



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
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Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in Africa: A Guide for Teachers



UNESCO

Subject



International Mother Language Day (IMLD) 2021

"Fostering multilingualism for inclusion in education and society"



UNESCO

Subject

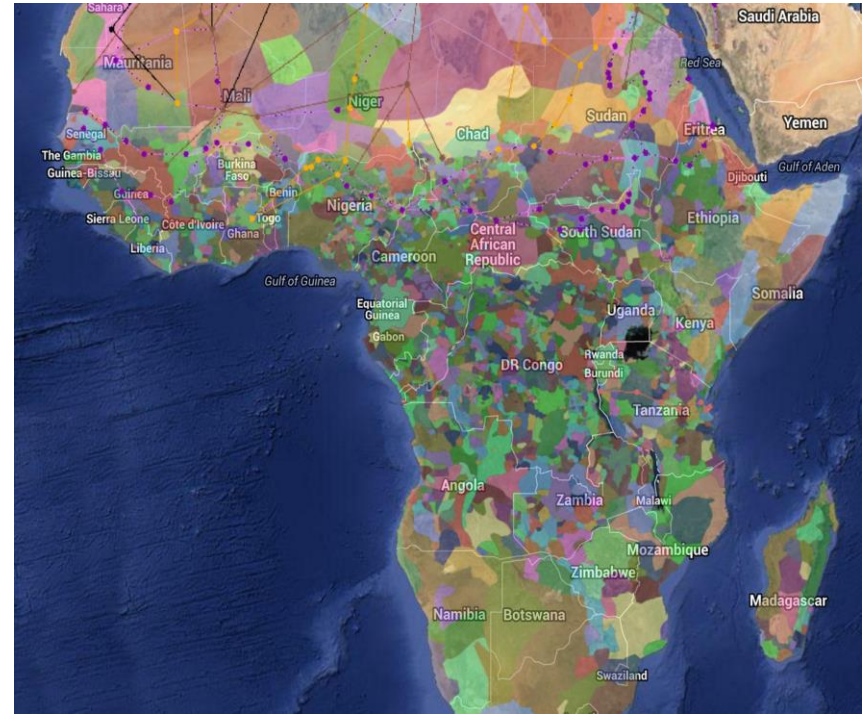


Why Mother Tongue?

Africa is the most multilingual continent in the world. There are 2,140 languages in Africa, reflecting the rich diversity and cultural heritage of the continent.

According to a UNESCO study in 2016, as much as 40% of the global population does not have access to an education in a language they speak or understand. Many of these students are in Sub-Saharan Africa.

So much has been said, but little done.
Why?



Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education

Mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB MLE) refers to the **use of learners' mother tongue or first language** (MT or L1) and the second (L2) or more languages as the media of instruction in schools.

Mother tongue-based instruction means **using L1 as the major language of instruction in formal education** for the entire school day. It is highly recommended to use the mother tongue as the medium of instruction **for at least six years of formal education** to build the capacity of literacy and verbal proficiency required for academic achievement in secondary school.

At the core of mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB MLE) is an underlying principle that **students learn best when they use what they already know** (their MT and existing knowledge and experiences) to learn new information (new languages, new knowledge, and new experiences).

New and relevant strategy?

Mother tongue-based multilingual education can be **an effective solution for multilingual contexts**. This guide makes the case that **students' languages are resources, not problems**.

Major Benefits of MTB MLE

Increase Learning Performance

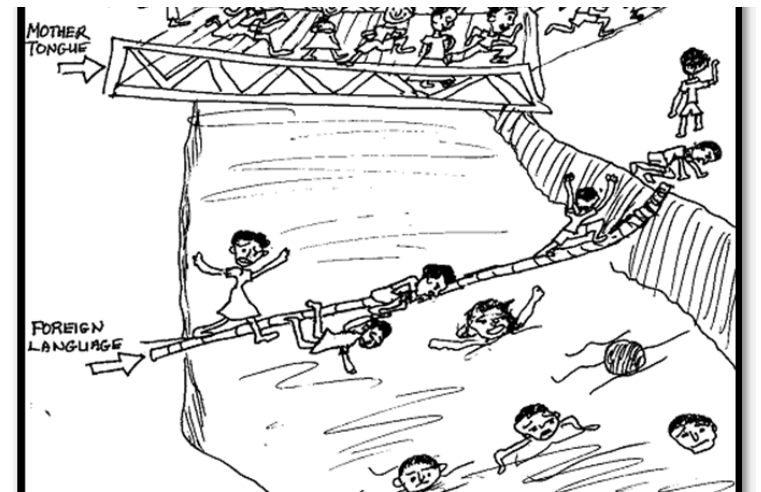
Research shows that **children learn best in a language they already understand. Literacy skill is developed more easily** in a familiar language.

Protect the Basic Human Right to Education

Promoting MTs is an **act of protecting the human rights of marginalized or potentially marginalized people** who do not speak the dominant or international language used in formal education

Promote Peace

Language shapes individual **ethnic identities and a sense of attachment** to communities or cultures. It also enhances the unity of one community.



Crucial Role of Teachers in MTB MLE

Teachers are the **single most influential and powerful force** for **equity, access and quality** in education.

Teachers need **knowledge** about **language acquisition, teaching and assessment strategies**, the interdependence of mother-tongue and second-language development, and the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of their students.

The most important **responsibility of teachers** is improving their **students' performance and confidence in their L1**, and an additional language. To do this, it is highly recommended that they **teach students' to read and write their MT**, using their MT as the language of instruction, while gradually introducing a L2 or L3.

In well-designed and well-implemented **MTB MLE programs**, teachers use **students' language and knowledge as a bridge to new languages and knowledge**. Teachers are encouraged to view students' language, knowledge, and experience **as teaching resources**, rather than as teaching challenges

The Teachers' Guide

The guide is comprised of **six chapters**:

Chapter 1: Introduction.

Chapter 2: Understanding Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE).

Chapter 3: The Teacher's Role in MTB MLE.

Chapter 4: Teaching and Assessment Activities.

Chapter 5: Engaging Families and Communities.

Chapter 6: African Experiences in MTB MLE

*Highlighted Questions and Answers

*Pre-Reading Question and a Reflection section



Several best practices in the continent

Many African governments are showing **increased interest in the positive results of MTB MLE.**

In Nigeria, students who transition to English after at least six years of MTB instruction have higher learning outcomes both in English and other subjects.

Ethiopia's education system in some regions uses both Amharic and English from grade 1 to 8, and students who receive 8 years of bilingual education perform better in assessments than those who go to English-only schools



Next Steps

Incorporate **Feedback** from Reviewers and Participants and proceed to publish it online

Next week, a **webinar** is organized in **French**

In collaboration with partners, there is a plan to **translate** the Guide to **French**

We request colleagues **to circulate it to their networks** and encourage its **translation to several African languages**



Thank you

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