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MOTHER TONGUE-BASED BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN VIET NAM

1. What is mother tongue-based bilingual education (MTBBE)?

Children learn more quickly through their mother tongue than through an unknown or unfamiliar language. Build on this notion, MTBBE in Viet Nam focuses on mother tongue-based instruction for ethnic minority children in the early grades, as a bridge to the national language progressively becoming the primary language of instruction.

2. Why is MTBBE necessary for ethnic minority children?

- Children who do not speak Vietnamese as their mother tongue face particular difficulties in learning effectively in school. On average, they are more likely than the general population of children to be excluded from school; they do poorly in tests and exams and are more likely to drop out of school.
- A UNICEF study reveals that children whose mother tongue is not Vietnamese do better in school when they participate in mother tongue-based bilingual education programme. It signals that MTBBE is a solution to overcome language barriers faced by ethnic minority students and create equitable access to education for all children.
- MTBBE takes Viet Nam's rich linguistic and cultural context into consideration which facilitates child-centered learning. It takes account of the characteristics of ethnic minority students to improve the quality of their learning and contributes to the preservation of their ethnic cultural values.

3. How is MTBBE implemented?

- Students learn mother tongue language and Vietnamese as individual subjects from pre-school to grade 5.
- Both languages are used as the medium of instruction in all subjects. The use of mother tongue language and Vietnamese are flexible and complementary to each other: children learn through mother-tongue language in early stage, with Vietnamese gradually replacing it as the main medium of instruction and mother-tongue language taking a supporting role at a later stage.

MTBBE is implemented in accordance with the following model:

Learning and the use of language in teaching and learning	Pre school	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Learning outcomes
Subject: Vietnamese (developing Vietnamese proficiency)	listening, speaking	listening, speaking	listening, speaking	listening, speaking, reading, and writing	listening, speaking, reading, and writing	listening, speaking, reading, and writing	Students meet the standard of Vietnamese proficiency required at primary school level.
Medium of instruction (flexible between Mother tongue and Vietnamese)	Mother tongue	Mother tongue	Mother tongue	Mother tongue/ Vietnamese	Vietnamese/ Mother tongue	Vietnamese /Mother tongue	Students are able to use both languages in learning and daily activities.
Subject: Mother tongue (reinforce mother tongue proficiency)	listening, speaking	listening, speaking, reading, and writing	listening, speaking, reading, and writing	listening, speaking, reading, and writing	listening, speaking, reading, and writing	listening, speaking, reading, and writing	Students meet the standard of mother tongue proficiency required at primary school level.

Key elements of MTBBE



TEACHERS

- Bilingual and knowledgeable of both cultures.
- Trained in child-centered approaches.



CURRICULUM AND MATERIALS

- Bilingual education curriculum.
- Tailor-made materials include wordbooks, communication materials, video, visual aids and picture books.



COMMUNITY & PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

- Parents are actively engaged in the education of their children.
- Community members receive information about the programme and play a supportive role in its implementation.



RESEARCH & PRACTICE

Integrated into all stages, steps, and activities

(Planning - Implementation - Observation - Consideration)

4. What are the benefits of MTBBE?

For ethnic minority children



- Removes language barriers to steadily improve Vietnamese proficiency and reinforce mother tongue proficiency;
- Develops transferable skills (e.g. communication, problem solving skills, collaboration skills) which helps children become more confident in their learning and daily life;
- Contributes to sustainable and long-term academic benefits for children's lifelong learning;
- Builds bilingual identity.

For teachers and education administrators



- Contributes to teachers' professional development by providing training on new child-centered teaching methods (e.g. teaching mother tongue; teaching Vietnamese as a second language; multi-grade teaching);
- Supports their knowledge building through the sharing of the latest research, best practices and in-country school visits.

For ethnic minority communities



- Engages parents in the education of their children;
- Supports social cohesion among teachers, students, parents and communities;
- Preserves cultural values of ethnic minority.



Conditions for the implementation of MTBBE

- A legal foundation in support of MTBBE;
- Policies and sustained budget allocation in support of the implementation of MTBBE;
- Pre- and in-service teacher training programs which invest in well-trained bilingual teachers with preference for teachers from the same ethnic minority group;
- MTBBE teaching and learning materials adapted to the specific cultural context of each ethnic minority group.



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