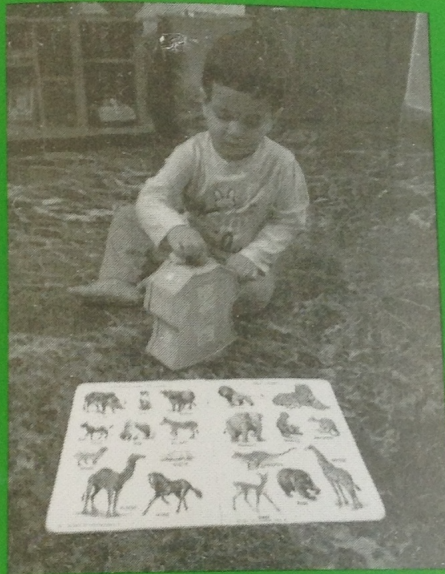


Atharva

Putting Thought In Action



ISSN 09739775



Vol. 6, No. 6, Page 38, June 1, 2011, Price: ₹25, Goa.

Queen's Tongue

V/s

Mother Tongue

Medium of Instruction Debate in Goa

A Monthly of Contemporary Studies & Analyses

Editor's Note

The demand for state grants to English medium primary schools and counter-demand to de-recognize those schools has kicked-off Queen's tongue versus Mother tongue controversy in Goa. The contention of pro-English lobby is that the poor should not be deprived of English at early stage of education. English, they claim, is the passport for job opportunities abroad and tourism-related activities in Goa.

Interestingly, the prominent legislators in fore-front of the medium of instruction agitation are school dropouts. Six out of 12 council of ministers or 12 including six ministers out of 40 legislators in Goa are overtly or covertly supporting the Nagaland pattern of primary education. 83.33 per cent of the ministers or legislators are from the Church- influenced areas of South Goa. The Forum for the Rights of Children's Education (FORCE) argues that the parents and not the educationists/ experts should have the right to decide the medium of instruction policy in the State.

The state government has adopted the policy prefers grants to regional languages— Marathi/ Konkani and other languages in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India. English is not the mother tongue of the parents, politicians, educationists who are spearheading agitation to claim state grants for private English primary schools. The parents must declare English as their mother tongue to avail grants for primary schools in English. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

It is pity that the protagonists of English are attempting to impose the language which is not spoken in the immediate environment of the learner— especially the poor by undermining confidence, self-esteem and identity nurtured by Indian languages at early stage of learning. The misguided venture is directed against the marginalization of local languages by taking parents on a ride by a section of managements of primary schools. The regulation of fee-structure by Government and other provisions under the enabling Right to Education legislation have pitted the vested interests to politicise the medium of instruction issue in Goa.

QUEEN'S TONGUE *Versus* MOTHER TONGUE: Medium of Instruction Debate in Goa *A PROLOGUE*

Atharva Intelligence Unit

The United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) goal is to promote linguistic diversity and multilingualism. The UNESCO statement on linguistic diversity and multilingualism reads:

“Languages, with their complex implications for identity, communication, social integration, education and development, are of strategic importance for people and the planet.

There is growing awareness that languages play a vital role in development, in ensuring cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, but also in attaining quality education for all and strengthening cooperation, in building inclusive knowledge societies and preserving cultural heritage, and in mobilizing political will for applying the benefits of science and technology to sustainable development.

It is thus urgent to take action to encourage broad and international commitment to promoting multilingualism and linguistic diversity, including the safeguarding of endangered languages”.

In the global and local context the indigenous languages play important role in promoting equity, access and quality in educational system. The Queen's tongue has assumed so much importance mainly amongst the middle class in post-colonial India that academic debate of indigenous languages has become less important. There are 1652 spoken tongues recorded in 1961 and 22 modern Indian languages in 2011.

The Anglo-Saxon bull-dozer view of globalization is attempting to wipe out the indigenous languages all over the world with rapid pace. The standardization is replacing diversity in global market. Truly, globalization refers to free flow of ideas. In fact, diversity should replace standardization. The enchanting phrase of 'global family' is being threatened by profit-driven 'global market' phrase. The rise of English as medium of instruction from primary to university stage is a portrait of distorted version of globalization.

The Christian missionaries set up primary schools in 1813 with local languages as the medium of instruction in India. Later, adopted English at secondary stage and set up universities in 1857 in the port cities. The colonial rulers set up educational/ economic infrastructure not to develop India, but to exploit the resources of colonies in a more systematic manner. In free India, access, equity

and quality of basic education continues to affect the human, cultural, developmental objectives.

The Right to Education Act, 2009 aims at providing free, compulsory and quality education to children from age of six to fourteen years. The access and quality are the twin-issues affecting educational system in India. The problems of education have no quick-fix solutions based on imported models, designs or theories. We have to draw out our own concepts, plans and strategies to revive primary to university the education in the country.

The need is stressed to integrate various branches of knowledge and stages of learning. Primary education is most vital component of the entire superstructure of the educational system and most neglected one for centuries in the country. The examination-oriented education system works against access, quality and relevance. The education needs to be made active, creative and inclusive by redefining, restructuring, re-locating the examination system.

The academic authority while laying down the curriculum, according to Clause 2 Section 29 of the RTE Act 2009, shall take into consideration:

- (a) conformity with the values enshrined in the Constitution of India;
- (b) all-round development of the child;
- (c) building up child's knowledge, potentiality and talent;
- (d) development of child's physical and mental abilities to the fullest extent;
- (e) learning through, activities, discovery and exploration in child-friendly and child-centered manner;
- (f) medium of instruction shall, as far as practicable, be in child's mother tongue;
- (g) make the child free of fear, trauma and anxiety and helping the child to express freely;
- (h) comprehensive and continuous evaluation of child's understanding of knowledge and his or her ability to apply the same.

The medium of instruction controversy at primary stage of learning was raked up in 1990-91 when the state government adopted a policy to provide grants to Indian languages (Konkani, Marathi, Kannada, Urdu and others) primary schools. In 2011, the Forum for the Rights of Children's Education (FORCE) demanded the grants-in-aid to English medium primary schools. There are 1252 primary schools with strength of 101523 students in 2010-11. There are 1252 primary schools with strength of 101523 students in 2010-11. 139495 or 9.57 per cent persons are in the age group of 0-6 years out of total population 1457723 in 2011. 1152117 or 87.4 per cent persons above seven years can read and write in any language as per Census of India 2011. The major contention of the FORCE is that the poor should not be denied access to English at primary stage. The parents should decide the medium of instruction at primary stage. The experts/educationists should not have any say over the matters related to choice of language (Herald, Goa: 14/04/2011). The pro-English lobby refuses to take legal

opinion over state aid to English medium primary schools and opted for pressure tactics to resolve the issue at political plane.

The Bharatiya Bhasha Suraksha Manch (BBSM) or Forum for Protection of Indian Languages argued that the state government should maintain the status of Indian languages (Konkani and Marathi) at primary school level and should not give grants to English medium primary schools. Goa needs state-funded primary education only in Indian languages, according to the Manch. The BBSM urged upon the state government to refuse recognition to English private medium primary schools as well as ban play schools and to shift the registered English medium primary schools to Indian languages within a time-frame. (Times of India, Goa: 07/04/2011).

The demand for state-funding of English primary education is contrary to Constitutional provisions. English is not the mother tongue of those who favour state grants to primary schools in Goa. The proficiency in English does not mean that the Indian languages should be replaced by English at primary stage. The mother tongue based education at formative stage weighs in favour of equity, access and quality. The research article by researcher Dr. Carole Benson and viewpoints put forth by Dr. Nandkumar Kamat worth attention of laymen, experts and policy-makers in the local as well as global context. All languages are equally creative and innovative. The people have to nurture the native languages. The strength of a tree lies in its roots and not in fruits.

WHY CONFUSE FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY WITH MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

Dr. Nandkumar M. Kamat
(*Research Scholar, Goa University, Goa*)

I. PERSONAL - WHAT I GAINED FROM SCHOOLING IN MARATHI MEDIUM

I belong to a family of traders where there was no tradition of formal education. So despite having been born in a GSB family my educational status was not different than the masses who were deprived of education. My late father knew excellent spoken as well as written Portuguese and Marathi in both nagari and old modi script but he was not educated beyond a few standards. My mother, now 78, originally from San-Mudgere, near Karwar left the school after a few standards in Kannada. With some practice she could read Marathi and Konkani. So my schooling was without any help in homework from the parents. When I look back at first 11 years of my basic education on the background of the snowballing controversy over medium of instruction in Goa and basically the issue of state funding of English medium primary schools, I fail to understand why people confuse foreign language proficiency with the medium of instruction.

What I gained in those 11 eventful years? My first two years were spent in Government primary school, Primeiro Bairro, Santa Cruz, where I learnt nagari alphabets, mental arithmetic and acted in a Konkani play. My next two years were spent in Panaji's Massano De Amorim primary school. It helped me because Central Library had opened the new Children's reading section where the curator Mr. Hubali gave me an early entry. Being in Panaji also gave me access to excellent libraries. I could not read English till I entered the Vth standard of Kasturba Matoshri High School, formerly known as Kanyashala -a high school established in 1937 for educating girls. I was totally illiterate in English before Std. Vth.. Then for six years I studied English only as a lower level language in our school. We had Wren and Martin high school English grammar, Tarkhadkar's bilingual grammars and teachers made it compulsory to purchase English to Marathi bilingual dictionaries. Without understanding much I used to watch English movies at National cinema theatre. Our shop used to get trunk-loads of old English magazines. The smell of the pages of Illustrated Weekly of India is still fresh in my mind. While turning the pages of these colourful English magazines, I wished I could have better English language proficiency to read them. After reaching VIIth standard, that became possible. But still there was a long way to go as I focussed on building my vocabulary.

As students we were encouraged to translate text passages from English to Marathi and vice versa. After finishing SSC with four languages -English, Marathi, Hindi and Sanskrit, joining the first year science class at Dhempe College was a big jump. Altogether we had at least 30 students from Goa and Maharashtra who had joined after finishing SSC in Marathi medium. All of them are well settled now. Today I don't have much difficulty with English. I owe this to solid foundation in a medium which was closer to my mother tongue-Konkani. Marathi medium education made me read Indian literature which enriched my life. I read many English classics first in translated form and then picked up the original works. Marathi medium education gave me a sense of belonging to local culture and the nation. Studying

four languages for four years helped me in creative writing. When I encounter convent educated post-graduate students with poor knowledge of English reading or writing, I really wonder what they really gained in English medium.

Parents and educationists need to read and debate Carole Benson's Background paper - Titled - The importance of mother tongue-based schooling for educational quality, prepared for UNESCO's the Education for All Global Monitoring Report, 2005. Carole works at Centre for Teaching and Learning Stockholm University, Sweden. She is also a consultant in mother tongue-based multilingual education in the Americas, Europe and Africa, including Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, South Africa and Ethiopia. Besides she is engaged in research relating to mother tongue-based schooling, the influence of language competence on learning across the curriculum and the ways that mother tongue education might facilitate girls' education. After reading this report I understood why I am different. It was my basic education which imprinted in my genes a strong sense of belonging to the soil, land, nature, culture, family, people and nation.

II. DO WE KNOW MORE THAN INTERNATIONAL LINGUISTIC EXPERTS FROM NON-ENGLISH COUNTRIES

Skutnabb-Kangas on linguistic rights

There is nothing new in any highly urbanized society when demands are made for changing medium of instruction to a foreign language. Goa can ill afford monolingual model. Ghanian linguist Ansre wrote:

“Linguistic imperialism has a subtle way of warping the minds, attitudes and aspirations of even the most noble in a society and of preventing him from appreciating and realizing the full potentialities of indigenous languages. Victims of it are often convinced that despite the fact that large numbers of the public may not be able to speak the foreign language it is good for the country”.

Champions of English as medium of primary education may not be aware of the work done in many countries by Tove Skutnabb-Kangas who's studied such demands in non- English speaking countries. Eight years ago by chance I picked her interesting multidisciplinary book- Linguistic Genocide in Education-or Worldwide Diversity and Humans Rights, an 800 pages tome in which she has devoted 50 pages to discuss several issues connected to mother tongue. She is actively involved with minorities' struggle for language rights since five decades. Her main research interests are in linguistic human rights, linguistic genocide, linguicism (linguistically argued racism), bilingualism and multilingual education, linguistic imperialism and the subtractive spread of English, support for endangered languages, and the relationship between linguistic and cultural diversity and biodiversity. She has written/edited around fifty books and monographs and around 400 book chapters and scientific articles in 32 languages. She is presently involved in projects in Nepal and India where indigenous children are being taught through the medium of their mother tongues. Kangash proposed linguistic human rights or LHRs.

In her view, every state should guarantee basic linguistic human rights to all children in the educational system, in day-care schools, and institutions of higher education, regardless of whether these children belong to linguistic majorities or minorities and regardless of whether the minority children represent indigenous peoples. Traditional national minorities, immigrated minorities, or refugee minorities. In her view, universal linguistic human rights should be guaranteed in relation to the mother tongue, in relation to an official language and in relation to drawing profit from education as far as the language of education is concerned. Her most important observation has a bearing on the controversy which is being created in Goa over medium of instruction at primary level. In relationship between languages Skutnabb-Kangas says that it is clear that if parents/guardians choosing the medium of day-care and education for children are not offered alternatives or do not know enough about the probable long-term consequences of their choices, the change of mother tongue which mostly is the result of majority-medium education for minorities, cannot be deemed voluntary, meaning it reflects linguistic genocide: the child has been 'forcibly transferred' to the linguistic majority group.

To those in Goa who are on the verge to promote the linguistic genocide- Skutnabb-Kangas has an advice- "The parents must know enough about the research results when they make their choices-they must, for instance, know that good mother tongue medium teaching can also lead to a better proficiency in both the dominant language, for instance English, and in the mother tongue, than English-medium teaching".

Skutnabb-Kangas also accuses the monolinguals- for the costs. The English speakers seldom learn other languages and make others pay to give them translators and interpreters. It is a myth that English is world's top ranked language. Actually it is third largest after Mandarin and Spanish. Our own Hindi has almost equal rank. The complete failure of Goa's out-dated Official Language Act is the main reason behind the demand for change in medium of instruction. Even 25 years after getting statehood, Goa does not have its' official gazette in official language. Not a single act has been translated in Konkani. Konkani would end up as a living linguistic and literary fossil confined to only academic space by middle of this century. This is not the fault of Konkani. It is fault of all those who verbally championed Konkani language and education but continued to send their own children to English medium schools.

For past 25 years English has been promoted and glorified in the administration, social, cultural commercial space. Events like IFFI do not have a single banner in Konkani. It took Goa University 15 years to print letterheads in Konkani. The new generation of frustrated parents is therefore restless and political opportunists would build on these frustrations. Parents of Goa have become panicky because they have seen over a period of a generation that their children lack the linguistic and communication skills required for employability and competitiveness. The crisis of confidence and self-identity is being masked by raking up an unnecessary controversy over medium of instruction.

Basically it is the failure of post globalization, parenting, collapse of family structure, rise of blind consumerism and craze for shallow quick fix solutions. It is really driving the kids crazy as proven by the recent suicides. I am a product of Marathi medium school. I ask myself a question-did I lose anything for having got educated under the old pattern of SSC

for 11 years straight entirely through Marathi medium. Even Maths and science subjects were taught to us in Marathi medium. It was a giant leap to migrate to fully English medium college education. But we adapted easily.

My cousin Dr. Sanjay Kamat — a NRI IT engineer at Lucent Technologies, New York, was a product of Mahila Nutan Marathi Vidyalaya, Margao. He enjoyed school education in Marathi medium and was a president's gold medal winner at M. Tech. examinations at IIT, Powai, Mumbai. Let all the schools which teach mother tongue get liberal grants. There is no need to change the policy on medium of instruction at primary level but let the children also learn elementary English and any two among Hindi, Marathi and Sanskrit languages upto Standard Vth. That's right age to make them multilingual, smarter, creative. Parents need to have more faith in experts like Skutnabb-Kangas than those who're deliberately misguiding them.

III. ANGLOCENTRISM-A STEP TOWARDS GETTING GOA A HONG KONG/MACAO LIKE STATUS

Stig Hjarvard on spread of English

The language issue in Goa can be understood from the Danish perspective of Stig Hjarvard, Professor Film and Media Studies, The Department of Media, Cognition and Communication, Centre for modern European Studies, University of Copenhagen. Stig specializes in globalization, mediatization, media and politics. By extending Bourdieu's (1984, 1992) theory of different kinds of capital in different fields of society, Stig conceives of language as a field in which cultural and social conflicts are articulated. Linguistic prowess (e.g., fluency in one or more foreign languages or the ability to switch between a local dialect and the standard language as the situation demands) constitutes capital that the individual may use to attain social status, an identity and/or power in relation to others. In Bourdieu's terminology, linguistic ability constitutes symbolic capital that may be converted to cultural capital (repute, social status, etc.) or economic capital (better-paid work, etc.). Commenting on English, as language of globalization the Danish scholar says- Over the past two or three decades, English has come to occupy a singular position among languages. Previously only one among several dominant European languages, on a par with French or Spanish, it is today a world language, the language people use whenever they wish to communicate with others outside their own linguistic community.

English has become the lingua franca of the global network: where the TCP/IP protocol secures technical communication between computers via the internet, English is the protocol for oral and written communication across national frontiers. As English has moved toward paramountcy, the status of the other principal languages has changed. Even though they are spoken by more people today than ever before, they have been demoted, degraded in relation to English. Today, French, Spanish, Arabic, German, Russian, etc., more or less have the status of regional languages, national languages that can be used beyond their national frontiers. But, they are losing their currency as the language of international communication, formal and informal: both in political and commercial contexts and in intercultural exchanges, as bridges between people who cross cultural frontiers or who like to enrich their lives with media products from abroad. His concluding remarks help us to explain the

undercurrents running in Goan society. While assessing the Danish situation vis a vis the expansion of English he remarks - Globalization may be seen as a new epoch in linguistic history. The golden age of dialects was associated with an essentially rural society, where agricultural production was the norm and industrial production was still in its cradle, a society where the local community was central and permanence the rule, where mobility across geographical and other boundaries was the exception.

With the advent of industrial production, urbanization and national consciousness, dialects were forced to retreat before the onslaught of a standardized national language. The global network society, finally, impacts on the social hierarchies of national industrial society. Not least its valuation of mobility means that a command of English and modern communications technologies confer status & the global society is a mediated society, where communication via electronic networks constitutes a new reality. The ability to take part in these networks has more than symbolic importance; increasingly it has implications for individual's economic standing, job opportunities and success on the marketplace, cultural identity and sense of belonging in society.

Goa has reached a critical point in the politics of languages at a critical time. This time the battle lines would not be easily drawn. These would remain diffuse if not deliberately confused. This time the issue is not as simple as releasing government grants to all the schools which impart primary education in English medium or maintaining the status quo which has existed since 1990. A generation has passed since this policy decision was taken. The Globe and Goa have changed beyond recognition during these 21 years. The basic issue is -having accommodated global brands in markets and in domestic environment, having brought and tolerated Casinos, discotheques and night pubs, home delivered pizza, pasta culture, having enjoyed the thrill of discovery on Google, Facebook, social networks and new social hormones like text messaging mobile telephony and multichannel DTH television, how far Goans are willing to accommodate vernacular languages which are rapidly losing the race?. What costs the state is prepared to pay and commit capital to float the local vernacular languages and especially the official language-Konkani? Earlier the issue was of colonization of land and resources. At present the issue is of globalization and colonization of minds by global images and symbols. As Castells (1996) points out, the network society gives rise to a culture of real virtuality. The arguments on both sides have become stale and stereotyped. This development has to be situated in the complex matrix of societal transformation. Economists call it a glocal phenomena— local societies becoming rapidly global.

The mall culture has reached Goa and going by the response there is social acceptance of this monolithic market phenomena. English language is also seen as global mall. Those who enter could shop for a variety of goodies across attractive counters. A new period of Globally Assertive Goans and Goan Assertiveness (GAGAGA) is beginning. Where GAGAGA is taking the future history of Goa? Probably in the same direction as that of Macao and Hong Kong. Goa is now destined to become republic of India's first specially administrative region-SAR with a high degree of autonomy. It doesn't matter how long this would take but first steps to build a critical mass of support have been taken. The provisional results of Census of India 2011 for Goa would be revealing. The rural-urban divide is melting. An urban (rural-urban) continuum has emerged. Assertiveness does not come from attitude but

affluence. Goans need to admit that they are far more affluent today than under the former colonial rulers who are now caught in a terrible debt-trap. The GAGAGA phase of Goa's political transformation would not be consolidated without fresh recruitment from Anglo-centric culture of real virtuality. The glocal would emerge victorious over local or national.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MOTHER TONGUE-BASED SCHOOLING FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

Dr. Carole Benson

(Centre for Research on Bilingualism, Stockholm University, Sweden)

[Reference: This is the abridged version of Paper commissioned for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2005, United National Educational Scientific & Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Document No. 2005/ED/EFA/MRT/PI/9 The Quality Imperative. For further information, please contact efareport@unesco.org]

PART A: OVERVIEW

While there are many factors involved in delivering quality basic education, language is clearly the key to communication and understanding in the classroom. Many developing countries are characterized by individual as well as societal multilingualism, yet continue to allow a single foreign language to dominate the education sector. Instruction through a language that learners do not speak has been called "submersion" because it is analogous to holding learners under water without teaching them how to swim. Compounded by chronic difficulties such as low levels of teacher education, poorly designed, inappropriate curricula and lack of adequate school facilities, submersion makes both learning and teaching extremely difficult, particularly when the language of instruction is also foreign to the teacher.

Mother tongue-based bilingual programs use the learner's first language, known as the L1, to teach beginning reading and writing skills along with academic content. The second or

foreign language, known as the L2, should be taught systematically so that learners can gradually transfer skills from the familiar language to the unfamiliar one. Bilingual models and practices vary as do their results, but what they have in common is their use of the mother tongue at least in the early years so that students can acquire and develop literacy skills in addition to understanding and participating in the classroom.

Bilingual as opposed to monolingual schooling offers significant pedagogical advantages which have been reported consistently in the academic literature:

- * Use of a familiar language to teach beginning literacy facilitates an understanding of sound-symbol or meaning-symbol correspondence.
- * Since content area instruction is provided in the L1, the learning of new concepts is not postponed until children become competent in the L2.
- * Explicit teaching of the L2 beginning with oral skills allows students to learn the new language through communication rather than memorization.
- * Student learning can be accurately assessed in bilingual classrooms. When students can express themselves, teachers can diagnose what has been learned, what remains to be taught and which students need further assistance.
- * The affective domain, involving confidence, self-esteem and identity, is strengthened by use of the L1, increasing motivation and initiative as well as creativity. L1 classrooms allow children to be themselves and develop their personalities as well as their intellects, unlike submersion classrooms where they are forced to sit silently or repeat mechanically, leading to frustration and ultimately repetition, failure and dropout.
- * Students become bilingual and biliterate. Bilingual programs encourage learners to understand, speak, read and write in more than one language. In contrast, submersion programs attempt to promote skills in a new language by eliminating them from a known language, which may actually limit learner competence in both.

All of these advantages are based on two assumptions: one, that basic human needs are being met so that schooling can take place; and two, that mother tongue-based bilingual schooling can be properly implemented.

PART B: POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF BILINGUAL PROGRAMS

Why bilingual policies have been introduced

The introduction of mother tongue-based policies and programs normally goes beyond pedagogical motivations to address social and political aims. While it should be remembered that any one program represents a combination of aims, the following illustrate a sampling:

Historical precedents. There have been a few historical precedents for use of the L1 in developing countries, with both positive and negative implications for current practice.

Compensatory motivations. New, more inclusionary policies are being directed toward traditionally marginalized groups.

New ideologies. More recent efforts in mother tongue schooling bring some new dimensions to the practice.

Educational development objectives. There are bilingual schooling programs with clear development goals; for example, experimentation in Mozambique began following a

conference on how to reduce the high repetition, failure and dropout rates plaguing basic education.

How programs have been introduced

Forms of introduction

Small-scale to large-scale introduction through experimentation. Experimentation is a common means for introducing mother tongue-based schooling. Such piloting is useful for determining how a bilingual model can be implemented given local conditions, and what types of technical and material input are required to make the program successful before going to scale.

Top-down introduction through legislation. In some contexts mother tongue-based programs have been introduced on a national scale by top-down methods, where government has legislated change and expected the education sector to implement it, whether or not piloting has been done and whether or not adequate resources have been mobilized.

Bottom-up introduction through nonformal education practices. Introducing mother tongue schooling from the grassroots level is not easy from a large-scale organizational standpoint, yet it is the most promising in terms of community commitment and sustainability.

Challenges and how they have been confronted

Mother tongue-based bilingual schooling is seldom disputed on the basis of its pedagogical reasoning, and if decision-making were to be based solely on how to provide the highest quality education for the learner many more of the world's languages would be used in education today.

The following myths and attitudes are regularly used to challenge use of mother tongues in education, yet their false arguments are easily revealed:

- * The one nation—one language myth.
- * The myth that local languages cannot express modern concepts. Léopold Senghor once illustrated this by translating Einstein's Theory of Relativity into Wolof, a lingua franca of Senegal.
- * The either-or myth. This myth holds that bilingualism causes confusion and that the first language must be pushed aside so that the second language can be learned.
- * The L2 as global language myth.
- * The myth that parents want L2-only schooling.

The attitudes reflected by these myths provide a background for understanding other more practical challenges of implementing mother tongue-based bilingual schooling. The following are the most challenging logistical aspects: (a) poverty and the meeting of basic needs; (b) human resource development; (c) linguistic and materials development; (d) educational decision-making in countries with linguistically diverse regions; and (e) allocation of material resources.

Applied to bilingual education in Guatemala, they have found that the initially higher costs of implementing mother tongue programs are outweighed by the savings due to more efficient schooling after only two years.

Effects/impact on quality of schooling

Well-documented empirical studies of mother tongue-based bilingual programs in developing countries began appearing in the 1970s and still form the basis of what is done in the field today. Some of the benchmark studies are these:

- * The indigenous children efficiently transferred literacy skills from the L1 to the L2 and outperformed monolingual Spanish speakers.
- * The full six-year primary education in the mother tongue with the L2 taught as a subject was not only viable but gave better results than all-English schooling.
- * The mother tongue materials of reasonable quality could be developed even where resources were scarce and even for previously undeveloped languages with small numbers of speakers.
- * Large-scale research found a positive relationship between achievement in the two languages, and found that low student performance overall was not an effect of bilingual education but of other factors, especially the low quality of teacher training.

More recent work demonstrates similar findings and goes beyond these to illustrate the positive aspects of mother tongue-based bilingual programs listed above, specifically: (a) facilitated bilingualism and biliteracy; (b) classroom participation, positive affect and increased self-esteem; (c) valorization of the home language and culture; (d) increased parent participation; and (e) increased participation of girls.

HOW PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN STRUCTURED

Models

The most common model of bilingual schooling is transitional and weak form because the L1 is used only as a bridge to the L2. Weak models take a subtractive approach to the mother tongue, undervaluing the first language and culture and prioritizing the second language. Transitional programs range from short-term oral use of the L1 during the preschool and/or early primary years to development of L1 literacy skills over three to five years before transitioning, or changing the language of literacy (and usually instruction) to the L2. The L2 is taught first orally and then phased in gradually as a language of instruction. Studies have demonstrated that “late-exit” transitional programs, i.e. those that develop the L1 for four to five years, have much better results in terms of student performance than other models that do not invest in L1 development. A weak form made weaker: Programs in economically disadvantaged countries often attempt to transition to the L2 after only one or two years, without consolidating L1 literacy or L2 communication skills.

Best practices concerning models

It is difficult to highlight certain programs as “best practice” when few functioning bilingual programs in developing countries actually follow the models that Western research would see as most pedagogically sound, and even countries that have adopted well-designed models on paper have had difficulties implementing them in practice.

However, it is clear from research in both North and South that submersion or early use of a foreign medium of instruction do not provide a reasonable quality of basic education.

A final point when discussing models is that it may be instructive to look more at non-formal education (NFE), where it seems there is more being done in mother tongues as well as more

innovation. This is probably because there is simultaneously more grassroots involvement from communities and NGOs and less control from government ministries.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

The following summarizes the points made in the text and key lessons learned from over thirty years of experience in developing countries as well as research in the North.

- Basic needs of students and teachers must be met for any reform to be effective. Unless physical conditions are improved for the most marginalized it is unlikely that a change in language policy will dramatically improve educational attainment.
- Significant investment of time and resources is needed in both teacher training and materials development (including linguistic development of the L1). Cost-benefit analyses demonstrate that this investment is balanced by savings in terms of per-pupil expenditure because of significantly reduced repetition and dropout rates.
- All stakeholders should be involved in the decision-making regarding implementation of bilingual schooling as well as which languages will be used and how they will be developed. Top-down processes should enable implementation through legislation and allocation of resources, while bottom-up processes provide grassroots commitment and linguistic community support and mid-level processes facilitate educational implementation. This implies some degree of decentralization of educational decision-making.
- Selection of appropriate bilingual models is the key to educational quality. Gradual transitional and developmental maintenance models maximize L1 development and therefore have the greatest potential to improve L2 development and content learning.

CONCLUSION

What Education for All means for people in developing countries is access to basic literacy and numeracy as well as other skills that will improve their lives. Mother tongue-based bilingual education not only increases access to skills but also raises the quality of basic education by facilitating classroom interaction and integration of prior knowledge and experiences with new learning. The effects of bilingual schooling mentioned above depict the progress made by traditionally marginalized students in the process of:

1. Becoming literate in a familiar language;
2. Gaining access to communication and literacy skills in the L2;
3. Having a language and culture that are valued by formal institutions like the school;
4. Feeling good about the school and the teacher;
5. Being able and even encouraged to demonstrate what they know;
6. Participating in their own learning;
7. Having the courage to ask questions in class (students) or ask the teacher what is being done (parents)
8. Attending school and having an improved chance of succeeding (all children and especially girls)
9. Not being taken advantage of (all children and especially girls).

Where these characteristics correspond with the goals of EFA and the goals people have for their children, mother tongue-based bilingual education can provide a means for reaching them.

*[Queen's Tongue versus Mother Tongue: Medium of Instruction Debate in Goa, Atharva,
Vol. VI, No. 6, June 1, 2011, Ponda, Goa, INDIA]*
