

**PERCEPTION OF DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS TOWARDS MOTHER-TONGUE-BASED MULTI-LINGUAL EDUCATION (MTBMLE) IN PASCHIM MEDINIPUR DISTRICT OF WEST BENGAL**



**ABSTRACT**

*The primary objective of this research is to know how different stakeholders (headmasters & teachers) feel about the MTBMLE programme. It's a comparative-cum-survey study. Data were collected through observation-cum-interview tool from ten schools in one education circle (i.e. Sadar East) under paschim medinipur district using a simple random sampling in 2019. Collected data were analysed using a qualitative statistical method. The findings shows that none of the headmasters are from the original mother tongue group and are not fluent in the students' language. Except for one school with one permanent Santali language teacher, these schools lack permanent Santali language teachers nearly 95% of teachers believe that students have challenges in furthering their education since it is difficult to pursue further education in the local language.*

**Keywords:** mother-tongue, multilingual education, perception and stakeholders.

**Introduction and rationale**

Mother-Tongue Based Multi-Lingual Education (MTBMLE) has grown into an international movement aimed at disadvantaged language groups and linguistic minorities who are suffering from the detrimental effects of non-mother tongue language submersion and assimilation in school. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, (UNESCO) the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and many other international organisations advocate and actively support mother tongue-based multi-lingual education as a vital practical step toward excellent education and as an effective strategy for linguistic and cultural maintenance.

At its General Conference in 1999, UNESCO coined the phrase "multilingual education" to describe the use of at least three languages in education: the mother tongue, a regional or national language, and an international language. In 1999, the General Conference of UNESCO declared February 21st as International Mother Language Day (IMLD), with the goal of promoting all of the world's languages ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_Mother\\_Language\\_Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Mother_Language_Day)). The importance of languages in supporting cultural diversity is mentioned in UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. India was the first country in South Asia to implement a large-scale MTBMLE programme, and other SAARC countries

(Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Bhutan) are following suit (UNESCO, 2007).

The Indian constitution guarantees education in the mother tongue for linguistic minorities under Article 350A. Under the Sarve Shiksha Abhijan, MTBMLE is a significant creative project of the Ministry of Human Resource Development and other state-level endeavours to deliver MTBMLE for tribal language populations. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009 in India not only provides education for all children up to the age of 14 but also encourages education in their mother languages and requires that education is of a minimum standard (Department of School and Mass Education, 2009).

In April 2010, the Government of West Bengal adopted the MTBMLE programme as a model for equitable quality education, based on programmes initiated by various international and national bodies. In July 2010, the West Bengal Board of Primary Education and the State Government formed the State Tribal Advisory Committee (STAC), which was chaired by the Chief Minister. They chose one tribal language as the medium of instruction and

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implemented it in government schools in four tribal concentrated districts. West Bengal's government has made it a policy to teach Santali language in Olchiki Scripts from Class 1 to Class X11 (District Human Development Report: Paschim Medinipur, 2011) The mother tongue-based MLE programme, on the other hand, began in 2012 practically.

A developmental model of language acquisition for school is explained and validated by the data analyses. The model and findings from this study make predictions about long-term student achievement as a result of a variety of instructional practices. Instructions are provided for replicating this study and validating the findings in local school systems (Thomas & Collier, 1997). The multilingual education programmes have improved enrolment rates, boosted rates, and boosted community awareness of and participation in education (Cuadra & et al, 2008). The accomplishment scores of children in multilingual education schools were much higher than those of students in non-multilingual education schools (NCERT, 2011; Panda & et al, 2011).

The evaluation of research on MTBMLE described above clearly reveals that India has taken a piecemeal approach, with no comprehensive attempt to analyze the perceptions of different stakeholders in the context of Santali language as a medium of instruction through Ol-Chiki script in the current running Bengali medium schools. As a result, this study is taken.

### Objective

- a) To know about how different stakeholders (headmasters and teachers) feel about the MTBMLE programme.

### Methodology

It falls under the category of comparative-cum-survey research in terms of the study approach. Simple random sampling was used to choose ten schools from one education circle (Sader East) in the Paschim Medinipur district. Only twenty teachers (one permanent and nineteen para-teachers) were working as Santali language teachers in ten schools. Only one school, Baramagurgeria primary school, is entirely in Santali Medium.

### Data analysis and interpretations

The information is elicited from the different

stakeholders and gathered on the basis of the following dimensions.

### Perception of Headmasters

#### Language

According to the research, the majority of the headmasters who work in these schools speak a language different from their mother tongue. None of the headmasters is a native speaker of the mother tongue. As a result, these headmasters have difficulty articulating their ideas to the students. As a result, they are uninterested in tribal language promotion and transmission in these schools.

#### Learning resources

According to all headmasters, the government should supply textbooks, TLM, school uniforms, and school bags to all students. However, none of this has anything to do with language, its transaction, or promotion. However, these have an indirect impact on the school because students are encouraged to attend. The headmasters are not fluent in the student's language. That is why they are uninterested in and unmotivated to learn that language. As a result, students' academic performance suffers.

#### Support services

According to the headmasters, the only support service is the textbooks through the Ol-Chiki script provided by the government. These texts are used in the classrooms by the teachers. Although they did not receive any such training, some headmasters (20%) mention a training programme sponsored by an NGO called Adivasi Socio-Educational Cultural Association (ASECA) in this regard. The government does not give any training for the promotion and growth of the Ol-Chiki Script and the language used by the students. Except for one school called 'Baramagurgeria School,' none of these schools have permanent Santali language teachers. Other schools get by with the help of 'para-teachers'. Furthermore, each school has five classes but only two or one pare-teacher for each class. As a result, there is a scarcity of human resources.

#### Academic challenges

According to all of the headmasters, these schools lack sufficient classrooms, and the required number of teachers, and are multi-grade in nature, with pupils of various grades studying in the same classrooms. This causes issues

for each group of students, who become bored and jaded when transactions are conducted for one grade while pupils in other classes are ignored. Furthermore, the quality of teaching is substantially harmed because a single teacher is required to work in a mobile mode. Another issue that has been discovered is that these schools have teachers whose first language is not Santali. They try to manage the classroom transaction with their limited understanding of Santali, which they obtained throughout their diploma course. This is often fatal since we are unaware that lack of knowledge is a dangerous thing. When a teacher lacks sufficient language skills, the quality of the classroom work will inevitably suffer.

### **Perception of Teachers**

#### **Mother tongue**

Only 31% of teachers speak Santali as their first language. The remaining 69 percent of teachers are from non-Santali backgrounds. This has a significant impact on the teaching-learning process as well as other curricular activities in these schools. Schools suffer because their teachers lack adequate language skills, which are essential for successful teaching-learning interactions.

#### **Understanding of the MTBMLE Programme**

Except for one permanent teacher who taught in Baramagurgeria elementary school, all of the teachers have a basic understanding of mother-tongue-based multilingual teaching. Their placement at a tribal school is a mistake because they are non-tribal. Furthermore, not understanding the importance of mother-tongue-based multilingual education harms both teaching quality and student achievement.

#### **Quality Education**

All of the teachers agree that MTBMLE provides high-quality education, owing to the use of vernacular symbols and everyday knowledge in classroom transactions. When pupils are taught in their own language, they feel at ease. Not only that, but teaching in the mother tongue fosters a positive learning environment and increases student motivation. When children are taught a foreign language, they feel as if they are in a foreign country and lose a lot of their passion. Teaching in their own language keeps kids in school and dramatically lowers the dropout rate. Learning

becomes more relevant and wholesome when transactions are conducted in the native tongue.

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### **Contact between teachers and students**

The application of mother-tongue-based multilingual education greatly improved teacher-student interaction. When students are communicated in their own language, they feel at ease. This offers excitement and motivation to the kids since they are able to express their feelings and needs more meaningfully by using their native languages. The relationship ebb has vanished, and the level of affection between instructors and students has reached new heights. This also contributes to active scholastic participation.

### **Teachers' opinions on textbooks**

Almost all of the teachers agreed that textbooks reflect local culture, tradition, folkways, and customs. It also employs local examples and context to aid students' comprehension. However, they claim that the textbooks intended for students are of average quality. It could have reflected the local psyche and context more accurately. An increase in the book's quality will undoubtedly benefit students.

### **Training on MTBMLE Programme**

Though the MTBMLE program has been in place since 2012, the government has not attempted to provide formal training. Teachers went about their business using whatever knowledge they had. However, teachers deeded some need-based courses from different universities (Rabindra Bharati University, etc.) and NGOs (ASCEA, etc). But no mid-term course or on-the-job course has so far been done by the teachers. Teachers believe that the training received from the aforementioned institutions is of average quality. They also stated that they received no professional training as part of the MTBMLEP. To some extent, the textbooks provided by the government are useful.

### **Instructional resources**

Approximately 90% of teachers believe that the government's instructional resources are too limited and insufficient to deal with the MTBMLE environment. The remaining 10% of teachers disagree with this viewpoint.

## Students' participation

Almost all teachers believe that the implementation of the MTBMLE has greatly increased student participation. They all believe that pupils are more engaged in the teaching-learning process.

## Parental role

All of the teachers feel that in mother-tongue-based multilingual education, parents have a stronger role to play. They can take constructive action by providing a welcoming environment for their children to learn in their native tongue. Teachers can launch an awareness campaign for parents in this context to encourage them to help their children learn in their mother tongue.

## Assessment of learners

Half of the teachers believe that assessing learners in their mother tongue is a blessing for them because they may easily manifest their inner core in their mother tongue. The other half disagrees with this reality, believing that the new script is insufficiently complete to allow learners to completely convey their views. In this circumstance, they choose different regional scripts.

## Conclusion

In terms of headmasters' perceptions towards MTBMLE, it is discovered that they are more critical of it. Many headmasters doubt the program's effectiveness since their schools are rife with potential problems. The majority of the teachers in these schools are not from a Santali background. They teach Santali as a result of their Santali language diploma program. Their opinion about the MTBMLE is mediocre. According to them, the program needs to be improved in every way, including support services, learning materials, teaching-learning facilities, and evaluation processes.

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