Future Challenges of MTB-MLE for ECD: Research, Evaluation and Collaboration

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Topics of this presentation

- Brief discussion on cognitive anthropology
- Some key dimensions of MTB-MLE in ECD
- Language and culture
- Some major needs for evaluation and research on MTB-MLE in ECD
- High-priority topics for evaluation and research
- Challenges we face
- New approaches are needed
- A Call to Action!

Orientation

- Cognitive anthropology, socio-linguistics/field linguistics, educational and economic anthropology
- Educational and ECD policy planning at national and sub-national levels
- UNESCO programme: Anthropology and Language Sciences in Educational Development (ALSED: 1968 – 1972+)

Cognitive Anthropology

- **Cognitive Anthropology is the study of culturally shared knowledge**: the contents of specific cognitive domains as "networks of neural connections"

- Examples of some **relevant cognitive domains**: Parenting skills and childrearing practices in a culture (mothers, fathers, grandparents); perceived stages of child development; childhood competencies

- Cognitive Anthropology also studies **how cognitive domains and cultural ideals relate to activities over time and space and to cultural roles**

- For example: points of intervention can be identified that are culturally acceptable for all mothers in a culture

Example: Maternal Ritual Roles

Roles in Culture	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3	Activity 4
High ranking mother	X	X	X	X
Average ranking mother		X		X
Low ranking mother	X	X		X
Lowest ranking mother		X		

Some Uses of Cognitive Anthropology in MTB-MLE for ECD

- Cognitive anthropology is useful for developing or adapting ECD educational materials that are **culturally derived** or **linguistically and culturally appropriate**

- It is important to assess **the coherence** (or lack thereof) between a culture's cognitive domains and a programme's messages and skills for parents

- Leading questions: How are cognitive domains shared and distributed in a culture? Among parents? With children?

- How might ECD services use a culture's cognitive domains, and the skills related to them, to develop successful programmes?

Some key dimensions of MTB-MLE in ECD

- Prenatal & parent education (NFE or FE settings): health, nutrition; sanitation; child development, protection, rights
- Early Childhood Intervention services (NFE related to FE)
- Nurseries and crèches for 0 to 3 years (NFE or FE settings)
- Family, friends and neighbors: child care and development
- Community 3-6 years pre-primary ECD services (NFE/FE)
  - School outreach to homes for children not enrolled in pre-primary education (FE to homes)
  - In community and homes (NFE with no FE link)
- Pre-primary schools/classes in/near primary schools (FE)

Language and Culture

- In ethnically and linguistically diverse populations, MTB-MLE is essential for all programmes of early childhood care and development

- For ECD, it is not just a language issue. Most fundamentally, it is a cultural issue

- To be effective, ECD services at the community level must fit the cognitive domains and cultural ideals of the people

- MTB-MLE services are best provided through using the home language in both NFE and FE settings to ensure: 1) high levels of parent involvement; and 2) children will achieve their potential

Language and Culture - 2

- Without MTB-MLE, parents tend to dismiss parenting messages regarding child development, health, nutrition, sanitation and child protection -- as pertaining to OTHERS (the majority culture) but NOT to them

- MTB-MLE is important for building the child's cultural identity and self esteem. This is an essential dimension of the social and emotional development of each child

- MTB-MLE is essential to the successful transition of children from home or preschool to primary school

- MTB-MLE helps ensure parents will become involved in their child's schooling

Language and Culture - 3

- MTB-MLE helps preserve cognitive domains and cultural roles as well as the language within a framework of cultural decisions, with flexible change over time. (Non-functional elements are rejected and other elements are strengthened.)

- It is essential to consider the use of culturally appropriate community and sub-regional media (such as radio, drama, puppets, musical messages, etc.)

Language and Culture - 4

- To achieve universal primary education, it is necessary to:
  - Improve child development in high-risk ethnic groups
  - Ensure equity in preparing children for success in primary school
  - Help parents to enroll their children on time in inclusive primary schools, especially in MTB-MLE classes
  - Offer quality primary schooling that values and uses the home language and culture

Some Major Needs

- With the disappearance of many cultures and languages, and conflict amongst groups who have lost their identity and live in poverty, expanded MTB-MLE services are needed during the ECD years

- Although many agree that these points are very important, relatively little research and evaluation has been conducted on the inputs, outputs and outcomes of ECD services using MTB-MLE in terms of: 1) child and family development; and 2) the improvement of formal and non-formal education systems

More research is needed!

- We have many research results on MTB-MLE in primary schooling in many countries and all regions
- However, **very little research has been conducted on MTB-MLE during the ECD period,** especially on:
  - Critical period of child development from birth to 3
  - Parenting knowledge and behaviours
  - Child development levels
  - Traditional childrearing methods in parenting services
- We need both internal evaluation research and basic research on MTB-MLE for ECD

Internal Programme Evaluation: What are the inputs and outputs of effective MTB-MLE?

- Inputs: Criteria and requirements for: teachers, promoters; sites, buildings; educational materials, manuals, posters, etc.; equipment; transportation; other

- Outputs: Numbers of persons enrolled; numbers and types of services rendered; types of persons served (ages, sex, ethnicity, language); other

Internal Programme Evaluation: What are some outcomes of effective MTB-MLE?

- Improved birth outcomes
- Children with vulnerable status identified and served
- Improved child development: infants prefer adults who speak their mother tongue
- Improved parenting knowledge and skills
- Timely enrolment in pre-primary and primary education
- Improved internal efficiency of primary school systems: lower absenteeism, grade repetition, drop out rates; and higher achievement and primary school completion rates
- Greater parent involvement in schools

Additional issues regarding internal evaluations

- Studies are needed on the effectiveness of alternative systems for monitoring and evaluating national programmes for MTB-MLE: design, methods, schedules, data gathering, analysis and reporting

- It is essential to identify and analyse common design errors in evaluation research, and to consider ways to overcome them in the field

- Promising programmes should be identified through internal evaluations in order to add external research projects on programme processes and outcomes

High-Priority Research Topics

- **Educational and social equity**
  - Ethnographic studies on educational equity and child rights with respect to linguistic and cultural status during the ECD period
  - Child and parental rights (presence/absence) in MTB-MLE ECD services
  - Relationship of (presence/absence of) MTB-MLE to the frequency of community conflict, domestic violence or other social pathologies

High-Priority Research Topics - 2

- **Policies and Strategic Plans**
  - Research on the inclusion/absence of language policies or statements in ECD Policies and Strategic Plans, Educational and National Development Plans (MDGs, Poverty Reduction)
  - Assessment of inclusion of early childhood period and/or parenting education in National Language Policies or Plans
  - Impact of National Language Policies and ECD Policies and Plans in providing MTB-MLE in ECD services
  - Compliance, accountability and enforcement of language policy statements in ECD services

High-Priority Research Topics - 3

- **Parental attitudes and language teaching skills**
  - Ethnographic studies on parental attitudes regarding MTB-MLE toward: mother tongue and its importance and utility; maintaining mother tongue and home culture; having their children learn the national language(s)
  - Ethnographic studies of the skills used by parents to impart the mother tongue or to teach a second language (early language teaching and acquisition)
  - Parental attitudes regarding MTB-MLE in pre-primary and primary schools

High-Priority Research Topics - 4

- **Use of cognitive domain research**
  - Use of cognitive domains (indigenous knowledge and practices) regarding parenting and child development in MTB-MLE: How best to do this?
  - Assessment of processes for successfully deriving and using cognitive domains
  - Assessment of the relative success of parenting programmes that use these approaches in contrast to those that do not

High-Priority Research Topics - 5

- **Quality issues regarding MTB-MLE programme contents for ECD services**
  - Developing/deriving or adapting curricula, educational materials, and manuals
  - Selection and use of appropriate teaching/learning methods and media
  - Techniques for field testing and revising programme contents and methods

High-Priority Research Topics - 6

- **Transitions (home or pre-primary to primary school): planned transition services**
  - What happened in comparison to non-MTB-MLE services?
  - How were effective transitions structured and conducted?
  - What were the roles of parents? Children? Teachers? Principals? Community members?
  - What elements should be recommended for inclusion in transition services for/with linguistic and/or ethnic minority parents?

High-Priority Research Topics - 7

- **Pre- and In-Service Training**
  - Ethnographic studies on the pre- and in-service training of bi- and multi-lingual teachers/facilitators, teacher trainers, school or programme managers, and directors of ECCD systems
  - Assessment of teaching competence and the use of recommended teaching methods
  - Assessment of varying training results: Which systems are most effective in terms of child and ECCD system outcomes? Which are most cost-effective?

High-Priority Research Topics - 8

- **MTB-MLE Child Development and Language Outcomes**
  - Developmental levels of young children (0 to 36 months; 37 mo – 60 months) served or not served by ECD MTB-MLE programmes
  - Assessment of language outcomes for pre-primary and primary age school children in terms of understanding, reading, writing (biliteracy) and speaking
  - Educational achievement in primary school (in all developmental areas)

High-Priority Research Topics - 9

- **Longitudinal Research on Educational Outcomes**
  - Promotion of longitudinal research (using experimental or quasi-experimental designs) on the long-term impacts of MTB-MLE during the 0 to 3 years and 3 to 6 pre-primary period on educational achievement, repetition rates, drop out and primary/secondary school completion

High-Priority Research Topics - 10

- **Economics of MTB-MLE during the ECD period (prenatal to 6/8 years)**
  - Conduct cost studies on alternative MTB-MLE models, including developmental, recurrent and in-kind costs in order to assist planners to design programmes that will give children high-quality education at the lowest possible cost
  - Using the cost studies, conduct projections and simulations to help nations expand their MTB-MLE services to meet demand and need

High-Priority
Research Topics - 11

- **Issues of Sustainability and Scale**
  - Which MTB-MLE programmes have been taken to scale in which world areas/countries?
  - How have MTB-MLE programmes been taken to scale, nationwide or at the provincial level?
  - How should MTB-MLE programmes be designed to help ensure that they will be able to achieve scale?

Challenges in conducting research on MTB-MLE for ECD

- Most practitioners in this emerging field tend to work in an isolated manner and they engage in very limited professional collaboration, due mainly to a lack of opportunities to do so

- Research methodologies are not well understood in this field

- It is hard to fund services of MTB-MLE for ECD. It is harder yet to find adequate funding support for research on them

- Programmes using MTB-MLE for ECD rarely include built-in M&E systems or support for external evaluations

Challenges - 2

- The roles of parents and children in MTB-MLE research in the field of ECD are rarely considered

- What little research that exists is focused on formal education and far less on NFE/ECD, even though it is critically important for reasons of equity, effectiveness and educational achievement

- Enlightened foundations are needed to support this emerging field

What might be done?

- More evaluators and researchers need to be trained, with a special emphasis on training members of ethnic groups
- Research designs should be exchanged and seminars provided on research methodologies on both language and cultural derivation and the appropriateness of programme models
- Research instruments should be shared, with recognition given to authors
- Research results should be issued more rapidly through the provision of a central website (either the document or a reference to its location)
- New private foundations should be attracted to support this field, as a cutting-edge area for investment

New approaches are needed

- It is time to build a **collaborative framework** for MTB-MLE research in ECD at sub-national, national, sub-regional, regional and at international levels, linking our work to regional/sub-MTB-MLE regional networks

- A website is being developed as an Online Multilingual Education Forum (Washington, DC group – mainly primary?)

- A new website may be needed to share research designs, tools, work in progress and research results in the ECD area

- We should link this website with global ECD networks, such as the CG/ECCD, UNESCO, UNICEF, SIL, WAECE/AMEI, World Forum, and regional ECD networks (ADEA WG/ECD, ARNEC, Red Primera Infancia, etc.)

A Call to Action!

- New sources of support for research in MTB-MLE are needed
- Researchers and evaluators must collaborate to create a "critical mass" of people who are able to address topics such as those suggested in this presentation
- Please share your research books, articles, reports and bibliographies with others
- Plan and hold special training workshops and seminars
- If we work together, our individual goals will be achieved, and our field will greatly benefit the children of ethnic and linguistic groups throughout the world.