2. Mother Tongue based Multilingual Education Programme

2.0 Preview

Having discussed the general concept of MTB-MLE in Chapter 1, this chapter is devoted to a detailed discussion on the various components of the programme. It is concerned with various types of MLE programmes based on the necessity of a particular community. It also deals with the core components of such a programme such as orthography which play vital roles in the overall success of the programme.

2.1 Introduction

Mother tongue based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) refers to the community based, mother tongue first education program which strives for providing better educational experience to the linguistically disadvantaged members of the minority language communities. This concept stresses on educating the tribal children through their mother tongue at the beginning, and then enabling them to make a smooth transition to the state or the national language or to other languages of wider communication (LWC). This educational method puts emphasis on providing an opportunity to the children of minority language communities to use the existing knowledge of their culture, tradition and surroundings in learning new knowledge without facing the challenge of the ‘double disadvantage’, described by Dhir Jhingran (2005) in the following lines

'Such children face a 'double disadvantage' of having to try and learn an unfamiliar language and to simultaneously attempt to understand new information and concepts being thrown at them in this unfamiliar language from the first day at school.'

MTB-MLE also provides a strong and effective platform for the children from minority language communities to help them acquire or learn their second language (L2) in the most effective way. This has been a proven fact that a stronger mother
tongue base always results in the better performance in the second language acquisition for the learners. This has led Jim Cummins to observe,\textsuperscript{4}

'\textit{Mother tongue promotion in the school helps develop not only the mother tongue but also children's abilities in the majority school language.}'

Commenting on the opposite and unfortunately most common scenario among the minority language children, Cummins opines,

'\textit{By contrast, when children are encouraged to reject their mother tongue and, consequently, its development stagnates, their personal and conceptual foundation for learning is undermined.}'

An important characteristic of this type of MT based MLE programmes is that these are community based. Each and every building block of this programme actually revolves around the target community. The community is the most important and powerful stakeholder in this programme. Right from the planning of the programme to its implementation and evaluation, it needs the active participation of the community members. This is because this programme is intended to be planned, designed, implemented, evaluated and sustained by the community. Even before the actual start of the programme, the community members have to sit and talk about the necessity of this kind of programme for their community. Ideally, while discussing the need for such a programme, the community can also invite the officials from the local education department and include them in the discussion. In the long run, this kind of inclusive approach can help the community in getting the programme recognised by the government. But in reality, the community confronts a number of challenges in availing the support of the government in this regard. They need to identify the goals and purposes generally achieved by such communities to fit into their context. A discussion of the objective and goals set by the Singpho community for the Singpho Multilingual Education Programme is presented in Chapter 4 (4.1). In many cases, it is seen that different communities have different goals and aims for running an MLE programme.

for their communities. In this regard, they need to consider the status of their language on the endangerment scale, the rate of literacy among them and also their socio-economic condition, since these factors will later influence the decisions made for the programme.

There are compelling reasons for providing mother tongue education for the children of the linguistically disadvantaged groups. Jhingran (2005) give a graphic description of the serious disconnect in the classroom situation—

'The children seemed totally disinterested in the teacher's monologue. They stared vacantly at the teacher and sometimes at the blackboard where some alphabets had been written. Clearly aware that the children could not understand what he was saying, the teacher proceeded to provide even more detailed explanation in a much louder voice. Later, tired of speaking and realizing that the young children were completely lost, he asked them to start copying the alphabets from the blackboard. 'My children are very good at copying from blackboard. By the time they reach grade 5, they can copy all the answers and memorise them. But only two of the grade 5 students can actually speak Hindi."

In other words, the children whose mother tongue is different from the school language invariably suffer from this kind of non-comprehension of the classroom instruction. This evidently results in rote learning, which is a major cause of academic failure in the higher grades. In such a situation, the relevance of MTB-MLE in a multilingual setting like India is much more evident. MLE puts utmost stress on educating the tribal children through their mother tongue first and then providing a sound platform to transition to the second/mainstream/school language. This is further strengthened by the incorporation of the indigenous cultural and traditional knowledge of the tribal community into the curriculum. This provides the children with a familiar, non-threatening atmosphere in the classroom which has a strong positive impact on their psyche. In such an atmosphere they are not perturbed by the challenges faced by the students referred to at the beginning of this section. This atmosphere is supported by a culturally appropriate curriculum, which helps children to gain competence and
confidence in using their oral and written languages for everyday communication and for learning academic (abstract) concepts. When we talk about academic learning skills we refer to the six stages in the development of learning proposed by Bloom (1956) (popularly known as Bloom’s Taxonomy). It defines six different levels of thinking. The levels build in increasing order of difficulty from basic, rote memorization to higher (more difficult and sophisticated) levels of critical thinking. These can viewed as below:

Table 3: Bloom’s Taxonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concrete</th>
<th>Abstract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Remembering</strong></td>
<td><strong>Understanding</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refers to simple recalling of what was taught, rote memorization</td>
<td>At this stage the learner can explain what is taught; he/she can construct meaning from oral, written and graphic messages through interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing and explaining.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 3 establishes the fact that mere rote learning is not going to help the students higher up the academic ladder. As the level gets higher, the demand for skills like analysis, evaluation etc. also increases. Therefore, it is most important that the learner’s
cognitive abilities be developed in the most suitable atmosphere and through a proper curriculum. The mother tongue, both as the medium of instruction in school and also as a subject, provides that developmental (cognitive) edge to the children in this regard. The teaching methodology of MTB-MLE puts utmost emphasis on developing these skills in the students through various strategies. One of these is the use of open and closed questions to help the students to form the habit of conscious thinking. The closed questions require mostly one-word answers, and are generally focussed on who, what, which, when etc. These questions develop the skill of remembering and understanding in the learners. The open questions, on the other hand, mainly provide the stimulus to the students to think critically as they are mostly focussed on how, why etc. Such questions make the learner think about the lesson critically and answer it in a way that helps develop the skills of analysing, evaluating and synthesising knowledge in the learners.

The MTB-MLE methodology stresses on improving the oral fluency of these students in their mother tongue followed by the development of the reading skills. This is because once these students have built up a strong oral vocabulary, it becomes easier for them to use these in their reading and writing of the language. Once these children acquire such a desired amount of literacy skills in their MT, they become ready to take up another language. In other words, a strong foundation in MT is required for learning L2, as Cummins (2000) points out:

'The development of children's mother tongue is a strong predictor of their second language development....'

He further comments

'Children...with a solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities in the school'

This process of minority children taking up the second/ mainstream/ school language is popularly known as the bridging process. Figure: 1 represents this bridging process in pictorial terms.
Figure 1 explains that those children with a sound MT base can have a smooth transition to the mainstream language through a strong bridge to cross over. But the ones who try to cross over without proper MT education often falter. This is the section of children who usually drop out of school or fail pathetically.
In this MTBMLE bridging process, the children are gradually exposed to the second language. In the process, the amount of the second language input is increased in a step-by-step manner. At this point, the community may decide whether they want to keep the MT going side-by-side with the LWC or whether they want to stop it at some point of time. As research has suggested, (Malone, 2006) we can identify six general phases of bridging programmes as shown in Figure 2.5

Figure 2: Six general phases of bridging programmes

- Continue oral and written L1 and L2 in all subjects. Use both languages for instruction at least through primary schools
- Continue oral and written L1 and L2 as subjects. Introduce reading and writing in L2
- Continue oral L1 as subjects. Introduce oral L2
- Continue oral L1 as subjects. Introduce reading and writing in L1
- Build small children’s fluency and confidence in oral L1

2.2 Types of MLE Programmes

Various types of MLE programmes can be designed and run for achieving different goal of the concerned community. Communities might have different needs and requirements which can be assessed by conducting preliminary or baseline surveys.

5Taken from Resource Manual for Mother Tongue speakers of minority languages engaged in planning and implementing education programs in their own communities by Susan E. Malone, 2006
Depending on such diverse goals the following kinds of MLE programmes can be designed and run.

### 2.2.1 Child literacy programmes

These programmes are usually designed for children of linguistic minority communities. Generally these children suffer from the linguistic disadvantage of having to try and learn new concepts and knowledge provided to them in a language that they have difficulty in understanding. Therefore, a MT based MLE programme aims at providing them with the much needed MT foundation which helps to develop their cognitive skills. With their basic literacy and perceptive skills well developed, they become ready for the transition to the other language i.e., the second or the school language.

### 2.2.2 Adult literacy programmes

These programmes are designed for the adults of a community. The adults in a particular community might be interested in becoming literate. In case of such a goal identified by the community, the MLE programme prepares proper teaching materials for the adults. It also provides special training for the teachers. Under an adult education programme, communities can decide to run women’s education programme. Since in most cases the children are basically attached to the mothers, it is very important that the mothers and women should be educated. Other reasons for starting a women’s education programme are cited by Malone (2006):

> 'Many women in our community have not had an opportunity to go to school, so they never learned to read, write or do calculations. They are often cheated when they go to the market because they cannot read prices and do not know how much change they should receive when they purchase goods. They earn money by marketing their vegetables but cannot keep their money in the bank because they cannot read deposit and withdrawal slips.'

Here the community expects that an MLE programme for the women in their community will help them solve the problem of exploitation.
2.2.3 Bridging programmes

This kind of programmes can be run either as an extension to the children’s literacy Programme or for people who already read and write in one language and want to become literate in a second language that they already speak and understand. In the case of the children’s literacy programme, it helps the children after they have attained a sufficient amount of MT skills to transition to the second language. It is done by preparing bridging teaching materials for those children, and also literature resources like story books, song books, posters etc. In case of young and adult learners, the direction of the bridging can be both ways. In certain situations, the learners might want to learn the second language. But in some other instances, the learners who have already lost their MT might want to learn it for the purpose of keeping their indigenous linguistic identity alive. In that case, a bridging programme can help such learners to become literate in their first language. So, it is obvious that such bridging programmes not only help the indigenous students perform better in their second language but also helps the learners to maintain their indigenous language. Apart from enabling the learning of the language, programmes of this kind also help in fostering a sense of pride and belonging towards the indigenous culture and tradition of the learners. In addition, the learning of L1 should actually be an on-going learning for the learners.

2.2.4 Programmes for life-long education

These programmes are for those people who want to continue to use and expand their reading and writing abilities in both the first and the second languages. These may be village reading clubs, training programmes outside the community or formal and non-formal education programme.

2.3 Stakeholders

Another important aspect of MLE is its stakeholders. A successful MLE programme always depends on the active participation of different individuals and agencies in the functioning of the programme. There may be different government and non-
Among all the stakeholders, the community is the most important of all. The community should be able to take responsibility for almost every aspect of the MLE programme. The community should understand the significance of an MLE programme and its necessity for their community. This is why the mobilization and awareness raising phase of the programme is so important. There are many instances where a well-begun MLE programme fails to achieve its goals as the community participation in it turns out to be very superficial.

Higher education institutions such as universities can be another important stakeholder. Linguists and educationists from the concerned university departments can help the community plan its programme by providing them with relevant research findings. The linguists can particularly help in the orthography development by preparing a study of the phonology of the language.

Literacy experts from national or international NGOs are considered as another important stakeholder for an MLE programme. These literacy experts can train the community in important aspects like production of teaching materials, making of an appropriate curriculum, teacher's training, school management and also sustaining the programme.

Government education departments are regarded as having a vital role to play in such programmes. The education departments can take stock of the situation regarding such programmes and can provide their input to the government in order to form an appropriate educational policy to support such programmes. It can also help the community by way of providing funds for printing of books and for other kinds of contingency expenditure.

Local NGOs can play a really important role by way of providing support for such programmes. NGOs can help in the mobilization and awareness raising campaign. They can help in creating awareness among the community members about the
importance of such a programme. They can also offer assistance in pooling resources for sustaining such programmes.

Thus, an MLE programme is most successful if all the concerned stakeholders actively participate in the process.

2.4 Core Components of MLE Programme

Having set out the possible types of MLE programmes and the various stakeholders of such programmes, this section presents an overview of the core components of a successful MLE programme.

2.4.1 Baseline/ Preliminary research

This is one of the most basic and yet the most important components of a successful MLE programme. All the strategies and decisions regarding the particular MLE programme are based on the findings of this preliminary research.

The kind of information that can be collected by the preliminary research under two broad categories is taken up for discussion below.

2.4.1.1 General information

The overall general information regarding the community is very helpful for proper planning of an MLE programme. Information related to the origin of the community as well as their ethnic and linguistic affiliations are important factors which can be used for mobilization processes. Information about the economic status of the community can provide important input towards planning for a strategy for the sustaining of the programme by the community. General information about the rate of literacy among the members of the community is very valuable, and a statistical representation of the situation can actually help the community members to do a proper assessment of their situation. Information about the demographic detail of the community is another important input for the planning of the programme. The geographic location of the community is an indicator of their language contact situation which plays an important
role in planning the transitional phase of the programme. Information about the state or national policy of education pursued by the government is an important factor which influences a lot of decisions in the programme. In this regard, the attitude of the government towards minority education programmes needs to be assessed. Preliminary research about the probable stakeholders (apart from the community itself) is also important. This information can show the possible options that are available for the programme in terms of finance, training, mobilization campaigns, government support etc. The researcher should also take stock of the resources available to help support the programme.

2.4.1.2 Specific information

A well-designed and well-conducted preliminary research can yield a good deal of specific MLE related information for the planning of the programme. The planning of an effective MLE programme depends to a great extent on the educational situation among the community members. Information regarding the literacy rate among the community members and, more specifically, the literacy rate of the female members seems to be helpful. It is also important to know the attitude of the community members towards their mother tongue as well as towards the state, national and other languages of wider communications (LWC). In many instances, the community is seen to look down upon their own mother tongue for many reasons. One of the most common views of the minority language communities towards their MT is that it does not have any functional value. In other words, in their view learning and maintaining of their indigenous language will take them nowhere in terms of getting a job or earning a livelihood. According to them, their children should try learn the second language or dominant language instead of wasting their time in learning their mother tongue. In such cases, it is important to raise their awareness about the role and significance of mother tongue education for their children. The benefit of MT education should be explained to the community members, including the fact that the learning of their MT will further increase the chances of better performance of their children in the acquisition of the second language instead of hindering it. It is also important to know the rate of use of the MT and also the major languages.
Research should also be conducted in order to know the level of use of oral and written form of the MT among the community members. Questions like whether the MT is spoken by almost everybody in the community, whether everybody can read and write their MT (if there is a written form of the language) need to be answered to help planning the scope of the programme. At the same time, it will also be important to look at the proficiency level of the community members in speaking and reading of the L2. Systematic investigation of such aspects may indicate greater importance of the programme.

Another important piece of information is whether a written form of the language already exists for the MT. If the language does not have a written form, then a written system will have to be devised. This involves careful research on the phonology of the language in order to develop a practical orthography which represents the phonology of the language. If the community already has a written form of the language, it is important to examine whether that writing system does represent their language phonology or not. In many instances it is seen that the writing system already being used by the community does not represent their language accurately (see 5.4.2). In such cases, it will be important to make necessary modifications to such writing system (with the active participation of the community members in the process).

The results of preliminary research can also be used to prepare advocacy documents for MLE programmes. It is important to let people outside the community know about the importance, necessity and benefits of such programmes. In many instances, it is important to debrief the concerned government officials about the prevailing educational situation in the community. The need of MT education for the indigenous tribal people in such instances can be emphasised by well-prepared documents supported by properly analyzed dataset. The government departments also can benefit from such data. Especially, such documents and data can give the government a proper input regarding the status of education and literacy among the target communities. Based on these reports, the concerned government department might prepare different schemes to provide appropriate support in terms of finance, resources, training and infrastructure to those communities, in order to improve their educational and literacy status. In other words, these sets of data and information will
help the government in planning and implementing strategies towards achieving the Education for All (EFA) goals set by UNESCO and also the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) set by United Nations

Apart from other benefits, a preliminary research or baseline survey can be crucial to the overall assessment of the programme after a certain period of time. All the information collected and analyzed through preliminary research can be used to assess the success or failure of the programme in the future.

2.4.2 Mobilization

Mobilization is another important step towards setting up of an MLE programme. This refers to the efforts aimed at sensitizing the community members and other concerned quarters about the philosophy and issues involved in mother tongue education for minority children. The community members particularly need to be detailed about each and every aspects of an MLE programme. There may be different ways and means for conducting this type of mobilization campaigns. This can be done at different levels, as discussed in Sections 2.4.2.1-3 below.

2.4.2.1 Formal Level

At the formal level, public meetings can be convened in the community in order to inform them about mother tongue education. Such meetings can serve its purpose best when called by the community leaders. It is important that such meetings be attended by all quarters of the community i.e. both young and old, parents, children, teachers, members of local youth clubs etc. The participation of local government officials from the concerned departments will be an added advantage. The main aim of such meetings is to give a big picture of a community based, mother tongue first, multilingual education programme. Various types of mobilization tools like posters, pictorial leaflets can be used to drive home the importance of such education in the community. The community leaders may be asked to express their opinion about the programme in public and these should be taken note of very carefully. It is important to encourage the community members to talk and discuss whether they really need such a programme in their community. The community should be apprised of different other such MLE
programmes already being run in different parts of the world and how it has improved the lives of those communities. In this context, it will be much more affective if any members from such communities can be invited to such meetings to share their experiences regarding the MLE programme.

Another possible way to create awareness among the community members about the benefits of mother tongue education is to hold mobilization workshops in the village. In such workshops, the participants should be informed about their constitutional rights (if any) for obtaining education through their mother tongue. They should be encouraged to think and talk about their needs and goals in their lives. They should be motivated to assess how far the current education system has either helped or hindered in achieving their goals. And then they need to be detailed on how a mother tongue education programme can bring changes into this situation. The participants should be made aware of the benefits as well as of the challenges in starting and sustaining such a programme. They should be given the opportunity to think and talk about the strengths and resources that are at their disposal once they decide to start such a programme. They should be informed about the different aspects of an MLE programme such as materials production, curriculum production, teachers training etc and the efforts required in implementing all such aspects. The community should discuss whether it will be possible for them to take responsibility for the programme, keeping in view all such requirements. They should also be aware of the kind of support they will need for running such a programme. Decisions need to be taken as to how best different issues like maintaining a school, providing infrastructure, providing salary for the teachers can be resolved.

2.4.2.2 Semi-informal level

At this level, members of local youth clubs or cultural groups can be involved in discussions regarding the programme. It is very much important that the youth of the community understand the philosophy behind MT education. Because, in the long run the younger generation of the community would have to play an active role in such a programme.
Important community leaders should be encouraged to get together and discuss about the possibilities of running such a programme in their community. The leaders can identify potential teachers, writers and workers from amongst the community who can work for such programmes. The leaders should also be encouraged to think about the possible challenges political, social, economic etc in the way of starting and sustaining such a programme.

2.4.2.3 Informal level

Each and every household in the community can be visited by the researcher or by the community leaders who understand the necessity of the programme and are motivated to work towards setting up such a programme in order to talk and discuss about the programme. It is also possible to conduct a house to house language attitude survey. This gives an opportunity to both the researcher and the community members to sit and talk about the programme at a more informal level. At this level, it is possible even to talk to the mothers directly and to understand their attitude towards the education of their children. Since children spend most of their time with their mother, it is important that they should understand the importance of MT education for their children. This can be explained to them better at an informal level.

2.4.3 Recruitment and Training

A successful MLE programme is the result of sincere performances of well-trained activists delivering their best services in different capacities relevant to the programme. The most important positions to be filled up for such activity are listed below.

2.4.3.1 Writers and Artists

Writers and artists should be able to compose as much relevant literature as possible so that the learners have enough to read and enjoy in the class. For producing good quality and proper literature for any such programmes these writers should be properly trained up. Artists on the other hand add to the quality of the books with the relevant pictures illustrating the texts. It is important especially for the children who as they are much more attracted towards nice pictures in the books.
2.4.3.2 Editors

Editors play a major part in the production of teaching learning materials for such programmes. An editor needs to check each of the materials produced by the writers for the correctness of language, sentence structure, pictorial representation, orthographic issues etc. In many communities the availability of efficient editors has been a problem.

2.4.3.3 Teachers

Teachers are considered as a major stakeholder in MTB-MLE programmes. They play the most important role of implementing the techniques and strategies to create a congenial and learner-friendly atmosphere in the classroom. Therefore, the teachers should have a proper understanding of the philosophy behind MT based MLE programmes. They need to be trained especially on using the MSM method for teaching. Apart from the MT language classes, these teachers also need to be trained to teach other subjects like Mathematics, Environmental Studies etc. However, such trainings should be provided to teachers who find themselves comfortable with teaching academic subjects while others can continue teaching the mother tongue.

2.4.3.4 Supervisors

The main responsibility of a supervisor is to keep track of the classes in regard to its proper functioning. Moreover he also needs to observe the teachers as they teach and note their strengths and weaknesses. He also should be able to look at the overall progress of the students and also should take care of the necessity of the teachers and the students. The supervisor may also be responsible for developing assessment tools for the programme. Under the guidance of the researcher, he can administer such assessment and report back to the concerned committee or to the researcher. This plays a crucial role in the continuous improvement of the programme in terms of planning and implementation.
2.4.3.5 Programme Coordinator

A programme coordinator is responsible for the overall progress of the programme. He plays the role of a link between the school committees and the other stakeholders outside the community. He works with the different committees in the programme to take decisions on various aspects of the programme.

In addition, there should be separate school management committees for each school. All these positions need to be filled up by the community members from amongst themselves in order to run and sustain the programme smoothly.

2.4.4 Orthography

Orthography or writing system plays an important role in the overall progress and success of a literacy programme. The issues relating to orthography need to be carefully looked into from the beginning. Most of the indigenous tribal languages are still unwritten. These languages have been in practice in the oral medium, and are much more vulnerable to language loss. Some these have been written down and have a written history from long back. There are a number of different orthographic situations which are found in the indigenous language communities. Some of these are as follows:

2.4.4.1 There is a well-practiced orthography used by the community. The written form of the language is understood and used by all the members old and young alike of the community.

2.4.4.2 There is a writing system for the language which is mostly used by the old generation. This is mostly used for writing down religious texts or for writing formal letters.

2.4.4.3 The written form of the language is used and understood by only a handful of speakers as the writing system does not in many instances represent the sound system of the language. But still the community members feel proud to showcase their written language which actually represents a more dominant variety of the language.
2.4.4.4 The language is still being used orally. Hence no writing system exists for the language.

Among all the four probable orthographic situations, with the exception of (2.4.4.1) which is a rare case, all the other three need orthographic treatment in terms of either modification of the existing system or bringing out a new practical orthography.

While dealing with the situations indicated in (2.4.4.2) and (2.4.4.3), it is important to consider the following steps:

- The reasons for the current writing system not being used/understood by all the members of the community need to be looked at.
- It is important to examine whether the writing system accurately represents the sound system of the language.
- It is also important to take into account the attitude of the young speakers of the community towards the existing orthography.

A careful observation of the situation mentioned above might reveal that the existing writing system is inadequate for representing the language. These inadequacies can be attributed to a number of factors. In many instances it is seen that much of the vocabulary used by the writing system is not adequate to make it useable for day-to-day writing for practical purposes. It is mostly used for religious texts and hence, nobody in the community has ever thought about using it for their everyday use. In some other instances, it is seen that the current writing system does not represent the phonology of the language. This is because that writing system is based on the phonology of a more dominant variety of the language group which differs phonologically in certain features from the less dominant variety. Therefore, the speakers of the target language community find it difficult to follow the principles of the writing system which eventually leads to the disuse of the written form of the language.

In such cases, it is important to look at both the principles of the existing writing system and the phonology of the language. Later, with the active assistance of the learned members of the community, necessary modifications should be done to the existing orthography so that it can practically be used and understood by most of the
member of the community. In the process of this modification, each and every decision should be taken by the community members. However, resource persons from outside the community can provide technical and theoretical inputs to help the community members to take right decisions.

In the case of the situation described in 2.4.4.4 which involves devising a completely new orthography, a great deal of thinking and planning is required. Development of a practical orthography requires a concerted effort of the community members along with language specialists. A new orthography is generally based on the analysis of the phonological system of the language. Based on the analysis of the sound system of the language, the community members should be given the choice of selection of symbols to represent their sounds. A number of important factors need to be considered while selecting the symbols for a new orthography. One of the most important of those is whether the community members want their written language to look like their state or national or any other language of wider communication. Choices can also be made in the opposite direction that is making the orthography very much different from that of the dominant or national language. This is generally done in order to retain a sense of uniqueness in the orthography. In this regard, the community members should be made aware of the issues involved in using either similar or different kind of symbols for their orthography as that of any other language.

Orthography development can be made more community-based by way of holding orthography development workshop in the community. The participant members of the community should be made aware of the relevant issues and trained to develop their own orthography. Once the first version of the set of symbols is prepared, it should be sent for field checking. This needs to be done in order to assess the usability and intelligibility of the prepared orthography.

In order to accomplish this task of devising new orthography for the community and also for modifying an existing orthography, it is suggested that an orthography development committee can be formed from within the learned members of the community. This committee can be put in charge of supervising the development or modification of the orthography. Apart from looking at the technical details of the
development such as identifying convenient symbols to be used in the orthography, this committee will also need to look at other influential political and sociolinguistic factors. One of the frequently faced issues in this regard is the usability of the orthography by the dialect speakers if the language has a number of dialects. Writing of an unwritten language also brings in the inevitable issue of standardization. Generally, the written variety of a language is much likely to be get standardized. More often, such situations call for political and social deliberation on the selection of the variety to be written down. At times, these issues may become very sensitive and may create social tension. Hence, the committee needs to be aware of all these issues, and should be able to take right decisions for the welfare of the community.

2.4.5 Curriculum

Curriculum is another important component of an MLE programme. The curriculum of an MLE programme needs to be learner-centred as well as relevant to the culture and traditions of the learners. In addition, it should also take care of the educational goal of the learners. Therefore, for planning the curriculum, it is important to know the learners’ educational goals. Different educational goals can be set for different learners. For example, the parents of the children may want their children to do well in the formal educational system. A young member of the community may want to do well in technical education and get a job for earning his livelihood. Adults in the community may want to learn to read and write so that they can read the religious texts and other literatures.

Keeping in mind all these important points, the curriculum should be prepared in a systematic way. Depending on the priority of the learner’s educational goal, a week-by-week instructional plan should be prepared. For example, for the children’s programme, it is always important to use the Multi Strategy Method (MSM) for teaching them the basic literacy skills at the early stage. In the Multi-strategy method, the learners are taught in a two track method- one is the word building track (WBT), and the other is the Story Book track.(SBT). In the WBT, the children are taught through the pre-readers and then the primer, while in the SBT, they are taught to read and understand the stories, songs, rhymes and other texts.
Along with the language class, subjects like environmental studies and mathematics also can be introduced in the curriculum.

2.4.6 Material Production

The success of an MLE programme depends on the availability of enough reading materials for the learners to use. It is a good idea to prepare enough reading materials even before the programme starts. It is witnessed in many instances that an MLE programme fails to achieve its goal only because of the lack of enough reading materials. Before producing any material, it is important to look at the background of the readers. Different types of materials can be produced by the writers in the community depending on the type of readers/learners they are aimed at.

The general principle and procedure of material production with reference to Stage 1 stories are discussed below.

The first step in writing a Stage 1 story for the children is to think about a story which is very interesting and which has the capacity to attract the children. At the same time, the story should be culturally appropriate to the learner. Once the story is thought out, the writer will write down the first draft of the story. One important characteristic of stage 1 stories is that these stories are complete within 6-8 lines. This is because the children at this stage will not be interested in reading a long story. Instead, they actually like to read a shorter but interesting story. It is a common difficulty encountered by almost all the writers to frame a nice attractive story within 6-8 lines. In order to make the story interesting for the students, it should have an interesting progression with a start, a climax and then a suitable end. In most cases, writers struggle to maintain this flow of story within the stipulated 6-8 lines. Therefore, it is very important that the theme of the story should be such that it can be easily incorporated into a story format. Another important aspect of these types of story is that all the actions in the stories can be illustrated by pictures.

Once the story is written according to the guidelines, this story is sent for editing to the editor. The editor mainly checks the flow of the story, the correctness and
appropriateness of the spelling and grammar and also of the words that are used in the text.

Once the editor have looked into the text and have made necessary corrections, the story is finally written in pencil on a single folded A4 paper with only one or maximum two sentences in each page with the related illustration. One important thing to look at while writing down the text on to the paper is to take note of the correctness of the page numbers and the respective lines that it should contain. This is a usual confusion when it comes to the writing of the story on to the folded A4 size paper that happens to the writers and collators of the book. Therefore, it is suggested that in such situations it is helpful to use a ‘dummy book’ to avoid this confusion.

Once all the texts have been entered into the paper, it is sent to the artist to illustrate the story according to the lines in each of the pages. At this point, it is much important that the pictures also should be culturally appropriate to the community. Therefore, it is always helpful to have an artist who is also a member of the community.

After all the pictures have been drawn, the pages finally become ready to be collated into a book format. Once this is done, the book is sent to the other learned members of the community for checking the overall appropriateness of the book for the children it is targeted at. After it is field-checked, this book is finally incorporated into the school curriculum. During the teaching of the book, the teacher will notice the effectiveness of the book in terms of arousing the children’s interest and understanding of the content of the story. If the teacher notices that the students are not so much interested in the story, this is an indication that it needs to be changed or modified.

In general, we can look at the four following types of reading materials which can be produced and used in an MLE programme. The four types of reading materials can be used for the Story Book Track in the MSM method.
2.4.6.1 Stage one literature

Such literature is especially for the beginners who have just started reading their L1. The various genres covered by it include short simple stories, rhymes, songs, primer books, pre-readers etc.

2.4.6.1.1 Pre-reader

A pre reader introduces the four basic literacy skills- listening, speaking, reading and writing to the students. It is actually an initial guide to the teachers in order to enable them to help the children to

a) identify different shapes and letters in their language.

b) develop their cognitive abilities to understand and relate the correspondence between different sounds and its corresponding shapes in the letters in their mother tongue.

c) gain oral fluency in their reading the texts and also in communicating with meaning.

d) gain control over the movement of their hands and fingers while using pencils, pen and also to develop a coordination among these actions. It is important for the children at this stage to learn and practice handling of pen/pencils, books etc.

The above objectives are achieved through four different activities in the pre reader which is planned in consultation with the community members and the teachers. The first of these is a listening activity where the students are introduced to a particular keyword and its corresponding sound in their mother tongue.

In the second step, the students are introduced to different shapes of letters in small boxes. They are particularly taught to discriminate between shapes of the letters. The students are asked to find out same shapes from a box where the teacher will write different letters. This is usually an activity that the children like very much to participate in. As a result, through this activity they develop their cognitive ability to differentiate between different shapes and letters.
The third part in the pre-reader aims at improving the oral fluency of the students. This is done through asking the students to draw a picture about the theme of the week and then make them talk and discuss about it. This makes the students vocal, and they start sharing their ideas about the picture and thus it helps in improving their oral fluency in their mother tongue.

In the fourth and the final part of the pre-reader, the teacher teaches the children to write the letters. It involves teaching them to hold the writing instrument and then assisting with their motor skills. In this section, the teacher uses some simple shapes to help the students to practice and improve their hand movement and coordination.

2.4.6.1.2 Primer

After the students finish the pre-reading period, the primer is introduced to help them learn more about parts of words, syllables and meaningful sentences in their language. Just like the pre-reader, the primer is also a guide to the teachers to help the children to

a) identify parts of words and to understand of the formation of words by way of breaking down and building up of a word.

b) improve their cognitive understanding of sound symbol correspondence in their mother tongue.

c) read meaningful and grammatically correct sentences.

d) learn about the spelling of words

Each of the primer lessons consists of four parts which can be taught over one week. The first part consists of a keyword and a picture representing the object that is referred to by the keyword. This keyword and its corresponding picture relates to the weekly theme which is ascertained in the cultural calendar. The main objective of this part of the primer is to enable the children to relate their existing knowledge to the learning of new sound symbol correspondence.

In the next part, that keyword is broken into syllables down to the key sound that is to be taught in that lesson thus helping the children to focus on the key sound and
its corresponding symbol in their language. In this part, the students are expected to learn about the part of a meaningful word and the process of its formation.

The third part of the primer is represented by a syllable box where the all the syllables that the children learn in that and the previous lessons are put and the children are asked to build meaningful words by combining different syllables from different boxes in the syllable box. The children seem to find a lot of interest in this activity, and in the process they learn the spelling of different meaningful words in their language.

In the last part of the primer, the keyword is shown as a part of a meaningful sentence. The children are asked to identify the keyword from the sentence is which is written below the syllable box.

There are a lot of important aspects that need to be kept on mind while producing materials for children. First of all, depending on the level, these materials need to be very clear and at the same time, interesting. The Stage One books are aimed at giving a firsthand experience of basic literacy to the children of 4 or 5 years of age. At this stage, the children will mostly enjoy browsing through the pages of the books and will look at the pictures which might be more interesting to them. Once the pictures arouse a certain amount interest and curiosity among the children, the teachers takes the responsibility to narrate the story to the children in the simplest and most animated way. But in order to enable the teacher to do that, the material itself should be simple and interesting. Therefore, three important characteristics of Stage One materials of an MTB-MLE programme are

- Length: The length of a story/ song/ rhyme should not be too long as the children at the early stage do not usually have the patience to read through a long story. Such a story can be written within eight to ten short and simple line.
- Interesting content: The content of such reading materials are expected to be able to attract the young children. It should be familiar to them. A proper beginning, climax and ending of a story makes the story more interesting, and the young children would like to initially skim through it.
• Illustrative pictures: Pictures are one of the most important components of a Stage 1 reading material. Each of the pages in the book comprises one or at the most two lines of the story along with a corresponding picture to depict the meaning of that sentence. The pictures are expected to be culture appropriate to the learners.

2.4.6.2 Stage two literature

Literature produced at this stage is for learners who are becoming fluent readers in their L1. The stories and songs written for this class of readers can be little longer. Since the learners now can read with understanding, they will want to read more. So they should be provided with enough reading materials which are interesting and exciting to read. Songs, dramas, skits, and other such materials are very much useful for the learners of this stage. Interesting translated texts in the form of stories, songs, skits, histories can be produced and made available to the learners to read and understand.

2.4.6.3 Stage three literature

At this stage, the literature is produced aiming at the learners who have learned to read in one language and now want to read a second language. For example, people who first learned to read in their L1 may want to learn to read in their L2. On the other hand people who learned to read in the L2 first might want to learn to read their L1. This stage, popularly known as the transitional period, actually prepares the learners to transition from one to the other language. Most of the reading materials, therefore, can contain texts in both the languages. A transitional primer is one important tool for preparing the learners for the transition at this stage. Later in the stage, short interesting texts in the form of stories, songs, poems etc in the L2 can be produced.

2.4.6.4 Stage four literature

Literature at this stage is produced for people who are fluent readers in both their L1 and L2 and want to continue reading in both the languages. All the materials produced for this class of learners are aimed at providing life-long learning. So, there can be a wide variety of reading materials which can be produced and used. These materials can
obviously come from both the languages and also can be translated materials from a third new language.

While preparing reading materials for all these stages, utmost importance is given on producing culturally appropriate materials. Especially, all the stories and songs for the Stage One reader should exclusively be based on their own culture and tradition. This helps the learners to relate their home knowledge to the knowledge imparted in the school. It strengthens their confidence which always has a strong positive effect on the cognitive development of the children.

In many instances, it is observed that the writers at the initial stage always get confused as to what they should write about. One effective way to solve this problem is to produce a cultural calendar for the community. A cultural calendar contains the indigenous names of the months for one year. Then, the community members are asked to think and write about the activities that the children usually do or see most in each of these particular months. This involves a lot of thinking and discussion amongst themselves. Once this is done, the writers are asked to write stories, songs, rhymes etc relating these different activities for each of the months. Later, in the class, students are taught to read and write and discuss about these texts, stories according to the month in the calendar.

Apart from the small story books, the writers can also produce big books which contain interesting stories along with nice illustrations (coloured, if possible), in big paper size. The letters should be big enough so that everybody in a class can read it. Posters and charts about different topics can also be produced and used as teaching materials.

**2.4.7 Varieties of reading materials for MLE**

Having discussed the various stages of the materials generally produced for a mother tongue based MLE programme, the different varieties of reading materials that can be produced according to the need of the learners need to be considered. Some of the most usually used and important formats of such reading materials are discussed below.
2.4.7.1 The Big book

Big books are used to show to the learners the skill of reading naturally and with understanding and enjoyment. This is also an interesting way of having the experience of shared reading, where all the learners can read it with their friends. Any kind of interesting story which can attract the children can be made into a Big book. Each page of the book can comprise of one or two sentences of the story with beautiful coloured (if possible) illustrations. The size of the pages should be of A3 size or bigger. The letters should be large enough for everyone in the class to understand and to be able to read it.

2.4.7.2 Listening stories

Listening stories are used to provide the learners with the opportunity to think and talk about an interesting and culturally appropriate story. These stories are read and not told. It enhances their capacity to listen to understand and make assumptions about a story. Listening stories should be readable in 5 minutes, at the most.

2.4.7.3 Picture posters

Picture posters can be used to make reading more interesting for the young learners. Picture of anything related to the indigenous culture of the learners can be drawn in a big chart paper and the students can be encouraged to talk, think and even write about it. For example, one can draw the picture of a traditional house of a particular community and write the names of the different parts of the house in their own language. This can encourage the learners to discuss about their own houses and even write little stories about their home. In the same way, one can draw the picture of a human body with pointers labelling the different body parts in their own language. This helps in enriching the mother tongue vocabulary of the young learners.

2.4.8 Teachers training

One of the most important components of an MLE programme is the teachers training. The teachers recruited for running the pilot classes need to be trained to deliver the best possible service to the programme. In this regard, the teachers should be trained to
follow the MSM method while teaching in the programme. The teachers are expected to be trained to evolve and use strategies to engage the learners' prior knowledge to synthesize new information and knowledge. They are also trained to develop higher order thinking skills in the learners. At the same time, the teachers are also trained to take the responsibility to enable the learners to make a smooth transition to the second language. Above all, the teachers are also trained to create a non-threatening learner friendly environment in the classroom so that the learners are always encouraged to come to the class and enjoy the school.

In the MSM method there are, as mentioned earlier, two different ways to teach the learners.

2.4.8.1 Word Building Track (WBT)

In the WBT the teacher teaches the children the sounds, symbols, and letters. In this approach, the teacher helps the children to identify each of the sounds and the symbol it is represented by in their language. They are also helped to develop their motor/tactile skills. They are taught to hold a pencil, to hold books and to draw lines and shapes.

2.4.8.2 Story Book Track (SBT)

In the SBT, the teacher uses a lot of stories to help the children develop their cognitive and academic skills. The students are taught to read with understanding. It enhances the creative thinking capacity in the learners. Regular reading of the stories with assistance from the teachers builds the fluency and understanding of meaning in the learner.

Mary D. Stringer and Nicholas G. Faraclas (2001), has summarised the role of teacher in this method as follows:
Table 4: Role of teacher in MSM method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SI No</th>
<th>A Story Track Teacher</th>
<th>A Word Building Track Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>is a model</td>
<td>is a trainer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>teaches by doing</td>
<td>teaches by introducing, asking, revising and by showing sames and differences (contrasts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>builds confidence</td>
<td>corrects mistake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>encourages creativity</td>
<td>encourages mastery of skills necessary for literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>stresses understanding</td>
<td>stresses accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>surrounds learners with meaningful printed materials</td>
<td>prepares learners’ eyes, ears and hands for reading and writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>introduces new materials by chunks</td>
<td>introduces keywords and syllables step by step</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>teaches how to read and write whole sentences and stories</td>
<td>teaches how to break down and make up words and sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>teaches reading for meaning</td>
<td>teaches word attack skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>shows how to read and write with enjoyment</td>
<td>shows how to read and write correctly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>helps learners to become fluent</td>
<td>helps learners become accurate and competent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>trains learners’ mind to predict what to come</td>
<td>trains learners’ minds to build on what has gone before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>develops learners’ power to make sense of new material</td>
<td>develop learners’ power to use learned material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>aims to make students original and creative thinkers and problem-solvers.</td>
<td>aims to make students methodical and accurate thinkers and problem-solvers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So, the teachers need to be properly trained to perform all these roles apart from keeping track of the students’ performance, attendance and other related duties.

### 2.4.9 Documentation and evaluation

Documentation and evaluation is another important component of an MLE programme. Careful documentation of a programme right from the beginning always helps to assess the success of the programme at a later stage. This documentation can be done in the form of keeping records and writing reports about the programme. A proper
documentation should include information regarding the situation before the start of the programme. It refers to the information regarding the rate of attrition and retention before the programme starts. It also consists of the records about the attendance of the students and teachers in the class. Along with the student’s performance, the teachers’ performance in the class in terms of implementing teaching strategies as instructed in the teachers’ training and also their ability to use innovative strategies to provide better educational experience to the students should be documented. Parents’ feedback is one important aspect to be documented. Reports about the various trainings, workshops, held in and outside the community also need to be documented. Samples of the reading materials, cultural calendar, curricula produced bear valuable information regarding the gradual progress of the programme, and hence should be systematically documented.

Evaluation, on the other hand, helps assessing the programme in terms of its progress in achieving its goal. It is important to do a proper evaluation of each and every aspect of the programme for sorting out the strengths and weaknesses in the programme. Evaluation of the curriculum, teaching materials, learners’ progress, efficiency of the teachers, involvement of the community, are very much important in order to get a clear picture of the programme. Evaluation should be able to bring out any difference that has come to the situation of the community due to the programme. Also any weaknesses or incorrect steps can be rectified once it is detected through proper evaluation and documentation of the programme. A proper documentation and evaluation of a programme can help other communities to start such programmes.

2.5 Sustaining an MLE programme

Keeping an MLE programme alive has always been a tough challenge for all the communities and the other stakeholders involved in it. It is relatively easier to start an MLE programme, since it brings a sense of enthusiasm into the minds of the members of the community along with other stakeholders. But then, to keep it going without compromising on the philosophy of MLE has been proved to be challenging. Therefore, there have been a lot of instances where a well-started MLE programme eventually comes to a halt after the first year. There are a number of reasons which can contribute to such a tragic situation. Some of these are discussed below.
2.5.1 Lack of community ownership

The main reason for the failure of an MLE programme is lack of community ownership. There are instances where in spite of initial enthusiasm, the community becomes disinterested later in the programme. There may be various reasons for this. Insufficient mobilization about the programme leads to the confusion of the members of the community about the programme. If there are too many social divisions within the community, that also might lead to the failure of the programme. Extremely poor economic condition of the community also can contribute to the failure of the programme. Lack of local leadership is another factor which can affect the programme negatively.

2.5.2 Teachers not sufficiently trained

The learners become uninterested in coming to the class if the teachers cannot follow the teaching method. A teacher without undergoing proper training will fail to execute the teaching strategies. In many cases, if the selected teacher does not have the requisite teaching skills, it can also adversely affect the classroom situation. This will influence both the performance and the attendance of the learners in the class. As a result, the parents will feel discouraged in sending their children to the school.

2.5.3 Insufficient reading materials

This is another important factor for MLE programmes not being successful. It is always advised to prepare enough reading/teaching materials to cover the whole session. It happens that once the students succeed in reading the stories in their own language, they become so encouraged and enthusiastic that they always want to read new stories. In such situations, if there are not enough material to read that decreases the interest of the students and eventually they stop coming to the class.
2.5.4 Lack of financial support

This is yet another biggest challenge faced by almost all the communities in keeping their programmes alive. Theoretically, the community should find a way to cover the cost of maintaining a school and other supplies. It also brings up the issue of providing salaries to the teachers. This can be done by starting an income generating programme in the community such as starting some firm or some other ways. But this is not so easy in practical terms. It requires a lot of planning and time of a group of enthusiastic, devoted workers. Usually, people talk about collecting donations from some of the rich members of the community or from someone from outside of the community. But it is a proved fact that this kind of programme cannot be run on donations always, since such donation will stop coming at some point. Therefore, it is very much important that the planners of the programme should think right from the beginning of practical and feasible ways of getting financial support from within the community. For this, the community members should think about the resources available within the community which can be used to earn some income. For instance, if the community is rich in cultivating any particular type of agricultural product, they can arrange for a community effort to cultivate a particular amount of such product for earning some money to support the programme. Moreover, they can also bank on their traditional and cultural uniqueness in terms of specially handloom productions, food, dances, songs etc (if available) to set up a kind of income-generating project.

2.6 Overview

This chapter has been concerned with the various aspects of an MTB MLE programme. Apart from a basic outline and theoretical perspective, this chapter also discussed the various types of MTB-MLE programme which can be designed and executed depending on the requirement of a particular community. Stakeholders in such programmes play vital roles in maintaining the quality of the programme and also in sustaining it. The sections dealing with baseline survey, orthography, material production etc. provided field-based information and insights drawn by the researcher regarding various practical issues. Sustainability of such a community-based programme is another strong
challenge. Hence, this was also discussed at length, on the basis of the researcher's practical experience and knowledge.