

WHERE MINDS HAVE NOT MET:
FIGHTING LANGUAGE BARRIERS
TO ASSURE QUALITY UPE FOR
ETHNIC MINORITY CHILDREN IN VIETNAM

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Outline of the presentation



- Background of the Study
- Study design
- Main findings
- The central message of the Presentation



Background



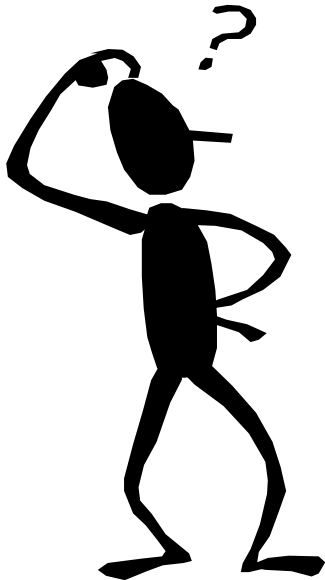
Background

- Favourable policy context (e.g. Education Law 2005; Inter-ministerial circular 2003; Prime Minister's Decision 2007)
- Strong commitments (e.g. Vietnam's EFA Action Plan 2003-2015; Prime Minister's Decision 2006)
- Various programs and initiatives to deal with language barriers (e.g. PEDC project, UNICEF-MOET Action Research on MTBBE; Save the Children; teacher trainings on ethnic languages and Vietnamese teaching methodology supported by NGOs)

The question is...

- ✓ Strong commitments and more favourable policies
- ✓ More support from 'external' resources
- ✓ Concurrent interventions

→ ***What is the current state of the teaching and learning of Vietnamese as a second language for five-year-old ethnic minority children in Vietnam to prepare for their primary education?***





Study Design



Setting

Two communities of Hmong people in a Northern mountainous province in Vietnam (this province has enjoyed most of the above mentioned interventions)

Community A:

- Residential congregation
- Kindergarten located at the center
- Public gathering for worshipping purposes on weekends

Community B:

- Scattered and distant clusters of households
- Kindergarten 'borrows' a Community Hall located at one end of the village (unstable, insufficient access, poor facilities)
- Little public gathering

Participants

Four groups in each community:

- **Educational authorities:** (policy-makers) provincial and district levels
- **School:** (service providers) preschool and Grade 1 teachers, preschool and primary school principals
- **Community:** (socio-linguistic factors)
 - ▣ Community leaders and members
 - ▣ Family: Parents of the newly-enrolled Grade 1 children
- **Beneficiaries:** Children who finished one-year preschool program in 2008-2009 and had just started their Grade 1

Stakeholder mapping



Data collection

- Semi-structured individual interviews
- Focus group discussions
- Areas of concern:
 - Attitudes of Vietnamese learning and teaching at pre-primary level (its necessity and feasibility)
 - Advantages
 - Disadvantages
 - Expected changes or solutions
 - Expectations of other stakeholders' work



Major findings

Advantages

- *Establishment of new kindergarten satellite schools*
- *Increase of teaching time*
- *Policies for the poor*
- *Support from international organizations and NGOs*
- *Support from community officers (enrolment, attendance)*

Disadvantages

- *Lack of adequate school and classroom facilities*
- ***Lack of Vietnamese exposure and speaking environment***
- ***Lack of care, support and supervision from parents***
- ***Lack of communicative and social skills***
- *Poverty – Need to work*
- *Malnutrition*
- *Severe weathers and difficult road to school*
- *Teaching methodology and teacher qualification*
- *Teacher – Student relationship*
- *Unsuitable curriculum*
- *Differences in linguistic features and language habits*
- *Inaccurate birth registration*

Expected changes and solutions

- *Improvement of school and classroom infrastructure*
- *Supply of teaching and learning tools and materials*
- *Improvement of teaching methodology and teacher qualification*
- *Training of local ethnic teaching assistants and teachers*
- *Enhancement of Vietnamese teaching*
- *Policies for teachers*
- *Priorities to bring children aged 3 and 4 to school*
- ***Support from community and family to create a Vietnamese friendly environment***
- ***Socialization of education***

Major findings

comparison of stakeholders' perspectives

Attitudes of Vietnamese teaching and learning at pre-primary level

- Education authorities and school teachers:
 - An essential school-readiness competence
 - The earlier the better
- Community and family:
 - Five years old is too young to learn – doubt of its feasibility and necessity

Expectations of each other's work (examples)

- **Vietnamese teaching: whose job is it?**
 - Community and family: the school is wholly responsible for Vietnamese teaching
 - Education authorities and school teachers: all stakeholders should involve in the teaching
- **Going to school means learning?**
 - Community and family: learning happens once students are at school
 - Education authorities and school teachers: learning is a multifaceted process (including the participation of community and family)
- **Role of Community and Family?**
 - Community and family: their jobs is to make sure that students go to school
 - Education authorities and school teachers: community should create Vietnamese-friendly environment

Overall findings



- Good awareness and commitment on the part of education authorities (policy-makers) and school teachers (service providers)
- Poor awareness and dim participation on the part of community and family (socio-linguistic factors)
- Mismatches on perspectives of different stakeholders



The central message

The theory of 'The four legs of the table'

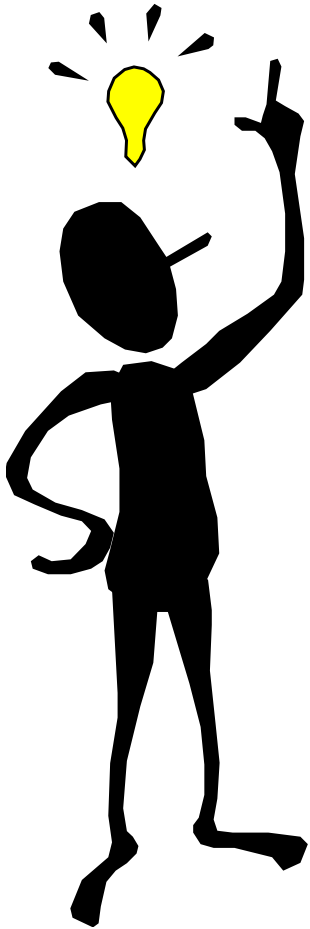
- The four legs of a table:
 - Leg 1: Policy makers
 - Leg 2: School (Service providers)
 - Leg 3: Learners
 - Leg 4: Community (Socio-linguistic factors)

- Quality UPE = a **stable** table with all four 'equally' **balanced** and **joint** legs

The four legs

- Leg 1: more and more favourable policies
- Leg 2: several on-going initiatives, such as friendly school, culturally and language appropriate curriculum and material design, teacher training
- Leg 3: On-going efforts to develop active learners
- Leg 4: Little has been done

What else to do...



More attention should be paid to the participation of *community* (including family)

Implications for community participation

Balanced

+

Joint



THANK YOU!