Survey Report

Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education Programs in Pakistan

By

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Part 1

Report on the MLE Survey in Northern Pakistan
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The effectiveness of L2 & L3 Language Learning in Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Schools in Pakistan
(The part is based on the study conducted in northern Pakistan)

Linguistic diversity is an essential part of life and vital for the long-term survival of humanity. Multilingualism symbolises the value of building bridges between peoples of different color, creed, culture and language (Cavaluzzi 2010: 3, quoted from Baker 1995). Crawford (2000) claims that developing bilingualism and cultivating academic excellence are complementary, rather than contradictory goals. At an early stage of learning, mother tongue instruction not only develops a strong educational foundation but also strengthens the cognitive development of learners (Kadel 2010).

Pakistan is a multilingual country with 69 distinct languages. Among these only Urdu, English, and to some extent Sindhi and Pashto are used in state-sponsored basic education and literacy programs. Usually, Urdu and English are used as the medium of instruction. Urdu is spoken by only 7.75% of the total population as a mother tongue (Cheema et al 2010) while English is a foreign language. Like many other developing countries, in Pakistan mother tongue based literacy programs are almost non-existent. A situation like this, where the medium of instruction is a language which is not spoken by the learners or which they are unfamiliar with, is defined by Benson as “analogous to holding learners under water without teaching them how to swim” (2005:2). This makes both learning and teaching difficult.

In mother tongue based multilingual education, the learners’ mother tongue is used to teach beginning reading and writing skills along with academic content. Later on, second and foreign languages are taught systematically so that skill transfer is gradual. The progression is from familiar to unfamiliar. The advantages of mother tongue based MLE programs are evident from the academic literature (Cummins 2000). A learner needs to learn reading and writing once in his/her life, and it is easiest to learn it in a language which is familiar (Skutnabb-Kangas online). Keeping in view the recent research findings favoring mother tongue based MLE, many programs have been started in different parts of the world. In Pakistan, where most of the languages have remained out of the curriculum, recently some attempts have been made to introduce mother tongue based literacy programs in a few small minority language communities in the northern and southern parts of Pakistan.
The aim of these mother tongue based MLE programs is to teach reading and writing skills to minority-language students in their own languages, and also develop reading, writing, listening and speaking skills in Urdu and English. The mother tongue is used as a bridge to Urdu and English.

Presently, MLE programs are successfully running in the Gawri and Torwali languages in Swat, Palula and Kalasha in Chitral, Gojri in the Kaghan valley, Parkari and Kachchi in the interior Sindh, and Balochi in Liyari, Karachi.

Most of these MLE programs teach Urdu as a second and English as a third language. In the MLE schools in Sindh, Sindhi is the second language, Urdu the third language, and English the fourth language.

The goal of our present study is to report on an initial, exploratory effort to assess the effectiveness of English language learning in these mother tongue based MLE schools in Pakistan, in comparison to English language learning in Urdu and English-medium schools. In the first phase of our research we surveyed mother tongue based MLE schools in Ashret (Chitral), Bamboret (Chitral), Kalam (Swat), Bahrain (Swat), and Budgran (Kaghan). The detailed findings of the research are described below.

1. Palula MLE Program in Ashret

Two Palula mother tongue based MLE schools have been operational in Ashret (Chitral) since 2008. These schools offer two years of pre-school education. In the pre-school, teaching starts in the mother tongue while after one year English and Urdu are introduced. Having completed two years of education in Palula, Urdu and English, the students are then admitted into the government primary schools. In the two-year pre-school program, students learn how to read and write in their mother tongue while also learning Urdu and English. In the government schools no mother tongue education is given.

A first batch of students completed the pre-school program in August 2010. At that time they could not be admitted in the Ashret Government Primary School (AGPS), as that school had already started its session in April 2010. Consequently, the class-1 government curriculum was taught to this first batch of students in the MLE school. As per April 2011, these students have been admitted in class 2 of AGPS.

For our research, eight students were selected from the AGPS class 2: four former MLE students and four non-MLE students. The actual selection was done by the teacher of the class, whom we had asked to pick his four best students from the non-MLE group, and to randomly pick four students from the MLE group.

Different types of language proficiency tests, including a test of basic math in English, were administered to the students. These tests involved the following tasks:
• Recognition and production of the letters of the English alphabet;
• Recognition and production of English words;
• Responding to simple commands in English;
• Recognition of numbers, saying the lower multiplication tables, spelling out numbers between 1 and 10 (all this in English).

The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Comparison of the MLE and Non-MLE Palula Students in English proficiency and Mathematics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Student</th>
<th>class</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Alphabets 15 points</th>
<th>Words 15 points</th>
<th>Response to Simple commands 15 points</th>
<th>Maths 15 points</th>
<th>Total points obtained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>MLE</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>MLE</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>MLE</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UG</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>MLE</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Non-MLE</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Non-MLE</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Non-MLE</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Non-MLE</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The comparison shows that the average scores of the MLE students are higher than the scores of the non-MLE students.

To find out what the impression of the students is with regard to the effectiveness of the MLE schools, both MLE and non-MLE students were asked the question, “who performs better in your school?” The responses of the students are given in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Performance perception of the MLE and non-MLE students in Ashret

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Student</th>
<th>class</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Better performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>MLE</td>
<td>MLE students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>MLE</td>
<td>MLE students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>MLE</td>
<td>MLE students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UG</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>MLE</td>
<td>MLE students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results in the table show that the attitudes and perception towards the academic performance of the MLE students is positive both among the MLE students and non-MLE students, as out of eight informants six are of the opinion that the MLE students perform better.

- We interviewed three teachers –Samiullah, Noor Shahdeen and Mushtaq Ahmed- of the Ashret Government Primary School (AGPS). They confirmed that the students coming from the MLE schools perform better in all subjects, including the learning of English, as compared to those students who start their pre-schooling in AGPS.

- MLE project Coordinator of the Palula MLE Project, Naseem Haider, told us that in the beginning people were very reluctant; however, this is now being overcome, and more and more people are being attracted to the program. Parents are requesting admission for their children in the MLE Schools. Before, when the program was started, they had to go the people and convince them.

- A local councilor and head of the Palula community, Siraj Din, also told us that in the beginning many community members were against the MLE program and he himself was not in favor of it either; however, seeing the success of the program he is now involved in it and has become a member of the Anjuman Taraqi Palula. “I think this program is providing us with two types of benefits: firstly, our children perform academically better, and secondly, saving our heritage language, which was otherwise being abandoned by the younger generations, especially by the school going children. Now they feel proud in speaking their language”, said the councilor.

We were very surprised when we observed Palula community activists using the Palula language in their formal speeches in the community meetings. This is very rare in Pakistan; even in Punjab province, meetings are addressed in Urdu rather than Punjabi (the predominant language of the Punjab province). This seems to be a very substantial step towards the preservation and promotion of an endangered linguistic heritage.

2. **Kalasha MLE School in the Bamboret (Kalash) Chitral**

The Kalasha are a unique ethnic group, with a unique religion, culture and language. They live in three valleys in southern Chitral. The group is endangered and the population is dwindling through conversion and migration. Bamboret is one of the valleys where the Kalasha people live.
A Greek organization called Greek Teacher Association has opened a Kalasha MLE school in this valley, with the cooperation of the government of Pakistan. Unlike the Palula MLE program, this school offers education up to grade 5.

There is a Government Primary School located close to the Kalasha School; there is no mother tongue based MLE program in it. English and Urdu are directly introduced from the beginning. To compare the performance of the MLE and non-MLE Kalasha students, we asked teachers from each school to provide us with three students of different ages and classes, in such a way that each student from the MLE school was matched with a student of the same age and class from the government school. The difficulty of the tests that were administered was determined keeping in view the grade level of each pair of students. We tried to explore their performance through testing in language proficiency and mathematics. The tests involved the following tasks:

For grade 1:
- Recognition and production of the letters of the English alphabet;
- Recognition and production of English words;
- Responding to simple commands;
- Recognition of numbers, saying the lower multiplication tables, spelling out numbers between 1 and 10 (all this in English).

For grade 3:
- Recognition and production of short phrases;
- Writing and reading of short sentences;
- Responding to simple commands and questions;
- English math questions according to their grade level.

For grade 4:
- Fill in the blanks (a word or a short phrase)
- Text comprehension
- Responding to commands and questions
- English math questions according to their grade level

Table 3: Comparison of the MLE and Non-MLE Kalasha Students in English proficiency and Mathematics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Student</th>
<th>class</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Alphabets 15 points</th>
<th>Words 15 points</th>
<th>Response to Simple commands 15 points</th>
<th>Math 15 points</th>
<th>Total points obtained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
The results for Bamboret are given in the Table 3

The data shows that among the students that were tested, the Kalasha MLE school children score higher both in English and maths, as compared to the students of the government primary school.

Moreover, while sitting in the lessons, we observed that the Kalasha MLE school children can read and write Kalasha freely and can also answer questions in English if asked in Kalasha and vice versa.

Unlike the Palula MLE program and other MLE programs in Pakistan, such as Torwali in Swat, Gawri in Swat, etc., the the Kalasha MLE program uses a Roman script for the Kalasha Language.

Two Kalasha school teachers, Meer and Imran, told us in an interview that the students of the Kalasha schools perform better than those in government schools in the higher classes. However, due to time constraints we could not confirm it from the High School in Bamboret, where the pupils of the Kalasha MLE School get admission after completing their primary education.

We interviewed Abdul Khaliq, an elderly member of the Kalasha community. He told us that people who want to send their children to the Kalasha School, cannot do so because the school has limited space available. Now he himself is planning to open a Kalasha MLE school with the cooperation of the Forum for Language Initiatives (FLI). The approach promoted by FLI is different from that in the Greek Kalasha school, as in the Greek Kalasha school the methodology
of teaching is not based on primer tracks and story tracks as developed jointly by UNESCO and SIL International. Also, their method is less child-centered and more teacher-centered than the language teaching approach adopted at Palula, Gawri, Torwali and Gojri MLE Schools.

We observed in the survey that English language learning is much easier for the Kalasha MLE students, as they start with the Roman alphabet letters, and consequently find it easier to learn reading and writing English than learning Urdu.

During our interviews we observed that the students of the Kalasha MLE School are more confident and extrovert than their counterparts studying in the government school.

An elderly Kalasha man, Noor Ahmed told us, “The teachers in the Kalasha School teach more efficiently to our children than the government schools”.

We also came to know through our interviewees that after the abduction of Professor Athanasios Lerounis in 2009, the Greek social worker who also worked as a teacher at the Kalasha MLE School, the school has suffered and the standard of education has slightly dropped. Later Athanasios was released, and returned back to Greece as he was not allowed by the Pakistan government to stay in Chitral. Growing extremism poses a great threat to the program and to this unique culture as a whole.

3. Gawri MLE Project

In Kalam of the Swat Valley, the Gawri Community Development Program (GCDP) in collaboration with the Forum for Language Initiatives (FLI) initially started two pilot Gawri mother tongue based MLE schools in 2008. By April 2011 forty students had successfully completed a two-year pre-school MLE program, as well as the class-1 curriculum (just like in the case of the Palula program; see section 1). The success of this pilot project encouraged the GCDP to open two more Gawri MLE schools. Abdul Ali, coordinator of the program told us that they want to increase the number of the schools gradually.

The records of the annual exams administered by the Gawri pilot MLE schools show that many children obtained good marks. Some of them even got more than 90% marks. The tests included a comprehension component, as a focus on meaning and a focus on accuracy go hand-in-hand in the MLE schools (as opposed to rote memorization, which is common in the government schools). However, the performance of those children who had migrated with their parents to the plains for longer periods of time was recorded as poor.

3 http://www.aku.edu/AKUEB/pdfs/IAEA05.pdf
Gawri Case Studies

a) Shakir Ali
Shakir Ali was admitted in the Gawri MLE school in August 2008 at the age of 6. He had not attended any school before. In 2010, after two year of attending the school, the following event occurred. One day, he was sitting with his elder brother and father and started to read the headlines of the (Urdu) newspaper which his father was reading. This surprised his father as the older brother who was in class 7 at a government school was still not able to read a newspaper. It is pertinent to mention that his elder brother started education in Urdu while Shakir started in Gawri and Urdu was introduced at a later stage.

b) Bakht Jumma
Bakht Jumma attended a Gawri MLE School for two years and afterwards joined the Girls Government Primary School. From GMLE School she had successfully completed class 1 and in the GGPS she was promoted to class 3 instead of class 2 for her excellent academic performance as compared to others who had got their earlier education from the non-MLE school. Presently she is in class 4 and continues to receive the highest scores in her class.

A few students from the MLE schools have been reported to have poor performance because of not attending the school regularly.

The popularity and success of the Gawri MLE program has further widened the scope of the MLE Schools. In response to community desires, the Gawri MLE project is planning to start adult literacy classes in the community for women and men. “Hopefully by early 2012 we will have pilot adult literacy schools in the Kalam valley” told Abdul Ali.

4. Torwali MLE program, Bahrain, Swat

Most of the MLE schools in northern Pakistan offer two years of education. The Torwali MLE School (TMS) offers education up to class 5. However, presently, the highest class is class 2. The MLE school is a project of Idara Bara-e Taleem–o-Taraqi (IBT).

The level of dropout of the school was compared with the local primary school. We found that in the TMS the rate of dropout was zero while among other schools it was quite high in the early classes. We also came across several students who had left government schools and joined the TMS.

5. Aslam Academy (Gojri Mother Tongue Based MLE School)

Usually, the literacy rate among Gojars all over Pakistan is lower than most of the communities in Pakistan. To promote literacy among the Gojar community of Budgran in Kaghan Valley, a Gojri MLE program was initiated in that area. The village did not have a school. Students of the village had to travel a long distance to attend primary school. The MLE school was name after
Aslam, a local resident of Budgran who died in the earthquake of 8 October 2005 along with 11 family members.

The Aslam Academy started in 2008 and initially 14 students were enrolled. Gradually the number of the students grew and presently it has 34 students, and two teachers are imparting education. The teachers are well trained, and teach by using modern techniques.

We informally observed the teaching methodology of the teachers at the Aslam Academy and the level of understanding of the learners. The teachers frequently use Gojri and very rarely use Urdu to clarify the concepts. The learners told us that they better understand concepts in Gojri than Urdu. The learning in the classroom seems to take place in a friendly environment, as compared to the public and government schools in Pakistan.

The following instances indicating successes of the Gojri MLE School were recorded during our field survey:

- Basharat who is 12 years old and studies in class 3. He was admitted to government school Shongo. He dropped out of the school after a year of education. When the Gojri MLE School started, Basharat got admission in the school and now he is in class 3. When he was asked for the reason of leaving the school, he told that the environment in the government school was threatening while in the Gojri MLE school it is friendly and we learn with interest and better understand the lessons. Teachers were always beating us.

- Aneesa, a girl student also left the Public School in the nearby village and enrolled in the Gojri MLE School. “Sometimes I would visit the Aslam Academy and attend the classes and finally I decided to leave the Public school and join the Aslam Academy”. She also told us that her parents were reluctant and did not give her permission initially thinking that the Gojri MLE school would be below standards as they teach in a “backward” language. She argued with her parents and finally they agreed and she was enrolled in the Academy. When she was asked to compare the teaching methods, she said:

  a) In the Public school mathematics was taught orally and no audio-visual aids were used. Most of the teaching was done orally, while in the Aslam Academy all subjects are taught through using audio-visual aids, and the use of flash cards and whiteboard is helpful in learning our lessons. English lessons are revised through recording machine.

  b) The burden of homework was very boring in the public school while in Aslam Academy there is less homework.

- Riasat Hussain is another student who left the Government School of Shongo and got admission in the Aslam Academy. He is in class 5 and studied up to class 3 in the previous school. Though he did not attend Gojri MLE classes, he loves using Gojri in the class and says he could easily understand things in Gojri rather than in Urdu. He further
told that the corporeal punishment in the government schools is horrible and scares the learners. He told us that he left the previous school and joined the Aslam Academy because of the unfriendly environment of the Hindko school children and the teachers towards the Gojri students and their language. The school where he had been studying had a majority of Hindko speakers and they would make disparaging and derogatory comments towards the Gojars and their language. He is now successfully furthering his education.

6. Dropout rate

The Aslam Academy was started in 2008 with 14 students and now the total number of the students is 34 and according to Javaid Hussain, a teacher at the Aslam Academy, students keep coming from other non-MLE schools and among these, four who were interviewed in the survey, said that they came to Aslam Academy because of better quality of education. According to the school records no dropout has been recorded so far. The rate of attendance is 94%. According to Javaid the attitude of the people is rapidly changing towards the MLE school and now people prefer to enroll their children in the Aslam Academy.

Government Primary School Shongo (GPSS)

Ghulam Hussain is a teacher at GPSS and he has been teaching in the school since 1994.

The total number of students in the school is 30. All teaching takes place in Urdu. However, sometimes Hindko is used informally. The use of Hindko is considered to be a sign of ‘backwardness’ in the class.

The school record shows 25% of dropout.
A Case Study

Naveed Ahmed is 8 years old and studies at Aslam Academy in class 1 while Iftikhar Arifeen is 12 years old and is studying in class 4 of GPSS. Both students were tested in English and Urdu reading and writing, and in mathematics. The tests were selected from the syllabus of Iftikhar Arifeen of class 4. Iftikhar scored 20 points, while Naveed who had no idea of the syllabus of class 4 obtained 30 points. Total points were 40.

Note: This competition was not arranged beforehand. While observing the performance of the learners we came across a situation where the MLE student was far better than a non-MLE student.

7. Comparison of the material for teaching languages

A detailed survey of the teaching materials used for teaching mother tongues, Urdu and English at the mother based MLE schools in Pakistan is quite different from that used in the government and public schools. The teaching/learning materials used in the MLE schools are more contextual based than that of those used in Private and the government schools. Especially the stories and symbols and shapes in the text books and primers use local articles and concepts while the teaching materials of the government schools and public schools contains mostly alien material, difficult to understand by the learners.

For the MLE programs the material for literacy programs is developed with consultation of the local community members who keep in view their culture and values while selecting the literacy material. Moreover, the storybooks used only those stories which describe local culture and environment while on the other hand, the literacy material used in the public and government schools usually contains stories that are not relevant to the local culture, geography and social values. Therefore the learners feel difficulty in understanding them.

The field data provides strong and convincing evidence which indicates that the English language proficiency among the students of these MLE schools is better than the students of those schools where no mother tongue education is given, and Urdu and English are directly introduced to learners. The research has also found that the learners of the MLE schools are more creative in their thinking than the non-MLE school students.

Apart from academic successes, the mother tongue based MLE programs will help develop unity among diverse communities. Respect and promotion of minority language will promote tolerance in a society where extremism and intolerance is spreading at an alarming rate.

8. Challenges to the Mother Based MLE programs
Though the mother tongue based MLE are beneficial and useful for we also see few challenges faced by the programs.

- It still faces resistance from 'educated' policy makers of the country. The policy makers have not realised the advantages of the MLE programs yet. Starting through Urdu and English is considered to be more beneficial than through a local small language. Time is to raise awareness among the agents of change in Pakistan especially the policy makers, and convince them that skills in mother tongue can make it easier to learn other languages especially English.

- Moreover, almost all mother tongue based MLE programs are supported financially and technically by international agencies. The volatile nature of the country may cause these agencies to stop their programs at anytime as nothing is predictable in the country. The local organisations running these programs do not yet have the capacity to continue the programs on their own. The future of the MLE programs will remain uncertain until these local organizations are able to support the implementation of the MLE programs in their respective areas.

- Most of the people support English medium school education and think that the children perform better by directly enrolling into an English-medium school, and consider teaching of indigenous languages as ghettoizing.

- Resources are not sufficient to meet the needs of all communities

- Too many small languages all over the country, and sometimes several local languages co-exist in a small village/location

- The volatile nature of the country, especially religious extremism, poses a significant threat to the future of the MLE programs. In a recent incident, a Greek voluntary teacher, who was a key person in the Kalasha MLE School, was kidnapped by the Taliban and was eventually released by payment of a ransom. He left the country, which fact has badly affected the Kalasha MLE School, though the program is still running.
1. Balochi MLE Schools in Karachi

Balochi community is one of the oldest communities living in Karachi, Sindh. Moreover, the community is lagging behind in education and other fields of life. Though the Balochi community is spread out in all parts of Karachi, most of the Baloch population lives in Lyari. Lyari is the most backward district in Karachi.

Apparently one of the reasons for the poor performance of the Balochis in Karachi is their medium of education which is Urdu/English.

Keeping in view the backwardness of the Baloch community some social workers started an adult education class in Balochi for girls and ladies and a tuition center to help the Baloch children in Lyari, Karachi. These programs lasted for two years and due to shortage of funds and personnel, they had to close the program.

Although the community had started their literacy programs much earlier, Balochi Language and Literacy Organization (BLLO) was only established in 2002 to manage and oversee the whole of the Balochi literacy program.

In the same year the BLLO started two year- pre-primary schools for children using the Multi-strategy method.

Teachers from the community are trained to teach in the Balochi language using the multi-strategy method.

First classes were started in 2003 in two different areas in Karachi – Singolane and Mari Pur. 89 children completed their pre-schooling in 2005 from these schools and seeing the success of the schools another 2 schools were opened in Shaligoth and Maroro. The Shaligoth School is running successfully however, the Mororo School was unsuccessful and was shifted to Machi Goth in 2009.

Total no of schools imparting MTBMLE in Karachi are four.

25 children are enrolled in each school however, in Shaligoth on the demand of the community the number has been increased and additional staff has been recruited, and the total number of students in the school is fifty.
Presently the number of the students who have completed their pre-schooling at Balochi MLE Schools is 650.

In 2009, the Balochi Primary Supporting Education Program was started. The goal was to help the Baloch children, who have finished the Balochi pre-primary education, in their learning of Urdu and English and continue to read and write in the Balochi language. The children, attending Balochi Primary Education Program, go to their regular schools in the morning and later in the afternoon they come to the Balochi Supporting School. The success of this Balochi Primary Supporting Education Program was analyzed by conducted interviews of some 10 elderly members of the Baloch community in Lyari. All expressed satisfaction over the program and told the performance of the children attending the Balochi Support program has improved. Among these informants we had 5 those members whose children did not attend the Balochi pre-schooling therefore they were not enrolled in the support and very interestingly they wanted to enroll their children in the program.

**Case studies**

**Nasira Alvi Nawaz**

Nasira has two daughters and her eldest daughter attended the MLE School while the youngest one went to the government school directly.

She told that her eldest daughter, Bakhtawar, is performing very well and has got distinctions in the school. She is now in class 5 at government school and has got first position in all her classes.

On the other hand her younger daughter does not perform well. Though she failed in class 2 and even then she could not improve her performance.

“I am really concerned about her performance and I regret my decision of sending her to the government school directly” she told. Nasira is wants to admit her to the Balochi school but it is not possible as she is now grown up and the Balochi school admits only the children of 5-7 years of age.

**Asma and Sakina**

Asma and Sakina are six years old and have attended the Baloch MLE school for the last one year. During this time they have attained the ability to read and write in Balochi, Urdu and English. We dictated words of English, Urdu and Balochi and both of them wrote the words correctly. They accomplished the task successfully. This level is hardly attained by the learners after even two years of education at government and other public schools whose medium of instruction is Urdu/English.
Balqees Noor

Balqees Noor is a teacher at Baloch School offering Support Education in the afternoon-4pm-6pm.

She teaches English, Urdu, Balochi and Maths. On the request of the parents she has also included 5 children in the class of 22 who have not attended the Balochi MLE school.

She says that there is a lot of difference between the students who have attended the Baloch MLE school and who have not.

To confirm her claim we looked at the scores of the tests conducted at the end of the each month we selected the test scores of the month of October 2011 for comparison. The test chores are given in the table below:

Table: Test scores at Balochi Educational Support Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Average scores obtained by MLE students</th>
<th>Average scores obtained by Non-MLE students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu</td>
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<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five students from the government school were compared with the first five students i.e. roll no 1-5 .

The scores show that those Baloch students who have attended the Baloch MLE perform better in every subject than those who did not attend the Baloch MLE School and were directly enrolled in the government schools.

We also attended a function arranged by the students of the Support program and notice that the MLE students more vocal and extrovert than the non-MLE students.

Gulrang Baloch (Coordinator of the Baloch MLE Project)

According to her the rate of literacy among the Baloch community of Karachi is lower than the Mohajir, -the Urdu speaking community-, and one of the basic reason according to her has been the medium of education. As medium of education has been Urdu and it gives advantage to the Mohajir community over those whose mother tongues are other than Urdu.
The program has attracted the Balochi speaking community and it is successfully increasing their literacy. She told us that the hostile attitude of the school environment where the small Baloch kids are exposed to Urdu, an alien language, forces them to dropout. She told us that there are few instances where students dropped out from a government school and later when they were brought to the Baloch MLE School they started afresh and attended school with keen interest and successfully continued their education.

**Observation**
We spent two days among the students and developed familiarity with them which allowed us to watch their activities with out any sense of estrangement.

We observed that the:

- Children spend time solving problems in groups allowing themselves to listen and learn from their peers.
- Children are confident to present their stories or give a speech in class or during functions.

This kind of confidence and level of involvement in lessons is almost non existent among children of traditional schools.

Azam Khan, the assistant coordinator of the BLLO, told that the Baloch women, who could not get education earlier, are asking for adult literacy classes. They want to learn how to read and write in Balochi, Urdu and English. Therefore the BLLO has planned one year Balochi Adult literacy program with bridging into Urdu and English. “We hope to start this program in 2012”, he added.

Azam Khan also told us that the BLLO is getting request to go into southern Balochistan to start mother-tongue base literacy classes. The BLLO has planned to work with the communities and help them start the MTBMLE and presently, the organization is doing survey in the area.

**Students of the First Batch**
We interviewed three students Jehanzeb, Fida and Awais, who were from the first batch of the students of the Balochi MTBMLE program.

After completing education at Balochi MTBMLE School, they continued their studies in a nearby school, and the school records show that they secured positions in their school. Jehanzeb and Awais are in B.com while Fida is in Pre-engineering. According to them they had advantage over the students who did not attend the MLE program. “We could easily understand the lessons while other students memorize them”, said Awais.

**Male Female Ration**
Enrollment shows that the ratio of girls to boys is 60% to 40%. So girls feel it easier to attend the MLE School. According to the Project coordinator the most of the girls who attended/are
attending the MLE School, would not have remained illiterate, if the MLE School had not been opened. The MLE schools seem to be playing an important role in increasing the literacy among the girl students.

**Challenges**

Our interviews with the parents and the administration of the Balochi schools revealed the following challenges:

- Not everyone is for Mother-Tongue Based Multilingual Education. Many parents just want their children to go straight into learning Urdu and English medium school.
- The BLLO sometimes faces the management problems. The management committees are selected by the communities and don’t have enough experience and commitment therefore the program faces problems. The BLLO has no control as to who should be in the committee for the schools. BLLO only guides them in their selection and management. “So, we do get School Management Committees who are having problems running the schools”, told the coordinator of the Balochi MLE program.
- Difficult to find Balochi teachers who are fluent in Urdu and English languages for our programs.
- In the Primary Supporting Education program, the children are not regular because the day is too long for them. In the afternoon they also have to go to madrassahs to learn the Quran.
- As the schools are community based therefore the BLLO is planning to handover the schools to the communities, but for most of the communities it is quite difficult to raise enough funds to run these schools successfully. On the other hand BLLO does not have enough resources to support the communities for long time.
- The BLLO started income generation schemes in the communities which have not been much successful so far. The aim of these schemes is to make the communities self reliant and enable them to run these MTBMLE schools on their own.
Paintings Prepared by the Balochi MLE Students
A Balochi Student Giving Presentation
Balochi MLE Students with their Teachers
Kachi Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education Program

Unlike other MLE Schools, the Kachi and Parkari MLE programs have been started for Hindu religious and linguistic minorities of the Interior Sindh.

The Kachi language is closely related to Gujarati, spoken in the state of Gujarati, India.

Nearly all Kachi Hindus are not only a religious minority but also the lowest group in the hierarchy of Hindu society i.e. they are the Dalit, and are extremely marginalized.

They live in the far flung areas of Mirpur Khaas. The people of the Kachi Community are haris. They don’t own land and work on the lands of the Muslim feudal lords.

We stayed among the community for 3 days and also attended a function arranged by one of the MLE School at Magsi Goth with the cooperation of Kachi Community Development Project (KCDP). The KCDP is running the schools.

The Kachi community doesn’t have basic necessities of like such as electricity, drinkable water supply and houses. They live in tents and makeshift houses. Most of the crude mud houses had been wiped away in the recent flooding in the area. The makeshift buildings of the schools also collapsed and schools remained closed for long time, however, they have managed to open them again on 15 October.

After long gap the students are back to their studies. The teachers teaching in the MLE schools are local.

The KCDP is working for the welfare and development of the Kachi community. The organization has opened 2 schools –The Nya Swera and The Amar Ujaala- for the Kachi Community.

There are no government schools nearby where any Kachi student could go. So we could not make any comparison of the performance with the Urdu/Sindhi or English medium schools.

Kachi schools offer education up to 5 years. We interviewed and tested 10 students randomly selected from class 1-5. The subject in which they were tested included Kachi, Sindhi, English and Maths. The average scores in these subjects are given in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Class 1</th>
<th>Class 2</th>
<th>Class 3</th>
<th>Class 4</th>
<th>Class 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kachi</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The performance of Kachi students in different tableau shows was very impressive (see the pictures below). The performance showed that in spite of the backward region, the understanding and creative ability of the students has remarkably increased. One can hardly see such performances in the schools of big cities of Pakistan.

However, according to the teachers and the parents of the students owing to the recent floods in the region, the students could not attend the schools and therefore their performance has slightly dropped.

Students of the Kachi MLE School attending a function
Kachhi students performing in tableau show.

**Parkari Mother Togue-Based Mulilingual Education Program**

The Parkari Literacy Project (PLP) is one of Parkari Community Development Project’s (PCDP) activity. The head office of the PCDP and PLP is in Rattanabad, Mirpur Khaas, adjacent to the Kachi Community Development office.

PLP is a community based literacy development project, which aims to provide education for children living in isolated villages of TharParkar and Nagar regions. This is the largest MTBMLE program in Pakistan.

The project has so far established 27 Parkari MLE schools in different villages. The Parkari MLE Schools offer education up to class 5 and are also planning to start up to class 8.

Like Kachi community most of Parkari community members belong to the Hindu community and are disadvantaged educationally and economically. The education ratio among the Parkari people is barely 2% which is lowest when compared to the literary rate of Pakistan which is over 45% (the official records of the PLP). To improve the literacy among the Parkari Community the PLP decided to start the MTBMLE program, and presently over 1200 students are benefiting from these schools.
The lack of education among the Parkari community is due their distant locations from the city centers and discrimination and fear of discrimination from the majority Muslim community, especially from the growing extremism. The community feels threatened.

The MTBMLE program of the PLP seems to be successfully increasing literacy among this marginalized Pakari community.

We selected the Jewan Jaat Parkari MLE School, operating in Karachi Paro, Union council Dumbalo, Taalka Mithi, District Badeen. Four teachers are employed to teach the children. The teachers include two men and two women. The school started in 2005 and first batch of the student reached class six as there is no government school nearby where these students could go therefore class six is also running in the Parkari MLE primary school. Total households around the school, are 250, and total no of the students enrolled in the school are 90. According to Veera Kumar, one of the teacher in the school in 2005 the school started with 25 kids and the number has been increasing since then. The Parkari language is taught as L1, Sindhi as an L2, Urdu as an L3 and English as an L4.

The Parkari MLE school is the only source of education for the Parkari community living in the neighborhood of the school.

**Shamo Patel**

Around 75 year old Shamo Patel is the village head. He migrated along with his community in 1973 and has been living in this village since then. He along with his family migrated to this village in due to drought in Tharparkar.

Shamo helped in establishing the MLE school for his community and has been actively participating in the promotion of the program. He told us that before the establishment of the school, the concept of the literacy was nonexistent among the community.

The fact was born out by the interviews of the other community members. We found out that the nearly all people who were not of school going age in 2005 were illiterate.

The reasons according to Shamo for the lack of education were:

- Fear of discrimination in the Muslim majority schools
- Unable to understand Sindhi and Urdu in the initial stage (Sindhi is the medium of instruction in the government schools).
- Long distance from the village.

He told us that they could not think of their girls sending to the government schools, and no instance of sending a girl could be recorded among the community before 2005. However, after
the establishment of the MLE School a large number of girls have started not only going to MLE school but also to the government schools after completing the MLE school.

Now parents are ready to send their girls to the government schools after completing their earlier education in the MLE School.

At present 40 girls and 90 boys are studying the Parkari MLE School and 10 girls and 30 boys, who have completed the MLE schooling are studying in class ten in a nearby government high school.

Like Kachi schools the records of the school has been washed away by the recent floods. The community with help of PLP, is rebuilding the structure of the school.

We observed the classroom activities. The students learn with keen interest and accomplish creative tasks in the class room.

**Parkari MLE Children in the Classroom**
Conclusion

The results of the tests, interviews, informal discussions and field observation have proved the fact the students studying in the MLE schools are performing better than the non-MLE students. However, more detailed survey is required to study the attitude of the society and especially of the parents towards the MTBMLE.

Apart from saving the endangered languages of the region, the MTBMLE programs, discussed above, have positively contributed towards increasing the literacy level among the marginalized communities of this volatile country. The contribution of these programs seems to have made difference and it is expected, on the basis of the present findings, that the program will expand further in future, and society will accept it as a norm rather than an exception.

The scope of the present study was limited. In future a detailed study of the attitudes of the society and the individuals especially the elite towards the MTBMLE can help to improve the program further, and cope with the challenges successfully, as only way out of the current educational crisis in Pakistan is the MTBMLE program. If the MTBMLE programs expand, it will discourage the traditional rote learning and develop creative and critical thing among the students.

Acknowledgements

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References


