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Keywords

MTB-MLE, materials development, language, model, mother tongue, parents' and teachers' perspective, multilingual

Cover Page Footnote

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PARENTS' AND TEACHERS' COLLABORATIVE PERSPECTIVE: AN INPUT FOR A
MODEL ON MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT IN A MULTILINGUAL SETTING

Jane Kibla Lartec[†]

Abstract

This study explored the collaborative perspective of teachers and parents for materials development in a multilingual setting. Respondents were six parents and six teachers from two of the pilot schools of Mother tongue based multilingual education in a melting pot city of different languages and cultures. The research design employed was qualitative to gain insights, explore the depth, richness and complexity inherent in the social or cultural phenomenon. Data were gathered from interviews with the aid of audio recorder and interview guide based on Malone (2007). Responses were transcribed and categorized into themes according to similarities pertaining to the development of materials. It was found that there were factors affecting materials development namely, language, culture heritage, social values and types of teaching materials. Suggestions from parents and teachers' collaborative perspectives derived from the responses and were converted into a model for materials development for the use in a multilingual setting. The findings could give educators in higher education institutions and other language teachers a model to consider.

Introduction

Change describes well the transformation that defines education, not only in United States but also in countries throughout the world (Rappleye, 2012) that initiates innovative programs beginning instruction in children's first language (Dutcher, 2004). Nepal for example, favors mother tongue as instructional medium in early grades and gradual transition to the languages of wider communication (Ghimire, 2011). Similarly, in the Philippines, educational progress gave birth to the implementation of the K-12 Educational Program. The Department of Education (DepEd) implemented the Mother-tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) program as a significant part of DepEd's K-12 Enhanced Basic Education program (Dumlao, 2012). Factors such as orthography, teachers' training and materials development grounded the successful implementation of MTB-MLE.

The study of Kahn-Horwitz, Schwartz and Share (2011) showed that developing the second language phonemic awareness reflects the mother tongue's orthographic experience. Thus, children with a background on an orthography that is not analyzed at a phonemic level may be expected to experience phonemic awareness as a greater challenge than children who have had experience in phonemic awareness in their first language (L1) orthography. To address this, bilingual programs encourage learners to understand, speak, read and write in their mother tongue language (Benson, 2004).

Conversely, teachers need linguistic awareness as generalists working across the curriculum with younger students or subject specialists working with older students. They all need enhanced awareness of the linguistic demands of the curriculum and sophisticated skills to make it accessible to students from a variety of language backgrounds, and at different stages of competence in the language of schooling (Anderson, Hélot & Obied, 2010). The study of Ikerionwu (2000) defined instructional materials as objects or devices that help teachers make learning meaningful to the learners. Materials development purposefully promotes efficiency of education by improving the quality of teaching and learning. If the materials are within the experience of the students, it will be manipulative, well maximized and will be effectively used. The materials mentioned are charts, graphs, diagrams, cartoons, posters, pictures, and maps/atlas that are locally available (Okobia, 2011).

The participation of the teachers in materials production increased the understanding of the rationale for mother tongue-based multilingual education in the local communities and local ownership of the program itself (Morgan & Young, 2005). However, if teachers will move together with parents, they would do well to learn how to coordinate efforts, exchange information, and engage in joint decision-making (Hedeen et al., 2010). Parents and teachers share the goal of helping children learn and feel successful. Teachers and parents often view parental involvement only in terms of attendance at parent-teacher conferences and other formal meetings. Historically, parental involvement as an integral part of the educational process has received little or no attention in teacher training programs (Yap & Enoki, 1995). Nevertheless, as stated in the study of Collier and Thomas (2011), the involvement of parents in school development is important. Parents of children in multilingual school systems “feel welcomed, valued, respected, and included in school decision-making”. This enables parents to reinforce the link between learning at home and in school. Thus, parents who understand the education system are also more likely to send their children to school. Quigley’s study (2000) found that it is beneficial for parents to be involved in their children’s education.

The study of Canter (2010) has further shown that when parents and teachers work together, everyone benefits - driven by mutual goals; parity; shared responsibility for key decisions; shared accountability for outcomes; shared resources; and the development of trust, respect, and a sense of community. Hence, establishing this partnership requires efforts from both teachers and parents to create a trusting, equitable relationship. The study of Karim (2007) on the other hand, showed that parents and teachers’ collaboration is was potent when they share information for materials development that challenges students. The developed materials should not only motivate and help students to understand the lesson but also help them to transfer high-level skills such as predicting, connecting, interpreting, and evaluating (Tomlinson, 2010).

There is no better resource for creating materials in the mother tongue than members of the language community themselves. Their involvement will not only build up community ownership and acceptance; it will also ensure that the materials produced are interesting and relevant to the community’s needs (Mother Tongue Based–Multilingual Education Network, 2012). The purpose of this study was to analyze the collaborative aspect of the teachers and parents in two pilot schools to design a model for materials development for MTB-MLE programs in a multilingual setting particularly in Baguio City.

Methods

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative approach. It engaged in data gathering through interviews. Qualitative approach is employed to gain insights, explore the depth, richness and complexity inherent in the social or cultural phenomenon (Ospina, 2004). It created understanding from data as the analysis proceeds.

Participants

This study was conducted in the two pilot schools of MTB-MLE in the city of Baguio. The city is known to be a melting pot of different language and culture in the Northern Philippines, so the students have diverse background in terms of language and culture. The respondents were grades one (1) to three (3) teachers having MTB-MLE program as their school curriculum, as well as parents whose children were taught under the mentioned school curriculum. The researchers interviewed twelve respondents, six (6) teachers and six (6) parents from the each schools. These teachers had rich experiences in employing and implementing the MTB-MLE in the pilot schools and have had worked with parents during the early grades in a multilingual classroom. The parents were also purposively selected based on their experiences in actively participating and collaboratively working with the teachers in teaching their children. Selecting the twelve interview subjects for the study was based on phenomenological inquiry and data saturation criterions. According to Creswell (1998), phenomenology requires in-depth interviews from three to thirteen subjects.

Data Collection Tool

To gather the data and information needed in the study, a semi-structured in-depth interview was used (Patton, 1990). To make sure all the topics were covered, an aide memoire was used. The key questions asked were based on Malone's (2007) guide questions in developing teaching and learning materials for MTB-MLE program. These are as follows: Who are the students? Do the students live in rural or urban areas? What language(s) do the students speak at home? How important is it for the children to keep their heritage or cultural identity? What is the status of the student's language? Are there any written materials that could be used in the MLE program? Are the teachers also native speakers from their own community? Do they understand and appreciate the students' heritage culture? What are the suggestions that you can give for materials development in a multilingual setting? The same questions were asked of the teacher and parent respondents.

If the interviewer is skillful, Best and Kahn (1993) believed that the interview could be regarded as a data-gathering device, which is often superior to others as people are more willing to talk than to write, and confidential information may be obtained from respondents who might be reluctant to put it in writing. The interview was considered suitable in this study in order to determine respondents' opinions, attitudes or trends of beliefs (Sharma, 1994 as cited by Ndamba, 2008). Video and tape recordings were used during the interview.

Data Collection Procedure

After obtaining approval from the school's administrators and principals of the pilot schools, letters of invitation were given personally. Parents and teachers who expressed interest and willingness were scheduled for an interview based on their availability. The consent to conduct and record the interview was secured from the respondents after carefully explaining the

purpose of the interview and the importance of their participation. The respondents were also assured of the voluntary nature of their participation and their rights to withdraw anytime during the interview. To elicit natural responses for questions, all the respondents were interviewed in locations of their own choice and lasted for at least 45 minutes to one hour per respondent. The interviews were conducted in the language that they are comfortable with to ensure the richness of the data. The interview sessions for the teachers and parents consisted of closed and open-ended questions to allow the researchers to opportunity to follow up points that needed elaboration and to clarify questions that were misunderstood by the respondents (Mouly, 1978 as cited by Ndamba, 2008).

Mode of Analysis

The researchers for a more accurate transcription (Clandinin & Connely, 2000) read and reread to facilitate understanding of the transcribed interview recordings. Anchors and phenomenal themes were extracted from the field texts and were subjected to phenomenological reduction by means of repertory grid. The grid presented the significant statements made by the respondents that were classified using themes and interpreted carefully. Simultaneous re-reading of the significant statements of each respondent facilitated the surfacing of the important ideas and experiences of the respondents. For the warm analysis, highlighted words or phrases were proofread and analyzed to formulate categories and themes. The validity, truthfulness, and trustworthiness of the emerging patterns and themes were done through correspondence with the participants where the consistency of the transcription and interpretation made by the researchers on the respondents' statements were verified individually with the study participants. Member-checking procedure (Graneheim & Lundan, 2004 cited in Valdez, De Guzman & Escolar-Chua, 2012) and a critical friend technique-involving expert were also employed.

Findings and Discussion

Through the thickness and richness of the descriptions of the collected responses from the parent and teacher participants, four interesting themes emerged relative to the factors to consider in developing materials. These include (a) language, (b) social values, (c) cultural heritage and (d) types of teaching materials.

Importance of Language

Language plays a significant role in determining the medium of instruction in teaching the mother tongue. It allows students to interact with words, images, and ideas in ways that develop their abilities in reading, listening, viewing, speaking, and writing. Students will comprehend more if they know or understand the language.

The writer's theory of language and language use states that in developing materials for any aspect of language learning, whether it be a skilled-based course in listening, speaking, reading, writing or an integrated-skills basic series, the writer's understanding of language and language use will have a major impact on material's design. It plays a role in determining the goals the writer sets for the materials and the focus of the materials themselves and the activities within them (Richards, 2005).

In this connection, one teacher said,

“during enrollment, we interview parents regarding the language they use in communicating to their children so as to know what language we will use as a medium of instruction inside the classroom especially in teaching mother tongue.”

From interviewing the parents concerning the language/s that are comprehensible to their children during enrollment in the pilot schools of MTB-MLE, teachers and/or the school will have the idea of the language that will be used as a medium of instruction inside the classroom.

Most teachers use Ilocano and Tagalog depending on what the majority of the class understands. It was also stated that all students should understand the language.

From both schools, teachers use Tagalog and Ilocano to teach their students. With regard to their community, most of the parents also use Tagalog and Ilocano and the other parents of the same school used English because it was what their children were exposed to,

“...I talk to them in English because it is where they were trained and are exposed to”.

Several teachers reported that their students understood better in Tagalog words than in Ilocano,

“Tagalog is our medium of instruction inside the classroom for the students can understand Tagalog better than Ilocano.”

Meanwhile, parents as well as teachers said that they use Ilocano and Tagalog in their community. With those findings, the most common responses from the teachers and parents in both schools are Tagalog and Ilocano. Thus, parents and teachers suggested that materials be written in Ilocano and if possible be translated to Tagalog. Many teachers' statements evidently showed it:

“it could have been great if there is a glossary to define highfalutin Ilocano words on books to be developed;”

“hoping that the books have translations, for example, the book is written in Ilocano language, translation should be in Tagalog and vice versa.”

This would cater the comprehension of the children considering that Baguio City is a multilingual setting.

Social Values

Social values were found to be a means of expressing oneself. As cited by Wilkinson (2010), those who possess strong social values tend to be termed as ‘social entrepreneurs’ – a spiritually, and ethically based individual who seeks the common good in order to create sustainability for both people and planet (Muscat & Whitty, 2009). In relation to this, most teachers and a few parents mentioned the same ideas on the importance of sharing social values

to students/children. They said that sharing the social values to their children/students open them to be more expressive toward their feelings. One parent said,

“social values is important for self-expression to communicate to their classmates with what they want to say or even what they feel without hesitation and they know how to participate especially in school.”

Hence, self-expression is very beneficial for students to learn to communicate their ideas as well as their feelings especially toward the new day-to-day lessons brought by mother tongue. Moreover, active interaction inside the classroom is anticipated, as it filters, students' anxiousness toward the lesson and helps them to gain confident when interacting with others.

Additionally, through the self-expressive acts, individuals make their private thoughts and feelings concrete, tangible and socially recognizable and having freedom to speak one's mind symbolizes one's ultimate freedom to be one's self (Kim & Sherman, 2007). This becomes possible if students relate well on the materials used by their teachers in various lessons.

On the other hand, many teachers said that the importance of sharing social values to students develops them holistically as well as their communication skills. Parents too have the same perspective that sharing social values to their children develop them to be good children such as being responsible, respectful, well disciplined, and God fearing, as stated:

“...boosts their communication skills in expressing their thoughts and feelings”;
“it is their way of socializing with their co-students”;

“they are being developed holistically.”

Thus, with teachers and parents collaborative perspectives, they were able to suggest that the materials must involve the students' participation to dwell well in each other's company, especially in the learning process. This involvement could be in a form of group activities that are integrated within the lessons and found in books or within the lessons. It was evident in the parents and teachers statement:

“the students can interact with their classmates better if they are having group works, so it is better if the books that will be produce include group works in order that they can interact with their classmates.”

Accordingly, self-expression values make people supportive of individual liberty and human rights. Self-expression values have an anti-discriminatory and humanistic tendency. Thus, this gives these values a largely pro-civic character (Ahmadi & Shahmohamadi, 2011).

Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage is one great means of determining identity of each individual. Nevertheless, it appears that younger children tend to adapt to different culture easier than older children do. One of the challenges many individuals experience is recognizing and valuing culture and many do not have an awareness of their role in their cultures (Bodenhorn, Jackson &

Farell, 2005). It was found that many students who do not recognize their own culture are led to non-awareness of their true identity (Banks, 2002; Brislin & Pedersen, 1976 as cited in Bodenhorn, Jackson & Farell, 2005).

Many teachers believed,

“...most of the time, they forget their origin and that they are still not so aware: they still really do not know their identity. They adapt the practices here in the city.”

Few teachers said that their students adapted already the culture in the city,

“...they have just adapted the culture in the city and now it serves as their identity.”

Teachers had a tendency to insinuate about the cultures of their students through their regular lessons. Generally, an awareness about specific cultures and groups makes it easier to respect and appreciate differences and to interact effectively with person from other cultures (The SOURCE, 1996).

Moreover, many parents said that they educate their children about their culture and its importance. One parent stated,

“...they adapt the culture which they are already used to. And, they preserve them until now the traditions like their pledging which is important for them so they could learn to pray and not forget God).It is not only the language that we teach but the culture as well.”

Hence, parents and teachers similarly suggested that the materials to be developed must integrate culture into its content as evidently shown in the statements,

“The culture must be injected onto day-to-day lessons for example, Ilocano words which are culture based like the word ‘BASI’ which means wine.”

This implies that developing materials with teaching tools on cultural awareness that are injecting throughout the course lessons is meaningful to students. Injecting could mean this is intended to address diversity emphasizing the importance of learning culturally specific information including communication patterns, health, beliefs and behaviors, religious practices, symbols and rituals (Stewart, 1991; Like, 1991; Nkongho, 1992 as cited in The SOURCE, 1996). Hence, as shown in the statement of parents and teachers, the materials developed should contain culture-based words.

Types of Teaching Material

From the gathered data, there were three types of materials used by the parents and teachers to teach their children an awareness of culture (a) teaching guides for the lessons, (b) printed aids and (c) technology. Most teachers said they were currently using the guide plan that was given to them from professional seminars they attended,

“...the teaching guide which they gave us during the seminar but it is incomplete when it comes to teaching. Actually, what they gave us is a module with lesson plans.”

One teacher said “printed materials and books”. Most teachers have the same perspective that it is better to use visual aids, picture, charts, flashcards and books.

Parents and teachers gave examples of printed materials such as books “...Ilocano Bible, both English at Ilocano books like Ilocano Bible” and “I use books and I let them read. “Mostly pictures, flashcards, charts with translations and work books”.

The traditional teaching aids mentioned by the teachers cater the needs of the students in their learning experiences. In contrast, most parents said that most of the materials that arouse their children’s interest were technologies such as computer and television. Furthermore, most parents said:

“...technology like computers are very important and there are times that they learn more in watching television for it has guidance from the administrators.”

These are modern teaching aids. Therefore, letting the children learn from technologies has advantage. It allows easy access for necessary information and facts. Although, disadvantages such as whether or not the information and facts are beneficial to students’ learning are not assessed.

In addition, one parent said that her child learns language from the Bible translated into Ilocano, and a few teachers mentioned, “drawing can be used to animate the lessons.” In that order, teaching aids are of immense help in promoting lifelong learning among students. This stimulates students’ senses to capture their attention to recognize learning. These materials combine traditional and modern teaching aids, such as mobile tools that support information access and flow in real time and the availability of current events, global perspectives, and resources (Boettcher, 2000). As of the design of the materials, teachers and parents provided similar suggestions in terms of the format, design and medium of instruction of the books utilization in a multilingual setting.

Considering the format of the books, a few parents and teachers said that the books used in the past are best for teaching. This entails the efficiency of the older books published. In addition, many stated different perspectives, but all agreed that the format of any instructional materials should be within the level of the students and it should start from the basics:

“the format of the book should be within the level of the students.”

Therefore, basics start with the phonemic awareness to the alphabets progressing to words and later incorporating into sentences. Furthermore, the instructional design that few parents and teachers were in favor of should include more pictures clues in books for a better comprehension for students. Such indicates a conventional and aesthetic appearance and attract students’ attention and interest to maximize the use of the material. In regards to the size, one teacher specified her suggestion in her statement,

“It must be gothic and 14-16 font size”.

Additionally, many said that the font size should be dependent on the capacity of the vision of the students while the others said that the font size should be big enough for the children to read. Moreover, most teachers suggested the content of the instructional materials, they suggested that the lessons must be suited and fitted for the whole year. Others suggested that it should always start with the basic and should include more drills.

Few teachers also suggested:

“...there should be piles of short stories, poems, and songs written in Ilocano or culture-based words.”

The materials in teaching MTB-MLE are insufficient. Teachers are only using the teachers' guide and some of their own-made instructional materials, which lack references to teaching students in their mother tongue.

Parents and teachers had collaborative ideas when it comes to the materials to use in teaching students in a multilingual setting, such as picture-filled books. In favor of using a textbook, Ur (1996) mentioned the sense of structure and progress (a) use as a syllabus being ready-made, (b) the price (which sometimes is not so reasonable or affordable), (c) convenience as a package, (d) the available guidance for teachers to give learners some degree of autonomy. Against using a textbook, researchers mentioned (a) homogeneity and inadequacy for individual needs and objectives, (b) irrelevance and lack of interest in many occasions, and (c) limitations of initiative and creativity, and over-easiness (Trujillo, Torecillas, & Salvadores, 2010).

The teachers also have the same idea with which they preferred to use to teach their students which is Audio-Visual. Trujillo, Torecillas, and Salvadores (2010) stated in their research the advantages and disadvantages of Audiovisual technologies. The advantages includes motivation, interaction, improvement of messages (combination of sounds and images). Further, teacher can face the students all the time; there is oral communication enhancement, cultural background exchanges, reusable materials, classroom time saving, and promotion of learner-centered systems.

In regards to the disadvantages, old equipment's availability in the classrooms, price, technical skills, and extra time needed to prepare activities and materials, teachers' reluctance to use materials, bad usage (inadequate materials or usage in isolation) are the concerns. Thus, materials must be developed even in the lesser-known Philippine languages in order to reach the overall impact of quality and relevant education for all Filipinos (MTB MLE Strategic Plan, 2010).

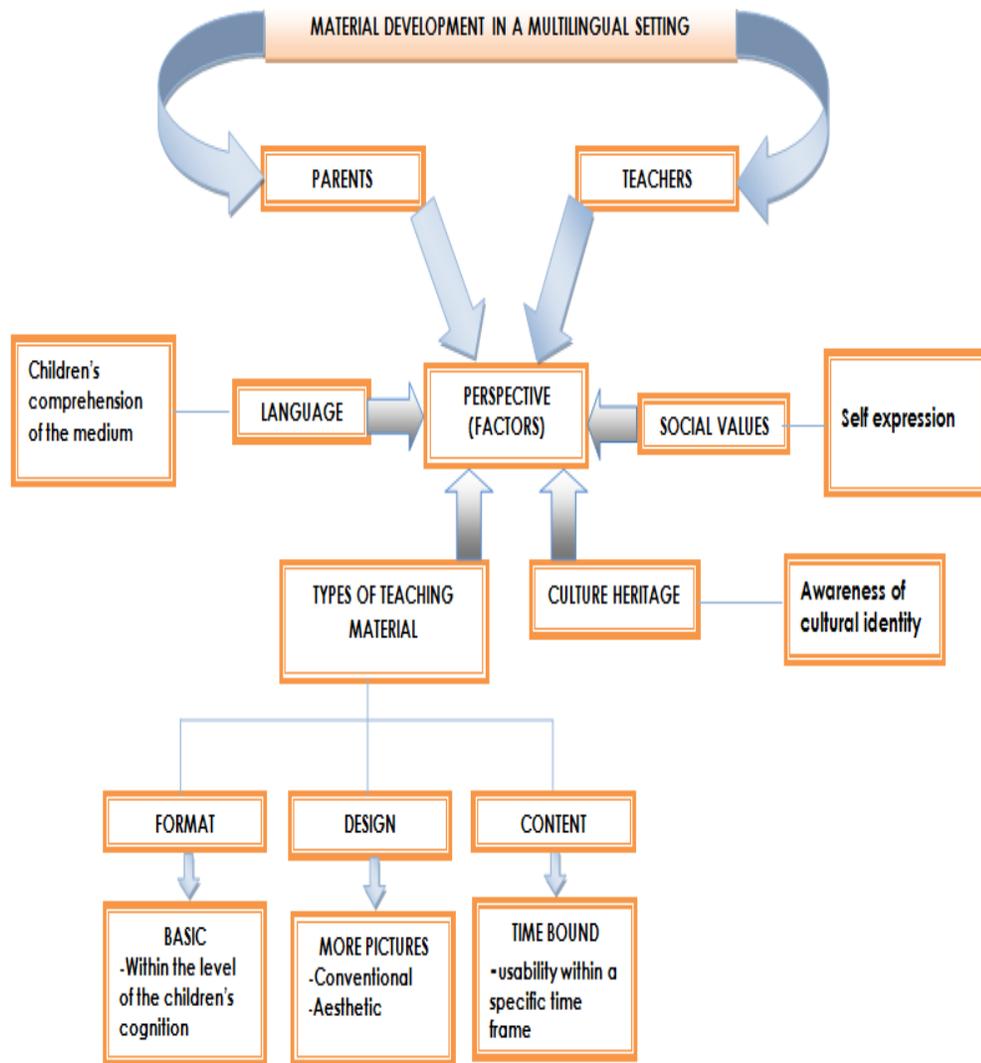


Figure 1. Parents and Teachers Perspective; A Model for Materials Development

Figure 1 shows that the material development in a multilingual setting is the central subject for it is the vital reason for making a model that involved side-to-side parents and teacher collaborative perspectives towards a material for a multilingual setting. From the similar perspectives, there were established factors affecting material development. The factors identified as language that will determine children’s comprehension of the content of such materials, cultural heritage, which will guide students towards awareness of their true cultural identity, social values that facilitate children, learn with others through self-express acts and types of teaching materials that focuses on the format, design and content. The factors point to develop a material for the mother tongue in a multilingual setting. From such factors, collaborated suggestions from parents and teachers perspectives established suggestions. For the materials’ format, it should be within the children’s level of cognition and comprehension of the lesson integrated on the materials; design suggested should have more pictures for its conventional and aesthetic appearance, and the content should have a specific period of

completion. In such manner, the material could be utilized in the entire school year within the specific timeframe. Thus the model is of great help for the materials' implementers, teachers and students. The model represents a dynamic, flexible guideline for building an effective material for MTB-MLE. It provides additional information for refinement to reinforce concrete and accurate material drawn from the parents and teachers collaborative perspectives toward mother tongue in a multilingual setting.

Implications

Clearly, findings generated in this study affirm the vital role of the collaboration of teachers and parents in supporting students' learning experiences relative to the development of materials for holistic education. Hence, the department of education and the teacher education institutions are challenge to initiate a mechanism by which the collaboration of teachers and parents are strengthen through assessment, monitoring and evaluation of programs for collaborative efforts putting prime importance of the role of parents and teachers. Holistic education geared toward recognizing the efforts of teachers and parents.

Conclusion

This study synthesized the collaborative perspective of parents and teachers towards a model for MTB-MLE in a multilingual setting and reflected on the importance of language, social values, cultural heritage and the suggested the instructional materials for teaching in a multilingual environment. The model could contribute a good foundation for a multilingual setting and provide quality-teaching aids that are effective in the learning process of all children. However, given the study site, the findings may not reflect the experiences and perspectives of all teachers and parents locally or internationally. Nonetheless, this study surfaced trends worthy of further investigation and ended with a view of increasing administrators, educators and parents' awareness and improving teaching and learning in a multilingual classroom towards a quality education.

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