. The Failure of Implementing and Resisting National LEPs

Upon the investigation of micro agents’ perceptions and experiences in teaching in elementary education programs, it was evident that the HEIs of the four informants follow the top-down approach to curriculum design and implementation with minimal up to no participation from teachers who directly implement the policies. In the case of syllabi design, three of the four informants felt that they are more involved in the preparation of course materials. Still, in the case of Informant 2, teachers must follow the guidelines set by the administration, while for Informant 3, teachers only involve themselves when invited. This shows that teachers in at least three HEIs involved in this study, who are directly engaged in policy implementation, are marginalized in the process of curriculum and syllabi design. This goes against what Shohamy (2009) advocates that curriculum must be “related and connected to the agents that implement them.” This also shows what Canagarajah (1999) meant when he claimed that learning is both political and ideological. Administrators of HEIs hold the monopoly of power in processes involving curriculum and syllabi planning, thus providing limited room, if not committing acts of silencing, for teachers to uphold what Shohamy (2009) pointed out to be important in LEP production: the “educational knowledge, experiences and praxis” of teachers inside language classrooms.

Meanwhile, it can also be seen that with MTB-MLE policy in practice for three years, the HEIs of the informants (except for informant 1) have not yet revised their elementary education curriculum and syllabi. More often, only verbal instructions are given to faculty members (except for informant 4) to align their instruction for their elementary education adult learners to the MTB-MLE policy. For informant 4, teachers must rely on their initiatives to update whatever they have for their adult learners to learn new national procedures. In some limited cases, the

HEIs of the four informants (except for informant 4) encourage their faculty members in the elementary education program to attend seminars conducted by the administration (of the informants' HEIs) or by other HEIs or organizations. The HEIs (except for informant 4) also conduct consultations among its faculty members to discuss the effects of MTB-MLE policy in their elementary education curricula, syllabi, and instruction. Putting the data from the four informants together, it can be gleaned that HEIs provide average up to no support for the alignment of MTB-MLE instruction in elementary education programs in colleges and/or universities.

The analysis in the previous section also revealed that the four informants from four different HEIs across the country have varying perceptions, practices, and beliefs regarding their HEIs' efforts (or lack of effort) to integrate MTB-MLE instruction in their curricula, syllabi, and instruction. Informants 1 and 3 showed positive feedbacks regarding the steps taken by their HEI to update their curriculum and syllabi for MTB-MLE instruction. Informant 2, on the other hand showed neutrality, while informant 4 revealed a negative perception towards his HEI's lack of support for the elementary education program and MTB-MLE policy alignment. Canagarajah's (1999) concept that learning is situational and cultural may be applied to this diversity of perceptions. Varying school cultures, practices and beliefs affect the informants' perception towards their HEIs and their decisions regarding their elementary education programs and MTB-MLE instruction.

Among the four informants, there is also only one who explicitly proposed a bottom-up approach to LPP. One showed hesitation to propose any intervention, while the remaining informants forwarded other tangible expansions for the elementary education programs of their HEIs (further research, benchmarking, training, and curriculum revision). No one among the informants invoked the responsibility of any macro agent (CHED or the national government) in the proposed expansions and enhancements. This reveals a significant gap between teachers and the macro agents. Shohamy (2009) advocates that language policies (and their makers) must be "related and connected to the agents that implement them." Teachers must be empowered to invoke the power of macro agents to provide them solutions to their problems regarding macro agents-mandated national policies. This act of resistance puts teachers in a significant position in LPP in the country.

8. Future Possibilities

Drawing from Ricento and Hornberger (2006) and Shohamy (2009; 2006), ELT professionals or language teachers must take “collective action” (or “linguistic activism” in Tollefson, 2007) to introduce changes in language classrooms: from the top-down implementation of language policies to bottom-up approach to language development. This solution arises from the lack of any national guidelines from CHED and/or DepEd regarding the revision of elementary education syllabi to fit to the current reforms in the basic education program. Macro agents must bridge the gap between politicians (including agents in CHED and other government institutions that are directly or indirectly concerned with the education of the youth) and teachers who implement national policies. Macro agents must engage teachers and other meso agents/stakeholders into a dialogue to determine what really happens in the learning processes across levels of education. Deregulated HEIs, on the other hand, must start securing permits for the approval of their own revisions initiated by a dialogue among the HEI administration, faculty members, and other stakeholders.

On the meso-level, HEIs must provide more concrete support for MTB-MLE instruction by empowering its faculty members in the elementary education programs. This can be done via adequate institutional support in faculty attendance in seminars, conferences, public consultations, consultations among faculty members, and research grants.

The findings and claims of this research may be further explored using a larger number of participants from diverse contexts. A similar study may also be done across year levels among private, public, and special schools: preschool, primary and secondary schools, and even in the graduate programs. This will create a more comprehensive and expanded view of language education and policy implementation in the country and its relationship to its stakeholders. Furthermore, the area that this paper covered may be further surveyed using focused-group discussion and individual conversational interviews. These methods of data gathering will give the research richer and more precise data on the perceptions and experiences of tertiary teachers of elementary education programs on the implementation of MTB-MLE in the Philippine basic education program.

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Content Notes

- 1 These languages (counted by number of speakers) are Mandarin, Spanish, English, Hindi, Arabic, Portuguese, Bengali, Russian, Japanese, Punjabi, German, Javanese, Wu, Malay/Indonesian, Telugu, Vietnamese, Korean, French, Marathi, Tamil, etc. (Ranking by Ethnologue).
- 2 “Informants” is operationally and equivalently used in this study to denote the respondents who willingly provided information through the researcher-made questionnaires. It departs from the qualitative assumption of the term “informant” as interviewees.
- 3 Shohamy (2009; 2006) believes that language policy needs to be understood beyond Spolsky’s (2004 in Shohamy, 2009) ideology, management and practices, and even Schiffman’s (1996 in Shohamy, 2009) overt and covert policies. Thus, Shohamy used the term “mechanism” to describe other factors that alter policies: policy documents, language education policy, and language tests and rating scales. Shohamy claims that these mechanisms are used as tools for language ideologies to be enforced and language practices to be created, but on the other hand, they may also be used to negotiate among the different stakeholders.
- 4 Linguistic activism is defined by Shohamy (2009: 63) as the “specific actions that can be taken by linguists, teachers and the public at large to open up the discussion of LP as a tool of power that should be examined and critiqued.”