Planning and developing large scale MLE programmes

Rewards, Hazards and Challenges

What can we learn from the Indian experience?

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Assumptions

- Beginning in MT provides a positive school experience for children from minority language communities where the language of school and the language of home are different
- Gradual introduction of the school language over a period of 5-7 years, providing oral and written practice, ensures children have the chance to learn that language before having to learn in that language

Indian multilingualism

- **3372 MOTHER TONGUES (1576 listed, 1796 as 'other' languages)**
- **300 – 400 LANGUAGES**
- **22+1 OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**
- **87 LANGUAGES OF PRINT MEDIA**
- **104 FOR RADIO BROADCASTING**
- **81/41 IN PRIMARY EDUCATION (1970/98)**
- **MINORITY LINGUISTIC GROUPS>20% in half of the Districts**

Relationship between Language, Power & Hierarchy:
"Multilingualism of the Unequals" (Mohanty,2004)

History of MLE programmes

Orissa: 23% - 62 groups, 33 languages

AP: 8%— 33 groups,
32 languages

Some groups cross borders of AP, Orissa, Chhattisgarh and MP

Background situation

- High dropout/ pushout – 75-80%

- Low achievement; at grade 5:
  - Children were not scoring any marks in language
  - Reading at grade 2 level
  - Children unable to converse in school language

- Teacher shortage, teacher absenteeism, teacher capacity, negative classroom practices
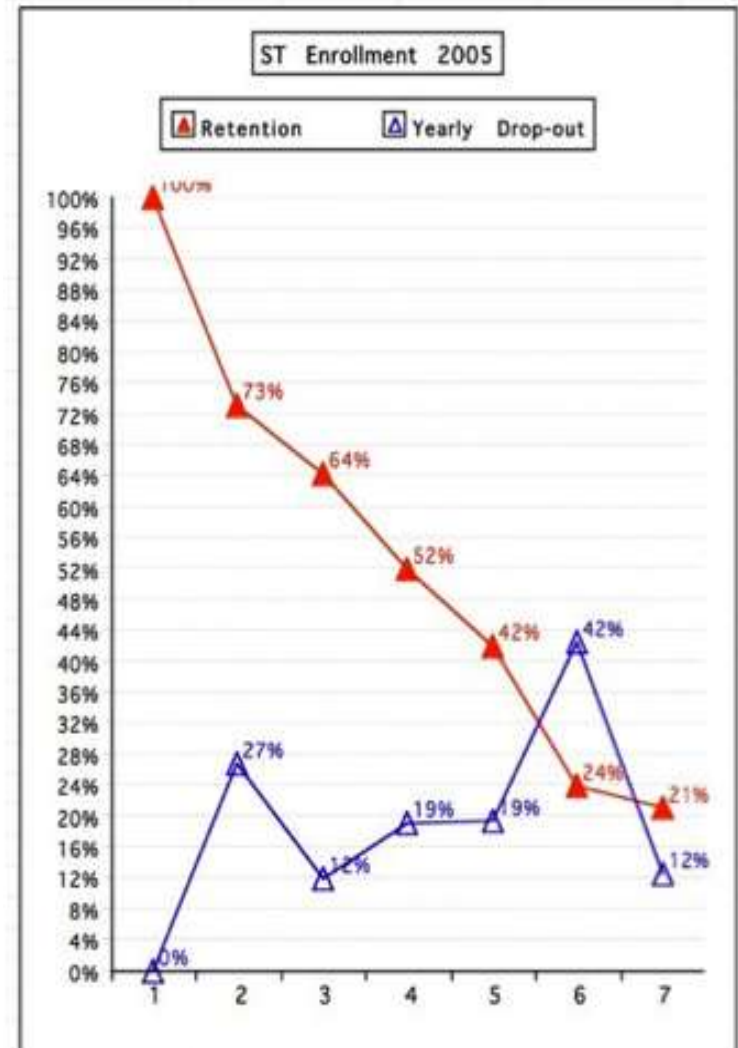
Persuading Government: Advocacy

- Discussion with top officials (frequent changes required frequent advocacy visits)
  - Current system is not working!
  - Using research, theory and international agencies' statements
  - Understanding what is legally binding for government: e.g. constitution, national curriculum
- Providing a feasible plan developed with linguists from AP universities

Beginning the programme

- AP: 8 language groups (started 2003)
- Orissa: 10 language groups (2006)
- Linguists supported
- Government structures and systems used – state government Ed Dept, Tribal Welfare, using national funds (for achieving EFA)
- One year to develop orthography, curriculum and materials (lang, maths and EVS) for one grade based on NCF 2005
- Worked with local teachers and communities
- Pilot in 10/20 schools
- Quick expansion

Teacher involvement in making materials

Involvement of community from material preparation to classroom transaction

Current situation

- 2500 schools assigned to MLE in AP

- 547 in Orissa

- Grades 1-5: culturally relevant textbooks, reading materials, maths, themes (gr1-2)

- Plans for preschool MT education

- More languages being added

- Moves to establish in state system

- http://nmrc-jnu.org/nmrc_img/Andhra%20Pradesh-%20MLE%20status%20report.pdf

- www.nmrc-jnu.org/nmrc_img/**Orissa**-%20MLE%20status%20report.doc

Obstacles to programmes

- Started by group/person with supportive state officials
- Commitment at all levels lacking (slow process down e.g. publishing)
- Lack of clear policy
- New official decides to shut it down
- Lack of sustainability (funding)
- Multiple languages in classrooms is a big area of concern
- Lack of teachers and training capacity
- Materials not published in time

Positive results of efforts of last 10 years

- Language is recognised as an issue in children's learning
- Communities mobilised and supportive
- Central/national MLE centre
- Small scale research
- 2 MLE programmes running with grades 1-5 materials prepared (including multilingual dictionaries in 8 languages in AP)
- 2 evaluations in progress
- MT in RTE

What have we learned about building a sustainable MLE programme?

- Advocacy
- Policy
- Building sustainability
- Technical and educational issues
- Funding
- Networking and collaboration
- Research

Advocacy

- Get it on the agenda, but as a high priority is not so easy
- Individuals lobby but need a network of support: making links between academic institutions, international agencies, government. (Many local communities don't have a strong voice)
- Centres of development: one centre in Delhi is functioning, bringing out good publications; still quite weak and limited. Funded by UN agency (UNICEF).
- Keep publishing and talking about it, raising it at conferences, nationally and at international agencies

Policy

- India has good laws and policies but the translation on the ground is not always in line with those ideas.
- Right to Education Act was notified 1st April, a law that talks about the right to quality, child-friendly education with a number of quality parameters for both infrastructure and quality. It says mother tongue instruction to the extent *possible*.
  - Requires a definition under the law of what 'to the extent possible' means in mother tongue instruction
- Need State as well as National policy

Sustainability: integrating it into government structures and institutions

- Getting people in Gov institutions who really know about language and education: well trained support teams
- Funding (see later…)
- Strategies to meet the state and national objectives of Right to Education:
  - Have to think big at the beginning but start small and grow
  - How to develop good locally supported, nationally recognized programmes
  - less rigidity on methods - compromise a bit
- Strengthen the centre and have it more embedded in the overall structures of the government-related institutions and that the staff and resources are expanded.

Sustainability: gaining local support

- Community readiness/ownership:
  - focus on those communities who are more open to it, who are enthusiastic about their mother tongue, who show some signs of enthusiasm and spend energy and time to make a successful project there
- Involve NGO and other networks
  - local, national and international
- Strengthen the voice of the communities

Technical

- Need a body of technical resource - national, state as well as district level

- Develop quality innovations, new models of multi-grade, multi-level teaching, but has to include multiple languages.

- Cultural adaptation of materials not just translation

- Baseline surveys – resource mapping to know what is there and how to use it

Educational issues

- Need to change the way language is taught – MT as well as L2

- Need for a clear framework for training and classroom practice in language learning

- Engaging children in oral and written literacy in language learning

- Creating a literate classroom environment – not enough L1 or L2 materials for developing fluency

READING A BIG BOOK IN THEIR MOTHER TONGUE

Story in two languages (Orissa)
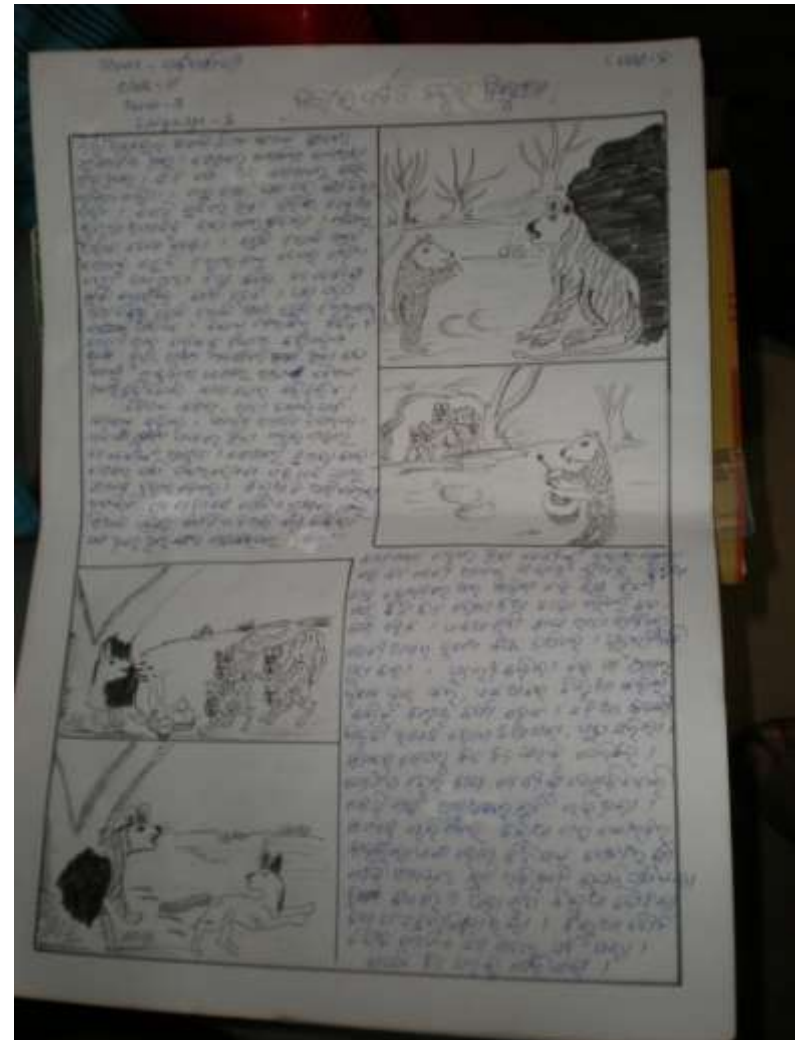
Funding

- Need to be strategic in getting funds into budgets; influencing planning permissions.

- At a district level the district collectors and district magistrates are holders of the budget.

Networking and collaboration

- Universities – linguistics and education
- Policy: change in policy to include the language issues in education bills etc.
- Language and culture
- Media in MT: radio, TV, Newspapers;
- Health
- Communities
- NGOs

Collaboration

Multilingual dictionaries (MT, Telugu, Hindi, English) in 8 languages developed by Ed Dept, Linguistics Dept (Universities), NGOs and Local communities (Shown: Koya, AP)

Research

- Longitudinal studies: still waiting for non-objection from the government.
- Government preschool programmes should be in MT – none yet
- Documentation of processes and results
- Building the body of evidence through research at JNU
- Research on teaching and learning

Research cont,...

- What factors are most influential in determining why children drop out of school or why they don't learn? One of the variables is looking at mother tongues.
  - observe children, test them, look at their interactions, home environment, teachers and classroom practices.
  - Need evidence of the gaps for children whose home language and school language is different.
- Look at successful teachers

Hindrances and challenges

- Parents want English
- Teachers don't believe multilingualism is a resource
- Officials – outward support as it's in the documents, but no commitment to do as language is political
- Whole programme not developed – part, maybe textbooks, not teachers, maybe teachers, not texts; translations, not culture
- Turnover of officials
- Programmes can be stopped at the whim of an official
- Lack of strong government (Jharkhand)

What not to do!

- Don't come in with the standard solutions, but really look at the local situation and what is needed.
- Don't be too rigid in the programme; to get started, work with what is there

What to do…

- Look for communities that are open, that show some interest
- Look for change agents or change type of groups where there is some interest, and then use that as a springboard to advocate for other groups
- Need to see examples of good practice

What next?

- Target teacher education
- Rationalise teacher deployment especially regarding language background
- Plan advocacy forums
- Build capacity at national and state level
- Dedicated full time teams
- Comprehensive planning and long term road map with small achievable short term goals.
- Quality improvement in classroom requires changes in all major components in educational planning: reason for education, curriculum, syllabus, textbooks and other teacher learning materials, teacher preparation, teacher's classroom processes, community participation, child friendly monitoring
- Changes in assessment procedures

Multilingual and multicultural education, to promote respect, diversity, tolerance

- Taking part in this process, for the first time they felt they have an identity, their language and they themselves have some dignity in the society. That way when these languages were counted, when stories, riddles, poems, art and paintings and games and other things from those cultures were collected in their language, for the first time they felt that they're part of the world's power system. And they could see that their language, their stories, their songs, their dances, their riddles, they have equalities like any other language.

- They felt that, here is a tool to empower them. So now…. if anybody tries to take away MLE or language from those schools, those people will revolt. They will never allow anybody to underestimate their language. They will stand for it themselves. This is a great achievement.

A Saora Story using traditional art (Orissa and AP)

- The hazards and obstacles are many

- Long slow process

- Rewards are worth it

- Children actually learn – and enjoy that learning

BOYS FROM THE KOYA COMMUNITY LISTENING TO A STORY IN THEIR MOTHER TONGUE IN SCHOOL FOR THE FIRST TIME

CHILDREN FROM THE KOYA LANGUAGE COMMUNITY IN ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA – ENJOYING A SONG IN THEIR OWN LANGUAGE!