Evidence for student-centered teaching: A process evaluation of MTB-MLE classroom instruction

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Abstract

Over a decade into the implementation of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) in the Philippines, program implementers continue to encounter challenges, especially in terms of student-centered instruction (SCI). To ensure a student-centered program, the Department of Education crafted guiding principles to which MTB-MLE teaching and learning should be anchored. However, numerous implementation challenges could potentially affect the application of SCI in the classroom. Utilizing process evaluation adopted from Stufflebeam's (2000) CIPP model, this study investigated the extent to which MTB-MLE teachers carry out SCI in a public elementary school. This paper also examined teachers' challenges and coping strategies in relation to classroom instruction. Results revealed that SCI was strongly implemented in the MTB-MLE classes. Further, the following SCI-related challenges emerged: (1) learners' unruly behavior during activities; (2) difficulty in the use of mother tongue; and (3) lack of cooperation among students. To address these concerns, the teachers employed coping strategies, such as setting clear classroom rules, using translation and code-switching, and providing varied activities to match learners' interests. The findings of this paper may aid policymakers, curriculum designers, and school administrators in developing appropriate programs and activities aimed at enhancing teachers' competence to implement a student-centered MTB-MLE education.

INTRODUCTION

The Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) was officially implemented in the Philippines in the School Year 2012-2013. Republic Act No. 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 provided MTB-MLE's primary legal basis, which made it part of the K to 12 Basic Education program of the country. The advent of the MTB-MLE program signified the end of the Philippines' long tradition of bilingual education (Adriano et al., 2021). According to UNESCO (2022), a multilingual education based on the mother tongue or native language is essential for attaining an inclusive and quality education for all learners. Furthermore, it empowers mother languages and "helps preserve the wealth of cultural and traditional heritage that is embedded in every language" (para. 2).

The Department of Education (DepEd) points out that MTB-MLE is the key to producing Filipino learners who are multilingual, multiliterate, and multicultural. Since knowledge and skills transfer across languages, it is best for learners to begin their education in the language that they are most familiar with. Once a strong foundation in the mother tongue is developed, learners are better disposed to learn through other languages (DepEd, 2016). Furthermore, DepEd (2016) claims that MTB-MLE (1) facilitates the integration of prior knowledge and new knowledge, (2) fosters critical thinking, (3) constructs a solid bridge toward fluency and oral proficiency in L2, (4) provides L2 support through the L1, (5) supports teaching for meaning and accuracy, and (6) builds confidence and proficiency development in all languages in the classroom, especially in the use of mother tongue.

Presently, mother tongue under MTB-MLE is a subject from Grade 1 to Grade 3 and a medium of instruction (MOI) from kindergarten to Grade 3. As a subject, Mother Tongue aims at the

development of, among others, critical thinking, oral competence and confidence, and knowledge of language structure. However, Mother Tongue may be put to an end soon as DepEd revealed its plan to abandon the subject and focus more on its use as an MOI instead (Pinlac, 2022). On the other hand, the use of mother tongue as a language of instruction starts at the kindergarten level and is applied in the teaching of all learning areas except in English and Filipino subjects. As an MOI, mother tongue targets better comprehension of academic content, curriculum mastery, and creative and critical thinking among learners.

MTB-MLE has been around for many years now as part of the K to 12 curriculum. According to Monje et al. (2021), the program is set on a sound pedagogical base and operates under the principles of learner-centered education. This solid pedagogical foundation and learner-centered learning are encapsulated in the set of guiding principles for MTB-MLE teaching and learning put forward by DepEd (2016), in which principles like discovery learning and active learning are included. In fact, there's a growing body of evidence supporting the claim that MTB-MLE promotes a learner-centered classroom (Asia Multilingual Education Group, 2014) where "learners engage more, respond to teachers' questions, and participate as equals" (p. 6).

The program may be firmly anchored in sound theoretical bases and principles, but MTB-MLE's implementation continues to be faced with numerous challenges and problems (Monje et al., 2021) that could potentially affect the realization of those principles in the classroom, especially in terms of instruction (Aperocho, 2023). MTB-MLE instruction relates to teachers' knowledge and competence in pedagogy and content, and proficiency in the MOI (Pradilla et al., 2017). Malone and Malone (2011) emphasized the need for teachers to be equipped with adequate pedagogical competence and language proficiency for the successful implementation of MTB-MLE. However, MTB-MLE studies in the country continue to emphasize the lack of quality and continuous teacher training to improve classroom instruction (see Lartec et al., 2014; Anudin, 2018). Other challenges that hamper MTB-MLE's implementation in the Philippines include multilingual environment, translation issues, inadequacy of instructional materials, and mandatory compliance with DepEd orders to be the primary reasons for implementation difficulties (Cabansag, 2016).

Student-centered teaching and learning

Student-centered instruction (SCI) is a well-known approach in education because of the extensive evidence available supporting its effectiveness in improving learners' academic performance (Ji-Hye Kim et al., 2017; Blumberg, 2016). SCI is defined as instruction that encourages learners' full engagement in activities and that allows students to be responsible for their own learning (Blumberg, 2009). Unlike teacher-centered instruction, SCI views learners as the center of the classroom and teachers as facilitators of learning. With SCI, teachers nurture students' growth through a variety of activities that enable students to engage in problem-solving, authentic learning, and collaborative tasks (Stefaniak & Tracey, 2015). SCI is rooted in constructivism. A constructivist view of learning regards knowledge as a product of learners' active involvement in the learning process (Golder, 2018). According to Jonassen et al. (2003), instruction is student-centered if the following factors are observed: (1) learners are able to freely manipulate and actively interact with their learning environment; (2) learners have opportunities to work with one another in pairs or groups; (3) learning goals and outcomes are properly communicated to the students; and (4) learners are exposed to authentic learning experiences that would allow them to apply their learning to real-world situations.

To help teachers aptly plan and conduct instruction for their MTB-MLE classes, DepEd (2016) formulated guiding principles for teaching and learning in the program. The principles that strongly lean toward SCI are discovery learning, active learning, and language learning or language transfer. In essence, discovery learning involves the use of learners' existing knowledge to learn or discover a new concept or idea. Active learning, on the other hand, places a premium on higher-order thinking skills and peer interaction, such as group activities. Finally, language learning or language transfer encompasses all classroom activities that promote learners' linguistic development, such as scaffolding, constructive feedback, sequential instruction, and freedom in terms of language use. For

the purposes of this program evaluation, SCI is defined as an instruction that embodies the principles of discovery learning, active learning, and language learning/transfer as explicated by DepEd (2016).

Factors and challenges affecting student-centered instruction

While a significant number of studies attest to the effectiveness of SCI in improving learners' academic achievement, there are numerous factors that influence teachers' use of the approach. One factor is teaching efficacy (Ji Hye et al., 2017), or the belief that one has the necessary skills to positively impact student learning. A teacher with high teaching efficacy is more likely to embrace SCI in his or her classroom compared to one that has low teaching efficacy. Aslan and Reigeluth (2015) identified major challenges to SCI. These include teachers' limited time to prepare for a learner-centered class (i.e., the materials & activities) and to monitor the progress of each student, and teachers' inconsistency in implementing SCI, which could result in confusion among learners due to differences in teachers' strategies and approaches.

du Plessis (2020) asserted that maintaining order during class could be difficult since student-centered classrooms are often noisy and chaotic. She also added that teachers using SCI often struggle managing learners' activities, especially since students usually work on different stages. Chiphiko and Shawa (2014) pointed out the difficulty in facilitating group activities in student-centered classrooms due to the fact that some learners prefer to work alone. Further, Opoku-Asare et al. (2014) established that class size affects the effectiveness of SCI. They maintained that learner-centered strategies, such as differentiated learning and physical activities, in overcrowded classrooms may not work and that teachers often resort to teacher-centered approaches like chalk talk in such situations.

In the study conducted by Tadesse (2020), he investigated the problems affecting the practice of a student-centered approach by primary school teachers (n=61) in Ethiopian schools. Using a mixed-methods research design, he found that the common barriers to the implementation of a learner-centered teaching include insufficient time and resources to implement, teachers' attitudes, lack of administrative support, large class size, and overwhelming amount of subject content to be covered. The study recommends that enough training and support may enhance teachers' attitudes and teaching methods.

Similarly, Rawat et al. (2012) also conducted a study that aimed to identify the factors that inhibit middle to secondary school teachers (n=123) from adopting a student-centered teaching approach in Pakistani schools. Utilizing a quantitative methodology, the research revealed that class size was an inhibiting factor towards adopting a student-centered teaching approach. The study recommends that teachers be provided with capacity-building activities to effectively implement learner-centered teaching in both large and small class sizes.

Factors and challenges affecting MTB-MLE instruction

Despite the growing body of evidence claiming the many advantages of MTB-MLE in enhancing learners' academic performance, teachers continue to struggle with numerous challenges that affect their implementation of the program. In the study conducted by Billones and Cabatcat (2019), they examined the experiences of teachers (n=11) in handling MTB-MLE instruction in Midsayap, North Cotabato, Philippines. Their research utilized a qualitative research design with participant interviews as the primary data-gathering activity. The results of the study revealed that teachers, especially non-Illongo, encountered challenges in terms of using the MOI. Further, it was found that teachers often use strategies like translation and code-switching to help students with different mother tongues understand the lessons. The researchers recommend that teacher training on the effective use of the language of instruction be intensified to help teachers come up with appropriate strategies to address their difficulty in handling a classroom with students who speak multiple first languages.

In another study undertaken by Medilo (2016), he documented the lived experiences of MTB-MLE teachers (n=10) in Southern Leyte, Philippines. Utilizing a hermeneutic phenomenology research design, he asked the teacher-respondents to share their concerns, successes, and problems in

implementing MTB-MLE instruction. Five themes emerged from the collected data: (1) use of more than one vernacular in teaching, (2) commitment to being globally competitive, (3) challenges of the superiority of English and inadequate materials, (4) burden caused by the complexity of the vernacular, and (5) optimism in accepting the responsibility of teaching MTB-MLE. Based on the findings, the study concluded that progress in MTB-MLE instruction in the country is slow and difficult because of the presence of varied vernacular languages.

Hunahunan (2019) explored the challenges and coping strategies of MTB-MLE teachers (n=13) in an elementary school in Tabigna, Surigao del Sur, Philippines. Using mixed methods, he found that the perceived issues of teachers regarding MTB-MLE implementation include lack of instructional materials, inadequate representation of the community's culture in the lessons, and lack of training on MTB-MLE instruction provided by DepEd. Moreover, the study revealed that teachers coped with the issues by doing self-training and asking their more knowledgeable peers for help.

In another study conducted by Lartec et al. (2014), they examined the strategies and problems faced by teachers (n=12) in implementing MTB-MLE instruction in a multilingual classroom. This qualitative study made use of interview to gather data from teacher-respondents employed in the pilot schools of MTB-MLE in Baguio City, Philippines. Using phenomenological analysis, the study revealed that teachers employed strategies such as translation of target language to mother tongue, utilization of multilingual teaching, and remediation of instruction. Further, the problems identified in the study were absence of books written in the mother tongue, lack of vocabulary to deliver lessons in the mother tongue, and lack of teacher-training. The study recommends that more attention and effort should be given by DepEd to improve MTB-MLE instruction.

To synthesize, most studies on MTB-MLE in the Philippines were focused on the challenges, problems, and strategies of teachers in implementing the program (Billones & Cabatcat, 2019; Medilo, 2016; Hunahunan, 2019; Lartec et al., 2014). However, there is a dearth of literature pertaining to the implementation of SCI in MTB-MLE teaching in the country. Thus, there is a need to conduct an evaluation, particularly a process evaluation, to identify the extent SCI is being implemented in MTB-MLE classrooms and determine teachers' challenges and coping mechanisms.

Statement of the Problem

The present study is focused on classroom instruction because it is one of the program aspects with the most problems or issues since the start of MTB-MLE's implementation (Aperocho, 2023). Since MTB-MLE embodies the concept of student-centered education (Monje et al., 2021), it is the main goal of this evaluation to assess teachers' implementation of a learner-centered MTB-MLE classroom instruction. Utilizing a process type of evaluation adopted from Stufflebeam's CIPP model, this small-scale program evaluation aims to address the following specific questions:

1. To what extent do teachers carry out a student-centered MTB-MLE classroom instruction?
2. What challenges or problems do the MTB-MLE teachers encounter in delivering student-centered instruction?
3. In what ways do the teachers cope with the identified challenges and problems?

METHODS

Research design and rationale

This research utilized a mixed methods case study design to explore teachers' implementation of student-centered MTB-MLE instruction. According to Creswell and Plano Clarke (2018), the design is "a type of mixed methods study in which the quantitative and qualitative data collection, results, and integration are used to provide in-depth evidence for a case…" (p.116). Further, the use of mixed methods would enable researchers to address the research or evaluation questions with ample depth and breadth (Enosh et al., 2014). Since the focus of the evaluation is program implementation, a process evaluation adopted from Stufflebeam's CIPP model was used as the evaluation framework. Essentially, process evaluation involves monitoring and documenting how the different processes and activities of a program are being carried out (Stufflebeam, 2000). In the said type of evaluation, the

process evaluator (1) reviews the work plan or activities to monitor, (2) asks the implementers about issues and challenges they are experiencing, (3) observes activities, (4) communicates with the participants, and (5) provides necessary feedback (Stufflebeam, 2000).

Research participants and locale

The participants of this research were four (4) MTB-MLE teachers from Argao Central Elementary School (ACES) in Argao, Cebu, Philippines. A stratified random sampling method was employed to get a teacher representative from each grade level (i.e., kindergarten, Grade I, Grade II, & Grade III) under the MTB-MLE program. The participants' ages ranged from 28 to 57 years old. Moreover, the research locale was selected based on two main reasons: (1) The school is accessible to the evaluator since he is currently based in Argao, where he works as a public high school teacher and (2) ACES is the largest elementary school in the municipality where most MTB-MLE teacher-training activities are held.

Data collection tools

For this study, two (2) data collection tools were used to gather data. The first one was the student-centered MTB-MLE instruction checklist adapted from works that determined key features of student-centered instruction: discovery learning (Bicknell-Holmes & Seth Hoffman, 2000), active learning (DepEd, 2016; DepEd 2019), and language learning/transfer (DepEd, 2019). To give a more accurate evaluation using the checklist, the researcher decided to use a 4-point scale (not observed, slightly observed, moderately observed, & strongly observed) to eliminate the neutral option. The other tool used was the open-ended questionnaire consisting of 14 items that centered around challenges and coping mechanisms by teachers in implementing student-centered MTB-MLE instruction. The data collection tools were reviewed and validated by an expert in the field of language education and research.

Data collection activities

Utilizing a mixed methods case study design, the researcher conducted a process evaluation to assess the extent to which a student-centered approach is implemented by MTB-MLE teachers during instruction at a single public elementary school and to explore the challenges they encounter during the implementation as well as the ways in which they address the said challenges. Prior to data collection, the researcher sought permission from the Schools Division Superintendent, the Provincial District Supervisor, and the School Principal to conduct the evaluation. After securing the permission of the school officials and the consent of the teacher participants, the researcher proceeded with the data gathering. Multiple sources of evidence – the instruction checklist and the open-ended questionnaire – were used to ensure the depth of the evaluation (Luck et al., 2006). The researcher observed the classes of four (4) MTB-MLE teachers who taught kindergarten, Grade I Mother Tongue, Grade II Mother Tongue, and Grade III Science at the time of the observation. The time allotment for each subject observed was as follows: kindergarten (3 hours), Grade I Mother Tongue (50 minutes), Grade II Mother Tongue (50 minutes), and Grade III Science (50 minutes). After the classroom observations, the teachers were then made to answer the survey questionnaire.

Data analysis

In this program evaluation, quantitative and qualitative data were elicited from the participants through the MTB-MLE instruction checklist and the open-ended questionnaire. To answer the first research question on the extent to which student-centered MTB-MLE instruction was implemented, descriptive statistics were utilized to summarize the data from the 4-point Likert scale. On the other hand, the responses from the open-ended questionnaire were analyzed using thematic analysis, in which data were read, reviewed, coded, and categorized into themes (Dawadi, 2020) to answer the second and third research questions on the challenges and coping mechanisms of teachers in MTB-MLE instruction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Student-centered MTB-MLE instruction implementation

MTB-MLE is a program that is founded on student-centered principles (Monje et al., 2021). Thus, it is important to explore evidence for student-centeredness in MTB-MLE instruction to ensure that the program's pedagogical goals are being fulfilled. Table 1 presents the results of teachers' implementation of MTB-MLE in relation to student-centered teaching.

Table 1. Implementation of student-centered MTB-MLE instruction

Items	Mean	Verbal interpretation
1. Allows learners to create knowledge through activities involving exploration	3.75	Strongly observed
2. Provides activities that enable learners to integrate new knowledge with their existing knowledge base	4.00	Strongly observed
3. Implements student-centered tasks in which learners exercise some control over the sequence and frequency of the activities	2.75	Moderately observed
4. Promotes learning by asking reflection questions	3.50	Strongly observed
5. Encourages experimentation without the fear of making mistakes	3.00	Moderately observed
6. Involves learners in meaningful pair and group activities	3.25	Moderately observed
7. Adopts a multisensory learning approach (hear- see-do activities) to engage learners	3.75	Strongly observed
8. Asks higher-order thinking questions to encourage learners to think critically	3.50	Strongly observed
9. Gives opportunities for learners to apply concepts through simulation-based tasks	2.75	Moderately observed
10. Provides a variety of activities to accommodate different learning styles	3.50	Strongly observed
11. Maintains a non-threatening learning environment that promotes respect to encourage language learning	4.00	Strongly observed
12. Presents the lesson in small steps to avoid overwhelming the learners	4.00	Strongly observed
13. Provides opportunities for formal and informal language use in the classroom	4.00	Strongly observed
14. Gives constructive feedback to improve learner performance	4.00	Strongly observed
15. Maintains a positive attitude towards errors as a normal part of learning	3.25	Moderately observed
Overall mean	3.53	Strongly observed

Based on the results, it can be inferred that SCI was strongly implemented by the teacher participants in conducting their MTB-MLE classes. Almost all indicators were strongly observed, and the weighted mean for each item ranges from 2.75 (lowest) to 4.00 (highest), which signifies that SCI was generally evident in the MTB-MLE instruction across all grade levels. The finding is congruent with the literature (Ji-Hye Kim et al., 2017; Blumberg, 2016) that regards SCI as a well-known approach in teaching primarily for its effectiveness in enhancing students' learning. Further, the results imply that

the teachers are knowledgeable and competent in terms of student-centered pedagogy, which is an essential ingredient for a successful MTB-MLE implementation (Pradilla et al., 2017; Malone & Malone, 2011). The teachers' competence in SCI may be attributed to numerous factors such as the fact that the participants belong to a central school, where they have better access to training and resources compared to teachers in barangay elementary schools.

The teachers were able to actively engage learners in a variety of student-centered tasks that paid particular attention to discovery learning, active learning, and language learning/transfer (DepEd, 2016). This implies that the participants possess high teaching efficacy (Ji Hye et al., 2017), which may have influenced their decisions to utilize a learner-centered approach to their teaching methods. Further, the results aligned with the literature explicating that activities such as authentic learning (e.g., exploration & problem-solving) (Stefaniak & Tracey, 2015) and collaborative tasks (Jonassen et al., 2003) can make learning in the classroom fun, reflective, and meaningful (Blumberg, 2009; Golder, 2018).

Challenges and coping strategies of teachers in MTB-MLE instruction

Based on the thematic analysis of the responses from the teacher participants, the following major challenges or problems emerged: (1) learners' unruly behavior during activities; (2) difficulty in the use of mother tongue; and (3) lack of cooperation among students.

Learners' unruly behavior during activities

Based on the teachers' responses, one of the challenges they encounter while facilitating classroom activities is students' chaotic actions. Teacher 2 said, "The problem that is usually encountered when implementing hands-on activities is learners' behavior. They can't do an activity without making unnecessary noise." Likewise, Teacher 4 mentioned that "learners nowadays are more active." She added, "That is why during hands-on activities they tend to talk a lot and do activities that are unrelated to the task." Also, students become hard to control when they are too excited to complete a task. Teacher 1 shared, "Every day in kindergarten, we do group activities. Sometimes, their eagerness to participate in the activity leads to too much noise that can disturb the other groups." Furthermore, Teacher 4 explained that "with little supervision, some learners tend to quarrel." This finding corroborates the results of du Plessis (2020) which showed that student-centered classrooms are often noisy and difficult to manage. To address this concern, the teachers said that a clear set of rules must be explicitly communicated to the students. Teacher 3 stated, "Set rules before the activity. Make directions clear and understandable." Even while an activity is ongoing, Teacher 4 deemed that it is necessary to "keep reminding the learners about the rules and tasks that they have to do." To help keep learners on track, Teacher 2 suggested that "more attention and supervision should be given to them."

Difficulty in the use of mother tongue

Another obstacle that affects the teachers' implementation of a student-centered class is related to the use of mother tongue as a language of instruction. This is a major concern since some learners speak English as their first language. Teacher 1 expressed, "There are pupils who are English-speaking and cannot understand the dialect." When it comes to relaying comments to the students, Teacher 2 echoed Teacher 1's concern, "In providing feedback on learners' performance or outputs, they cannot understand it properly." This finding accords with the results of Cabansag's (2016) inquiry that found the multilingual environment as a major challenge in implementing MTB-MLE instruction in the Philippines. Moreover, this affirms the finding of Medilo (2016) regarding the burden caused by the intricacies of the vernacular. The majority of the teacher respondents said that they utilize strategies like code-switching and translation to help the students cope with MOI difficulties. Teacher 1 revealed, "During class, I usually shift languages: MTB to English." Similarly, Teacher 2 uses translation "from mother tongue to English to make learners understand the lesson during Mother Tongue class." Teacher 3 also uses the same technique whenever the students ask her to translate messages from Binisaya to English. This result is parallel with the findings of previous

studies (Billones & Cabatbat, 2019; Lartec et al., 2014) that divulged MTB-MLE teachers' use of various linguistic and communicative strategies to effectively convey ideas or thoughts from the mother tongue.

Lack of cooperation among students

Lastly, another problem identified based on the answers of the teachers is the reluctance of some learners to participate in class activities. Teacher 2 shared, "During tasks or activities wherein pupils work independently, there are learners that will not do the activity." She added, "Others will not work on time." Teacher 4 also encounters such a problem every time she gives her students pair activities. She narrated, "Whenever I give pair work, some students tend to depend on their partners and lack cooperation." This finding is similar to the existing literature (du Plessis, 2020; Aslan and Reigeluth, 2015; Chiphiko & Shawa, 2014) that highlighted the difficulty in facilitating classroom activities since learners differ in their pacing and some prefer to work independently rather than with a partner or group. To address this challenge, the teachers employ numerous strategies to encourage students to participate actively in classroom tasks. Teacher 1 has an interesting way of motivating her students. She disclosed, "Sometimes, if there are pupils who are not in the mood to participate, I usually bribe them with rewards (food) to do their task. I always have stocked foods, peanuts, candies, lollipops, etc. inside the classroom." The majority of the teacher respondents answered that one way of handling the problem is by providing diverse activities to pique learners' interest. Teacher 4 noted, "I use varied activities and tasks to accommodate their learning needs." On the other hand, Teacher 1 emphasized the importance of getting acquainted with students' learning styles. She explained, "Facilitating and accommodating the different learning styles is quite challenging in the first few months of the school year. But teaching them the way they learn comes easily if you have already mastered their styles." However, the literature (Opoku-Asare et al., 2014; Tadesse, 2020; Rawat et al., 2012) cautions that varied or differentiated activities may not work effectively if classrooms are overcrowded.

Succinctly, this paper responded to the need to conduct more investigations to determine whether or not student-centered principles (Monje et al., 2021) are reflected in MTB-MLE classes. In view of the extensive evidence available regarding the effectiveness of SCI in improving learners' academic performance (Ji-Hye Kim et al., 2017; Blumberg, 2016), the results of this study offer helpful insights into understanding student-centered teaching better in the context of multilingual education based on the mother tongue. Further, this paper presented specific indicators of SCI in MTB-MLE teaching, which were generally observed in the classrooms.

CONCLUSION

Since MTB-MLE in the Philippines is still considered to be in the early stage, there is a need to continuously examine the program's implementation to identify its strengths and weaknesses (Monje et al., 2021). The present study responded to the call by conducting an investigation of MTB-MLE focused on the implementation of SCI by teachers in a public elementary school. Guided by the principles of process evaluation (Stufflbeam, 2000), this program evaluation explored: (1) the extent of SCI implementation; (2) the challenges encountered by the teachers; and (3) the strategies they used to address the identified issues or problems.

One of the key results of this evaluation indicates that SCI was strongly observed in the MTB-MLE classes of the teacher participants. This finding affirms the literature (UNESCO, 2022; DepEd, 2016; Asia Multilingual Education Group, 2014; Monje et al., 2021) that highlighted MTB-MLE as a program that promotes learner-centered education. In parallel with previous studies (Monje et al., 2021; Cabansag, 2016; Medilo, 2016), another finding of the evaluation shows that teachers are confronted with the following challenges in carrying out SCI: (a) learners' unruly behavior during activities; (b) difficulty in the use of mother tongue; and (c) lack of cooperation among students. To address the challenges, the teachers utilize numerous coping strategies such as setting clear classroom rules, using translation and code-switching, and providing varied activities to match

learners' interests. These accord with other studies (Billones & Cabatcat, 2019; Lartec et al., 2014) that detailed the various mechanisms employed by MTB-MLE teachers to ensure an instruction that is free from difficulties or impediments.

In light of the findings, the following recommendations are formulated: (1) to sustain the implementation of SCI in the MTB-MLE classrooms, teachers should be provided with necessary resources and regular capacity-building activities that would further enhance their pedagogical competence and classroom management skills; (2) the school administration may organize programs that would allow MTB-MLE teachers to receive mentoring and coaching sessions and to share their best practices with fellow teachers, especially in addressing the challenges in relation to instruction; and (3) DepEd could strengthen its support for small-scale research initiatives to explore SCI challenges and opportunities, which may be unique from school to school, and to come up with evidence-based classroom practices. However, this program evaluation only focused on the implementation aspect of MTB-MLE, specifically teacher instruction. For future research using process evaluation, other aspects of the program may be explored like instructional materials, curriculum, and learning outcomes as they also impact the overall implementation of MTB-MLE. Moreover, this evaluation is limited in terms of sample size. To gather a richer amount of data, it is recommended to involve more teacher participants and schools in the evaluation. Small-scale program evaluations like the present research may be good pilot studies for more comprehensive works in the future, such as a dissertation. By investigating a single aspect of MTB-MLE, researchers may be provided with preliminary findings that can inform future investigations of the program. In the case of this evaluation, a more comprehensive inquiry involving various stakeholders and other program aspects could be pursued to determine the interconnected factors contributing to the student-centeredness of the classrooms.

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