

4. Is MLE more expensive?

No, MLE costs less than any formal school, especially if you consider the money wasted due to grade repetition and dropouts when the medium of instruction in mainstream schools, provincial or national language, is not yet spoken or understood by the learner.

Read what stakeholders say about their MLE pilot projects!

Three language communities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province are running MLE pre-primary schools for children. Teachers, parents, and community members shared how much better children performed in understanding new concepts and gaining reading and writing skills in the language they know best.



Gawri-speaking parents, Kalam - Swat

"As parents, we are happy and satisfied with MLE schools teaching and quality of education." When asked for a specific reason why he liked the programme, another parent said: "What you are teaching in MLE schools is according to our culture and customs, that is why our children are learning very easily."



Palula community members, Ashret - Chitral

"Our MLE programme is very successful and appreciated by all community members. Parents are especially very happy and hopeful for a bright future for their children. They can understand classroom teaching very easily in a non-threatening environment— no beating or punishment. And now students can also read the school language (Urdu) without difficulty."



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Torwali MLE senior teacher, Bahrain – Swat



are in 5th grade in mainstream schools, and our kids performed better than them."

"We saw a great change in the attitude and behaviour of the children regarding hygiene, social competence and emotional intelligence. They now perform well because of their reading and writing skills. We compared the level of skills of our kids with the ones who



Some of the numerous teaching and graded reading material produced in the mother tongue of these communities .

Forum for Language Initiatives



Training and resource centre working to enable the language communities of northern Pakistan to preserve and promote their mother tongues.



Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education

Forum for Language Initiatives (FLI) is a resource and training centre working through partnerships with language communities of northern Pakistan to enable them to preserve and promote their Mother Tongue. One way to promote and develop local languages is to implement Mother Tongue-based programmes; such as Multilingual Education (MLE).

Multilingual Education (MLE) Programmes

MLE builds a strong educational foundation by using the mother tongue as medium of instruction, the language learners are familiar with, to then bridge smoothly into the national language or any other. Once learners understand difficult concepts in their own language, all they have to do is to learn the corresponding vocabulary and structure in the second language. So, instead of struggling or feeling inadequate, they can perform better in school and continue their education. Mother Tongue-based education with a strong bridge component into other languages fosters good lifelong learning habits and provides opportunities to improve standard of living.

Challenges and Issues of Traditional Education System

An education system that does not take into account local language and cultural identity guarantees a decline in students self-esteem and performance because it is difficult to learn concepts in a language they do not understand. Copying letters, words, and sentences from the chalkboard and a book without focusing on meaning is not the way to gain knowledge; neither is memorising words, phrases and whole sentences in an unfamiliar language. As a result, students become discouraged, and rates of absenteeism, class repetition, and dropouts increase. A further result is that many young people fail to develop the skills necessary to pursue higher education and have access to good jobs and better opportunities in the future.



Benefits of MLE Programmes

- Build self-confidence in learners.
- Encourage learners to ask questions, discuss topics, and participate actively in all classroom activities.
- Focus on reading to understand and gain knowledge.
- Enable learners to express their own thoughts and feelings because they have consistent writing practice .
- Prepare students for mainstream school system, minimising confusion and difficulties.
- Improve school performance and completion rates.
- Reduce dropout and repetition rates.
- Open access to secondary and higher education, as well as life-long learning education.
- Parents and teachers are happier being able to communicate freely with the children.
- Children are learning; parents and the community are involved.
- Strengthen the respect and pride for languages, culture, traditions and values.

Teaching Methods

MLE methods are creative and responsive, focusing on comprehension instead of rote memorisation. Using innovative strategies, like the multi-strategy method, learners develop skills in four basic elements of literacy acquisition:

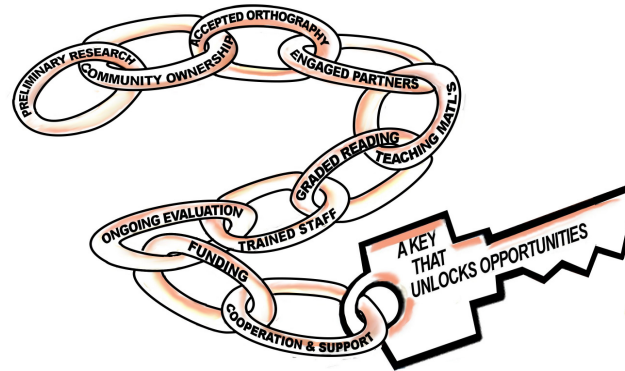
- Reading and understanding of whole texts.
- Expression of thoughts and feelings in writing.
- Recognition of relationship between written symbols and the sounds they represent.
- Correct spelling of words so that other people can read and understand them.

Two tracks are used simultaneously: stories to focus on meaning and a primer for accuracy. Oral communication in the mother tongue ensures total active participation from learners. A variety of activities, which include the sharing of songs, rhymes, storytelling, combined with some basic instruction contribute to increase oral ability and fluency in the mother tongue, preparing learners to be successful in school when they face additional languages because they learnt to read and write first in their own language.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. How can we, community members, get started with MLE Programmes?

These are the essential components for successful community-based Initiatives:



Key Components of a Successful MTB MLE Programme

Sustainable MLE programmes include each of the above components during the planning and implementation periods. If you want to mobilise community members and other stakeholders for action, you will need to:

- Conduct a survey to identify needs as well as the positive and negative factors
- Involve others in the community in all activities to nurture local ownership
- Set goals and carefully select key people from inside and outside the community
- Train the staff, plan the programme, provide effective leadership in supporting and maintaining it
- Work with the team, build a vision, and continue mobilising the community throughout the life of the programme.

2. Is MLE for children only?

MLE is for everybody: children, young people, and adults.

In case of a children's programme, the scope could cover:

- **Pre-school only** (4-5 year old children): They will first learn to read and write in their mother tongue and then will start learning Urdu and English orally. After these two years, the children will be better prepared to enroll in private or public schools, if available or near the community. Supplementary classes can continue to increase fluency in the mother tongue and support learning of school subjects
- **From Pre-school to full Primary** (till 5th grade): same as above, with the addition of continuing education based on the two tracks of comprehension and accuracy, to ensure top performance and success, using the official curriculum.

In case of an adult's programme:

- Addressed to adults and disadvantaged youth groups who did not have access to school or dropped out for different reasons. They will first learn to read and write in their mother tongue and then transfer those skills to other languages. Also, through this programme, they will develop essential skills for lifelong learning.
- Strong mother tongue-first education enables adult members of communities to access the knowledge and information they need in order to take an active part in local and national development efforts. The results are increased self-esteem and a community better equipped to become literate in languages of wider communication.
- It is not just about learning to read and write but dialoguing on relevant topics, and making positive life changes.

3. What is required for MLE Schools?

- Support of the community.
- Development of a good curriculum.
- Production of good and culturally appropriate teaching and graded reading materials.
- Training of coordinators, supervisors, local teachers, and other staff before implementation.
- Monitoring, evaluation, and review .