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ABSTRACT

The present study assessed the implementation of Mother Tongue Instruction in the laboratory elementary schools of a university from the pupils' lenses and voices to elicit policy changes and recommendations that will address the persisting gap in the unsuccessful implementation of the Program in public and private schools.

Explanatory Sequential Design was employed in the study where quantitative data on the extent of implementation of the Program were acquired through a survey questionnaire administered among the intermediate pupils and qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews for critical analysis and validation of findings.

Findings revealed that the implementation of Mother Tongue Instruction in laboratory elementary schools is successful based on the pupils' perspective and reasons. These findings is primarily attributed to the fact that Mother Tongue Instruction is implemented in these schools, not as a medium of instruction but as a subject.

Through this study, policymakers will have a basis for implementing Mother Tongue Instruction and not jeopardizing its primary purpose of improving learning while enriching and revitalizing the community's culture. Further, through this research, academic scholars will consider seeing the implementation and success of the Program in their respective schools from the pupils' standpoint, which is often not emphasized.

Keywords: Explanatory, Iloko, Mother Tongue, Pupils

INTRODUCTION

Young children are picking up languages at home all around the world that are distinct from the prevailing tongue that is used in their larger social environment. These kids bring a priceless asset—their mother tongue—to early learning programs like preschool and elementary school. In addition to promoting the preservation of linguistic and cultural variety through language-in-education policy, UNESCO has promoted children's rights to learn their mother tongue since 1953, (UNESCO, 1953, 2003). An analysis of recent research and program reports covers mother tongue-based bilingual or multilingual education for kids beginning in early childhood (UNESCO, 2010). The slow and uneven progress in achieving the goals for universal education outlined in the Education for All Goals 1 (ECCE), Goal 2 (Primary Education), and Goal 6 (Quality of Education) (UNESCO, 1990) make discussion of this subject particularly pertinent at this time. The current review was given impetus by UNESCO (2008a) "Global Monitoring Report on Education for All: Will we make it?" "To ensure educational inclusion for the 72 million children who are not in school and to decrease the number of young learners who leave school without acquiring critical skills and knowledge, this report calls for unwavering political will to ensure that education from early childhood onward is a priority of national governments, civil society, and the private sector, (Ball, 2010).

The Department of Education (DepEd) Order No. 74, issued in 2009, established Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) in the Philippine educational system. More recently, the "Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013," a binding law that President Benigno Aquino III enacted, expanded the scope of MTB-MLE. The usage of the mother tongue is one of many things the law mandates. Kindergarten to Grade three of elementary school is taught using the mother language (MT) as the principal medium of instruction (MOI). Between fourth and sixth grades, English and Filipino are to be introduced through a transition program until these two languages can be utilized as primary MOI in secondary education (Republic Act No. 10533, 2013).

Policymakers were persuaded to implement mother tongue instruction in the nation's educational system by the findings of several studies regarding the advantages gained. The advantages emphasized in these studies include: (a) better academic performance (Cummins, 2000; Thomas & Collier, 1997; Walter & Dekker, 2011); (b) active participation in the classroom (Benson, 2000; Dutcher, 1995); (c) accessibility to instruction (Benson,

2004; Smits, Huisman & Kruijff, 2008); and (d) improved critical and creative thinking skills (Saud & Johnson, 2006). Studies have also emphasized the importance of multilingual education for (a) protecting and promoting cultural heritage (Wright & Taylor, 1995; Cummins, 2000); (b) increasing parental participation, and (c) improving student achievement.

In more recent studies, the study conducted by Arispe et al. (2019) on analyzing the sentiments of teachers to Bikol MTB-MLE, it was unveiled that 61 percent of the responses are characterized as positive. Most participants claimed that MTB-MLE works well because half of the students are taking part in the conversation in class. Using MTB-MLE encourages students to participate in class, and express their opinions freely, which improves communication among students, builds their self-confidence, and develops higher-order thinking abilities which are also in support of the research findings of Aliñab et al. (2018). However, 39 percent of responses are negative, as the use of MTB-MLE makes it difficult for the pupils to understand their Mathematics lessons better. This negative sentiment about using MTB-MLE in teaching Mathematics is also supported by the studies conducted by Kolman (2019) and Uayan (2017). It was also discovered that MTB-MLE significantly hinders language proficiency, as revealed in the studies of Apolonio (2022) and Namanya (2017).

The differing perspectives and results of using the mother tongue in instruction indicate that the program has yet to succeed. Furthermore, these imply that in schools that yielded unsatisfactory results on the learners' academic performance, problems in the MTB-MLE implementation exist as recognized in the research studies of Adriano, Franco, and Estrella, (2021), Anudin (2018), and FaculloKhunakene et al. (2022). Hence, the implementation of the Program in different parts of the country was explored by academic scholars, however, in spite of the outpouring of studies, none of these have totally addressed the gap as it still persists. In addition, none of these conducted studies have highlighted the pupils' perspectives and voices relative to the implementation of the Program especially those from laboratory elementary schools of universities in the Philippines. After all, the main focus of the MTB-MLE is on the pupils' development.

With this premise, a study was conducted to assess the implementation of Mother Tongue Instruction in the laboratory elementary schools of a university from the pupils' perspective as an avenue to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the program implementation and discuss important problems in light of eliciting policy changes and recommendations that policymakers can consider for the total success of Mother Tongue Instruction for both public and private schools. The author contends that assessing the program's execution can reveal whether or not the Program is successful in the eyes of the primary benefactors, the pupils.

METHODOLOGY AND TOOLS

This study utilized the Explanatory Sequential Design, which is a sort of mixed-methods research in which the researcher first gathered and analyzed quantitative data before moving on to a qualitative phase to discuss the findings and provide a more thorough justification of the preliminary quantitative finding, (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017).

In this study, the researcher gathered quantitative data on the extent of implementation of the Mother Tongue Instruction using a survey questionnaire and validated it using the qualitative data acquired through Interviews. The survey instrument used in this study is a researcher-made questionnaire anchored to the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the MTB-MLE Program. This had been tested for its validity and reliability prior to its administration among the two hundred thirteen (213) intermediate pupils (Grade IV-Grade VI) of the laboratory elementary schools. As for the interview, a semi-structured questionnaire was used that emanated from the results of the survey where it was participated by thirty (30) intermediate pupils. The rationale for having the intermediate pupils as the respondents and participants of the study is because of their empirical experiences and observations with Mother Tongue Instruction from Kindergarten-Grade III. Furthermore, the quantitative data were analyzed through Mean and the qualitative data were analyzed through Thematic Analysis.

As for the ethical considerations in the conduct of the study, the researcher observed protocols where communication letters were given to the proper authority. After the approval, since this study involved children, parents' or guardians' consent was sought followed by informed consent given to the pupils. The pupils were informed about their voluntary participation and were oriented about the context of the study and so with how they will take part in it. Moreover, before the conduct of the interview, each participant was informed about how it will take off, each of them was also asked if they are comfortable with video recording, the place, and even with the interviewer. The results of the interviews were transcribed and a copy of their own transcribed responses was given to the participants for proofreading.

RESULTS

The main findings of this study's scope and focus include the critical evaluation and analysis of the MTB-MLE or the Mother Tongue Instruction implementation based on the perspective of the pupils and the researcher's expert interpretation, as well as its major strengths and weaknesses. The discussion followed a clarified important programmatic characteristic as they were evaluated, examined, and critically studied.

Table 1 illustrates the extent of implementation of the Mother Tongue Instruction in the laboratory elementary schools of a university based on the perspective of the intermediate pupils. As reflected, it has a grand mean of 4.19 with a descriptive equivalent of “Implemented”. The initial results indicate that the extent of implementation of the Program is High, which means it is being implemented well with a note that it can still be improved.

Table 1: The Extent of Implementation of the Mother Tongue Instruction in the Laboratory Elementary Schools

| Statement of Objectives of the Mother Tongue Instruction | Pupils' Perspective | |
|--|---------------------|----|
| | WM | DE |
| A. To improve language acquisition of the pupils both in their mother tongue and in second languages English and Filipino. | 4.57 | FI |
| B. To improve the cognitive ability of the pupils. | 4.55 | FI |
| C. To develop/improve socio-cultural awareness of the pupils such as self-expression and consciousness of cultural identity and multiculturalism in the classroom. | 4.64 | FI |
| D. To develop a curriculum that will adhere to the principles and framework of Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) which starts from where the learners are and from what they already know proceeding from the known to unknown. | 4.46 | I |
| E. To make available instructional materials and capable teachers to implement the MTB-MLE curriculum. | 2.52 | MI |
| F. To use MTB-MLE or the learner's mother tongue and additional languages for formal and non-formal education. | 4.74 | FI |
| G. To develop a curriculum that is a spiral progression approach to ensure mastery of knowledge and skills after each level. | 4.50 | I |
| H. To develop a curriculum that is flexible enough to enable and allow the schools to localize, indigenize and enhance the said curriculum based on their respective educational and social contexts. | 4.62 | FI |
| I. To develop a curriculum that will develop proficiency in Filipino and English, provided that the first and dominant language of the learners shall serve as the fundamental language of education. | 2.47 | SI |
| J. To use the regional or native language of learners in instruction, teaching materials, and assessment. | 4.87 | FI |
| GRAND MEAN | 4.19 | I |

Legend: **WM** – Weighted Mean; **DE** – Descriptive Equivalent; **FI**– Fully Implemented; **I** – Implemented; **MI** – Moderately Implemented; **SI** –Slightly Implemented; **NI**– Not Implemented

Looking closely at the data presented in Table 1, it can be noted that the following objectives of Mother Tongue Instruction as based on its Implementing Rules and Regulations gained descriptive equivalents of “Fully Implemented”; (1) A. To improve language acquisition of the pupils both in their mother tongue and in second languages English and Filipino; (2) B. To improve the cognitive ability of the pupils; (3) C. To develop/improve socio-cultural awareness of the pupils such as self-expression and consciousness of cultural identity and multiculturalism in the classroom; (4) F. To use MTB-MLE or the learner's mother tongue and additional languages for formal and non-formal education; (5) H. To develop a curriculum that is flexible enough to enable and allow the schools to localize, indigenize and enhance the said curriculum based on their respective educational and social contexts; and (6) J. To use the regional or native language of learners in instruction, teaching materials, and assessment.

On the other hand, objective “I” which states, “To develop a curriculum that will develop proficiency in Filipino and English, provided that the first and dominant language of the learners shall serve as the fundamental language of education,” is seen to be the least implemented area of the Mother Tongue Instruction followed by objective “E” on making available instructional materials and capable teachers to implement the MTB-MLE curriculum.

DISCUSSION

In the aim to critically evaluate and analyze the survey results, the researcher found a clear answer to why these results were obtained in the interviews with the chosen pupils from the intermediate grades. The laboratory elementary schools in a university where the pupils had their primary education are implementing the Mother Tongue Instruction not as the primary medium of instruction in teaching different concepts in the various primary subjects but as a Subject only. This means that pupils are taught to learn the “Iloko” language or the

native language of the province and other Iloko works of literature in their Mother Tongue subject instead of using it as the primary medium of instruction to make the pupils understand their lessons in the different subject areas. Clearly, this is a deviation from the mandate of the Department of Education where schools are asked to implement Mother Tongue Instruction as the medium of instruction in all the learning areas such as Math, Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health (MAPEH), EdukasyonsaPagpapakatao (Values Education), AralingPanlipunan (Social Study) and Science and to make Mother Tongue Instruction as a subject as well, (DepEd Order 31, s 2013). But given the power to make alterations because of the University's own Charter, the way Mother Tongue Instruction is implemented in the laboratory elementary schools is valid.

In a more specific sense, relative to objective A which states, "To improve language acquisition of the pupils both in their mother tongue and in second and third languages, English and Filipino", this obtained high remarks from the pupils of the Laboratory Elementary Schools because they have Mother Tongue Instruction, Filipino, and English subjects from kindergarten to Grade 3. This implies that they are taught to learn different languages at an early age which makes them Multilingual. This is again a deviation from the mandate of the Department of Education because, in public schools, Kindergarten use only the native language of the locality in teaching while the second language which is Filipino is introduced in the Second Quarter of Grade 1 and English is introduced in the Third Quarter of Grade One (1), (DepEd Order 31, s 2013). However, despite the unique practice of the laboratory elementary schools, anchoring it to the results of the survey and the interview conducted, this aspect of Mother Tongue Instruction is implemented well.

Consequently, in the study conducted by McLeod et al. (2016) on Multilingualism and speech-language competence in early childhood, when tested for school readiness at 4-5 years old, multilingual children with speech and language issues performed as good as or better than English-only children (with or without speech and language issues), but they performed worse on measures of English vocabulary and behavior. The early divide between English-only and multilingual youngsters has closed by the ages of 6-7 and 8-9. In addition, the study of Quinteros and Billick (2018) shows that bilingualism or multilingualism in this population enhanced cognitive performance on two different cognitive tasks, and that fluid intelligence was increased for monolingual children growing up in a socio-linguistically diverse context. These studies imply that multilingualism and monolingualism at an early age have advantages and disadvantages.

However, when the pupil-participants of the laboratory elementary schools were asked about the benefits of being exposed to a Multilingual setting, most of them mentioned having a lot of playmates, being able to communicate with their grandfathers and grandmothers, and being able to understand almost everyone including their lessons in different subjects. It is at this point that the researcher understood that the learners in the laboratory elementary schools do not speak the same language in their primary grades hence implementing Multilingualism to reach everyone. According to Poarch and Bialystok (2017), learners who do not have a foundation in the native language must be assisted by helping these kids learn to speak multiple languages. This will greatly aid them in the growth of their executive function, which would increase their chances of long-term academic success.

In a realistic setting also, conducted studies have shown that the effects of mother tongue implementation in the educational system on second and third languages have negative impacts without any preparation, (Denizer, 2017). The study of Namanya (2017), where it was investigated how MTB-MLE affected the English literacy growth of Filipino children revealed that students who were educated in their pure mother tongue had a lower level of literacy in English. These findings then suggest that to effectively implement mother tongue, they must not be taught with the use of pure native language but must be prepared by way of integrating other languages which conforms to the concept of Multilingual Education as practiced by the laboratory elementary schools.

As for objective B on improving the cognitive ability of the pupils, this was rated to be Highly Implemented because of the understanding of the pupils that their mother tongue pertains to the language they are using at home or the language they feel more comfortable with and not necessarily the use of the native language which is Iloko in learning the different concepts in the various learning areas. Seeing it from the lens of the pupils means that they are learning better when teachers use their language to teach and explain their lessons. And in the case of laboratory elementary schools, using the mother tongue of the pupils as an avenue to enhance their cognitive abilities is using the Iloko, Filipino, and English languages. The logical reason is again attributed to the unveiled background of the pupils that a lot of them started their primary schooling with little or zero knowledge about their mother tongue as some pupils are eloquent in the use of the Iloko language and there are also pupils who speak pure Tagalog or English and mixed.

Opposingly, in the study of Nishanthi (2020), she claimed that the mother tongue is mainly attributed to the native language of the people whereas, in the case of the laboratory elementary schools, it is Iloko based on the ordinance passed by the province where these schools are situated. Furthermore, she concluded that there are many children in the developing world in every country who are acquiring virtually little knowledge in school, a fact that she related to linguistic instruction that they do not completely comprehend. Accordingly, it is a habit that causes insufficient or absent education and training in knowledge and abilities, alienating situations, and

high rates of repeat and dropout. She then recommended improving education quality where Mother-tongue learning needs to be considered in language policies.

Nishanti's claim and conclusion are non-argumentatively true. However, she failed to recognize the existing reality that it is not the choice of these schools to cater to learners with diverse first languages and with little or zero knowledge of their native language. These pupils come to school with their own language that may or may not align with the language expected of them. One contributor to this is the advancement and modernization attributed to Science and Technology (Chua, 2021) where learners learned different languages like Filipino and English instead of their native language.

With this being said, improving the cognitive part of the pupils with the mother tongue or native language that most pupils do not know will certainly not thrive. Hence, it is in this perspective that the laboratory elementary schools institutionalized Mother Tongue Instruction as a subject and not as a primary medium of instruction. Furthermore, it is in this context that the pupils of laboratory elementary schools are being taught in a Multilingual set-up to make everyone have the same common understanding of what is being discussed in the classrooms until such time that they are able to speak and comprehend one another in English, Filipino, and even in Iloko. Therefore, as for the contribution of Mother Tongue Instruction to the pupils' cognitive development in the laboratory elementary school when asked about it, most of them mentioned that through Mother Tongue Instruction, they were able to acquire more knowledge both in the formal and informal settings. This resulted because of the gradual development in their native language acquisition that enabled them to understand things in a wider and deeper sense.

Moving on, the Fully Implemented descriptive equivalent on the development/improvement of socio-cultural awareness of the pupils such as self-expression and consciousness of cultural identity and multiculturalism in the classroom is attributed to the fact that through their Mother Tongue Instruction subject, they are not only taught to learn and speak the native language which is Iloko but they are also taught to understand the culture of the Ilocano (people speaking Iloko) which they should normally encounter in their community. Unfortunately, based on the interview with the pupils, some of the Ilocano cultures being introduced are new to them which is a manifestation that the culture of the Ilocano is slowly fading. In an attempt to understand why they do not know much about their own culture, some answered that they don't do it at home, and some claimed that though they see it being practiced at home or in the community, no one is explaining why it is being done, and there are also pupils who responded that they don't usually go out that made them emerged to technologies where they learned foreign culture including the languages which indicate the pervasive influence of technology (Murphie & Potts, 2017). This is also supported by the study of Galeon (2020) where it was found that difficulties in preserving the Ilocano culture is centered on the Westernized lessons and behaviors imparted at home, inadequate information literacy among the populace, lack of adaptation from the younger generation, failure to recognize the importance of culture in people's life, inadequate use of media for educational culture-based goals, and weakening of policies in cultural policies preservation. However, with the Mother Tongue Instruction subject, as claimed by the pupils, these are being brought back in the line (Nishanthi, 2020).

Relatively, according to the pupils, in their Mother Tongue Instruction subject, they are exposed to Language and Reading concepts. In their Mother Tongue Language, they are taught to learn about basic terms in Iloko along with how they will construct/speak sentences with correct grammatical structure. On the other hand, the Reading part presents works of literature containing the values, practices, norms, traditions, and beliefs of the Ilocano people. When asked about Ilocano culture they have learned, these were some of their answers: Biagni Lam-ang (a literary piece of Ilocano), Nakuripot (Ilocano values which means being frugal), Atang (food offered to enchanted beings), Nangisit a Pusa (black cat symbolizes bad luck), Panagkurus (putting a cross mark to things and even at the baby's forehead to drive away bad elements-associated also to being religious because cross symbolizes God), Tagapulot (sweets from sugarcane), Patupat (a dessert made of sticky rice and sugarcane juices), and many other Ilocano cultures they have learned in games, cuisine, traditional crafts, festival celebrations, customs surrounding marriage and death, and historical sites dedicated to the development of tourism. . These responses from the pupils show the rich culture of the Ilocano and so with the positive impact of the Mother Tongue Instruction in the laboratory elementary schools.

With regard to the fourth objective that gained Fully Implemented remarks which is the use MTB-MLE or the learner's mother tongue and additional languages for formal and non-formal education, the reason why this was rated to be Fully Implemented is anchored again to their practice of implementing multilingual education where pupils are exposed inside and outside the four corners of the room to speak the languages, they are comfortable with and to learn languages they are not good at. This accentuates that in cases where the pupils couldn't express himself/herself using the primary medium of instruction in a particular Subject Area, the pupils are allowed to have their answers delivered in the language they find themselves eloquent. Understanding this better from the perspective of the pupils, as learned previously, pupils in the laboratory elementary schools speak different mother tongues where not everyone can speak and understand well the native language in the province which is Iloko. However, in spite of this being said, the Mother Tongue Instruction subject uses Iloko as the primary medium of instruction since this is the native language of the province that carries the culture it

developed over the years. Therefore, in the Mother Tongue Instruction subject of the laboratory elementary schools where Iloko is the primary medium of instruction, learners whose first language is Filipino or English are allowed to respond in these languages and through the assistance of the teachers and the pupils who are good in the use of the native language, these responses are be translated in Iloko as an avenue for these pupils to learn the language until such time that they can construct their sentences in the primary medium of instruction. The same practice is applied in subjects that use Filipino or English as the primary medium of instruction. Pupils who are not good in Filipino or in English are allowed to speak in their vernacular until such time that they can convey their messages in the required language. As for the use of the mother tongue in the informal setting, it was explained by the pupils that they are allowed to communicate to their classmates and to everyone in any language they preferred to use regardless of their competence. Meaning, pupils who are not good in Iloko but wish to converse with others in Iloko are not being hampered to do so. On the other hand, pupils who are good in English or Filipino and wish to speak in English or Filipino are also allowed.

With these explanations from the pupils, it is concluded that pupils in laboratory elementary schools are not limited to learning a particular language as they are being prepared not just to connect to their roots but also to connect in the national and global arena. These also imply that they are put in an environment where they do not feel threatened but can comfortably learn regardless of the language they speak firsthand, this drives them to engage in active and effective learning (Che Ahmad, Shaharim, & Abdullah, 2017; Sun, Siklander, & Ruokamo, 2018), a learning environment characterized as flexible. Accordingly, flexible learning environments have been shown to support collaborative learning, student autonomy, self-regulation, and engagement. As a result, learning becomes more fun, cozy, and inclusive, allowing for better learning and more interaction (Kariippanon, et al., 2018).

Consequently, as for objective H on the development of a curriculum that is flexible enough to enable and allow the schools to localize, indigenize and enhance the said curriculum based on their respective educational and social contexts, the precipitating reason for its high level of implementation from the point of view of the pupils is because they believed that Mother Tongue Instruction in their schools is implemented appropriately. This pertains to how Mother Tongue Instruction is taken, as a subject and not as the primary medium of instruction in all academic learning areas. This is again related to the finding that pupils in the laboratory elementary schools are not all Iloko speakers. Hence, implementing the program as a subject only did not put non-native speakers in a situation where learning in other areas is hard because of the language barrier. An indication that Mother Tongue Instruction is implemented appropriately to the educational and social context of the community.

Digging deeper into this, two of these laboratory elementary schools are situated in communities considered to be uprising cities while the other school is situated in the heart of a city. This manifests the fact that the communities where these schools are built are in a way flowing to the rapid changes brought about by modernization along with the idea that it is populated with people with diverse ethnicity and culture. It sends the message then that the perceived concept of Social Context where it is largely anchored to a specific culture and specific mother tongue or native language of the community is not applicable in these communities and schools. This is because children in these communities and schools do have little or almost zero experience and knowledge about their unique culture and language.

Looking at the concept of Social Context from the lens of Sociocultural Theory, the theory connects and supports the stages of children's literacy development from the nonconventional to the conventional level, when a kid is thought to have the capacity to build meaningful and useful literacies. Furthermore, it may be said that the sociocultural perspective interprets children's literacy development by examining the social, cultural, and historical circumstances in which the children have evolved. The sociocultural theory ties the social behaviors and cultural encounters that children had outside of the classroom to the growth and acquisition of literacy, (Naddumba&Athimoolam, 2022). This implies that the development of literacy is linked to the beliefs and behaviors that a kid forms to define himself or herself in particular cultural contexts or situations in which the child's unique practices and experiences are highlighted. And in the case of laboratory elementary schools, the pupils' social context is diverse, and meeting them in the ground of teaching and learning requires diverse avenues as well that includes the medium of instruction to be used. It is in this context that the pupils rated the objective on the development of a flexible curriculum as fully implemented.

With the validated results of the survey on the extent of implementation of the Mother Tongue Instruction in the laboratory elementary schools from the perspective and reasons of the pupils, it is concluded that objectives that were rated to be fully implemented are the strengths of the program that should be sustained and modeled.

Zooming in on the objectives rated to be least implemented, an exploration of where the pupils are coming from was done through interviews. The result of the development of Filipino and English proficiency through the dominant language of the pupils is related to where the pupils are in terms of their competency in the use of the native language. Most of the pupils in the laboratory elementary schools are not pure Iloko speakers and do not have a strong foundation in it as most of them have learned Filipino or English first before being introduced to the Iloko dialect or to the official language of the province. Therefore, using Iloko to improve their proficiency in Filipino or in English is not possible in their case. But as the interview progressed with each of the

participants, it was learned that pupils whose mother tongue is Iloko were able to intensify their Filipino and English-speaking competencies through it. As for those pupils whose first language is English or Filipino, they were able also to improve their proficiency in Iloko by utilizing the language they are competent at. This finding from the pupils of laboratory elementary schools is in consonance with the study of Kecskes (2000), where he argues that a foreign language improves one's ability to use and develop their mother tongue or native language and can result in multicompetence. This implies then that pupils in the laboratory elementary schools were able also to enhance their Second and Third Languages through their First Language but not mainly in the context of using the Iloko as a starting point but in the context of using the language they are comfortable with.

With these being unearthed, it connotes that the result of this objective is somehow not valid because it is viewed as one-sided only by the policymakers. This suggests then that policymakers must not just view the implementation of Mother Tongue Instruction as a tool for improving the Second Language (L2) and Third Language (L3) of the pupils which are Filipino and English respectively but must also consider the idea of implementing it to have the native language be developed and improved using Filipino and English. This underpins the fact that the pupils' First Language isn't usually the native language of the pupils but could be Filipino or English making the native language their Second or Third Language.

Lastly, in light of the moderately implemented objective of the Mother Tongue Instruction in the Laboratory Elementary Schools, which is on the availability of instructional materials and capable teachers to implement the MTB-MLE curriculum, it was learned from the pupils that they only have one book reference used to learning. These imply that they have limited material to consult so as to have a wider array of knowledge that they can use to understand better the topics or lessons incorporated in their Mother Tongue Instruction subject. Therefore, limited book or reference also entails limited knowledge to learn or grasp. When asked about the capability of their teachers, some revealed that some of their teachers are amenable to not being good at using Iloko as, like most of them, Iloko isn't their language foundation. Most of the pupils said that their teachers are better at speaking Filipino and or English. Furthermore, some of the pupils also claimed that there are instances in which some of their teachers could not give further explanations, especially about why some Ilocano practices are being carried out before or even in the current years. With these responses from the pupils, it was made clear that the weakness of the Mother Tongue Instruction in the laboratory elementary schools is in the provision of appropriate and sufficient instructional materials and in the capacity of the teachers to fully implement the program which is also consistent with other research studies, (Anudin, 2018; Arispe et al., 2019; Eslit, 2017; Perez, 2019;) that makes it the main focus of the policymakers to address.

CONCLUSION

Generally, the implementation of Mother Tongue Instruction in the laboratory elementary schools is seen to be successful from the pupils' lens and voices. This emanates from the practice of these schools on how Mother Tongue Instruction is implemented which is as a subject only and not the medium of instruction in the various learning areas in the primary grades. The rationale behind this is because of the reality that pupils in laboratory elementary schools do not share the same mother tongue brought about by modernization where technologies play vital roles. Hence, in the case of the pupils in these schools, not all of them have a strong foundation in the native language of the province which is Iloko as some of them learned to speak Filipino and or English first which contradicts the idea that their mother tongue pertaining to the native language must be used as stepping stone for them to learn Filipino and English better. However, learners whose First Language is either English or Filipino still learned other languages which conform to the concept of scaffolding that the Mother Tongue Instruction Program adheres. Through this kind of take in the implementation of Mother Tongue Instruction, the purpose of significantly affecting the learning performance of the pupils along with protecting, strengthening, and revitalizing the community and of the nations' culture is being truly achieved.

These findings implicate that the success of Mother Tongue Instruction greatly depends on how it is implemented in school settings where policymakers must not focus only on capacitating the prime implementers who are the teachers and on the provision of appropriate and sufficient materials. It, therefore, urges the policymakers to first consider the social context of the pupils in the locality or community where the pupils' linguistic aspect is viewed as an important deciding factor. This accentuates that before implementing the native language of the locality, province, or region as the primary medium of instruction, they must conduct first language mapping to know where the pupils are in terms of their language. Hence, in cases where pupils in schools have diverse mother tongues or do not have strong foundation of the native language akin to the case of the pupils in the laboratory elementary schools, policymakers must allow schools to have Mother Tongue Instruction be implemented as a subject only and not as a medium of instruction anymore. But in instances where it will be found that most of the pupils do speak the same mother tongue or speak the same native language, it is the time when Mother Tongue Instruction must be implemented as a subject and as a medium of instruction in the different learning areas. However, in doing so, teachers must be made to understand that in spite of implementing Mother Tongue Instruction as a subject or both as a subject and medium of instruction, the concept of Multilingual Education must be practiced where the learners are not just confined to learning,

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